

Introduction

The life and works of Innocent Gentillet, like all France of his time, were shaped in large part by the religious conflict which escalated into a series of civil wars waged intermittently over the latter half of the sixteenth century. Though termed the Wars of Religion, historians agree that the division between Catholic and Protestant was not the sole contributing factor, and since the time of the wars many writers have argued that religion was not the primary cause. At its highest point, the Protestant (or Huguenot) population comprised around ten percent of France, drawn mostly from the nobility, merchant, and professional classes; of these, "Huguenots of state" were politically motivated, while "Huguenots of religion" were concerned with reform of the church.¹ The distinction was not always clear, and a contemporary observer remarked of both Protestant and Catholic institutions that "those which held and persuaded pressure of consciences, were commonly interested therein themselves for their own ends."² In the most tragic event of the wars, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres,

Atrocious deeds were done, in which religious passion was often the instrument, but policy was the motive . . . When the King of France undertook to kill all the Protestants, he was obliged to do it by his own agents. It was nowhere the spontaneous act of the population, and in many towns and in entire provinces the magistrates refused to obey. The motive of the Court was so far from mere fanaticism that the Queen [Catherine de Medici] immediately challenged Elizabeth to do the like to the English Catholics.³

The order for the killings had been given by twenty-two-year-old Charles IX, under the guidance of his mother, Catherine de Medici, and her Italian advisers. Catherine had had little influence while queen of Henri II; after his death in 1559, however, she wielded great power for thirty years while her three ineffectual sons nominally reigned. In the wake of Bartholomew, it was said that Catherine was governing by the principles of Machiavelli, her bedside reading and her Bible. This was polemic, but not without foundation; Machiavelli viewed religion as a tool to be cynically manipulated for political ends; and he approved political violence, provided it is done expeditiously and all at once. Moreover, *The Prince* had been addressed to Catherine's father, Lorenzo de Medici, advising him that "on the other hand, it would be easier to conquer the kingdom of France, but there would be great difficulty in holding it . . . The contrary is the case in kingdoms governed like that of France, because it is easy to enter them by winning over some baron of the kingdom, there being always malcontents, and those desiring innovations. These can, for the reasons stated, open the way to you and facilitate victory..."⁴ If this was not enough, Machiavelli implied in *The Prince* and *Discourses on*

¹ See J.H.M. Salmon, *The French Wars of Religion: How Important Were Religious Factors?* Boston: D.C. Heath, 1967.

² Quoted in Francis Bacon, "Of Unity in Religion" (source unknown).

³ Dalberg-Acton, John. *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, pp. 43-4. London: MacMillian, 1907.

⁴ *The Prince*, ch. 4.

Livy that French incompetence and barbarism made them worthy of such handling. In this context, it is unsurprising that French reaction to Machiavelli was particularly hostile; and that reaction found its ultimate expression in Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*.



Gentillet was born around 1532, the same year *The Prince* was published, in Vienne, a city in south-eastern France whose proximity to Geneva made it more strongly Protestant than most of the country.⁵ After a period of military service, he studied law and theology, acquiring a solid grounding in classical humanism. Beginning in 1547 he appears on court lists for twenty-nine years, but was probably rarely in attendance. In 1562 Vienne was sacked by Protestants, and Gentillet was sent to Geneva and Bern to recruit ministers for the Protestant congregation. He is listed in Vienne as a bailiff's attorney in 1564 and as a deacon in 1566. In 1568 he refused to take an oath required by the Edict of Longjumeau, and was prosecuted for *lèse-majesté* in absentia. In 1572 he took a post in Toulouse, but fled to Geneva after the St. Bartholomew events. In 1574 he published an anonymous *Remonstrance* to Henri III, accusing Italians of fomenting disorder and proposing to banish them with their Machiavelli. The following year he printed the Duke of Alençon's *Protestation*, which said many of the same things; in 1576 he dedicated the *Anti-Machiavel* to the duke. After local Italians complained about *Anti-Machiavel*'s recriminations against their countrymen, Gentillet was summoned to the Geneva city council; he published an apology of sorts, but in early 1577 was assaulted in the street by an Italian, Francesco Lamberto; another Italian was arrested after being overheard threatening to kill Gentillet if he met him out of town. Later that year Gentillet returned to France and was named to the *Chambre mi partie* (a court with both Catholic and Protestant members) of the Parlement of Grenoble. In 1578 he published a translation from Latin, *La République des Suisses*. In 1581 he was nominated to the presidency of the Parlement of Grenoble. In 1584 he published *Apologie ou défense pour les chrétiens de France de la religion réformée*; the following year the Treaty of Nemours again banned Protestantism, and Gentillet returned to Geneva. In 1586 he published *Le Bureau du concile de Trente*. He died in Geneva on 23 June, 1588.

These are the facts as we have them now, more or less; but in 1702 the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* complained, "I wonder we have so few particulars about the life of a person who distinguished himself both by his writings and employments . . . those who have given us an account of the authors of his province could not fill up six lines concerning him without committing several faults."⁶ One of the editors of *Les bibliothèques françaises* questioned whether Gentillet had written the book at all: "For my part, I believe that all these Gentilletes are masks, and that the author of *Anti-Machiavel* is not known."⁷

⁵ Rathé, C. Edward. "Innocent Gentillet and the First 'Anti-Machiavel'." *Bibliothèque D'Humanisme Et Renaissance* 27, no. 1 (1965): 186-225.

D'Andrea, Antonio. "The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel." *Renaissance Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1970): 397-411. D'Andrea, "The Last Years of Innocent Gentillet: 'Princeps Adversariorum Machiavelli'." *Renaissance Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1967): 12-16.

⁶ *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Peter Bayle: The Second Edition*, Volume III, pp. 156-7. London, 1736.

⁷ *Les bibliothèques françaises de La Croix du Maine et de Du Verdier*, p. 220. Paris: Saillant & Nyon, 1772.

Further controversy was sparked by Edward Meyer's *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama* (1897). Because *The Prince* was not printed in English translation until 1640, Meyer questioned the origins of what he thought an unfair hostility in Elizabethan "Machiavel" allusions (of which he counted almost four hundred). On finding a copy of *Anti-Machiavel* in the British Museum, Meyer felt he had discovered "the source of all Elizabethan misunderstanding," the vitriolic invective of Gentillet.⁸ After T.S. Eliot remarked Shakespeare's "shameless lifting" from *Anti-Machiavel*,⁹ it was dismissed as "never of any importance in England,"¹⁰ which in turn has been refuted. Recent editors differed as to the book's significance; C. Edward Rathé, who in 1968 published a reissue of the French first edition, enthusiastically called for more attention; while Antonio D'Andrea and Pamela Stewart, who collated several early editions to produce an authoritative French text in 1974, declared the matter closed:

It would be anachronistic indeed to imagine even for a moment that the *Discours* could still be read, quoted, and discussed, as in the past, in connection with the interpretation of Machiavelli's thought. Nor is it possible to expect of today's readers, even of scholars, the impassioned curiosity for erudite puzzles, that also contributed much for about two centuries to the success of a book, published anonymously by an author completely unknown beyond the restricted provincial horizon of the Dauphiné and the confines of Calvinist Geneva. These reasons for interest in the book have long since ceased to exist. From the nineteenth century on the only conceivable reason for studying the *Discours* has been the role they played in the origins and development of anti-Machiavellism.¹¹

This has proven something of an overstatement, however, and Gentillet continues to draw attention outside the province of Machiavelli studies. More recently Sydney Anglo hinted that in attributing Elizabethan "Machiavel" tropes to Gentillet's influence, Meyer "may have got something like the right answer for the wrong reasons,"¹² though unfortunately he did not give any indication as to what the right reasons might be. Another writer has suggested that "there are many more allusions [to Gentillet] waiting to be discovered by scholars who know what to look for . . . It would be helpful if readers of texts from the last quarter of the sixteenth century were to keep alert for more signs of his influence, so that we can estimate that effect more precisely."¹³ We will now note some of these allusions, a majority for the first time, hoping to shed some light on the "erudite puzzle" of Gentillet.



In September of 1575 the Duke of Alençon, brother of Henri III and heir to the throne, leader of the moderate *politiques*, joined with Huguenot forces opposed to the Catholic

⁸ Meyer, Edward. *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama*. Weimar: E. Felber, 1897.

⁹ G. Wilson Knight. *The Wheel of Fire*, p. xvi. London: Routledge, 2001.

¹⁰ Raab, Felix. *The English Face of Machiavelli*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

¹¹ D'Andrea, Antonio and Pamela Stewart, eds. *Discours contre Machiavel*, pp. xi-xii. Florence: Casalini Libri, 1974.

¹² Anglo, Sydney. *Machiavelli – The First Century: Studies in Enthusiasm, Hostility, and Irrelevance*, p. 284. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹³ Bawcutt, N. W. "The "Myth of Gentillet" Reconsidered: An Aspect of Elizabethan Machiavellianism." *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 4 (2004): 863-74.

crown. His *Protestation*, calling for reforms and an end to foreign influence at court, was published in Geneva by Gentillet, who also printed his own response. Months later Gentillet dedicated the *Anti-Machiavel* to the duke; *The Prince* had been dedicated to Alençon's grandfather, Lorenzo de Medici. In 1583 Alençon, formerly a suitor to Queen Elizabeth, disastrously tried to attack Antwerp under the color of amity; when Shakespeare called his ancestor in *1 Henry VI* "that notorious Machiavel," adding "take this compact of a truce/Although you break it when your pleasure serves," he was alluding to the more recent duke's maneuvers. According to Meyer, "That Shakespeare had Gentillet in mind is perfectly evident."¹⁴ *Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli* notes "the only two times the word "Machiavel" is uttered in the history plays, it is spoken first by Richard York and second by his true son, Richard Gloucester."¹⁵ York is himself Machiavellian, deriding "churchlike humours [that] fits not for a crown"; but Shakespeare tells us that the father, who "will hunt this deer to death," is surpassed in perfidy by the son (Richard III), who "must hunt this wolf to death." In *2 Henry VI* the latter, who "always has piety on his lips in public, though he never observes any piety in private," says "Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill." In *3 Henry VI* he says

I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.

Anti-Machiavel states: "as soon as the prince shall clothe himself with Proteus' garments, and has no hold nor certitude of his word, nor in his actions, men may well say that his malady is incurable, and that in all vices he has taken the nature of the chameleon." This is unique to Simon Patericke's English translation; in the original French, followed by the Latin, "the nature of the chameleon" reads *le ply du camelot*, or the ply of a peddler. Patericke's *Anti-Machiavel* did not appear until 1602; presumably he borrowed from Shakespeare, who in turn borrowed from *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of York* (1595):

I can adde colours to the Camelion,
And for a need, change shapes with Protheus,
And set the aspyring Catalin to schoole.¹⁶

Proteus and the chameleon were frequently coupled following the popular *Adages* of Erasmus; an entry in Francis Bacon's *Promus* reads "Chameleon, Proteus, Euripus"

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 58

¹⁵ Hollingshead, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli: The Role of the Christian Prince in the History Plays*. Diss., Marquette University, 1996. (Incidentally, Hollingshead is a descendant of Raphael Holinshed, whose *Chronicles* were Shakespeare's primary source for English history.)

¹⁶ The relationship between the two plays continues to be debated; see Randall Martin: "'The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York' and '3 Henry VI': Report and Revision." *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 53, no. 209 (2002): 8-30.

(Euripus is a strait in the Aegean with currents that regularly reverse direction).¹⁷ Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* echoes Gentillet in its account of Richard:

Richard, the third of that name, king in fact only, but tyrant both in title and regiment, and so commonly termed and reputed in all times since, was by the Divine Revenge, favouring the design of an exiled man, overthrown and slain at Bosworth Field; there succeeded in the kingdom the Earl of Richmond, thenceforth styled Henry the Seventh.

Anti-Machiavel relates:

A similar punishment happened by the judgment of God to that cruel king Richard of England . . . that king, who despaired otherwise to be maintained in his estate, gave battle to the earl and was slain fighting, after he had reigned about a year. And the earl of Richmond went right to London with his victory, and the slaying of that tyrant; then he took out of the monastery Edward's two daughters, espoused the elder, and was straight made king of England, called Henry VII, grandfather of the most illustrious Queen Elizabeth presently reigning.

Divine intervention against Richard was frequently stressed because the Tudor dynasty's claim to the throne rested on a usurpation, albeit of a tyrant. Shakespeare's *Richard III* strongly emphasized this line: "Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end"; "O God . . . revenge his death!"; "heav'n with lightning strike the murd'rer dead," etc.

Allusions to Gentillet in works with early references to Shakespeare, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) and *Polimantia* (1595), have been noted previously. Events rehearsed in *Anti-Machiavel* are depicted in many of Shakespeare's English and Roman history plays; echoes of Gentillet have been found in *Measure for Measure*;¹⁸ and *Hamlet* may have been influenced by a passage which includes incest on the part of the emperor Claudius, poisoning, and improper royal succession:

When the emperor Claudius would espouse Agrippina, his brother's daughter, he made a law whereby he authorized the marriage of the uncle with the niece, which was published all over . . . indeed this marriage fell out not well for him; for Agrippina poisoned him to bring Nero to the empire, her son by another marriage; although Claudius had by his first wife Messalina a natural son called Britannicus, whom Nero poisoned when he came to the empire. So that by the incestuous marriage wherewith Claudius had contaminated and poisoned his house, he and his natural son, who by reason should have been his successor, were killed with poison.

¹⁷ Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which features a character named Proteus, twice refers to the chameleon. The grouping is also found in Thomas Andrew's *The Unmasking of a Feminine Machiavel* (1604):

With the Cameleon can she change her hiew,
Like every object that her eye doth view,
Proteus was never half so mutable
As the unconstant, of her word unstable . . .

¹⁸ Holland, Norman N. "Measure for Measure: The Duke and the Prince." *Comparative Literature* 11, no. 1 (1959): 16-20.



A great deal has been written about the influence of Machiavelli on Francis Bacon; however, the influence of Gentillet has so far passed unremarked, with the exception of one writer who suggested that "It may not have been mere coincidence that in his account of the Essex trial . . . Francis Bacon echoes Gentillet in his conclusion that ambition engenders treason and treason finally brings the complete ruin of the traitor."¹⁹ In fact, when Bacon adverts explicitly to Machiavelli, more often than not he is echoing Gentillet, sometimes Shakespeare as well. An allusion with multiple parallels occurs in *The Advancement of Learning*:

As for evil arts, if a man would set down for himself that principle of Machiavel, that "a man seek not to attain virtue itself, but the appearance only thereof; because the credit of virtue is a help, but the use of it is cumber"; or that other of his principles, that "he presuppose that men are not fitly to be wrought otherwise but by fear, and therefore that he seek to have every man obnoxious, low, and in strait," which the Italians call *seminar spine*, to sow thorns: or that other principle, contained in the verse which Cicero citeth, *Cadant amici, dummodo inimici intercidant* [Let friends fall, provided our enemies perish with them], as the Triumvirs, which sold every one to other the lives of their friends for the deaths of their enemies: or that other protestation of L. Catilina, to set on fire and trouble states, to the end to fish in droumy waters, and to unwrap their fortunes...

Anti-Machiavel relates the story of "Catiline, who with his companions went about to destroy his country with fire and sword"; twice uses the phrase "fish in troubled waters," and devotes a chapter to the policy of keeping subjects poor. It also speaks of Cicero being traded to Antony: "Antony, to have his enemy Cicero (whom Octavian favored as his friend), was content to deliver in exchange Lucius Caesar, his own uncle on his mother's side; so that the one was exchanged for the other, and they both died." This brutal bargaining is depicted in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

Octavius. Prick him down, Antony.

Lepidus. Upon condition Publius shall not live,
Who is your sister's son, Mark Antony.

Antony. He shall not live; look, with a spot I damn him.

Two scenes later, we learn that Cicero is one of the victims:

Brutus. Therein our letters do not well agree;
Mine speak of seventy senators that died
By their prescription, Cicero being one.

¹⁹ Zaharia, Alis. "Circulating Texts in the Renaissance: Simon Patericke's Translation of *Anti-Machiavel* and the Fortunes of Gentillet in England." *The University of Bucharest Review* vol. IV, no. 1 (2014): 54-62.

Gentillet asked: "Is it not a strange thing to hear that a friend should be betrayed to death, to have the cruel pleasure of slaying an enemy? Yet by this course died a hundred and thirty senators, besides many other persons of quality."

In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon wrote: "Achilles was brought up under Chiron the Centaur, who was part a man and part a beast: expounded ingeniously but corruptly by Machiavel, that it belongeth to the education and discipline of princes to know as well how to play the part of the lion in violence and the fox in guile. . ." Earlier Gentillet wondered, "should we call this beastliness or malice, what Machiavelli says of Chiron? Or has he read that Chiron was both a man and a beast? Who has told him that he was delivered to Achilles to teach him that goodly knowledge to be both a man and a beast?" Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* displays similar impatience with Machiavelli's advice:

A beastly ambition, which the gods grant thee t'
attain to! If thou wert the lion, the fox would
beguile thee; if thou wert the lamb, the fox would
eat thee: if thou wert the fox, the lion would
suspect thee . . . What beast couldst thou be, that
were not subject to a beast? and what a beast art
thou already, that seest not thy loss in
transformation!

Another place in *The Advancement of Learning* reads "Machiavel noteth wisely, how Fabius Maximus would have been temporizing still, according to his old bias, when the nature of war was altered and required hot pursuit." Gentillet relates that "the Roman Senate sent against Hannibal Fabius Maximus, who was not so forward (and it may be not so hardy) as Flaminius or Sempronius were; but he was more wise and careful, as he showed himself." Bacon elaborates in *Apophthegms New and Old*:

Fabius Maximus being resolved to draw the war in length, still waited upon Hannibal's progress, to curb him; and for that purpose, he encamped upon the high grounds. But Terentius his colleague fought with Hannibal, and was in great peril of overthrow. But then Fabius came down from the high grounds, and got the day. Whereupon Hannibal said, *That he did ever think, that that same cloud that hanged upon the hills, would at one time or other, give a tempest.*

This is a strong echo of *Anti-Machiavel*:

On his arrival he did not set upon Hannibal, who desired no other thing, but began to coast him far off, seeking always advantageous places. And when Hannibal approached him, then would he show him a countenance fully determined to fight, yet always seeking places of advantage. But Hannibal, who was not so rash as to join with his enemy to his own disadvantage, made a show to recoil and fly, to draw him after him. Fabius followed him, but upon coasts and hills, seeking always not the shortest way, but that way which was most for his advantage. Hannibal saw him always upon some hill or coast near him, as it were a cloud over his head; so that after Hannibal had many times essayed to draw Fabius

into a place fit for himself, and where he might give battle for his own good, and yet could not thereunto draw him, said: "I see well now that the Romans also have gotten a Hannibal; and I fear that this cloud, which approaching us, still hovers upon those hills, will one of these mornings pour out some shower on our heads."

Francis Bacon is known for advocating inductive reasoning, or the Baconian method, a precursor of the scientific method. Anglo remarked that "Gentillet's appeals to historical exemplars are really no more rigid, and no further removed from true inductive reasoning, than is Machiavelli's use of Livy."²⁰ Bacon's *Novum Organum* strongly echoes Gentillet on the subject; Bacon wrote:

There are and can be only two ways of searching into and discovering truth. The one flies from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms, and from these principles, the truth of which it takes for settled and immovable, proceeds to judgment and middle axioms. . . The other derives axioms from the senses and particulars, rising by a gradual and unbroken ascent, so that it arrives at the most general axioms last of all.

Anti-Machiavel reads:

Aristotle and other philosophers teach us, and experience confirms, that there are two ways to come unto the knowledge of things. The one, when from the causes and maxims, men come to knowledge of the effects and consequences. The other, when contrary, by the effects and consequences we come to know the causes and maxims. . . The first of these ways is proper and peculiar unto the mathematicians, who teach the truth of their theorems and problems by their demonstrations drawn from maxims, which are common sentences allowed of themselves for true by the common sense and judgment of all men. The second way belongs to other sciences, as to natural philosophy, moral philosophy, physick, law, policy, and other sciences. . .

The Great Assizes holden in Parnassus (1645, attributed to George Wither) features a court of poets and scholars, with Francis Bacon as Chancellor, before whom are arraigned authors charged with "strange abuses, committed against [Apollo] and the Nine Muses":

Hee was accus'd, that he had us'd his skill,
Parnassus with strange heresies to fill,
And that he labour'd had for to bring in,
Th' exploded doctrines of the Florentine,
And taught that to dissemble and to lie,
Were vitall parts of humane policie. . .

"Th' exploded doctrines of the Florentine" can only refer to *Anti-Machiavel*; the court of Parnassus also includes Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and the scholar Isaac Casaubon, a friend of Bacon's who was born in Geneva to Huguenot refugee parents. Bacon wrote in

²⁰ Anglo, Sydney. "The Reception of Machiavelli in Tudor England: A Re-Assessment." *Il Politico* 31, no. 1 (1966): 127-38.

a letter to Casaubon: “to write at leisure that which is to be read at leisure matters little; but to bring about the better ordering of man’s life and business, with all its troubles and difficulties, by the help of sound and true contemplations – this is the thing I am at.”²¹ He comments on the edifying potential of the stage in *The Advancement of Learning*:

Dramatic poesy, which has the theatre for its world, would be of excellent use if well directed. For the stage is capable of no small influence both of discipline and of corruption. Now of corruptions in this kind we have enough; but the discipline has in our times been plainly neglected. And though in modern states play-acting is esteemed but as a toy, except when it is too satirical and biting; yet among the ancients it was used as a means of educating men’s minds to virtue.

A similar concern with the didactic effects of the theatre is expressed in the dedication of *Anti-Machiavel* (after the first edition):

After Solon had seen Thespis’ first edition and action of a tragedy, and meeting with him before the play, he asked if he was not ashamed to publish such feigned fables under so noble, yet a counterfeit personage. Thespis answered that it was no disgrace upon a stage, merrily and in sport, to say and do anything. Then Solon, striking hard upon the earth with his staff, replied thus: “Yea but shortly, we that now like and embrace this play, shall find it practiced in our contracts and common affairs.” This man of deep understanding saw that public discipline and reformation of manners, attempted once in sport and jest, would soon quail; and corruption, at the beginning passing in play, would fall and end in earnest.

This dedication (“for kinred”) is to Francis Hastings and Edward Bacon, half-brother of Francis Bacon. It is dated 1577 and first appeared in the Latin edition of that year, published at Geneva. It is anonymous, and critics have accepted it as the work of a different author, but the possibility of a literary fiction cannot be discounted; the vituperative tone of Gentillet is also present in the dedication. Antonio D’Andrea attributes it to Lambert Daneau,²² a Huguenot theologian who had been a tutor of Francis and Anthony Bacon; Daneau later dedicated his commentary on the minor prophets (1586) to Anthony.²³ D’Andrea also suggests the possible involvement of Theodore Beza, Calvin’s successor in Geneva and a colleague of Daneau’s, who approved the *Anti-Machiavel* for publication.²⁴ While in Geneva Anthony Bacon lodged with Beza, who later dedicated his *Meditations* (1582) to Lady Anne Bacon, mother of Francis and Anthony. The Bacon family’s connections in Geneva went back to Lady Anne’s father, Sir Anthony Cooke, who corresponded with Calvin and met Beza while living on the continent as a

²¹ Spedding, James. *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol. IV, p. 147. London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868.

²² D’Andrea, Antonio. “Machiavelli, Satan, and the Gospel.” *Yearbook of Italian Studies* (1971): 156-77.

²³ Vickers, Brian. *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, p. 562. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

²⁴ D’Andrea, Antonio. “Geneva 1576-78: The Italian Community and the Myth of Italy.” In *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, edited by Joseph McLelland, 60-3. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980.

Protestant exile during the reign of Mary I.²⁵ Beza's *Meditations* dedication echoes the one in *Anti-Machiavel*; while the former speaks of "that right vertuous and right renowned Lord, my Lord Nicholas Bacon your husband, & most worthy Keeper of the seale of England,"²⁶ the latter exhorts Edward Bacon to "imitate the wisdome, sanctimonie, and integritie of your father, the Right Honorable Lord Nicholas Bacon, Keeper of the broade Seale of England, a man right renowned. . ."

Machiavelli's influence on Bacon is now taken for granted; however, Bacon's family motto, *Mediocria firma* ("moderation is stable" or "the middle way is sure"), is flatly contradicted by Machiavelli, who complained that "men take certain middle ways that are very harmful, for they do not know how to be altogether wicked or altogether good." This is handled by Gentillet and in Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients*, "Scylla and Charybdis": "Mediocrity, or the middle way, is most commended in moral actions; in contemplative sciences not so celebrated, though no less profitable and commodious; but in political employments to be used with great heed and judgment . . . The way of virtue lies in a direct path between excess and defect." This idea is also found in *Merchant of Venice*: "It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean." Machiavelli counseled a prince "to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite." Bacon wrote "Constancy is the foundation on which virtues rest," echoing Gentillet: "constancy is a quality which ordinarily accompanies all other virtues; it is, as it were, of their substance and nature." This idea is also found in *Measure for Measure*: "it is virtuous to be constant in any undertaking"; and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (spoken by Proteus): "were man but constant, here were perfect." Machiavelli's assertion that "when the deed accuses, the effect excuses," commonly interpreted as "the ends justify the means," is attacked by Gentillet and strongly condemned in Bacon's "Charge against Owen": "evil is never in order towards good. So that it is plainly to make God the author of evil, and to say with those that St. Paul speaketh of, *Let us do evil that good may come thereof*, of whom the Apostle says excellently *That their damnation is just*."²⁷ I will here note by the way what appears to be an intentional misprint in the 1606 English edition of Jean Bodin's *Six Books of a Commonwealth*, which reads: ". . . Frauncis Machiauell, and many other following Polybius, have as it were with one consent approoued his opinion. . ." Thus the relationship between Machiavelli and Bacon is more complex than has hitherto been assumed, and might be summarized in what has been said of Shakespeare: "while he clearly rejects the most fundamental tenets of

²⁵ McIntosh, Marjorie Keniston. "Sir Anthony Cooke: Tudor Humanist, Educator, and Religious Reformer." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119, no. 3 (1975): 233-50.

²⁶ Beza, Theodore. *Christian Meditations upon Eight Psalmes of the Prophet David*. London: Christopher Barker, 1582.

²⁷ Spedding, James. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, Volume XII, p. 167. London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869.

Machiavellian political philosophy as unnatural and therefore destructive, he is not so foolish as to dismiss Machiavelli's other insights out of hand."²⁸



The infamous Huguenot tract on the right of resistance, *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579), was included as a sort of antidote in several editions of *The Prince*. The *Vindiciae* was first published in Basel with a false imprint of Edinburgh, under the pseudonym Stephanus Brutus Junius – alluding to Marcus Junius Brutus (later in *Julius Caesar*), as well as Lucius Junius Brutus, who deposed Tarquin and established the Roman Republic (later in *The Rape of Lucrece*). Machiavelli advised that "Whoever takes up a tyranny and does not kill Brutus, and whoever makes a free state and does not kill the sons of Brutus, maintains himself for little time." The *Vindiciae's* account of Tarquin reads:

Tarquinius Superbus was therefore esteemed a tyrant, because being chosen neither by the people nor the senate, he intruded himself into the kingdom only by force and usurpation . . . The true causes why Tarquinius was deposed, were because he altered the custom, whereby the king was obliged to advise with the senate on all weighty affairs; that he made war and peace according to his own fancy; that he treated confederacies without demanding counsel and consent from the people or senate; that he violated the laws whereof he was made guardian; briefly that he made no reckoning to observe the contracts agreed between the former kings, and the nobility and people of Rome.

Anti-Machiavel reads:

Tarquin, who enterprised to slay his father-in-law king Servius Tullius to obtain the kingdom of Rome, showed well by that act and many others that he was a very tyrant. . . when he changed his just and royal domination into a tyrannical government, he became a contemner and despiser of all his subjects, both plebian and patrician. He brought a confusion and a corruption into justice; he took a greater number of servants into his guard than his predecessors had; he took away the authority from the Senate; moreover, he dispatched criminal and civil cases after his fancy, and not according to right; he cruelly punished those who complained of that change of estate as conspirators against him; he caused many great and notable persons to die secretly without any form of justice; he imposed tributes upon the people against the ancient form, to the impoverishment and oppression of some more than others; he had spies to discover what was said of him, and punished rigorously those who blamed either him or his government.

The introduction to *The Rape of Lucrece* echoes these passages, and may reflect what Eliot called Shakespeare's "shameless lifting" from Gentillet:

Tarquinius, for his excessive pride surnamed Superbus, after he had caused his own father-in-law Servius Tullius to be cruelly murdered, and, contrary to the Roman laws and customs, not requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had possessed himself of the

²⁸ Hollingshead (1996), p. 274.

kingdom . . . the people were so moved, that with one consent and a general acclamation the Tarquins were all exiled, and the state government changed from kings to consuls.

The *Vindiciae's* preface, which has been ascribed to Gentillet,²⁹ includes an edict of Theodosius II and Valentinian III, whereby emperors became subject to Roman law; the edict is also transcribed in full in *Anti-Machiavel*. The *Vindiciae's* preface challenged, "the Machiavellians are free to descend into the arena: let them come forth. As we have said, we shall use the true and legitimate weapons of Holy Scripture. . ." ³⁰ Gentillet, on the other hand, "must fight against their impiety . . . not by assailing them with the arms of the holy Scripture . . . but by their proper arms and weapons" (that is, pagan authors). However, Gentillet and the *Vindiciae* use many of the same sources, biblical and classical; this in itself is unsurprising, but the similarities are so extensive as to indicate at the least a strong influence.

The *Vindiciae's* authorship is still unresolved.³¹ It was first attributed to François Hotman, author of the *Francogallia* (1573), another Huguenot "Monarchomach" treatise. Hotman's son Jean had been a tutor in the household of English ambassador Sir Amias Paulet, while Francis Bacon happened to be living there. Beza, author of *De jure magistratuum* (The Right of Magistrates, 1574), was then thought responsible; his connections with the Bacon family have been noted. The next candidate was Philippe du Plessis Mornay, a Huguenot author and diplomat who fled to England after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres. During the peace negotiations at Poitiers in late 1577, Bacon met both Mornay and Jean de La Gessée, secretary to the Duke of Alençon. Mornay later invited Anthony Bacon to Montauban, and the two became good friends.³² Finally Hubert Languet, or a collaboration between Languet and Mornay, was credited with the *Vindiciae*. Languet corresponded extensively with Sir Philip Sidney, a friend of Bacon's who witnessed the Bartholomew events and helped try to negotiate a marriage between Elizabeth I and Alençon. Bacon himself has not been proposed as a possible author of the *Vindiciae*, but it is interesting to note that he had connections to all candidates, a fact that has so far been overlooked.



Numerous parallels with *Anti-Machiavel* are also found in Pierre de la Primaudaye's *L'Academie Française*, published in four volumes from 1578-98. A draft of the first volume, in English, was published as *The Anatomie of the Minde* in 1576. *The French Academy* strongly resembles Bacon's later essays; as with Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, it

²⁹ By Mastellone (1969); see Victoria Kahn, "Reading Machiavelli: Innocent Gentillet's Discourse on Method." *Political Theory* 22, no. 4 (1994): 539-60.

³⁰ *Vindiciae, contra tyrannos*, tr. George Garnett, p. 11. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Other citations are from the 1648 English translation dubiously attributed to William Walker, supposed executioner of Charles I.

³¹ See Barker, Ernest. "The Authorship of the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*." *Cambridge Historical Journal* 3, no. 2 (1930): 164-81. Also George Garnett, *Vindiciae, contra tyrannos*, pp. lv–lxxvi.

³² See Daphne du Maurier, *Golden Lads* (1975).

features four young French gentlemen secluded for purposes of study. In the dedication to Henri III, Primaudaye (who later worked for the Duke of Alençon) speaks of having attended the Estates General in 1576-77 (as did Bacon). He begins: "Sir, if we credit the saying of Plato, commonwealths begin then to be happy, when kings exercise philosophy, and philosophers reign." Gentillet said: "there cannot come a better and more profitable thing to a people than to have a prince wise of himself; therefore, said Plato, men may call it a happy commonwealth when either the prince can play the philosopher, or when a philosopher comes to reign there." Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* echoes: "although he might be thought partial to his own profession, that said 'then should people and estates be happy, when either kings were philosophers, or philosophers kings'; yet so much is verified by experience, that under learned princes and governors there have ever been the best times." As a recent example Primaudaye cited "Francis I, a prince of most famous memory, [who] so loved and favored letters and the professors of them that he deserved the name of the restorer of sciences and good arts." Gentillet said "the restoration of good letters, which Francis I brought into France, did more to celebrate and immortalize his name in the memory of all Christian nations, than all the great wars and victories his predecessors had."

As with Gentillet, Primaudaye attributes France's troubles to foreign influence: "the ruin and destruction of this French monarchy proceeds of no other second cause (our iniquity being the first) than of the mixture which we have made of strangers with ourselves. Wherein we are not contented to seek them out under their roofs, unless we also draw them unto us and lodge them under our roofs, yea prefer them before our own countrymen and citizens in the offices and honorable places of this kingdom..." An English intelligence paper credited to Francis (or Anthony) Bacon, "Notes on the Present State of Christendom" (1582), reported "division in [France] for matters of religion and state, through discontentment of the nobility to see strangers advanced to the greatest charges of the realm, the offices of justice sold, the treasury wasted, the people polled, the country destroyed, hath bred great trouble, and like to see more."³³ Gentillet complains of "all France fashioned after the manners, conditions, and vices of foreigners that govern it, and who have the principal charges and estates." Shakespeare's *Richard II* laments:

Reports of fashions in proud Italy
Whose manners still our tardy-apish nation
Limps after in base imitation.
Where the world doth thrust forth a vanity-
So be it new, there's no respect how vile. . .

Primaudaye warns: "It is a hard matter (said Socrates) for a man to bridle his desire, but he that addeth riches thereunto, is mad." Gentillet asked: "Who could then bridle vices

³³ Spedding, *Works* Volume VIII, p. 27. The same report noted that "the diseased estate of the world doth so concur with [Alençon's] active forwardness, as it give him matter to work upon."

and iniquities, which are fed with much wealth, and no less liberty?" Bacon's *New Atlantis* again echoes: "the reverence of a man's self is, next religion, the chiefest bridle of all vices" (Calvin stressed the need to "bridle our affections"). Finally, *The French Academy* echoes the strident tone as well as the content of *Anti-Machiavel*:

[T]here are a great many amongst us of those foolish men of whom David speaks, *Who say in their hearts that there is no God*. In the forefront of which company, the students of Machiavel's principles and practicers of his precepts may worthily be ranged. This bad fellow, whose works are no less accounted of among his followers than were Apollo's Oracles amongst the Heathen, nay than the sacred Scriptures are among sound Christians, blushed not to belch out these horrible blasphemies against pure religion, and so against God the Author thereof; namely, that the religion of the heathen made them stout and courageous, whereas Christian religion makes the professors thereof base minded, timorous, and fit to become a prey to every one; that since men fell from the religion of the Heathen, they became so corrupt that they would believe neither God nor the Devil; that Moses so possessed the land of Judea as the Goths did by strong hand usurp part of the Roman Empire. These and such like positions are spewed out by this hell hound sometimes against true religion, other whiles against the religion and Church of Rome, sometimes also taxing the religion of the heathen of falsehood and cozenage; so that in truth he would have all religion to be of like account with his disciples, except it be so far forth as the pretense and show of religion may serve to set forward and effect their wicked policies. And for this cause he sets down this rule for every Prince and Magistrate to frame his religion by, namely, that he should pretend to be very religious and devout, although it be but in hypocrisy. And to this he adds a second precept no less impious, that a Prince should with tooth and nail maintain false miracles and untruths in religion, so long as his people may thereby be kept in greater obedience.



Gentillet's influence, while not so great as to account for "all Elizabethan misunderstanding" of Machiavelli, has not been fully understood. Certainly it is enough to warrant more attention, and many more allusions remain to be found. Though much maligned and seldom studied, recently Gentillet has found a few defenders; though he represents a world long past, many of his arguments are still valid; and even where he is obsolete or unfair to Machiavelli, the historical citations are worthwhile. Gentillet is admittedly reactionary, as his adversary was revolutionary; but his thinking, as a previous editor said, "always shows itself to be a curious mixture of idealism and common sense . . . it would be quite wrong to see Gentillet as an idealist dreamer combatting the pragmatic scientist, Machiavelli."³⁴ Leo Strauss, who claimed to hold the "old-fashioned and simple" view of Machiavelli, wrote that "one cannot see the true character of Machiavelli's thought unless one recovers for himself and in himself the pre-

³⁴ Rathé, *Ibid.*, 220-1.

modern heritage of the western world, both Biblical and classical.”³⁵ This perspective is best espoused by Gentillet, who “was not naïve enough to believe that princes had always been virtuous, but viewing the world as a battle ground between good and evil, he was not prepared to surrender without a fight, to accept an amoral standard in personal or political life.”³⁶ Issues raised by Machiavelli will always be with us, and some of his positions will remain controversial; his opponents, even if dated and imperfect, should continue to find readers as well.

³⁵ Strauss, Leo. *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 9-12. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. It should be noted, however, that Strauss emphasized the need for “esoteric” writing, whereby philosophers cloak amoral and dangerous views in conventional piety.

³⁶ Rathé, *Ibid.*, 209.