Henry Savile’s Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England

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ABSTRACT Ancient Rome was a source of widespread and growing fascination in Elizabethan England, and Roman history was ubiquitous in public argument and imaginative writings alike. Translations of classical historians proliferated, as did original works about ancient Rome. Yet the extent and character of Roman influence on the period’s literary and political culture have yet to be properly explained. Paulina Kewes illustrates the richness and diversity of contemporary writings on Roman themes, and, second, challenges recent approaches to the uses of the Roman past in the Elizabethan fin de siècle by providing a rigorous reassessment of a key translation: Henry Savile’s Tacitus of 1591. Contrary to those who either anachronistically interpret Savile’s book as a quasi-republican manifesto or else read it as an intervention in court politics, Kewes shows that at its inception Savile’s Tacitus was first and foremost a pointed commentary on international politics and the succession. KEYWORDS: Tacitus; Henry Savile; Roman history; Elizabethan politics and foreign policy; early modern historiography

The history and literature of ancient Rome pervaded the thought and imagination of Elizabethan England. Historians, politicians, divines, poets, and playwrights looked to the Roman past for guidance or inspiration. This was not a new phenomenon, but it was a rapidly widening one. The appearance of a great many translations of Roman texts was one reflection of the trend, the composition of original works about ancient Rome (including plays by Shakespeare and Jonson) another. Lessons of Roman history were a shaping influence on Elizabethan thinking about issues that were central to the age: among them the powers of the monarchy, the succession to the throne, the proprieties of colonial expansion and of empire, and the confessional clashes of Protestant and Catholic.

Yet the reign of Elizabeth has never received its due as a distinctive phase in the transmission and application of Roman history. Modern studies have focused mostly on the early Stuart era, with only the occasional excursus into the Elizabethan fin de siècle. At the center of their attention, moreover, has been Tacitus, the Roman author intimately linked to the circle of Robert Devereux, second Earl...
of Essex. The near-exclusive concentration on Tacitus as chronicler of imperial tyranny and courtly corruption, topics that would carry special frisson under James I and Charles I, has overshadowed the relevance of Tacitus and of other classical historians to the distinctive concerns fueled in the late 1580s and early 1590s by the precarious international situation—notably, war with Spain and England’s military involvement in France and the Netherlands—and by the unfolding succession crisis in the aftermath of Mary Stuart’s execution. Our sense of the political culture in Elizabeth’s twilight years will remain partial and incomplete, it seems to me, unless we cast our net more widely and consider the contemporary appeal of classical history and the mediating effect of Continental writers and editors (Machiavelli, le Roy, Botero, Lipsius, Amyot, Goulart)—both in the original languages and in translation—alongside homegrown accounts of the Roman past. Above all, we need to get beyond the modern disciplinary categories that have concealed the interdependence in Elizabethan minds of history, literature, and classical studies and to grasp the opportunities offered by moving across forms and genres.

In what follows, my aim is twofold. First, I wish to illustrate the sheer variety and richness of Roman themes in the works of this period that in turn elicited correspondingly diverse applications from audiences and readers. Second, by reconsidering what is arguably the most influential contemporary translation of a Roman historian, Henry Savile’s Tacitus of 1591, I wish to challenge the current approach to the uses of Roman history at the turn of the century. While it is a truism that in analyzing the political bearing of translations we must be alive to the contexts that produced them, in practice much recent scholarship has read Savile’s Tacitus proleptically. Some treat it as a knowing supply of images and vocabularies of corruption, despotism, and faction that had not in fact come to determine the view of Elizabeth among Essex and his followers until several years later; others anachronistically emphasize the role of Savile’s book in the development of a quasi-republican sensibility. A rigorous contextual reading of the 1591 Tacitus demonstrates, however, that in its moment of composition and publication the volume served first and foremost to articulate the pressing preoccupation with the dangers, which the Crown allegedly failed to address, from Spain, Catholicism, and the unsettled succession.


2. It is my ambition to do just that in my “Translations of State,” an interdisciplinary account of the influence of Roman history on Elizabethan literature and politics, of which this essay will be a part.
How did the Elizabethans learn about the Roman past, and how did its circulation in print develop at the turn of the century? History was not a separate subject in either grammar schools or universities. But the study of Latin grammar and rhetoric involved reading, translation, and commentary on classical writings—above all, poetry, oratory, history, and moral philosophy. Students would have been familiar with the works of Cicero, Caesar, Seneca, Livy, Sallust, Suetonius, Tacitus, and many others. Academic disputations in a variety of disciplines, too, fostered the knowledge and critical appreciation of ancient history, political thought, and literature. In addition to formal education, there was a fair amount of private tutoring and applied study of Roman historians—mostly, though not exclusively, in the original. When, at the instigation of William Camden and Fulke Greville respectively, the first Oxford and Cambridge chairs of history were founded in the early seventeenth century, the incumbents, Degory Wheare and Isaac Dorislaus, were asked to focus not on national or modern European history but on that of ancient Rome. That task, moreover, was interpreted very much as the study of texts: the Camden professor’s remit explicitly called for lectures on Florus.

Most of the Greek and Latin originals were imported from the Continent. Only a few were published at home—Sallust in 1569, 1573, and 1601; Caesar in 1585, 1590, and 1601; both Lucan and Livy in 1589. The editions in the original languages, and the extensive commentaries and annotations with which they were equipped, constituted the early reading, and shaped the views of Roman history, of the very persons who later translated the classics or wrote imaginative works in the vernacular.


Until the final decade of the sixteenth century, however, England had been poorly served with translations of classical historiography. While English versions of Cicero’s *De officiis* and *De amicitia*, for example, were being repeatedly reprinted, those of historical works were few and far between. If we restrict our investigation to the half-century covering the reign of Elizabeth, we discover a clear dividing line in 1590–91. The highlights of the earlier period had been Arthur Golding’s rendering of Caesar (1565), William Barker’s of Appian (1578), and Thomas North’s of Plutarch (1579). Otherwise we find only piecemeal versions of Polybius (Book I, 1568) and Livy (1561, 1566–67), Eutropius’s summary of Roman history from Romulus to Jovian (1564), and a couple of compilations of lives of sundry Roman emperors, of which one was original and the other translated from the Spanish (1571, 1577).

By contrast, in the 1590s translations and original accounts of Roman history rapidly proliferated. Savile’s translation of Tacitus’s *Historiae* and *Agricola* (1591) was followed by Richard Greneway’s of the *Annales* and *Germania* (1598) and Philemon Holland’s of Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* (1600). Prefaced to his Tacitus, Savile’s own prose composition, *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba*, provided a narrative link between the events covered in the last surviving book of the *Annales* and the first of the *Histories*; while William Fulbecke’s *An Historicall Collection of the Continuall Factions, Tumults, and Massacres of the Romans and Italians* (1601) plugged the gap

and Maureen Bell (Cambridge, 2002), 141–73. Given that imported editions were a crucial conduit of classical influence upon early modern intellectual culture, we need to know a lot more about their scholarly apparatus, circulation, and readership, and calculate the proportion of these foreign imports in recorded collections, as opposed to home-published translations.


9. Extracts from Livy appeared in William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1566), and Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1567); in 1561, there was a new edition of Antony Cope’s *Livy, The History of Two the Moste Noble Captaynes of the Worlde, Anniball and Scipio*, previously printed in 1544 and 1548. Book I of Polybius’s *History* was translated by Christopher Watson from the Latin version of Niccolò Perotti as *The Hystories of the Most Famous and Worthy Cronographer Polybius Discoursing of the Warres betwixt the Romanes and Carthaginenses* (London, 1568); Nicolas Haward’s *Eutropius* appeared as *A Briefe Chronicle, where in are Described Shortlye the Original, and the Successiue Estate of the Romaine Weale Publike the Alteratyon and Chaunge of Sondrye Offices in the Same* (London, 1564). The two collections of lives were Richard Reynolds, *Chronicle of all the Noble Emperours of the Romaines* (London, 1571); and *A Chronicle Conteyning the Lives of Tenne Emperours of Rome* (London, 1577), Edward Hellowes’s translation of the original by Antonio Guevara, bishop of Mondonnedo.
between Livy and Tacitus. Thomas Lodge’s translation of Josephus (1602) supplied a new angle on the Jewish rising against Rome. Admittedly, there were some signal absences. Suetonius was not translated until 1606, Sallust (in the first complete version of his two monographs) until 1608, Ammianus Marcellinus until 1609, Florus until 1618/19, and Polybius until 1633. But the key point is that by 1601 Englishmen had access to vernacular versions of authoritative accounts of the complete run of Roman history from the foundation of the city to Trajan.

The appearance of these new translations coincided with three other developments that attest to the reading public’s intense and growing appetite for works about ancient Rome. The publishers’ concerted effort to cater to it stimulated further demand. First, earlier translations were reprinted, often with supplementary materials. Thus the second edition of Golding’s Caesar and the fourth edition of Cope’s Livy both came out in 1590. The second edition of North’s Plutarch—the one Shakespeare drew on—was issued in 1595. It was followed in 1603 by a third, which contained the additional non-Plutarchan lives of, among others, Augustus and Seneca by the French Calvinist minister Simon de Goulart.

Second, the 1590s brought a plethora of publications, some homegrown, others originating from the Continent, that popularized and explicated the Roman past from a variety of ethical, confessional, and ideological perspectives. Among them were works on politics, military art, and rhetoric. Observations vpon the Fiue First Bookes of Caesars Commentaries (1600) by the minor government official Clement Edmondes took passages from Caesar’s original as a point of departure for ruminations on matters military and political. Reprinted several times in an enlarged form, the Observations contained Edmondes’s own partial translation of Caesar, which rivaled Golding’s. Most such expository writings, however, were translations of works by Continental thinkers. Rendered into English as the Sixe Bookes of Politickes (1594),

11. Philemon Holland’s Suetonius: The Historie of Twelve Caesars Emperors of Rome (London, 1606); Thomas Heywood’s Sallust: The Two most Worthy and Notable Histories which Remaine Unmained to Posterity: (viz:) The Conspiracie of Cateline, Undertaken against the Government of Rome, and The Warre which Jugurth for Many Yeares Maintained against the Same State (London, 1608); Jugurtha had already been translated in the 1520s by Alexander Barclay, and Costanzo Felici’s revised version of the Catilina by Thomas Paynell in 1541 (reprinted with Barclay’s Jugurtha in 1557); Philemon Holland’s Ammianus Marcellinus: The Roman historic containing such acts and occurrents as passed under Constantius, Iulianus, Iovianus, Valentinianus, and Valens, emperours (London, 1609); Edmund Bolton’s The Roman histories of Lucius Iulius Florus from the foundation of Rome, till Caesar Augustus (London, 1619); and Edward Grimstone’s Polybius: The History of Polybius the Megalopolitan (London, 1633).
13. The Liues of the Noble Grecians and Romanes (London, 1595); The Liues of the Noble Grecians and Romaines . . . Hereunto are also added the Liues of Epaminondas, of Philip of Macedon, of Dionysius the Elder, Tyrant of Sicilia, of Augustus Caesar, of Plutarke, and of Seneca: With the Liues of Nine Other Excellent Chieftaines of Warre: Collected out of Aemylius Probus, by S.G.S. and Englished by the aforesaid Translator (London, 1603). The additional lives had been printed in a separate volume in 1602.
the Flemish intellectual Justus Lipsius’s reason-of-state treatise on the nature of political power, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (1589), drew on a range of classical authorities that were scrupulously documented in the margins. As an accompanying note indicated, however, “Cornelius Tacitus hath the preeminence, being recited extraordinarily, because he alone affoordeth more matter, then all the rest.”15 Lipsius’s tract could therefore be seen as essentially a political commentary on the writings of the Roman historian. On the other hand, the French politique Innocent Gentillet, author of the *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner* (1576), which Simon Patrick translated in 1602, tried to rescue Livy from what he believed were the perverse interpretations of Machiavelli.16 The works on classical antiquity by the Italian Giovanni Botero and the Frenchman Louis le Roy too were translated into English.17 Indeed, the first complete English text of Aristotle’s *Politics* was rendered from le Roy’s French translation and comprised his extensive annotations on ancient Rome, contemporary Europe, and the wider world.18 There were also English versions of Continental manuals of rhetoric such as *The Orator: Handling a Hundred Severall Discourses, in Forme of Declamations: Some of the Arguments being drawne from Titus Liuius and other Ancient Writers* (1596).19 In the *Orator*, on which Shakespeare would draw for his *Merchant of Venice*, set speeches arguing for or against a particular position frequently centered on episodes from the history of Rome as recounted by Livy.

Third, the 1590s witnessed an unprecedented flowering of literary compositions, mostly plays and poems, both lyric and narrative, which took ancient Rome as their theme. Some of the closet dramas, such as Mary Sidney’s *Antonius* and Thomas Kyd’s *Cornelia*, were translations from the French of Robert Garnier, an acclaimed contemporary poet and Senecan dramatist; others, such as Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*, Samuel Brandon’s *Octavia*, and Fulke Greville’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, were original works.20 Public stage plays, from Thomas Lodge’s *The Wounds of Civil War* (ca. 1586) and George Peele and William Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (1593—94) to Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (1599) and Ben Jonson’s *Poetaster* (1601) and *Sejanus* (1603), and

15. *Sixe Bookes of Politickes* (London, 1594), sig. A5v. On William Jones, the translator, see Hugh Gazzard, “The Patronage of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c.1577—1596” (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2000), 208–11, 230–31. Lipsius’s tract had been published in London in the original Latin in 1590, that is, a year after it came out on the Continent. Sir John Stradling prepared a competing translation but was prevented from publishing it by the appearance of Jones’s version; see Mihail Dafydd Evans’s *ODNB* article on Stradling. In 1592 Lipsius’s discussion of Roman history was printed in Cambridge as *Iusti Lipsi tractatus ad Historiam Romanam cognoscentam apprimê vitæ*.

16. *A Discourse vpon the Meanes of wel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome, or other Principaltie* (London, 1602).


19. This Anthony Munday translated from *Epitomes De Cent Histoires Tragiques* (1581) by Alexandre van den Busche, known as Le Sylvain.

20. Greville’s play has not survived: the author claimed to have burnt it after the Essex rising of February 1601 for fear readers would discern in the protagonists thinly disguised portraits of Elizabeth and her fallen favorite; see his *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, in *The Prose Works of Fulke Grevile*,
academic plays, such as the anonymous *Caesar and Pompey* (ca. 1593), dramatized the accounts of classical historians, chiefly Appian and Plutarch, *Sejanus* initiating the vogue for staging Tacitus. Among the works in verse, Book I of Lucan’s historical anti-epic *Pharsalia* was rendered into English by Christopher Marlowe; the narrative poem *Romes Monarchie* by one E. L., which traced Roman history from Romulus to Nero, claimed to derive from French and Italian originals; while Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*, which focused on the pivotal moment in Rome’s early history, the abolition of kingship and foundation of the republic, included a prose “Argument” based on Livy and Ovid. There were also lyric pieces depicting suffering Roman heroines, Daniel’s “Octavia to Antonius” and Thomas Middleton’s *The Ghost of Lucrece*.

The timing of the print publication of many of these imaginative writings is telling. Sidney’s *Antonius* appeared in 1592; Lodge’s *Wounds of Civil War*, Peele and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare’s *Lucrece*, Daniel’s *Cleopatra*, and Kyd’s *Cornelia* all in 1594; *Romes Monarchie* in 1596; Samuel Brandon’s *Octavia* in 1598; Daniel’s “Octavia to Antonius” in his *Poetical Essays* of 1599; Marlowe’s Lucan and Middleton’s *The Ghost of Lucrece* both in 1600; Jonson’s *Poetaster* in 1602 and his *Sejanus* in 1605. This sudden profusion in print of literary works concerned in one way or another with Roman history is thrown into sharp relief when we recall that with the exception of *Apius and Virginia*, a raucous interlude performed about 1564 and issued in quarto in 1575, none of the earlier Elizabethan plays on Roman themes had been published.


21. Sidney, *A Discourse of Life and Death. Written in French by Ph. Mornay. Antonius, a Tragoedie Written also in French by Ro. Garnier. Both done in English by the Countesse of Pembroke* (London, 1592); Lodge, *The Wounds of Civill War. Lively set forth in the true Tragedies of Marius and Scilla* (London, 1594); Peele and Shakespeare, *The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus* (London, 1594); Shakespeare, *Lucrece* (London, 1594); Daniel, *Delia and Rosamond Augmented. Cleopatra* (London, 1594); Kyd, *Cornelia* (London, 1594); *Romes Monarchie Entituled the Globe of Renowmed Glorie. . . Translated out of the French and Italian histories by E. L.* (London, 1596); Brandon, *The Tragicomedi of the Vertuous Octauia* (London, 1598); *A Letter from Octavia to Antonius precedes The Tragedy of Cleopatra corrected in The Poeticall Essays of Sam. Danyel* (London, 1599), and, like Shakespeare’s *Lucrece* five years earlier, is prefaced with a prose argument; Marlowe’s *Lucan* was simultaneously published singly as *Lucans First Booke Translated Line for Line*, by Chr. Marlow (London, 1600) and also alongside *Hero and Leander: Hero and Leander: Begunne by Christopher Marloe: Whereunto is Added the First Booke of Lucan Translated Line for Line by the Same Author* (London, 1600); *The Ghost of Lucrece* (London, 1600); Jonson, *Poetaster or The Arraignment* (London, 1602); Jonson, *Seianus his fall* (London, 1605). Many of these works were promptly reprinted—for instance, Sidney’s translation of Garnier in 1595, Daniel’s *Cleopatra* in 1595, 1598, and, in revised form, in his *Poetical Essays* of 1599, as also, with further revisions, frequently thereafter; Shakespeare’s *Lucrece* in 1598, 1600, 1616, and so on, reaching a ninth edition by 1655.

22. *A New Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia . . . By R. B.* (London, 1575). Thomas Nuce’s translation of the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, set in the reign of Nero, appeared singly in 1566 (*The Ninth Tragedic of Lucius Annes Seneca called Octavia. Translated out of Latine into English*, by T. N. *student in Cambridge* (London, 1566]) before being republished in *Seneca his Tenne Tragedies, Translated into Englysh* (London, 1581). While the outbreak of the plague, which precipitated a lengthy closure of the theaters, may explain the publication in 1594 of public stage plays such as Lodge’s *Wounds* and Peele and Shakespeare’s *Titus*, it obviously has nothing to do with the appearance of the closet dramas.
Translators of Virgil, whose works no less than those of classical historians influenced contemporary thinking about monarchy, government, and citizenship, also proliferated toward the end of the reign. First published in 1573, the complete rendering of the Aeneid into English by Thomas Phaer and Thomas Twyne was reprinted with additional material in 1584, 1596, and 1600.23 The Catholic exile Richard Stanyhurst’s competing version of Books 1–4, which had appeared in Leiden in 1582, was re-published in London a year later.24 The growing interest in the mythic origins of Rome and, by extension, of Britain is further attested by the inclusion of a prose history of Aeneas in William Warner’s verse retelling of the national past Albions England (1586 and later editions) and by Marlowe and Thomas Nashe’s dramatization of Virgil in Dido Queen of Carthage (ca. 1586; pub. 1594).25 England’s connection with Rome was also emphasized in contemporary defenses of the Brute myth. At the same time, the drive toward documenting Roman conquest and colonization of Britain gained prominence in narrative poems by William Warner (1586) and John Higgins (1587), in chronicles by Raphael Holinshed (1577, 1587) and John Stow (1580, 1592), and in works of antiquarian scholarship such as William Camden’s Britannia (1586; trans. 1610).26 From the mid-1590s onward, Roman plays and verse histories were thus easily available in print alongside translations of historical writings, political theory, and polemic.

The format of the book usually reflected the status of the author. Major classical historians—Plutarch, Tacitus, Livy, Josephus, and Pliny—were issued in folio; all the others, including Virgil, in quarto or octavo.27 Publishers sought to boost sales by

23. Phaer’s translation of the first seven books had been published in 1558 with a fulsome dedication to Queen Mary. The augmented version printed posthumously as The Nyne Fyrst Bookes of the Eneidos of Virgil Conuerted into Englishe Vearse by Thomas Phaer Doctour of Phisike, with so Muche of the Tenthe Booke, as since his Death Coulde be Founde in Vnperfit Papers at his House in Kilgarran Forest in Penbroke Shyre (London, 1562) was dedicated to Sir Nicholas Bacon by one William Wightman, allegedly in accordance with Phaer’s wishes.

24. The first foure bookes of Virgil his Aeneis translated intoo English heroical verse by Richard Stanyhurst, wyth oother poëtical diuises theretoo annexed (Leiden, 1582); repr. London 1583.


27. The quarto Appian of 1578 is an exception. First issued in quarto, Chapman’s Homer would be reprinted in folio about 1609.
making their editions as complete as possible and by providing supplementary material. That is why Savile’s translation of Tacitus was reprinted in 1598 alongside Greneway’s (the two would be republished together from 1604 onward) and why the 1603 Plutarch contained the additional, non-Plutarchan lives, also translated by North, which had been published separately only the previous year. The strongest commercial asset of Fulbeke’s *Historicall Collection* (1601) was that it provided a link between Livy and Tacitus, a point advertised on the title page of the first edition, which described it as “Beginning where the historie of T. Livius doth end, and ending where Cornelius Tacitus doth begin,” and further amplified by that of the second edition, which billed the work as *An abridgement, or rather, a bridge of Roman histories to passe the neerest way from Titus Liiius to Cornelius Tacitus. Under which (in three bookes) as it were through three arches, for the space of sixe score yeeres, the fame and fortune of the Romans ebbs and flowes* (1608). Individual publishers, moreover, were keen to bring out works related by author or theme that would appeal to clients who had purchased some of their wares before. Thus Adam Islip, publisher of *The Orator*, seems to have calculated that those who owned this book would also want to obtain a copy of Holland’s Livy and Gentillet’s *Anti-Machiavel*. Islip’s edition of *The Orator* enticingly sported Livy’s name on the title page.

The intended readership, implicit in the price and format of each book, was often explicitly discussed in dedications and prefatory materials. North’s Plutarch, Savile’s Tacitus, and Holland’s Livy were dedicated to the queen; Greneway’s Tacitus to the Earl of Essex; the distinctly lowbrow *Romes Monarchie* to London’s mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen; and the remainder of the works under consideration to members of the nobility and gentry, among them Sir Robert Sidney, Sir Francis Vere, and Sir John Puckering. In a note to the reader appended to his translation of Books 1–7 of the *Aeneid* (1558) and reprinted in the version completed by Thomas Twyne in 1573, Thomas Phaer had claimed that the piece was meant as “recreation of you the nobilitie, gentelmen and Ladies, that studie not Latine.” When the Phaer-Twyne translation was reprinted in 1584 with the additional attraction of Maffeo Vegio’s Book XIII rendered into English by Twyne, Phaer’s note was dropped, the title page touting the work as designed for “the delite of such as are studious in Poetrie.” Known only by his initials, “E. L.,” the compiler of *Romes Monarchie* aimed the piece at “the multitude, or vulgar sort of our nation, [who] not having those large volumes, neither can attaine unto for value of price, or want of knowledge of the languages wherein some of them are written, may in this briefe behold how those great Monarches in their sayd warres, stirred vp by Ambition of rule and Emperie, subdued the Nations of the world.” The concluding lines of the poem, which gave a compressed recital of the Roman past in truly execrable verse, recommended Savile’s accomplished translation


of Tacitus to those intent on broadening their knowledge of the Roman past, in particular of the reign of Nero,

Whose storie full at large may well be seen,
In Tacitus in English fine translate,
A worthie present for a King, or Queene,
For noble Peeres, or others of high state:
His praise deserv’d, shall never come too late,
Who did so well, in English it reduce
For high degree, to serve for publique use.31

The contrast suggested here between different constituencies of readers—the “vulgar sort” and those of “high degree”—could not be starker. In practice, however, there must have been quite a lot of overlap in terms of who read what, even if those best served were predictably the best educated and the most affluent. North advertised his folio Plutarch as profitable reading for “the common sorte”; Holland, notwithstanding the near-prohibitive price of his Livy, too was adamant that the book was not meant for “the court onely or the Universities; but to remaine here still both in citie and countrie,” which is why he had opted for “a mean and popular stile.”32 Actually, English translations of Roman historians were often extensively used by those familiar with the originals. John Hayward, who had firsthand knowledge of Tacitus’s writing in Latin, nonetheless copied verbatim close to five hundred passages from Savile’s translation in his politic history King Henrie the IIII.33 Ben Jonson, one of England’s most erudite imaginative writers, silently appropriated lines from Greneway’s translation of the Annals in his Sejanus, the first quarto of which bristled with references to myriad classical sources.34 And readers of Camden’s Anglicized Britannia (1610) were encouraged to consult Savile’s Tacitus.35

All in all, by the time Elizabeth died, readers could consult translations of both the old favorites such as Sallust and Caesar and the newly translated authors such as Appian, Plutarch, Tacitus, Livy, and Josephus, as well as prose accounts by Englishmen that supplied missing links in the narrative (Savile, Fulbecke), or turn to a series of Roman plays and poems, or else look up any number of expository works by native and foreign authors. Far from being trend-setters, Jacobean translations of Sallust, Suetonius, and Florus or the Roman plays by Shakespeare, Jonson, and Massinger or the histories of and commentaries on the Roman past by Edmund Bolton and others continued the trends that had been firmly established in the Elizabethan fin de siècle.

31. Sig. K3v. Ironically, some of the most searing passages on Nero derive not from Tacitus but Savile’s own narrative piece, The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba.
35. See Britain, or A chorographical description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ilands adjoyning (London, 1610), marginal note, p. 1. Philemon Holland’s translation was based on the 1607 expanded edition of the Britannia.
What, then, about the political drift of the various treatments of ancient Rome published in the 1590s and beyond? How important was the mediating influence of writings by Continental intellectuals? Given the availability of foreign books both in the original languages and in translation, and given the strong ties between foreign and native courtiers, soldiers, and intellectuals, many Elizabethans would have been aware of the highly politicized uses of Roman history elsewhere in Europe, especially in France, Spain, and the Netherlands, as also north of the border, in Scotland. Several translators preserved the original paratextual apparatus, as did North in his Plutarch, “I. D.” in his Aristotle, and Patrick in his Gentillet. Mary Sidney and Thomas Kyd, though they deleted Garnier’s prefatory epistles proclaiming the relevance of his plays to French politics, would themselves have been keenly aware of it. We thus need to ask how late Elizabethan translators, historians, and imaginative writers guided readers to draw suitable topical inferences while avoiding official censure. We must also assess the novel currency that changing political circumstances may have conferred on older works.

Received wisdom has it that in the realm of political and ethical thought the later sixteenth century witnessed a transition from Ciceronian humanism, characterized by a concern about active life, civic virtue, and true nobility—especially in the sense of aristocracy of merit—to a new humanism indebted to the stoic and skeptical ideas of Seneca and Tacitus, and marked by an abiding preoccupation with tyranny, courtly corruption, and decline of virtue, expressed in a language of prudence and reason of state.36 That broad ideological transition is assumed to have run parallel to a shift of interest from Livy, chronicler of Rome’s earliest republican glory, to Tacitus, who described her inexorable degeneration under the emperors.37 However, newer work in the field suggests that neither changes in intellectual climate nor shifts in historiographic taste and polemical deployment of history were so straightforward or thoroughgoing. In England, Malcolm Smuts argues, “we do not find a transition from one kind of humanism to another so much as an ongoing conversation, in which constitutionalist, ethical and reason of state arguments interact with each other.”38 Late Elizabethan Tacitism is a case in point.

38. Smuts, “Varieties of Tacitism.” Markku Peltonen, too, acknowledges that Tacitism and neo-stoicism did not straightforwardly supersede Ciceronian humanism; Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought, 1570–1640 (Cambridge, 1995), 135–36. Sallust, on the other hand, can be seen as an authority enlisted by both traditions, the civic humanist and the prudential; see Osmond, “Princeps,” 101–3.
Associated with the Earl of Essex and his circle, the vogue for Tacitus has been traditionally explained in relation to the mounting factionalism at Elizabeth’s court. Essex, we know, was an admirer of Tacitus and author of a now-lost commentary on his writings. Several of the earl’s friends and confederates, among them Henry Savile, Henry Cuffe, Henry Wotton, Sir Robert Sidney, Anthony and Francis Bacon, Fulke Greville, and Antonio Pérez, too shared his fascination with the study and application of Tacitus and Roman history more generally. Some of them enlisted Tacitus to advocate limited monarchy and resistance to tyrants; others conscripted him in defense of royal absolutism and political prudence. But the utility of Tacitus’s writings was not confined to the sphere of court politics. As Smuts points out, they could be commandeered for a variety of disparate and often contradictory purposes, notably to “illuminate . . . European civil wars, the tactics and discipline of Roman armies, the challenges of colonial conquest, the Celtic and Germanic roots of British civilization.”

In the remainder of this essay, I take a fresh look at the single most important Elizabethan translation of a Roman historian: Henry Savile’s richly annotated rendering of Tacitus’s *Historiae* and *Agricola*, published in 1591 alongside Savile’s own historical sketch, *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba*, written in imitation of the master. What was the book’s political import? Savile’s Tacitus has been variously read as a manifesto of the martial ethos promoted by the Earl of Essex and a major source of the languages of favoritism, corruption, and tyranny that would dominate the outlook of the earl and his allies, and the perception of his rise and fall at the turn of the century. With few exceptions, modern interpreters have assessed the book from the perspective of the late 1590s, an approach that obviously generates some distortion. While Tacitus certainly did supply a lens through which Elizabeth’s dying years would be viewed, at the moment of its publication Savile’s bumper English edition was more pertinent to foreign policy and the international scene generally than to domestic affairs. Its relevance to the situation at home, such as it was, consisted primarily in raising the spectre of civil war in the event of an unsettled succession, not in stigmatizing the aging queen as a latter-day imperial tyrant—although, as the copious notes to the *Agricola* demonstrate, Savile was keen to warn his patron Essex about the pitfalls of court intrigue and royal jealousy.

39. In a letter dated 12 January 1603, Henry Brooke, eleventh Baron Cobham, asked an unknown recipient for a loan of “a paper boke of my lo of Essex notations of Cornelius Tacitus” (BL, Cotton Vespasian FXIII, fol. 290r). I am grateful to Paul Hammer for clarifying the context of Cobham’s request, and to Tim Wales for checking the transcription.
41. Smuts, “Varieties of Tacitism.”
42. I owe this last point to Professor Smuts’s paper, “Tacitus and the Politics of Royal Jealousy in Late Elizabethan England,” delivered at the 2010 Renaissance Society of America meeting in Venice. On the adoption by Essex and his circle of conspiratorial theories of court politics first broached by Elizabethan Catholics, see Peter Lake, “‘The Monarchical Republic of Elizabeth I’ Revisited (by its Victims) as a Conspiracy,” in *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe: From the Waldensians to the French Revolution*, ed. Barry Coward and Julian Swann (Aldershot, U.K., 2004).
Mathematician, classical scholar, Elizabeth’s tutor in Greek, and, since 1585, Warden of Merton College, Savile had an avid interest in political ideas. The commonplace book he had compiled during his travels on the Continent between 1578 and 1585 evinces curiosity about the constitutions of European states, as we see from his extensive notes on the process of royal election in Poland. Following Savile’s appointment to the wardenship, topics of disputations at Merton shifted from natural philosophy to questions about constitutional structures and forms of government, military matters, the relative merits of the vita activa and the vita contemplativa, and the place of virtue in public life. Even if we discount Ben Jonson’s ascription to Essex of the provocative preface to Savile’s Tacitus, signed with the initials “A. B.,” which Savile must have vetted anyway, there is no doubt that the volume was more than a showcase for his massive learning.

Savile dedicated the book to Elizabeth. “[W]ishing your Majestie either so much pleasure your selfe, or a Tacitus to describe your most glorious raigne,” he declared that his aim in publishing an English version of “this Historian,” whom she holds in high esteem, was to encourage the queen to make public her own “most rare and excellent translations of Histories.” Savile’s at once obsequious and self-deprecating epistle...
concluded with a prayer for “a long, happie, and prosperous raigne, and the onely true means thereof, many watchfull eies to foresee, many valiant handes to fight, and many godly hartes to pray for the peace of your state” (sig. ¶2v). A. B.’s preface dwelled on the value of history as a guide to action and extolled Tacitus’s exemplary portrayal in the Historiae of “all the miseries of a torne and declining state” while passing over in silence both the Agricola and Savile’s Ende of Nero. Urging the reader to digest and apply the lessons of the work carefully, the preface drew a sharp contrast between imperial Rome and Elizabethan England—the former prey to tyranny, civil war, and lawless chaos, the latter enjoying the benefits of peace and plenty under her “wise, just, and excellent Prince” (sig. ¶3r–v). The opposition between the two states must give us pause. For although, as Smuts has noted, the theme of Tacitus’s Historiae was seemingly more germane to the situation in war-torn France, there are hints that similar evils might ensue at home unless measures were taken to prevent them. Tellingly, while harping on his country’s alleged felicity, A. B. omits to mention that since 1585, when Elizabeth had sided openly with the revolted Dutch, the country had been at war with the world’s most formidable power and pretender to universal monarchy, Philip II’s Spain, and, as such, a constant target for invasion from without and treason from within. The debilitating uncertainty about the succession made England’s position all the more precarious.

In setting forth his Tacitus, Savile sought recognition as a scholar and an interpreter, not only to drive home political messages. But the former subtly reinforced the latter. For the impressive contents of the book, their careful arrangement, and the imposing scholarly apparatus yield suggestive clues about Savile’s aims. Tacitus’s Historiae and the Agricola were flanked by Savile’s own historical work, The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba, compiled mainly from Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio Cassius, and his essay on the Roman art of war, A View of Certaine Militar matters, for the better understanding of the ancient Roman stories. The subject of both the Ende and the Historiae is Rome’s descent into bloody civil wars and the resulting violent changes of regime—from Nero to Galba to Otho to Vitellius to Vespasian—punctuated by mutinies and provincial rebellions. The Agricola is a biography of Tacitus’s father-in-law, a model soldier and government official whose impregnable virtue marks him out amid near-universal moral collapse. Having acquitted himself brilliantly in a variety of posts, principally as governor of Britain, Agricola retires from public life to avoid further inciting the enmity of the tyrannical Emperor Domitian on whose orders, it is strongly implied, he will, nevertheless, be poisoned. Savile generously annotated both of Tacitus’s works as well as appending a brief explication of a passage

47. Smuts, “Court-Centred Politics,” 27.
49. Following the spirit and style of Tacitus, Savile drew extensively on Suetonius’s lives of Nero and Galba, Plutarch’s life of Galba, and Book 63 of Cassius Dio’s Roman History.
in Polybius, a list of editions he had used in preparing the volume (among them Justus Lipsius’s first edition of Tacitus published in 1574), and a translation of the Greek passages from the notes and marginal glosses. A testimony of his prodigious erudition, these sundry contributions steered the readers toward a particular application of the text before them.

Although Savile’s name was not given on the title page, his Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba had far more prominent typographical billing than Tacitus’s writings, its title positioned at the top and set in larger type than that of either the Histories or the Agricola. Recent scholarship has judged Savile’s piece shocking in its iconoclasm because of the admiring portrait, for which there is no precedent in the classical sources, of Julius Vindex, the general whose rebellion led to Nero’s deposition and death. David Womersley has traced Savile’s daring stance to his fusion of Huguenot resistance theory and Machiavellian virtù. By casting Vindex as a public-spirited martial hero, argues Womersley, Savile sought to boost Essex’s nascent self-fashioning as a military commander intent on playing a serious part in the political life of the nation. While questioning the applicability of some of Womersley’s findings to the early 1590s, Smuts accepts this analysis of Vindex, whom he sees as a counterpart to Tacitus’s Agricola, likewise a paragon of martial virtue and true nobility. According to Smuts, the Histories’ narrative of brutal internecine strife is thus framed by stories of two patriotic if ultimately unfortunate military heroes.

This reading is persuasive so far as it goes. However, it overlooks the fact that in stark contrast to Agricola, scion of a distinguished Roman family, Vindex is a foreigner, something Savile takes care to highlight. “Vindex,” we are told on the very first page of the Ende of Nero, “was by his father of a Senator’s house, by birth French and extract from the line of their ancient kings.” Womersley has stressed the integrity of Vindex who, unlike self-serving rebels and would-be usurpers, acts solely for the public good. Yet it is surely significant that as a “stranger” (as Savile calls him) Vindex would have had no prospect of obtaining the imperial diadem anyway. Also on the first page of the Ende of Nero, in a passage that has no counterpart in his sources, Savile emphasizes that Vindex “wel weigh[ed] the weaknesse of his estate, & withal his owne

50. Lipsius’s edition used by Savile contained text only; Lipsius would not publish his commentary on Tacitus until 1580; Arnaldo Momigliano, “The First Political Commentary on Tacitus,” Journal of Roman Studies 37, pts. 1 and 2 (1947): 91–101.
51. Unlike the Histories, which were printed in roman type, the Ende was set in italic and also separately paginated.
52. Womersley, “Sir Henry Savile’s Translation of Tacitus.”
54. Following Dio Cassius 63.22. As we shall see, this persistent updating of classical references—France instead of Gaul and so on—entices the reader to apply the story to the present. Savile stresses that on hearing about the revolt, Nero planned to murder “all French hee could finde in the Cittie, as being frendes to the cause” (8); and in the note on the custom of canonizing princes, which is also the only one that explicitly draws an analogy with “our time,” he describes the funerall effigy of Charles IX and the near-idolatrous obsequies afforded it by the popish clergy (“Annotations upon the First Booke of Tacitus,” marginal note c, p. 2; third pagination).
person uncapable of the Empire, as being a stranger.” Moreover, whereas Tacitus hails Agricola for furthering the Roman conquest and pacification of Britain and dwells on his father-in-law’s merciless suppression of the rebellion led by the Caledonian chieftain Calgacus and effective Romanization of the native population, whose capacity for resistance is thereby irredeemably weakened, Savile enthusiastically endorses Vindex’s provincial rebellion. In so doing, Savile again subtly revises the tenor of the surviving accounts from which he drew his material.

Thus the book opens with a revolt initiated by a royal descendant of a conquered people whose reasons for overthrowing Nero are, first, the relief of “France” from growing depredations—Vindex, Savile declares, fought “to redeeme his cuntrey from tyranny and bondage”—second, the succour of Rome, and, third, the liberation of the world (6, 2). The volume concludes with a paean to a Roman general and provincial administrator who overcomes and forcibly civilizes the British. “[A]nd so by little and little,” Tacitus observes acridly, “they proceeded to those provocations of vices, to sumptuous galleries, and bathes, and exquisite banquetings; which things the ignorant termed civilitie, being indeede a point of their bondage” (Agricola, 251). By complementing his translation of the Histories with that of the Agricola, which recapitulates the Roman conquest of Britain and envisages a possible takeover of Ireland, Savile invited the reader to view imperial expansion through the prism of his country’s erstwhile subjection to Roman rule and now dominion over Ireland, and to compare Tacitus’s imperialist outlook with the recent sympathetic narratives of the Britons’ struggle for independence in Holinshed’s Chronicles and Camden’s Britannia. The way Savile has structured the book, then, placing first his own piece fervently supportive of resistance to tyranny, induces the reader to maintain a double perspective on the story—identifying now with the various subjects of Rome, whom Tacitus typically denounces as barbarians when they venture to oppose her authority, now with the Romans themselves.

55. In order to strengthen his case for the Spanish Infanta, the Jesuit Robert Persons would draw attention to the fact that some of the best Roman kings and emperors had been foreign; Conference about the Next Succession to the Crowne of Ingland (Antwerp, 1594 [1595]), 228 (second pagination). On Rome’s strategic employment of citizenship, notably citizenship without the right to vote (civitas sine suffragio), as an instrument of domination, see Clifford Ando, “’A dwelling beyond violence’: On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Contemporary Republicans,” History of Political Thought 31 (2010): 183–220. See also Ando, Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire (Berkeley, Calif., 2000).

56. The descriptions of Vindex’s rebellion in both Plutarch and Suetonius are perfunctory; here Savile relies closely on Dio Cassius, 63.22. But although he reproduces the Roman History nearly verbatim, there are salient correspondences between his/Dio’s language and that of contemporary pamphlets—particularly as regards the obsessive fear of foreign tyranny and bondage—which would not have escaped a reader attuned to the idiom of anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish polemic.

57. Cf. Tacitus’s comparable appraisal of the Gauls’ loss of liberty, which, he says, led to the erosion of their valor.


59. There is no space here to discuss the corresponding construction by the English of their Irish colonial subjects as barbarians, which, in any event, is nowhere alluded to by Savile. See, however,
At stake are two distinct kinds, or perhaps concepts, of liberty that, however fleetingly, seem to converge in Savile’s *Ende of Nero*. Tacitus makes plain in both the *Histories* and the *Agricola*—as also in the *Annals*, which Savile chose not to translate—that the liberty the Romans had enjoyed under a free state had been irretrievably lost with the transition to the principate and concomitant moral degradation of Roman society. “[A]s our ancestors attained and saw the highest pitch and perfection of liberty,” he says in the *Agricola*, “so we of servility, being deprived by intelligencers and spies of the commerce of hearing and speaking together” (237–38).60 Illustrating the manifold strategies by which the successive emperors steadily arrogated to themselves the powers and authority once vested in the senate, the elected officials, and the commonwealth, Savile’s annotations reinforce the point. “Augustus,” he remarks wryly, “who of the old state left nothing standing but names, & hardly that . . . [sought] every way to cut the sinews of liberty and yet to retain a shew of ancienety.”61

But there is another context in which the idea of liberty comes to the fore—liberty, that is, from foreign domination and control: the uprisings of the various conquered peoples against the supremacy of Rome. Tacitus and Savile present those in markedly different ways. Recounting the revolts of the Batavians under Julius Civilis and of the Iceni under Queen Voadica (Boudicca) in the *Histories*, and of the Caledonian Britons under Calgacus in the *Agricola*, Tacitus vividly communicates the rebels’ motives, sometimes reporting their grievances, sometimes inventing rousing speeches in which the quest to recover native liberty and secure freedom from Roman domination is held up as a patriotic duty. A searing indictment of the Romans’ insatiable greed for conquest and possession, Calgacus’s call to arms is an eloquent testament to Tacitus’s skill in ventriloquizing the sentiments of Rome’s unwilling subjects. Victory today, says Calgacus,

> will give a happy beginning to the freedome of the whole ilande. For both have we all hitherto lived in liberty, and beside no lande remayneth beyond, no sea for our safety, the Roman navy thus, as you see, surveying our coasts: so that combat and armes, which men of virtue desire for honour, the dastard must also use for his security. . . . For wee the flowre of the Brittish nobility, and seated therefore the furthermost in, sawe never the coasts of the cuntreyes which served in slavery, even our eyes are kept unpolluted, and free from all contagion of tyrannie. Beyonde us is no lande, beside us none are free: us hitherto this corner and secrete recessse hath defended. . . . But what nation now is there beyonde us? What els but water and rockes, and the Romans Lordes of all within lande? Whose intolerable pride in vayne shall you seeke to avoyde by service and humble behaviour: robbers of the world, that having now left


60. In his *Dialogus de oratoribus*, Tacitus identifies another deplorable consequence of the shift from republic to empire: a severe decline of eloquence.

no lande to bee spoyled, search also the sea. If the enemy bee rich, they seeke to winne wealth: if poore, they are content to gaine glorie: whom not the east, not the west hath satisfied: the onely men of all memory that seeke out all places, be they wealthy or poore, with like ardent affection. To take away by maine force, to kill and to spoile, falsely they terme Empire and government: when all is waste as a wildernes, that they call peace. (Agricola, 255)\(^{62}\)

One is reminded of the chilling reflection on the Britons’ “servitu[de] under the Ro[mans]” that Robert Sidney inscribed in the margin of his Latin copy of Tacitus, perhaps when he was stationed under Leicester in the Low Countries.\(^{63}\) Yet however effective Calgacus’s diatribe may be as a rhetorical set-piece—and it is a tour de force—its impact is swiftly undercut by the historian. For what could be more lethally deflating than Tacitus’s comment on the Britons’ reaction to their chieftain’s words? “This speech was cheerfully received, with a song after their barbarous fashion, with confused acclamations and noyses” (257). Agricola’s measured address to his soldiers comes next, a fitting preamble to the relation of the Romans’ resounding triumph. Tacitus’s characteristic double perspective, it is true, allows him to idealize both general and opponent up to a point, but ultimately the marks of difference are explicitly drawn.

Perhaps because the threat posed by the Batavians was the more formidable, setting in train a rebellion in Gaul and proclamation of the “Empire of France” amid predictions that the end of the Roman imperium is nigh, or else because the Batavian legions had regularly fought alongside the Roman ones and their defection seemed the more galling, Tacitus is exceptionally nasty in his narration of the Batavian revolt. He excoriates its leader, Julius Civilis, a quondam Roman auxiliary, as a self-interested and self-aggrandizing dissimulator, and scornfully dismisses Civilis’s address to his countrymen as specious and insincere even as he downplays the Batavian general’s political astuteness, tactical ingenuity, and courage on the battlefield. The Batavians, the Gauls, the Britons, and various other tribes and peoples who have dared defy Rome are contemptuously decried as barbarians, their subjection construed as a natu-

\(^{62}\) See Ronald Martin, Tacitus (Berkeley, Calif., 1981), 44. For a perceptive analysis of Calgacus’s anti-imperialist outburst in the context of changes in Roman political culture, see Katherine Clarke, “An Island Nation: Re-reading Tacitus’s Agricola,” Journal of Roman Studies 91 (2001): 94–112 at 104ff. Similar speeches “for the other” can be found in Sallust and Caesar; on Critognatus’s oration in De Bello Gallico (7.77), which may have served as model for Tacitus, see Andrew Riggsby, Caesar in Gaul and Rome: War in Words (Austin, Texas, 2006), 107ff.

ral consequence of their inferiority and internal squabbles, even if, in some ways, those strange people with Roman names have more of a feel for libertas than the Romans themselves. In descriptions of battles, the dividing line between “us” and “them” is unmistakable, the historian’s interjections bordering on gloating derision. In a passage that must have made Elizabethan readers deeply uneasy, Tacitus lingers over the carnage Agricola’s soldiers inflicted on the Britons: “The night and our fulness of bloud made an ende of the chace. Of the enemies side ten thousand were slaine: three hundredth and forty of ours” (Agricola, 261).

Located firmly in the context of relations between the center and the provinces, Savile’s approving account of Vindex’s bid to topple Nero serves to vindicate resistance to both royal misrule and “colonial” oppression, which for Savile are two sides of the same coin. He endorses the grievances of the Gauls and other nations, and works to justify the rebellion against Nero as a rightful means of redressing them. The speech he assigns to Vindex, which strikingly departs from that in Dio, is a case in point. In planning the assault on the tyrant, Vindex seeks the support of his countrymen, whom he galvanizes into action by reminding them of the ravages their homeland has suffered:

To whom recounting in order the tyrannies of Nero, namelie his paring of France to the quicke, to the utter destruction of so many men, the universal decay of so goodlie a cuntrey, he exhorteth them all to take armes, to succour themselves, to succour the Romans, and to free the whole world from so heavie a yoke. Or if, which the gods forbid in so good a cause, yet let us (quoth he) sell him our lives in the fielde with honour, seeing wee cannot possesse them with safetie. For another Prince (our broken state, and age voide of virtue, not bearing a free common wealth) wee have here at hande. (Ende of Nero, 2)

64. Indeed, it might be argued that Hist. 4 is partly a way of recreating Vindex’s campaign, not unlike the way that the German campaigns in Ann. 1 recreate the disaster of 8 AD. I owe this point to Professor Christopher Pelling. On Civilis, see Holly Haynes, The History of Make-believe: Tacitus on Imperial Rome (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003), 148–77.

65. Cf. Dio Cassius, 63.22, where the stress falls on Nero’s indolence, sloth, and despicable crimes, and where there is no mention of the irreversible extinction of the republic. Cf. also Galba’s speech to Piso in Book I of Tacitus’s Histories, which likewise acknowledges that the free state is no longer viable. Savile’s interest in the administration of empire is further confirmed by a lengthy note to the Histories that elucidates the different types of provinces and their status vis-à-vis the center that originated with Augustus: namely, those which fell under the jurisdiction of the senate and of the prince (“Annotations upon the First Booke of Tacitus,” note 26, pp. 7–9). Philip II was equated with Nero within a year of the appearance of Savile’s Tacitus. “It may be sayd of the Spaniard,” noted the minor writer and minister, Simon Harward, “setting all countries about him on fire, as the Spanish song goes of Nero... From Tarpeia Nero doth behold / Rome hard by burnes: / Though cries be made of young and olde / He nothing mournes” (The Solace for the Souldier and Saylour [London, 1592], sig. F2r). Both Mary Sidney’s Antonius (1592) and Samuel Daniel’s Cleopatra (1594) would cast Octavian Caesar, the future emperor Augustus, as a Machiavellian tyrant-in-the-making whose arrogant boasts of unlimited power over Rome and the world speak directly to the concerns about Philip II’s relentless pursuit of global dominion. And shortly thereafter, Romes Monarchie (1596) openly figured Julius Caesar’s violent seizure of sovereign power as an ugly precedent for Philip II’s tyranny and unquenchable appetite for territorial possessions.
It is too late, Vindex concedes, to resurrect the republic. But there is hope that under a better prince a modicum of liberty might be recaptured. Here constitutionalist understanding of liberty as freedom from arbitrary or tyrannical government merges seamlessly with one that could be defined as freedom from subjection to a foreign power. The fall of the republic and rise of imperial despotism, Vindex seems to imply, have been responsible for erosion of both kinds of liberty, which is why the Gauls and the Romans should make common cause against Nero. Savile and Tacitus, then, are at one in deploRing the loss of liberty and virtue and the mounting servitude and corruption under the emperors. But where Tacitus is essentially a proponent and ideologue of Rome’s imperial expansion, even if he condemns the abuses perpetrated by colonial administrators and gives voice to grievances of the conquered, Savile’s stance is far more ambiguous.

While skillfully emulating Tacitus’s own ambiguity, Savile pursues a range of textual strategies, chief among them modernization of titles and place names, which evince parallels between the Roman past and contemporary European politics. The object, it appears, is to underwrite the legitimacy of armed resistance such as the Dutch revolt against Spain, the Huguenot struggle against the Spanish-backed Holy League of France, Don Antonio’s cause in Portugal, and the Aragonese rebellion, which erupted shortly before Savile’s Tacitus went to press. In attacking Spanish imperialism, Savile deploys Roman history to stress the importance of bold decisive action. He shows that a daring stroke can bring down a seemingly massive structure of power and authority whose outward appearance masks inner weaknesses. That would have applied to France, as Smuts has argued, but also (in the minds of Essex and his followers) to Spain. The fact that Vindex is of royal lineage would have reinforced the argument for someone like Essex: it takes a royal or noble figure to grasp the opportunity, but once this has happened others will follow.

While not exactly tampering with history, Savile ensures that points of contact between then and now will not be missed, which is why he describes Vindex as a Frenchman and Galba as “Lieutenant of Aragon,” or why he speaks of “France” and “Portingall,” consigning “Gallia” and “lusitania” to marginal glosses. No less revealingly, he hails the tribes of Gaul that side with Vindex as “the flower in a manner of France,” perhaps alluding to Calgacus’s address to his comrades-in-arms as “the flower of the Britich nobility” in the Agricola (Ende, 2, 5; Agricola, 255). In his explanatory note on Polybius, moreover, Savile engages with a study of Roman coinage, de re numaria populi Romani liber (1585) by François Hotman, eminent Huguenot jurist and monarchomach thinker whose Franco-Gallia (1573), with which Savile would have been familiar, appropriated scriptural idiom to denounce the

66. “The Britans endure levies of men and money and all other burdens imposed by the Empire patiently and willingly if insolencies be forborne, indignities they cannot abide, being already subdued to be subjects, but not to be slaves” (Agricola, 244–45).
67. Antonio Pérez, leader of the Aragonese revolt, likened Philip II to both Nero and Tiberius in his correspondence with Essex in the mid-1590s; see Gajda, “Robert Devereux.”
Roman empire as “the Great Beast” for robbing the Gauls at once of liberty and valor.69 Even if Hotman is invoked only to be refuted on a technical point,70 the very mention of his name directs the reader’s thoughts to the ideological divisions among the French. Such touches serve as effective reminders of the brutal wars that are tearing Europe apart, and of England’s involvement in them.

Savile’s decision to translate the Historiae and the Agricola, rather than the Annales or the Germania, too fits this brief. Placed alongside Savile’s Ende, the two works readily lent themselves to anti-Spanish constructions. For with the recent upheavals in the Netherlands, France, and elsewhere, there would have been a powerful impulse to equate imperial Rome, whose yoke the Gauls, the Batavians, the Jews, the Britons, and others are shown striving to shake off, with Philip II’s Spain. In each case, the Romans seem to have violated the terms of the original league by abridging the liberties and privileges of the native population or by exacting extortionate taxes or by carrying out forcible drafts—in a word, by treating the inhabitants of the provinces not as allies or subjects but as slaves, precisely the sort of abuses the Spanish were accused of having committed against the Dutch and others.71 To the knowing reader, Tacitus’s portrayal of the Batavian revolt would have been

69. Hotman cites Tacitus in support: "Now Tacitus in his Life of Agricola, attributes, the Loss of this their so remarkable Valour, to the Loss of their Liberty" (Robert Molesworth, trans., Franco-Gallia: or, An Account of the Ancient Free State of France, and Most other Parts of Europe, before the Loss of their Liberties, 2nd ed. [London, 1721], 15; cf. Savile’s translation of Agricola, 244). In the preface, Hotman laments the civil wars of France through an explicit analogy to Nero’s Rome: “when I consider my unfortunate miserable Country has been for almost twelve Years, burning in the Flames of Civil War. But much more am I grief’d, when I reflect that so many have not only been idle Spectators of these dreadful Fires (as Nero was of flaming Rome) but have endeavour’d by their wicked Speeches and Libels to blow the Bellows, whilst few or none have contributed their Assistance towards the extinguishing them” (iv–v). On Hotman’s political vision, in particular his demonization of Rome and his idealization of the Gauls and the Franks as lovers of liberty, see Donald R. Kelley, François Hotman: A Revolutionary’s Ordeal (Princeton, N.J., 1973), 241 passim.

70. “Explication of a Place in Polybius … wherein also the reason of the militar stipend is declared”, 75–76 (third pagination). Savile would have known Hotman’s son, Jean, who had spent a number of years in England, including a prolonged sojourn at Oxford, and who had moved in forward Protestant circles patronized by the Earl of Leicester, and later Essex, becoming particularly close to Henry’s younger brother, Thomas, with whom he discussed Tacitus, among other things. In 1590 Jean Hotman left England for good. See G. H. M Posthumus Meyjes, Jean Hotman’s English Connection (Amsterdam and Oxford, 1990).

71. For justifications of the Dutch revolt along such lines, see the works by two Church of England divines, Thomas Bilson, The True Difference betweene Christian Subiection and Unchristian Rebellion (London, 1585), and Simon Harward, The Solace for the Souldier and Saylour (1592), and a piece by the erstwhile Catholic exile, turned government publicist, Lewis Lewknor, A Discourse of the Usage of the English Fugitives (London, 1595). According to Bilson, since Spain’s sovereignty over the Low Countries is conditional, and since Philip II—not a king “but Earle of Flaunders”—is not entitled to “alter their State, and euert their auncient Lawes,” the Dutch are within their rights to disobey him (521); cf. Harward: “As for a governour that is elected conditionally, and onely with power to maintaine the auncient liberties and priviledges of the Aristocratie of the countrey, as is the preheminence which Philip may perhaps lawfully chalenge in the low countries: if he then seeke against covenant to turne the Aristocratie into an absolute Monarchie: this is undoubtedly such a tyranny, as may lawfully bee withstood of them which neither by conquest nor lawful right were delivered into his hands; for as to seeke to bring in an Aristocratey where is an absolute Monarchy established, were manifest rebellion,
particularly piquant since the Dutch claimed the Batavians as their forebears. In an effort to forge an uplifting national ethos based on solid classical foundations, Lipsius and other humanists rejected the mythic Prince Bato and instead drew on the writings of Tacitus, Pliny, and Strabo for a narrative that cast the Batavians as invincible warriors, lovers of liberty, and sworn enemies of imperial tyranny. Contemporary woodcuts, pamphlets, sermons, literary works, and popular histories, in both Dutch and Latin, with which Englishmen who visited the Low Countries or served there or had access to foreign books would have been familiar, cast the Batavian rising against Rome as a heroic precedent for the Dutch revolt against Spain.

Consider also the likely topical resonance of anti-Roman outbursts by leaders of the various peoples and tribes featured in Savile’s Tacitus. Civilis, Voadica, Calgacus all issue withering excoriations of the guile, rapacity, and cruelty that drive Rome’s ruthless pursuit of empire. Virtually identical charges were a staple of anti-Spanish propaganda, which reached fever pitch in the late 1580s, and which further intensified amid reports of a second Armada. Sermons, pamphlets, and imaginative writings homed in on Philip II’s lust for universal dominion epitomized by his supremely arrogant motto, *non sufficit orbis*, adopted after the takeover of the crown of Portugal, pillorying Spain’s tyrannical government, economic exploitation, and enforced conversion of nations under her control.

Parallels between the Roman conquest of Britain and Spain’s attempted invasion of England were routinely invoked to underscore the need for national unity. In her appearance at Tilbury, Elizabeth assumed, as Anthony Miller has observed, “the role of a warrior queen fighting the invader—in British terms, a new Boudicca so also to bring in a Monarchie where is an Aristocratie established, is manifest tyrannie” (sig. D3v); and Lewknor: “since it hath ben made manifest to the world that these wars and injuries offered by the king of Spaine to those of the Low countries, whose laws, customs and priuiledges he hath most vio- lently, tyrannously, wrongfully and periuredly broken, whereby hee hath freed them from his subjec- tion, yoake, and tyranie, and lusty and deservedly for euer lost al such preheminences, prerogatives, authoritie, and jurisdiccion as he pretended over them, as more amply appeareth in the ancient records of the priuiledges of these nations, which both he & his predecessors at their entrée of government into these provinces haue solemnly vowed and sworne to maintaine all in general, and euerie in particular inuiolate, & vppon that couenant and condition they haue reciprocally sworn to him due fidelitie and obeisance, he fayling in the one, they to be exempted from the other” (sig. K2v–K3r). Elizabethans who were wary of or hostile to claims for the right of resistance to tyranny in England took a different stance toward resistance to Spain abroad. Burghley’s readiness to think of the Dutch revolt as a legitimate response to tyranny underlies “A declaration of the causes mooving the queene of England to giue aid to the defense of the people afflicted and oppressed in the low countries” issued by the government in 1585 and duly reprinted in the second edition of Holinshend’s *Chronicles* (1587); see also a partial translation of the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* into English: *A Short Apologie for Christiain Souldiours: Wherein is Contented, how that we ought both to Propagate, and also if Need Require, to Defend by Force of Armes, the Catholike Church of Christ, against the Tyrannie of Antichrist and his Adherents*; Penned by Stephanei Iunius Brutus, and Translated into English by H.P. for the Benefite of the Resolution of the Church of England, in the Defence of the Gospel (London, 1588).

fighting a new attempt to impose the rule of Rome.”73 Savile’s Tacitus tapped directly into this language of patriotic anti-imperialism. As the Agricola made painfully clear, Britons had been easy to overcome because of internal divisions, factionalism, and lack of efficient central government, a point stressed by late Elizabethan chroniclers, poets, and polemicists.74 “[N]ot by their virtue, but by our iarrings and discords they [the Romans] are grown into fame,” Calgacus tells his countrymen, for “to our shame be it spoken, many of our owne nation . . . now lende their lives to establish a forreyne usurper” (256).75 In 1591 these words would have sounded gruesomely ominous given the treasonable scheming of Robert Persons and other Hispanophile Catholic exiles, and the notorious defections of English commanders in the Low Countries such as Rowland Yorke, who surrendered Zuthpen to the Spanish, and William Stanley, the betrayer of Deventer.76

Later texts emanating from the Essex circle literalized the assumptions latent in Savile’s book, employing Roman history to vilify Spain. In The State of Christendom, a trenchant dissection of European politics penned about 1594–95 by an associate of Essex’s (most probably Anthony Bacon), ancient Romans are made to look like the Spanish of the day—crafty, duplicitous, insatiable, and bloody-minded:

[T]hey cunningly enlarged their Confines, by seeming to be careless of Conquests; made themselves Monarchs, by pretending to suppress

73. Roman Triumphs and Early Modern English Culture (Basingstoke, U.K., 2001), 27.
74. “Heretofore they were governed by kings, now they are drawn by petite Princes into partialities and factions: and that is the greatest helpe wee have against those puissant nations, that they have no common councell together”; cf. Tacitus’s account of Voadica’s rebellion: “the Britans free of feare beganne to discourse the miseries of bondage, to lay their injuries together, and aggravate them by constructions . . . and that they [Romans] would doubtlesse depart, as Caesar Julius had done, if the Britans would imitate the vertues of their progenitours. . . . With these and the like speeches inciting one another, by common consent they resolve to take armes under the conduct of Voadica a lady of the bloud of their Kings” (Agricola, 244, 246–47). It is no coincidence that in the Ende of Nero Savile emphasizes the “common consent” (2) of the French to follow Vindex in his fight against Nero. Alongside Dio Cassius and Josephus, Tacitus was a major source for accounts of ancient Britain by Holinshed, Stow, and Camden, all of whom echoed his claim that lack of unity facilitated the Roman conquest. Here is Camden: “the inland parts of Britaine, wasted rather with Civill wars and factions, than by the force of the Romans, after sundrie overthrows and slaughters of both sides, came at the length by little and little under the subjection of the Romans” (Britain, 40, 63–64). Camden’s view of the Roman conquest was equivocal, for, however oppressive, it brought with it civilization and ultimately Christianity.
75. Cf. Higgins’s Caesar, who explains that he owed the conquest of Britain to “ciuill discorde” and treason within the enemy ranks; see Mirour (1587), fol. 8orff.
Tyrants; and did wrong unto all men, by bearing an outward shew to suffer no manner of injury to be done unto any man. This cunning in aspiring unto Forrain Dominions, begun in the Infancy of the Romans prosperity, continued in the riper years thereof, and practised even until their declining Age; was not only proper unto them, but passed (as their Empire did) from them unto other Rulers (by what name or title soever they were called) taking advantage of the time, omitted no means to attain unto their desires and purposes.77

This Machiavellian analysis of Roman and Spanish imperialisms is adduced to justify England’s intervention on behalf of the Dutch, the French, and the Portuguese, even as Spain’s interference in Ireland earns bitter condemnation.

We find similar sentiments in popular works such as *Romes Monarchie* (1596), a versified account of Roman history from Romulus to Nero, which complimented Essex by association with the two Scipios, Scipio Africanus the Elder and Scipio Africanus the Younger. The final section of the poem combined severe censure of imperial tyranny with enthusiastic support for the French, British, and other local risings against Nero and Rome, which are figured as “A mightie wind” sweeping through the ancient world. The last two stanzas supplied a eulogy of Savile’s Tacitus “Where is describ’d Nero his monstrous life: / A common-wealth, and state, in pieces torne” (sig. K4v).78 This piece of doggerel, seemingly worlds apart from the writings of the scholarly clientele of the Earl of Essex, fully shared their ideological underpinnings. Although aimed at a markedly different readership—it was dedicated to London’s civic authorities—*Romes Monarchie* astutely sought to advertise its affinity with elite productions such as Savile’s, which also appeared to blast Philip II’s secular despotism by implicitly likening Hapsburg hegemony to the Roman empire. The anony-

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78. See also the anonymous translation of Antoine Arnauld’s *The coppie of the Anti-Spaniard made at Paris by a French man, a Catholique. Wherein is directly proued how the Spanish King is the onely cause of all the troubles in France* (London, 1590), with its deliberate echo of Cicero’s *De officiis*: “The King of Spaine would make vs belieue that he will be our Protector. But in what sorte? Did not the Romanes content them selues with the bare name of friends, and allies with those, whom by conquest they had made their subiects? And doth not he at the first vsurpe the name of maister ouer vs?” (5); and *A comparison of the English and Spanish nation: composed by a French gentleman against those of the League in Fraunce, which went about to perswade the king to breake his alliance with England, and to confirme it with Spaine. By occasion whereof, the nature of both nations is liuely decyphered. Faithfully translated, out of French, trans. Robert Ashley* (London, 1589), in which the supposed solidarity between ancient Britons and Gauls finds a modern counterpart in England’s help to France against Spain. A much subtler though no less evocative attack on Spanish imperialism under the guise of Roman history can be found in Mary Sidney’s translation of Garnier’s *Marc-Antoine*, completed in 1590 and printed in 1592: see Paulina Kewes, “‘A fit memoriali for the times to come . . . ’: Admonition and ‘Topical Application in Mary Sidney’s *Antonius* and Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*,” *Review of English Studies*, advance access May 2011; print forthcoming in 2012. Essex famously claimed the mantle of Sir Philip Sidney, Mary’s recently deceased brother and icon of militant Protestantism.
mous author self-effacingly recommended Savile’s book to a readership more select
than that he envisaged for his own poem. Contrary to Savile, however, he made no
bones about twisting the Roman past to advance his jingoistic agenda, which, for all its
crudeness, was not far removed from the political vision of Essex and his allies.

For the early moderns, Tacitus was an authority not only on Roman politics but also
on warfare. By affixing his own essay on the art of war to the translation of Tacitus,
Savile further enhanced the volume’s military aspect. It would be difficult to find a
more apposite comment on the present condition of England than the following: “no
state may looke to stand without notable molestation, and danger of ruine, much lesse
to enlarge, which in any kinde of service, on foote, or on horsebacke, or by sea is quite
defective and utterly disfurnished, although perhaps it cannot in all attaine to that de-
gree of perfection, which some of their neighbours have attained unto.”

The Histories and the Agricola deal with very different kinds of warfare. In the
former, civil war predominates. The latter is largely concerned with foreign conquest
and colonial expansion. Most battles retailed in the Histories are fought by regular
Roman armies. Even in quelling the various provincial risings, the Romans often face
foreign forces that once fought alongside them as auxiliaries, and one type of enemy
leader is the man who was Roman-trained (Tacfarinas, Arminius, Civilis). By con-
trast, in the Agricola Roman armies and a few indigenous defectors are pitted against
the “barbaric” tribes of Britain. The reader is thus prompted to ponder the military di-

mension of internecine strife where the warring parties have had largely the same
training, and where success depends on the quality of leadership and the sense of
personal loyalty and motivation—rational considerations that gain poignancy as we
learn that a son has unwittingly killed his father or that friends and one-time brothers-
in-arms are now on opposing sides—and, second, that reflect on the challenges of
suppressing provincial rebellions and annexing new territories. Confrontations
with insurgents such as the Batavians, who have had extensive experience of the
Roman military and whose leader, Civilis, was a veteran of many an imperial cam-
paign, are fundamentally distinct from encounters with the as yet “uncivilized”
Caledonians.

Predicated on the assumption that one can learn military science from books,
Savile’s preoccupation with warfare was part and parcel of a trend, which seems to
run throughout English historiography and translation of the classics, gaining mo-
mamentum in the latter part of Elizabeth’s reign, and which was becoming increasingly
centered on the person of Savile’s patron, the Earl of Essex. Nothing short of a mili-
tary revolution, sixteenth-century advances in weaponry and strategy were being

79. A View of Certaine Militar matters, for the better understanding of the ancient Roman stories,
71, third pagination. Savile’s “Explication of a Place in Polybius . . . wherein also the reason of the mili-
tar stipend is declared” serves a similar purpose.

80. Rhiannon Ash, Anarchy: Armies and Leaders in Tacitus’ Histories (London, 1999); Haynes,
History of Make-believe.
theorized and disseminated in publications that answered the demand driven by wars that raged across the better part of the European continent. Military manuals were complemented by works that ransacked classical sources for clues about discipline, tactics, and strategy and by legal treatises on the just causes and proper conduct of wars.81

His reputation as staunch champion of the Protestant cause growing rapidly, by the late 1580s Essex began to be named in dedications to all manner of books on war, as well as in those prefixed to reports from Continental battlefields. Shortly before the appearance of Savile’s Tacitus, the earl became the recipient of, among others, De jure belli (1588–89), a three-part disquisition on the laws of war, and De iniustitia bellica Romanorum actio (1590), an overview of Roman history documenting the atrocities and injustices of Roman wars, both by the Italian Protestant exile Alberico Gentili, a one-time protégé of Essex’s mentor the Earl of Leicester and now Regius Professor of Law at Oxford. In his dedications, Gentili singled out for special praise Essex’s learning, civil virtue, and valiant service at Leicester’s side in the Low Countries.82

Given the overlap in subject matter and patronage, Savile’s Tacitus needs to be studied not only alongside other translations of classical historiography but also alongside legal works indebted to classical sources such as those by Gentili who, like Savile, was an Oxford don and a client of Essex.

Although Tacitus was widely admired by members of the Essex circle, the admiration was not unqualified, especially as regards matters military. In his abundant notes, Savile frequently corrects Tacitus’s factual errors, misdatings, and inaccuracies as well as criticizing the order in which the Roman narrates events and carping at omissions of detail that prevent the reader from visualizing scenes of combat. Savile condemns Tacitus’s accounts of some campaigns even as he praises others. Like the topical hints scattered throughout the Ende of Nero, the heavy emphasis on war in Savile’s essay and annotations animates his polemical agenda. Naturally, there are always snags with topical applications, and we cannot expect consistency across the various materials that make up the volume. If the account of Vindex’s rising encouraged the reader to think about the situation on the Continent or if the description of the Batavian rebellion prompted comparisons with the Dutch revolt or if the Roman conquest of Britain brought to mind the Armada, these analogies were necessarily local and evanescent. (The Batavian-Dutch parallel collapses by the time we learn that legions made up of Batavians took part in Agricola’s pacification of Britain.) Cumulatively, however, there is enough evidence to suggest that the purpose of Savile’s book


was to garner support for a more bellicose stand against Spain and so advance Essex’s political goals.

At the time the volume was conceived and published there were as yet few signs of a rift between Essex and the Cecils. In fact, it was owing to Burghley’s help that the earl secured appointment as lieutenant-general of the expeditionary force that was sent to Normandy in August 1591. “The Earl of Essex is now to go to France although the Queen was long unwilling,” reported one contemporary, adding that the Treasurer “seems inclined to him, and both of them to the Puritans at home, and the King of Scots abroad.” The French venture ended in failure, which Catholic publicists would gloatingly exploit; and on his return to England in January 1592 Essex stepped up the campaign to increase English military presence on the Continent. That the Tacitus was a literary missive in support of a more aggressive foreign policy is confirmed by the tenor of Savile’s contribution to the reception of Elizabeth in Oxford later the same year. The oration he delivered before the queen on 23 September exploited the principle of *laudando praecipere* to make a case for a more belligerent stance toward Spain. An eloquent demonstration that a harmonious relationship between arms and letters is vital in a healthy and well-governed commonwealth, the oration stressed the value of ancient history in instructing military commanders. Savile concluded with a ringing encomium of the queen’s learning and courage. Casting Elizabeth as a protectress of Christendom thanks to her determined assistance of the Dutch, the French, and the Portuguese, he discreetly encouraged her to live up to this flattering portrayal and send more men to France, a suggestion made the more apposite by the presence of the French ambassador.

Two days later, on 25 September, Thomas Savile, Henry’s younger brother and then senior proctor, returned to the subject. Following a disputation in divinity tackling the Machiavellian question (*Discorsi* I. 4) of whether civil dissensions are beneficial to the state (*An Dissentiones Civium sint Reipublicae utiles?*), which was bound to turn the thoughts of the audience to the situation in France, Savile took thereby occasion by name to commend ... the Lord Treasurer (who was present), in respect of his great care in the Government of this


85. Richard Verstegan’s attack must have been particularly galling, for it savagely ridiculed the premature celebration in print of the earl’s hoped-for success: “Some are of triumphes of victories, before they be obtayned, as when the Earle of Essex, was to go with his forces into Normandie” (A Declaration of the True Causes of the Great Troubles presupposed to be intended against the realme of England [Antwerp, 1592], 75).

Commonwealth. And after him the Lord Chamberlain. And after him
the Lord Admiral his great worth and valiant service at sea. And, lastly,
fall into commendation of the Earl of Essex, his honorable, valiant service
in the Low Countryes, in Portugall, and in Francie: and so concluded.87

An eye-witness report notes that immediately afterward “the Lords went to sit in
Counsell” (156). The three elder statesmen (Burghley, with whom the earl’s relations
were beginning to deteriorate, Hunsdon, and Howard) were members of the Privy
Council. By a fine irony Essex, whose martial exploits Thomas Savile praises so lav-
ishly, was not. From their high-level deliberations on foreign policy this ambitious
politician was therefore excluded.88

Although first and foremost a commentary on international affairs, Savile’s Tacitus
was also prepared with an eye to the succession question. The title of Savile’s own
piece, The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba, was tantalizingly suggestive, not least
because like Nero, the last Julio-Claudian emperor, Elizabeth was the last of her line.
So was Henri III, the last Valois king of France. (Indeed, on the title page the largest
type was reserved for the words “Ende of Nero.”) A. B.’s admonitory preface, too,
brought to the fore contested imperial succession, which is the driving force behind
the fratricidal wars retailed in the Histories.89 Savile’s Tacitus was no succession tract,
but there is an uncanny resemblance between its rendition of Roman history and the
vision of internecine strife and near-universal scramble for the crown evoked in
several contemporary pamphlets.90

The Puritan MP Peter Wentworth issued the first missive on the succession
after Mary Stuart’s execution, A Pithie Exhortation to her Maiestie for establishing Her
Successor to the Crowne, composed shortly after 1587. “[I]f your successor be not set-
tled in your life-time,” Wentworth warned his queen, “al your nobility, counsellours,
and whole people will be up in armes with all the speede they may. . . . and then there

87. Ibid., 3:155–56. The proponent in the disputation was Henry Cuffe, Regius Professor of Greek,
close associate of Essex’s and, like the two Savile brothers, fellow of Merton (see Paul E. J. Hammer’s
ODNB article on Cuffe).
88. Essex would be appointed to the Privy Council in February 1593; see Hammer, Polarisation,
118–20.
89. Tacitus’s account of the devastating internecine strife of 69 would have enjoyed topical cur-
rency in his own time; Galba’s failed adoption of Piso and the ensuing contention for the throne con-
trasted favorably with Nerva’s auspicious adoption of Trajan. See Rhiannon Ash, “Fission and Fusion:
Shifting Roman Identities in the Histories,” in The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus, ed. Woodman,
85–99 at 89–90.
90. On the fierce if clandestine debate about the Elizabethan succession, see Paulina Kewes, This
Great Matter of Succession: Drama, History and Elizabethan Politics (Oxford, forthcoming 2012),
and The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England, ed. Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes
(Manchester, forthcoming 2013).
will be as many kings proclaimed, as there will be competitors.”91 Urging Elizabeth to emulate the example of her father, Henry VIII, who had taken the necessary precautions to regulate the succession, Wentworth invoked a battery of historical precedents, among them several drawn from the Roman past. “[W]e reade that the Romane Emperours when otherwise their successor was not known,” he explained, “did in their lifetime adopt them heires, to whome by order of that government, they caused the right to succeede them to be established. Thus Julius Caesar adopted Octavius Augustus, and hee Tiberius Caesar. Nerva, Trajan. Adrian, Antoninus Pius: and hee againe Antoninus Philosophus” (23). In what must seem to the modern reader a strikingly perverse application of Roman history, Wentworth held up Tacitus’s wily tyrant Tiberius, who had bequeathed the throne to the yet more vicious despot, Caligula, as model of princely probity when it came to making provision for the future of Rome:

And for further proffe of the force of the light of nature, yet remaining in a mere naturall man to teach him this lesson: it is written in Chronicle that the Emperour Tiberius Caesar a little before his death said: That of all the grieves and troubles that the grievous pangs of death brought with it, this greeved & troubled him most, how to preserve the kingdome committed to him of trust: and also to see the inheritance thereof conveyed unto him, to whome of right it did appertain: concluding with these words, This is the dutie of a king. Oh what a strange thing were it then for a Christian Prince, having not onelie light of nature, but also the light of the word shining unto her to direct her hereunto: if (all examples both divine and humaine, foraine and domesticall, of all ages and times provoking also thereunto) she should not, or would not suffer her self to bee drawne unto this Christian dutie. (23–24)

Wentworth’s was the first Protestant succession tract to dilate on England’s dynastic future by analogy with the principate and early empire. In such constructions, hitherto the preserve of Catholic pamphleteering, Elizabeth would come dangerously close to being seen as no better (and perhaps worse) than any number of heathen princes.92

91. A Pithie Exhortation to her Maiestie for establishing Her Successor to the Crowne ([Edinburgh], 1598), 101–2; cited below in the text. The piece was published posthumously—Wentworth had died in 1597—alongside his later refutation of Robert Persons’s Conference. Persons too anticipated “a terrible threatening of extreme calamitye to the common wealth,” “as God only and the sword must make the conclusion”; Newes from Spayne and Holland ([Antwerp], 1593), fols. 40r, 38r; “this Affair cannot possibly be ended by any possibility moral, without some War, at least wise, for some time at the beginning” (Conference, 197, second pagination).

92. A daring sermon Matthew Hutton, archbishop of York, preached at Whitehall before Elizabeth and the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in early 1596 boldly admonished the queen that she must shield her subjects from the peril of civil war by resolving the succession. Hutton pointed to the grim example of Nero, who “was specially hated for wishing to have no Successor,” and to the only marginally less disheartening one of Augustus, who “was the worse beloved for appointing an ill man” Tiberius—“to his Successor” (Sir John Harington, A briefe view of the state of the Church of England as it stood in Q. Elizabeths and King James his reigne, to the yeere 1608 being a character and history of the bishops of those times [London, 1653], 187–91).
There is also the Essex connection. By the late 1580s, the earl had resolved to work toward the Stuart succession, and in the second half of 1589 had made contact with James VI of Scotland, an action that earned him a stern rebuke from the queen.93 Not long afterward, in late 1590 or the first half of 1591, Wentworth tried to intercede with the earl in a bid to have his tract presented to Elizabeth. Although nothing came of the attempt, as the piece was seized by the authorities and the author jailed, the episode demonstrates that as early as 1590–91 Essex was perceived as someone who might be willing to broach the forbidden topic with the queen. By the time Robert Persons dedicated his explosive Conference about the Next Succession (1594) to Essex, he was able mischievously to portray the earl as a mastermind behind the imminent transition to the new reign.94 It is no small irony that in the secret correspondence with the Scottish king begun in 1594, the earl assumed the moniker “Plato” (and “28”) to James’s “Tacitus” (and “10”).95

In the climate of anxious uncertainty about the succession, topical deductions were drawn at the slightest prompting. The relevance of Savile’s Tacitus to the question of the succession lay not only in its vivid depiction of civil wars ignited by brutal competition for the throne but also in its calculated emphasis on how (and where) emperors are made, an emphasis that Savile’s annotations served to reinforce. For instance, note 34 to Book I of the Histories highlights the widespread practice of adoption, also remarked by Wentworth, which up to a point had helped preserve the illusion of dynastic succession: “C. Iulius adopted Augustus; Augustus Livia and Tiberius, who adopted Germanicus, whose sonne Caius was, and Claudius his brother, and lastly Claudius adopted Nero in whom fayled the Iulian line” (“Annotations,” 10).96 Whether the early principate was a hereditary or an elective monarchy was hotly disputed in our period.97 Robert Persons and his various opponents would

94. Conference, sig. *2r–*3r; the epistle was dated 31 December 1593 but the pamphlet would not in fact be published until the second half of 1595; copies reached England in October. Persons’s claim that a war of succession is inevitable makes his praise for Essex—a military man—seem even more dangerous and likely to bring him into disfavor with the queen, as such commendations are wont to do; see note 16 in Savile’s “Annotations upon the Life of Agricola,” 46–47 (third pagination). (I am not persuaded by Victor Houliston’s suggestion that the dedication was designed to disrupt the earl’s rapport with James VI; see his Catholic Resistance in Elizabethan England: Robert Persons’s Jesuit Polemic, 1580–1610 [Aldershot, U.K., 2007], 76.)
95. Hammer, Polarisation, 168 n. 97; correspondence of 18 May to 4 November 1594 between David Foulis, Anthony Bacon, and Essex using those names can be found in BL, Add. MS 4125, fols. 157, 160, 162, 164, 167, 169, 170, 172–73, 174. I owe this reference to the kindness of Mr. Alexander Courtney.
96. See also note 35, which explains that “Adoption, as Generation, doeth in a sort eternize, and eternity knoweth no agednes” (“Annotations,” 11).
97. As J. G. A. Pocock notes, it was in fact neither; Barbarism and Religion, 4 vols. to date (Cambridge, 1999–2008), vol. 3, The First Decline and Fall, 27.
cite the history of the principate to argue, respectively, for contract and election and for absolute royal sovereignty and lineal succession. To be sure, the first emperors retained the outward signs of election by the senate to bolster their legitimacy, but how much autonomy did the senate actually possess? What was the role of the army in the subsequent transitions of power? Tacitus was the crucial source for anyone interested in constitutional developments after the collapse of the republic. In contrast to the Annals, which depicted the more or less orderly successions of the various heirs of Augustus, the Histories and Savile’s introductory sketch concentrated on what happens when the pretense of both election and dynastic succession vanishes and the senate ends up rubber-stamping the outcome of battles.

Savile’s description of Nero as an hereditary ruler “rooted in the Empire by fower descents of ancestours” (Ende, 6) makes the approving portrayal of the tyrant’s overthrow acutely disturbing, indeed more disturbing than that in Persons’s Conference, which was to categorize imperial succession as a species of election in order to justify Nero’s deposition. The upshot of Savile’s approach is to demystify monarchical authority, and, in glossing Tacitus, whose view of power relations is no less skeptical, to draw attention to the very process of demystification. A parenthetical aside in the Ende of Nero highlights the instability to which language is prone at times of political upheaval. Referring to Vindex’s followers as rebels, Savile observes acerbically, “for so they were stiled till they prevailed” (3). Still more revealing is Savile’s definition of the term arcanum imperii in relation to the proprieties of imperial succession. Elucidating Tacitus’s assertion in Book I of the Histories that by having himself proclaimed emperor in Spain Galba disclosed “that secret of state . . . that a Prince might bee made elsewhere than at Rome” (I, iii, 3), Savile exposes the spurious value of tradition and ceremony in keeping the masses in check:

The example is of an act done in undue place, whereof there had beene no precedent before. In congruity a Prince of Rome were to be created at Rome, & an Emperour in the seate-towne of the Empire, and so it had beeene always observed: but the truth was, and so much the secrete imported, that in substance it mattered not much where he was made, that afterward could maintaine it with armes, and with the good liking of the subiects of the Empire. This secrete of state Galba disclosed, and making his profit thereof against Nero, gave occasion to other to practise the like against him. And generally after this secret was by Galba once disclosed, more Emperors were made abroad, then at Rome.

98. Cf. Histories, I, iv, 10; II, xxiii, 97.
99. Conference, 45. Persons’s reading of Roman history would be refuted, respectively, by two civil lawyers, an Englishman and a Scot: see John Hayward’s An answer to the first part of a certaine conference, concerning succession, published not long since vnder the name of R. Dolman (London, 1603), and Thomas Craig, De Jure Successionis Regni Angliae, Libri Duo, which, though completed by the end of 1602, remained in manuscript until 1703 when an English translation was prepared by the non-juring Scottish divine James Gatherer, Concerning the Right of Succession to the Kingdom of England (London, 1703).
100. “Annotations upon the First Booke of Tacitus,” note 20, p. 6.
With the modern French experimenting with exclusion and election, and with at least some Englishmen envisaging a parliamentary settlement of the succession, Savile’s and Tacitus’s clear-eyed, forensic analysis of the constitutional expedients contemplated or implemented in late first-century Rome would have been highly pertinent if also profoundly dispiriting.

The situation in France was, as we have seen, the principal context for Savile’s work. His patron Essex was deeply involved in events in France in 1590–91, when the Catholic League and their Spanish allies were trying to exclude the Huguenot Henry IV (the next lineal heir) from the succession and secure the election of a Catholic by the Estates General. This plan would be abandoned only after Henry’s conversion to Catholicism in July 1593.¹⁰¹ (For all that the apostasy of the erstwhile Protestant hero aroused anxiety and dismay among his allies in England and elsewhere, Essex would remain a staunch supporter.)

While for Essex and his friends France was the cause that mattered most at this point, and while even for those less obsessed with French affairs, knowledge of what went on in France was significant, the looming Elizabethan succession inevitably drew attention to alternative constitutional scenarios depicted in Savile’s book. Like their French counterparts—first the Huguenots and now the Leaguers—some Englishmen favored a parliamentary settlement of the succession in what would effectively amount to election. In winter 1584–85, Burghley and Thomas Digges independently put forward proposals for an interregnum in the event of Elizabeth’s death without an appointed heir.¹⁰² An anonymous memorandum drafted when Mary Stuart was still alive, probably about 1586–87, and now housed in the Northamptonshire Record Office, explicitly argued for the election of James VI of Scotland by the English Parliament. Since “the lawes of the Realme . . . overthowe his titell in that hee is a stranger borne,” James must “put[ting] him self to theire discreation.” The three Estates, “findinge in themselves a full choice of election” and mindful of the “safetie and quettt [that] maye come to the Realme by acceptinge of him,” will be sure to bestow the crown on the Scottish king “by the free and voluntarie guift.”¹⁰³ Following Mary’s execution, Peter Wentworth made only a slightly less outspoken case for electing Eliza-


¹⁰³. Northamptonshire Record Office, Fitzwilliam (Milton) Politics 214, pp. 1, 2, 3. I am grateful to Sue Doran for drawing my attention to this document, and to Gerard Kilroy for help with the transcription.
beth’s successor in his *Pithie Exhortation*: the rights of the various competitors, Wentworth suggested, ought to be “lawfully . . . determined,” “tried & examined,” “found and declared” in and by Parliament (35, 5, 37). If James’s commitment to the cause of reform would ultimately persuade Protestants (including Wentworth) to recognize the Scottish king’s hereditary claim, and if hopes of toleration (or even his conversion) would gain the loyalty of most Catholics, a few Hispanophiles such as Persons nonetheless promoted quasi-elective solutions in a bid to forestall the accession of a Protestant Stuart.

The sordid machinations behind the consecutive changes of regime retailed in Savile’s Tacitus evince abiding pessimism about human nature and the efficacy of political institutions and processes. In the *Ende of Nero*, think of Titus Vinius’s bleak reflections on the fate of putative successors, Germanicus and Corbulo, both of whom paid with their lives for unwittingly incurring the envy of their princes; or of the compromised election of Galba, whom the senators chose over the more worthy candidate, Verginius Rufus, even though “in their secrete opinions Verginius deserved to resume the benefite which hee had put into their handes” (3, 10). In the *Histories*, consider Galba’s adoption of Piso, “the onely stay, as he supposed, of his estate,” that far from securing peace or strengthening the emperor’s own position, led to both Galba and his adoptive son being butchered and the throne falling to the dissolute and contemptible Otho (*Histories*, I, iv, 8).

With the demise of the Julio-Claudian line and the irregular ascent of Galba, Rome is at a crossroads. In Galba’s view, nomination of a worthy successor offers the most promising alternative now that restoration of the republic is no longer viable:

> If this vast body of the Empire could stande without governour, balanced in due proportion and order, the free common wealth might worthily have taken beginning from me: but now it is come long age to that passe, that neither mine age can benefit the people of Rome any way more, then in finding them a good successor, nor your youth, then in yielding them a good Prince. Under Tiberius, Caius, & Claudius, we have bene as it were, the inheritance of one family: it wil 

This speech would have struck a chord in early 1590s England since at least some dilemmas facing the Elizabethans were not unlike those the aging emperor identifies as facing Rome. So too Tacitus’s masterful adumbration of the atmosphere of rumor,

104. Cf. Savile’s attribution of the aging emperor’s fall to his meanness and lack of generosity to soldiers (*Ende*, 17).
speculation, and self-interested scheming tallies with contemporary reports by Thomas Wilson, Sir John Harington, and others of the ubiquitous if illicit talk about the succession to Elizabeth:105

No speech was for the time more common and curraunt in the whole city, partly upon a licence and lust to talke of such matters, and partly because Galba was spent and feeble for age: upon judgement or love to the common wealth very few, the most part upon secret hopes, as they favoured or followed this man or that, offered occasion to bring them in speech for the succession. ([Histories, Liv, 7]

Flashes of topicality such as these keep the issue of succession firmly in the reader’s mind. They elicit speculation on future possibilities but do not add up to a coherent message or program.106

In this respect there is a marked contrast between the book’s explicit pro-war thrust and its much more muted and equivocal approach to the succession. Elizabeth’s reception at Oxford in September 1592 throws the difference into sharp relief. Whereas the issue of England’s support for Continental Protestants was raised outright in both Savile’s oration and his brother’s remarks after one of the disputations, there was no scope openly to tackle the succession. The closest we get is during another disputation. Addressing the question whether, with the world waxing old, heroism too is waning (An ob mundi senectam [sic], homines minus sunt heroici nunc quam olim), one of the participants alluded to “the predictions of the death and advancement of divers Princes.”107 The speech may well have encouraged the audience to ponder England’s future after the death of their own prince. (Certainly, within a few years the choice of a similar theme for academic debates at both Oxford and Cambridge provoked official disapproval.108) But otherwise the problem of the succession remained untouched.

When restored to its immediate context, Savile’s Tacitus emerges as a penetrating application of Roman history to the specific concerns of the early 1590s, above all the question of European politics and England’s role in them. Smuts has described the


106. There is little of relevance to the succession in the Agricola; and it is surely telling that A. B. makes no mention of the work in the preface. Perhaps the knowing reader would interpret Tacitus’s positive assessment of Nerva and Trajan in the light of their knowledge that Nerva’s adoption of Trajan inaugurated the Trajanic-Antonine dynasty, the line of the “five good emperors.” The most we can say is that in the context of the early 1590s Calgacus’s attack on homeborn traitors could elicit association with Hispanophile Catholics such as Persons and his associates, who, with Mary Stuart gone, were rooting for a Spanish Catholic successor.


108. Harington, Tract: “And which was worth the observing, the two universities at their commencements in the yeare 98 did both light on one question that bewraied a kynde of weerines of this tyme, mundus senescit, that the world waxed old; which question I know not how well it was ment, but I knowe how ill it was taken” (104).
book as a “practical guide to war and politics.” It was that and more. An intriguing cross-over from the academy to the wider world of public affairs, the volume illuminates the scholarly and intellectual pursuits of Essex’s Oxford clients aimed at bolstering their patron’s militant Protestant internationalism. Vindex’s call for liberation of the world from imperial tyranny prefigures Essex’s nascent vision of a pan-European alliance against Spain whose goal would be nothing less than liberty of Christendom.

In an influential essay that cites Hobbes’s attack on the subversive ideas engendered by the classics, Quentin Skinner has argued that the republican concept of liberty, which the English had absorbed from the Greeks and Romans, played a decisive role in bringing about the intellectual ferment that in turn led to Civil War. Peter Lake and others have criticized Skinner’s approach here and elsewhere for its lack of attention to religion; and Johann P. Sommerville has taken issue with Skinner’s description of numerous common law concepts as neo-Roman. But what should we make of Skinner’s claims about the reception of classical authors?

Skinner emphasizes that the ideologically charged impact of the classics was heightened by the appearance of English translations, among them Grimalde’s of Cicero, Savile’s and Greneway’s of Tacitus, I. D.’s of Aristotle, and Holland’s of Livy. In citing as evidence these Marian and Elizabethan publications, Skinner makes virtually no distinction between the uses of the classics before and after the arrival of the Stuarts. Rather, he treats the successive translations as so many contributions to the inexorable development of the neo-Roman view of liberty. Nor does he pause to examine the significance of each of the translated texts in the context in which it appeared or consider the effect of its bibliographical packaging.

There is no denying that contemporary views of liberty were in part shaped by the classical authors Skinner studies. But it is far from clear that the translations had the effects he posits. For, as we have seen in the case of Savile’s Tacitus, which comprised Savile’s own retelling of a stretch of Roman history as well as suggestive annotations—all omitted by Skinner—the meaning of the new version could be subtly different from

the tenor of the original. And indeed, the concept of liberty embodied in Savile’s work alters the Roman historian’s meaning on that point. In quoting from the Elizabethan Aristotle, too, Skinner overlooks the fact that by reprinting le Roy’s extensive commentary, which applied the teachings of the *Politics* to aftertimes, the book turned the Greek philosopher into an ardent monarchist. As one of le Roy’s notes has it, “Thus we see that almost all nations doe leuell and aime at the Monarchicall and Royall gouernment: and that those which continue long in that forme, proue at length verie puissant and mightie.” This shift in the assessment of forms of government inevitably entails a change in the perception of liberty.

We know, moreover, that even before the appearance of the English translation, the annotations supplied in le Roy’s Aristotle were avidly read and discussed by England’s academic community, Gabriel Harvey noting facetiously, “You can not stepp into a schollars studye but (ten to one) you shall likely finde open ether Bodin de Republica or Le Royes Exposition uppon Aristotles Politiques or sum other like Frenche or Italian Politique Discourses.” The reception of Greek and Roman authors the English typically read in the original, in editions imported from the Continent, too, would have been strongly mediated by the accompanying scholarly apparatus, which was sometimes adopted, sometimes modified or contested by the translators. A good deal of textual and comparative work remains to be done before we can pronounce with confidence on the ideological thrust of individual editions and assess the uses that were made of them. Finally, it is as well to remember that participants in the vigorous if surreptitious succession debate in Elizabeth’s dying years were perfectly capable of invoking the same classical author or text to substantiate widely divergent, indeed mutually opposed, constitutional and ideological positions.

112. As Lawrence Venuti remarks, “In contributing to the canonicity of a foreign text, the translation leaves neither that text nor the receiving situation unaltered. . . . The foreign text undergoes a radical transformation in which it comes to support a range of meanings and values that may have little or nothing to do with those it supported in the foreign culture”; see his “Translation, Interpretation, Canon Formation,” in *Translation and the Classic: Identity as Change in the History of Culture*, ed. Alexander Lianeri and Vanda Zajko (Oxford, 2008), 27–51 at 30.


115. Among commentaries on classical historians, there seems to have been a growing attention to political/constitutional issues from the late sixteenth century on. In the case of Tacitus, the turning point seems to have been the publication in 1580 of Lipsius’s commentary; bafflingly, Lipsius denied he intended his remarks there or in the *Politiorum Libri Sex* to be taken as a political commentary on the Roman historian (Momigliano, “The First Political Commentary,” 92). A caveat, however, is that most of the scholars producing commentaries in Latin were writing for schools or the scholarly community; they were often editing the text themselves or in any case were primarily interested in contemporary debates on the transmission of the text or philological questions of sources, stylistic comparisons, etc. The result is that political observations are often intermingled with notes on textual or linguistic matters. Moreover, a preface may discuss the topical value of a work, whereas the notes remain predominantly textual. In the dedication of his edition of Sallust’s *Opera* (1599) to the senate of Nuremberg, for instance, the German scholar Christoph Coler asserted the utility of his author to any and all systems of government, in contrast to Tacitus, whose writings are applicable only to principalities (cited in Osmond, “Princeps,” 101). Some recent studies in the commentary traditions include On Renaissance Commentaries, ed. M. Pade (*Noctes neolatinae* 4; Hildesheim, Germany, 2005); *Talking to the Text: Marginalia from Papyri to Print*. Proceedings of a Conference held at Erice, 26 September–3 October 1998, ed. Vincenzo Fera, Giacomo Ferraià, Silvia Rizzo, 2 vols. (Messina, Italy, 2002).
a salutary reminder that we must listen carefully to what they had to say and not succumb to the lure of teleological readings.

Recently, there came to light a manuscript copy, long thought to have been lost, of a vindication of Emperor Tiberius by the Catholic antiquary and historian Edmund Bolton. In dedicating his “Ponderous, and new considerations, vpon the first six books of the Annals of Cornelius Tacitus, concerning Tiberius Caesar” to Charles I’s Privy Council in 1634, Bolton described himself as a man on a mission. His goal, he explained, was to counteract what he called “the vnadvised reading” of Tacitus, which will “teach, and enable the prone, and credulous . . . to dote vpon popular States, and either to hate, or vndervalue Monarchie, though borne therein.”116 Like Hobbes’s castigation of the pernicious influence of the classics, Bolton’s attack on Tacitus is set to prove grist for the mill of scholars eager to find republicans in early modern England, and I suspect that it is only a matter of time before Bolton’s comment is retrospectively applied to Savile’s or Greneway’s Tacitus. Yet rather than treating late Elizabethan translations of the classics as milestones on the road to Civil War and king-killing, it makes more sense to think of them as distinct textual events and explore, as we have done, their diverse and often contradictory resonances at the moment of publication, as also to reflect on the fresh topicality subsequent editions may have acquired in new political circumstances. For all that its immediacy and relevance would change over time, in 1591 Savile’s volume was neither a jaundiced anatomy of royal envy and courtly corruption nor an antimonarchical manifesto, but, rather, a searching analysis of international affairs and a call to arms in solidarity with England’s Protestant allies.

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