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Zones of Privacy in Letters Between Women of Power: Elizabeth I of England and Anna of Saxony

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Abstract: The present article explores how women of power engaged in diplomatic efforts via forms of epistolary privacy by analysing private letters between Elizabeth I and Anna of Saxony in the late 1570s and early 1580s. Through a close examination of how their exchanges moved from very public matters to more personal requests, the authors show how early modern notions of privacy offered strategic communication prompts that could be used effectively by women in political negotiations. The intersection between these zones of privacy with the very public matters being addressed in Elizabeth's and Anna's epistolary exchange makes explicit how noble women could develop their own private politics, becoming active agents of diplomacy even in periods of extreme religious and political turmoil through personal connections within female noble circles.

Keywords: Female agency; diplomacy; epistolary culture; sixteenth century; private politics

Introduction

> "If it pleases her Majesty to send letters to [August and Anna of Saxony], and withal wrote [sic] a ***familiar*** letter to the Duchess of Saxony, [William of Orange] did not doubt but that some good would ensue."[1]

Queen Elizabeth I of England (1533-1604) was a fierce proponent of creating a united Protestant front to face the threat of a Catholic resurgence throughout Europe.[2] Between 1577 and 1586 she dedicated diplomatic and intelligence efforts to urge other Protestant territories to join this alliance.[3] Daniel Rogers (1538?-1591), a diplomat with Queen Elizabeth's government, wrote the opening passage to her in 1577, when negotiations for the

[1] The National Archives (TNA), State Papers (SP) 83/1, f, 21, "Daniel Rogers to Walsingham," July 1577. See also M. Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Relations politiques des Pays Bas et de l'Angleterre* (F. Bayez, 1888), 416–424; *Calendar of State Papers Foreign, Elizabeth*, vol. 12, 1577-1578, ed. Arthur John Butler (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1901), 21–25. The boldness of the word "familiar" is our emphasis.

[2] This work draws from the interdisciplinary research at the Danish National Research Foundation Centre for Privacy Studies (DNRF 138), based at the University of Copenhagen and directed by Mette Birkedal Bruun. We are profoundly appreciative of the support and feedback from our colleagues at the Centre for Privacy Studies in the development of this article.

[3] For more details on this political and religious scenario, see David Scott Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations and the Protestant Cause: Elizabethan Foreign Policy and Pan-Protestantism* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Protestant League had reached a critical point.[4] Advised by William of Orange (1533-1584),[5] Rogers identified Electress Anna of Saxony (1532-1585) as a key figure in establishing a connection with the German principality of Saxony since Anna was known to communicate with her husband, the Elector, August of Saxony (1526-1586), about political matters.[6] Contacting Anna would give Elizabeth a different approach to convince August—known to be headstrong and methodical on religious matters—to join Elizabeth's efforts in establishing the Protestant League, in case the Queen's other diplomatic strategies failed. August and Anna were extremely influential among the German principalities and maintained close contact with the Holy Roman Empire, a Catholic kingdom, through Emperor Maximilian II. Winning August over to Elizabeth's cause would have been a game-changer in the political and religious landscape of Europe. Therefore, in 1577, Elizabeth sent letters to "nine princes (plus one to Electress Anna, August's wife)" in Germany, which was the first contact between these two women of power.[7]

Although extensive studies of Elizabeth's epistolary and diplomatic history exist,[8] along with detailed studies of Anna's vast collection of correspondence and far-reaching personal and political networks, it is surprising that the letters between the Queen and the Electress have not been examined and analysed in greater depth.[9] Such letters provide fertile grounds to understand the agency and

[4] Daniel Rogers was a diplomat and agent of Elizabeth I's spymaster Francis Walsingham. Born in Wittenberg, Germany, Rogers was directly affected by the religious Reformation and well connected to the Protestant regime since his father, John Rogers, was burned at the stake by Mary I. Rogers was an agent for Walsingham in France, Ireland, and the Low Countries, during which he had regular interactions with William of Orange and the Count Palatine, John Casimir. It was during the period of meeting with Orange and Casimir in July 1577 that he received instructions in July 1577 'to persuade' them to contribute to the development of a military branch for the Protestant alliance. This was the period in which he sent the advice about writing Anna of Saxony a 'familiar' letter. See also Mark Loudon, "Rogers, Daniel (c. 1538-1591)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008).

[5] A proponent for the freedom of religion, William of Orange (also known as 'William the Silent') was the Governor of the Habsburg Spanish Netherlands, who was close with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and the recipient of a Roman Catholic education, despite being raised a devout Protestant. He served in this position until the Spanish began to persecute Protestants in the Netherlands, at which point, in 1567, he rebelled and joined the Dutch revolt as the leader against the Spanish, led by Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, the Duke of Alba. William became one of the leading allies for the Protestant alliance. His connection with Saxony occurred when William married the daughter of Maurice of Saxony, August's brother, also named Anna of Saxony (Princess of Orange/1544-1577), in 1561. Electress Anna of Saxony was the guardian of her niece, Anna of Saxony-Orange, and though the relationship between the Electoral couple and their niece was strained, they were connected. William would have known the couple well, especially since August and Anna supported and corresponded with William regarding the Dutch revolt and Protestant unity. Therefore, his advice to Rogers was based on intimate knowledge of and familial relations with Electress Anna. The best study and source for this reference is Liesbeth Geevers, "Family Matters: William of Orange and the Habsburgs after the Abdication of Charles V (1555-67)," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 63:2 (2010), 459–490. See also Ingrun Mann, *Anna of Saxony: The Scarlett Woman of Orange* (Point Pleasant: Winged Hussar Publishing, 2016), 5–9.

[6] "Daniel Rogers to Walsingham," SP 83/1, f. 21.

[7] David Scott Gehring, "Elizabeth's Correspondence with the Protestant Princes of the Empire, 1558-86," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence*, eds. Carlo M. Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, and Jonathan Gibson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 196.

[8] Elizabeth R. Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy and Epistolary Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021); Rayne Allison, *A Monarchy of Letters: Royal Correspondence and English Diplomacy in the Reign of Elizabeth I* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Carlo M. Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, and Jonathan Gibson (eds.), *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Anne McLaren, *Political Culture in the Reign of Elizabeth I: Queen and Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138.

[9] Katrin Keller, "Zwischen Zwei Residenzen: Der Briefwechsel Der Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen Mit Freiin Brigitta Trautson," in *Viatori per Urbes Castraque. Festschrift Herwig Ebner*, ed. Helmut Bräuer and et al. (Instituts für Geschichteder Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 2003), 365–382; Katrin Keller, "Die Sächsischen Kurfürstinnen in Der Zweiten Hälfte Des 16. Jahrhunderts—Familie Und Politik," in *Die Sächsischen Kurfürsten*

power of women in early modern diplomatic relations. Diplomatic letters played a crucial role in forging relationships between foreign powers and aided in facilitating diplomatic ceremony by providing "justification" for diplomatic audiences and negotiations.[10] However, a factor in understanding diplomatic letters and their context is determining the relationship between the sender and the receiver by examining the social standing and rank of individuals within epistolary exchanges. This examination is necessary because "social rank and hierarchical relationships are an important feature of early modern European practices," as well as "the ways in which writers construct objects of their address and how this construction shapes their epistolary discourse."[11] Accordingly, by positioning Elizabeth and Anna within their social and diplomatic settings, we can make sense of how women of power communicated with each other and the protocols and formulae that they operated with. This contextualisation contributes to "reconstruct[ing] epistolary historical meaning as dialogic: it is not just writing, but also reading, and their mutual relation that generates meaning."[12]

The diplomatic practices of women like Elizabeth and Anna reflected both an aspect of wider techniques that blended the personal and political, as well as female practices that persisted as a unique form of diplomacy embedded in personal, informal, and private practices. Male diplomatic relations and behaviours were rooted in public, formal, and "masculine" practices.[13] However, status was critical for not only the effectiveness of diplomacy, but because it also dictated the dialogic forms, customs, and expected behaviours of diplomatic activities and interactions. As such, status was tied to wealth, learnedness/language skills, and social and political rank. While women's diplomatic practices occurred outside of formal channels, status also dictated how female diplomacy operated and what methods could be employed. The diplomatic practices and resources employed by Elizabeth and Anna were indicative of their rank, as well as their learned skills. Elizabeth, as queen regnant, had vast resources and an active, institutional "diplomatic network" at her disposal.[14] This bureaucratic network consisted of residential ambassadors, spies, and informal diplomatic agents, through which Elizabeth could exercise greater political authority. These resources enabled her to gather intelligence and compile information through "official embassies [and] private correspondence," which determined the development of close bonds and personal relations with German rulers.[15] On the other hand, Anna, though a royal princess, was a princely consort who utilised her dynastic bonds as tools of diplomacy, whereby she acted as an "informal channel between states," mediator, and

Während Des Religionsfriedens von 1555 Bis 1618, ed. Helmar Junghans (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007), 279–296; Katrin Keller, *Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen* (1532-1585) (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2010); Katrin Keller, "Die Kurfürstin Im Alten Reich. Korrespondenz Und Klientel Im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert," *Neues Archiv Für Sächsische Geschichte* 83 (2012), 189–206; Pernille Arenfeldt, "Gendered Patronage and Confessionalization" (2008), 26; Pernille Arenfeldt, "Wissensproduktion und Wissensverbreitung im 16. Jahrhundert: Fürstinnen als Mittlerinnen von Wissenstraditionen," *Historische Anthropologie* 20:1 (2012), 4–28; Pernille Arenfeldt, "'The Queen Has Sent Nine Frisian Cows': Gender and Everyday Cultural Practices at the Courts in Sixteenth-Century Germany," in *Der Hof*, ed. Susanne Rode-Breymann and Antje Tumat (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), 116–131; Alisha Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters: Noblewomen as Healers in Early Modern Germany* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[10] Tracey Sowerby, "Negotiating with the Material Text: Royal Correspondence between England and the Wider World," in *Cultures of Diplomacy and Literary Writing in the Early Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 210.

[11] Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti, "Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture: An Introduction," *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 3 (2014), 20.

[12] Camiciotti, "An Introduction," 20.

[13] Tracey A. Sowerby, "Masculinity, Ambassadorial Handbooks and Early Modern English Diplomacy," *The International History Review* (2021), 3–4.

[14] Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 15.

[15] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 12.

communicator of news.[16] Anna's diplomatic position enabled her to forge a network and collect personal information based on intimate knowledge. This crucial context surrounding gendered diplomatic practices emphasises the informal personal bonds, intimacy that characterised both the epistolary nature and relationship between these women of power.

In total, we were able to identify five surviving letters exchanged between the Queen and the Electress.[17] These were official letters that pertained to very public matters. However, along with the ceremonial greetings and rituals of political communication, Elizabeth and Anna needed to sound open to forging personal connections in order for these letters to accomplish their diplomatic missions. Thus, as Rogers suggested, the letters needed to be "familiar," signifying that Elizabeth's approach should be more intimate to forge a more personal relationship. Yet, such an approach raises the question: can anything be private in the correspondence between two public figures of such status? In this article, we will explore how privacy was a tool for communication between women of power and how their use of a 'private rhetoric' contributed to early modern politics and diplomacy.

Talking about privacy in this period of extreme political and religious turmoil requires that we understand what this idea could mean to the people living in it, which can both differ or overlap with how we perceive privacy today. The word 'privacy' or other variants on the Latin root *privatus* could mean something very different than what a contemporary reader would expect: the private was not only that which was removed from the public, but it was also the opposite of the "official, professional, communal, or evident."[18] As such, we need to expand the term to encompass semantic cognates to the private (such as the personal or the intimate), which helps us to better encapsulate the complex experience or understanding of early modern privacy.[19] Privacy had to be carved out from within different collectives: families, institutions, guilds, or broader communities.[20] When we speak of privacy for Elizabeth I and Anna of Saxony, we cannot forget their positions and how the state permeated their personal lives as ruling women.[21] As such, in order to explore how both these women of power instrumentalised private matters in the rhetoric of their letters, we will situate their exchanges within different heuristic zones of privacy.

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[16] Matthias Pohlig, "Gender and the Formalisation of Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe," *The International History Review* (2021), 4.

[17] There are two letters from Anna to Elizabeth in the 1580s that most likely received a reply. However, through extensive further archival research, we believe that the replies did not survive. The first letters exchanged between Elizabeth and Anna are in diplomatic Latin. Considering that this style of letter writing leaves a lot of information to be inferred, with formulaic pleasantries and careful sentence formulations, we interpreted the letters in light of the contextual information and supplemental primary sources. We indicate abbreviations using square brackets, and translate the "royal we" as the respective letter writer, hence the appearance of conjugations in the plural when we speak of only one individual. We would like to thank Christine Jeanneret and Eric Bianchi for their help with correcting the transcription, and Paolo Astorri for his assistance with the interpretation of the Latin.

[18] Mette Birkedal Bruun, "Towards an Approach to Early Modern Privacy: The Retirement of the Great Condé," in *Early Modern Privacy: Sources and Approaches,* eds. Michaël Green, Lars Cyril Nørgaard, and Mette Birkedal Brunn (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 22.

[19] Bruun, "Towards an Approach," 21.

[20] Lars Cyril Nørgaard, "Past Privacy," in Green et al., *Early Modern Privacy*, 3.

[21] Our use of 'ruling women' is not to refer to monarchial power and rule, but women who exercised power as royal and noble women, and agents in state networks.

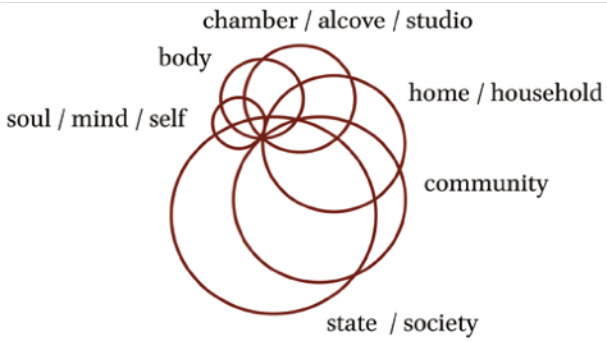

Figure 1: Bruun's heuristic zones

These heuristic zones are an analytical tool that aims to "represent early modern areas of theorising, regulation and practice related to privacy and the private."[22] The model of the heuristic zones (Figure 1) shows the contours of the thresholds and intersections between the self, the body, the chamber, the household, the community, and the state. We will use these spheres as a lens of analysis to locate how passages of the letters by Elizabeth and Anna cross over or reinforce the thresholds between these different analytical domains. In particular, we will pay attention to how the individual self intersects with state matters. As personal connections are at the centre of noble political alliances, privacy in this context can also be understood as a myriad of strategies to build intimacy and personal bonds. By employing this tool, this article will show how the language used by these women of power blurred the lines between the public and private divide. We seek to demonstrate that Elizabeth and Anna carefully and strategically employed specific rhetorical forms in their writing as a way of negotiating and engaging in politics. The intersection of the public nature of epistolary culture with the notions of privacy within these particular letters can be seen as a unique form of 'private politics' among women. 'Private politics' here will encompass personal interactions that negotiate or influence political situations, events, or processes, but also the instrumentalisation of the 'private' as a way of exercising agency, cultivating a public identity, or engaging with political matters. Moreover, we will analyse their communication to see how they navigate the dual nature of their positions, being women—usually associated with the private sphere—and as highly influential political figures very much associated with the public.[23] A textual analysis of these letters will allow us to dissect the epistolary language used and illustrate the process of evoking notions of privacy, intimacy, or bonds of trust between addressees and recipients. Through this analytical investigation, we will highlight how the notions of privacy and the rhetoric of familiarity and kinship were tied to "emotions, the dynamics of emotional engagement and the role of emotions in interpersonal

[22] Mette Birkedal Bruun, "The Centre for Privacy Studies Work Method," July 2019. https://teol.ku.dk/privacy/research/work-method/.

[23] The association of women with the private sphere has been problematised by gender historians and feminist theorists for many years. For an overview of this debate, see Ulla Wischermann and Ilze Klavina Mueller, "Feminist Theories on the Separation of the Private and the Public: Looking Back, Looking Forward," *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 20:1 (2004), 184–197. Here we are pointing to this association to show how the rhetoric of the private sphere and domesticity could also serve as a way for women to manipulate their positions in political discussions and public decision-making in the early modern period, adding nuance to this public/private debate.

relations" that contributed to private politics, personal diplomacy, and forged bonds of trust between women of power.[24]

The construction and delivery of diplomatic letters incorporated various forms of communication from written text, verbal exchange of information, and diplomatic rituals. Materiality and ornamentation of letters also were curated carefully to support their messages. More importantly, the construction of diplomatic letters, similar to other types of letters, had to conform to specific structures, conventions, rhetorical parts, and formulas, or there was a risk of causing offense.[25] Therefore, the different components and specificity required of diplomatic correspondence involved numerous people, from dictating the epistolary content to the final delivery of the letter. The role of each contributor must be considered and acknowledged. Elizabeth was keenly aware of the vital role that letters played in diplomatic relations. However, as queen, Elizabeth could not deal with all of the correspondence in the complex epistolary system on her own and relied on trusted secretaries to oversee the construction of certain parts and types of letters. Yet, as multiple scholars have agreed, Elizabeth was "conspicuously involved" in the epistolary process.[26] Similarly, Anna had assistance with the sheer volume of the Electress' epistolary communication.[27] She had preferred secretaries—usually shared with her husband—and rarely wrote in her own hand, complaining that she had difficulty in writing.[28]

By examining how letters, gender, diplomacy, and privacy intersect, this article contributes new research in three specific ways. First, through a close reading of the letters between Elizabeth and Anna utilising the perspective of the heuristic zones of privacy, we shed new light on Anglo-German cultural and diplomatic relations that focus on the epistolary practices of the women involved. Accordingly, to answer the call of Elizabeth Williamson, we also contribute a different nuanced perspective of the many roles of women within sixteenth-century diplomacy.[29] Second, this analysis will also enable us to dissect the similarities and differences in epistolary communication and social practices between women of power in a transnational context.[30] Finally, the article provides a new "interpretative methodology" connecting epistolary and privacy studies, drawing "attention to the rhetorical, linguistic and materiality of letters, as well as the historical" role that these letters played in the sixteenth-century political and religious landscapes.[31]

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[24] Linda A. Pollock, "Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England," *Historical Journal* 47 (2004), 73. Linda A. Pollock, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620* (London: Collins and Brown, 1993), 51–53.

[25] James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 65. Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 15.

[26] Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 15–16. Bajetta et al., *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence,* xx. Jonathan Gibson, "Dedans La Plie de Mon Fidelle Affection': Familiarity and Materiality in Elizabeth's Letters to Anjou," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence,* eds. Bajetta et al., 67 and 76.

[27] Keller, "Zwischen Zwei Residenzen," 365–382.

[28] Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort in Protestant Germany, 1550-1585. Anna of Saxony as 'Mater Patriae.'" (PhD Thesis, European University Institute, Department of History and Civilization, 2006), 60.

[29] Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy,* 5.

[30] Here we build upon the notable work of James Daybell, particularly in reference to privacy in letter-writing and how women's letters were read by early modern contemporaries. James Daybell, "'I wold wyshe my doings might be...secret': Privacy and Social Practices of Reading Women's Letters in Sixteenth-Century England," in *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-1700: Form and Persuasion*, eds. Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 143–162.

[31] James Daybell, "Social Negotiations in Correspondence between Mothers and Daughters in Tudor and Early Stuart England," *Women's History Review* 24:4 (2015), 503–504. Daybell, *The Material,* 13.

Figure 2: *Queen Elizabeth I, c.* 1560, Unknown artist, NPG4449, National Portrait Gallery, London, United Kingdom (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0)

Figure 3: ***Anna von Dänemark (1532-1585), Kurfürstin von Sachsen, c.*** **1565, Lucas Cranach the Younger, GG3141, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria (CC BY-SA 3.0)**

I. First wave of letters—1570s

By the 1570s, religious turmoil pervaded every aspect of early modern life that hinged on the struggle between the Protestants and Catholics, impacting the social, political, diplomatic, and cultural dynamics throughout "the entirety of Europe."[32] A series of European conflicts and events dominated the dialogue of transnational relations, such as the 1569-1570 Northern Rebellion in England, the 1572 St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in France, and the 1572-1579 Spanish campaign led by the Duke of Alba in response to the revolts in the Dutch Low Countries, along with continuous threats of wars and invasions.[33] This religious and political crisis resulted in waves of refugees seeking to escape the Catholic violence throughout Europe and fleeing to Protestant havens in England and Germany. Protestants were growing fearful "of an international conspiracy" by Catholic powers, of

[32] Jonas van Tol, *Germany and the French Wars of Religion, 1560-1572* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 13.
[33] Dustin M. Neighbors, "'With my rulinge': Agency, Queenship, and Political Culture through Royal Progresses in the Reign of Elizabeth I," (PhD Thesis, University of York, 2018), 104–105.

which was described as a "generall Desygn [...] to exterminate all Nations dyssentyng with [Catholics] in Relygion."[34] Thus Anglo-German relations, waning towards the end of the 1560s, resumed with a newfound urgency around the formation of a united Protestant League, which was now more critical than ever. These issues threatened not only the religious policies and politics of sovereign states but also the personal beliefs and souls of these rulers and their subjects. As a result, letters around religious discourse and the Protestant League blended the personal and diplomatic conditions often reflected through passionate language.

Upon her accession as a Protestant queen, Elizabeth and August frequently corresponded, lamenting each time over "the dreadful confusions and perils of Europe," in which they both desired to be "[...] united in Godly agreement."[35] As such, these Protestant "beacons"[36] and "bailiff[s] of God"[37] championed "unity and unity of princely action,"[38] whereby "English and German Protestants looked to each other for their individual and mutual security."[39] Elizabeth's involvement and role in establishing a policy and connections for Anglo-German relations are actually tied to her religious teachings when she was young. Elizabeth was experienced with the German language and Protestant confessional principles through her tutor, Johannes Spithovius (?-1563).[40] This early interaction informed Elizabeth's vision for her religious policies, especially the Settlement of Religion. Surprising, however, is the fact that the 1559 Settlement was not aligned with the Protestant principles in Germany and across Europe.[41] The Queen maintained consistent communication with the German princes and Protestant rulers, including Anna's brother Frederick II of Denmark (1534-1588), through "several hundred" letters seeking and forging Protestant unity.[42] At the same time, as Elizabeth's reign evolved, William Burghley (1520-1598), Rogers, and other courtiers in England, as well as key princes of Germany and Protestant allies, shaped and influenced the shift in Elizabeth's optimism for a pan-Protestant alliance with the Elector of Saxony at the centre. However, this early optimistic cooperation had quickly faded and began to unravel by 1570 as August, the leading Protestant power among the German princes and within the Holy Roman Empire, remained hesitant to join the League and continued to be staunchly committed to establishing religious uniformity.[43]

August of Saxony refused to compromise on confessional principles. His allegiance was crucial to the Protestant League because Elizabeth and other Protestant leaders saw the influence and considerable power that August wielded with the Protestants in continental Europe. Thus, the proponents of a Protestant alliance, especially Elizabeth, intended to establish August as the head of

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[34] Hatfield House Archives, "Nicholas Throckmorton to William Cecil," *Calendar of Manuscripts*, Misc., Vol. 1, f. 363.

[35] *Calendar of State Papers Foreign: Elizabeth I, Volume 2, 1559-1560*. Edited by Joseph Stevenson (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1865), 1. See original manuscript TNA, SP 70/8, f. 3, "Elector August of Saxony to Queen Elizabeth I of England," October 1559.

[36] Mary Villeponteaux, *The Queen's Mercy: Gender and Judgement in the Representations of Elizabeth I* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 42.

[37] Manfred Rudersdorf, "Kurfürst August von Sachsen. Ein neuer nachrefromatiorischer Fürstentypus im Konfessionsstaat des Alten Reiches," in *Kurfürst August von Sachsen: Ein Nachreformatiorischer 'Friedesfürst' Zwischen Territorium und Reich*, eds. Winifred Müller, Martina Schattkowsky, and Dirk Syndram (Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2015), 10.

[38] Rudersdorf, "Kurfürst August von Sachsen," 10.

[39] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 2.

[40] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 17.

[41] Susan Doran, "Elizabeth I's Religion: The Evidence of her Letters," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 51:4 (2000), 720.

[42] David Gehring, "Elizabeth's Correspondence with the Protestant Princes of the Empire 1558-86," in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence*, ed. Bajetta, 189.

[43] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 81.

the Protestant League. However, by 1577 this proved almost impossible given August's fear of fracturing the Empire and his cautious and fragile relationship with the Habsburg emperor, Rudolf II (1552-1612), regarding his conflicting religious sentiments.[44] This perhaps explains his delays in joining.[45] Therefore, in 1577, the combination of increased "Catholic violence" and conspiracies, the recent deaths of two significant figures, Maximilian II (1527-1576), the Holy Roman Emperor, and Frederick II (1482-1556), Elector Palatine, along with the failure of the League to materialise—primarily due to August's refusal to join the League—prompted Elizabeth to launch a diplomatic campaign by dispatching "four major embassies to Germany," armed with letters to the German princes and Anna.[46]

Elizabeth's first letter to Anna

It was this context that surrounded Elizabeth's first letter to Anna in 1577.[47] As this letter was the first contact with the Electress, Elizabeth had to balance respect and persuasion properly. Greeting formulae of diplomatic letters "reveal the variations characterising the interpersonal relationships between correspondents, like public/private, informal/formal, family/non-family, intimate/distant."[48] Therefore, the letter's opening was not just a matter of convention but also established the tone in which the letter should be read. Following Roger's advice to write a familiar letter Elizabeth greeted Anna as her "grace sister of royal blood" and twice as her "most beloved cousin," acknowledging and honouring Anna's status and position of power. The use of familial relations, such as "sister" and "cousin," was a traditional rhetoric device for noble letter-writers, and Elizabeth wrote a similar greeting in her letter to August.[49]

Elizabeth's letters usually referenced other European royalty as brothers, sisters, and cousins as a means to reaffirm their proximity and alliances, as well as to defuse the political tension resulting from potential misunderstandings.[50] The use of the "pseudo-familial" and maternal language in Elizabeth's letters was a social practice whereby the Queen could deal with "political issues within the emotional parameters of [...] fictional kinship relationships" or manipulate the emotional

[44] Paul Douglas Lockhart, *Frederik II and the Protestant Cause: Denmark's Role in the Wars of Religion, 1559-1596* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 151–155, 197.
[45] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 82–88.
[46] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 55.
[47] Together with the letter to Anna, Elizabeth also sent a missive to August, both written in August 1577 and dispatched with Robert Beale. Beale did not meet the Electoral couple or deliver the letters until October 1577.
[48] Camiciotti, "An Introduction," 20.
[49] While the direct translation for "*Consanguineo nostro charissimo*" is "most beloved relative," we have interpreted Elizabeth's Latin usage here as "most beloved cousin" as this follows the epistolary forms that Elizabeth frequently used in her correspondence in various languages (Latin, Italian, French, and English) to other royal and princely sovereigns, including Frederik II of Denmark, Catherine de Medici, and others. See Bajetta, et al., *Foreign Correspondence*, xxi. Susan Doran, "Loving and Affectionate Cousins? The Relationship between Elizabeth I and James VI of Scotland, 1586-1603," in *Tudor England and Its Neighbours*, eds. Glenn Richardson and Susan Doran (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 205. Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 38–39. In her letter to August, Elizabeth enthusiastically greeted "our very dear cousin" with "wishes of prosperous affairs and happy successes." Although the second reference to "dear cousin" (*Consanguineo nostro charissimo*) in the subsequent sentence reinforces this bond, we argue that the second emphasis of this kinship bond serves to signal the personal position from which Elizabeth is writing—as a trusted kin. This position is especially important given the explosive nature of the letter. Hauptstaats Archiv (HStA) Dresden, Bestand 10024, Loc. 7278/01, f. 241r.
[50] Bajetta et al., *Foreign Correspondence*, xxi.

associations with kinship to establish connections and bonds.[51] This familial addressing was a formality with which Anna would be very familiar, as she would also commonly use this strategy to reinforce bonds of kinship and her adherence to the existing social order.[52] Politics and familial bonds were intensely connected in the sixteenth century, and noble women were particularly trained to operate as dynastic links.[53] The way familial terms were used as an emotional and power tool shows that intra-familial relations could redefine political landscapes to the point that imagined family tropes became a usual rhetoric device in diplomatic letters. Politics were inherently dependent on private connections and the proper navigation of the familial realm.

Elizabeth followed her familial greeting by stressing that she was sending Robert Beale (1541-1601), her secretary of the Privy Council and private ambassador to Germany, to mediate with August, but that Elizabeth wanted to take the opportunity to communicate with Anna.[54] By sending her intimate counsel through her ambassador, Elizabeth conveyed that Beale understood and would protect not only the Queen's conversation with August but also Elizabeth and Anna's need for a private communication channel. Maintaining the 'sisterly' tone of the letter, Elizabeth articulated the text in a way that stressed the personal nature of this missive, rather than the political aspects underlying its contents. She again emphasised that both women came from bloodlines blessed by God, as belonging to royal families of England and Denmark.[55] This particular formulation indicates that Elizabeth was trying to connect with Anna not simply as the Queen of England—and therefore superior in ranking to the Electress—but as a fellow woman who also had to ponder complex political and religious affairs. This is a primary example of how diplomatic communication was also a gateway for friendships over great distances, which were crucial to women's alliances.[56]

Establishing a social balance within the communication is to be understood as a fundamental factor in understanding diplomatic letters and their context.[57] In determining the relationship between the sender and the receiver, the examination of the social standing and rank of individuals within the exchange help us clarify the choice of words. As the Queen, Elizabeth I of England ruled as queen regnant and *femme sole,* possessing considerable agency in decision-making and the capability to exercise power.[58]Anna of Saxony, on the other hand, as the daughter of Christian III (1503–1559),

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[51] Jonathan Gibson, "'Dedans la plie de mon fidelle affection': Familiarity and Materiality in Eizabeth's Letters to Anjou," in Bajetta et al., *Foreign Correspondence*, 64.

[52] Pernille Arenfeldt, "The Political Role of the Consort," 80–81.

[53] Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 210 and 213. Jill Bepler, "Dynastic positioning and Political Newsgathering: Hedwig Eleanora of Schleswig-Gottorf, Queen of Sweden, and her Correspondence," in *Queens Consorts, Cultural Transfer and European Politics, c. 1500-1800*, eds. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly and Adam Morton (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

[54] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, fol. 244.

[55] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 244.

[56] Amanda E. Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 38–39.

[57] Sowerby, "Negotiating with the Material Text," 210.

[58] The use of 'femme sole' been examined in connection with the economic and legal status of single women versus married women ('feme covert') in the sixteenth century. This is important to note when considering the amount of personal and political decision-making power that Elizabeth I had. There has been a great deal of discussion of 'femme sole' surrounding Mary I's status as a married queen. However, given Elizabeth's status as queen and having no male guardian, her economic and legal independence was hers alone. As such, an argument can be made for Elizabeth's status as a queen ruling alone as a single woman. See Marjorie K. McIntosh, "The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300-1630," *Journal of British Studies* 44:3 (2005), 410–438. David Loades, "Literature and National Identity," in *The Cambridge History of Eary Modern English Literature*, eds. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208–209. See also David Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England* (London: Continuum UK, 2009).

was a princess of Denmark who married a German prince for dynastic and political connections. As a princely consort and, eventually, an Electoral consort, Anna was the "female half of a ruling couple," who exercised agency and had power based on influence, status, and connections through her reputation.[59] Although their social status was not vastly different, Elizabeth was higher in rank, which required formal and strict adherence to social forms of address. Within the Holy Roman Empire, due to her husband's position as Elector, Anna was afforded the social rank second only to the Empress. However, outside of the Holy Roman Empire, in connection to England and Denmark, Anna was ranked and was addressed similarly to junior members of the royal household.

As an approximation strategy, Elizabeth appealed to Anna's conciliatory role as the princely consort.[60] She did so by first describing the Electress' many virtues that were identified through diplomatic intelligence. Anna's celebrated reputation most likely contributed to the Queen's desire to write more intimate letters with the Electress, separate from the communication with the male princes, who might be "envious and ill-favoured" (*invida et male gratiosa*) that Elizabeth reached out directly to Anna.[61] By distinguishing the letter to Anna from communication with the other princes, Elizabeth aimed again at cultivating a sisterly bond, which many other noble men would tend to misunderstand. The wording seems to imply an implicit trust shared between noble women, as they understand from their own experience the feminine virtues required to navigate life at court. She also acknowledged the limits of this type of communication, yet affirmed that her messenger would safeguard and honourably report the state of their affairs in a satisfactory way.[62] With this acknowledgement of the limits of private conversations through the written word and emissaries, Elizabeth signalled for a more intimate conversation with Anna, saying that Anna's virtues sparked in her "a desire to act and speak more familiarly with you by letter" (*eam familiarius vobiscum agendi et loquendi appetentiam, per l[ite]ras*).[63] By putting her own power of influence aside, Elizabeth showed that the letter was meant to be understood as a personal message between two noble women who had to deal with moral quandaries. In doing so, Elizabeth might have hoped that Anna's faith and piety would prevail and encourage the Electress to intervene with her husband.

In fact, Elizabeth claimed that if Anna (*Celcitudini vostre*) helped the situation to return as it was before, both sides would be thankful and delighted, and that God would bless her (*faelicem reru[m] n[ost]rarum statum referet, tanquam rem vobis gratam & iucundam, et nobis vicissim, quantum vos Deus beaverit beat[e]q[ue])*. This is much friendlier phrasing than can be found in the letter Elizabeth sent to August on the same occasion. In that correspondence, Elizabeth seems to diplomatically address the issue of religious confession, criticising August for prioritising adherence to confessional principles over the need to protect and defend the confessionally diverse Protestant communities from Catholic threats, hindering the progress of the Protestant cause.[64] The key difference between Elizabeth's letters to August and Anna is the extent of the familiar tone and the personal language contained within Anna's letter, whereby religious rhetoric was used to establish a bond and appeal to Anna for support.

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[59] Heide Wunder, *He is the Sun, She is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany*. Translated by Thomas Dunlap. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[60] The role of consort came with specific responsibilities as a dynastic connector and intercessor. See Pernille Arenfeldt. The Female Consort as Intercessor in Sixteenth-Century Saxony," in *Less Favored - More Favored: Proceedings from a Conference on Gender in European Legal History. 12th-19th Centuries*, eds. Grethe Jacobsen, Helle Vogt, Inger Dübeck, and Heide Wunder, (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 2005), 1–14.
[61] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 244.
[62] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 244.
[63] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 244.
[64] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 241r-v.

The use of religious rhetoric, especially in epistolary exchanges, was fairly common among early modern women. It was a means of expressing their private piety or religious thoughts with other women, as well as publicly establishing their personal identity and/or performing, or displaying, their private attributes and unseen religiosity. Thus, the approach of using religious rhetoric and belief was a way of personalising politics and political issues to persuade, convince, and negotiate. The personalisation of politics and power was a core element of diplomacy and foreign relations. More importantly, it was a crucial practice to establish familiarity, forge bonds of trust, and to share and gather information. In Elizabeth's letter to Anna, similarly to August's, multiple heuristic zones intersected—the soul/self and household, with the community and state. What stands out within Elizabeth's letter is that dual distinction of Anna as most illustrious princess and sister (*Illustrissimæ Principi ac Dominæ , D: Annæ, Illustrissimi Ducis Electoris Saxoniæ Conthorali, Sorori et Consanguinæ nostræ Charissimæ*) and consort of the most illustrious Duke (*Cum ad Ill[ustrissi]mum Ducem Conthoralem vestrum, et consanguineum n[ost]rum Charissimu[m]*).[65] This epistolary strategy shows how the heuristic zone of community (i.e. dynastic family ties) intersected with the state. By positioning this communication at the threshold between these two heuristic zones, Elizabeth rhetorically combined the bond of personal kinship and her political goals in reaching out to the Electress. This gendered greeting and rhetoric, heuristically linked to the self, aligns with Elizabeth's epistolary writing style and emphasises her desire to secure an advantageous personal connection. The employment of both male and female characteristics in representations, known as "disabling speech,"[66] reinforces the "sexual ambiguity inherent in her role as female head of state."[67] Throughout her reign, Elizabeth expertly and shrewdly manipulated gender roles and exploited gender characteristics to cultivate representations of a legitimate and acceptable female ruler, while also maintaining the royal authority of her queenship.[68] However, we argue that this distinction was Elizabeth's acknowledgement of Anna's power and a way of relating to the Electress, perhaps even pointing out Anna's regal prerogative as a female consort. Additionally, this gendered rhetoric involves the intersection and tensions between the heuristic zones of the self, household, and state, as this rhetoric was a practice through which to reconcile the patriarchal trope of the private associations of the female gender and their function in the public domain.

Anna's reply

Elizabeth's letter demanded a calculated reply. The way in which the Queen interwove politico-religious matters with Anna's personal role of wife and pious Protestant required an answer that would likewise carefully weave the threads of Anna's relationship with her husband and her diplomatic involvement into this tapestry of the public and private divide. Anna did not know Latin herself, and crafting a response was most likely a collective effort involving scribes and counsellors. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first letters from Anna to Elizabeth sound more formal,

[65] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 244.

[66] Elizabeth Mazzola "Schooling Shrews and Grooming Queens in the Tudor Classroom," *Critical Survey* 22:1 (2010), 22.

[67] Larissa J. Taylor-Smither, "Elizabeth I: A Psychological Profile," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 15:1 (1984), 47–72.

[68] For example, in 1558 it was said that Queen Elizabeth responded in a speech to Parliament's demand to marry by proclaiming, "I have already bound vnto an Husband, which is the Kingdome of England." Camden William, *Annales* (George Purslowe, Humphrey Lownes, and Miles Flesher: 1625), 27. In a letter to Ivan IV of Russia in June 1571, Elizabeth juxtaposed her gender to proclaim that "we rule [our country] ourselves, in manner befitting a virgin queen, appointed by the great and good God; nor was there ever better obedience shown to any prince than to us by our people." See also Yurii Vasil'evich Tolstoi ed., *The First Forty Years of Intercourse between England and Russia* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), 114; Allison, *Monarchy of Letters,* 125.

although it is possible to identify an attempt at translating the interpersonal skill that Anna typically used in her communication with other nobles, which tended to blend dynastic connections, exchanges of gifts and favours, and references to personal details from within her noble circles.[69] However, when it came to formulating a reply to Elizabeth, Anna had to tread carefully, at least at first.

Anna replied with two letters, sent on the same date but composed in two different tones. Both of them fit into what Arenfeldt called "familiar letters," but there are significant differences, not only in the length of the letters but also in how Anna's private life and motivations are used to shape her answer.[70] One of them sounds formal and elaborate in its discussion of how Anna positioned herself in the negotiations of the Protestant League.[71] The other is more personal and deferential, fitting into the "reconfirmation of dynastic loyalty and affinity" type of letter.[72]

The letter that appears first is the more formal.[73] The message starts with formal greetings and reverence to the Queen. Anna then reaffirmed the bonds between England and the Kingdom of Denmark and "thanked her diligently and respectfully" (*gratias sedulo et reverenter agit*) for the Queen's letter.[74] Anna congratulates Elizabeth on the growth of her "most pious" (*magis pius*) mission, as was conveyed by Beale.[75] She confirms August's and her enthusiasm towards the Protestant cause and indicates that she will ensure that her husband's Christian zeal would increase and that he would respond "with equity and prudence" *(pro summa æquitate et prudentia sua*) to Elizabeth's requests.[76] She pointed out that August recognised the Queen's efforts and would not deny anything that a "prince could or should do with a safe and sound conscience, which is devoted to piety, truth, and Christian concord" (*salua et illæsa conscientia, studiosissimus pietatis, veritatis, atque concordiæ CHRISTIANÆ princeps facere possit ac debeat*) [77] Nevertheless, Anna clarified that there was little she could do but join "pious prayers" (*piæ preces*) with Elizabeth and affirming that her husband would also "equally unite his vows" (*hac equidem in parte vota sua*) with those of the Queen and the "whole assembly of Christians" (*et toto christianorum caetu [coetu]*).[78] This letter established Anna as a humble servant—almost downplaying her influence over her husband—who was willing to speak with August, at the same time reinforcing the conviction of her husband's faith. Anna presented them as a united front, as expected of a Protestant princely couple, while also showing deference and respect towards the Queen's request and status.[79]

The second letter is shorter but with more personal undertones. After brief greetings, Anna described how she was overjoyed by Elizabeth's letter (*Exosculatæ sumus Serenitatis Regiæ vestræ literas)*—and not for the many compliments, which she "hardly can recognise due to modesty" (*pro nostra modestia vix agnoscimus*).[80] When praising the Queen, Anna referenced the qualities of "piety, justice,

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[69] Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 56; Keller, "Die Sächsischen Kurfürstinnen," 279–296; Keller, *Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen;* Keller, "Die Kurfürstin Im Alten Reich," 189–206. Natacha Klein Käfer, "Personal gift-giving: attempts at intimacy in Anna of Saxony's letter exchanges," in *Beyond the Private-Public Divide: Privacy in Early Modern Correspondence,* eds. Michaël Green and Lars Nørgaard (Brepols, in peer-review).
[70] Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 56.
[71] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105.
[72] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 107. Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 56.
[73] The two letters appear together in the State Papers at the National Archives. The first letter is folio 105. The second one is folio 107.
[74] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105.
[75] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105.
[76] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105.
[77] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105.
[78] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105.
[79] Keller, *Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen*, 213–219; Wunder, *He is the Sun, She is the Moon,* 63–84.
[80] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 107.

equity, kindness and all the remaining virtues and regalia that can befall any man" (*Pietatis, Justitiæ, Æquitatis, bonitatis, et omnium deniq[ue] virtutum et ornamentorum, quæ in hominem cadere possunt*).[81] After acknowledging the historical dynastic bond of their families, Anna demonstrates the observance of their duties to the Queen and claims that it would "not be unworthy" (*neq[ue] indignas esse*) that she also embraced their favour perpetually.[82] Reference to worthiness follows a unique "rhetorical formula" utilising "tropes [...] of deference and self-deprecation," thus maintaining a polite submission and deferential appreciation for Elizabeth's respect for them.[83] This feature of deference in letters demonstrates the author's understanding of social expectations and conventions, demonstration of humility, and means of establishing bonds. Continuing, Anna offered her prayers to the Queen and strengthen their bond with a fruit (*cum fructo*) as "usually princes expect of women who are diligent of their duties" (*solet a Principum fæminarum sui observantissimarum officiis expectare*).[84] Although Anna described the gesture of providing the gift of a fruit as an expected one, this was a common strategy, which she used to establish long-standing connections with other nobles.[85] As such, Anna was using her method of providing a personal gift, probably collected from her famous orchard, to demonstrate her willingness to engage in continuous correspondence.[86] The tone of this letter is less an Electress diplomatically engaging with the Queen, more a friendly and personal message acknowledging the expectations of their positions as women of power having to step up to their respective roles. It is more evident in this letter that Anna was engaging with Elizabeth's rhetoric of a feminine bond, but the Electress used their mutual understanding of the duties of a noble woman to explain how she could not act in any way that would contradict her husband, except to join in "pious prayers" for a resolution that was satisfactory for both parts.[87] In this very formal exchange and discussion of state matters, we notice how women of power connected more intimately by understanding the strategies they used to navigate the threshold between state and household as queen regent and princely consort.

There are other instances in which Anna would send two letters at the same time to the same addressee—mostly for people harder to reach given the distance or for matters that needed to be discussed separately. However, it is hard to compare these two letters with other instances in Anna's correspondence, as she rarely had to send letters in Latin. Also, most examples of first contact letters happened when the stakes were not too high, and the political climate was mild. In this case, Elizabeth came to Anna with a *supplication*—to plead with August to solidify their alliance.[88] Anna was no stranger to supplication letters: she was known to intercede in the name of people of all rankings.

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[81] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 107.
[82] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 107.
[83] Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 15. In a 1544 letter accompanying a gift of a translation for her stepmother, Queen Katherine Parr, Elizabeth downplayed her writing skills and apologised for any errors in the translation as a result of "the capacitie of my simple witte, and small lerning coulde extende themselues." See Elizabeth I, *The glasse of the synnefull soule*, in *Elizabeth I: Translations, 1544-1589*, eds. Janel Mueller and Joshua Scodel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 42. Lynne Magnusson, "A Rhetoric of Requests: Genre and Linguistic Scripts in Elizabethan Women's Suitors' Letters," in *Women and Politics in Eary Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. James Daybell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 55–58.
[84] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 107.
[85] Klein Käfer, "Personal gift-giving: attempts at intimacy in Anna of Saxony's letter exchanges."
[86] Katrin Keller, "Tulips, tobacco and parrots: Consorts and their role in the transfer of animals and plants in the second half of the sixteenth century," in *Telling Objects: Contextualizing the role of the consort in early modern Europe,* eds. Jill Bepler and Svante Norrhem (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz Verlag, 2018).
[87] TNA, SP 81/1, f. 107.
[88] Supplication letters are a format of correspondence that "tend to obtain some favour, may be considered as a kind of request or petition." T. Osborne (printer), *The Art of Letter-Writing* (London, 1762), 63.

However, in most cases, it would be someone from a lower social position asking for Anna to help them in legal and mercantile matters—which is evident later in this article—and it usually was someone who was already in touch with the Electress.[89] The fact that someone outranking her was asking for intervention in a highly contentious matter, such as the Protestant League, was undoubtedly a situation that required much more tact than her usual supplication letters.

It is possible that one of Anna's two missives was meant as a ceremonial introductory letter, while the other directly dealt with the matters at hand. Usually, Anna would have personal messengers deliver her letters, who could take care of the proper introductions. In contrast, the letters to Elizabeth were sent along with the Queen's emissary, which might have prompted Anna to add an introductory letter. Many times, Anna would add notes to her familiar letters—containing extra details that she deemed should be delivered separately, providing little autographed notes to make letters more personal or pass on confidential information.[90] Most likely, the more formal letter was meant to be a public statement by the Electress and was written considering that it would be passed around within noble circles with which Elizabeth was negotiating.

Despite all the diplomatic efforts, the outcome of Elizabeth's embassies to the German territories was not what she hoped for. Her private ambassador, Beale, had arrived in Saxony to meet August in early October 1577; by November, the electoral couple had written their replies. Yet, despite August supporting the idea of the Protestant League, he remained opposed until a formal agreement on the confessional principles was secured by League members before committing to the Protestant alliance. Furthermore, Elizabeth had written to August regarding his decision to support a unifying Lutheran theology and concerns over "a soleme assemblie to be holden at Magdeburge, and to begin in October" with the "intention to condemne suche as are not of t[h]e Augustane confession."[91] Elizabeth and other Protestant allies "thoght good to impeche [sic] t[h]e saide assemblie," whereby the Queen urged August to postpone the meeting, planned for October to decide on the confessional laws within Protestant principalities of Germany.[92] This October meeting followed two previous assemblies in March and May of 1577 at Bergen Abbey, during which a group of theologians under August—Jakob Andreä (1528-1590), Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586), David Chytraeus (1530-1600), Christoph Körner (1518-1594), Andreas Musculus (1514-1581), and Nikolaus Selnecker (1530-1592)—gathered in Madgeburg to draft the *Formula of Concord*, a Lutheran statement of faith that promoted a unified understanding of Lutheranism. This approach would put a tolerant Protestant League in jeopardy, going against Elizabeth's efforts. Although it was believed to be "a matter so full of danger and peril, consideringe t[h]e secret ploy t[ha]t are layed by t[h]e enemie,"[93] the October meeting was intended for "Princes and theologians" to "agree on doctrine and condemn non-subscribers to the Formula."[94] Despite Elizabeth's plea, August only gave the appearance of having conceded to the Queen's counsel regarding the October "assemblie" in Madgeburg, or perhaps as a result of the late arrival of Beale and the letters in October, as August did not cancel the meeting entirely, but rather postponed and relocated the meeting to Nuremberg.[95] August continued the quest for the unification of the Lutheran faith, culminating with the publication of the *Book of Concord* under

[89] Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 55.
[90] Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 64.
[91] TNA, SP 104/163, f. 33r. The concerns surrounding the assembly of Madgeburg were explained in the "instructions" to Beale on 21 August 1577. The letter from Elizabeth to August can be found in the Saxon archive. HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 241r.
[92] TNA, SP 104/163, f. 33r. To be examined alongside the letter; HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 241r.
[93] TNA, SP 104/163, f. 33r.
[94] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 62.
[95] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 65.

his patronage. Nevertheless, the German missions produced vital diplomatic outcomes. One of the most important results was the connection and bond established with Anna of Saxony, which became a crucial link in the following turbulent decade.

II. Power in every letter: diplomatic correspondence and political strategies

In order to understand the broader significance of these letters, we must situate them in the context of early modern diplomacy and epistolary cultures. Diplomatic communication was key to amassing political knowledge, intelligence, and gathering information that revealed threats, opportunities, activities, and processes of foreign powers and kingdoms. As such, correspondence was crucial to diplomatic practices and foreign relations. Early modern diplomacy was bound up in with the "general systems of information-gathering, of representation, and of negotiation" as part of the political process of ensuring "peaceful conduct of relations between states."[96] All too often, diplomacy has been associated with the public sphere and its role in politics and state formation reinforced diplomacy as a visible instrument of the ruler's power and authority.

Yet, the private nature of diplomacy can be identified through key diplomatic practices related to information-gathering and negotiations, specifically surveillance/spying, establishing bonds and familiarity, and secrecy. Diplomacy was improvisational since diplomatic relations move between being either a social or intimate setting and practices.[97] The gathering of intelligence through formal methods and obtaining personal information requires the use of both the social and intimate. As such, diplomacy and diplomatic relations transcended the thresholds of public/private politics and public/private relations, ultimately obscuring the "line between a social event and a political meeting, between public/private life."[98] Early modern women, like Elizabeth and Anna, were masters at navigating between the social and intimate. In fact, both the intersection and blending of the social and intimate within women's everyday lives manifested in multiple ways, such as hospitality, letter writing, and patronage.[99] These very gendered diplomatic activities are grounded in female homosociality and acted to "regulate access to knowledge and socializing experiences," by which we also argue that diplomatic homosociality provided further opportunities for women to create familial bonds, act as mediators, facilitate relationships, and function as "important sources of information, potential conduits to their male relatives and spouses" and "they also provided informal contact and opportunities for diplomatic sociability at court."[100] Another key practice where diplomacy involved notions of privacy was through diplomatic correspondence, such as encrypted letters only understood through secret cyphers. The diplomatic letter "was to act as a vehicle for political decision-making"[101] and was "not only a representation of [rulership] but a performance of rule", while

> Royal letters functioned, sometimes simultaneously, as command, admonition, licence, grant, gift, and intimate gesture. Imitating violence and love, they were text of a royal government that, as writers were to complain, rested on fear as well as affection.[102]

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[96] Jeremy Black, *History of Diplomacy* (London: Reaktion, 2010), 12.
[97] Catriona Standfield, "Gendering the Practice Turn in Diplomacy," *European Journal of International Relations* 26:S1 (2020), 152.
[98] Standfield, "Gendering the Practice," 155.
[99] Standfield, "Gendering the Practice," 155. Susan Fitzmaurice, *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002), 129–130.
[100] Tracey Sowerby, "Early Modern Queens Consort and Dowager and Diplomatic Gifts," *Women's History Review* 30:5 (2021), 174.
[101] Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau, and Cecile Dauphin, *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middles Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997), 45.
[102] Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 92.

The language and rhetoric within epistolary diplomacy were unique to the letter's author, often leaning more towards affection rather than fear or violence. More importantly, the letters' contents rely on context, which is why every word was carefully selected due to implication. As such, the written aspect of diplomatic communication relied also on verbal messages, gifts, and visual communication. While "in a diplomatic context, rituals convey a number of layers of meanings contributing to a wider diplomatic language," the use of familiarity and intimacy as an instrument and form of ritual within diplomatic correspondence intended to cultivate affection and negotiate foreign politics.[103] The effectiveness of intimate or familiar letters in diplomacy was contingent upon following the epistolary codes of conduct, persuasive use of language, and 'private rhetoric' to establish bonds and connections.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, diplomacy was a specific form of foreign interaction that was tied to the elements of representation—the symbolism and authority as part of the *theatricalisation* of power as a means of balancing the personal with the public.[104] This theatricalisation, or public visibility, became entrenched in early modern politics and power, and was a crucial way for monarchs to negotiate and ensure the public's (i.e. ordinary citizens, courtiers, foreign agents, and rulers) acceptance of and conformity to their authority.[105] Therefore, diplomacy and, by proxy, diplomats, were extensions of this theatricalisation of power as representation and representatives were vital components of the political dialogues in foreign relations. Consequently, diplomatic practices were embedded in codes of behaviour, protocols, rituals, and forms of ceremony, whereby rulers and their representatives were always on display to foreign powers to be scrutinised and watched closely for signs of indignity, suspicion, and betrayal. These codes of behaviour, protocols, and rituals were both individualised and standardised throughout Europe, which required monarchs, rulers, consorts, courtiers, and diplomats to have international experience, knowledge, and social skills to navigate international politics, the foreign courts, and successfully negotiate foreign relations. Most of all, diplomacy "assert[ed] the ideology of particular regimes."[106] In the case of Queen Elizabeth, diplomatic relations and dialogues with European powers illustrate a preference for a *via media* form of Protestantism.[107] With this in mind, diplomatic correspondence was instrumental in facilitating diplomatic negotiations and representation.

It is important to note that royal and noble authorities, like Elizabeth and Anna, acted as diplomatic agents. Recent studies have convincingly challenged the traditional assumption of women having no role (formal or informal) in the public or political sphere by demonstrating that women were "influential intermediaries" in politics and dynastic relations through epistolary diplomacy.[108] Furthermore, with the invention of the "ambassadress" role, women within resident embassies were key to diplomacy as their exploitation of "social connections could allow the embassy to gather

[103] Michael Talbot, "Accessing the Shadow of God: Spatial and Perfomative Ceremonial at the Ottoman Court," in *Keys to Power?: The Culture of Access in Princely Courts, 1400-1750*, eds. Dries Raeymaekers and Sebastian Derks (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 106.
[104] Sharpe, *Tudor Monarchy*, 71.
[105] Sharpe, *Tudor Monarchy*, 62.
[106] Black, *Diplomacy*, 56.
[107] See Norman Jones, *Governing by Virtue: Lord Burghley and the Management of Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 203.
[108] Ellie Woodacre, "Cousins and Queens: Familial ties, political ambition, and epistolary diplomacy in Renaissance Europe," in *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, eds. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 37.

additional diplomatic intelligence."[109] Although most of these diplomatic situations occurred in person or involved secretaries, we must acknowledge that power did not lie solely with carrying out diplomatic activities (i.e., writing letters, meeting with foreign authorities), but that power also flowed from royal and noble authorities through dictating epistolary communication and instructing their diplomatic agents. As such, diplomatic correspondence considers the authorial agency in the construction of letters beyond servants and agents, who often drafted the text for diplomatic letters.

Diplomats played a huge role in the dynamics of domestic and international court cultures and influenced politics between nations, especially because they moved fluidly between the public and private spheres, often functioning as ad hoc "political advisors."[110] Official ambassadors lived at the courts of nations they were appointed to, collecting and sharing information, especially as epistolary authors, about how sovereigns lived and ruled their dominions as part of diplomatic 'information gathering.' Other ambassadorial agents or diplomatic emissaries, such as Rogers, Beales, and Anna of Saxony's messenger to the Holy Roman Imperial couple, Brigitta Trautson (1510/15?-1576), were dispatched for specific missions that had to be handled intimately and with caution, and were crucial to the "ritual impact" and enhancing the reception of correspondence.[111] Therefore, diplomacy was not just a political instrument but a system whereby early modern diplomacy "governed the behaviour of diplomats and rulers when they were performing official acts with one another."[112]

These codes of conduct and behaviours also had to be followed in diplomatic epistolary exchanges. This included following protocols: for greetings and inconspicuous self-fashioning before foreign monarchs;[113] for communicating according to social status and hierarchy;[114] in using stylistic and rhetorical language that balanced subjectivity and objectivity;[115] and that relied on skills, intelligence and experience to carry out diplomatic missions successfully. By adhering to the codes and behaviours and gaining access, diplomats not only witnessed but also facilitated public and private interactions at the monarch's court, of which diplomatic letters played a crucial role in securing an audience or private meetings with powerful figures. This witnessing is evident in many of the letters that diplomats wrote to their masters, such as Bernardino de Mendoza's letter to Philip II of Spain in 1578, where he recounted that while the Queen was on her royal progress, she and Roger North were "talking […] for more than an hour […] overheard to say […] many Englishmen […] organised

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[109] Gemma Allen, "The Rise of the Ambassadress: English Ambassadorial Wives and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture," *The Historical Journal* 62:3 (2019), 633.
[110] Williamson, *Elizabethan*, 21.
[111] Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 19.
[112] William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach," *The Journal of Modern History* 52:3 (1980), 452.
[113] This was certainly one the characteristics that Niccolò Machiavelli played around with in his sixteenth-century observations about princely power and self-fashioning for public. Baldassarre Castiglione also commented on the on the importance of "Gentetlman that lyueth in the Court of Princes" to "have the knoweleage howe to serue them perfectlye in euery reasonable matter." However, this self-fashioning also included epistolary self-fashioning. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513), translated by Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). Baldassarre Castiglione/trans. Thomas Hoby, *The Covrtyer of Covnt Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure books* (Wyllyam Seres, 1561). Christine Vogel, "Diplomatic Writing as Aristocratic Self-Fashioning," in Sowerby, *Cultures of Diplomacy*, 190–202. Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 139–140. Costas M. Constantinou, "Between Statecraft and Humanism: Diplomacy and its Forms of Knowledge," *International Studies Review* 15:2 (2013), 148–149.
[114] W. Webster Newbold, "Traditional, Practical, Entertaining: Two Early English Letter Writing Manuals," *Rhetorica* 26:3 (2008), 272.
[115] Williamson, *Elizabethan Diplomacy*, 23.

in regiments in the Netherlands."[116] However, these ambassadors also initiated moments of privacy with courtiers and/or monarchs to discuss politics, such as Guzman De Silva's letter to Philip II of Spain in 1568 where De Silva approached Elizabeth, again during royal progress, and engaged in a conversation "away" from the activities of the court and "advised her not to allow them [Catholics in England] to be molested and maltreated."[117] The personal appointment of special ambassadors or agents to carry out affairs that were considered private was a key part of diplomacy. This was the case of Beale being appointed Elizabeth's private ambassador to the court of August and Anna of Saxony in Dresden in 1577.[118] In addition to communicating Elizabeth's intimate counsel, Beale was sent to implore August to join the Protestant League.[119]

Letter-writing formulas, formats, and authorial styles

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, diplomatic correspondence increased significantly in response to the "rise of permanent diplomacy [...] and the expansion of diplomatic networks."[120] The increase in diplomatic correspondence is evident by the production and availability of letter-writing manuals throughout Europe, which highlighted formal or official modes of letter writing. The rise in diplomatic letters and letter-writing texts highlights what has been labelled as a "new trend in letter writing, characterized by imitating Cicero" in the early modern period, which blended the "late medieval and Renaissance rhetorical art of letter writing and Latin and French models for business and legal writings."[121] This blended letter-writing style gave way to more informal or conflated forms of diplomatic expressions that joined the personal with the formal. The blending of epistolary styles and the use of various rhetorical devices within diplomatic correspondence is particularly evident in the letters by and between Elizabeth and Anna. Therefore, to understand the letters exchanged between Anna and Elizabeth, we need to put them in the broader context of their individual epistolary and rhetorical skills, style, and practices.

Although both women grew up as royal princesses, they received very different educations. These educational differences not only reflect their social status but also provide context to their diplomatic strategies and correspondence. In the sixteenth century, ruling power and authority no longer rested solely on dynastic inheritance or reputation; power, authority, and rank had to be displayed, demonstrated, but most of all performed. The performance of authority and rank, including knowledge and skills, was fundamental for diplomatic relations. For royal and noble women, their education was rooted in performativity and prepared women for social engagement and domestic leadership which often interacted with the political and public sphere, primarily to "provide the

[116] *Calendar of State Papers (CSP)—Spain (Simancas), Volume 2, 1568-1579,* ed. Martin A S Hume (London, 1894), 609–618; "Bernardino de Mendoza to the King," 8 September 1578.
[117] *CSP—Spain (Simancas) Volume 2,* "Guzman De Silva to the King," 10 July 1568.
[118] Gary M. Bell, "Beale, Robert (1541-1601)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2015).
[119] HStA Dresden, Loc. 07278/01, f. 244 (Elizabeth to Anna, August 1577); TNA, SP 81/1, f. 105 (Anna to Elizabeth, November 1577).
[120] Filippo de Vivo, "Archival Intelligence: Diplomatic Correspondence, Information Overload and Information Management in Italy, 1450-1650," in *Archives and Information in the Early Modern World*, eds. Kate Peters, Alexandra Walsham, and Liesbeth Corens (Oxford: Oxford University/British Academy Scholarship Online, 2018), 53.
[121] Marijke Van der Wal and Gijsbert Rutten, "The Practices of Letter Writing: Skills, Models, and Early Modern Dutch Manuals," *Language and History* 56:1 (2013), 27.

elaborate hospitality that was a fundamental characteristic of courtly society," as well as fostering bonds that contributed to status and reputation.[122]

Despite conflicting scholarly views, Elizabeth's education was unique in several key ways.[123] First, as a royal heir, she was not subject to any standard curriculum, and she was educated to a greater level than most noblewomen. Her practical learning was moulded by her experiences with the dynamics of court politics, personal monarchy, and the power of words and representations at the courts of her father, her brother, and her sister. Second, Elizabeth's personalised curriculum included readings that heavily featured civic humanism and fostered rhetorical practices. Furthermore, Elizabeth was educated at a similar level as a man, given that "Edward and Elizabeth shared a residence for a time during his early years, it is reasonable to suppose that Elizabeth might also have been under the tutelage of Edward's tutors."[124] While Elizabeth's educational curriculum may not have been a direct delivery of a princely education, it was a curriculum that contained a political and religious education and intended more for her than marriage. For Anna, she seems to have been "taught primarily the skills specifically expected of a Lutheran noblewoman."[125]Anna's education consisted of religious teachings, history, astronomy, alchemy, and mathematics, along with reading, music, and writing. However, Anna did not study or train in languages or the rhetorical arts, though she may have been exposed to and had knowledge of ancient literature.[126] It is clear that both Elizabeth's and Anna's educations played a formative role in the development of their own identities as well as shaping their personal styles and defining their epistolary and diplomatic approaches.

It is important to note that Elizabeth and Anna were brought up with the expectation to possess the literary and communication skills that would make them good wives, companions, and mothers, through the "knowledge of letters" and languages. This knowledge prepared women for social engagement and domestic leadership that often interacted with the political and public sphere, primarily to "provide the elaborate hospitality that was a fundamental characteristic of courtly society," as well as fostering bonds that contributed to status and reputation.[127] The fostering of bonds was a critical element of Anna and Elizabeth's correspondence. However, these rhetorical, epistolary, and language skills equipped elite women such as Elizabeth with the skills and faculties to interact with and shape their own connections to the public sphere, particularly through foreign relations and epistolary correspondence. This was very much the case for Anna of Saxony, and her

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[122] S.D. Michalove, "Equal in Opportunity? The Education of Aristocratic Women 1450-1550," in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500-1800*, ed. Barbara J. Whitehead (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 51 and 57–58.

[123] In Pollnitz's chapter within the edited collection, *Tudor Court Culture*, she asserts that Mary's "juvenile works did more than show their princely potential." However, in her more detailed monograph she argues, "Their [Mary and Elizabeth] families' doubts regarding their princely potential were reflected in the provisions made for their liberal educations." We do not completely agree with Pollnitz's argument that Elizabeth and Mary's were not "brought up to rule" or be political engaged. Along with being educated by the same tutors as Prince Edward and maternal influences, we believe that they did receive an education that prepared them for political engagement; not only as intendants for diplomatic marriages, but also as agents in social and political exchanges—most importantly as active consorts. Pollnitz's reasoning does not consider the impact of the practical and personal experiences, the influence of tutors, the curriculum and texts engaged, or the actual writings produced by each princess at their father's court. Pollnitz, *Princely Education*, 20; See also A. Pollnitz, "Humanism and Court Culture in the Education of Tudor Royal Children," in eds. T. Betteridge and A. Riehl, *Tudor Court Culture* (Selinsgrove: 2010), 55.

[124] Ted Booth, *A Body Politic to Govern: The Political Humanism of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 11.

[125] Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters*, 131–132.

[126] Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters*, 131–132. Keller, *Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen*, 13–14.

[127] Michalove, "Equal in Opportunity?", 58.

vast knowledge and political networks. Consequently, Elizabeth's writing style and epistolary collection "combined majesty with familiarity in a powerfully effective way that was the hallmark of Elizabeth's royal style."[128]

Linking familiarity with notions of privacy

Familiar letters are complex and "heterogeneous," forming a genre of letters that "assumes different guises."[129] As such, familiar letters and the attributes of familiarity, like notions of privacy, do not follow a specific standard or formulae. Thus, what does it mean to be 'familiar'? Accordingly to a seventeenth-century writer, familiar letters have "a Native clearness and shortness, a Domesticall plainness, and a peculiar kind of Familiarity."[130] William Fulwood meanwhile advises that familiar letters shares "our businesse, be it of helth, prosperitie, [...] or any other domesticall and familiar thyngs."[131] The vagueness of what constituted a familiar letter added to the "permeability of generic boundaries" that gave rise to blended letters that were both familiar and diplomatic.[132] Therefore, familiar letters included domestic, familial, and personal information, as well as business, state, and political matters.

The social epistolary communication within familiar letters is at the core of Elizabeth's and Anna's letters. By analysing the familiar within these letters, we are able to distinguish how the public and private zones intersected and how diplomacy occurred between women of power. In fact, Erasmus provides us with a starting point about the privacy and public nature of letters by differentiating that private elements in letters consist of "our state of health, or our progress in our studies, of how our affairs are progressing in the country, at court, in building concerns, and in the law courts, or [...] trivial details of parties and conversations," while public aspects include details or "news concerning peace, war, kingly exploits, treaties, plagues, floods, earthquakes, storms and other such things."[133] This differentiation illustrates how zones of the private and the public intersected and influenced one another, as well as emphasising that the private and the public are relational and situational. It is this important distinction—relational and situational—that must be taken into account when considering the familiar, intimate, and private within diplomatic correspondence. In establishing the relational, it is crucial to define the associations and connections between the letter's author and recipient, as we have briefly shown in distinguishing Elizabeth and Anna's power status and roles as queen and consort within a political and diplomatic context. This understanding allows us to recognise how this relationship contributed to the diplomatic communication and language of their letters. Thus, the forms and address within diplomatic letters "reveal the variations characterising the interpersonal relationships between correspondents, like public/private, informal/formal, family/non-family, intimate/distant," as well as power hierarchies that define relationships

[128] Sharpe, *Tudor Monarchy*, 334.
[129] Fitzmaurice, *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English*, 4.
[130] Thomas Sprat, *An Account of the Life and Writings of Mr Abraham Crowley* (1678), 19.
[131] William Fulwood, *The enemie of idleness: Teaching the maner and stile how to endite, compose and write all sorts of Epistles and Letters* (Henry Bynneman, 1568), 69v.
[132] Daybell, *Material Letter,* 21.
[133] Desiderius Erasmus, *Libellus de Conscribendis Epistolis* (1522), trans. Charles Fantazzi, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings*, ed. J.K. Sowards (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 225.

in both the family and non-family contexts throughout early modern Europe.[134] As a broader example, Jill Bepler highlights the ways in which a newly coronated queen, Hedwig Eleanora, Queen of Sweden, had to adjust to the forms of address and communication with those of a lesser status than hers, even within her own family.[135] Yet, the language and the forms of addressing were not standardised and often reflected the communication style of the correspondent. This is certainly the case with Elizabeth, as well as Anna, as she recognised royal rank and constructs a royal "sister" connection in an attempt to forge personal and diplomatic bonds.

Contextualising Elizabeth's epistolary and writing style

Elizabeth was an accomplished writer and authored an extensive collection of texts, translations, speeches, and letters. She was "immersed in a culture of writing…and which to some degree, [Elizabeth] helped to create [in England]."[136] Elizabeth's reputation for and gift of writing was cultivated at an early age, having started corresponding with European rulers as a princess at 11-years-old. Her learned persona was well known, from her proficiency in languages to her use and command of rhetoric, as well as having "faire" handwriting.[137] Elizabeth's personal style and authorial skills were based "political humanism [that] was the cornerstone of [her] political persona or 'body politic'," and forged through rhetorical practices and self-representations that defined her propaganda strategy, personal diplomacy, political leadership, and communication style.[138] More importantly for our context, Elizabeth's letters blended politics, gender, and familiarity, which she employed throughout her reign.

During the course of Elizabeth's reign, she "produced over three thousand letters…either written in her own…hand, or bearing her distinctive swirling signature."[139] However, writing letters was traditionally considered an "unnecessary form of manual labor" for rulers and was mostly left to secretaries.[140] The production of royal letters signified the monarch's active engagement in political issues and foreign relations while also illustrating a "ritual dimension to the process of diplomatic exchange."[141] Moreover, the application of Elizabeth's distinctive royal signature to letters signalled honour, personalised diplomatic exchanges, and reflected "a personal political system, where individual relationships were paramount [and] privy communication lent a degree of confidentiality to exchanges between correspondents, which was central to cultivating and maintaining social and political contacts" that solidified relationships and bonds.[142] Therefore, the collection of Elizabeth's epistolary writing shows her agency in establishing connections and competing within early modern European diplomatic networks and politics.

Elizabeth was always acutely aware of the precarious position she was in due to her gender and visibility as a Protestant ruler. Therefore, she had to manipulate the gender boundaries through self-fashioning and self-representations to successfully play the patriarchal game and to be able to come

134 Camiciotti, "An Introduction," 20.
135 Bepler, "Dynastic positioning and Political Newsgathering," 136–137.
136 Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo, *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing* (London: The British Library/Cromwell Press, 2007), xiii.
137 Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (1570), 21.
138 Booth, *A Body Politic to Govern,* 186.
139 Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, xii.
140 Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 1.
141 Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*, 16.
142 James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108.

out on top as queen regnant. For Elizabeth, rhetoric was "an instrument of power" and she was all too keenly aware of the force rhetoric, self-fashioning, and cultivating bonds and alliances had "to rule effectively."[143] Thus, Elizabeth also recognised the importance of letters as central to the performativity and negotiation of power, as well as the practice of diplomacy.[144] The rhetoric used in letters maintained royal authority, legitimacy, diplomatic relations, and political negotiations, but also fostered personal, intimate, and familial bonds.

Elizabeth's personal rhetorical style of communication and counsellory approach are visible in her letters to Anna. Yet, the society and culture over which Elizabeth and Anna presided over utilised epistolary practices differently, which came to define Anglo-German diplomatic relations. To understand the German epistolary practices, we must first understand the context of Anna's writing and epistolary practices.

Contextualising Anna's epistolary and writing style

Like Elizabeth, Anna was a prolific letter writer. The Saxon archives hold circa twenty thousand letters in Electress Anna's correspondence folders.[145] This vast corpus, which ranged from 1554 to 1585, provides a very broad context to situate the letters to Elizabeth within Anna's epistolary culture. In order to tackle such material and dive into how privacy and the private were used as rhetorical tools in Anna's communication, we can thankfully count on detailed studies of her correspondence. Katrin Keller has explored this archival material to understand Anna as a powerful political player in the sixteenth-century European political landscape.[146] Furthering this discussion, Pernille Arenfeldt has dissected Anna's practices of letter writing for diplomacy, religious patronage, and dynastic connections.[147] Alisha Rankin has situated Anna's communication to understand how she operated within alchemical networks in early modern Germany.[148]

Anna's correspondence network was extensive, including nobles from across Europe, medical and religious authorities, as well as traders and local officials. Her counsel was requested for political issues, legal tribulations, and health matters. Due to the nature of the problems she had to address, Anna was very aware of the importance of keeping information private. In order to ensure that information would not fall into the wrong hands, she made use of a variety of strategies. She had personal trusted messengers, many of whom she would employ for decades to maintain particular dynastic connections.[149] When sharing medicinal secrets, she would send information split between more than one carrier to guarantee the safety of the secrets being shared in case of interception.[150]

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[143] Alison Heisch, "Queen Elizabeth I: Parliamentary Rhetoric and the Exercise of Power," *Signs* 1:1 (1975), 31–32.

[144] See also Allison, *Monarchy of Letters*; Bajetta et al., *Foreign Correspondence.*

[145] Katrin Keller identified "at least 16,000 existing letters" in her research on Anna's correspondence, but the archivist Karl von Weber's account has gone as far as listing 33,000 letters. Katrin Keller, "Kommunikationsraum Altes Reich: Zur Funktionalität der Korrespondenznetze von Fürstinnen im 16. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 31:2 (2004), 212; Karl von Weber, *Anna Kurfürstin zu Sachsen: Ein Lebens- und Sittenbild aus dem sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, 3.

[146] Weber, *Anna*, 3. Keller, "Zwischen Zwei Residenzen," 365–382; Keller, "Die Sächsischen Kurfürstinnen," 279–296; Keller, *Kurfürstin Anna von Sachsen;* Keller, "Die Kurfürstin Im Alten Reich", 189–206.

[147]Arenfeldt, "Gender Patronage and Confessionalization: Anne of Saxony as a 'Mother of the Church'", *Renæssance Forum* 4 (2008) 26: Arenfeldt, "Wissenproduktion und Wissensverbreitung," 4–28; Arenfeldt, "'The Queen has sent Nine Frisian Cows," 116–131.

[148] Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters*

[149] Keller, "Zwischen Zwei Residenzen," 365–382.

[150] Klein Käfer, "Personal gift-giving" (forthcoming).

Anna's letters tend to show a skilful use of a more traditional and formulaic style of letter-writing—following the *salutatio*, *exordium*, *narratio*, *petitio*, and *conclusio* division—combined with strategic usage of dynastic affirmations and mentions of personal information that she had collected about the addressee. She would pay attention to health rumours about other courtiers to reach them, offering salves and distillations to alleviate their problems.[151] Personal interests such as botany also served as a way of maintaining continual communication and strengthening political connections.[152] As we will see, these attempts at approximation with other nobles through the sharing of private interests and personal materials related to them was a very effective form of maintaining personal bonds, and Anna would engage this strategy with Elizabeth as well. Anna's power is maintained and reinforced by her interpersonal relationships, which she carefully crafted by using the "personal" in her correspondence.[153] However, as evidenced by her communication with Queen Elizabeth, these power dynamics and personal bonds shifted to address crucial political decisions, diplomatic issues, or economic matters that occurred.

III. Second wave—1580

By the 1580s, August of Saxony was viewed as "firmly opposed to theological moderation and political cooperation," a stance that was essential to Protestant unity and political security.[154] Europe was at a breaking point with religious unrest and conflict. Elizabeth began to work around August because of his divisive confessional policies, which eventually culminated in the publication of the "Book of Concord" in June 1580, further fracturing Anglo-German relations. With rising Catholic aggression, Elizabeth made one final attempt to get the German princes, including August, to put aside confessional differences and unite for the survival and protection of the Protestant faith. Once again, the Queen sent an embassy to Germany in September 1580, with Rogers as her private ambassador. Armed with more letters, including another one for the Electress of Saxony, Rogers was to engage in further discussions with the German princes.[155] Unfortunately, these meetings did not take place because Rogers was captured by Catholic forces and imprisoned in October 1580. The letters he carried were read and then destroyed, along with the last official diplomatic campaign for the Protestant League.[156]

For the remainder of the 1580s Elizabeth fostered cooperation with the German princes who were loyal to Protestant unity, as well as strengthening the burgeoning relationship between England and Denmark. The relationship proved beneficial as Frederik II of Denmark, Anna of Saxony's brother, actively advised August in cooperation with Elizabeth. Recognising August's considerable power among Protestants and within the Holy Roman Empire, Elizabeth did continue to engage with him. However, despite the friction between

[151] Klein Käfer, "Personal gift-giving" (forthcoming).
[152] Katrin Keller, "Tulips, tobacco and parrots," 171–190.
[153] Examples from people of different rank can be found in her communication with the baroness Brigitta Trautson (Keller, "Zwischen Zwei Residenzen"), with the theologian Nikolaus Selnecker (Arenfeldt, "Gendered Patronage and Confessionalization"), and with the Dutchess Dorothea of Mansfeld (Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters*).
[154] Gehring, *Anglo-German Relations*, 81.
[155] British Library, Cotton MS Galba, C. VII, f. 80 and 90r-v; "Rogers to Wilson," 1 October 1580.
[156] TNA, SP 81/2, f. 8v. "Rogers to the Secretaries," 31 October 1580. Rogers gives a detailed account of his capture and what happened to the letters he carried.

Elizabeth and August, it fell on Anna to continue cultivating the familiar and social bonds that linked Saxony and England through epistolary communication. The letters exchanged in the 1580s highlight how the bonds between Anna and Elizabeth were formed, evolving into a more personal and comfortable connection, intended to ensure the preservation of strong Anglo-German relations.

Interceding for others

On 22 May 1581 the Electress of Saxony sent Elizabeth another letter, in which Anna asked the Queen to grant a licence to "certaine subiectes of the Elector [...], m[er]chantes & named Andrewe and Walter Cragen [...] for the better increase and furtherance of their trade."[157] This letter was originally sent in German,[158] from which a translation in English can also be found in The National Archives.[159] In this letter, Anna addresses Elizabeth as "Muhme," a medieval term for "mother's sister" which gradually evolved to mean any female relative.[160] Anna used the term to address noble women with whom she communicated often, such as Anna of Bavaria, Elisabeth of Mecklenburg, Sabina of Hessen-Kessel, and Sophie of Denmark.[161] The letter is a supplication regarding the Cragen family, asking if it would be possible to ease the customs over their clothing trade and grant them a licence to transport six hundred fine clothes. The Queen had imposed restrictions and levied new taxes on imports from the Hanse, who had violated a trading treaty.[162] The request was not unusual, particularly as the letter and language (for the most part) followed the formalities and epistolary style of supplication letters. However, what is interesting is that the letter contains instances of much more personal language than the previous letter, reflecting a more comfortable and intimate connection, which is illustrated in Anna's concluding remark of "friendlie thanks"[163] and the promise that she would "requite [repay] the same againe where maie."[164] Anna tended to use "friendly" in letters with her more recurrent correspondents, and the fact that this letter arrived in German indicates that this was a less official request coming directly from the Electress' office.

This letter seems to have been one step ahead in the intimacy between the two women of power. Intercessions and supplication letters were a common method that Anna employed to stay connected to different courts, and a chance of forwarding the Cragen request meant an opportunity to maintain

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157 English transcription from TNA SP 81/2, f. 45. Original German: "Unsers herzlibsten Herrn unnd Gemahls Unterthane und handelsleutt alhie, Anders unnd Walten die Kragen Vater und Sohn, haben uns aus geforster hoffnung unnd zuvorsicht, das unserbitt und furderungsschrifft bei E. Kon. W. In guttem ahnfehen sein unnd stadt finden werde, gantz underthenigst gebethen." TNA SP 81/2, f. 43.

158 TNA SP 81/2, f. 43.

159 TNA SP 81/2, f. 45.

160 William Jervis Jones, *German Kinship Terms, 750-1500*: *Documentation and analysis*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 135.

161 An exploration of familial addressing terms used by Anna of Saxony can be found in Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 74–87.

162 T.H. Lloyd, *England and the German Hanse, 1157-1611: A study of their trade and commercial diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 330–332.

163 TNA, SP 81/2, f. 45. In the German version: "freundlichen danck und gefallen annehmen." TNA SP 81/2, f. 43.

164 TNA, SP 81/2, f. 45. In the German original: "Unnd hinwieder zu furfallender gelegenheit freundlich beschulden unnd vorgleichen." TNA SP 81/2, f. 43.

contact with Elizabeth.[165] Through weaving an elaborate tapestry of contacts—traders, nobles, specialists in different forms of knowledge—noble women like Anna and Elizabeth were able to form their own form of private politics. While this is also expected of their position, having personal connections was fundamental for noble women outside their political role, ensuring that they would be able to have some level of influence as widows as well.[166] As such, being able to intervene for others with fellow nobles, being in a position to make and fulfil requests, and knowing enough personal information to anticipate wants and needs were important parts of being effective in politics as a noble woman.

Connecting through hunting

A similar strategy seems to also be behind Anna's next letter, but this time through an appeal much closer to home. Anna's next and perhaps final letter to Elizabeth was sent on 8 September 1584. This letter can be found in Anna's cartulary but has not been located yet in Elizabeth's correspondence.[167] Again, Anna addresses Elizabeth as "Muhme." She then described how the Electoral couple had "a passion and fondness for the high hunt" and would very much appreciate it if the Queen could send them a couple of good bloodhounds from England (*Nachdem der hochgeborne Furst her Augustus Herzog zu Sachssen des hailige Rom[mische] Reichs Erzmarchahl und Churfurste unser F[urst]l[ich] herzlieber her und Gemahl ein besondere lust und naigung zu der hohen Jagten und anderm wanderern hat, Und wir von S C vormercken das S C gernn ein [par] guetter bluthunde haben wollten, welche dan wie wir berichten Jul ~~Engelandt wol~~ zu bekommen sein sollen*).[168] She then repeated that she was ready to repay the favour. In the margins of the cartulary, there is an addition that replicated the languages from the previous letter, saying that she would do the same at any opportunity (*zu furfallender gelegenheit*).

The subject of the letter is not out of the ordinary for Elizabeth or Anna. The practice of hunting was a common activity among the early modern elites across Europe, functioning as a symbol of status and power. Although it had multiple functions in the sixteenth century, the hunt was first and foremost a personal, recreational activity that provided moments of privacy between participants. The hunt was often not visible to the broader public and was an exclusive activity, consisting of only a few trustworthy and loyal people. Elizabeth's skill and knowledge of the hunt were well known in England and throughout Europe. However, the Queen often hunted with a small group of courtiers and a dedicated hunting staff because the pursuit of hunting was an intimate activity in which Elizabeth was in close proximity to those within her hunting party. This close proximity required a great deal of trust and loyalty from those around her.[169] As hunting activities were such a popular and significant pastime for European nobles the subject was a common topic employed in early modern epistolary communication, connecting the elite and creating an affinity between them. Furthermore, the exchange or giving of hunting gifts (e.g., weapons, equipment, books, horses, hounds, hunting birds, and predatory/exotic animals, such as boars, bears, and wolves) was also commonplace. The exchange and giving of hunting gifts signified the increasing degree of intimacy between them as gift

[165] Arenfeldt, "Political Role of the Consort," 54.
[166] In the early modern period, noble women would have arrangements for widowhood, with assigned widow seats in provincial castles, and many times still being able to exercise political influence. An interesting case of influential widows is Duchess Dorothea of Mansfeld, Anna of Saxony's mentor in distilling remedies. See Rankin, *Panaceia's Daughters*).
[167] HStA Dresden, Kop. 526, f. 85r.
[168] HStA Dresden, Kop. 526, f. 85r.
[169] Dustin M. Neighbors, "Elizabeth I, Huntress of England: Private Politics, Diplomacy, and Courtly Relations through Hunting," *The Court Historian* 27:2 (forthcoming 2022), 15–17. See also Neighbors, "'With my ruling,'" 163.

exchanges were "one of the strongest forms of creating and maintaining social bonds."[170] Given Anna's own reputation for hunting and collecting information about personal hobbies and interests as a way of approaching with meaningful gifts, she would have known of Elizabeth's love of the hunt. As Elizabeth was also known for giving hunting birds and hounds, the request would put the Electoral couple in the inner circle of Elizabeth's international hunting community.[171] Hence, Anna's request seems to be a means to "pierce through the formal bubble" and engage in a certain level of intimacy.[172] By affirming that the Electoral couple shared the same passion as the Queen, Anna opened a closer channel of communication of a more personal nature.

IV. Conclusion: Women of power, epistolary privacy, and the Protestant League

The letters between Queen Elizabeth I of England and Electress Anna of Saxony reveal the agency of women in religious politics and their role in shaping the pan-Protestant network in early modern Europe. In examining these letters, we have demonstrated how notions of privacy and cognates can be a lens to identify the ways in which women of power built intimacy and shaped diplomacy at a distance during a period of political and religious upheaval. The intimate and personal rhetoric of epistolary communication was pivotal for the operation and performance of sixteenth-century diplomacy and politics. By employing this lens, we identified three important patterns.

Firstly, it became evident that women contributed to and facilitated the social and cultural dimensions of early modern diplomacy by engaging in their own private politics, while their diplomatic practices contribute to and reflected broader diplomatic tactics. They were agents of epistolary culture and influence. Noble women had considerable access to knowledge, resources, and networks that were crucial for the functioning of early modern politics, despite the differences in status, rank, and education that defined the resources and knowledge at their disposal. In the case of Elizabeth and Anna, we have illustrated how notions of privacy within diplomatic correspondence occurred through the process of sharing personal thoughts and communicating in a familiar way that was limited to a small circle of people. As a result, the privacy in diplomatic correspondence was not only exchanged in written form but also shared through verbal exchanges, via personally appointed or private diplomatic agents by royal and noble women that were crucial extensions of diplomatic correspondence. Written communication could only convey trust to a certain extent, so diplomatic agents and private meetings helped to establish trust across long distances. Therefore, unlike the modern understanding of private correspondence, it was not only communication limited to one or two people that was considered private in the early modern context. Rather, privacy was something that could be shared within a small group of individuals who were bound by loyalty, trust, and familiarity. Female alliances and diplomatic efforts depended on the establishment and upkeep of such bonds that could survive political turmoil. Cyphers and private ambassadors were therefore crucial to protect valuable information and maintain a channel of private communication. This is especially true for women like Elizabeth and Anna, who employed their own epistolary and diplomatic methods. Their rhetorical blend of fear and affection shows how tenuous yet critical this trust was in their communication, as it at the same time solidified personal bonds and ensured mutually-assured destruction should either side violate this trust. As such, the privacy they could

[170] Klein Käfer, "Personal gifting-giving," 1.
[171] Bajetta et al., *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence,* 189.
[172] Klein Käfer, "Personal gift-giving," 1.

create through the careful forging of personal connections, private ambassadors, and gendered rhetoric was a situational and relational bond that must be studied in its unique historical context.

Secondly, we made explicit how women had an active role in transforming epistolary diplomacy and set a precedent in establishing a formal role in diplomatic procedures. The key practices of diplomacy were predicated on information-gathering, counsel, and negotiation, which were dependent on notions of privacy—familiarity, trust, friendships, private meetings, and personalised communication. Women such as Elizabeth and Anna were masters of the epistolary communication needed for diplomatic efforts, not only because they straddled the boundaries between the public and private, but also because they were able to cross the thresholds of the heuristic zones in their letters, blending state matters with personal experiences within their households, families, noble circles, and private beliefs. The exploration of notions of privacy in their communication enables us to think beyond the traditional boundaries of the gender spheres to reconsider the role of royal and noble women in pre-modern societies. More importantly, this analysis reveals how private actions and behaviours have political consequences. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that privacy was a pervasive political tool in the early modern period. In fact, we argue that diplomacy, past and present, requires the private.

Thirdly, we have shown how women shaped the Protestant League and early modern confessional discourse. Elizabeth and Anna were skilled diplomatic agents, exceptional epistolary authors, and intelligent figures who wielded a considerable amount of power. These attributes equipped them to make or influence political decision-making that left an indelible mark on the historical narrative of early modern Europe. Yet, based on much of the existing scholarship, Elizabeth and Anna's roles, and women's involvement in general, are not extensively considered within the context of the international Protestant relations, Anglo-German relations, or their significance within the narratives of sixteenth-century European diplomacy and political culture. Beyond acknowledging female agency and its significant impacts in the political landscape of the early modern period, the case of Elizabeth and Anna exemplified how noble women made use of their connection to the household and their role as keepers of religious zeal to create their own private politics, therefore revealing the hidden actors of diplomacy. Women were not merely a peripheral presence in diplomatic history of religious conflict—they actively operated within noble networks and defined the contours of political developments, which have a structural influence to this day.

The study of historical privacy provides us with a framework and "understanding of what we say and what we intend to say, when we define present matters of privacy" that opens new avenues of research.[173] This research includes exploring privacies in relation to modern royal families, politicians, and the role of women in modern politics and diplomacy, which enables us to gain new insights into the conflicts between the public and private. For instance, in assessing the current battle between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and the media over their privacy, or the disgraced Prince Andrew's legal battle regarding his private life, the study of heuristic thresholds of privacy can help us distinguish the extent to elements of the institution of monarchy continue or have changed, along with the impact of privacy on the public perception of the monarchy. This avenue of analysis also informs and shapes the modern discourse about whether public figures have a right to privacy. Alternatively, in considering the 2020 backlash surrounding Sanna Marin, the Finnish Prime Minister, we can explore how gender and sexuality impact the political and diplomatic effectiveness of leadership. In 2020 Marin posed for a magazine photoshoot wearing a blazer and "plunging neckline and no top

[173] Nørgaard, "Past Privacy," 3.

underneath," giving the illusion of being topless.[174] The public opinion in Finland and elsewhere in the world was divided. Supporters of the image have stated that "Women have a right to be presented in photos this way because we have seen half-naked men in the sauna," emphasising these photos of men do not lead to criticism of their abilities as politicians.[175] Alternatively, criticism of the photo has centred around the photo where "men [were] saying it was wrong" because "it was inappropriate" as a politician and "eroded her [Sanna's] credibility."[176] The image mostly touches on discussions of gender equality; however, it raises questions about the public/private divide because the controversy deals with "Sanna Marin as a politician or as a person."[177] The article attached to the image focused on Marin's private life as a woman and not in her capacity as a politician, thus suggesting the image was a private endeavour.[178] For some, Marin was flaunting her sexuality while she was a politician. Thus, research exploring the relationship between gender, sexuality, and privacy within politics and diplomacy can shape modern discourses around women in positions of power. In fact, we can explore the ways in which notions of privacy and the private relate to the role that spouses of world leaders and politicians play in modern diplomatic and political practices. For example, in recent years at the G7 summits world leaders have been photographed with the spouses, wives, and same-sex husbands. These spouses have no formal political role in their partner's administration, yet they remain influential, and their personalities and private activities have had an impact on diplomatic relations. This is certainly the case of world leaders with same-sex partners as the recent cases demonstrate with the Irish Prime Minster, Leo Varadkar, and his partner, Matthew Barrett, as well as the scandal surrounding Luxembourg's Prime Minster, Xavier Bettell and his partner, Gauthier Destenay.[179] These situations and examples raise questions to be pursued through new studies about the relationship between sexuality, privacy, and diplomacy, including 1) What role do these women play in the modern political process?; 2) Is sexuality a private or public matter when it comes to public politicians and diplomats?; and 3) Are there parallels between the wives of modern world leaders and the queens and princely consorts of pre-modern societies, like Elizabeth and Anna? In the end, the study of historical privacy within royal studies enables us to make better sense of the modern dynamics between the public and private within politics, diplomacy, and everyday life.

[174] Sarah Young, "#IMWITHSANNA: Sexism row over photo of Finnish Prime Minister," *The Independent* (16 October 2020).
[175] Mark Odom, "PM Marin's supporters turn table on glamour photo backlash," *yle* (13 October 2020).
[176] Amy Woodyatt, "Finland PM's photoshoot sparks sexism debate," *CNN Style* (16 October 2020). Young (16 October 2020).
[177] Odom (13 October 2020).
[178] Woodyatt (16 October 2020).
[179] Luke O'Neil, "Irish PM brings partner to meet Mike Pence and delivers pointed remarks on sexuality," *The Guardian* (14 March 2019). Chris Riotta, "White House excluded gay first spouse of Luxembourg from photo caption," *Newsweek* (27 May 2017).