

Constancy and Commonwealth: Nero and English
Political Culture *c.*1580-*c.*1630

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Abstract

In the mid-sixteenth century early modern authors became interested in the historical works of the Roman writer Tacitus, and in the philosophy of the Roman statesman Seneca. Richard Tuck has termed this movement “new humanism” – a cynical and sceptical form of humanism based on the political and philosophical outlook of Tacitus and Seneca - to distinguish it from old humanism which had been largely inspired by the writings of Cicero.

In England “new humanism” was reflected in historical, philosophical and dramatic works crafted from around 1580 onwards. These works took inspiration from Tacitus’s pessimistic treatment of the psychology of power, and from Seneca’s philosophy of constancy which taught men how to survive in the capricious world of politics. English “new humanism” created a rhetoric that was often critical of political life, and that called for men to oppose the political culture associated with the royal court.

In existing scholarship this political dimension of “new humanism” has been characterised as “republican” in tone. However, this overstates the radical character of the political thought associated with this interest in Tacitus and Seneca. This thesis reappraises existing scholarship on the politics of English “new humanism” and points to the conservative aspects of the movement. It uses early modern figurations of the emperor Nero as a case study to explore English interaction with the histories of Tacitus and the philosophy of Seneca, to demonstrate that English “new humanism” was entirely compatible with belief in monarchical power.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Philip Honoré Goodburn.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference has been made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma at the University of York or any other institution.

There is a discussion of the provenance of the *Tragedy of Nero* and of theatre as a metaphor in this play in my 2011 Master's thesis — “[B]ehold an Emperor dancing,/Playing oth'stage”: Theatrical Politics and Political Theatre in the *Tragedy of Nero* (1624 &1633)”.

Introduction

In late Elizabethan and early Stuart England many playwrights, political thinkers and scholars became interested in the works of the historian Tacitus, and of the philosopher Seneca. Early modern writers identified these men as astute judges of human affairs, who provided much advice for readers who wished to understand human behaviour and historical causation. One such early modern author was William Cornwallis, an essayist and critic, who, writing in the closing years of Elizabeth's reign, recognised his contemporaries' fascination with Tacitus and Seneca. In an attempt to appeal to contemporary tastes, he produced two works deeply indebted to these two classical writers. In 1601, he published a ground-breaking work on the political philosophy of Seneca's tragedies.¹ Here, Cornwallis takes a number of sentences or phrases from Seneca's works and provides an exegesis to explain precisely what relevance Seneca's words might have for the early modern reader. Cornwallis draws attention to the nuggets of wisdom contained within the dramatic works of the Roman statesman, and points to Seneca's acuity in revealing the make-up of man's personal and political existence. Around the same time as writing this work on Seneca, Cornwallis was working on providing his own words of wisdom in the form of his *Essayes*, which acted as a series of reflections on human life. This work is modelled on the *Essais* of the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, and Cornwallis consciously emulates the style of his French counterpart, and displays "a high level of respect" for Montaigne even where their opinions differ.² Montaigne's work was infused with content drawn from Seneca's philosophical writing, and Cornwallis continues this reverence for Seneca in, for example, his treatment of the theme of constancy.

In this later work, Cornwallis also addresses the popularity of the historian Tacitus. He underscores the political value of Tacitus's work, and draws attention to the idea that the interpretation of Tacitus's writing had become politically charged.

¹ Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, "Neostoicism and Absolutism in Late Elizabethan England," in *Politics, Ideology and the Law in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of J. H. M. Salmon*, ed. Adrianna E. Bakos (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 17. Lisa Ferraro Parmelee notes that this work was the "first English book devoted entirely to Seneca".

² William M. Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey: Reading the Essays in Shakespeare's Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 80.

Of History if you wil haue me showe you the best first, I must begin, and ende with *Tacitus* so graue a stile, so Iudicial a Censure, and so piercing an eye into the designes of Princes, and States, neuer met in one man: he is so worthie, that I wish hee were as rare, for I holde no eye meete to wade in him, that is not at the helme of a State.³

Tacitus, he suggests, should be admired not only for his style of writing, but for his forensic-like examination of the art of politics. Later in the same collection, Cornwallis heaps more praise upon the Roman author, by arguing that “he is more wise, then [sic] safe”, but that this lack of safety is caused less by Tacitus himself than by those who have so “ill handeled” him.⁴ Cornwallis suggests that those who want to read, study and borrow from Tacitus, approach his works with trepidation, not because Tacitus is a “dangerous” or subversive author, but because no reader can easily throw off the meaning attributed to his works by early modern commentators and exegetes. Referring to contemporary commentators, Cornwallis continues, “some of them...haue so powdred him with morality, that they conuert his iuice into as little variety, or good vse”.⁵ Others, he suggests, “haue left him as they found him, without making him confesse any thing”.⁶ “[A]ll of them”, he concludes, “haue done no more, thē to try who loues gold so well as to pul it out of the durt, for he that fetches his sentences out of their pages, aduentures a bemiring”.⁷

Cornwallis’s work reveals that, for early modern readers and authors, the words of Tacitus and Seneca had become part of the political landscape. When authors lifted themes, words and concepts from these writers, they were doing more than merely imitating their style or content: they were making a political declaration. Furthermore, when writers borrowed from a particular translation of Tacitus or Seneca, or quoted their words indirectly from another writer, these choices were equally meaningful and were often made with the intention of making a specific political statement. The concern of this thesis is to attempt to establish the nature of this statement. When English authors wrote plays dealing with the histories found in Tacitus’s *Annals*, or wrote tracts inspired by Seneca’s philosophy, what political relevance did these works have? Can we identify the political outlook of those writers who harnessed the language of prudence and

³ William Cornwallis, *Essayes by Sir William Corne-Waleys the Younger, Knight* (London: S. Stafford and R. Read for Edmund Mattes, 1600-1601), STC 5775, sig. h3v.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

necessity found in Tacitus's historical writing, or of those writers drawn to the language of constancy and providence found in Senecan philosophy? Why did authors turn towards Tacitus and Seneca in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period? This thesis seeks to answer these questions by providing an analysis of the ways in which English writers used the works of Tacitus and Seneca (and of early modern Continental writers influenced by them) when writing about the reign of the emperor Nero.

Humanism and "new humanism"

Before beginning to explore the political implications of interest in Tacitus and Seneca, it is necessary to define the precise context in which this intellectual movement arose. It is important to establish how the classical past was used and understood before the mid sixteenth-century, and to consider how modern scholars have interpreted the vogue for Tacitus and Seneca. In the early modern period, the education of individuals revolved around the *studia humanitatis*. Generally speaking, this humanist education usually comprised the study of language, history, rhetoric and moral philosophy. The emphasis was on extracting from within the Western classical tradition the values and concepts that were most profitable in creating a well-rounded individual capable of participating in political and cultural life.⁸ This education did not involve the passive study and imitation of the style or ideas found in classical texts, rather, it was meant to provide students with an outlook and a system of values that they could put into practice. Renaissance humanism was, therefore, "an activity" which involved the revival of classical texts, and "the assimilation of the ideas and values that they contain".⁹ The classical past was, as Freyja Cox Jensen has recently asserted, valued not merely in itself, but because it could enlighten the present.¹⁰ Anthony Grafton characterises the humanist scholar as an individual "firmly committed to the belief that practical instruction for the most urgent tasks in political and social life can best be found in Greek and Roman texts."¹¹ Humanism quickly developed a political dimension in informing the most

⁸ Nicholas Mann, "The Origins of Humanism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰ Freyja Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic in Early Modern England* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 5.

¹¹ Anthony Grafton, "Humanism and Political Theory," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, ed. J. H. Burns with Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 9.

important decisions made by rulers, and in providing a ready-made language of power: "...it could legitimate or attack a regime, defend a war, instil patriotism, and offer advice in time of crisis."¹² For example, the work of the historian and antiquarian Edmund Bolton, whose history of Nero's reign forms the subject of the fourth chapter, demonstrates the ways in which the Roman past had a practical application. Bolton's marginal annotations, accompanying the dedicatory epistle to King James reveal that he is concerned with the *utility* of Nero's reign, and with how it provides a political lesson: he is focused on "*the principall good use of the badnesse of the Neronian raigne.*"¹³ The experiences of the classical world provided a frame of reference in which to discuss contemporary politics, and were used to form theories about the ideal practice of politics.

In the earlier part of the sixteenth century, Englishmen took their political and philosophical lessons principally from the writings of Cicero and other writers concerned with the institutions of the Roman Republic. It was, as Cox-Jensen has recently claimed, "Cicero, Caesar and Sallust" who "were universally taught", and it was principally through these authors that "Roman ideals and civic virtues" became entrenched in the minds of young Englishmen.¹⁴ Grammar school education was, she continues, "unquestionably Ciceronian, Caesarian, and Sallustian" and "it was therefore necessarily both classical and republican."¹⁵ For example, Cardinal Wolsey's 1523 statutes for Ipswich Grammar school stipulated that Cicero's *Selected Epistles* be studied in the fifth year, while Harrow School's 1591 statutes prescribed the study of Cicero in four out of the five years of study.¹⁶ The grammar schools instilled a "sense of active civic duty to the commonweal" in their students, and taught them "the importance of *negotium* rather than *otium*" by stressing that true virtue was fostered by the *vita activa*.¹⁷ At the universities this pattern of reliance on Cicero was continued. Cicero was included in the

¹² Ibid., 14.

¹³ Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved...* (London: Thomas Snodham and Bernard Alsop, 1627), STC 3222, "Dedication to King James," sig. A3v.

¹⁴ Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, 27.

¹⁵ Ibid., 29.

¹⁶ Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13.

¹⁷ Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*, 29 n.20. Cox Jensen explains her use of the terms classical and republican and outlines that she does not mean to suggest that this education system was republican in a constitutional sense: "This is not to say that it was 'classically republican' in the political sense. I mean rather that the politics of the Roman republic, the importance of *negotium* rather than *otium* and a sense of active duty to the commonweal, are central to the works of these authors and, consequently, to the curriculum as it was studied in the grammar schools."

lists of set texts for instruction in rhetoric at both Oxford and Cambridge, and his *Orationes* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* are frequently found in reading lists.¹⁸ It has been argued that Englishmen, like their Italian counterparts, were striving to create the *vir virtutis*: that is, the ideal man whose education and rhetorical ability makes him the perfect citizen or servant to the commonwealth.¹⁹ This historical and rhetorical scholarship, then, primed men for action and encouraged the idea that virtue was attained through active participation in the commonwealth.²⁰

In the view of some historians of early modern political culture, this educational grounding was instrumental in transforming subjects into citizens. In his seminal “Monarchical Republic” thesis, Patrick Collinson presented a direct challenge to the conservative interpretation of the Elizabethan and Jacobean polity offered by J. G. A. Pocock, where, “the hierarchy of degree, the community of custom, the national structure of election” held a check on the language of citizenship before 1649.²¹ Collinson saw that, by the Elizabethan period, Englishmen did not think of the monarchy as a personal “despotism”, rather, they considered themselves to be members of a polity endowed with a “measure of self-direction...but with a constitution which also provided for the rule of a single person by hereditary right.”²² When the political situation necessitated it, the mechanics of this self-directed state automatically sprang into action.²³ Humanism was central to this transformation in English governance, because the rhetorical and

¹⁸ Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, 51-52. Mack refers here to the “*Statuta Reginae Elizabethae anno duodecimo regni sui edita*” in *Documents Relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge*, vol. 1 (London: George E. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1852), 457 and 459. The references to Cicero here are on 457: “*Dialectices professor Aristotelis elenchos aut topica Ciceronis. Praelector rhetorices Quintilianum, Hermogenem aut aliquem alium librum oratoriarum Ciceronis.*”

¹⁹ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 87-101.

²⁰ Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought 1570-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10-11.

²¹ John F. McDiarmid, “Introduction,” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England, Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson*, ed. John F. McDiarmid (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 2; J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), 350.

²² Patrick Collinson, “The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I,” chap. 2 in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 36.

²³ *Ibid.*, 46-56. Collinson describes the occasions in which we see these “quasi-republican” ideas being floated. He explains, although there were notions of a quasi-republic expressed in the 1560s, a more serious articulation is found during the debate over the fate of Mary Queen of Scots in 1572 where parliament led the discussion of a sovereign’s fate. A second “republican” moment can be noted in the various proposals made in 1584 (Bond of Association and Burghley’s proposals for the Interregnum government) to deal with the assassination of Elizabeth, should it have occurred. Collinson also points to various forms of self-governance we encounter in provincial administration.

intellectual grounding received by young men created a body of intellectual public officials who could, Collinson argues, conceive of themselves as a public entity.²⁴ The grammar school system created a literate group of individuals, well-versed in the language of virtue and citizenship, and thus produced many formal, and informal, groups of “citizens...concealed within subjects”.²⁵ Collinson was, however, keen to stress that this increased sense of civic responsibility, or the existence of a community of Ciceronian-inspired rhetoricians, did not constitute “a kind of constitutional monarchy” nor did it create a “headless republic” and it is not even recognisable as a “continuous, coherent republican movement.”²⁶ Collinson did, nevertheless, tentatively forge some form of link between the study and use of the Roman past, and the rise of quasi-republican ways of thinking.

Where Collinson was cautious, more recent scholars have been bolder in asserting the idea that English humanism led directly to the interest in republicanism as a political ideal. In the work of Markku Peltonen, as Blair Worden has noted, the “civic republican” idea that we might associate with Collinson’s essay, merges seamlessly with the growth of “constitutional republican” thinking.²⁷ Central to Peltonen’s thesis is the idea that humanist education endowed individuals with a political and rhetorical tradition that had practical application.²⁸ Peltonen argues that classical humanism was a dominant influence in late Elizabethan and early Stuart culture, and that the revival of classical themes and ideas *did* lead to the development of a republican tradition in this period.²⁹ He asserts that classical humanists derived their understanding of politics from the Ciceronian idea that the *vita activa* was preferable to the *vita contemplativa*: they believed that the active life or practical citizenship conferred virtue upon the individual

²⁴ Patrick Collinson, “*De Republica Anglorum*: Or, History with the Politics Put Back,” chap. 1 in *Elizabethan Essays*, especially 19-20.

²⁵ Collinson, “*De Republica Anglorum*,” 19.

²⁶ Collinson, “The Monarchical Republic,” 55.

²⁷ Blair Worden, “Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience,” in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, vol. 1: *Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Martin Van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 308-310.

²⁸ See Peltonen, “Citizenship and Republicanism in Elizabethan England,” in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, vol.1, 85-106 and *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 7. See also Markku Peltonen, “Rhetoric and Politics in the Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth,” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England, Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson*, 109-128.

²⁹ Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 12.

and the commonwealth.³⁰ This focus on virtuous citizenship led, as Peltonen asserts throughout, to an interrogation of the existing hierarchy of “nobility” or “fitness” to rule.³¹ This interrogation led Englishmen towards the conclusion that: “[t]he public good was, therefore, not totally dependent on the qualities and abilities of the prince, but also, and perhaps in particular, on the virtuous civic participation of the people as a whole.”³² In his most recent book, Peltonen suggests that the pre-eminent place of Cicero in the humanist “programme” in England provided men of all ranks with a thorough appreciation of the *ars rhetorica*, and that this endowed these men with a power that was “sovereign and regal, mythical and unlimited.”³³ What Collinson and Peltonen imply is that Englishmen, taking inspiration from Cicero, founded an educational system geared towards service to the commonwealth, and that they harnessed a political language that favoured optimistic and self-effacing commitment to the common good.

From the 1570s onwards, however, this brand of humanism which celebrated Cicero’s vision of the citizen came to be eclipsed by what Richard Tuck has described as “new humanism”: a more sceptical approach to political life inspired by the works of Tacitus and Seneca.³⁴ A more “modern, instrumental and often unscrupulous politics” emerged in this period, and it seemed to cater for a European populace weary from religious conflict, and tried by political uncertainty.³⁵ As Alexandra Gajda demonstrates in her survey of the reception of Tacitus in early modern Europe, the old “certainties” that virtuous rulers received virtuous counsel, and governed with the interest of the commonwealth at heart, were undermined by the waning of the city-state model of governance in Italy, aggressive imperial expansion, and near continuous warfare.³⁶ In this climate, Tacitus’s particular appeal lay in his political realism. His was not an idealistic vision of political life, but a reflection on the psychology of power, of friendships and of rivalries. It was also Tacitus’s ambiguity, however, that ensured his works had a wide

³⁰ Ibid., especially, 18-35.

³¹ Ibid., 35.

³² Ibid., 39-40.

³³ Markku Peltonen, *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-revolutionary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 14.

³⁴ Richard Tuck, *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁵ Ibid., xii.

³⁶ Alexandra Gajda, “Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c.1530-c.1640,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, ed. A. J. Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 254-255.

readership. He could be co-opted as an anti-monarchical writer by those who read his contempt “for flattery and other forms of servility” as a condemnation of the imperial age.³⁷ This, for example, is the attitude of Leonardo Bruni who, in his *Panegyric to the City of Florence*, borrowed from the opening phrases of Tacitus’s *Histories* to emphasise that rule by a “single head” extinguishes all forms of virtue within a polity.³⁸ On the other hand, Tacitus’s account of the means by which the emperors established and secured their power through prudent governance and through the suppression of opposition quenched the thirst of those pointing to Europe’s need for “strong or ‘absolute’ government” to provide some form of stability.³⁹ This, for example, was the Tacitus understood by Justus Lipsius, who, in his *Politica*, used Tacitus’s *Agricola* to explain that the successful ruler is “able to intermingle that which is profitable, with that which is honest”.⁴⁰ These two interpretative stances have come to be described using the short-hand of “red” Tacitism, a form of republican Tacitism, and “black” Tacitism, a form of absolutist Tacitism, with both forms co-existing uneasily throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁴¹

Tacitus’s appeal was widespread. Peter Burke’s survey of the readership of classical texts in the period 1450-1700 indicates the increase in demand for Tacitus’s works in the second half of the sixteenth century, and first part of the seventeenth. From this we learn that the number of editions of the *Annals* and *Histories* more than doubled

³⁷ Peter Burke, “Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, 484.

³⁸ I take the phrase “single head” here from the version of Bruni’s work cited by Kapust who explains that Bruni took Tacitus’s preoccupation with liberty to explain how a republican city state best safeguards individual freedoms; see Daniel Kapust, “Tacitus and Political Thought,” in *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World: A Companion to Tacitus*, ed. Victoria Emma Pagán (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 507-508. The passage from Bruni reads as follows: “Now, after the Republic had been subjected to the power of a single head, “those outstanding minds vanished,” as Tacitus says. So it is of importance whether a colony was founded at a later date, since by then all the virtue and nobility of the Romans had been destroyed; nothing great or outstanding could be conveyed by those who left the city.” Leonardo Bruni, *Panegyric to the City of Florence* trans. Benjamin G. Kohl in *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, ed. Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 154 also cited in Kapust, “Tacitus and Political Thought,” 507.

³⁹ Gajda, “Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c.1530-c.1640,” 259.

⁴⁰ Justus Lipsius, *Six Bookes of Politickes or Civil Doctrine Written in Latine by Justus Lipsius which doe Especially Concerne Principallitie* trans. William Jones (London: Richard Field for William Ponsonby, 1594), STC 15701, sig. Qr.

⁴¹ Guiseppe Toffanin, *Machiavelli e il “Tacitismo”: la Politica Storica al Tempo della Controriforma* (Padua: A Draghi, 1921). See also Peter Burke, “Tacitism,” in *Tacitus*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 149-171.

from thirty-two in 1599, to sixty-seven by 1649.⁴² By the end of the sixteenth century it was Justus Lipsius's version of Tacitus's *Opera* that formed the centrepiece in early modern Tacitean scholarship.⁴³ Ben Jonson, as he explains to his audience, mined the 1600 edition of Lipsius's Tacitus in writing his *Sejanus*, while Robert Sidney assiduously annotated his 1585 edition while serving as part of Essex's campaign in the Netherlands.⁴⁴ Alongside various editions of Lipsius's Tacitus, by this period, Englishmen could read the *Annals* and the *Germania* in Richard Grenewey's translation of 1598, and the *Histories* and *Agricola* in Henry Savile's translation of 1591.⁴⁵ The author of the *Tragedy of Nero*, whose work will be discussed in the third chapter of the present study, used the 1598 edition of Grenewey's Tacitus (which, from this date, was could be bought together with Savile's works) to craft his dramatization of the life of Nero, while Ben Jonson also borrowed from Grenewey's text for his *Sejanus*, despite condemning this version as having been "ignorantly done jn Englishe".⁴⁶ Savile's Tacitean scholarship was instantly more popular, not least because his own *End of Nero*

⁴² Peter Burke, "A Survey of the Popularity of Ancient Historians, 1450-1700," *History and Theory* 5, no.2 (1996): 137, 'Table 2'.

⁴³ The first edition was published in 1574 but Lipsius's edition and commentary was subsequently republished in 1589, 1595, 1600, and 1607; see Jeanine de Landtsheer, "Commentaries on Tacitus by Justus Lipsius: Their Editing and Printing History," in *The Unfolding of Words. Commentary in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Judith Rice Henderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 188-233.

⁴⁴ Jonson famously primed his audience by listing the works he had consulted in writing *Sejanus*: "To the Readers" ¶1 2v: "I haue quoted the page, to name what Editions I follow'd. *Tacit. Lips.* in 4^o. *Antverp. edit.* 600. *Dio. Folio. Hen. Step.* 92. For the rest, as Sueton. Seneca, & co. the chapter doth sufficiently direct, or the edition is not varied". "Notes on *Sejanus* quarto of 1605" in *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, vol. 1, *The Man and His Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), 251. See also Daniel Boughner, "Jonson's Use of Lipsius in *Sejanus*," *Modern Language Notes* 73, no. 4 (1958): 247-455. For Sidney's annotations see Joel Davis, "Robert Sidney's Marginal Comments on Tacitus and the English Campaigns in the Low Countries," *Sidney Journal* 24, no. 1 (2006):1-19.

⁴⁵ In the *STC* there are five different editions of Grenewey's translation from the period covered by this thesis (c.1580-c.1630): Richard Grenewey, *The annales of Cornelius Tacitus. The description of Germanie* (London: Arn. Hatfield for Bonham and John Norton, 1598), STC 23644; Richard Grenewey, *The annales of Cornelius Tacitus. The description of Germanie* (London: Arnold Hatfield for John Norton, 1605), STC 23645; Richard Grenewey, *The annales of Cornelius Tacitus. The description of Germanie* (London: Arnold Hatfield for John Norton, 1612) STC 23646; Richard Grenewey, *The annales of Cornelius Tacitus. The description of Germanie* (London: John Bill, 1622), STC 23647.

⁴⁶ Stephen James Teller, "The Anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition," (PhD thesis University of Illinois, 1967), xx-xxi. Teller notes the fact that the anonymous playwright seems to follow Grenewey's error in naming the conspirator Piso as Lucius Piso rather than Gaius Piso. See: Grenewey, *The annales of Cornelius Tacitus* (London: Arn. Hatfield for Bonham and John Norton, 1598), STC 23644, 237 and Anon., *Tragedy of Nero, newly written* (London: Augustine Mathewes and John Norton for Thomas Jones, 1624), STC 18430, sig. D1r; sig. F2r; Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* ed. Philip Ayres, *The Revels Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 14-16. Jonson's remarks are in "Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden," in *Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford and Simpson, vol. 1, 149. Jonson describes Grenewey's work "The first four bookes of Tacit[us] ignorantly done jn Englishe".

satisfied those readers desperate to hear a Tacitean judgement on Nero's overthrow. The author of *Romes Monarchie* praised Savile's work as a "fine" translation and "[a] worthe present for a King, or Queene", while Edmund Bolton described Savile's *End of Nero* as a "maister-peece, and a great one".⁴⁷ Jonson likewise congratulated Savile for having delivered "the soule of TACITVS" to his readers, and for having so masterfully "restor'd" the fall of Nero in perfect imitation of Tacitus's style.⁴⁸ According to Jonson's epigram, Savile gave readers what they desired: "[w]e need a man, can speak of the intents,/The councells, actions, orders, and euent/Of state, and censure them: we need his pen/Can write the things, the causes, and the men."⁴⁹ The study of Tacitus was widespread, but his words were often appropriated to inform conflicting viewpoints. The conflict over Tacitus's political value was perfectly illustrated by Degory Wheare in his inaugural lectures as the Camden Chair of Ancient History at the University of Oxford in 1623, where he drew attention to those, on the one hand, who praised Tacitus as a political guide, and to those on the other hand who thought him the breeder of mischief.⁵⁰

The attraction to Seneca's writing revolved around his philosophy of constancy and contemplation, which claimed to insulate men against the turmoil of the external world. The Ciceronian emphasis on "social morality and on the ethical need to subordinate one's own interests to those of one's republic" fell by the wayside, as individuals sought refuge instead in the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, and focused on the preservation of the self.⁵¹ The benefits of Senecan philosophy in galvanising the core of man's inner strength were stressed by Lipsius in his prefatory dedication to his edition of Seneca's complete works of 1605. He explains the salience of Seneca's philosophy: "[b]ut seeing the worlds Lithargie so farre growne, that it benumbed wholly with false appearance, I made choice of this author, whose life was a pattern of continence, whose

⁴⁷ E. L., *Romes monarchie* ... (London: widdow Orwin for Matthew Lawe, 1596), STC 21296, sig. K4; Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved*... (London: Thomas Snodham and Bernard Alsop, 1627), STC 3222, "An Historical Parallel", 16.

⁴⁸ Ben Jonson, "To Sir Henrie Savile" xcv in *Epigrammes in Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, vol. 8, *The Poems. The Prose Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), 61.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁰ Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 200-201; Ronald Mellor, "Tacitus, Academic Politics, and Regicide in the Reign of Charles I: The Tragedy of Dr. Isaac Dorislaus," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11, no.2. (2004): 169-171. Wheare explains the dispute over the meaning and interpretation of Tacitus with reference to the views of Lipsius and Casaubon; see Degory Wheare, *The Method and Order of Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories* ... (London: M. Flesher for Charles Brome, 1685), Wing W1592, 104-108.

⁵¹ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 51.

doctrine a detection and correction of vanities, and whose death a certaine instance of constancy.”⁵² Lipsius’s 1605 edition of Seneca’s extant works was available to English readers in the original Latin, but it was Thomas Lodge’s 1614 translation of Lipsius’s text and commentary that brought Seneca to a wider audience.⁵³

In addition to these editions of classical texts, English readers were introduced to a range of texts which were coloured by Tacitus’s political outlook, or inspired by Seneca’s philosophy. The dispersal of what might loosely be described as “new humanist” texts from the Continent has been well-documented in existing scholarship.⁵⁴ By 1630 English readers could access vernacular translations of a number of key works: Justus Lipsius’s *De constantia* (1594) and *Politica* (1594); Guillaume du Vair’s *Philosophie morale des Stoïques* (1598); Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais* (1603) and Pierre Charron’s *De la sagesse* (1608).⁵⁵ The vogue for these Continental works was noted by those directly involved in translating them. William Jones, the translator of Lipsius’s *Politica* remarked that his was the fourth attempt at an English version of Lipsius’s book.⁵⁶ With Jones’s version making the presses, other would-be translators, such as John Stradling, turned their attention to translating Lipsius’s *De constantia*.⁵⁷ A number of English writers produced their own works: some based on the histories found in Tacitus’s works and some based on passages taken piece-meal from the philosophy of Seneca. Both Robert Dallington and Thomas Gainsford appear to have been moved by the idea of prudence, and produced works dealing with conduct in military and civil life

⁵² Justus Lipsius ed., *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca...* trans. Thomas Lodge (London: William Stansby, 1614), STC 22213, “To the Courteous Reader”.

⁵³ There were various editions of Seneca’s separate works available in this period. Ownership of the 1605 edition seems to have been moderate. For example a copy of 1605 edition seems to have been donated in the same year to the library of St John’s College, Oxford (Shelf mark Lambda.1.6) by William Fletcher.

⁵⁴ See for example: Lisa Ferraro Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce: French Anti-League Propaganda in Late Elizabethan England* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1996); Parmelee, “Neostoicism and Absolutism in Late Elizabethan England,” 3-20; Gilles D. Monsarrat, *Light from the Porch: Stoicism and English Renaissance Literature* 86: Collection Études Anglaises (Paris: Didier-Érudition, 1984), 30-66; Paulina Kewes, “Henry Savile’s Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74, no.4 (2011): 515-551; Salmon, “Stoicism and Roman Example,” 199-225.

⁵⁵ Robert Dallington, *Aphorismes civill and militarie amplified with authorities, and exemplified with historie, out of the first quaterne of Fr. Guicciardine* (London: R. Field for Edward Blount, 1613), STC 6197.

⁵⁶ F. J. Levy, “Hayward, Daniel, and the Beginnings of Politic History in England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 50, no.1 (1987): 13.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

that were apparently similar in tone to Lipsius's *Politica*.⁵⁸ Joseph Hall, known as the "English Seneca", was drawn to the Senecan philosophy of tranquillity, and urged readers to place trust in God as the means to create a form of peace on earth.⁵⁹ We also know that readers read their classics alongside early modern works inspired by the ancient texts. For example, the Oxford scholar and St John's College Dean of Law, John English, seems to have counted Gwinne's *Nero tragedia nova*, Hall's *Heaven Upon Earth*, Cornwallis's *Essayes*, Lipsius's *Politica* in his collection alongside editions of Seneca's and Tacitus's works.⁶⁰ What we are faced with when exploring English "new humanism" is a cultural movement that took inspiration from Tacitus and Seneca, but that moved beyond the words of these men to create forms of Tacitism and Senecanism that blended ancient concepts with early modern concerns.

As Tuck claimed in *Philosophy and Government*, what early modern theorists took from the works of Tacitus and Seneca was the general emphasis on self-preservation.⁶¹ Writers extracted a malleable rhetoric from these classical authors, and this rhetoric stressed the benefits of self-interest, both of the individual and the state, and recognised the currency of "necessity" in justifying acts taken in order to protect the "self", whatever the self was.⁶² In England the same was true. As Salmon has argued, Tacitus and Seneca "were seen as parts of a single ethical and political movement" providing counsel in the arts of survival.⁶³ Thus the specific *sententiae* found in Tacitus's works were fleshed out into a more vague philosophy that sought ways to assist men in how they could either engage with, or withdraw from, political life. An author

⁵⁸ I am reliant here on Salmon's interpretation of Gainsford's work: Thomas Gainsford, *Observations of State and Military Affairs, for the most part collected out of Cornelius Tacitus* Huntington Library, MS EL 6857 cited in Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 217. Salmon discusses Dallington in "Stoicism and Roman Example," 208; 215-217 and in J. H. M. Salmon, "Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 181-182.

⁵⁹ Joseph Hall, *Heaven Vpon Earth, or Of True Peace, and Tranquilitie of Minde...* (London: John Windet for John Porter, 1606), STC 12666. See also the discussion in Adriana McCrea, *Constant Minds: Political Virtue and the Lipsian Paradigm in England, 1584-1650* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 172-196.

⁶⁰ W. C. Costin, "The Inventory of John English, B.C.L., Fellow of St. John's College," *Oxoniensia* XI-XII (1946-1947): 106-116. Mordechai Feingold also discusses Costin's reading in "The Humanities," in *The History of the University of Oxford*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke, vol.4, *The Seventeenth-century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 324.

⁶¹ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*. Tuck makes this plain in the opening section; see xiii-xvii.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 51-52. Tuck explains throughout *Philosophy and Government* that the language of self preservation provided the defense of a range of political actions.

⁶³ Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 199.

might adopt a “cut and paste” approach to Tacitus’s works, and extract phrases from his writing and place them within the text of another narrative. This was the approach taken by John Hayward in his *Henrie III*, where, as Francis Bacon remarked, Hayward used Tacitus in his treatment of the deposition of Richard II.⁶⁴ Often an author might not borrow Tacitus’s words directly, but might engage with the general outlook of Tacitus’s writing. For instance, even though, as a pastoral romance, Philip Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* seems far from the atmosphere of imperial Rome, we might describe it as a Tacitist work, because Sidney engages with the themes of rebellion, the *arcana imperii* and liberty in a similar way to Tacitus, and was inspired by Lipsius’s scholarship.⁶⁵ So, in the present study, a reference to an author’s Tacitism alludes to an author’s general interest in the historical events recounted by Tacitus, or to an author’s interest in the central political theme of Tacitus’s works. Benedetto Fontana identifies the recurring theme of Tacitus’s writing as the conflict between “the opposing and contradictory ideas of *libertas* and *principatus*”.⁶⁶ Tacitus accepts the establishment of the principate as a *fait accompli* and concerns himself with an exploration of the balance of power between the emperor and the senate/individual.⁶⁷ Signs of engagement with Tacitus, therefore, may be found in a writer’s concern with Tacitus’s themes (and with how their contemporaries interpreted these themes), rather than in his focus on Tacitus’s words.

Similarly, in the works inspired by Senecan philosophy, the specific ideas about man’s existence and man’s relationship with the cosmos found in Seneca’s writings became somewhat diluted, so that when referring to the Stoicism in these texts we understand a more amorphous “philosophy of adversity”, as Monsarrat suggests.⁶⁸ For instance, in *Heaven upon Earth* Hall adhered to the Senecan ideal of inner tranquillity, but, as Adriana McCrea has noted, he emphasised that this ideal could not be achieved

⁶⁴ Francis Bacon, *Sir Francis Bacon his Apologie...* (London: Richard Field for Felix Norton, 1604), STC 1111, sig. C2v-C3r. Bacon comments that he explained to Elizabeth that “the Author had committed very apparant theft, for he had taken most of the sentences of *Cornelius Tacitus*, and translated them into English, and put them into his text.”

⁶⁵ Blair Worden, *The Sound of Virtue: Philip Sidney’s Arcadia and Elizabethan Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 257. Worden explains that Sidney heard Lipsius lecture on Tacitus in Leiden, and speculates that it was on this occasion that Lipsius gave Sidney a copy of his *De constantia*. Worden also points to the similarity between Sidney’s work and Savile’s Tacitean works and this connection will be discussed in more detail in the first chapter of the present study.

⁶⁶ Benedetto Fontana, “Ancient Roman Historians and Early Modern Political Theory,” in *The Cambridge Companion to The Roman Historians*, ed. Andrew Feldherr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 365.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 365-366.

⁶⁸ Monsarrat, *Light from the Porch*, 3.

through a reliance on the pagan philosophy of Seneca alone.⁶⁹ The species of Stoicism in this “new humanist” period had a generally Senecan feel rather than a purist Senecan creed. It is best described as a general philosophical outlook, but an outlook with a core set of values. These values are succinctly defined in Christopher Brooke’s recent work. Brooke notes that the Stoics shared beliefs: in divine cause and effect; in the emphasis on the perfection of a rational existence; that virtue is the super-eminent “good”; in the cultivation of the state of *apatheia*; and in the possibility of attaining sagehood, that is, the truly virtuous and most free form of human existence.⁷⁰ Signs of a writer’s engagement with a species of Senecan Stoicism, then, might consist of a writer’s interest in any, or all, of these themes, or with an early modern contemporary’s treatment of these themes.

What this thesis deals with is the English variant of Tuck’s “new humanism”, or with what Salmon has described as “Tacitean Neostoicism”.⁷¹ These are convenient short-hand terms for the loose collection of Tacitean and generally Senecan-inspired Neostoic ideas that converged in the late Elizabethan period. Throughout this thesis this intellectual trend will be referred to using Tuck’s terms “new humanist” or “new humanism”, while it is recognised that he uses these terms to define more than just an interest in the political philosophy of Tacitus and Seneca. The present study focuses exclusively on the cultural expression of this intellectual current, and explores what the literary sources reveal about its impact on the early modern conceptualisation of political relationships, of constitutional arrangements, and of man’s position within a political structure in general.

The political significance of “new humanism” in early modern England

While the emergence of a fairly widespread interest in Tacitus and Seneca in mid sixteenth century Europe is not disputed by historians, it is clear that the political significance of this intellectual trend remains in dispute. In 1978 Quentin Skinner identified Montaigne, Lipsius and the neo-stoic thinkers more generally, as individuals

⁶⁹ McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 182.

⁷⁰ Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), xii.

⁷¹ Salmon, “Stoicism and Roman Example,” 224.

guided by a conservative approach to political life.⁷² The political attitude of these writers stressed the “idea that everyone has a duty to submit himself to the existing order of things”, and thus the idea of resistance against an authority or ruler was shunned in favour of “enduring” all rulers “with fortitude.”⁷³ Skinner interpreted the political philosophy of the Neostoics as one of passive obedience and submission, since their philosophy of endurance mitigated the need for men to take action to remove the cause of political or social discomfort. Thus, as J. H. M. Salmon argued in 1989, English authors who received inspiration from these thinkers, and who engaged with Tacitus and Seneca directly, were participating in a “movement” with a largely cynical and passive political outlook.⁷⁴ Salmon suggested that, compared with the interests of Philip Sidney’s circle, the “new humanism” of the Essex circle was more cynical in tone. Tacitus’s depiction of political corruption, court intrigue and factionalism in the imperial household was picked up by those disaffected by their experience of the Elizabethan court. Whilst this Tacitean Neostoicism may have provided a language of opposition to the character of Elizabethan and Jacobean politics, the lessons of Tacitus and Seneca taught this opposition that “private prudence and withdrawal were the best policies” in times of political difficulty.⁷⁵

Malcolm Smuts’s analysis of the uses of Roman history in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England largely confirms Salmon’s suggestion that English Tacitism did not transform malcontents into a concerted opposition to the monarchy in this period.⁷⁶ Smuts identifies Elizabethan and early Stuart Tacitism as a kind of internal dialogue that was occurring amongst those in, and connected with, the royal court. Very rarely do we encounter a form of Neostoic Tacitism that might neatly be aligned with a parliamentary opposition to the crown. Smuts suggests that there were flashpoints, such as during the debates over the Spanish Match, and over the influence of the Duke of Buckingham, where Tacitean themes of social breakdown, the decline of virtue and the rise of ambitious men developed into a rhetoric targeting royal despotism.⁷⁷ But, while some

⁷² Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, *The Age of Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 276-303.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁷⁴ Salmon, “Seneca and Roman Example,” 199-225.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁷⁶ Malcolm Smuts, “Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians,” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 21-44.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

saw Tacitus as an author preoccupied with painting the Empire “as a tyranny characterised by moral corruption and a ruthless and conspiratorial style of politics”, it was possible for others, like Edmund Bolton, to “interpret imperial rule as the salvation of Rome from the evils of factiousness and demagoguery.”⁷⁸ This emphasis on English Taciteanism as a language of frustration spoken by those within, and around, the court is picked up by J. H. M. Salmon’s student, Lisa Ferraro Parmelee. In two works dealing primarily with Neostoicism, Parmelee confirmed Salmon’s and Smuts’s interpretation of the political ramifications of English interest in Tacitus and Seneca by arguing that, although Neostoicism cannot easily be associated with a political doctrine, it was rarely, in this period, a philosophy tied to a republican sentiment.⁷⁹

In more recent scholarship, however, English “new humanism” has been identified as a trend which fed quite naturally into an ideology of republicanism. McCrea pinpoints Lipsius as the chief form of inspiration for English Tacitists and Neostoics, by drawing attention to the ways in which the Lipsian philosophy of adversity provided Englishmen with the means to pursue a full and active political life even when their political freedoms seemed to be under threat. It was the Lipsian “exemplum”, she argues, “which taught ‘prudence’ as an approach to political issues and promoted ‘constancy’ as a justification for political engagement.”⁸⁰ McCrea’s vision of Lipsius presents his philosophy as one entirely compatible with the *vita activa*, where Lipsius’s sceptical interpretation of political life in the *Politica*, and his submission to providence in the *De constantia*, provided men with the means to survive the “highs and lows” of the political world. The legacy of Lipsius, McCrea argues, lay in the articulation of a concept of political organisation where a “state” was “constituted through a body of healthy and fully participating members”.⁸¹ More specifically, she asserts, the English response to Lipsius leant more towards the “classical form of republicanism” in its emphasis on civic engagement, and less towards a rhetoric and ideology of absolutism that had characterised the French response to Lipsius.⁸² Although his work deals with Stoic thought in the English Civil War, Andrew Shifflett’s analysis of English attitudes

⁷⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁹ Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce*; Parmelee, “Neostoicism and Absolutism in Late Elizabethan England,” 3-20.

⁸⁰ McCrea, *Constant Minds*, xx.

⁸¹ Ibid., 211.

⁸² Ibid.

towards Stoic themes shares McCrea's belief that Englishmen translated the language of constancy and virtue into an active political philosophy. For Shifflett, English Tacitism and Stoicism instilled the belief that men ought to be prepared for action, and convinced men that where action and political engagement was impossible, virtuous withdrawal was itself a form of *activity*.⁸³ Shifflett, like McCrea, however makes the more questionable point that this outlook logically mapped onto a political ideology opposed to the idea of monarchy itself.⁸⁴

In his analysis of proto-republican thinking, Markku Peltonen stresses that the optimistic Ciceronian vision of the active citizen was not eclipsed by the more cynical and passive philosophy of Tacitus and Seneca.⁸⁵ The pessimism of the two writers, and their philosophy of preservation, prudence and contemplation, he argues, merely represented new idioms that complemented the language of active citizenship associated with the humanist vocabulary.⁸⁶ For example, those who identified with Tacitus's account of the royal court as a corrupt place did not necessarily distance themselves from the idea that the ultimate goal of man was to live the *vita activa*.⁸⁷ The historical account of imperial corruption and tyranny provided by Tacitus, Peltonen implies, could, in fact, strengthen the resolve in favour of the *vita activa*, and the Stoic philosophy of constancy could insulate men against perceived corruption in their own times.

Peltonen's suggestion — that Tacitus's histories of imperial corruption and accounts of the servility of the imperial subjects, could be easily accommodated within the existing political rhetoric of the *vita activa* and proto-republican thought — has been picked up by literary scholars. Some scholars have argued that Skinner's version of

⁸³ Andrew Shifflett, *Stoicism, Politics, and Literature in the Age of Milton: War and Peace Reconciled*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-26.

⁸⁴ Shifflett seems particularly keen to stress that Lipsius's work is sympathetic to the idea of a republic: "To say that "Courts of Princes" are typically corrupt is to suggest, whether one wants to or not, that there must be some better way of governing a commonwealth. For Tacitus a better way had been republican government, although it was fast becoming a distant memory and heroes like Thræsea were seeming more and more unreal." See *Ibid.*, 28. Moreover, Shifflett suggests that the Stoic inspired militarism of the Sidney and Essex circles was quite naturally subversive of monarchy since it suggested that war was the necessary demonstration of true nobility or virtue at a time when the monarchy was pursuing a policy of peace: "A philosophy that argued that there was no important difference between peace and war for the virtuous person, that argued that God was not necessarily interested in peace — that God may well want us to be embroiled in war and civil war for our eventual correction and benefit — could not help but be subversive of royal policy at a time when royal policy was synonymous with peace and diplomatic evasiveness." See *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁵ Peltonen, "Civil life and the Mixed Constitution in Jacobean Political Thought," chap. 3 in *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

Tacitism and Stoicism as a philosophy of obedience and passive withdrawal is unrecognisable in England because Englishmen turned to the words of Tacitus and Seneca to fashion a political rhetoric that would be used by a republican opposition. Andrew Hadfield, in particular, has implied that Tacitus's unflattering depictions of imperial suspicion and corruption satisfied the appetites of English writers already disenchanted by the English monarchy.⁸⁸ Hadfield singles out two "basic stories of republicanism" which we find in Roman history: the rape of Lucretia and the expulsion of the Tarquins, and the transition from Republic to Empire under the Julio-Claudians.⁸⁹ These stories are, according to Hadfield, part of the republican narrative, and in dramatizing "more of the republican story than any other dramatist working in Elizabethan and Jacobean England", Shakespeare espouses *republicanism* by "applying the lessons of a history of the republic to the English crown."⁹⁰ In Hadfield's analysis of Shakespeare's works, we are told that the Englishmen of Shakespeare's generation learnt an easily digested lesson from Roman history: "[t]he historical lesson given declares that the republic is a far more desirable form of government than the empire, although the latter may be preferable in times of decay and corruption...".⁹¹ He points to the existence of a vibrant "republican" literary culture in which Englishmen borrowed and retold stories from Republican Rome and produced works presenting republican ideas.⁹² In turning to the history of the Julio-Claudians as related by Tacitus, English dramatists, Hadfield suggests, were buying into this "republican" ideology by underscoring the evils of rule by a single sovereign.

Elsewhere, Hadfield detects a more subtle republicanism and points to the existence of six factors which denote a republican leaning in a text: a rhetoric, derived from Tacitus's *Annals* and from Protestant resistance theory, against tyranny; a stress on the idea that humanist education created individuals fit to address questions of rule; an emphasis on the need for virtuous magistrates and officials; an interest in the Roman republic; the articulation of a language of natural rights; and, finally, a focus on the overall role of public officials.⁹³ The rhetoric against tyranny, drawn from Tacitus, did

⁸⁸ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁸⁹ Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism*, 54-55.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

not persuade men that action was futile, but rather convinced them that action and political intervention against a sovereign were necessary. It is his section on the literary engagement with “republican stories” which is most difficult to accept.⁹⁴ According to Hadfield, what the early modern reader extrapolated from the example of ancient Rome was that emperors were prone to tyranny, and that only a republican constitution could safeguard individual liberty.⁹⁵ He continues: “Roman history shows that it is better to try to make the republic function properly, and then to defend it against its enemies, than to throw one’s lot in with the imperialists.”⁹⁶ Again this rests on the assumption that Roman historians such as Tacitus were conveying a single lesson — and specifically a republican lesson — and, that this lesson was learnt and understood by each and every reader who knew his Roman history. Furthermore, this type of analysis suggests that the depiction of the “republican story” signals an endorsement of *republicanism*, when even Hadfield initially acknowledges this is not necessarily the case.⁹⁷ What is more, Hadfield pays little attention to the philosophy of inner liberty that early modern readers crafted from Stoic philosophy, and this leads him to ignore an important dimension of English “new humanism”, one which involved the rejection of the activist political stance.

Other literary scholars have adopted Hadfield’s approach, presenting as fact the idea that writers who portray imperial Rome as a corrupt environment are putting forward a republican agenda. In Warren Chernaik’s 2011 work, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, Ben Jonson’s *Sejanus* is identified as a republican text because of its scathing critique of imperial Rome. In his *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England*, Curtis Perry seeks to explain that, in the 1620s, we encounter an anti-court rhetoric which espoused republican ideology and criticised royal favourites.⁹⁸ According to Perry, the historical narrative of the transition from Republic to Empire, which is related by Tacitus, appealed to late Elizabethan and early Stuart anxieties about the subversive power of the royal favourite.⁹⁹ He argues that, in early modern

⁹⁴ Ibid., specifically 54-80.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 56. See quotation above.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁸ Warren Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117; Curtis Perry, *Literature and Favoritism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 229-275.

⁹⁹ Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 230.

dramatizations of imperial Rome, we encounter “a republican theory of favouritism” in which “contemporary concerns about royal favouritism” are discussed against a backdrop of institutional transformation in early imperial Rome.¹⁰⁰ The rise of the favourite was conceptually equated with the rise of tyranny and constitutional change by writers who borrowed settings from imperial Roman history. Perry acknowledges that such plays may not advocate republicanism, but concludes that the discussion of royal favouritism forms “part of the gradual development of oppositional republican habits of thought”.¹⁰¹ His analysis of *The Tragedy of Nero*, a play which forms the subject of the third chapter of this thesis, is less balanced. He argues, this text “can be read as a republican text in that strong sense” for its radicalism lies in its focus on “the people’s stake in Rome” coupling “the republicanism of the elite Pisonian rebels and the common citizens of Rome.”¹⁰² He summarises:

For this reason, I can think of no other text that so perfectly instantiates Holstun’s argument about the emergence of class-conscious republicanism in the opposition to Buckingham during the 1620s.¹⁰³

Perry claims that early modern authors were fascinated with the flaws and failings of imperial Rome, and that this fascination itself indicates that a republican mentality was emerging in this period. He implies that stories about unjust rulers and ambitious favourites from imperial Rome’s past attracted early modern authors because they considered the transition from Republic to the tyranny of the Julio-Claudians to be analogous to the transition from Elizabethan to Jacobean rule. Writers subtly expressed the idea that parliament, much like the Senate, was sovereign, and that this sovereignty was being unlawfully usurped by tyrannical monarchs. Perry confirms this line of argument by stating that the history of imperial Rome, dramatised during the 1620s in plays such as *The Tragedy of Nero*, *The Roman Actor* and *The Tragedy of Julia Agrippina*, “is used to explore the ethical and political failure of a top-down system of patronage”, and to scrutinise the Jacobean court, and its patronage network.¹⁰⁴ Such Roman history plays, he argues, were being used to reassert the importance of political

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 231.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 232; 275.

¹⁰² Ibid., 273.

¹⁰³ Ibid. Perry refers to James Holstun’s *Ehud’s Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution* (London: Verso, 2000), 186 and his theory of class consciousness earlier in this section: see *Literature and Favoritism*, 232-233.

¹⁰⁴ Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 232.

participation based on civic duty rather than royal privilege, and thus, in depicting the usurping power of emperors whose power “came at the cost of republican liberties and the independent agency of the senate” authors were reasserting the role of parliament.¹⁰⁵

Perry summarises:

More importantly, perhaps, the animosity directed at the exclusivity of imperial favor raises questions about alternative modes of enfranchisement, a development that leads in *The Tragedy of Nero* and *The Roman Actor* to a rethinking of the nature of the state along surprisingly inclusive and implicitly republican lines.¹⁰⁶

There is very little room in Perry’s account for those who were put off political life altogether, and considered retirement the obvious course of action to avoid involvement in political corruption. For instance, in Perry’s analysis, there is no place for the pessimism of *Sejanus* where the only recourse for the virtuous is to “[s]it rather down with loss, than rise unjust.”¹⁰⁷ So, Perry’s analysis, like McCrea’s, suggests that English “new humanism” was republican in tone. Both Perry and McCrea argue that English writers believed, in order to prevent corruption and tyranny from taking root, men ought to take on a full and active role in political life. It is claimed that the works of Tacitus and Seneca encouraged men to question the political status quo, and prompted them to consider how they could forestall political decline.

In more recent scholarship, political theorists have implied that the concept of liberty which emerged from English engagement with Tacitus and Seneca was either republican in tone, or formed part of a political philosophy that taught that freedom was secured through active participation in governance. In spite of his earlier assertion that the “new humanism” of Montaigne and Lipsius was accepting of monarchical authority, in a recent work Skinner has implied that English “new humanism”, more specifically English interest in Tacitus, reflected an awareness of the classical republican theory of liberty. What English readers of Tacitus took from the *Annals*, Skinner argues, was the notion that the existence of a principate threatened the freedom of the individual and the freedom of the polity as a whole.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 231-232. He notes that the royal favourite was also targeted as an extension of imperial power or an instrument which could become the focus of opposition without targeting the monarch themselves.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 274.

¹⁰⁷ Ben Jonson, *Sejanus* in *Ben Jonson Five Plays*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4:l.166-167, 175. Peltonen cites the same passage from *Sejanus*; see Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 133.

Tacitus in his *Annals* provides a contrasting description [compared with Sallust] of how the Roman people were forced back into slavery under the early principate, and likewise equates their loss of liberty with the re-imposition of arbitrary will as the basis of government. As Grenewey's translation puts it, after the ascendancy of Augustus 'there was no signe of the olde laudable customes to be seene: but contrarie, equalitie taken away, every man endeavored to obey the prince', so that 'the Consuls, the Senators, and Gentlemen ranne headlong into servitude'.¹⁰⁸

Skinner seeks to persuade us that what early modern readers and students of Tacitus extracted from the Roman writer's works was a neo-roman theory of liberty, in which a state cannot be described as free if it is deprived of its capacity to act "at will in pursuit of its chosen ends", or if "it is merely subject or liable to having its actions determined by the will of anyone other than the representatives of the body politic as a whole."¹⁰⁹ This was a theory of liberty as non-domination which, by the time of the 1640s, fed into "an explicitly anti-monarchical perspective" that prompted men to evaluate the means by which their liberty was guaranteed.¹¹⁰ Skinner's interpretation, however, silences the "new humanist" voices expressing an ethical concept of liberty. This ethical form of liberty may resemble the neo-Roman species of liberty in its insistence that true freedom exists where men are beyond the reaches of domination by anyone or anything, but this form of liberty has little to do with political constitutions or the structures of a polity. As Freya Sierhuis and Felicity Green have separately demonstrated, writers like Lipsius and Montaigne, and those inspired by them, may have adopted the political distinction between the man who is *sub potestate* and he who is *sui iuris*, but this distinction formed the basis of a theory of liberty crafted without immediate reference to constitutional forms.¹¹¹ As Green summarises, with reference to Montaigne's philosophy, the "new humanist" theory of liberty borrows the distinction between servitude and domination,

¹⁰⁸ Quentin Skinner, "Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War," in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, eds. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, vol. 2, *The Values of Republicanism in early modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12. Skinner cites Grenewey, *Annales*, 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 47, 49.

¹¹⁰ Skinner, "Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War," 14.

¹¹¹ Freya Sierhuis, "Autonomy and Inner Freedom: Lipsius and the Revival of Stoicism," in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, eds. Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, vol. 2, *Free Persons and Free States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 46-64; Felicity Green, "Freedom and Self-possession: the case of Montaigne's *Essais*," in *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, vol. 2, 27-45; Felicity Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially 3. For a simple discussion of the *Digest's* definition of freedom and servitude and its relationship to the classical republican theory of liberty see Skinner, "Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War," 9 and for a fuller discussion see Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*.

but it is a theory grounded in “Stoic conceptions of independence as a state of inner tranquillity and detachment.”¹¹²

The scope of the present study

The scholarship discussed above provides the most immediate context for the present study. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that the recent trend in scholarship on English “new humanism” and political thought is inaccurate, since it seems that scholars have been too quick to dismiss the idea that English “new humanism” was a conservative movement. The tendency to align English Tacitism and Senecanism with republican thought, which we find in recent scholarship, stems from the desire to identify the genesis of the political thought of the English Republic. This desire has led some scholars to seize upon a writer’s interest in Tacitus’s criticism of imperial Rome or in Seneca’s lamentation about the capriciousness of court life, as evidence for nascent republicanism in Elizabethan and early Stuart England. This interpretation of early modern political culture is incorrect in two ways. Firstly, this interpretation simplifies the “function”, if it is possible to speak of a function, of the texts in question. For instance, for Perry to conclude that *The Tragedy of Nero* is a republican text because the author celebrates the active citizenship of men like Piso implies that by recreating Nero’s world the author considers Piso’s behaviour to be a model to emulate in real life. Perry does not acknowledge the fact that, while the author might admire Piso’s actions, his interest in regicide, let alone in republicanism, is merely hypothetical. Blair Worden’s analysis of “literary republicanism”, this burgeoning field of scholarship identifying republican themes and ideas in early modern writing, underlines the futility of attempts to identify an author’s political leanings.¹¹³ He takes issue with the basic idea that a writer’s choice of subject matter reflects a wider political agenda.

In Renaissance England all manner of things could be and were imagined. What we seek in vain is evidence that imaginative literature reflected or fostered a desire for republican rule. It was fully within the capacity of readers and audiences to enter imaginatively into worlds with political arrangements different

¹¹² Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom*, 3.

¹¹³ Reid Barbour uses the term “literary republicanism” to describe those works which seek to identify republican themes and ideas in the literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century; see Reid Barbour, “Recent Studies in Seventeenth-Century Literary Republicanism,” *English Literary Renaissance* 34, no. 3 (2004): 387-417.

from their own without inferring that such arrangements could or should be transplanted to their own time and place.¹¹⁴

Secondly, an author's interest in, for example, the atmosphere of suspicion and corruption found in Tacitus's writing or in Seneca's disaffection with political life does not necessarily imply that the author advocates dismantling the system in which the corruption and suspicion has taken root. Worden, again, provides a straightforward rebuttal of the republican interpretation by pointing to the fact the Greek and Roman world "did supply vantage-points from which shortcomings in present monarchical régimes were discerned", and also by stressing the fact that this scrutiny of monarchy did not entail its outright rejection.¹¹⁵ Where the concepts of servitude and liberty were used to discuss the failings of specific monarchs, there was little suggestion that monarchy itself was at fault:

In the extinction of freedom under the Roman empire many modern parallels were discerned, but they were deployed to illustrate the evils of tyranny, not the virtues of kingless government. When the Roman republic was commended it was for the spirit of its liberty, not for its constitutional arrangements.¹¹⁶

It is difficult to disagree with Worden's argument here, since it seems that scholars expect too much by analysing an author's use of Roman history in order to understand *precisely* which constitutional system the author in question favours. It is far more common, as the present study will demonstrate, to find an author aware of the limits of their liberty, and engaged in searching for a means of safeguarding their personal freedom, but disengaged from a discussion of constitutional change. Where we might find an author who examines how they might engage in political life, this focus should not be interpreted as evidence that the author is committed to the classical republican belief that active citizenship is conducive to political freedom. All the authors discussed in this thesis accept a monarchical system, and in their most "radical" moments, think of the English polity as a form of mixed-monarchy. As Peter Lake notes, the general move to uncover early modern English republicans has prompted a thoroughly misleading reading of texts: "texts which had been traditionally glossed as containing notions of mixed rather than absolute monarchy have been re-described as 'republican', and what Skinner has dubbed strains of 'neo-Roman' thought and speech have been recuperated

¹¹⁴ Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide, Republic," 309.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

from a variety of texts and institutional and social locales.”¹¹⁷ English “new humanism”, that is, English interest in the political thought of Tacitus and the philosophy of Seneca, should not merely be subsumed into a narrative detailing the emergence of English republican thought.

Textual introduction

The following study presents a focussed analysis of four key texts which have been specifically selected to demonstrate the problems in the existing scholarship on late Elizabethan and early Stuart “new humanism”. All four texts deal with the life and reign of the emperor Nero, a ruler whose name had become synonymous with the idea of a tyrant.¹¹⁸ By analysing literary figurations of Nero, this study maintains a focus on how each author responds to *both* the key classical writers associated with the “new humanist” movement.¹¹⁹ This study will analyse exactly how each author handles Tacitus’s account of Nero’s reign: it will examine how they treat the juxtaposition of servitude and freedom we find in Tacitus’s narrative, and will analyse how they respond to Tacitus’s depiction of Nero’s victims and opponents — Thrasea Paetus, Piso and Seneca — and to his account of these individuals’ attitudes towards Nero’s tyranny. This study will also explore how each author treats Seneca himself, and how they appropriate his philosophy of consolation, inner freedom and withdrawal to portray Seneca’s retreat from public life. The present study will consider what lessons each author takes from Tacitus and Seneca, and will explore how each author’s interpretation of the classical works informs their use of terms such as virtue, liberty, commonwealth and prudence. While we might associate terms like liberty and commonwealth with classical republicanism, this study will prove that, in the four works in question, these terms are used and defined in such a way that they are able to form part of an outlook supportive of monarchical power.

¹¹⁷ Peter Lake, “‘The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I’ (and the Fall of Archbishop Grindal) Revisited,” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England*, 132. Lake has Skinner’s *Liberty Before Liberalism* in mind here, and Norbrook’s *Writing the English Republic*; see 132, n6.

¹¹⁸ W.B. Gwyn, “Cruel Nero: the Concept of the Tyrant and the Image of Nero in Western Political Thought,” *History of Political Thought* 12, no. 3 (1991): 421-455.

¹¹⁹ In addition to the editions of Tacitus referred to earlier in this chapter, the history of Nero’s reign was available to early modern readers in Dio Cassius’s *Historia Romanum*. Although there was no English translation of Dio Cassius in this period, various editions of the Greek text and Latin translations were available and we know Jonson used the 1592 parallel Latin-Greek text in writing *Sejanus*: see n44 of the present chapter. French translations of Dio Cassius were printed in 1588 and 1589. Suetonius’s *Twelve Caesars* was printed frequently in the sixteenth century and translated into English in 1606.

The four texts analysed here are Sir Henry Savile's (1549-1622) *End of Nero and Beginning of Galba* (printed 1591), Matthew Gwinne's (1558-1627) *Nero tragaedia nova* (printed 1603), the anonymous *The Tragedy of Nero* (printed 1624, 1633 and as *Piso's Conspiracy* in 1676) and Edmund Bolton's (1574/5-1634) *Nero Caesar or Monarchie Depraved* (printed 1624 and 1627). Since the publication dates of these texts span roughly a fifty year period which witnessed war, rebellion and the succession of James I, we can explore how English "new humanism" adapted and evolved during a period of considerable political change. Each of the selected texts fits into one of the phases of "new humanist" activity described in Salmon's analysis, and thus by looking at one text from each phase, we can detect how English engagement with Tacitus and Seneca (and Continental writers like Lipsius and Montaigne), developed in order to allow authors to convey anxieties relating to a number of immediate political problems.¹²⁰ As Salmon explained, the first phase of English "new humanism" is seen in the Sidney circle where Sidney and his associates became interested in Lipsius's philosophy and, perhaps inspired by Lipsius, turned towards the works of Tacitus and Seneca to describe and analyse contemporary politics. In the "new humanism" of the Sidney circle an uneasy compromise was forged between Huguenot theories of resistance and the traditional philosophy of obedience. The legacy of this first phase is seen in Henry Savile's text. The next phase of "new humanist" activity took place during the 1590s and early 1600s, when the Essex circle used a vocabulary derived from Tacitus and Seneca to describe their plight at the Elizabethan court. In Henry Savile's text we see Sidney's "new humanism" being modified by the the new Essexian brand of "new humanism", and in Matthew Gwinne's text we find a response to the Essexians. The middle phase of "new humanism" emerged during the first part of James I's reign, when individuals such as Sir William Cornwallis and Sir Robert Dallington, part of a group loosely associated with the household of Prince Henry, used Tacitus's and Seneca's works to discuss the politics of the Jacobean court, and to voice their opposition to the Jacobean Peace. Whilst one side of this court narrative used the language of virtue and prudence to call for active opposition to the policy of peace, as in the work of Dallington, the other side used the same language to underscore the futility of political activity, as in the anonymous work *The Tragedy of Nero*. In the third phase of this Tacitean Neostoic discourse we see James

¹²⁰ Salmon identifies three phases of "new humanist" activity with the foundations being laid by Sidney and his associates. "Seneca and Tacitus had been linked by Lipsius and his disciples, but the entry of Tacitean politics into English Neostoicism was accomplished by those who inherited the tradition of the Sidney circle, first in the retinue of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, and then in the household of Prince Henry." Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 207.

I himself embroiled in countering the vogue for Tacitus, with Edmund Bolton acting as his chief “spokesperson” railing against the corrupting influence of Lipsius, Tacitus and Seneca.

Three of these texts have also been selected because they have previously been incorporated into an analysis of early modern political culture focussed entirely on demonstrating the gradual rise of republican theory in England. Warren Chernaik locates Savile’s *End of Nero* within the Tacitist tradition of the Essex circle and implies that it is unsurprising to find Savile espousing a form of “red” Tacitism since his associates favoured unseating Elizabeth I.¹²¹ Chernaik asserts that Savile’s “vocabulary here [in *End of Nero*] is essentially republican”, and that Savile’s positive depiction of Vindex’s rebellion against Nero indicates a republican mentality.¹²² Chernaik also sustains Perry’s analysis of *The Tragedy of Nero* as a republican text. Both scholars argue that, due to the play’s hostile depiction of the Roman Empire, and because of the playwright’s criticism of the corruption created by the emperor, the text is republican in tone.¹²³ As has been outlined above, Perry argues that *The Tragedy of Nero* endorses republicanism because of the play’s criticism of Nero and interest in the actions of Nero’s opponents. Although there are reasonable grounds to believe the play was composed in the early part of James I’s reign, Perry reads *The Tragedy of Nero* alongside Massinger’s *The Roman Actor*, and analyses *The Tragedy of Nero* as a product of the 1620s, because, he argues, it reflects contemporary anxieties about the rise of the Duke of Buckingham and the failure of the Spanish Match.¹²⁴ Even Bolton’s vindication of Nero has been incorporated into a narrative of late Elizabethan and early Stuart “republicanism” put forward by recent scholars. Norbrook explains Bolton’s work: “Bolton’s strategy was boldly to turn the republicans’ arguments against them: he would agree that Nero was a sadistic tyrant, but

¹²¹ Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome*, 18-20. Chernaik does not provide any biographical information for Savile and merely situates the texts in the Essex Circle.

¹²² Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome*, 19.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹²⁴ Perry, “Instrumental Favoritism and the Uses of Roman History,” chap. 7 in *Literature and Favoritism*, particularly 249-275. On the dating of *The Tragedy of Nero* see for example Teller, “The Anonymous *Tragedy of Nero*” xxi, xvii and G. Blakemore-Evans, “Notes on Fletcher and Massinger’s Little French Lawyer,” *Modern Language Notes* LII, (1937): 406-407; Eliot M. Hill ed. *The Tragedy of Nero Renaissance Drama: A collection of Critical Editions* ed. Stephen Orgel. (NY & London: Garland Publishing, 1979), xv. These scholars place the composition date some time between 1618 and 1622. However, also see Michael Payne Steppat, “The Vices of the Times,” *Notes and Queries* 29, no. 2 (1982): 145-146 where he discusses a possible allusion in a work of 1616 (Robert Anton, *The Philosophers Satyrs*, (London: T. C & B. A., 1616), STC 686, I3v-I4r) to Poppea from *The Tragedy of Nero*. Based on this I am inclined to think that the play was written sometime between 1612 and 1616.

use this as evidence not for popular power but for absolutism.”¹²⁵ Again Norbrook’s analysis rests on the assumption that a quasi-republican ideology was entrenched in the early Stuart period, and on the assumption that Bolton’s main aim was to counter this ideology. Not only is Norbrook incorrect on this first matter, as this study will demonstrate, but he is also misguided in reading Bolton’s intention as Bolton’s overriding aim in most of his historical and classical scholarship was to counter the misreading of Tacitus.¹²⁶

This study presents an analysis of the political dimension of English “new humanism” based on a close engagement with the texts listed above. My approach here focusses on analysing the authors’ engagement with themes and concepts lifted from Tacitus’s histories and from Seneca’s philosophical writing. This study takes inspiration from Paulina Kewes’s recent approach to Savile’s translations of Tacitus and responds to her call to consider these texts “as distinct textual events”, and to analyse “their diverse and often contradictory resonances at the moment of publication”.¹²⁷ I intend to explore how ideas about rebellion, virtue, constancy and commonwealth were crafted by these authors from their various readings of Tacitus and Seneca. I will consider, for example, how these authors responded to the political events of Nero’s reign, such as Piso’s rebellion against Nero, and analyse how their responses to these events informed their political philosophy. To be clear, this study does not take the form of a “reception study” exploring how each aspect of Nero’s story is handled by early modern authors. The research for this study has involved a partial exploration of early modern reading patterns and habits, but the present study does not claim to engage in a detailed and substantial analysis of reader engagement with individual texts. The work of Cox-Jensen indicates that studying annotations and markings in classical texts can help establish how early modern readers responded to ancient Rome, and Jacob Soll’s and Joel Davis’s articles on annotations in copies of Lipsius’s editions of Tacitus certainly indicate that there is scope for investigating what traces of reading tell scholars about the political dimension of

¹²⁵ David Norbrook, “Lucan, Thomas May, and the Creation of a Republican Literary Culture,” in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, 56.

¹²⁶ Kewes, “Savile’s Tacitus,” 551. Kewes points to Patricia Osmond’s work on Bolton’s vindication of Tiberius – a manuscript recently rediscovered in Genoa see Patricia J. Osmond, “Edmund Bolton’s Vindication of Tiberius Caesar: A ‘Lost’ Manuscript Comes to Light,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11, (2005):329-343. In his work on Tiberius, and in *Nero Caesar* and, I would add, in *Hypercritica* Bolton targets the misuse and abuse of Tacitus, see Edmund Bolton, *Hypercritica; or A Rule of Judgement for writing, or reading History’s* published from Bodleian Library MSS Rawlinson 1722 in *Ancient Critical Essays Upon English Poets and Poësy*, ed. Joseph Haslewood, vol. 2 (London: Printed by T. Bensley, for Robert Triphook, 1815).

¹²⁷ Kewes, “Savile’s Tacitus,” 551.

“new humanism”.¹²⁸ In the present study, attention is paid to the relationship between the early modern text and its immediate political context, and to the author’s manipulation of the themes and rhetoric drawn from Tacitus and Seneca. Again, the study takes inspiration from Kewes, in her re-reading of Samuel Daniel’s and Mary Sidney’s depictions of Antony and Cleopatra, by “looking at themes, images, and vocabulary of the plays alongside those we find in public argument”.¹²⁹

Before moving on to consider how the analysis breaks down into chapters, it is worth saying something about the nature and purpose of the texts in question. The four works this study considers are of different genres. Savile’s text combines a translation of Tacitus’s history with an historical account inspired by the style of Tacitus. Bolton’s text combines antiquarian inquiry with historical revisionism. Gwinne’s work and the anonymous play are pieces of drama. Although only Savile’s and Bolton’s works, can be accurately described as histories — in the sense that they provide prose analysis largely following the chronology of Nero’s reign — the dramatic works ought to be considered a species of historical writing worthy of comparison with the two prose texts. The two dramatic pieces are politic histories and, much like Tacitus’s own historical writing, they offer insight into the motivations of individuals, analyse the cause and consequence of actions, and pass judgement on how events have unfolded. The two plays are best described using Daniel Woolf’s term “parasite genres”, a term he applies to the range of popular works that developed following the decline of the chronicle form in early modern England.¹³⁰ He notes how the functions of the chronicle came to be performed by a host of lighter genres: “the chronicle’s functions as newsbearer and preserver of the present were being usurped by the news and diary forms”, while its function “as narrator of the past and as entertainer or edifier” were being performed by plays, ballads, and poems.¹³¹ As Woolf states, of the “parasite genres” from this period, the history play was well-received by a fairly wide section of Elizabethan society, since the history play was seen to continue the medieval tradition of publicly staged drama like the Mystery

¹²⁸ Cox Jensen, *Reading the Roman Republic*; Jacob Soll, “Amelot de la Houssaye (1634-1706) Annotates Tacitus,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 61, no.2 (2000): 167-187; Davis, “Robert Sidney’s Marginal Comments on Tacitus and the English Campaigns in the Low Countries,” 1-19.

¹²⁹ Paulina Kewes, “‘A Fit Memorial for the times to Come...’ Admonition and Topical Application in Mary Sidney’s *Antonius* and Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*,” *The Review of English Studies*. n.s 63, no.259, (2007): 244.

¹³⁰ D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 26-32.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

Plays, but also since the history play appealed to man's instinctive taste for the spectacular.¹³² Although very little is known about the performance history of the two plays about Nero (or indeed whether performance was intended), it might reasonably be assumed that the plays, like the prose works, were fairly popular within certain circles.

It is reasonable to assume that all four texts were aimed primarily at an audience associated in some way with the royal court, or that they were written for those who possessed some knowledge of the court's dynamics. These texts manifest that "sophisticated and critical political language" that Smuts has identified as having been formed "within the context of a court-centred political system" by authors taking inspiration from "classical sources".¹³³ We are dealing with a rhetoric and dialogue, then, between men of the court and the literary coterie associated with them. This is a language that would eventually, as Smuts notes, spill over into "parliamentary and public critiques of the Stuart court" in the 1620s, when the matter of the Spanish Match and the Duke of Buckingham's ascendancy gave rise to more widespread interest in, and commentary on, court life.¹³⁴ In these texts the impression given is that these authors are writing for men like themselves. They read each other's work, and respond in their own writings.

If we look at the texts themselves we can trace a lineage of sorts between the authors and identify a tacit dialogue taking place between them. There is evidence, as discussed earlier in this chapter, that Savile's *End of Nero* and his translations of Tacitus were fairly well known in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period. Gwinne responded to Savile's work in the *Nero tragaedia nova* by incorporating much of Savile's *End of Nero* into the final act of his play. We might imagine, had Gwinne's play been accepted for performance by St John's College, Oxford, that a host of luminaries, like Henry Savile, who were themselves inspired by Tacitus, would have been a ready-made audience for Gwinne's work.¹³⁵ Gwinne's prefatory letter gestures towards the idea that in Oxford there were a number of individuals who were deeply interested in Tacitus's

¹³² Ibid., 32.

¹³³ Smuts, "Court-centred politics," 23.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Sutton notes the connection between Gwinne's work and the Gager-Rainolds controversy in his introduction to the work; see Sutton "Introduction," in Dana F. Sutton, "Matthew Gwinne, *Nero 1603*, A Hypertext critical edition," Philological Museum, University of Birmingham, 27 November 1997, revised 20 November 2012, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/Nero/intro.html> [accessed June 20, 2015], 46-55. He convincingly demonstrates that Gwinne was raking over old wounds in the dispute over the theatre since the debate had been revived in the years prior to the play's composition.

writing, and that Gwinne may have had this group in mind when writing his play about Nero.¹³⁶ The fact that Gwinne includes marginal references to the classical sources he has used to create his drama suggests that he not only shared Jonson's eagerness to substantiate his account, but that he also intended to cater for an audience who were likely to retrace the history of Nero's reign for themselves.

If we turn to the other dramatic work considered in this study, it is equally clear that its author is penning a work designed for the same type of audience for which Savile and Gwinne are writing. The anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* comes from an author who "makes no parade of his learning", but leaves "no source of information unexplored".¹³⁷ Again the emphasis is on combining classical erudition with dramatic vigour, and it is impossible to deny that the author successfully blends the two. Bullen thought the author was most likely a young classical scholar from one of the universities, while Bradford goes further in suggesting that the work is that of "a younger member of the Jonson-Savile-Camden circle".¹³⁸ The playwright is heir to both Savile's and Gwinne's visions of Nero, but his vision of the emperor is more vivid than that of his predecessors.¹³⁹ The sense is that this playwright enters into a form of textual dialogue by responding to and re-working the existing cultural identity of Nero. There is very little evidence to suggest that this work was ever performed, but it is far easier to imagine a performance of this

¹³⁶ Sutton, "Introduction," 46- 55. Gwinne's dedication in *Ibid.*, http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/Nero/Act_I_trans.html, [accessed June 20, 2015]. Gwinne writes of his critic "And would be remarkable that he would not gnaw at this very thing, this carper against everything, this captious critic, who would (I suspect) chew at the body of our Lord, unless this play did not contain more of Tacitus, whom he values highly, than of myself, whom he values not a whit."

¹³⁷ A. H. Bullen ed., *A Collection of Old English Plays Part I*, vol. 2, (New York: Benjamin Blom Inc., 1964), 5.

¹³⁸ Alan T. Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1983): 144.

¹³⁹ See Chapter Three for a discussion of the playwright's use of Savile. Teller denies any similarity between the anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* and Matthew Gwinne's *Nero tragaedia nova* of 1603 see: Teller, "Tragedy of Nero (1624): A Critical Edition", viii. Sutton, however, notes the similarity between Gwinne's work and the anonymous work see: Sutton, "Introduction", 44. He notes the similarity between Claudius's description of the empire in Gwinne's work and Antoninus's description of the empire. He also notes that both Nero, in Gwinne's work, and Antoninus, in the anonymous work, declare their love for Poppea using similar phrases. In addition, Hill tentatively links *Tragedy of Nero* to Gwinne's work through the character of Neophitus who does not feature in the writings of Tacitus, Dio or Suetonius see: Hill, *Nero*, xiv. Neophitus is mentioned in Sextus Aurelius Victor's brief biography of Nero found in the *Epitome de Caesaribus*: see Sextus Aurelius Victor, *Epitome de Caesaribus*, trans. Thomas M Banchich, Canisius College Translated Texts, No.1, Canisius College, Buffalo, New York, 2nd Edn. 2009, <http://www.roman-emperors.org/epitome.htm>, [accessed July 31, 2011]. Perry has shown that the *Epitome* was known in this period since it is paraphrased in *Leicester's Commonwealth*; see Perry, *Literature and Favoritism*, 233.

Neronian drama than it is to envisage how Gwinne's work may have been performed.¹⁴⁰ Whether or not this work saw a public staging remains unclear, but the fact that we do not know its performance history does not prevent us from imagining how the work might have complemented an existing body of literature inspired by Tacitus and Seneca. Moving to the final text in this study, it is clear that Bolton seems to embrace all those Neronian works that have come before, but seeks to amend any errors in the interpretation of Nero's reign.¹⁴¹ As noted earlier in this chapter, it is clear that Bolton knew Savile's work even though he claims to have made little use of Savile's *End of Nero* in writing his own history. Bolton's *Nero Caesar* embraces this fascination for Seneca and Tacitus, but resurrects the optimism of Gwinne's work and rejects the stoicism of the *Tragedy of Nero*. Bolton's history of Nero's reign purports to present an "official" history of Neronian Rome, and his aim is to demonstrate that participation in public life and obedience to a sovereign is possible in even the most troubled times.

¹⁴⁰ The manuscript of the play forms part of a collection of fifteen plays bound together in MS Egerton 1994 and is found at f245-f268 see: "English plays, in different hands" Egerton, MS 1994, British Library, London, viz;-1. The Elder Brother, a comedy [by John Fletcher]. Printed in 1637, f245-f268 (Harvester Microform Collection, Series I, The English Renaissance, c. 1500-1700, Reel 64 British Literary Heritage, Sussex, England: Harvester Microform, 1987), *British Literary Manuscripts Online*, accessed July 25, 2011, <http://go.galegroup.com/blm/i.do?&id=GALE%7CMC4400001873&V=2.1&v=britlib&it=v&p=BLM&sw=w&viewtype=fullcitation>. See also, Hill, *Nero*, xlii. Frederick Boas was the first to offer his thoughts about how the manuscript came to be in the possession of the British Museum. He followed Sir George Warner's suggestion that the collection was purchased by the British Museum from the library of Lord Charlemont in 1865, and, following this suggestion, there has been much speculation about how the manuscript came to be in Charlemont's possession; see Frederick S. Boas, *Shakespeare and the Universities, and Other Studies in Elizabethan Drama* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Publisher to the Shakespeare Head Press of Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1923), 97; Hill, *Nero*, "Textual Introduction" xlii-lviii. See also Bullen, *Old English Plays*, 417-433. Boas and Warner suggested that the collection was originally bequeathed to Dulwich College by the actor and bookseller William Cartwright (junior). It had been borrowed from Dulwich by Edmund Malone who lent it to Lord Charlemont who then never returned it to Malone; see Bullen, *Old English Plays*, 417-418; Boas, *Shakespeare and the Universities*, 97. See also Hill, *Nero*, xlii-xliv. On Cartwright see Andrew Gurr, "Cartwright, William (1606-1686)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/4824. The connection to Cartwright is intriguing and it, along with the manuscripts themselves, prompt the question as to whether (and if so, when) these plays were performed. For many of the plays in the collection the answer seems quite straightforward. In the manuscripts for two of the plays there is clear evidence that these plays had officially been licensed for performance subject to some revisions being made to the text. Boas suggests that *The Lady Mother* and *The Launchyne of the Mary* are original playhouse copies as both contain handwritten notes by officials at the revels permitting performance of revised versions of these works; see Boas, *Shakespeare and the Universities*, 98-99. As noted in n123 Michael Payne Steppat has pointed to a possible allusion to Nero's Poppea in a 1617 work by Cambridge satirist Robert Anton in which the author lists the various historical figures that have appeared in dramatic performances; see Payne Steppat, "The Vices of the Times," 145. See also, Anton, *The Philosophers Satyrs*, I3v - I4r.

¹⁴¹ Salmon makes this point in stating that Bolton's work "was an answer to earlier plays". Salmon, "Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England," 186.

The structure of the present study

Each of the following chapters begins by attempting to situate each text within an immediate political and cultural context. I will not provide a detailed biographical sketch of each author, nor will I seek to explore the printing history and readership of each text. My aim is to explore the cultural and linguistic environment in which each text was produced. My approach, therefore, is typical of the approach J. G. A. Pocock has described in his analysis of the scholarship on the history of political thought, in that I begin by identifying a language or idiom in which a textual event has participated, before establishing the meaning of each text.¹⁴² In the present study this language “within which texts as events occur” is that of “new humanism”, and the texts themselves, through the author’s use of the building blocks of this language, have a capacity to alter the meaning of specific words, such as constancy and commonwealth, associated with this language. Of course, it might be difficult to determine *precisely* how each author engages with Seneca or Tacitus (or Lipsius or Montaigne for that matter), but we know that “new humanism” was one of the general and continuous “levels of meaning” available to early modern writers, and that each text was “performed” in this context.¹⁴³ In the present study, while the broad language in which these texts operate is “new humanism”, there are other events and contexts, such as the Essex rebellion, which create other “levels of meaning” with which these texts interact. For example, the word “necessity” may have one particular meaning for Tacitus, but when an author borrows and re-uses this term, he may alter the meaning of the word because he is influenced by the way in which the term was used in the rhetoric associated with the Essex rebellion. The present study demonstrates that each text shares the common language of “new humanism”, but each individual author’s version of this language is inflected and altered when it comes into contact with other levels of discourse associated with the immediate political context.

Chapter One provides an analysis of Henry Savile’s *End of Nero*. My examination of the way Savile uses Tacitus to comment on foreign and domestic politics is deeply indebted to Paulina Kewes’s recent assessment of Savile’s Tacitus.¹⁴⁴ I sustain her argument which claims that Savile’s *End of Nero* ought to be read alongside anti-

¹⁴² J. G. A. Pocock, “Texts as Events: Reflections on the History of Political Thought,” in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1987), 25-29.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

¹⁴⁴ Kewes, “Savile’s Tacitus,” 515-551.

Spanish discourse of the 1580s and 1590s. I agree with her proposition that Savile's engagement with resistance theory reflects his awareness of the plight of those states under the dominion of Spain. Kewes maintains that Savile's depiction of Nero's overthrow is informed, in part, by Elizabethan domestic politics, and that Savile shows an awareness of some of the constitutional expedients being debated as a means to resolve the succession problem. As Kewes suggests, although Savile considers the succession crisis, he is hesitant when condoning parliamentary involvement in settling succession, and he seems unconvinced more broadly, by the idea of meddling in England's existing constitutional system. On the whole, Savile's text shares the inconsistencies and ambiguities we encounter in Sidney's *Arcadia*: Savile, like Sidney, balances stoic obedience with principled resistance; like Sidney he focusses on the means of strengthening a state whilst also pointing to how the opportunist individual might exploit a state's weakness; and like Sidney, Savile tests the limits of man's capacity for participating in a tyrannical state and reveals the ways in which men can maintain their virtue even through inaction.

The second chapter considers Gwinne's *Nero tragaedia nova*. This analysis demonstrates that whilst Gwinne takes some inspiration from Savile's text, Gwinne is less comfortable with the theories of resistance that Savile explores. Gwinne undermines the language of prudence and dissimulation that we encounter in the work of Lipsius, and unravels a Tacitist vision of the universe in which man's power to control his own destiny was celebrated. Gwinne instead insists that man must surrender to the divinely ordained universe. Through this surrender, Gwinne implies, man attains a freedom greater than that which man could attain in the sphere of politics. Gwinne's work is deeply indebted to the philosophy of Montaigne. This debt is reflected in Gwinne's interest in Montaigne's idea of "custom", and is also shown in the way Gwinne shares Montaigne's preoccupation with demonstrating the virtue of Paulina, and the wisdom of Seneca's response to Nero's tyranny. Gwinne takes each individual at Nero's court — Seneca, Paulina, Agrippina, and Piso — and dramatises how their response to their political and personal tribulation shapes their destiny. This dramatization acts, this chapter argues, as a form of commentary on the events of the Essex rebellion, as Gwinne seeks to demonstrate how a direct confrontation with a tyranny rarely ends well.

Chapter Three presents an analysis of the anonymous play the *Tragedy of Nero*. The tone of this play differs considerably from the hopeful "new humanism" of Gwinne's work. The play shares the pessimism of Jonson's *Sejanus* in condemning political life as faulty beyond repair. The playwright picks up the tone of Jacobean anti-

peace literature and uses Nero's Rome to comment on the likely fate of a nation subjected to an enforced peace. Although the playwright situates himself as a partisan of the war-party through his condemnation of the peace, he does not advocate political rebellion or resistance as a means of signalling this opposition. Instead, the playwright suggests that withdrawal from political life is the safest recourse for those who feel threatened by their political surroundings. There is little sense that the playwright seeks to challenge the existing constitutional system, as he moves to outline how the liberty and happiness man enjoys does not hinge upon the existence of a particular political structure, but rests on man's outlook. He articulates a theory of freedom, and a concept of the commonwealth, drawn from Seneca's moral philosophy, and points to the means by which man can salvage his freedom and safeguard his existence through the annihilation of the political self. This chapter examines how the playwright's "new humanism" interacts with the language of "court" and "country" that we encounter in the satirical literature of this period. I demonstrate that the playwright's articulation of the idea of a retreat to the celestial stoic cosmos ought to be considered another variant of the retreat to the idealised "country" that is found, for example, in the poetry of Jonson.

The fourth and final chapter presents an evaluation of Bolton's *Nero Caesar*. Bolton's "new humanism" returns us to the organised universe of Gwinne's *Nero tragaedia nova*, where the maintenance of custom and order is preferable to rebellion or withdrawal. In Bolton's interpretation of Nero's Rome it is Seneca who is principally at fault for having, in material terms, elevated himself to the position of a rival to Nero. Furthermore, Seneca's philosophy of sagehood provided the Romans with a subversive philosophy capable of convincing men that they themselves can attain the status of a god, and of convincing men that they owe little allegiance to their temporal ruler. For Bolton, there is no place for the philosophy of consolation and withdrawal within the state. Instead, he argues, men ought to focus on cultivating their ability to withstand political difficulty and must devote themselves to preserving the unity of the state. Bolton insists that the monarch, who neutralises the unruly passions of men and channels these passions into a desire to serve the common good, provides the best means for men to remain free. This chapter points to the orthodoxy of Bolton's views, and compares his political philosophy to the philosophy of his royal patron. I identify Bolton's and James I's shared assumptions by situating Bolton's depiction of Piso's rebellion within the context of James's treatment of Catholics and the question of obedience.

Thus the following analysis is intended to offer a case study exploring the relationship between "new humanism" and political thought in the period c.1580-c.1630.

The present study seeks, above all, to show that it is far too simplistic to assume that an emulation either of Tacitus's hostility towards the imperial age or of Seneca's criticism of court life signals an outright condemnation of monarchical governance. These texts dealing with Nero's reign do underscore the means by which an individual's personal freedoms can be undermined by a ruler, and do celebrate the ability of the virtuous citizen to overcome this assault on their freedom, but the authors are reluctant to consider these problems to be grounds for overthrowing the system of monarchy. The issue these authors engage with is not whether a republican, or even quasi-republican, form of governance is better than a monarchy. These authors focus, rather, on the dilemma of how a subject can survive in an uncertain and capricious political environment. For all four authors, the answer lies in using Tacitus's moral history as a manual to navigate political life, and in using Seneca's moral philosophy as a creed to survive political tribulation.

Chapter One:

Henry Savile's *The End of Nero*

In 1591, the mathematician and warden of Merton College, Henry Savile, published a translation of Tacitus's *Histories* and *Agricola*. The translations of Tacitus's works were accompanied by Savile's own Tacitean work, *The End of Nero and the Beginning of Galba* (*End of Nero*), which relates the overthrow of Nero by the Gaul, Vindex, and explains Galba's early and unsteady rise to power. The *End of Nero* is the first of the Neronian texts we will consider, and, as this chapter will show, in order to understand the political implications of Savile's "new humanism", we must consider the relationship between Savile's depiction of Nero and his translations of Tacitus's other works.

Savile's own work acts as a preamble to the *Histories*, and is intended to bridge the gap in the extant works of Tacitus. Tacitus's narrative breaks off after the account of the death of Thrasea Paetus, the last event recorded in what remains of the *Annals*, and resumes with the description of the early beginnings of Galba's second consulate, the first event recorded in the *Histories*. In the prefatory epistle to the reader, the mysterious "A. B." outlines the merits of Savile's attempt to translate Tacitus into English.¹ The author of this prefatory material implies that each detail of Tacitus's account ought to be preserved, because the lessons the Roman historian provides are so precious. "A. B." urges the reader to learn from the *Histories*:

In these fower bookes of the storie thou shalt see all the miseries of a torne and declining state: The Empire vsurped; the Princes murthered; the people wauering; the souldiers tumultuous; nothing vnlawfull to him that hath power, and nothing so vn safe as to bee securely innocent.²

This preoccupation with the "miserias" of a state also propels Savile's *End of Nero* as he depicts the plight of Rome's provinces, and the Romans themselves, under a harsh master. In the *End of Nero* Savile handles the revolt of Vindex with some admiration, and relates how Vindex came to the fore to lead the charge against Nero. Scholars have seized on Savile's apparently laudatory attitude towards Vindex's rebellion as an implicit sign that Savile is here endorsing not just rebellion against an unjust sovereign, but the overthrow of

¹ Henry Savile, *The ende of Nero and beginning of Galba...* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1591), STC 23642, "A. B. To the Reader", sig. ¶3r.

² Ibid.

the whole notion of monarchy. As we saw in the introduction to this thesis, Chernaik, for example, sees Savile as a champion of popular sovereignty, and claims that Savile's presentation of Vindex's attack on "tyranny and bondage" is crafted using "essentially republican" language.³ However, this undoubtedly overstates Savile's approval of Vindex's rebellion. If we consider Savile's Tacitean works as a triptych, as Savile presumably wished his readers would, it is clear that Savile's republicanism is doubtful. With each historical tale flowing naturally into the next, it is evident that the consequences of Nero's overthrow, as related in the *Histories*, are more harmful than the results of Nero's misrule. Based on this, it is clear that Savile's attitude toward rebellion and popular sovereignty is far more cautious than recent scholars suggest.

On the surface it would appear that Savile's Tacitean works call for active opposition to Elizabethan political culture, and question the authority of Elizabeth. It is undeniable that Savile's exploration of resistance theory in the *End of Nero* suggests that he aligns himself with the type of activist foreign policy pursued in the Sidney circle, and later in the Essex circle. We might read his presentation of Vindex's revolt against Roman hegemony as a tacit endorsement of, for example, the revolt of the Dutch against Spain.⁴ Similarly, Savile's translation of the *Histories* seems to filter the fears, expressed by individuals like Sidney and Essex, that the horrors of a breakdown of order would be experienced in the Elizabethan polity. Some thought that, because of the uncertainty surrounding Elizabeth's likely successor, and because of England's political and religious involvement in Continental religious conflict, England was likely to experience political chaos similar to that experienced by Rome after Nero's overthrow. However, in spite of his endorsement of this activist approach to foreign policy, and his apparent sympathy with the cause of the Dutch, Savile stops short of sanctioning the actions of Vindex. In fact, Savile uses the *End of Nero* to explain precisely how Rome was plunged into turmoil, and this suggests that rather than applauding Vindex's actions, he seeks to demonstrate how Vindex's revolt placed Rome on a path to certain destruction. Savile implies that ostentatious displays of military virtue have no place in an ordered state. Moreover, Savile's decision to translate the *Agricola* suggests that he considered Agricola's method of quiet prudence and resilience under tyranny to be the preferable approach to dealing with the misrule of a monarch. Savile's "new humanism", therefore, is far more conservative in tone than has been previously suggested. He maintains a careful balance between, on the one hand, his support for the Protestant rebellions against Spain, and his

³ Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome*, 19.

⁴ Kewes has pointed to this context: see Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 515-551.

sympathy with the plea for England to adopt a more activist foreign policy, and, on the other hand, his belief that it was best for those opposed to Elizabeth's hesitant foreign policy not to cause unnecessary conflict.

In existing scholarship, Savile's translation of Tacitus has been associated with the Essex circle. This is not only because Savile's personal connections to Essex and his associates are well-documented, but also because Savile's Tacitean works are typical of the Essexians' fascination with political history and with the lessons provided by Tacitus. Savile's connections at Oxford included prominent members of Essex's secretariat. Henry Cuffe, who probably joined Essex's retinue in Hilary term of 1595, was a Fellow at Merton and Regius Professor of Greek during Savile's wardenship at Merton.⁵ Thomas Smith, who joined Essex's secretariat in December 1585, had been at Christ Church since 1573, and was Public Orator at Oxford from 1582, a period which overlaps with Savile's time at Oxford.⁶ Smith was responsible for bringing Savile into contact with the Spanish exile Antonio Pérez, whose "brand" of anti-Spanish Tacitism, as Gajda notes, found favour in the Essex circle.⁷ Paul Hammer has characterised Smith's role as that of a shepherd to Pérez, in that he arranged for Pérez to visit Oxford with Savile, and orchestrated a visit to Essex's country house Barn Elms in Surrey, for the two Tacitean scholars.⁸ Henry Cuffe, probably the best known of Essex's associates, was undoubtedly closer to Savile. In 1586, Savile secured the fellowship at Merton for him, and in 1592 the two men were actively

⁵ Paul Hammer, "The Uses of Scholarship: The Secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c.1585-1601," *English Historical Review* CIX, no. 430 (1994): 27-31.

⁶ Ibid; Paul E. J. Hammer, "Smith, Sir Thomas (c.1556-1609)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/25907. It is also highly likely that Savile also knew (most probably indirectly in an academic capacity) Sir William Temple, the Ramist scholar who had been appointed secretary to Sidney in 1585 and became Essex's secretary in 1594. Robert Goulding has drawn attention to the fact that one of Savile's undergraduate students at Oxford, William Batt, records the fact it was rumoured that Savile was expected to be chosen to produce a refutation of Temple's Ramist defence *Pro Mildapetti*; see Robert Goulding, "Studies on the Mathematical and Astronomical Papers of Sir Henry Savile," (PhD thesis, Warburg Institute, University of London 1999), 65-66. Goulding here cites Batt's circulation of this rumour from MS Rawlinson D.985, f. 52v, Bodleian Library, Oxford. For Temple's career; see Elizabethanne Boran, "Temple, Sir William (1554/5-1627)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/27121.

⁷ Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94-95.

⁸ Hammer, "The Uses of Scholarship," 33; Gustav Ungerer, *A Spaniard in Elizabethan England: The Correspondence of Antonio Pérez's Exile*, vol.2 (London: Tamesis Books Limited, 1976), 372, 367. Ungerer has suggested that the meeting at Oxford (which he assumes to have taken place based on correspondence between Smith and Pérez) and that at Barns Elms formed part of Pérez's attempt to secure Savile's backing for the publication of his own Tacitean work, the *Relaciones*.

involved in Elizabeth's visit to Oxford.⁹ Furthermore, Savile and Cuffe maintained a healthy correspondence when the latter was travelling on the continent as part of his secretarial duties under Essex.¹⁰ It was his connection with Cuffe which ultimately proved dangerous for Savile following the Essex rebellion. From what we know about the investigation, the interrogators questioned those who knew Savile about his relationship with Cuffe and Essex. Anne Phillipson was asked questions about Cuffe's and Savile's meetings — "[w]hether she knoweth or no that Mr. Savell hath had letters from Mr. Cuffe since Sunday last"; "Why Mr. Savill, to her knowledge, would not come upon Sunday last night into the Court, but was only at the Court gate"; "How long it is since she saw Mr. Cuff or that Mr. Savell and he saw each to her knowledge, and how long it is before Sunday last that Mr. Cuff came to Mr. Savell's lodgings here at Westminster" — in order to establish Savile's connection to the rebellion.¹¹ The closeness of Savile's rapport with Essex is further evidenced by the words of the Earl himself. It is Savile whom Essex identified as his chief tutor in matters relating to policy. In the *Apologie*, published posthumously in 1603, Essex celebrates Savile as "that most learned and truly honest maister" who inspired in him a love of knowledge rather than fame.¹²

⁹ For Cuffe's career at Oxford and his connection to Savile; see Paul E. J. Hammer, "Cuffe, Henry (1562/3–1601)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6865; an account of Cuffe's and Savile's roles in the 1592 visit is found in John Nichols's compendium; see Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke and Jayne Elisabeth Archer, eds. *John Nichols's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I...* vol. 3, 1579-1595 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 622-638, and in G. H. Martin and J. R. L. Highfield, *A History of Merton College, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 170-171.

¹⁰ For examples of Savile and Cuffe's correspondence during Cuffe's excursion in Florence see: "Henry Cuffe to Henry Savile" 4/14 June 1597, *HMC Salisbury*, vol.7, 1597 Calendar Page: 234, Calendar Entry: 527, *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2015, accessed June 20, 2015. <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4305800531&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Calendar>. Gale Document Number, MC4305800531; "Henry Cuff [sic] to Henry Savile" 4/14 March 1597-8, *HMC Salisbury*, vol. 8, 1598 Calendar Page: 76, Calendar Entry: 160, *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2015, accessed June 20, 2015. <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4305900163&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Calendar>. Gale Document Number MC4305900163; "Henry Cuffe to Mr. Savile" 27 December 1598, 6 January 1597, *HMC Salisbury*, vol.7, 1597, Calendar Page: 524, Calendar Entry: 1238, Gale Cengage *State Papers Online*, accessed June 20, 2015. <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4305801242&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Calendar>. Gale Document Number: MC4305801242.

¹¹ "Anne Philipson" 15 February 1600-1, *HMC Salisbury*, vol.11, 1601 Calendar Entry: 134, Calendar Page: 56, Gale Cengage *State Papers Online*, accessed June 20, 2015. <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4306200136&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Calendar>. Gale Document Number: MC4306200136.

¹² Robert Devereux, *An Apologie of the Earl of Essex against those which jealously, and maliciously, tax him to be the hinderer of peace and quiet of his country* (London: Richard Bradock, 1603), STC 6788, sig. A1v.

It is primarily due to Savile's involvement with this coterie of individuals that his text has been identified as something of a clarion-call in relation to Essex's rebellion of 1601. Some scholars have been keen to stress that there is something of Essex in Savile's rendering of Vindex, the Gaul whose resistance against Nero sparks the emperor's overthrow, and they have proposed that Savile seems to endorse not merely resistance to a monarch, but a nebulous form of "republic" as an alternative to monarchy.¹³ The suggestion is that Savile was not only sympathetic to the Essexians' interest in resistance theory, but that he also acted as a spur, by providing Essex with a rhetoric of popular sovereignty. For others, the subversive aspect of Savile's text lies in the suspicion, first proposed by Ben Jonson and Edmund Bolton, that Essex is the mysterious "A. B.," whose prefatory epistle commends Savile's Tacitus as the way to peer into the secrets of statecraft.¹⁴

Although this is the context in which Savile's text was read and interpreted, we must not overstate the relationship between Savile's Neronian text and the Essex rebellion. To better understand Savile's "new humanism", we need to consider Savile as an heir to a tradition of Tacitism and Stoicism, rather than the instigator of a new form of politics inspired by these Roman writers. The type of thinking Savile inherited was that found in the circle of Sir Philip Sidney, where Huguenot resistance theory was blended with the philosophy of political prudence found in Tacitus's texts, and the philosophy of constancy found in Seneca's. We need to give greater consideration to Savile's connections with this earlier group of men who were the first to encounter the works of Lipsius and other writers inspired by Tacitus and Seneca.

The link between Savile and Sidney is found in the intellectual networks that these two men shared. Savile's European travels provide evidence that there was a cultural sympathy between them. Between 1578 and 1582, Savile was given leave from his responsibilities at Oxford to embark on a tour of Europe with Henry Neville, George Carew and Philip Sidney's brother, Robert Sidney. Their travels took them first to Paris, where Thomas Bodley, Savile's contemporary at Merton, was spending part of his tour.¹⁵ From there, the party travelled to Breslau, where they resided with the diplomat, André

¹³ Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome*, 19.

¹⁴ "Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden," 142; Bolton, *Hypercritica*, 254. Jonson explains "Essex wrotte that Epistle or preface before the translation of y^e/ last part of Tacitus which is AB." Bolton states: "And of such Works the late Earl of *Essex* under the letters *A.B* (for *Fames* gives it him) in an Epistle before the translated *Tacitus* of his Friend Sr *Henry Savil*, it is as probably pronounced for true, as if an Oracle had utter'd it..."

¹⁵ R. D. Goulding, "Savile, Sir Henry (1549–1622)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2015, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/24737.

Dudith, for six months. Whilst on tour, Savile consumed vast quantities of texts and manuscripts, making use of Dudith's library at Breslau, and collecting manuscripts for Dudith after his departure.¹⁶ The travellers moved on to Altdorf, where they worked alongside Johannes Praetorius and were met by another party of English tourists which included Arthur Throckmorton.¹⁷ Praetorius furnished them with introductions to the astronomer Tadeáš Hájek, whom they met in Prague.¹⁸ In the summer of 1581, the party was welcomed to Vienna by Johannes Sambuc, who had received a letter from Dudith introducing the English travellers.¹⁹ The final outbound part of their journey would see the party first travelling to Venice, where Savile consulted the collections held in the Biblioteca Marciana, and made the acquaintance of Wolfgang Zünderlin, and then finally to Padua. During his time in Padua, Savile stayed at the home of the Italian humanist Gian Vincenzo Pinelli, which acted as "an informal academy" for the streams of visitors that frequented the Venetian territories in this period.²⁰

¹⁶ Mordechai Feingold, *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship: Science, Universities and Society in England, 1560-1640* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 126-127. Feingold provides the most in-depth account of Savile's movements during this period, but the broad outline of Savile's journey is also recounted in Goulding, "Savile, Sir Henry (1549-1622)" *ODNB* and in Martin and Highfield, *A History of Merton College, Oxford*, 165-166.

¹⁷ Feingold, *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship*, 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Marcella Grendler, "A Greek Collection in Padua: The Library of Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535-1601)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (1988): 387. For a prosopographical account of the English visitors to Padua during this period; see Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485-1603* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co. Ltd., 1998). Grendler recounts how Pinelli's library was depleted by a pirate attack while the collection was being transferred to Naples in 1604; see Grendler, "A Greek Collection in Padua," 388. What remains is now housed at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan. In these manuscripts there are a number of extracts from Savile's Tacitean works. The Savile manuscripts include two Italian versions of Savile's "Certain View" published as an appendix to *End of Nero, Histories and Agricola* catalogued as "Osservazioni su certe cose militari per miglior intelligenza delle istorie romane, traduzione italiana" *D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 6 ; 1, 21r-31v* and *D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 6 ; 1, 21r-31v*. There are also five Italian versions of a footnote from the annotations on the *Life of Agricola* catalogued as "La più capitale sorte di nemici sono i laudatori, discorso sopra il detto di Tacito", *D 221 inf.: unità codicologica 16 ; 1, 58r-59v; D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 3 ; 1, 5r-8r; D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 8 ; 1, 43r-45v; D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 10 ; 1, 49r-v, 54r-v; D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 10 ; 2, 50r-52v*. There are also two Italian versions of an annotation on the *Life of Agricola* "Giudizio sopra il Discorso dell'Inglese sopra il detto di Tacito" *D 221 inf.: unità codicologica 17; 1, 62r-68v* and *D 246 inf.: unità codicologica 4 ; 1, 9r-13v*. There is also a manuscript containing Latin versions of the prefatory matter "Alcune traduzioni del Tacito inglese di Enrico Savello" *Q 122 sup.: unità codicologica 21; 1, 126r-128v*. R. B. Todd speculated that Savile had left these manuscripts behind with Pinelli and suggested that they represent draft versions of his Tacitean works; see R. B. Todd, "Henry and Thomas Savile in Italy," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 58 (1996): 439-44. This suggestion is interesting, as it would mean that Savile had, in fact, completed the main part of his translations by the time he left Pinelli's house. Closer examination of these materials, however, suggests that these manuscripts were, in fact, copies from Savile's text which were made for Pinelli. I am grateful for Professor David Wootton's assistance in translating parts of these manuscripts and discussing these with me.

Similarly, Sidney had travelled in Europe between 1572 and 1575. His journey had taken him from England to the French court at Paris, where he witnessed the bloodshed of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre.²¹ The chaos and horror which emerged in the aftermath propelled Sidney through the Lorraine region and into Switzerland, before he journeyed on to Frankfurt, where he met Hubert Languet.²² The two travelled to the imperial court at Vienna before parting company.²³ Languet remained at the imperial court and Sidney travelled on to Venice and Padua, under the auspices and protective eye of Languet.²⁴ Sidney remained in Padua for several months, before travelling through Germany, on to Poland and then into Vienna where he arrived in November 1574.²⁵ As Alan Stewart notes, Sidney stayed in Cracow for a short time, while on his journey through Poland.²⁶ In Cracow, he met Dudith who, as Emperor Maximilian's ambassador in Poland, was busy representing the imperial interest in the Polish succession crisis.²⁷ Sidney was reunited with Languet and both men set out on the final part of Sidney's journey to Prague.²⁸ The journey completed by Sidney, therefore, foreshadowed Savile's, and it seems that the path taken by Sidney provided Savile with a ready-made network to explore. Feingold suggests that it is "highly likely" that it was Sidney who recommended Savile to André Dudith in the same way Languet had recommended him.²⁹ Feingold also speculates that Sidney may have informally introduced Savile to Tadeáš Hájek, or that Savile may have met Hájek's son, Johannes, at Oxford, since the young Hájek had been entrusted to Sidney after he had matriculated with Robert Sidney at Oxford in 1575.³⁰ Savile's student, Robert Sidney, accompanied him during his European tour, a tour which, to all intents and purposes, seems to retrace the footsteps of the elder Sidney and appears to

²¹ Steuart A. Pears, *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet* (London: William Pickering, 1845), xi-xxxii. Sidney's journey has more recently been documented in Alan Stewart, "The Company of Wise Men," chap. 5 in *Philip Sidney: A Double Life* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2000).

²² Pears, *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, xvi.

²³ *Ibid.*, xvii.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, xvi.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xlvi.

²⁶ Stewart, *Philip Sidney: A Double Life*, 133.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Pears, *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, xlix.

²⁹ Feingold, *Mathematicians' Apprenticeship*, 126.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Feingold refers to this account of Johannes's education from J. M. Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney, 1572-1577* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 242, 312-13.

use Sidney's established contacts on the Continent as a basis for the journey. It is important to consider how Savile's travels on the Continent may have informed his Tacitean works.

It is evident that Savile operated within the same cultural and personal networks as Sidney and was, in all probability, an acquaintance, if not an associate, of his. Feingold suggests that Savile may have met Sidney while the latter was at Christ Church (1568-1570), since it is clear that by 1580, when Philip Sidney counselled his younger brother, Robert, on how to become an astute and erudite gentleman, Sidney was familiar with Savile's reputation for learning.³¹ It is possible to imagine that Savile's tour represented a conscious emulation of Sidney, and it is apparent that the two men enjoyed some form of intellectual rapport for, as this chapter will demonstrate, it is clear that Savile and Sidney both drew similar political and philosophical considerations from their engagement with Continental moral and political philosophy. Given this connection between the two men, it is unsurprising that there is much overlap between Sidney's work and Savile's Tacitean texts. Blair Worden's suspicion that the two men were engaged in some form of dialogue in the late 1570s about Tacitus, and the lessons the Roman historian imparted to the early modern reader, is very plausible, since there is an obvious similarity in the tone and content of Savile's and Sidney's work.³² There is a notable degree of likeness between Savile's text and Sidney's pastoral romance, as both men carefully negotiate the almost negligible difference between stoic endurance and passive servitude. It is also clear that the two texts were received in conjunction with each other, as William Blount's marginal annotations to his edition of the *Arcadia* reveal.³³ The most frequently cross-referenced parts of Savile's work are his first and fourth books of the *Histories* and his *Agricola*, with Blount noting the lessons the *Arcadia*'s fantastical tale shares with Tacitus's dense and pessimistic history.³⁴

³¹ Feingold, *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship*, 125.

³² Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 257. Worden notes the striking similarity between Savile's exposition on the phrase *arcana imperii* and the words used by one of Sidney's characters, Eurcharus, in the *Old Arcadia*: "The evidence [for the dialogue between the two men] lies in a footnote to Savile's translation. There Savile discusses Tacitus' celebrated phrase *arcanum imperii*, which he translates as 'secret of state'. He explains that in the passage to which the footnote belongs, Tacitus used to mean 'the secret truths or appearances in affairs of estate; for [adds Savile] the mass of the people is guided and governed more by ceremonies and shows than matter in substance. The words point us to the passage in the *Arcadia* where Eurcharus, making the arrangements for the trial of the princes, 'did wisely consider the people to be naturally taken with exterior shows far more than with inward consideration of the material points'; for 'in these pompous ceremonies he well knew a secret of government much to consist'".

³³ Fred Schurink, "'Like a Hand in the Margine of a Booke': William Blount's Marginalia and the Politics of Sidney's *Arcadia*," *Review of English Studies* n.s 59, no. 238 (2008): 1-24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

This chapter reads Savile's "new humanism" as the legacy of Sidney's interest in Tacitus and Seneca. It argues that Savile and Sidney deal with the themes of rebellion, resistance and prudence in similar ways, in that both men seem to equivocate when handling these concepts. The first and second sections of this chapter discuss Savile's engagement with the political thought associated with Protestant rebellion against the Catholic powers. These sections demonstrate that the sensitivity that Sidney shows towards European resistance theories is also exhibited in Savile's work, as both men consider themselves allies to the Protestant cause in Europe and contemplate the legitimacy of Dutch resistance against Spanish hegemony. This part of the chapter is deeply indebted to Kewes's recent analysis of Savile's text as a reflection on ongoing debates concerning England's support for the rebellion of the Dutch and Portuguese against Philip II.³⁵ Savile and Sidney also focus, however, on domestic politics, and the impact any court conflict over foreign policy might have on the stability of the English polity. Savile, like Sidney, considers the merits of rebelling against Elizabeth to effect a change in foreign policy, but, in evaluating the option of rebellion, Savile expresses a number of reservations. The third section of this chapter argues that while, like Sidney, Savile points to the weaknesses any potential rebels might take advantage of to undermine a state, at the same time his observations provide the rulers of a state with the means to remove these weaknesses before they can be exploited. In the *Arcadia* Sidney explored how the rule of the heart plunged the Arcadian nation into a state of decline, and in his *End of Nero* Savile confronts the same issue. He does this, it will be argued, as a way of highlighting how a monarch can prevent a rebellion like that led by Vindex. Furthermore, Savile's stance here stems from his concern about the viability of, and stability provided by, the political expedients that had emerged as potential solutions to the ongoing concerns about the succession.³⁶ Savile, again like Sidney, stops short of endorsing action that may interfere with the politics and policy of the state. Thus he aims to deter both would-be rebels like Essex and individuals like Burghley who sought to identify parliamentary governance as the solution to the succession crisis from taking any action which might significantly alter the nature of sovereign power in England. Instead, as the fourth section of this chapter indicates, Savile points to a better course of action. Through the characterisation of Vindex and through his illustration of Agricola's prudence, Savile implies that quiet patience is far preferable to the destruction wreaked by the actions of a rash and intemperate individual.

³⁵ Kewes, "Henry Savile's Tacitus," 515-551.

³⁶ Kewes, "Henry Savile's Tacitus," 546-548. These plans are outlined in Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I," 31-58.

The anatomy of a tyrant: Nero and Philip II

The prefatory epistle to Savile's Tacitus establishes the idea that the lessons Tacitus's histories teach his readers are enduring. The principal characters may change, and the scene may alter, but men's motives and actions rarely vary. Savile's Protestant contemporaries understood this idea when writing about the actions of Europe's Catholic rulers, and were quick to draw parallels between contemporary rulers and Rome's most vicious tyrants. In his *End of Nero* Savile develops a conceit in which Nero and the Roman Empire represent an imperial supremacy equal to that of Philip II.

There is a telling sign in Savile's narrative that his vision of Nero is constructed with an eye turned towards Philip II. At the end of the work, Savile recounts the events of 68AD, when news of Galba and Vindex's revolt reached Nero, who was residing in Naples. Fraught with the news that the empire he was desperately trying to hold together was being torn apart in the provinces, Nero could not contain his anger. In Savile's text, the reader is provided with a rich description of Nero's rage:

Whereupon in a desperate rage, hee tare the letters, ouerturned the table, dasht two cuppes on the grounde, which hee dearelie esteemed, and casting awaie all care of himselfe, notwithstanding the perill pressed no nearer, hee called for poyson, which hee put up in a golden box, that his death at the least might bee according to his estate, and so walked forth into the Seruilian gardens.³⁷

The sound of Nero's cherished Homeric glasses smashing to the ground signalled the beginning of the end for Rome's actor-emperor. Sensing that safety and security would be found in Egypt, Nero resolved to flee Italy. Meanwhile, Nero's chief ministers and favourites, Nymphidius and Tigellinus, "*preffered by Nero from nothing to that honourable place*" were, as Savile states, "*the first to forsake him*".³⁸ As Nero's rule was crumbling, they pulled themselves up out of the ruins and, believing that Nero had already fled, promised a donative to Galba.³⁹ Nero was left abandoned by those who had been the chief instruments of his reign. Savile's description of Nero is tinged with a note of sympathy for a forsaken prince:

³⁷ Savile, *End of Nero*, 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

*Their fellowes which warded that night foreseeing the issue, and coueting in this creation of the new Prince a part with the rest, left Nero a sleepe alone in the garden. Who being awaked about midnight, understanding his garde was departed, leapt out of his bed, and sent about for his frendes: from whom receiuing no answere, hee with a fewe went to their lodgings himselfe. The great Monarch of the world, adored erewhile as a god, attended upon and garded by thousands of frendes, of souldiers, of seruants, now as a page knocking at dores findeth all shutte against his unfortunate state.*⁴⁰

Savile, here, builds his narrative of Nero's fall largely around Suetonius, who relates how Nero acknowledged his impending death. Suetonius explains how Nero woke from his sleep in the gardens to find himself abandoned, and how he resolved to hasten his own demise by consuming poison.⁴¹ However, in Savile's account, we are given a more tangible sense of Nero's hubris. Savile underscores the contrast between Nero's former state, "adored erewhile as a god, attended upon and garded by thousands of frendes, of souldiers, of seruants", and his "unfortunate state".⁴² Savile's emphasis on Nero, "[t]he great Monarch of the world" who forfeits his empire, is a highly suggestive addition to the narrative because Savile's description here would surely evoke Philip II's imperial motto: "Non sufficit orbis".⁴³

Savile's treatment of the rebellion against Nero, and the fall of a mighty dynasty, is an allegory for the waning power of Philip II, and the rebellion of the Netherlands against his rule. Philip's imperial ambitions weighed heavily on the minds of Savile's contemporaries and Kewes notes that Savile's *Agricola* shares the emphasis "on Philip II's lust for universal dominion epitomized by his supremely arrogant motto, *non sufficit orbis*" that we encounter in anti-Spanish texts of this period.⁴⁴ In the 1596 text, *Romes Monarchie*, an extended conceit is drawn between the Roman Empire and Spanish imperialism and wars of conquest.⁴⁵ The marginal glosses confirm the contemporary

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9-10.

⁴¹ Suetonius, *The historie of twelve Caesars emperours of Rome* trans. Philemon Holland (London: H. Lownes and G.Snowdon for Matthew Lownes, 1606) STC 23422, 204-205.

⁴² Savile, *End of Nero*, 9.

⁴³ Ibid. It is true that Nero's imperial iconography, particularly coins circulating in Egypt and the eastern provinces, celebrated Nero as "benefactor of the world" in the vein of Augustan imperial imagery. Similarly, the people of Boetia in Greece celebrated Nero's philhellenism and Nero in return responded by declaring himself their benefactor and lord of the entire world; see Sigrid Mratschek, "Nero the Imperial Misfit: Philhellenism in a Rich Man's World," in *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, ed. Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 55-56. See also. Myles Lavan, "The Empire in the Age of Nero," in *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, 71.

⁴⁴ Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 536. She reiterates this point in her analysis of Mary Sidney's *Antonius*; see Kewes, "'A Fit Memorial,'" 251.

⁴⁵ E. L. *Romes monarchie* also cited by Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 538.

relevance of the sections relating to Nero's overthrow, as the author condemns "ciuill discord, bringing woes and spoyles", which the annotations declare "[w]hose increase is mightie now a dayes."⁴⁶ The reader is directed to Savile's *End of Nero*, a "worthie present for a King, or Queene", "[w]here is describ'd *Nero* his monstrous life:/A common-wealth, and state, in pieces torne".⁴⁷ Similarly, in *The State of Christendom*, which Gajda has recently attributed to Anthony Bacon, a call to arms against Spanish oppression is illustrated by extended comparisons between Roman Catholic persecution and violence, and the force of the later Roman Empire.⁴⁸ The target of the author's hostility, Philip II, is described in terms identical to those used by Savile, as the Spanish ruler is castigated for his desire to "tyrannize without comptrolment, and make himself or successors monarchs of the whole world without resistance."⁴⁹ Here, the author explains the similarity between the Romans and the Spanish:

Again, as the *Romans* never entred into League or Amity with any Prince or Nation who did not wholly submit himself, and it self unto their discretion; So the *Spaniard* never receiveth any King or Potentate for his Ally and Confederate, unless he can and will be content to be wholly at his devotion.⁵⁰

In this parallel, those "instruments" of Catholic power like the Duke of Guise are as ambitious as Caesar, "who drave *Pompey* out of *Italy*", or Sejanus, who forced Tiberius to impose exile on himself and retire to Capri.⁵¹ When Savile was working on his *End of Nero* and his translations of Tacitus, it is highly likely that he was familiar with the streams of material being produced by apologists for the Netherlands, where Philip II's character was likened to Nero's. In William of Orange's *Apology* (probably co-authored by Philip Sidney's correspondent, Hubert Languet), the former Governor of the Netherlands, Margaret the Duchess of Parma, is said to have surpassed even Nero (and Phalaris, Busyrus and Domitian) for having cruelly enacted punishments and torments upon, and

⁴⁶ E. L. *Romes monarchie*, sig. K4v.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Alexandra Gajda, "The State of Christendom: History, Political Thought and the Essex Circle," *Historical Research* 81, no. 213, (2008): 423-425.

⁴⁹ Henry Wotton, [attr.] Anthony Bacon [?], *The State of Christendom...* (London: for Humphrey Moseley, 1657), Wing W3654, "A Supplement to the History of the State of Christendom," (32), sig. Eeev.

⁵⁰ Ibid., (65), sig. Kr.

⁵¹ Ibid., (26), sig. E1v.

engaged in, the bloody persecution of “poore subiectes”.⁵² Savile, like his counterparts, seems to have understood the notion of *similitudo temporum* in evoking the Roman tyrants as a mirror for Europe’s Catholic rulers.

When addressing the methods and mindset of a tyrant, it is evident that polemicists writing against Philip II focus on the character and personality of the ruler. It is a ruler’s excessive cruelty, or his depravity which singles him out as particularly vicious and tyrannical. In Savile’s *End of Nero*, this emphasis is also evident, as those opposed to Nero, like the supporters of the revolt in the Netherlands, dwell not on the unlawful or unjust aspects of Nero’s rule, but on his flawed persona. Savile’s text thus accords with the anti-Spanish rhetoric emerging from the Netherlands in this period. Martin Van Gelderen notes that in Orange’s *Apology* Philip II “was held personally responsible for the troubles afflicting the Netherlands”, and that this represented a break with the usual stance in Dutch political thought which portrayed Philip II as a good ruler misled by manipulative counsel.⁵³ In the *Apology*, the focal point of criticism is Philip II, and the attack is highly personalised and designed to portray the Spanish ruler as an incestuous and murderous tyrant.⁵⁴ Philip II, like Nero in *End of Nero*, is pilloried as a witless, in-bred ruler:

They see euery day before them an incestuous king, which is one onely halfe degree, nigh unto Iupiter, the husbände of Iuno, his owne sister, & yet they dare reproach me... And againe I am here inforced to beseeche you (my Lordes) not to thinke of me that, which as yet you haue neuer seene in me, to witt, that by their wicked speaches, I am moued, to laie open these abhominable biles... He then, that hath married his Neice dare reproche vnto me ... He I say, dare vpbraied me with my mariage, who (to the end he might obtaine such a mariage) hath cruelly murdered his owne wife, the daughter and sister of the kings of Fraunce... yea his lawfull wyfe, the mother of two daughters, the true heires of Spaine ...⁵⁵

The charges weighed against both rulers underline personal, often sexual, failings, and focus on the character of the monarch/ruler rather than the sovereign office. For example, in the *Defence*, an appeal to German princes to assist the Dutch in their revolt, published in an English translation in 1571, it is the personality of the Spanish instruments of power

⁵² William of Orange, *The apologie or defence of the most noble Prince William ...* (Delft, 1581) STC 15207.5, sig. G4v.

⁵³ Martin Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 152. Initially, Van Gelderen asserts, in tracts such as the *True narration and apology*, Adrianus Saravia’s *The Heartfelt desire of the noble, long-suffering and high-born prince of Orange*, Orange’s war against Spanish policy in the Netherlands was presented as the actions of a concerned and loyal prince attempting to wrest the command of Netherlands from ambitious men such as the Duke of Alva, in defence of Philip II’s rule; see Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 98-102.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵⁵ William of Orange, *Apologie*, sig. E2r.

which comes under scrutiny.⁵⁶ The author describes the pleasure the Duke of Alva allegedly took in targeting “every most virtuous person” and highlights his character flaws: “Every the most innocent man’s blood he has shed... all laws of God and man he has violated, the bonds of marriage he has broken, the Sacrament of Baptism he has polluted, all order of charity and friendly society he has overthrown”.⁵⁷

This type of *ad hominem* argument is crafted by Savile, who seems to place Vindex’s words, recorded in Dio Cassius, into the mouth of Galba, who lambasts Nero in a highly personal attack.⁵⁸

*I neede not to speake of the sorrowful sighes & bitter teares of so many young gentlemen bereft of their fathers, so manie wiues robbed of their husbands... which crie vengeāce vpon such a Prince. A Prince? nay, an incendiarie, a singer, a fidler, a stageplaier, a cartdriuer, a vsurier, no Prince, nay no man, that hath a man to his husband, & a man to his wife, but a monster of mankinde; against whom what Vindex in France hath already intended I am sure you doe know, & I, for my part, am most sory to heare.*⁵⁹

Savile’s immediate point of reference is probably Vindex’s mocking invective against Nero in Dio Cassius’s account where a similar rhetorical structure is used:

...he has despoiled the whole Roman world, because he has destroyed all the flower of the senate, because he debauched and then killed his mother, and does not preserve even the semblance of sovereignty.... I have seen him, my friends and allies, — believe me, — I have seen that man (if man he is who married Sporus and been given in marriage to Pythagoras), in the circle of the theatre... I have seen him in chains, hustled about as a miscreant, heavy with child, aye, in the travail of childbirth — in short, imitating all the situations of mythology by what he said and what was said to him, by what he submitted to and by what he did.⁶⁰

The language Savile places into the mouths of the Roman rebels matches the type of rhetoric found in the texts relating to the Dutch rebellion against Spain, as both focus on targeting the personal and private failings of the ruler, and use these as justification for his overthrow.

⁵⁶ For an exploration of the purposes and authorship of this text see *The Dutch Revolt* ed. and trans. Martin Van Gelderen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xv-xviii.

⁵⁷ “A Defence and True Declaration (1570),” in *The Dutch Revolt*, 1-78, 9.

⁵⁸ Dio Cassius, *Roman History, Books LXI-LXX* trans. Earnest Cary on the basis of the version of Herbert Baldwin Foster (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 174-176.

⁵⁹ Savile, *End of Nero*, 4.

⁶⁰ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 173.

Savile also picks up on the rhetoric found in anti-Spanish texts that suggests that the “new” Roman Empire was particularly noted for its cruelty. In the speech delivered by Galba, discussed above, Savile has the new emperor denounce Nero’s personal failings:

*...what kind of exaction hath he not proued to supply with extortion that which with shame he hath spent? what kinde of cruelty hath he not practised? ... Beholde, poisoned his father and brother, abused & slaine his owne mother, murdered his wife, his master, & what els soeuer valiant or vertuous: in Senate, in city, in prouince, with-out anie difference of sex, or of age.*⁶¹

In Galba’s oration Nero’s cruelty is indiscriminate, like that described by Rainolds in 1571, who states that Nero observed “no meane” and that “no estate [was] spared”.⁶² Although it may be suggested that Savile merely continues a tradition in identifying Nero as a particularly cruel individual, it is more likely that Savile here consciously reflects the type of arguments found in the tracts condemning the tyranny of Philip II.⁶³ This is clear if we compare the way in which the tenor of Galba’s declaration in the *End of Nero* mirrors the language of resistance used by the Dutch in their secession from Spanish rule. For example, in the *Apology* the Spanish, like Nero’s Romans, are condemned for their barbarism and capriciousness. In the *Apology*, Orange outlines how the Spanish have proved themselves tyrants through their appetitive attitude towards their colonies and their desire to treat the Netherlands as they would the Indies.⁶⁴

*...I haue bin a witnes of their aduise, by which they adiudged all you to death, making no more account of you, than of beastes, if they had power to haue murdered you, as they do in the Indies, where they haue miserablie put to death, more than twentie millions of people, and haue made desolate & waste, thirtie tymes as much lande in the quantitie and greatnes, as the lowe countrie is, with such horrible excesses and ryottes, that all the barbarousnesses, cruelties, and tyrannies, whiche haue euer bin cōmitted, are but sport, in respect of that, which hath fallen out vpon the poore Indians...*⁶⁵

Perhaps more significantly, Savile’s description of how Nero turned against even his kinsmen and “*poisoned his father and brother, abused & slaine his own mother, murdered his wife, his master*” seems remarkably similar to *The State of Christendom*’s description

⁶¹ Savile, *End of Nero*, 4.

⁶² Richard Rainolde, *A Chronicle of all the noble emperours of the Romaines ...* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1571), STC 20926, sig. f.37v.

⁶³ Gwyn, “Cruel Nero,” 422.

⁶⁴ William of Orange, *Apologie*, sig. f3v - sig. f4r.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. f4r.

of the internecine cruelty Philip II is said to have practised.⁶⁶ In the supplement to the work it is alleged that Philip II “has not spared his son, his brother, his kinsman, his nobility and peers” and has pursued wars “performed with barbarous cruelty”.⁶⁷ It is evident, then, that Savile’s text shares a rhetorical structure with anti-Spanish invectives of this period and this suggests that Savile engages with Nero’s reign as a form of thinly veiled commentary on the legitimacy of the actions of the Netherlands in their revolt against Philip II.

In crafting his account of Nero’s demise there is no Tacitean text for Savile to draw upon since Tacitus’s narrative breaks off before Nero’s fall. However, it is clear that in his presentation of Nero’s character, Savile continues Tacitus’s preoccupation with exploring Nero’s villanous psychology. Michael Mordine has pointed to the way in which Tacitus seems to present Nero as a particularly grotesque specimen by framing Nero’s most cruel actions as pieces of theatre, performed on the stage of the imperial household.⁶⁸ In the thirteenth book of the *Annals*, Mordine argues, we see Nero’s “cruelty, incompetence, narcissism, rashness, and paralysis” exhibited within the walls of the household, as Nero executes the murder of Britannicus, and engineers Agrippina’s fall from favour.⁶⁹ This is certainly true, as at this point in the narrative Tacitus focusses not on the ways in which Nero has eclipsed senatorial power, or on the ways in which the freedoms of the individual have been infringed, but on Nero’s personality. Tacitus draws attention to the perverse pleasure Nero displayed in observing the pain of the dying Britannicus, and the relish with which the emperor seized upon an occasion to humiliate Agrippina.⁷⁰ Furthermore, in his description of Nero’s lascivious behaviour, Tacitus conveys the idea that Nero was both disturbed and unnatural.⁷¹ It seems that Savile seizes on this aspect of Tacitus’s narrative because it equips him with precisely the type of language he requires to emphasise the similarity of character between Nero and the version of Philip II described by the Spanish monarch’s opponents.

⁶⁶ Savile, *End of Nero*, 4; Wotton, [attr.] Bacon [?], *The state of Christendom*, 32.

⁶⁷ Wotton, [attr.] Bacon [?], *The State of Christendom*, 32.

⁶⁸ Michael J. Mordine, “Imperial Household,” in *A Companion to the Neronian Age*, 111.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Grenewey, *Annales*, 183-184.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

The legitimacy of resistance

When exploring the theoretical underpinning of Vindex's rebellion, Savile is, in fact, acknowledging more recent acts of resistance and considering the justification for the Netherlands' abjuration of Philip II's power. Although Savile deals with the legitimacy of resistance, his message is unclear and inconsistent as his work reads as an academic exercise outlining various *theories* of resistance, rather than as an argument in support of rebellion. He seems to deter men from rebellion by pointing to the outcome of Vindex's actions and by underlining the difficulties faced by the Romans after Nero's overthrow. Savile's "new humanism" is not as radical as scholars have suspected since he does not unequivocally advocate resistance. His text is also topical in another sense, as he seems to cast judgement on the role parliament sought to play in determining the Elizabethan succession. Kewes has suggested that his text acts as some form of intervention into the ongoing debate concerning whether the English monarchy was hereditary or elective.⁷² She suggests that Savile's approach to the Neronian succession is to "demystify monarchical authority", an act which draws attention to Roman "constitutional expedients", in order to give weight to the constitutional experimentation of the 1580s, which developed in response to the uncertain Elizabethan succession.⁷³ His text, she argues, reflects the Earl of Essex's own leanings towards favouring the Stuart succession as the work takes the "approving portrayal of the tyrant's overthrow" found in Robert Persons's *Conference about the Next Succession*, a tract dedicated to Essex, and magnifies it to underscore how the transition may be achieved without difficulty.⁷⁴ However, as Kewes notes, Savile's commitment to this type of constitutional innovation is shaky, as Savile seems doubtful about the ease with which such a change can be effected.⁷⁵ In considering both resistance and constitutional change Savile is hesitant and points to the likely harm caused by both acts.

As outlined above, Savile's emphasis on the tyranny of Nero hinges on a concerted criticism of Nero's character. Nero's moral failings, and his dubious behaviour, are what mark him out as a tyrant. In this stress on Nero's person, Savile seems to lay the foundations for the emperor's deposition being justified by a private law theory of

⁷² Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 542-549.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 545-546. For quotes see 545; 546.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 545; 544.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 548.

resistance. In Galba's speech, as outlined in the previous section, Nero is personally attacked as a private individual. In Galba's words, it is evident that Nero's opponents no longer consider him an elevated or supreme power because, through his disregard for justice and law, he has forfeited any status he had once held. Galba notes how Nero is reduced to a private person.⁷⁶ Through Galba's words, Savile seems to suggest that action against Nero may be considered legitimate because, to borrow Skinner's analysis of private law resistance theory, "a ruler who exceeds the bounds of his office automatically reduces himself to the status of a felonious private citizen."⁷⁷ This approach to resistance is similarly conveyed in William of Orange's *Apology*, where the Spaniards are presented as a legitimate target to be resisted because, through their disruption of the common peace, they have reduced themselves to the status of a private enemy of the Netherlands.⁷⁸ Philip II's transgressions and moral failings were his *private* wrongs, and did not tarnish the mystical corporate entity of the sovereignty of the Netherlands. In the *Apology* Philip II and other instruments of Spanish power have forfeited their superior powers, as Van Gelderen notes, and thus resistance was conceptualised as an act taken against a private individual: "The *Apology* seemed to suggest, following the 'private law' theory of resistance, that in such a situation taking up arms did not amount to armed resistance against a prince, as the latter had lost office and become a private person".⁷⁹

Moreover, Savile builds this theoretical divorce between the sovereign office and the person of the king or emperor into his narrative structure. In relating the downfall of Nero, Savile stresses how Nero is confronted as a private enemy and he evokes the idea of the "king's two bodies" to stress how Nero's mystical corporate identity is not assaulted by the actions of Vindex. In Savile's narrative Nero's lost identity as ruler is most clearly conveyed in the depiction of Nero's *personal* isolation after he learns of Galba's revolt. There is an interruption in his account of Nero's personal dilemma and death, a break which Savile uses to relate the actions of the Senate, who declare Nero to be an enemy of the state.⁸⁰ Savile leaves Nero at the end of the first section "*vpon a simple pallet in a backe roome*", hiding in the "*bushes and breres*", forsaken by those who once supported him.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Savile, *End of Nero*, 4.

⁷⁷ Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, 200.

⁷⁸ William of Orange, *Apologie*, sig. B2v.

⁷⁹ Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 153.

⁸⁰ Savile, *End of Nero*, 10-11.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

Savile then switches the focus to the senate's decree that Nero be pursued and punished *more maiorum*, and its decision that Galba should be designated the new ruler.⁸² Finally, the focus returns to Nero who, having learnt that he is condemned to death — “*that his necke should be locked in a forke, and himselfe whipped naked to death*”— decides to commit suicide with the help of Epaphroditus.⁸³ The brief caesura in the tale of Nero's downfall parallels the uncoupling of Nero's body public and private. Savile creates a space for the Senate to transfer the powers of the old emperor to the new.

For Savile, this narrative allows him to legitimise the act of deposition, whilst also stressing the sanctity of monarchy. Like other English writers of this period, he is able to “square the circle”, by recognising the legitimacy of actions taking place in the Netherlands, whilst also supporting Elizabeth by condemning the deposition of a legitimate monarch by powers like those of the papacy.⁸⁴ Thomas Bilson, for example, in his musings on the nature of power, explained that the ruler who “goe[s] about to subiect his kingdome to a forraine Realme, or change the forme of the common wealth, from imperie to tyrannie”, or who would “neglect the Lawes established by a common consent...to execute his owne pleasure” can no longer be considered a king and thus those who defend themselves against his will are not to be counted rebels.⁸⁵ Savile preserves the sanctity of the imperial office, whilst sanctioning rebellion against a tyrant, by suggesting that at the point of deposition Nero is a private person. To explain this more clearly, it is Nero's mortal body that dies while a mystical body survives. In the common formulation, that which is “subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age”, is the private and physical body of the monarch that Savile has die with Nero's suicide, and that which “cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government”, forms the body public or body politic and lives on in perpetuity through Galba's coronation.⁸⁶

The novelty of Savile's depiction of Nero's deposition is apparent if we compare how Savile's text reads alongside the classical sources. As noted above, in the description of Nero's demise, Savile signals how the emperor's public person is deconstructed by

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 11.

⁸⁴ Alexandra Gajda, “Debating War and Peace in Late Elizabethan England,” *The Historical Journal* 52 no. 9 (2009): 867. Here Gajda discusses Thomas Bilson *The True Difference*.

⁸⁵ Thomas Bilson, *The True Difference...* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1585), STC 3071, 520.

⁸⁶ Edmund Plowden, *Commentaries or Reports* (London: 1816), 2122 cited in Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, 7th edn with a new preface by William Chester Jordan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 7.

having him seek refuge in Phaon's house, where Nero hides under a cloak and lies down on a makeshift mattress in a bare room. Savile then continues by dramatising the re-assembly of the office of emperor, outlining how the senate then transfers imperial power to Galba.⁸⁷ In Suetonius, Nero is urged by Phaon, as in Savile's text, to hide in a sand-pit, but he refuses, instead crawling through a narrow cut-away section of wall into a room in Phaon's villa.⁸⁸ Nero makes arrangements for his death and utters the famous words "what an artist dies in me", before he is interrupted by a courier who brings news of the punishment decreed by the senate.⁸⁹ Dio Cassius similarly focuses on Nero's imminent mortality, and bridges the first part of the narrative of Nero's fall in which Nero is hiding in a cave sustaining his weakened body with bread and water, and the second part in which Epaphroditus deals the final death stroke, with what reads as a brief aside, alluding to the events taking place in Rome:

While he was in this plight the Roman people were offering sacrifices and going wild with delight. Some even wore liberty caps, signifying that they had now become free. And they voted to Galba the prerogatives pertaining to the imperial office.⁹⁰

In Plutarch the emphasis is on Galba's receipt of the news of Nero's overthrow. Galba receives a report from Icelus, a freedman, that Nero is in hiding and "that the army first, and then the senate and the people" have proclaimed Galba emperor, after which, news that Nero was dead begins to spread.⁹¹ Savile's structure here is a composite: he follows Dio Cassius and Plutarch in interrupting the narrative flow of Nero's death to describe the decisions taken by the Senate, and he follows Suetonius by dramatising how Nero is informed of his imminent punishment by the Senate. This moment shares the power of the fourth act of *Richard II* where, standing face to face with the new king, Bolingbroke, Richard removes his crown and symbolically reverses the ritual elements of the coronation.⁹² Savile creates a necessary pause in the narrative to demonstrate that the body politic and public of the *princeps* live on, while Nero prepares for death. This structure

⁸⁷ Savile, *End of Nero*, 10.

⁸⁸ Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars*, 206-207.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁹⁰ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 29.

⁹¹ Plutarch, *Galba* in *Plutarch's Lives* trans. Bernadotte Perrin, vol. 11, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1926), 219.

⁹² William Shakespeare, *Richard II* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard & Katharine Eisaman Maus, (London and New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 4.1.

allows Savile to reiterate that, at the point at which he is sentenced to death, Nero is no longer a sacred superior power, merely a traitor or private enemy of Rome.

Savile blends this private law theory of resistance, with a reference to the assertion that resistance is also legitimate because a ruler who descends into tyranny undermines his position by breaking the contractual obligations he has towards his subjects. Tacitus famously noted how Nero's deposition revealed the *arcana imperii* that an emperor could, in fact, be made and crowned outside Rome.⁹³ Savile seems to toy with this idea of the *making* and *unmaking* of an emperor in his narrative, by exploring the senatorial role in determining the succession. He begins by exploring how Nero circumvented the expectations of an emperor by subjecting Rome and its provinces to fourteen years of cruel domination and hard service.⁹⁴ Savile then explains how the senate responds to this. He emphasises the decision-making powers of the Senate which initially favours Verginius as the new emperor, but, reluctant to alienate the Praetorian guards, decides Galba should be hailed as Nero's successor.⁹⁵ Savile underscores the constituent power of the senate in assembly and its right to rescind the legal imperial prerogatives of one ruler and transfer them to another. In this focus, Savile draws attention to an aspect of Galba's succession that is merely glossed over in the classical sources. Myles Lavan notes that the "real foundations of his [the emperor's] position were the *de facto* control of the armies" in addition to the possession of enough wealth to command authority, and the ability to exercise patronage.⁹⁶ Thus, as H. H. Scullard surmises, because Galba maintained the support of the military commanders of Lusitania, Baetica and Africa, and because Nero could not sustain the support of the Praetorian commanders — Nymphidius proclaimed a donative to Galba and Tigellinus fled Nero on hearing that Galba had been declared emperor by the provinces — the emperor's overthrow was secured.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the senatorial role in the succession of an emperor, as Vasily Rudich notes, "became in most cases a mere formality in regard to a *fait accompli*", as the real authority to make and unmake emperors lay with the army.⁹⁸ It cannot, therefore, be for reasons of historical

⁹³ Savile, *Histories*, 3.

⁹⁴ Savile, *End of Nero*, 10.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Lavan, "The Empire in the Age of Nero," 66.

⁹⁷ H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome 133 BC to AD 68* (London: Meuthen, 1970), 319.

⁹⁸ Vasily Rudich, *Political Dissidence Under Nero: The Price of Dissimulation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 321. Notes to Chapter 6. Rudich here cross-references J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army 31 BC –AD 235* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

accuracy that Savile chooses to spend time focussing on the decision-making powers of the senate, since their role was of little consequence in Nero's succession.

In highlighting the role of the Senate in determining the succession Savile must surely be reflecting on the politics of the Netherlands. He draws a parallel between the Senate's position in determining Nero's overthrow, and the assembly of the states of the Netherlands, who similarly enacted their "right" to reject Philip II in their proclamation of the Act of Abjuration. Savile describes how the Senate assembled and declared Nero an enemy of the state, to be punished *more maiorum*, and settled formally upon Galba as Nero's successor.⁹⁹ In the *End of Nero* Savile seems to model the overthrow of Nero and the succession of Galba in terms reminiscent of the Act of Abjuration. In the Act, the States General affirms its sovereign right to rescind its original allegiance to Philip II since the Spanish ruler had become nothing more than a tyrant. The assembly of the states draw attention to the difference between a monarch and a tyrant. According to their definitions, a prince is a divinely ordained individual who:

...for the sake of the subjects (without which he could be no prince) to govern them according to equity, to love and support them as a father his children, or a shepherd his flock, and even at the hazard of life to defend and preserve them.¹⁰⁰

When a king fails to govern for the goodwill and benefit of his subjects and instead "oppresses them, seeking opportunities to infringe their ancient customs and privileges, exacting from them slavish compliance, then he is no longer a prince, but a tyrant".¹⁰¹ The assembly of states claim that, in such a situation, the rights of the sovereign are forfeited *ipso jure*, as the constituent union of the states retains the right to absolve the union formed and elect another ruler:

So having no hope of reconciliation, and finding no other remedy, we have, agreeable to the law of nature, in our own defence, and for maintaining the rights, privileges, and libertys of our countreymen, wives and children, and latest posterity, from being enslaved by the Spaniards, been constrained to renounce allegiance to the king of Spain, and pursue such methods as appear to us most likely to secure our ancient liberties and privileges.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Savile, *End of Nero*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ "The Declaration of the States General of the United Provinces; setting forth, that Philipp the Second had forfeited his right of Sovereignty over the said Provinces. At the Hague, 26 July 1581" in *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts, on the Most Interesting and Entertaining Subjects...* ed. Walter Scott, vol. 1, (London: T. Cadell, 1809), 323-329, 323.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 327.

The Dutch abjuration of Philip II's power, and their subsequent courtship of Elizabeth I, the Earl of Leicester and the Duke of Anjou as Philip's successor, is the obvious precedent informing Savile's presentation of the Senate's role in Galba's succession. We know from Savile's Oxford speech of 1592 that he maintained a keen interest in affairs on the Continent, as he laments the fate of Portugal and the Netherlands, and condemns their suffering under the rule of Philip II.¹⁰³ He celebrates Elizabeth as a saviour of the Netherlands, because she "alone waged war on land and sea, doing so for the safety of all": a phrase referring not only to the defeat of the Armada, but also to the land campaign led by the Earl of Leicester.¹⁰⁴ Savile's views of the Act of Abjuration are made explicit in this speech. He claims, following the Dutch line of reasoning, that it was Philip II who first altered the terms of the relationship with the Dutch provinces, by encroaching on the terms of the Transaction of Augsburg (1548), and by extending his power over the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵ Evidently, Savile understands the logic behind the argument that the relationship between Spain and the Netherlands was a contractual one, and appreciates the idea that, for a contract to exist, both parties must give their consent and agree to have mutual obligations towards each-other. Savile suggests that, with Philip II's failure to fulfil his obligations, the assembly of states gained the right to rescind his power and, in effect, determine the end of one rule and the start of another. This notion is subtly encapsulated in Savile's treatment of the succession of Galba. Arguments echoing the States General's description of Philip II as a tyrant, and mirroring the rhetoric of natural rights employed in the Abjuration, are filtered through the speeches of Vindex and Galba. Moreover, Savile encourages the reader to imagine the convocation of the senate, the visual representation of the organic unity of the "people" who, like the Dutch States General, possess the freedom to determine their political future.

¹⁰³ "Sir Henry Savile, Speech Delivered at Oxford, in the Year 1592, on 23 September, in the Presence of Queen Elizabeth," edited by Sarah Knight in *John Nichols's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I. A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources*, vol. 3, 1579-1595, 654-655.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 655.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* Savile uses the term "Burgundian pact" here in his discussion of the Dutch problem. Sarah Knight states that this might refer to the Act of Abjuration (n188) but this does not make sense in the context of Savile's argument. Savile states that Philip II "had broken [the Burgundian pact] first himself, when he sent a group of pirates into your province, and took the people of the Netherlands into his company, increasing the limits of his power by assaulting so many cities...". This would imply that the "Burgundian pact" initiated a Spanish policy of aggression and centralisation towards the Netherlands and allowed Philip II to take the Netherlands "into his company". The Act of Abjuration marked the reassertion of Dutch sovereignty and the decline of Spanish influence. For this reason I am inclined to disagree with Knight and instead I suggest that Savile here refers to the 1548 Transaction of Augsburg signed by Charles V which recognised the Netherlands as a unified state and absolved them from certain central controls. For a discussion of the Treaty of Augsburg see Van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt*, 17-18.

Although Savile displays an interest in the types of arguments put forward by those seeking to break from Spanish rule, he refuses to recommend resistance against a sovereign power. He clearly acknowledges the justification for resistance and seems to engage with the intricacies of how a nation might go about legitimising the act of rebellion, but he seems distant from these arguments. His approach is much more cautious than other English Protestants who dwelt upon the lawfulness of rebellion. For instance, although he comes close to accepting a private law theory of resistance in his depiction of Nero as a private citizen when confronted by Vindex and Galba as aggrieved private individuals, Savile comes nowhere near to the type of radical private-law theories developed by anti-Marian resistance theorists.¹⁰⁶ There is nothing in Savile's text that can be seen as similar to the arguments of Christopher Goodman, for example, who suggests that the duty of resistance rests not only with inferior magistrates, but with society as a whole, and who claims that it is not merely "lawfull for the people" to "cut off euery rotten membre" of the tyrannous government, but "it is their duetie".¹⁰⁷ Instead, Savile seems to sympathise with the idea that Goodman seems intent on disproving. Savile identifies with the fear that that it would seem "a great disordre, that the people shulde take vnto them the punishment of transgression", and seems convinced of the unsuitability of the populace to act as judges of their superior powers.¹⁰⁸

This sentiment is made explicit in Savile's rendition of Plutarch's description of the early days of Galba's rule. Plutarch notes how many became carried away in cruelly punishing Nero's followers: "they cast Spiculus the gladiator under statues of Nero that were being dragged about in the forum, and killed him; Aponius, one of Nero's informers, they threw to the ground and dragged waggons laden with stone over him".¹⁰⁹ The outbreak of savagery and violence was so uncontrollable that Mauricus, "one of the best men in Rome", warned the senators that they would soon be hoping for another Nero to return and restore order.¹¹⁰ In Savile's version, he emphasises how one tyranny, that of Nero, had merely been replaced by another — the tyranny of the masses:

¹⁰⁶ For a discussion of the difference between the radical and conservative aspects of this private law theory of resistance see Skinner, "Calvinism and the Theory of Revolution" part three, in *Foundations*, vol.2.

¹⁰⁷ Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers ought to be Obeyed of their Subiects, and wherein they may lawfully by God's Word be Disobeyed and Resisted* (Geneva: John Crispin, 1558) STC 12020, 189-190, also cited in Skinner, *Foundations*, vol.2, 235.

¹⁰⁸ Goodman, *How Superior Powers*, 185 also cited in Skinner, *Foundations*, vol. 2, 235.

¹⁰⁹ Plutarch, *Galba*, 223.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

*Spicillus the fencer they tied vnder the images of Nero, trailed him along thorow the streetes, and dispatcht him in the Place of publicke assembly. Aponius an accuser, they ouerthrew, and drew cartes laden with stones ouer his bodie, beside manie other outraged and slaine, and some, as it happeneth where the reine is let loose to the furious multitude, innocently: insomuch that in Senate a graue & honourable counsellor openlie protested, that in short time there would be great cause to wish Nero again, as beeing more tolerable one tiranne then manie, and better to liue where nothing then there where al things were lawful.*¹¹¹

Savile stresses the chaos unleashed by Nero's overthrow and demonstrates, by explaining the meaning of Mauricus's words, that the people are unfit to determine their political fate. What the aftermath of Nero's overthrow reveals, Savile shows, is that to give the people the authority to depose a sovereign results in the abandonment of all law and reason.

In this approach, Savile shares Sidney's attitude towards resistance and the right of the private citizen to rebel against an ordained ruler. Blair Worden has demonstrated how Sidney leans more towards the limited resistance theory articulated by Hubert Languet in the *Vindiciae* rather than accepting the populist theories of Goodman.¹¹² When considering the prospects of the Netherlands, Sidney and his contemporaries were acutely aware of the tendency for popular government to slide into a tyranny of the masses.¹¹³ The ease with which the situation in Ghent had descended into anarchy, due to Orange's attempt to harness the power of the "non-nobility" during the late 1570s, no doubt informed the view that the "people" were too quick to seek vengeance and too ready to cause havoc.¹¹⁴ Sidney articulates this view in his presentation of the Arcadian rebels, as Worden explains: "Though the rebels of Arcadia affect 'the glorious name of liberty', they represent not 'liberty' but 'licence', which is also the characteristics of tyrants, and which in its 'popular' form 'is indeed the many-headed tyranny'."¹¹⁵ In terms similar to Savile's criticism of the individuals responsible for persecuting Nero's followers, Sidney stresses, through the words of Pyrocles, who chastises those who would assault Basilius and his principality, that there is "no obedience where every one upon his own private passion may interpret the

¹¹¹ Savile, *End of Nero*, 13.

¹¹² Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 284.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Worden cites Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The New Arcadia)* ed. Victor Skretkowicz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) hereafter *New Arcadia* 292/12; Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (The Old Arcadia)* ed. Jean Robertson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), hereafter *Old Arcadia* 128/1-2; *New Arcadia* 174/7-14; *New Arcadia* 160/5-6 and 299/12; *Old Arcadia* 127/8 and *New Arcadia* 174/15-16'.

doings of the rulers”.¹¹⁶ Both Sidney and Savile dwell upon the role of the public in resisting a monarch, and both express reservations about the wisdom of embarking on such a path.

Savile, then, does not endorse resistance by the people, since such an action entails the creation of a form of rule worse than that of the tyrant himself. What is more, there is little evidence to suggest that Savile considers resistance by a constitutional entity representing the people to be any more palatable. Although Savile engages with the idea that monarchy might be underpinned by a form of contract between the ruler and the ruled, he does not seem to be willing to suggest that monarchy is in any way elective or dependent on the goodwill of the people. Savile’s choice of subject matter, in using Nero’s overthrow to dissect the arguments of Protestant rebels, would seem to bring him into line with the argumentation developed by Huguenot writers, as David Womersley has noted.¹¹⁷ For instance, we might link Savile’s *End of Nero* to the discussion found in *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, where the precedent of Nero’s overthrow informs a broader theorisation about imperial or royal power. In the third question about resistance explored in the *Vindiciae*, the author stresses the primacy of “the people” acting through the senate to make and unmake rulers. Drawing upon Livy, the author states that early in Rome’s history it was decided that “kings would be chosen by the votes of the people with the approval of the senate”.¹¹⁸ Thus, he continues, Tarquinius Superbus was a tyrant because “he was created neither by the people nor by the senate, but held command [*imperium*] by relying on force and power [*potentia*] alone.”¹¹⁹ According to the author of the *Vindiciae*, it was Augustus who established the custom whereby the emperor acknowledged that his power rested on the consent of the senate, and this custom was broken by Nero, “who was the first to usurp command with criminal violence and without relying on any colouring of right”, because of which he “was condemned by the senate”.¹²⁰ What this tells us, the author claims, is that “no-one is a king in himself”, because the office of kingship derives

¹¹⁶ Sidney, *New Arcadia*, 286/22-5, also cited in Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 284.

¹¹⁷ David Womersley, “Sir Henry Savile’s Translation of Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Elizabethan Texts,” *The Review of English Studies* n.s 42, no.167 (1991): 329.

¹¹⁸ Stephanus Junius Brutus, the celt [pseud.] *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos, or Concerning the Legitimate Power of a Prince Over the People, and of the People Over a Prince* ed. and trans. George Garnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 71. The author cites Livy, *Ab urbe condita* I.xlix.3; see *Livy in Fourteen Volumes* ed. and trans. B. O. Foster, vol.1, *Books 1 and 2* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 173. Livy explains Tarquinius Superbus had “no right to the throne but might, since he was ruling neither by popular decree nor senatorial sanction”.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* The author again cites the same passage from Livy.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* The author cites Suetonius, *Nero* see n.33.

from the will of the people.¹²¹ He asserts that, in a state of nature “a people can exist of itself, and is prior in time to a king”, but kings cannot exist without the people.¹²²

The reign of Nero similarly acts as a frame of reference in François Hotman’s *Francogallia* where Nero’s overthrow acts as a precedent confirming the elective and contractual nature of sovereignty. In the first chapter of this panegyric on Gallic independence, Hotman outlines how the Gauls maintained their freedoms through the election of the most virtuous to a position of power:

It is to be noted, and this is not a point to be lightly passed over, that, in the first place, these kingdoms were not hereditary but conferred by the people on someone who had a reputation for justice; and, in the second place, the kings did not possess an unlimited, free and uncontrolled authority, but were so circumscribed by specific laws that they were no less under the authority and power of the people than the people were under theirs.¹²³

This principle of elective rule and the contractual relationship between sovereign and people disappeared once Rome “subdued and tamed the country and reduced it to the status of a province”.¹²⁴ He refers to the *Agricola* to argue that once Gaul was reduced to a colony and denied its liberty, it lost all vestiges of virtue and military prowess.¹²⁵ Hotman follows Tacitus’s interpretation of the Gallic nation by suggesting that all honour and liberty were lost with their submission to Roman rule.¹²⁶ The Gauls, Hotman continues, experienced “servitude with the utmost misery and resentment”, until the reign of Nero when they “threw off his authority”.¹²⁷ “We cannot offer sufficiently high praise for the worth of our ancestors”, claims Hotman, for they “were the first in the world to begin to remove from their necks the yoke of so powerful a tyrant, and to claim for themselves release from their servitude under so monstrous an oppressor.”¹²⁸

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ François Hotman, *Francogallia*, Latin text prepared by Ralph E. Giesey, trans. J. H. M. Salmon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 155. Salmon notes that these words are “largely Hotman’s” see 154, n31 as Hotman departs from the description of Gaul provided by Caesar.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 173-175. See *Agricola* trans. Maurice Hutton in *Tacitus. Dialogus, Agricola, Germania* ed. and trans. William Peterson and Maurice Hutton (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 188-189.

¹²⁶ Hotman, *Francogallia*, 173-175.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 179. Hotman here refers to Suetonius’s account of Vindex’s rebellion: see 179, n22 where Suetonius, *Nero*, 46 is cited.

¹²⁸ Hotman, *Francogallia*, 179.

Savile may share the approach of these resistance theorists by using the overthrow of Nero to explore the idea that kingship might in some ways be an elected office, but it would seem that the similarity between Savile's text and these Huguenot tracts ends at the subject matter. Savile does not believe that monarchical power is something that can be rescinded or interfered with by a monarch's subjects. As Kewes acknowledges, there is nothing explicit in Savile's narrative to suggest that he sanctions the settlement of the succession by parliament/senate.¹²⁹ In fact, it might be argued that Savile underscores the political chaos caused by such an act by presenting the civil strife documented in the *Histories* as the direct consequence of Nero's failure to establish his hereditary successor. Kewes draws attention to the pessimism in Savile's handling of the Neronian succession. She explains that Savile's depiction of Galba's succession draws attention to the idea that the succession removed all measure of spectacle and tradition associated with the imperial office.¹³⁰

The example is of an act done in vndue place, whereof there had beene no precedent before. In cōgruity a Prince of Rome were to be created at Rome, & an Emperour in the seate-towne of the Empire, and so it had beene alwaies obserued: but the trueth was, and so much the secrete imported, that in substance it mattered not much where he were 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, gaue occasion to other to practise the like against him... And generally after this secrete was by Galba once disclosed, moe Emperours were made abroad, then at Rome.¹³¹

Savile does indeed draw attention to the way in which Galba's succession desecralised the office of emperor, as Kewes suggests, and he possibly presents this effect as beneficial as it endows the senate and army with a greater influence in electing the emperor. However, through a reference, in this annotation, to Plutarch's account of the adoption of Vitellius as Galba's successor by the soldiers garrisoned in Germany, Savile also draws attention to the weakening of the office of emperor itself.¹³² It is unclear whether he intends to point to the element of disloyalty Plutarch recounts in the soldiers' actions, but it is evident that Savile

¹²⁹ Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 548.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 545. Kewes analyses how Savile draws attention to the "spurious value of tradition and ceremony in keeping the masses in check" when discussing the secrets of the state which Galba's accession revealed. She later goes on to explore Savile's pessimistic attitude towards the political change: "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"; see Ibid., 547.

¹³¹ Savile, *Histories*, "Annotations on the First Book of Tacitus," 6, no.20, also cited in Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 545.

¹³² Savile, *Histories*, "Annotations," 6; Plutarch, *Galba*, 251-259.

forges a connection between the initial act of overthrowing Nero and the factious period of 64AD which followed, and that he does so to suggest that the secret of the empire, once revealed, created discord in the empire at large.¹³³

Rebellion and social discord

In his translations of the *Histories*, Savile relates the chaos unleashed by Nero's overthrow and explores how, as a result of the deposition, Rome was plunged into civil war. As the previous section demonstrated, the Romans were prompted to reconsider and re-evaluate the nature of the imperial office once it was revealed that an emperor could be made outside Rome. Tacitus explains that it was Nero's overthrow and Galba's coronation that ultimately weakened the imperial office, because the power of the emperor became largely dependent on the good will and support of the army. However, in his exploration of Nero's reign, Savile implies that the imperial office had already begun to alter during Nero's turbulent rule, where weak leadership permitted the gradual desacralization of the imperial office. Savile urges the reader to reflect on Nero's failings and analyses precisely how Nero's reign convinced the Romans that the power to "un-make" an emperor rested with them. By pointing to the mistakes Nero made when attempting to govern the empire, Savile uses Nero as an example of how *not* to rule. However, Savile's portrait of Nero as an "especially unmartial" ruler overthrown by the "militaristic subject" does not, contrary to Gajda's assertion, seem particularly to celebrate the strength of Vindex or Galba in their undermining of Nero.¹³⁴ To reach the conclusion that Savile's text is closer to "red Tacitism", like that of Antonio Pérez, on the grounds that Savile articulates how a military "hero" may easily topple a government "endangered by the government of a weak tyrant", downplays the fact that Savile's *End of Nero*, in fact, forms part of a wider literary project of counsel in guiding the ruler in how he ought to secure his reign.¹³⁵ Savile's text leans far more towards a "black" reading of Tacitus in emphasising how the "secrets of the state" must be kept secret in order to preserve order and unity within the body politic.

In his analysis of Savile's Tacitism, Womersley has suggested that Savile blends the "red" and "black" forms of Tacitism: he pursues "the ends of what Toffanin called 'red Tacitism' (veiled republicanism) through the means of the 'black Tacitism' (disguised

¹³³ Galba presents the German soldiers as a mutinous group who ultimately betrayed the senate in favour of creating Vitellius as Galba's successor, see Plutarch, *Galba*, 253.

¹³⁴ Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 228.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Machiavellianism) he considered its opposite and antagonist".¹³⁶ His aim, Womersley continues, was to match the tenor of Huguenot literature in which Machiavelli was seen as a "solvent" of tyranny: a form of "pink" Tacitism.¹³⁷ However, it seems that, while Savile blends these two Tacitisms, the emphasis is not that described by Womersley. Savile's text is more firmly cast in the mould of "black" Tacitism since he seems only to pursue the "red" Tacitist agenda as a means of pointing to the potential weaknesses any rebels might exploit. His stance in relation to Nero's overthrow suggests that rebellion and resistance ought to be avoided, and thus his scholarly efforts do more to equip monarchical rulers with a means of defence, than they do to provide a blueprint for action.

Savile's translation of the *Histories* explores the consequences of the reframing of the imperial office that occurred when the Romans overthrew Nero. As noted above, Savile explores how the whole nature of imperial sovereignty was transformed once the idea that imperial power was elective rather than hereditary became commonly accepted. In Galba's speech, declaring Piso his successor, it is clear that with the end of the Julio-Claudian line of succession the meaning of the imperial office had been significantly altered. Rome was now faced with a situation where it was normal practice for emperors to be adopted or elected by their supporters.

If this vast body of the Empire could stande without gouvernour, balanced in due proportion and order, the free common wealth might worthilie haue taken beginning from me: but now it is come long agoe 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 yeelding them a good Prince. Vnder Tiberius, Caius, & Claudius, we haue bene as it were, the inheritance of one family: it wil be insteed of liberty, that we begin to succede by election: and now the Iulian and Claudian lines be spent, adoption wil stil find out of the best: for to be descended of Princes, is a matter of meere fortune, and so is esteemed: in adoptions our iudgement is most incorrupt, and seldomest abused; and if we will chuse of the fittest, the voice of the most will point vs our man.¹³⁸

Kewes has pointed to the topical resonance of Savile's exploration of elective monarchy, as the Roman expedients explored after Nero's overthrow parallel those discussed by Burghley and his contemporaries who pondered the prospects for England's monarchy

¹³⁶ Womersley, "Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus," 326.

¹³⁷ Ibid. Womersley refers specifically to the printing of the *Vindicae* which was bound with a Latin translation of *Il Principe* in which the preface acknowledged how Machiavelli's text was not a guide for tyrants, but a guide for those living under tyrants as it presented them with the knowledge of how to recognise a tyrant's art. I am using the term pink Tacitism here in the same sense employed by Daniel Kapust in Kapust, "Tacitus and Political Thought," 510.

¹³⁸ Savile, *Histories*, 10 also cited in Kewes "Savile's Tacitus," 547.

after Elizabeth's demise.¹³⁹ However, as Kewes acknowledges, Savile's views on this type of constitutional experimentation are ambiguous.¹⁴⁰ Whereas in Galba's words there seems to be an acceptance, if not an endorsement, of innovation in determining the nature of the succession, later, in Otho's speech innovation is rejected. In an oration to the soldiers in book one of the *Histories*, Otho outlines how instability is perpetuated through the denigration of the imperial office: "If when things are bidden euery one may demaunde, and question the matter, obedience fayling, gouernement withal wil fall to the ground".¹⁴¹ Far from stating the benefits of altering the succession through election, Savile foregrounds the need for obedience and custom, something provided by the custom of hereditary succession. As his gloss on the *arcana imperii*, discussed above, reveals, Savile is hesitant when celebrating a move that effectively makes the imperial crown vendible to the highest bidder.

Savile seems to share the concerns of Sidney and his contemporaries in outlining the harm caused by the removal of a sovereign and by giving a platform to the "public voice". Savile most likely has a dual focus in that his plea for order and unity would not only resonate with those, like Lipsius, who feared for the future of the Netherlands, but also with those who recognised that Elizabeth's unsettled succession threatened the stability of the English polity. Savile's presentation of Nero acts as a deterrent against any hasty action that might cause irreparable harm to the nation.

Savile shares the cautious tone of the *Politica* in which Lipsius argues for order to be brought to the situation in the Netherlands. According to Lipsius, "[t]here is no greater mischiefe in the world then want of gouernement".¹⁴² To remove "this settled vnderprop" of government causes "the destruction of Cities, it ouerthroweth houses, and leaueth them wast, it casueth the souldier to turne his backe in battell".¹⁴³ Surely there is no finer illustration of Lipsius's warning than that found in Savile's *Histories* where this is precisely the fate that befalls Rome upon Nero's overthrow. Lipsius's message that "obedience preserueth the substance and life of such as follow her" is echoed in Savile's attitude towards rebellion.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 542-548.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 546.

¹⁴¹ Savile, *Histories*, 47.

¹⁴² Lipsius, *Sixe bookes*, sig. D1r.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Lipsius quotes from the *Antigone* here. For the passage see Sophocles, *Antigone* in *Sophocles: The Theban Plays* trans. E. F. Watling (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), 144.

Further to this, Savile's depiction of the turmoil caused by hasty political decisions also has topicality in another sense, since his description of the trouble caused by Nero's deposition seems to reflect Savile's anxieties about the proposals to resolve the succession. As Patrick Collinson has demonstrated, the prospect of Elizabeth's death loomed large for those at the heart of government in the 1580s and 1590s. On the likely event of Elizabeth's death at the hands of a follower of Mary Queen of Scots, or some other "enemy", the responsibility for avenging the queen's assassination, and for governing in the interim, would rest with a council of notable individuals.¹⁴⁵ The signatories to the Bond of Association, a form of covenant to be fulfilled at the point of Elizabeth's death, would become responsible for managing the affairs of the state.¹⁴⁶ Yet there was much confusion about the authority and rights this group of individuals would possess. As Thomas Digges, speaking of the Bond of Association, noted, there was probably nothing but confusion awaiting England should the Bond of Association be enacted:

Briefly me thought I did behowld a confused company of all partes of the Realme of all degrees and estates then risinge in Armes at such a tyme as there is no councell of estate in Lyfe, no Lawfull generall, ...no presidente, no Judges, no sheriffes, no justices, briefly no officers...¹⁴⁷

The picture of confusion Digges paints bears some resemblance to the vision of Rome recounted in the *Histories*. It would seem that Savile channels the concern expressed by individuals like Digges regarding the interregnum proposals that Bughley was developing. As Collinson notes, Digges called for the whole enterprise of the interregnum to be put on a firmer legal footing, because he worried that England would, otherwise, be subject to the "owtrage, ryot and villanye" that had accompanied previous efforts at governance by a council of individuals.¹⁴⁸ In Savile's account of the experimental governance that followed

¹⁴⁵ Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic," 48-51.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Digges, "The daungers that may sue by the oath of Assotiacon hereafter yf yt bee not qualified by a convenient Acte of Parlamen", P. R. O., S.P.12/176/26 cited in Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic," 51, also cited in Patrick Collinson, "The Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis and the Elizabethan Polity," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 84, (1993): 65. I am reliant wholly on Collinson's discussion of Digges here. It must be noted that Digges was instrumental in crafting the plans. Digges worked to place the interregnum plans on a firmer foundation. Some of the vagueness in the Bond of Association was remedied in the Act for the Surety of the Queen's Most Royal Person. However, as Collinson notes, even in this Act it was unclear "who would wield the sovereignty by which the tribunals allowed for were to sit and armed force be raised and deployed." He notes that there was no clear statement about how the succession would be determined, or any theorisation about how power would be transferred and restored to Elizabeth's successor. Collinson, "The Monarchical Republic," 51.

¹⁴⁸ P. R. O., S.P.12/176/26 cited in Collinson, "The Elizabethan Exclusion Crisis," 66.

Nero's overthrow, we are presented with a situation similar to the one feared by Digges, and thus it is possible to see how Savile's Neronian text expresses caution about the proposed intervention.

Far from approving of innovation in the hereditary succession, Savile seems intent on demonstrating that such an unprecedented act would propel England into the same crisis Rome had experienced in AD64. The same approach to rash political change is captured in Sidney's *Arcadia* where Basilius's hasty decision to trust the words of the Oracle and enter into a phase of political retirement ultimately makes Arcadia subject to internal division. While Sidney writes on the brink of the proposed marriage between Elizabeth and Anjou, his depiction of political strife caused by governance by a counsellor during a form of interregnum, has much in common with Savile's account of the transition from Nero to the "Year of the Four Emperors". In book two of the *Old Arcadia* it becomes evident that the fate of Arcadia has been determined by Basilius's decision to retire. The narrator explains that this period of uncertainty merely paves the way for Arcadia to be eclipsed by foreign rivals since the Arcadians, now turned in against themselves, conquer themselves: "What need from henceforward to fear foreign enemies, since they [the Arcadians] were conquered without stroke striking, their secrets opened, their treasures abused, themselves triumphed over, and never overthrown?".¹⁴⁹ By the fourth book of the *Old Arcadia* Philanax's description of the political confusion provoked by Basilius's death, a fate Basilius inflicted on himself through his rash decision to retire, seems to evoke Tacitus's description of the experience of Rome after Vindex's and Galba's rash decision to overthrow Nero. Tacitus explains that Nero's death was joyful news to the Romans but the consequences of this event "wrought...very diuerse effectes in the mindes of the Senate at home, the people and Citty-souldier, and of all the Legions, and captaines abroad, perceiuing that secret of state disclosed, that a Prince might bee made elsewhere then at Rome".¹⁵⁰ Philanax similarly remarks that "the whole multitude" of Arcadia fell into "confused and dangerous divisions" after Basilius's death.¹⁵¹ The Arcadians spoke of "[p]ublic matters", yet had little experience in governance; they wanted to secure the safety of the state, but they ultimately led themselves into danger; and they "had no lively taste what was good for themselves", yet they desired peace and prosperity.¹⁵² As in Savile's

¹⁴⁹ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 112.

¹⁵⁰ Savile, *Histories*, 3.

¹⁵¹ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 277.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

text, the emphasis here is that political innovation leads to disunity and that the misfortune caused by the change is almost always greater than the ills people are attempting to rectify. Given that Savile shares Lipsius's and Sidney's caution in this matter, it is clear that Savile does not present Vindex's decision to resist the authority of Nero as a wise move.

Although Savile's text interacts with resistance theory and deals ostensibly with the legitimacy of rebellion, he hints more at the damage caused by such actions and presents rulers with instruction in how to safeguard against such internal threats. As Womersley's reading of Savile's text has shown, there are many echoes of Machiavelli's *Il Principe* in Savile's analysis of Nero's reign. In his discussion of Nero's overthrow, in particular, it seems that Savile attributes Nero's failure to the emperor's inability to conform to a Machiavellian model of leadership. This aspect comes through most clearly in Nero's closing scenes. In his analysis of the overthrow of Nero, Savile explains the reasons for the emperor's downfall:

Thus Nero, a Prince in life contemptible, and hatefull in gouernement, hauing thereby disarmed himselfe both of the loue and feare of his subiects, ended his daies the eighth of Iune in the one and thirtieth yeare of his age, and fourteenth of his Empire, at the first hauing ruled the state with reasonable liking, insomuch that Traian was wonted to saie, that euen good Princes were short of Neroes five yeares: but after breaking forth into all infamous behauiour, and detestable oppressions and cruelties, and beeing withall a Prince weake in action, not of vertue sufficient to upholde his vices by might, he was at the length thus ouerthrowen.¹⁵³

Here, as discussed above, Womersley has suggested there is an echo of Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, for the failure of Nero's rule stems from his inability to recognise that a ruler might achieve and maintain power through "fear", if not through "love".¹⁵⁴ In chapter seventeen of *Il Principe*, Machiavelli explains that, the successful ruler realises that when it is impossible to govern a country through "love" and "fear", a ruler can rely upon fear alone to govern his subjects.¹⁵⁵ Nero was dispossessed of his empire not because he was a tyrant, but because he did not possess the type of virtue which might provide even the most tyrannical rulers with the skill to conceal their misrule. Savile suggests that Nero's attempt to instil fear in his subjects only made him a figure of hatred. Like the unsuccessful rulers Machiavelli describes, Savile's Nero merely becomes despised as a "fickle, frivolous,

¹⁵³ Savile, *End of Nero*, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Womersley, "Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus," 324.

¹⁵⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli's Prince*, trans. W. K. Marriott (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1908), 134.

effeminate, mean-spirited, irresolute” ruler who is “hated”, rather than a skilfull ruler who commands his subjects through inspiring fear.¹⁵⁶

The same Machiavellian interpretation of power is conveyed in Savile’s analysis of Galba’s failings as a ruler. Savile emphasises how the new emperor’s weakness stemmed from allowing those around him to become too powerful. Savile suggests the successful ruler will stamp out any ambition and rule by fear rather than love. Savile follows Dio, Suetonius and Plutarch in attributing Galba’s downfall to the fact that the soldiers who had carried him to power were discontented having not received the donative they had been promised.¹⁵⁷ Savile then goes on to outline explicitly the lesson Galba’s demise imparts:

*To priuate men it is sufficient if themselues do no wrong: a Prince must provide that none doe it about him; or els he may looke when the first occasion is offred against him to be charged with all the whole reckening together. To him that suffereth the iniurie, it matters not much who made the motion when he feeleth the hand that is heauy vpon him. Thus Galba though innocent of much harme which passed under his name, yet because he permitted them to commit it, whom he ought to have brided, or was ignorant of that which he ought to haue knowen, lost reputation, and opened the way to his owne destruction.*¹⁵⁸

The successful prince is one who knows how to control and instil fear in those who surround him: unchecked ambitious individuals must be bridled by strong rule. Weakness in this respect leads to the dispossession of sovereignty. The same idea is conveyed by Savile a few years later in his speech to Elizabeth during her visit to Oxford. Savile stresses that great skill is required to maintain a state successfully:

For just as it is a more noble and a more difficult task for nature to create than to increase and maintain, so it takes more purpose, creative talent, skill, and virtue to found an empire than to watch over it; for even remote nations hate a new power growing in their midst, and neighbours fear for themselves and for those who come after them.¹⁵⁹

There is an echo here of chapter six of Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, where the author stresses that a prince governing new territories needs to muster all his creativity and virtuosity to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 149; 135. Womersley makes this point: Womersley, “Sir Henry Savile’s Translation of Tacitus”, 323-324.

¹⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Galba*, 22; Suetonius, *Twelve Caesars*, 220; Dio, *Roman History*, 201-203.

¹⁵⁸ Savile, *End of Nero*, 17.

¹⁵⁹ “Sir Henry Savile’s Speech,” 647. Knight’s translation here is a little generous in glossing Savile’s words to have them read more as an affirmation of the Machiavellian style of rule. The original text reads: “Ut enim generare naturae nobilius eoque difficilium est opus quam augere, quam conservare: sic majoris animi, ingenii, artis, virtutis, imperium fundare quam tueri; cum novam in medio crescentem molem oderint etiam longinqua nationes, sibi ac posteris suis metuant vicinae.” John Nichols ed. *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth...* vol. 3 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1960), 161.

hold onto that which is newly his.¹⁶⁰ It is evident, then, that Savile is concerned with the means by which a state is preserved, and sanctions the use of Machiavellian tactics in upholding authority.

Savile's Tacitean works emphasise how *imperium* collapses under the strains of faction and discontent. The same idea is found in his other works, which seem to provide lessons on how a ruler could survive rebellion. Savile seems interested in the Machiavellian idea that the stable and harmonious state is one which channels the ambitions of militaristic individuals into a centralised and streamlined military, thus neutralising any destabilising influences. In the work accompanying his Tacitean translations, entitled a *View on Certain Military Matters*, Savile's aim is to provide a form of manual to guide readers through the intricacies of Roman military structures and organisation, in order that those readers may then use his analysis to create similar military systems. The idea that the Roman past could serve as an example for the present also provides the motivation behind the tract Savile produced for Burghley, in which Savile explores how the Roman Empire maintained its army and ensured the loyalty of its soldiers.¹⁶¹ What emerges from both pieces is the view of a state as an organic and harmonious unity, where the obedience of men of all ranks is ensured. In the *View on Certain Military Matters* Savile explains that, in particular, the loyalty of military men must be secured. A successful nation is one where military ambitions are channelled into patriotic service, and one which possesses the means to defend itself against attack.

And generally no state may looke to stand without notable molestation, and danger of ruine, much lesse to enlarge, which in any kinde of seruice, on foote, or one horsebacke, or by sea is quite defectiue and vtterly disfurnished, although perhaps it cannot in all attaine to that degree of perfection, which some of their neighbours haue attained vnto.¹⁶²

In the *Histories* Savile relates how mutiny and dissent developed within Rome's military structures, causing the empire to be torn apart. He continues, in the *View of Certain Military Matters*, by explaining how to prevent this from occurring. As the above extract indicates, a state must furnish itself with an effective and loyal military in order to flourish. In the *View of Certain Military Matters* Savile notes the various ways by which the loyalty of military subjects has been secured and the personal stability of the principate

¹⁶⁰ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli's Prince*, 45-50.

¹⁶¹ "Mr. Henry Saville's Report of the Wages paid to the ancient Roman Soldiers, their Vittayling, and Apparrell. In a Letter to Lord Burghleigh, 1595," in *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts* ed. Walter Scott, vol. 1, 555-557.

¹⁶² Savile, "A View of Certain Military Matters," 71 also cited in Kewes, "Savile's Tacitus," 539.

maintained. For instance, he makes a link between the payment of wages to auxiliaries and the fact that there were very few incidents of mutiny and disorder as a result of low wages.¹⁶³ By underscoring how an emperor's rule was often influenced by the relationship between the imperial household and the praetorian guard, Savile points to the state's need of a loyal military.

But Sylla resigning the state and his garde [praetorians] both at once, howsoever he is charged by Caesar *nescare literas*, may seeme to haue followed a better grammar then Cęsar himselfe; who dismissing his garde and not his gouvernement, committed a notable and dangerous solecisme in matter of state, and opened the way to his owne destruction. ...after the battell at Actium Augustus eschewing his fathers fault, and thinking it expedient for the safety of his person, maintenance of his state, and dispatch of affaires to haue in a redinesse a conuenient company of souldiers in armes, established vnder the name of the *Praetoriani* a garde of ten thousand men diuided into ten cohorts...¹⁶⁴

The lesson Savile takes from his reading of Roman history is that it is necessary to maintain the loyalty of would-be upstarts and rebels in the military. If the authority of a monarch is built and broken on the battlefield, as the fates of Nero and Galba suggest, then those men in the field must be kept loyal.

This desire to explain that the loyalty of the military must be maintained informs Savile's advice to those involved in Elizabethan governance. In a 1595 document entitled "Wages paid to the ancient Roman Soldiers, their Vittayling and Apparrell" Savile instructed Burghley on how the Romans ensured the obedience of a regular army.¹⁶⁵ He notes that Augustus "coming in by civil warre and the helpe of soldiers" was quick to increase the pay of soldiers and that Tiberius, faced with the threat of mutinying soldiers, resolved to increase pay as some means of remedy.¹⁶⁶ Savile implies that the backbone of the state is a loyal army. In his 1592 Oxford speech he reiterates the need for a state to possess a strong military, but qualifies this by outlining that possessing military strength without philosophical and tactical wisdom about how to use it is meaningless.¹⁶⁷ It is the knowledge of how to *use* the military, and of how to perfect strategy, that a ruler must possess in order to be able to benefit from military support. More generally, Savile

¹⁶³ Savile, "A view of Certaine Military Matters," 68.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ "Mr. Henry Saville's Report of the Wages to the ancient Roman Soldiers, their Vittayling, and Apparrell. In a Letter to Lord Burghleigh, 1595," 555-557.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 556.

¹⁶⁷ "Sir Henry Savile's Speech," 646-652.

suggests that a successful, prosperous and stable state harnesses the industry of every man and channels it into the communal endeavour of supporting the monarchy. He explains, the state should “doubtless be united, not uniform: and its dignity and safety should be contained not within one form of praiseworthy activity, but in one balance of all kinds of praiseworthy activity.”¹⁶⁸ The vision of the state Savile fosters celebrates the activities of all men who come together in service of the state, and the state is guided by the values of obedience and *unity*.

Again, in this emphasis on the military capabilities of a state, Savile reiterates Machiavelli’s argument. In *Il Principe* Machiavelli stresses the idea that a successful ruler knows how to manage, control and use his military force. In chapter twelve of his work Machiavelli claims that the foundation of a state rests on “good arms” and “good laws”.¹⁶⁹ Since mercenary and auxiliary forces are “disunited, ambitious and without discipline” it is vital for a prince to possess a regular army and take control of warfare himself.¹⁷⁰ In chapter fourteen of his work Machiavelli underscores the need for a prince to be equipped with a strong grounding in the art of war. According to Machiavelli, a ruler who fails to appreciate the importance of military affairs rarely holds power for long. He explains: “it is seen that when princes have thought more of ease than of arms they have lost their states”.¹⁷¹ Moreover, as discussed above, Savile echoes Machiavelli’s belief that knowledge of how to use the military is necessary if a ruler wishes to command his troops with authority.

And therefore a prince who does not understand the art of war, over and above the other misfortunes already mentioned, cannot be respected by his soldiers, nor can he rely on them.¹⁷²

Schooling in the arts of warfare is as essential as the possessing the practical means to conduct a war.

Furthermore, Savile shares the approach of both Lipsius and Sidney in that he uses the example of a state that has been torn apart through the weakness of a ruler to provide a form of public counsel to a monarch. Savile’s vision of the ordered state in possession of a

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 652.

¹⁶⁹ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli’s Prince*, 97.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 98.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁷² Ibid., 116.

strong and loyal military body mirrors the image of the state provided by Lipsius in the *Politica* where, like Savile, Lipsius calls for a restoration of harmony and an end to civil disorder. Both Savile and Lipsius provide counsel on how rulers might fortify the state in order to prevent a collapse. The fourth book of Lipsius's *Politica* resembles Savile's *End of Nero* in its discussion of the role of the praetorian guard in protecting the emperor, and Lipsius's argument that successful rulers will "enrich the soldiers" seems to resonate in Savile's work.¹⁷³ In Sidney's *Old Arcadia* we find the same emphasis on the need for a state to be in a state of military preparedness. In *Old Arcadia*, the character of Eucharus, is greeted with suspicion because the Arcadians realise that the "ill-ordered weakness" of their state would make it easy for a foreign ruler like Eucharus to conquer and enslave them.¹⁷⁴ Eucharus rules with the type of wisdom that we imagine Savile would advocate, in that he governs by "keeping his thoughts true to themselves", making "his actions straight", and in accordance with the principle of "constancy".¹⁷⁵ This wisdom leads Eucharus to make the judgement that a successful state, even in a time of peace, must have the resources to conduct a war: "For this reckoning he made: how far soever he extended himself, neighbours he must have; and therefore, as he kept in peace time a continual discipline of war, and at no time would suffer injury".¹⁷⁶ With the threat from the "Asiatics" and the "Latins" "gaping for any occasion to devour Greece", only the "united strength, and strength to be maintained by maintaining their principal instruments" could prevent the Arcadians from becoming subject to foreign domination.¹⁷⁷ Savile's text, participates in the dialogue in which Sidney and others were engaged. This dialogue stressed that England's polity needed to be in order, be in a state of military preparedness, and be unified if it was to participate in wars against the Catholic powers of Europe. Savile's interest lay not in outlining the benefits of undermining the order and structure of a state, but in demonstrating how order and loyalty to the state should be maintained.

Virtue, fortune and freedom

The previous section explained how Savile adopts a Machiavellian interpretation of power in order to explain Nero's demise. Savile, echoing the lessons provided by

¹⁷³ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. L1r.

¹⁷⁴ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 307. Worden also discusses how Sidney has Eucharus begin in his role as ruler of Arcadia by establishing a strong military foundation; see Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 250-251.

¹⁷⁵ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 309.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

Machiavelli, explains how a successful ruler will command with virtue and fear, and outlines how a state's success depends on its capacity for conducting war. Although he seems convinced by this aspect of Machiavelli's message, it seems that Savile remains less certain about Machiavelli's analysis of the relationship between "virtue" and "fortune". Womersley claims that Savile provides an "odd reading of Machiavelli", because, rather than seeing Machiavelli as a "primer for tyrants", Savile appropriates Machiavellian theory to present a favourable account of an "insurrection against a tyrant".¹⁷⁸ According to Womersley, in Savile's text it is Vindex, rather than Nero, who possesses that "creative amoral energy" that Machiavelli suggests a leader needs in order to maintain power.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Womersley affirms, in his presentation of Vindex's death, Savile adopts the same stance Machiavelli does in relation to Cesare Borgia: he laments the failure of a man who had the potential to become a successful leader.¹⁸⁰ In chapter seven of *Il Principe* Machiavelli explains that, in spite of his best efforts to maintain power, Borgia became victim to Fortune. Womersley detects a similar tone in Savile's presentation of Vindex and suggests that Savile praises Vindex's efforts to overthrow Nero. However, this analysis simplifies Savile's application of Machiavellian theory. While Savile engages with the Machiavellian language of "virtue" and "fortune", he is sceptical about how successfully men can put Machiavelli's advice into practice.

As the previous sections have illustrated, Savile's *End of Nero* displays a superficial preoccupation with exploring the legitimacy of rebellion. His discussion of Vindex's rebellion allows him to consider the argument made by the Netherlands to legitimise their break from Spanish rule, while his depiction of Galba's installation as emperor allows him to discuss the constitutional expedients his contemporaries had presented as solutions to the Elizabethan succession crisis. When dissecting how and why Rome experienced rebellion, Savile seems intent on using the example of Neronian Rome to explain to rulers how they can prevent a similar fate from happening to them. While Savile may sympathise with the ideals conveyed by individuals like William of Orange in the rebellion against Spain, and may recognise why individuals like Essex seem frustrated by Elizabeth's lack of action and by the unresolved succession, he considers these individuals to be hot-headed men who seek change without recognising the harm it may cause. The idea to emerge from his Tacitean translations is that hasty action, however necessary and justified it may be, is dangerous. For example, we have already seen how

¹⁷⁸ Womersley, "Sir Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Texts," 326.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 325.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 320 n39.

Savile seems wary of political intervention to settle the Elizabethan succession, and we have explored how he questions the wisdom of Vindex's rebellion against Nero. Rather than pushing men to take action, Savile offers men who might be discontented with political life an alternative model to follow: that of Agricola's quiet prudence. Savile's decision to translate the *Agricola* must surely stem from his interest in Agricola's ability to express some form of virtue without resorting to the flashy displays of defiance that characterise the actions of Vindex, or those of Thræsa Paetus who serves as a point of contrast to Agricola's behaviour in Tacitus's text. For Savile, Agricola acts as something of a model to indicate how it is possible for men, even in times of tyranny, to preserve their dignity, and even their freedom, without wreaking havoc against the state they purport to serve. The type of virtue Savile advocates here, then, is a stoic form of virtue which involves being true to the self, and remaining steadfast in time of political tribulation.

Savile's presentation of Vindex's rebellion is far more nuanced than scholarship has suggested. Womersley characterises Savile's Vindex as a master of Machiavellian *virtù* and has identified Savile's narrative as highly sympathetic to Vindex's rebellion.¹⁸¹ Savile protracts the account of Vindex's death by expanding considerably upon the fleeting description of Vindex's demise found in the classical sources. Plutarch merely notes that Vindex "died by his own hand" "after the loss of twenty thousand Gauls" during the battle of Vesontio.¹⁸² Similarly, Dio Cassius only alludes to Vindex's anguish after the loss of ground at Vesontio, and states that Vindex "was so overcome by grief that he slew himself": "he [Vindex] felt exceedingly grieved because of the peril of his soldiers and was vexed at Fate because he had not been able to attain his goal in an undertaking of so great a magnitude, namely the overthrow of Nero and the liberation of the Romans."¹⁸³ Savile's account in comparison is rich in pathos:

Vindex seeing the unluckie successe of this unlooked for battaile, hauing lost in a maner the flowre of all France, & suspecting fraude of Verginius side, as though he ment to entrappe him, and sende him to Nero, ranne himselfe vpon his owne sworde. This ende had Iulius Vindex, a man in the course of this action more vertuous then fortunate; who hauing no armie prouided, no legion, no souldier in charge, whiles others more able lookt on, first entred the lists, chalenging a Prince vpholden with thirty legions, rooted in the Empire by fower descents of ancestours, and fourteene yeares continuance of raigne, not upon priuate dispaire to set in

¹⁸¹ Womersley, "Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus," 320.

¹⁸² Plutarch, *Galba*, 219.

¹⁸³ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 179. Dio also notes that many soldiers inflicted wounds on Vindex's body which created the impression he had fallen victim to troops in battle.

*combustion the state, not to reuenge disgrace or dishonour, not to establish his owne soueraignty...*¹⁸⁴

Vindex aimed to liberate his country, a prize he weighed as having more worth than his own life.¹⁸⁵ At Vesontio, Savile continues, “*fortune gaue vertue the checke, and by a strange accident, which mans wisdom could not foresee*” Vindex’s aims were stifled.¹⁸⁶

It appears that Savile praises Vindex because he represents the “adventurous” individual who takes control of fortune, and seizes the opportunity to change political affairs.¹⁸⁷ However, on closer examination Savile seems unconvinced that Machiavelli’s model of action is feasible. In his analysis of Vindex’s failure, there is an echo of chapter seven of *Il Principe*, but this parallel is used to expose the problems with Machiavelli’s political theory.¹⁸⁸ Machiavelli explains the role Fortune plays in the affairs of those attempting to acquire a new kingdom, by drawing attention to the examples of Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. Sforza, Machiavelli explains, rose to power through great effort, and built a firm base for his rule. Borgia inherited his state “during the ascendancy of his father, and on his decline he lost it”.¹⁸⁹ In spite of Borgia’s wisdom and virtue, he, like Vindex, was unable to establish his leadership: “notwithstanding that he had taken every measure and done all that ought to be done by a wise and able man to fix firmly his roots in the states which the arms and fortunes of others had bestowed on him”.¹⁹⁰ Borgia’s best efforts as a statesman could not ensure his stability, and his experience provides a valuable lesson:

Because, as is stated above, he who has not first laid his foundations may be able with great ability to lay them afterwards, but they will be laid with trouble to the architect and danger to the building.¹⁹¹

To ensure a long and prosperous rule, a ruler must ensure that he has built a firm base for his power. Machiavelli implies that it is not enough for a ruler to possess *virtù*, and have the tenacity to make the most of an opportunity for action, since there is always the risk

¹⁸⁴ Savile, *End of Nero*, 6.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli’s Prince*, 207.

¹⁸⁸ Womersley, “Sir Henry Savile’s Tacitus”, 320, n.39.

¹⁸⁹ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli’s Prince*, 54.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 54-55.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 54.

that Fortune will prevent such a ruler from being successful. He explains this with reference to Borgia: “if his dispositions were of no avail, that was not his fault, but the extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune.”¹⁹² Although Machiavelli urges man to assume “control” of Fortune, in this passage of the work he acknowledges that this is not always possible.

Savile adapts this aspect of *Il Principe* in his presentation of Vindex. He indicates that in spite of Vindex’s efforts, his *virtù* and his sense of adventure were no match for the power of Fortune. Savile uses the Machiavellian language of *occasione* to demonstrate how Vindex took a chance “*whilst others more able lookt on*”.¹⁹³ However, Vindex was “*more vertuous then fortunate*”, and when “*fortune gaue vertue the checke*” at the battle of Vesontio, Vindex was unable to survive his attempt to overthrow Nero.¹⁹⁴ Thus, Savile implies that however virtuous a man might be, the danger that Fortune will thwart a man’s actions always exists. It is preferable, then, for men to work with Fortune rather than against it, because it is almost impossible to fulfil the Machiavellian ideal of the individual impervious to the afflictions of Fortune. Savile offers Agricola’s model of quiet prudence as a better course of action, since Agricola maintains his virtue by being adaptable to circumstance, and by working with Fortune. This is explained in the final part of the *Agricola* where Savile explains that because Agricola cultivated a particularly prudent form of virtue, he was rewarded by fortune: “for of all the parts of true felicity which consisteth in vertue, hee had fulfilled the measure: and hauing obtayned beside Consulare, and triumphall ornaments, what more could fortune annexe to his estate?”¹⁹⁵ Savile provides a critique of the Machiavellian analysis of virtue and fortune. He uses the story of Vindex to demonstrate that it is impossible for men to become the type of “ruler” or “leader” Machiavelli describes, and uses Agricola as a more suitable example of virtue for men to emulate.

Savile’s equivocal attitude towards the rebellion against Nero, and his criticism of Machiavelli’s theory of “virtue” and “fortune” is echoed in history plays from the late Elizabethan period. In existing scholarship, it has been implied that there were largely two responses to Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*: there were those who rejected the work for its amoral outlook, and those who endorsed the work as a manual for political activity.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Savile, *End of Nero*, 6.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Savile, *Agricola*, 265.

Savile's approach indicates that there was a third approach to Machiavelli's advice: it was possible to admire Machiavelli's model of power, while recognising his ideal of the virtuous "prince" who conquers fortune and seizes the opportunity for change as unachievable. It is interesting, for example, to compare Savile's depiction of Vindex's rebellion with the description of Mortimer Junior's rebellion in Marlowe's *Edward II*. While Mortimer's motives for resistance are less "pure" than Vindex's, and although it is clear that Mortimer, unlike Vindex, aspires to take Edward's crown for himself, there are, nevertheless, obvious parallels between the two men. Mortimer, like Vindex, "is destroyed in spite of the fact that he embodies a Machiavellian self-sufficiency, strength and aspiring will."¹⁹⁶ When Edward II orders him to be sent to the Tower, Mortimer defiantly exclaims that his virtue cannot be contained:

Mor.ii. What *Mortimer*? can ragged stonie walle
Immure thy vertue that aspires to heauen,
Edward, Englands scourge, it may not be,
Mortimers hope surmounts his fortune farre.¹⁹⁷

Mortimer displays all the traits of the expert Machiavellian "prince". He justifies his attempt on Gaveston's life using the language of "necessitie", seizes the moment to take action, and possesses the skill and charm to carry the people with him in his rebellion.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, Edward, like Savile's Nero, lacks all these characteristics. He is imprudent, passive and unpopular. However, in spite of Mortimer's Machiavellian characteristics, he is unable to emulate Machiavelli's model of the "prince". After Edward has surrendered his crown, Mortimer claims he "now makes Fortunes wheele turne as he please", and is able to shape his own destiny.¹⁹⁹ However, a few scenes later Mortimer himself has become the object of hatred. He comments on the change in his fortunes:

Mort.ii. Base fortune, now *I* see, that in thy wheele
There is a point, to which when men aspire,
They tumble hedlong downe, that point I touchte,
And seeing there was no place to mount vp higher,
Why should I greeue at my declining fall,
Farewell faire Queene, weepe not for *Mortimer*,

¹⁹⁶ Irving Ribner, "Historical Tragedy and Moral History," chap. 5 in *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 127.

¹⁹⁷ Christopher Marlowe, *The Troublesome Raigne and Lamentable death of Edward the Second ...* (London: R. Robinson for William Jones, 1594), STC 17437, sig. G3r-G3v.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. C2v; sig. C3v.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. K2r.

That scornes the world, and as a traoueller,
Goes to discouer countries yet vnknowne.²⁰⁰

Irving Ribner suggests that in the depiction of Mortimer's rise and fall Marlowe scrutinises the Machiavellian world-view.²⁰¹ Ribner explains that in *Edward II* Marlowe's "enthusiasm for the Machiavellian superman is considerably diminished".²⁰² Marlowe reveals the hollowness of the Machiavellian description of virtue's triumph over fortune: "He [Marlowe] has come to recognize that to control power in the secular absolutist state, the Machiavellian brand of virtù will not suffice."²⁰³ Mortimer, like Savile's Vindex, has the potential to be the type of ruler Machiavelli describes in *Il Principe*, but he is unable to fulfil this role, and is eclipsed by the power of Fortune. Both Savile and Marlowe are interested in Machiavelli's theory of power but are sceptical about how his model might be put into practice. This attitude suggests that in late Elizabethan England, although Machiavelli's theory of power was appealing, it was held up as an impossible ideal.

As discussed above, it is most probable that Essex was the intended recipient of Savile's advice. Indeed, Savile's description of Vindex's ability to recognise when his fortune has turned finds an echo in the type of counsel Essex was given by those around him. In 1598, Thomas Egerton wrote to the Earl and he, like Savile, reiterated the sagacity of Seneca's philosophy and advised Essex to temper his anger if he wished to return from his exile from court.²⁰⁴ "The difficulty", Egerton explained, "is to conquer yourself", but to do so represents "the height of all true valour and fortitude".²⁰⁵ Quoting from Seneca's *De ira*, Egerton urges Essex to be prudent and give way to fortune and accept Elizabeth's will.²⁰⁶ Egerton's approach to political life is as wary as Savile's: "The best remedy is not to contend and strive, but humbly to submit".²⁰⁷ The same idea is conveyed in Sidney's

²⁰⁰ Ibid., sig. Mar.

²⁰¹ Ribner, "Historical Tragedy and Moral History," 128.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ "Egerton to the Earl of Essex," 15 October 1598 in *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, From the Year 1581 till her death ...* ed. Thomas Birch, vol. 2, (London: A. Millar, 1754), 383-386. Also cited in McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 37.

²⁰⁵ "Egerton to the Earl of Essex," 386.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 385. Egerton remarks "And SENECA saith, *Lex si nocentem punit, cedendum est iustitiae; si innocentem, cedendum est fortunae*". This is adapted from *De Ira* 2.30 where Seneca states "Is he a King? If he punish thee being guiltie acknowledge his justice, if being innocent, give place to thy fortune." Seneca, *De Ira* in *Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 545-546.

²⁰⁷ "Egerton to the Earl of Essex," 385.

Old Arcadia where it is claimed that wisdom and virtue provide man with the means to survive the blast and bluster of fortune. In book one of the *Old Arcadia* the counsellor Philanax, writes to Basilius explaining that “wisdom and virtue” are the “only destinies appointed to man to follow”.²⁰⁸ Little misfortune befalls the man “accompanied with virtue” because this man, when he is “standing or falling with virtue”, can outstep the harm which fortune may have in store.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Philanax urges Basilius that the truest demonstration of “a constant virtue” is to remain steadfast and face whatever fate has destined.²¹⁰ By acting to pre-empt fate Basilius denies himself the occasion to demonstrate his virtue: “to give place before they [the strikes of ill-fortune] come takes away the occasion”.²¹¹ In these snippets we encounter the same message provided in Savile’s Tacitean works. The advice Philanax provides to Basilius is repeated by those seeking to bridle the ambitions of the Earl of Essex, and Savile’s voice is added to this chorus who aim to urge men that virtuosity need not involve defiance and destruction. An ability to endure political life and survive the sways of fortune are the marks of a truly virtuous man.

In his Tacitean works Savile is, as Gajda notes, vexed by the problematic relationship between the royal person and the military figure.²¹² As his annotations to the first book of Tacitus reveal, Savile is acutely aware of the mutual suspicion which characterises the relationship between the prince and the military commander. Augustus, he explains, took measures to stifle the celebration of military virtue:

The cause as I iudge of the innouation was, that to Augustus who of the old state left nothing standing but names, & hardly that, the pompe triumphall seemed a thing too full of maiesty for any subiect, & therefore seeking euery way to cut the sinewes of liberty, and yet retaine a shadow of ancienty, hee cunningly conuerted the solemnity of a triumph into *Triumphalia insignia* onely the Princes themselues, or their children, as Germanicus in Tiberius time, solemnely triūphed.²¹³

Savile notes that the prince’s jealousy and hostility is usually directed at the courtier or soldier who seems to have all those characteristics the prince lacks. The prince is suspicious of a more popular leader, a more able military man or a more charismatic

²⁰⁸ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 6. Same passage cited in Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 137.

²⁰⁹ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 6.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 232.

²¹³ Savile, “Annotations on the first booke of Tacitus,” 25 also cited in Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 232.

individual. There is little doubt that this notion resonated with the Essex circle when the Earl's attempt to garner support for the cause of a more active foreign policy angered those around him. Francis Bacon wrote to the Earl in 1596 praising his "greatness" and his "popular reputation", and, sympathising with the Earl's predicament, but warning that his eminent position would most likely draw the attention of the queen:

...you can find no other condition, than [Elizabeth's] inventions to keep your estate bare and low; crossing and disgracing your actions; extenuating and blasting of your merit; carping with contempt at your nature and fashions; breeding, nourishing, and fortifying such instruments as are most factious against you...²¹⁴

This misfortune is not accidental, Bacon explains, for it springs from the spite of a slighted monarch confronted with a rival for admiration in the form of Essex: "a dangerous image" for "any monarch living".²¹⁵ It seems, as Worden indicates, that everyone around Essex understood this lesson except the Earl himself.²¹⁶ This conflict between the charismatic military figure and the monarchy had been played out years earlier in the relationship between Sidney and Elizabeth, and in the relationship between Leicester and the queen. Like Essex, Sidney found his desires to secure his military reputation frustrated by the orders of the queen.²¹⁷ His correspondence with Languet betrays his restlessness with the thwarting of his military ambitions.²¹⁸ This conflict had been similarly played out between Leicester and Elizabeth, since during the negotiations for the Anjou match, it was widely known that Leicester was a formidable opponent to the queen. Leicester's secret marriage to Lettice Devereux in 1578 was regarded as an act of defiance, and as the negotiations for the match with Anjou progressed, it was observed that Leicester "did a faction strong maintaine" against those "[w]ho sought to make that nuptiall accord".²¹⁹ With this pattern of fraught relationships between Elizabeth and notable men of honour, Savile's text emerges as a form of counsel, providing such men with advice about how to maintain a public role without causing conflict.

²¹⁴ Francis Bacon, "To my Lord of Essex, from Mr. Bacon," 4 October 1596, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*... eds. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath, vol. 10, *The Letters and the Life*, vol. 2, (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862), 40-45, 41.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ Blair Worden, "Historians and Poets," in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* ed. Paulina Kewes (California: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 2006), 82-83.

²¹⁷ Worden, *Sound of Virtue*, 286.

²¹⁸ See "Sidney to Languet," 1 March 1578 and Languet's reply "Languet to Sidney," 2 May 1578 in *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, 143-146; 147-150.

²¹⁹ Thomas Rogers, *Leycesters ghost* (London: s.n.,1641) Wing R1837A, 16.

So, what course of action does Savile advocate? In translating *Agricola* Savile provides men like Sidney and Essex with the solution to their problem. They must continue to perform acts worthy of applause, but must do so with tact and prudence, and know that an excess of virtue raises the royal ire. What Tacitus does when writing the *Agricola* is draw a comparison between the subtle virtue of Agricola and the showy virtue of Thrasea Paetus in the *Annals*.²²⁰ Kapust summarises the essence of the *Agricola*: men can survive under “bad rulers”, but they must “possess certain virtues” these being “submission and moderation [*obsequiumque ac modestiam*]” and “animation and energy”.²²¹

In the *Agricola* then Savile explains that in an age where “experience, and desire of militare renowne” was “a quality not so acceptable”, where “vertues were greatly suspected, and a great fame endangered more then a bad”, Agricola found the surest means to self-preservation.²²² From his earliest years in service to Rome, Agricola was temperate when approaching service, “wholly directing his minde to knowe the prouince, to bee knowne of the army, to learne of the skilfull, to follow the best”, but to “desire no imployment vpon vaine glory ...to shewe himselfe both carefull and earnest in action.”²²³ Agricola’s skill lay in deciphering the mood of the imperial court and responding accordingly:

After his Questorship till he was created Tribune of the people, & the yeare also of his Tribuneship he passed ouer in rest and quietnesse, well weying the nature of Neroes time, wherein slouth was a vertue, and to doe nothing the greatest wisdom of all. His Pretorship also he passed ouer in the same sort, with the like silence...²²⁴

Savile’s translation reveals Agricola’s character as moderate and prudent. When in office “[t]he playes and vanities of the office he gouerned and executed by the rule of reason and measure of wealth: farre from excesse, and yet not without magnificence & honour”.²²⁵ When serving in Britain, Agricola honed the skills required to govern under a cruel ruler “cunningly conforming himselfe to that humour” and having “tempered the heate of his

²²⁰ Ronald Martin, *Tacitus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 176.

²²¹ Daniel Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy and Tacitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 134. Kapust cites the *Agricola* 42.3.

²²² Savile, *Agricola*, 240.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 239.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 240.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

nature, and restrained from growing his hawty desires”.²²⁶ Savile demonstrates, however, that the pattern Agricola sets is not one of cowardly acquiescence for through his prudence Agricola proves his virtue: “[s]o by his vertue in valiantly doing his charge, and his modesty in sparingly speaking thereof, he was without enuy, but not without glory.”²²⁷

Savile explains how Agricola’s successful command in Britain provoked the envy of Domitian, who considered it a “perillous point, if a priuate mans name should be exalted aboute the name of the Prince”.²²⁸ In the face of this threat from Domitian, Agricola never swayed from his commitment to serve his country, yet he approached his obligations with prudence:

Now to the ende hee might temper of qualifie with other good parts his militare renowne, a vertue vnpleasant to men of no action, hee gaue himselfe wholly to quietnesse and meddling with nothing; being in apparell moderate, affable in speech, accompanied vsually but by one or two of his frendes: so that many, which commonly iudge of great men by the outwarde apparence and pompe, seeing and marking Agricola, missed of that which by fame they conceyued, fewe aimed aright at the cause.²²⁹

It is this quietness that Savile seems to advocate as the surest means of protection against the fury of a jealous sovereign. Bacon’s 1595 advice to Essex echoes the thrust of Savile’s guidance in stressing the need for Essex to discard his image of an unruly courtier, and instead appear conciliatory when in conversation with the queen.²³⁰ This idea that temperance and moderation provide the best reproach to a jealous sovereign or rival is also echoed in the *Old Arcadia* where the figure of Eucharus responds exactly as Savile and Bacon urge, by avoiding provocation. Eucharus who inspired “an awful love in his subjects...could not avoid the assaults of envy — the enemy and yet the honour of virtue.”²³¹ The rulers of neighbouring provinces, the narrator explains, “not being able to attaine his perfections” took to destroy Eucharus’s strength “lest his virtues, joined now to the fame of the Macedonians, might in time both conquer the bodies and win the minds of their subjects”.²³² Eucharus, however, was well aware of “what ill might happen to a man

²²⁶ Ibid., 241.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid., 262.

²²⁹ Ibid., 263.

²³⁰ Bacon, “To my Lord of Essex,” 4 October 1596.

²³¹ Sidney, *The Old Arcadia*, 9.

²³² Ibid.

never so prosperous”, and insulated himself against the threat by sending his son Pyrocles away for protection.²³³ The theme in both Savile’s and Sidney’s work is that to be forewarned is to be forearmed: when conspicuous virtue is under suspicion, it is best to know this fact and adapt to circumstance rather than engage in a futile fight.

From his exposition on the *Agricola* it is clear that Savile wishes to prove that this form of virtue — prudent and stoic virtue — is the quality men must cultivate. In a lengthy footnote to a passage referring to “commendors” of Agricola’s virtue as his most “captiall kinde of enemies”, Savile explains the irony that good deeds become the basis for suspicion.²³⁴ Savile explains that when a man’s virtues are celebrated, virtues in which a prince “ought to excell, or...affecteth to excell”, this is “one of the most subtle, ready, & pernicios means to worke a great mā in disgrace with his Prince”.²³⁵ He goes on to relate how personal jealousy caused emperors to imprison, torture and kill those who seem to diminish their own abilities. Nero, he explains, took offence from Seneca’s eloquence, and was angered by Poppaea’s praise of Otho’s honour.²³⁶ Above all, Savile stresses, it is men who possess military qualities who provoke the most animosity from their rulers.²³⁷ The way in which such men ought to deal with this constant threat and peril is made explicit in the *Agricola*. Savile explains: “great men may be found euen vnder bad Princes”, and “that dutifull obedience and modesty, if industry and valure bee ioyned, may attaine to that degree of praise and renowne, which some following dangerous courses haue aspired vnto by an ambitious death, without any further profit at all.”²³⁸ The point of Savile’s text is that, in an environment where mistrust and envy transform virtue into a most despised quality, it is preferable for virtuous men to lie low and express their virtue as a form of resilience against tyranny, rather than attempt a miscalculated act against a tyranny, an act inspired by a misguided notion that rebellion is the only means to articulate virtue.

Overall, Savile’s “new humanism” seems highly orthodox. Savile is undoubtedly sensitive to the resistance theories articulated by the Dutch and others at this time and he is acutely aware of the frustrations of the forward Protestants at Elizabeth’s court who longed

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Savile, *Agricola*, 263.

²³⁵ Savile, “Notes on the Life of Agricola,” 46, n16.

²³⁶ Ibid., 47.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Savile, *Agricola*, 264.

for England to join the Dutch in their rebellion. He is equally attuned to the type of political experimentation being discussed as potential solutions to the Elizabethan succession crisis. We might expect then to find his engagement with Tacitus and Seneca to be radical or “republican” in tone. However, what Savile takes from his readings of Tacitus and Seneca is a view that rebellion and political change ought to be avoided. As discussed in the first sections of this chapter, Savile seems hesitant in proving his commitment to theories of resistance articulated by European Protestants. He considers resistance and rebellion to be acts which lead only to greater turmoil. His view of political change, particularly the idea of involving a representative body in the question of the succession, is equally pessimistic. He is preoccupied with the destruction caused by Galba’s succession, a similar act of intervention and transformation, and thus is reluctant to approve of such behaviour. Savile seems acutely aware of the frustrations felt by individuals like Essex, but suggests that, in an atmosphere of suspicion and jealousy, it is preferable to lie low and seek an alternative method of demonstrating one’s ability and virtue. Thus, in conclusion, Savile’s “new humanism” is deeply pessimistic about the wisdom of engaging in political life, and any attempted intervention to alter the character of Elizabethan political culture. Savile writes to warn Essex and others against action and it seems that his remarks were prescient. As we will see in the next chapter, an equally conservative “new humanism” emerged in response to the Essex rebellion, where the tone of Savile’s work is picked up and transformed into a commentary on the events of 1601.

Chapter Two:

Matthew Gwinne's *Nero tragaedia nova*

In 1603 the Oxford graduate and physician, Matthew Gwinne, published a dramatic epic in Latin depicting the reign of the emperor Nero. Gwinne's *Nero* exudes a sense of horror at the depths to which men can sink in the pursuit of power and wealth. Act three of the play opens with the ghost of Britannicus urging Charron to allow him to pass into "the abodes of the Blessed" (III.i.1310).¹ Charron refuses, urging Britannicus to stay and watch, and stating that the crimes Nero has committed against Britannicus are merely "trifles", for Britannicus's murder is merely "a step along the way of crime, not the end of the journey" (III.i.1322-1323).² "[T]he evil grows daily", Charron continues, and "the pious emperors of Rome who have lived, who will live, will never equal impious Nero's pious five-year span" (III.i.1325-1328).³ At the close of the act, the fury Megaera ascends from the fiery pits of hell to muse upon the maladies of Nero's reign. Megaera highlights the cruelty which has just unfolded, and underlines the strife caused by man's insatiable desire to devour fellow man. "Man is not a god, but a wolf to his fellow man", she argues, "[n]o beast treats a fellow animal as man treats man" (III.Chorus 3. 2203-2204).⁴ There is nothing "as ungrateful", "nothing as hateful" as "man to man" (III.Chorus 3.2207-2209).⁵ Even the furies are moved by the hostility and the unfeeling attitude of man, as Megaera suggests man must have been created from stone "since he resembles hard rock in his spirit" (III.Chorus 3.2210-2211).⁶ She continues by claiming that men are misled if they

¹ Matthew Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova* in Matthew Gwinne, *Nero (1603) A hypertext critical edition*, edited and translated by Dana F. Sutton, The Philological Museum, University of Birmingham, posted 27 November 1997, revised 20 November 2012, accessed April 19, 2014, http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/Nero/Act_III_trans.html. Quotations are based on Sutton's translation throughout unless stated otherwise. Act and scene divisions are those used in Sutton's hypertext edition and line numbers refer to the Latin edition of the text from Sutton's site. Latin quotations in footnotes are taken from the 1603 version of Gwinne's play and signature numbers are provided for these citations: Matthew Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*... (London: Ed. Blounte, 1603), STC 12551. Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. F3r: 'Vmb. Sedes beatas peto pius et insons puer.'

² Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. F3v: "Cha. Quid parua magnis aggrauas? sceleris gradus,/Non finis hic est: hactenus factum scelus".

³ Ibid. "Votum est in istis: indies crescit nefas./Quin qui fuerunt, quique erunt summe pij,/Romæque domini Cæsares, nunquam impij,/Quinquenniū Neronis exæquent pium;".

⁴ Ibid., sig. I3r. "Homini lupus est homo, non Deus est./Vt homo est homini, fera nulla ferae est."

⁵ Ibid., sig. I3r-v. "Nihil ingratum, nihil infidum,/Nihil infestum, nihil inuisum,/Vt homo est homini...".

⁶ Ibid., sig. I3v. "Non malè saxo creditur ortus,/Animo immiti qui saxa refert."

believe the furies to be cruel and unjust tormenters, for men themselves “are unjust, we honest; they torture the undeserving, we punish the deserving; they do so avidly, we with sorrow” (III.Chorus 3.2216-2220).⁷

This extract typifies Gwinne’s attitude to this period of Rome’s history. He relates the chaos and horror wreaked on a once glorious state by an unsettled succession, by an ambitious ruler, and by glory-seeking rebels. In the *Nero* we see reflected a conservative “new humanism”, where the need to maintain order and custom is paramount. This chapter argues that this “new humanism” leans towards the weary scepticism of Montaigne, and that Gwinne’s depiction of Nero’s reign is heavily influenced by his involvement in translating the French philosopher’s *Essais*. Gwinne appropriates much of Montaigne’s scepticism about the wisdom of interfering in political affairs, and suggests that, where political activity is likely to have damaging repercussions, it is preferable to persevere in the existing situation, without seeking amendment for political ills.⁸ Gwinne uses Tacitus and Seneca to forge a political philosophy designed to counter what Gwinne suggests is a more ambitious, and indeed seditious, form of “new humanism” associated with the Earl of Essex and the revolt of 1601. In short, this chapter situates Gwinne’s *Nero* within a culture drawn to the solutions offered by Stoicism, and obsessed with highlighting the philosophy’s lessons in the “cooling of dangerous passions” and “enduring the hardships of the times.”⁹

⁷ Ibid., “*Homines Furiae; nos Eumenides:/Iniusti homines, nos sinceræ:/Illi immeritos, nos promeritos,/Illi cruciant, nos punimus:/Alacres illi,nos maerentes.*”

⁸ Where I refer to Montaigne’s political and ethical beliefs throughout this chapter I am aware of the incoherence in Montaigne’s relationship with Stoic philosophy and acknowledge how the *Essais* were produced in a piecemeal fashion. Geoffrey Miles has outlined how the *Essais* “were in a state of continual change over more than twenty years: from the first two Books written in the 1570s and published in 1580, through the major expansion of these essays and the addition of a third Book in 1588, to the further expansions which Montaigne made in the margins of his personal copy, posthumously published in 1595.”; see Geoffrey Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85. In a now classic analysis of Montaigne’s thought Pierre Villey pointed to the originality of Montaigne’s thinking by noting how Montaigne’s approach was to blend several forms of thinking: “Ainsi, sans construire une doctrine proprement dite, il aboutit à un éclectisme très personnel.”; see Pierre Villey, *Les Sources et L’Evolution Des Essais de Montaigne*, vol. 1, *Les Sources et La Chronologie Des Essais* (Paris: Librairie Hachette & Co., 1908), 31. Villey notes that Montaigne’s belief in the supereminence of Senecan philosophy seems to fluctuate over the course of writing the essays, so that in 1588 we witness Montaigne’s disenchantment with Seneca’s moral philosophy, before he returns to Seneca after 1588; see Villey, *Les Sources*, vol. 1, 214-217. Montaigne’s interest in Tacitus is equally patchy; see Villey, *Les Sources*, vol. 1, 224-227. As Miles notes, Villey hints towards three stages in Montaigne’s thought: “conventional Neostoicism, a sceptical ‘crisis’ in the mid-1570s, and finally a tolerant, quasi-Epicurean *philosophie de la nature*.” See; Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 85. Villey explains that Montaigne may have started out being heavily influenced by Stoic thought but became disengaged from it; see Pierre Villey, *Les Sources et L’Evolution Des Essais de Montaigne* vol. 2, *L’Evolution des Essais* (Paris: Librairie Hachette & Co., 1908), 91. Therefore, where relevant, I will point to the part of the *Essais* to which I refer.

⁹ Parmelee, *Good News from Fraunce*, 119 but also see chapter six “Neostoicism,” more generally.

Gwinne's text appeared with a publication date of 1603 and, as Dana Sutton has demonstrated, it is evident that Gwinne was finalising the text of his drama on the threshold between the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I.¹⁰ In many respects the play's content channels the anticipation and anxiety of the later Elizabethan period, and Gwinne's focus on Rome in a period of transition establishes a parallel between the Neronian era and the concerns of the Elizabethans. It seems that Gwinne's personal connections were instrumental in the formation of his political philosophy, since it is evident that Gwinne's drama is shaped by the type of thinking that was taking place in the intellectual climate in which he operated. In the *Nero* there are traces of both Sidney and Savile. The connection with Sidney is unsurprising, since Gwinne was instrumental in the collaborative effort to publish the *Arcadia* in 1590, and contributed to the verses written to commemorate Sidney's death in 1586.¹¹ Gwinne's intellectual sympathy with Savile is also to be anticipated, since the two men crossed paths during Elizabeth's 1592 visit to Oxford, where Gwinne was respondent in a debate overseen by Savile at St Mary's Church.¹² As explained in the introduction to this thesis, Gwinne was evidently sufficiently inspired by Savile's *End of Nero* to model the final act of *Nero* on Savile's narrative.

Although *Nero* displays traces of Sidney and Savile's work, there can be little doubt that it was Gwinne's relationship with John Florio that had the most significant influence on Gwinne's Neronian drama.¹³ At some point in the 1590s, Florio had been asked to produce an English translation of Montaigne's *Essais* for the Countess of Bedford.¹⁴ He was assisted in this endeavour by Gwinne and the Italian physician Theodore Diodati, and it seems that for Gwinne the interest in Montaigne's ideas spilled

¹⁰ Sutton "Introduction," 56. Sutton notes that *Nero* was printed in 1603 and was dedicated to the Egertons and Francis Leigh. The epilogue in a first version praised Elizabeth, but when Elizabeth died two days before the beginning of the 1603 calendar year (Old Style) a few issues were reprinted with a new dedication to her successor. Printing was paused around the time of Elizabeth's death to allow this reconfiguration to take place.

¹¹ Iain Wright, "Gwinne, Matthew (1558–1627)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/11813.

¹² See the account provided in Goldring, Eales, Clarke and Archer, eds. *John Nichols's The Progresses*, 622–626.

¹³ Wright, "Gwinne, Matthew (1558–1627)," *ODNB*. For details of Gwinne's connections in Oxford, particularly his involvement with William Gager see Sutton "Introduction," and J.W. Binns, *Intellectual Culture in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: The Latin Writings of the Age* (Leeds: Francis Cairns Publications Ltd., 1990), 122–136. For information on Florio's partnership with Gwinne see Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey*, 6–8 and Frances A. Yates, *John Florio: The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 50, 93, 221–222.

¹⁴ Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey*, 7.

over into his subsequent work.¹⁵ The time Gwinne spent working with Florio to bring the French philosopher's words to an English audience seems to have been formative for Gwinne, since some of Montaigne's distaste for political change and his hostility towards innovation appear to have left their mark on Gwinne's *Nero*.

It is not only the echoes of Montaigne's fatigue with political life that demonstrate that Gwinne belongs to this tradition of "new humanism" in England. Gwinne's "new humanism" interacts with Lipsius, Montaigne and Savile, but re-works their political philosophy by highlighting ideas and concepts that support the need for obedience and those that point to the benefits of monarchy. The dedicatory epistle to Gwinne's play firmly establishes Gwinne as part of the resurgence of interest in Tacitus and stoic philosophy. The epistle is provided by one of Gwinne's fellow scholars at St John's College, John Sandsbury.¹⁶ Sandsbury's dedication addresses Lipsius, claiming that other writers are likely to be envious of Gwinne, for his *Nero* provides a truer Nero and a more faithful vision of Seneca than they could envisage.¹⁷ We should read Sandsbury's remarks not only as an indication that Gwinne's characterisation of Seneca is more realistic than that provided by other "new humanists", but also, as Emma Buckley has demonstrated, as an indication that Gwinne's drama itself is more faithful to the Senecan dramatic style than most Senecan-inspired pieces.¹⁸ The choruses (and their language referring to misery and evil), the lyricism of the dialogue, and the bloodiness of the action are features Gwinne's drama borrows from Seneca.¹⁹ Sandsbury's reference to Lipsius also announces Gwinne's complex relationship with Lipsius's political philosophy. This chapter will demonstrate that, on the one hand, there are aspects of Lipsius's philosophy contained within Gwinne's depiction of Nero — particularly where the notion of inner constancy as a form of liberation is used to craft the narrative of Octavia and Seneca's withdrawal — while on the other hand, Gwinne wholeheartedly rejects other aspects of Lipsian political philosophy, specifically the Lipsian idea of *prudentia mixta*.

Although Sandsbury makes no mention of Gwinne's debt to Savile's *End of Nero*, Gwinne himself does not shrink from drawing attention, through his marginal annotations

¹⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁶ D. K. Money, "Sandsbury, John (1575/6–1610)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/24644.

¹⁷ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. Ar.

¹⁸ Emma Buckley, "Matthew Gwinne's *Nero* (1603): Seneca, Academic Drama, and the Politics of Polity," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 40, no. 1 (2013): 16-33.

¹⁹ Ibid., 17-19.

in the play's final act, to the connection with Savile's work. If Gwinne's relationship with Lipsius's work is complicated, no less so is Gwinne's relationship with the work of Savile. Chapter One of the present study explained that Savile uses Nero's reign to underscore how, in comparison with the problems faced by the Romans, the problems faced by Elizabethan Englishmen are insignificant. Gwinne adopts the same approach in that he uses Nero's reign as an example of the worst type of ruler men can encounter, and encourages his readers to consider themselves fortunate because they live under a rational and benevolent ruler. However, Gwinne departs from Savile's model by refusing to accommodate Savile's assumption that some form of resistance in certain contexts is legitimate. What guides Gwinne's text is the insistence that the removal of a ruler causes more harm than persevering and living under even a bad ruler.

In using Tacitus and Seneca to articulate the need for obedience to a sovereign, and to stress the fundamental importance of unity within a polity, Gwinne is revealing something of his attitude towards contemporary political events. Gwinne's "new humanism" is at odds with the rhetoric of constitutionalism and non-domination which, it has been implied, typified the reception of Tacitus and Seneca in late Elizabethan England.²⁰ To be more specific, Gwinne is most certainly attuned to the discourse associated with the forward Protestants who were frustrated by Elizabeth's inaction over Europe's religious wars and angered by her alleged stifling of military virtue. However, he uses Tacitus and Seneca to reach political conclusions fundamentally opposed to the politics of these men. Although Gwinne seems to have had little direct relationship with the court during Elizabeth's later years, it is possible to connect Gwinne to prominent members of the Essex circle. Given his association with Florio — who was himself tutor to the third Earl of Southampton, and whose fortunes "on the face of it" seemed tied to Essex and his associates — it is reasonable to assume that Gwinne shared some of his friend's interest in this group's affairs.²¹ Gwinne himself provided a poem addressed to the Earl of Southampton for inclusion in Florio's *Dictionary*.²² Furthermore, it is also evident that, after the Essex rebellion, Gwinne was in correspondence with John Davies, who served with Essex in France and Ireland, and was only spared execution for his part in Essex's

²⁰ Gajda, "Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c.1530-c.1640," 266-267.

²¹ Yates, *John Florio*, 76; for quotation see 93. See also the account of Florio in the Earl of Southampton's biography: Park Honan, "Wriothesley, Henry, third earl of Southampton (1573–1624)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Sept 2012, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/30073. Yates also points to Florio's defence of Essex, presuming he is the "A. B." whose dedication prefaces Savile's *End of Nero*; see Yates, *John Florio*, 198.

²² Yates, *John Florio*, 191.

rebellion because he informed on his accomplices.²³ In addition to these connections, Gwinne's part in the publication of the 1590 *Arcadia* perhaps indicates some ideological sympathy with the Tacitism and Neostoicism of the Essex circle, since it seems this edition was designed to hitch Sidney's political and ethical outlook to the interests of the Essex-circle.²⁴ These connections are, nevertheless, tenuous and the nature of Gwinne's relationship to this group of mavericks seems as ambiguous as Florio's.²⁵

Nero was written in the aftermath of the Essex rebellion, and in his depiction of the rebellion against Nero Gwinne's criticism of Essex's actions is discernible. In the first section of this chapter we will explore how Gwinne depicts the dangers of political innovation, a theme he picks up, as will be shown in section three, when discussing the harm caused by resistance and rebellion. Gwinne attempts to overhaul the language of prudence and necessity that had been developed by the Essexians as a means to justify their attempts to attain some form of political liberty through taking action against Elizabeth. Instead, as will be explained in section four, Gwinne seeks to persuade that freedom only comes to those who are truly virtuous and who aspire to a form of virtue achieved through inaction. To summarise, in his treatment of Tacitus and Seneca Gwinne attempts to dismantle the version of these two authors presented by the Essex circle and reconstructs a type of "new humanism" that he considers to be more palatable.

Custom and innovation

As outlined in the section above, Gwinne was probably writing his drama in the final years of Elizabeth's reign when uncertainty about the succession was rife. His depiction of Nero is undoubtedly influenced by this uncertainty, as Gwinne chooses to narrate Nero's reign from the period of Nero's dubious accession through to the moment when it seems that the Julio-Claudian line would be extinguished by Nero's overthrow and death. Gwinne's play opens on the cusp of the succession, with Claudius engaging in protracted deliberations about his marriage, and then announcing his adoption of Nero (I.ii

²³ Feingold, *The Mathematician's Apprenticeship*, 111. See also J. J. N. McGurk, "Davies, Sir John (1560x63–1625)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, May 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/7242.

²⁴ Joel Davis, "Multiple *Arcadias* and the Literary Quarrel between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke," *Studies in Philology* 101, no. 4 (2004): 401-430. Davis describes the conflict between Greville, Gwinne and Florio on the one hand and the Countess of Pembroke and Hugh Sanford on the other as a battle to determine the character of Sidney's Tacitean Neostoicism.

²⁵ Yates makes the suggestion, based on Florio's correspondence with the Venetian diplomat Niccolò Molino (10 August 1600 *C.S.P. Domestic* 1598-1601, 459-60), that Florio may have been in the employment of the Cecil faction and tasked with spying on Essex and Southampton; see Yates, *John Florio*, 216-218.

and I.iii). Throughout this, Gwinne stresses the novelty of Nero's succession and the rupture this innovation causes within the state. In the process of narrating how Agrippina secured the succession for her son in spite of the desires of Rome, and in detailing the havoc the pair subsequently wreaked, Gwinne channels the anxieties of the late Elizabethans about their own succession crisis. What is more, he does so by evoking the disillusionment of both Montaigne and Lipsius and by adapting their concern about political and religious strife.

The play opens with Claudius celebrating the glories of the Roman Empire and complacently acknowledging the stability and prosperity his reign has brought to the Roman people (I.ii.112-151). In these opening scenes, Gwinne dwells on the source of Rome's instability: Claudius's marriage to Agrippina and the adoption of Nero as his heir. Claudius continues his opening speech by boasting of the fact that he is being "wooded by rival brides" and that it is his right as "a bachelor" to be "free to choose a wife", whether it be for reasons of "policy", "lust" or "ardent love" (I.ii.146-148).²⁶ His closest advisors, Narcissus, Calistus and Pallas, sing the praises of Claudius's prospective brides. When Claudius considers marriage to his niece, Agrippina, Gwinne illustrates how this decision flies in the face of common practice and common sense. Claudius acknowledges the uproar a betrothal to Agrippina would provoke:

CLAUD. The populace will reject this.
 VIT(TELIUS). Should the populace reject Casear? Is he thus ordered about? Does the populace govern Caesar?
 CLAUD. The law forbids.
 VIT. You are a law unto yourself.
 CLAUD. This is without precedent.
 VIT. Create a precedent. But it is not unprecedented. Consider barbarian kingdoms.
 CLAUD. This reeks of barbarism.
 VIT. But what is permissible anywhere is permissible everywhere.
 CLAUD. Nature rebels.
 VIT. The hardhearted law ordained marriage. Nature makes no distinctions, but rather invites kinsmen to love each other.
 CLAUD. You urge a thing scarce sanctioned by custom. (I.ii.278-286)²⁷

²⁶ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. B2r. "Leuamen habeo mortuae vxoris, nouam/Eligere quod iam caelibi vxorem licet./Sit causa, sit libido, sit feruens amor,".

²⁷ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. B4r. "*Clau.* Populus negabit. *Vitel.* Caesari populus neget?/Sic imperator? Caesarem populus reget?/*Clau.* Lex prohibet. *Vitel.* Es lex tu tibi. *Clau.* Exemplo caret./ *Vitel.* Exempla proebe: sed nec exemplo caret:/ Barbarica repete regna. *Clau.* Barbariem sapit./ *Vitel.* At vbique liceat, quod loco quouis licet./*Clau.* Natura pugnat. *Vitel.* Dura lex statuit thoros,/ Natura non distinguit, inuitat magis/ Cognata amentur. *Clau.* More vix lictum doces."

In this exchange Gwinne suggests that Claudius's decision to circumvent the wishes of the populace, by marrying Agrippina, represents an extension of royal prerogative. He does this by underscoring how Claudius is urged by Vitellius to consider himself *lex loquens*. However, the most significant aspect of the above exchange is the fact that Gwinne frames the whole discussion concerning the legitimacy of Agrippina and Claudius's marriage (and Nero's adoption) as a matter relating to the issue of custom and tradition. As the drama continues, Silanus, Claudius's son-in-law, is informed that he is to be removed from the Senate and is told that his claim to the throne has been denied by Claudius. Again, Gwinne returns to stress the novelty of the situation:

VIT. I admit that marriage to a brother's daughter is a new thing at Rome. But elsewhere it is familiar, nor do the laws forbid it. Custom is unfair: marriage to a cousin was once unknown, but the passage of time removed this obstacle. Customs become accommodated to human needs, and things now once familiar were once novelties – as will this innovation, thanks to their example. (I.iii.377-382)²⁸

The opening scenes of Gwinne's drama, then, indicate that Rome's misfortunes have grown ultimately from the rejection of tradition and custom. In this focus, it is evident that Gwinne is reflecting something of the Neostoics' unease at the readiness to discard long-held beliefs and shake off tried and tested methods of governance. In "Of Custome", an essay which appears in the first booke of the *Essais*, Montaigne expresses how he is "distasted with noveltie, what countenance soever it shew", because he has "seene very hurtfull effects follow the same".²⁹ Employing the metaphor of the body in his discussion of the polity, Montaigne explains that there is little profit to be gained "in the change of a received lawe", since it is "impossible to stirre or displace one" without irreparably weakening and undermining the whole system itself.³⁰ In his *Nero*, Gwinne seems to adopt the stance Montaigne had adopted in his early essays when treating political change. Gwinne also shares the reverence the French philosopher Pierre Charron has for custom. Charron's work was translated into English in 1608 but, as Parmelee notes, the French work appeared in 1601 and would have been known to Elizabethan readers.³¹ For Charron,

²⁸ Ibid., sig. C1v. "Coniugia Romae in filias fratrum noua./Fateor: sed alibi nota: nec leges vetant;/Sed mos iniquus: pariter ignotus fuit/Thalamus sobrinae, tempore inualuit dato./Accommodantur commodis mores: noua/Fuere quae nunc nota: hoc ex illis erit."

²⁹ Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Militarie Discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne...* trans. John Florio (London: Val. Sims for Edward Blount, 1603), STC 18041, 53.

³⁰ Ibid., 52.

³¹ Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce*, 128.

upholding the “lawes & customes” of a country, “both in word and deed”, is paramount.³² He points to the detrimental effects of innovation and the suspension of customs:

All change and alteration of lawes, beleafes, customes and observances is very dangerous, and yeeldeth always more evill than good; it bringeth with it certaine and present evils for a good that is uncertaine to come.³³

Gwinne’s attitude parallels Charron’s and Montaigne’s suspicion of novelty. Early in the drama it is Claudius who acts as the innovator by showing no hesitation in preferring “love” over “custom” (I.ii.286-287), and in defying the wishes of the Senate, the people and the praetorian guard.³⁴ It is this act that propels Rome into misery under the misrule of Agrippina and, later, under Nero. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Gwinne also presents the Pisonian rebels, who seek, like Claudius, to change custom, as the architects of Rome’s misfortune and thus the consistent message in the drama is Gwinne’s assertion of the need to uphold the status quo.

While Gwinne is consistent in articulating this idea, it is less clear how his pessimistic view of political innovation should be interpreted in relation to Elizabethan politics. There are a number of possible analogies that can be extracted from the opening scene of the drama, where the fate of Rome is confirmed through Claudius’s and Agrippina’s nuptials. The debate over Claudius’s choice of brides, and the dramatization of his consort’s eclipsing of his power, must surely represent Gwinne’s attempt to call to mind the debate about Elizabeth’s proposed marriage in the late 1570s and 1580s. As discussed in the first chapter, it is likely that Savile’s text was informed by the political uncertainty and division surrounding the Elizabethan succession crisis, and that Savile possibly adopted much of Sidney’s pessimism about the political implications of the Anjou match. Gwinne similarly seems to pick up on this rhetoric in his *Nero*. Claudius’s ghost’s exclamation in act two that “[a] false Nero invades a kingdom not his own and casts down the true Nero” (II.i. 660-661) reflects some of the anxieties expressed by those opposed to Elizabeth’s planned marriage to Anjou.³⁵ For instance, in his letter of 1579 to Elizabeth, Philip Sidney outlined his certainty that England would become prey to domination by the

³² Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdome...* trans. Samson Lennard (London: Eliot’s Court Press for Edward Blount and Will Aspley, 1608), STC 5051, 312.

³³ *Ibid.*, 313, also cited in Parmelee, *Good Newes From Fraunce*, 129.

³⁴ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. B4r. “*Clau.* More vix licitum doces,/ *Vitel.* Amore licitum fiat”.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, sig. D1v. “*Imperia falsus non sua inuadit Nero,/ Verum Neronem deijcit: nec dum sat est.*”.

ambitious Anjou, who would not be content to submit to Elizabeth.³⁶ Gwinne’s presentation of Agrippina’s ambition seems to echo Sidney’s attitude. Furthermore, in Claudius’s opening speech in celebration of Rome’s prosperity and the settled peace of the empire, there are a number of thematic and linguistic echoes of Sidney’s depiction of Elizabethan England. In the “Letter”, Sidney outlines that security and stability rests on the trust the people have for their monarch. Worden points to Sidney’s assertion that Elizabeth’s government is based on the love and fear her subjects have for her, and that the success in maintaining their loyalty during this time of tribulation over the Anjou match rests with her ability to demonstrate her virtue, justice and resolution.³⁷ To proceed with the marriage to Anjou would, Sidney contends, be to submit to the attraction of an outward sense of stability provided by alliance with Anjou but this, he continues, is a far less settled strength than that Elizabeth possesses when she stands alone.³⁸ Sidney fears that Elizabeth will suffer a loss of her “honourable constancy” if she commits to a marriage based not on a shared diplomatic fear or desire, but on “private affection”.³⁹ Claudius’s reign, like Elizabeth’s, is “enjoying a stable fortune” with a “foundation” greater than ever before (I.ii.115-120).⁴⁰ He possesses “Fortune’s support, and Virtue’s guidance”, like Elizabeth, but is willing to forfeit all these benefits in order “to indulge” his “need” and “nature”, and is keen “to wield the thyrsus of Bacchus and the distaff of Hercules” (I.ii.130-145).⁴¹ Claudius’s reference to the Phoenix (I.ii.151) might further confirm that Gwinne gestures towards the question of Elizabeth’s marriage and the succession that had dominated discourse in the previous decades.⁴²

If Gwinne has his eye turned forwards to the prospect of James I’s accession, rather than backwards to Elizabeth’s failed marriage negotiations, it may also be the case that Gwinne picks up the message that James I stresses in his own political thought — that of

³⁶ “Sir Philip Sydney to Queen Elizabeth, An. 1580, perswading her not to marry with the Duke of Anjou,” in *Letters and Memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth...* ed. Arthur Collins (London: Osborne, 1746), 287-292.

³⁷ Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 118-119.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁹ “Sir Philip Sydney to Queen Elizabeth,” 245-258.

⁴⁰ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. B1v. “Me cernat, et te Roma: vix aetas tulit/Exempla quaeuis paria, quàm stabili bono/Fruerentur ἀὐτοκράτορες terrae Ioues./Augusta rerum Domina, et Europae caput/In astra surgit Romuli angustus labor;/Et talis annos bis quater centum stetit.”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, sig. B2r. “Caesare fauente, comite fortunâ, duce/Virtute, vinci quod volo, victum dabo. ... Libet, orbe domito, genium et ingenium sequi,/Tractare thyrsum Bacchi, et Alcidae colum.”

⁴² *Ibid.*, “Phaenix iugales sola non nouit faces.”

pursuing a marriage in good conscience and based on sound counsel and custom. In the *Basilikon Doron*, first published in Edinburgh in 1599, James instructs his son to recognise marriage as one of the most important decisions a monarch can make. Due attention must be paid to “the weale of his people” when choosing a bride, and a monarch must not “for any accessory cause or worldly respects” choose a woman “vnable, either through aage, nature, or accident, for procreation of children”.⁴³ A ruler must be particularly concerned to avoid marrying one “of knowne euill conditions, or vicious education: for the woman is ordeined to be a helper, and not a hinderer to man”.⁴⁴ Gwinne seems to echo James’s general sentiment and, in portraying Claudius’s misfortune as the result of his defiance of shrewd advice like that offered by James, Gwinne perhaps attempts to endear himself to the future ruler.

Alternatively, it is possible to read Agrippina’s attempts to secure Nero’s succession and assassinate Claudius as a reflection on the threat posed by Mary Queen of Scots. Agrippina’s dialogue with Pallas in the first act, in which she plots to assassinate Claudius by having him ingest poison, has an obvious topicality as Gwinne seems to tap into contemporary fears about the ambitions of Elizabeth’s rival. In the *New Arcadia*, with which Gwinne was very familiar, the figure of Cecropia, as Worden illustrates, serves as an allegory for the threat posed by Mary Queen of Scots since her arrival in England in 1568.⁴⁵ The action of the *New Arcadia* centres in part on the machinations of Cecropia who, by the opening of the action, has already attempted to assassinate Basilius. The ambition and “devilish wickedness” of Cecropia, who would enact any “mischievous practice” if it meant her son could attain Basilius’s throne, is paralleled in Gwinne’s portrait of Agrippina, who works by any means to achieve power.⁴⁶ Moreover, Gwinne’s negative depiction of Agrippina, that “irate and powerful” woman (I.iv. 471) whose capacity for villainy seems boundless, reflects the outpouring of popular condemnation of Mary Queen of Scots following the discovery of the Babington Plot.⁴⁷

⁴³ King James I, *Basilikon Doron* in *The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles Howard McIlwain, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918), 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Worden, *The Sound of Virtue*, 172-176.

⁴⁶ Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia (The New Arcadia)*, 117.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of representations of Mary Queen of Scots in the wake of the Babington Plot; see James Emerson Phillips, “The English Campaign for the Execution of Mary: 1586-1588,” chap. 5 in *Images of a Queen: Mary Stuart in Sixteenth-century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. C2v. “Agris. Quid haeres? faemina irata, et potens.”

Further to these interpretations, it is possible to read Gwinne's discussion of Claudius's disregard for custom in the marriage to Agrippina as an echo of the constitutionalist arguments stressing that "great hazard and danger" is the likely result of any interference with, or royal encroachment on, legal custom.⁴⁸ Claudius's disregard for the Senate, in claiming the matters of his marriage and succession are his concern alone, seems to evoke Elizabeth's attitude towards parliamentary involvement in the discussions of the succession, her marriage and matters of religious policy. Thus, it is evident that Gwinne acknowledges the anxieties of that diverse "loose coalition" of men, like Sidney or Burghley, who championed what Collinson has described as "aspects of the Protestant Ascendancy", whether this be advocacy of a more militant foreign policy in dealings with Catholic nations, or the settlement of, or at least discussion of, the succession.⁴⁹ It might be argued that, through presenting Claudius as a ruler who ignores and belittles the desires of his subjects and counsellors, Gwinne allies with those, like Sidney or later like Essex, who felt frustrated by the apparent willingness Elizabeth showed in acting without due regard for her subjects. However, as will be shown later in this chapter, Gwinne is wholly unsympathetic to the idea of intervening in the name of the "Protestant Ascendancy", and stresses the simple point that any form of innovation or unsettling of the status quo causes irreparable damage to the polity.

Therefore, while showing an awareness of the types of thinking occurring in court circles in this period, Gwinne makes no clear statement about his political stance. From this we may conclude that he shares the ambivalence of Montaigne who, as Parmelee acknowledges, seems "far less concerned with who is right and who is wrong than he is with the damaging effects of the upheaval itself".⁵⁰ What is clear, is that Gwinne, by pointing to the naivety of the belief that change inevitably leads to profit, seeks to dissuade men from making an unnecessary intervention in public life. In the second act, Gwinne draws attention to the fickleness of the populace who are easily convinced that Nero's accession is something to be celebrated, merely because Nero represents the new face of Rome. An equestrian enters, and is apparently confused about the sequence of events

⁴⁸ Edward Coke, *IV Reports*, in *The Reports of Sir Edward Coke, Knt.* ... ed. John Henry Thomas, vol. 2 (London: Joseph Butterworth and Son, 1826), preface, v. Glenn Burgess makes the important point that Coke does not necessarily consider the use of royal prerogative to be a threat to the immutability of common law because he establishes the idea that prerogative is part of, not antithetical to, legal custom: see "The Political Thought of Sir Edward Coke," chap. 6, in Glenn Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy and the Stuart Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 165-208.

⁴⁹ Patrick Collinson, "Puritans, Men of Business and Elizabethan Parliaments," chap. 3 in *Elizabethan Essays*, 63.

⁵⁰ Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce*, 124.

which has just unfolded. “Where’s Britannicus? Where’s Claudius’ son? Where’s Britannicus?”, he asks, and resigns himself to “follow the crowd”, and “follow that version of events which is offered” (II.ii.675-678).⁵¹ Gwinne here seems to echo the sentiments found in Montaigne’s *Essais* where, in the “Apologie for Raymond Sebond”, the philosopher laments the ease with which men cast off the old in favour of the new. In the piece, which Miles has described as Montaigne’s “most belligerently sceptical” of the essays, Montaigne makes an intervention into the French religious conflict by suggesting that France’s religious problems stem from the weakness of man’s attachment to faith itself.⁵²

...had we hold-fast on God by himselfe, and not by vs; had wee a divine foundation, then should not humane and worldly occasions have the power so to shake and totter vs as they have ... The love of novelties, the constraint of Princes; the good successe of one parties, the rash and casuall changing of our opinions, should not then have the power to shake and alter our believe.⁵³

This resonates in Gwinne’s work where he outlines how men are too quick to turn their back on tradition. Like Montaigne, as will be illustrated later in this chapter, Gwinne suggests that this constant desire to seek out change and novelty stems from a defect in man’s character — the inability to separate the external ephemera from internal constancy. The implications of Gwinne’s belief in terms of a political outlook are evident, for Gwinne favours the maintenance of hierarchy and order, however bad, over action to remedy any perceived ill within the state.

The language of necessity

Gwinne’s *Nero* stresses the need to maintain the status quo in governance. It is evident that Gwinne, despite the horrors of Nero’s reign, remains convinced of the benefits of a benevolent monarchy. Like Savile, Gwinne suggests that Englishmen ought to consider their situation fortunate, for they live under a stable and just ruler. Gwinne’s interest lies in underscoring the idea that preservation of the state is in the interest of all but, unlike Savile, he asserts that there is a limit to the lengths to which a ruler ought to go

⁵¹ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. D1v-D2r. “*Eques. Britannicus vbi est? Claudij proles vbi est? Britannicus vbi est? nemo respondet? Sequar/Vnus frequentes: numerus excusat malos./Oblata, nullo qui renitatur, sequar.*”

⁵² Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 93. Miles notes that the “Apologie” was a piece commissioned from Montaigne by Montaigne’s father to defend the theology of Sebond against Protestant attack; see Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 94.

⁵³ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 253.

in order to preserve his position. Where, as the first chapter argued, Savile considers there is merit in practising prudence or in dabbling in Machiavellian style politics in order to maintain a firm grasp on power, Gwinne rejects this view, preferring, instead, to point to the need for politics to conform to Christian moral values. Where authors like Lipsius had concluded, in the words of Skinner, that it was “less realistic to insist that the maintenance of justice must always be given precedence over the preservation of the commonwealth”, Gwinne argues that justice is, in fact, the foundation of the commonwealth and that adherence to a moral and legal framework is necessary.⁵⁴

In presenting the the play’s villains as exploiting the language of necessity to destroy Rome from within, Gwinne confronts the consequences of foregrounding personal and political necessity over what is morally right. Necessity is the watchword of Nero’s court. The desire to survive and gain advantage in the imperial circle propels each individual to act in more violent and more outlandish ways. As the ghost of Britannicus remarks in act three, “crime be heaped on crime” (III.i.1332).⁵⁵ This message is conveyed in the first act of the play when Agrippina, having witnessed the ease with which Claudius denigrates her character to Britannicus, contemplates the murder of Claudius. As she notes, it is impossible for anyone at the royal court to rest on their laurels: “Who can await the outcome of royal threats in security? Who would not forestall them?”(I.iv.454-455).⁵⁶ One must be prudent to survive:

If necessary, you should cheerfully commit a crime rather than suffer one. Prudent sovereigns, guard against making arrogant threats: they arm us, they whet us, they impede their own progress. For whoever threatens evil advises me to caution. I shall forestall crime by crime; in the face of evil salvation lies in evildoing. Let him be put down lest he put me down unawares.⁵⁷ (I.4.457-461)

The maxim which Agrippina explains to Pallas suggests that one must be willing to preempt a fall and act out of necessity to preserve the self. The spirit of this message finds a close parallel in Macro’s words in act four of the 1603 work, *Sejanus*. Having learnt that an opposition is being formed against Tiberius and Sejanus, Macro considers his own fate:

⁵⁴ Skinner, *Foundations*, vol. 1, 253. Skinner points to the growth of the principle of “reason of state” in the Low Countries more generally but Lipsius most certainly falls into this category of writers.

⁵⁵ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. F3v. “...scelere cumuletur scelus”.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. C2v. “Quisquamne regum tutus expectet minas?/Quin potiùs illas occupet?”.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, “si sit necesse, quàm feras, facias lubens./Cauete tumidas prouidi Reges minas:/Armant, et acuunt, et viam claudunt sibi./Nam qui malum minatur, vt caueam monet./Scelus anteuertam scelere: nam sceleri salus/Scelus est: prematur, ne minùs cautam premat.”

Macro, thou are engaged: and what before
 Was public; no, must be thy private, more.
 The weal of Caesar, fitness did imply;
 But thine own fate confers necessity
 On thy employment: and the thoughts born nearest
 Unto ourselves, move swiftest still, and dearest.
 If he recover, thou art lost: yea, all
 The weight of preparation to his fall
 Will turn on thee, and crush thee. Therefore, strike
 Before he settle, to prevent the like
 Upon thyself. He doth his vantage know,
 That makes it home, and gives the foremost blow.⁵⁸

The sense, in both contexts, is that the language of necessity and self-preservation is being manipulated to serve ill ends. In Gwinne's *Nero* this language of necessity and survival is placed in the mouth of the play's arch-villain, Agrippina. She summons her power to accomplish the aim of murdering the emperor Claudius: "[w]oman is irate and powerful. Think that Joves' thunder and lightning are here. For wrath and power are Jove's thunder and lightning - and Woman is an even greater thing" (I.iv.472-475).⁵⁹ Narcissus recognises the power which he has unleashed in assisting Agrippina: "I have lopped a head from off this wanton Hydra, but with one cut off a new head has grown up. But not one in place of another: it does not remain a mere goat, but becomes a lion-faced, snake-tailed Chimera" (I.v.507-510).⁶⁰ In placing this rhetoric of necessity and preservation in the mouth of Agrippina, Gwinne surely confronts the problem of the ambivalent meaning of such terms. Gwinne shows that necessity and self-preservation can be skewed to justify the most heinous acts: not those merely unprofitable to the commonwealth but those in defiance of all reason and morality.

This emphasis on highlighting the harm that stems from appropriating necessity also shapes Gwinne's account of Nero's murder of Britannicus. In Nero's description of the motives that lead him to plot to poison Britannicus, he summons all the hatred he has for Britannicus, Octavia and Agrippina — a hatred which seeps out of every pore of his body and which is his true motivation for the murderous acts he will commit — and disguises this as a form of political necessity. His aim is not to remove a legitimate danger to his power, nor are the acts he ponders required to preserve the state; rather, his hatred

⁵⁸ Jonson, *Sejanus*, 4.1.81-92, 172.

⁵⁹ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. C2v. "...faemina irata, et potens./Hic esse crede fulgur et fulmen Iouis./Ira et potestas fulgur et fulmen Iouis:/Et vtroque maius foemina."

⁶⁰ Ibid., sig. C3r. "Hydrum impudicam capite mulctauit; tamen/Nouum reciso capite succreuit caput;/Nec vnum in vno: sola nec restat capra,/Sed et est Chimaera, fronte leo, caudâ draco."

masquerades as a form of necessity. Nero exclaims, referring to the approaching Agrippina, Octavia and Britannicus, “But I see him, and women I hate even worse. Let hatred defer to self-preservation” (II.vii.1055-1056).⁶¹

The language of necessity and Lipsian *prudencia mixta* is still more pronounced in Nero’s plans to murder his mother Agrippina. In act three, Poppaea urges Nero to consider removing Acte, Octavia and Agrippina from his royal retinue, and persuades the emperor that the empress should have no rival for his affections. Nero seems compelled by her arguments, but his intention to act against Agrippina is cemented by news that Agrippina plans to dethrone Nero and replace him with Plautus, who has a claim to the royal throne (III.iii. 1497-1552). Nero, now resolved to act against Agrippina, consults Burrhus and Seneca, who are patently less enthused about the justification for condemning Agrippina. Nero’s actions are clearly not “a little” unjust and based “upon extreme necessitie”, as is demonstrated in the following exchange.⁶²

NERO Are you deaf, that you hear these accusations, and do not know that she is guilty? Are you so obtuse that you deny her guilt, and punishment?
BUR. If she is guilty.
NERO What’s this? *If* she is guilty. This is Burrhus’ loyalty? I presume this is how you thank her for giving you preferment. But someone else will act.
BUR. Why doubt my faith?
NERO Because it is loyal to a traitress.
BUR. Thus you call your mother?
NERO Thus she demonstrates herself
BUR. Monstrosities are being spoken of. But every person must be given an opportunity for defending himself, even more so for a mother. ... Nevertheless, if she is convicted of the accusation, I promise her death. Let her hear these charges, let her establish her innocence or pay the forfeit. (III.iii.1536-1550)⁶³

Yet Nero has little interest in upholding the proper process of justice, dismissing Burrhus and exclaiming, “But while she lives, she does so on the condition that Nero is condemned to death” (III.iii.1551-1552).⁶⁴ Nero understands the maxim of necessity and claims to act

⁶¹ Ibid, sig. E3r. “Sed et ipsum, et ipso cerno quas odi magis./Odium saluti cedit...”.

⁶² Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Qr. I refer here to Jones’s marginal annotations (see later in this chapter).

⁶³ Gwinne, *Nero trgaedia nova*, sig. G2v. “*Nero*. Sic surdus audis crimina, & nescis ream?/Sic obstupescens scis ream, & poenam negas?/*Bur*. Si rea. *Ne*. Quid hoc est? si rea? Haec Burrhi fides?/Scilicet ab illa praeposite reddis vices./At faciet alius. *Bur*. Quid fidem dubitas meam?/*Ner*. Quia proditrici fida. *Bur*. Sic matrem vocas?/*Ner*. Sic seipsa monstrat. *Bur*. Monstra narrantur: sed est/Defensionis cuique tribuendus locus;/Matri magis:nec actor accusans adest:/Sed vna vox vnus inimicà domo/Affertur; illam (visa si fas est loqui)/Tenebrae refutant, nox vigil dapibus data./Cuncta propria temere securis: tamen/Si criminis conuicta, promitto necem./Obiecta noscet, solute, aut poenas luet.”

⁶⁴ Ibid., “*Ner*. Agite, ite, egregias innocens causas agat./At dum illa viuet, viuet vt moriens Nero.”

outside what is honest and just, as a means to survive: “Destroy her and I live; fail to destroy her and I die. Safety bids me forestall her in crime — a son’s safety, which ill accords with his mother’s” (III.vi.1872-1874).⁶⁵ He is also the master of dissembling and can, as Lipsius recommends, “*play the foxe*” by hiding his true intentions against the life of Agrippina as if her murder was required for the safety of the commonwealth.⁶⁶ While he plots her theatrical and outlandish murder, Nero feigns adoration of his mother, fawning over her as she is about to set sail on what he hopes will be her fateful journey. “Guard your safety. It is for your sake that I live and reign”, he exclaims and runs to kiss her, “O how pleasant! And a kiss on your eyes...Oh cruel kiss, how regretfully I part from you!”, but as soon as she departs he turns and exclaims: “Farewell for the last time. If this is not sufficient, farewell for ever” (III.vi.1815-1821;1836).⁶⁷ Here Gwinne suggests that Nero has mastered the Lipsian language of political expedience and has, not merely honed his skills to become a masterful politician, as Lipsius would have rulers be, but has used these skills to act in the most vicious and cruel ways.

Here Gwinne reflects upon the moral character of a politics guided by foregrounding what is required, more precisely, what is *utile*, over what is just or right. He undoes the political philosophy of thinkers like Machiavelli and Lipsius, to stress that there is little merit in a philosophy that allows men like Nero to continue to act as tyrannically as they wish. Machiavelli devotes chapter eighteen of *Il Principe* to explaining how many successful rulers “have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft.”⁶⁸ The Prince must, if required, be prepared 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”.⁶⁹ This language of prudence and discretion in determining how and when to act also shapes the fourth book of Lipsius’s *Politica* where, as Adriana McCrea has demonstrated, Lipsius confronts the proper virtues of the prince and advocates the practice of mixed prudence.⁷⁰ Lipsius confronts those who suggest the prince must always aspire to truly virtuous rule:

⁶⁵ Ibid., sig. H2v. “Si perdis illam, viuo; nisi perdis, cado./Praeoccupare scelus adhortatur salus:/Et male cohaerent matris et nati salus.”

⁶⁶ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Qr.

⁶⁷ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. H1v-H2r. “...Valeto mater, et me â causâ vale:/Cura Salutem tu tuani: causâ tuâ/Ego viuo, regno. ... Figam labellis oscula: ô quantum placent?/Et his ocellis oscula: ô quàm me iuuant!; ‘*Ner. Vale supremùm: si id parum, aeternùm vale.*”

⁶⁸ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli’s Prince*, 141.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 143.

⁷⁰ McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 16.

Surely thou art deceiued: *the forsaking of the common profit* is not onely against reason, *but likewise against nature*. We ought all to stand as it were in some sphere of the commonwealth, which when it is turned about, we ought to choose that part unto the which the profit and safetie thereof doth drive us. Doest thou beleue that any vnlawfull thing is mixed herewith? There can not be any. For *that which is commonly reputed dishonest*, for this cause will not be so. *He which regardeth the societie and benefit of men, doth alwayes that which he ought.*⁷¹

The prince, Lipsius urges, must be able to discern how there is no fixed moral quality to actions: that which may be considered dishonest or “wrong” is, if such an act is profitable to the state and prince, condonable. The prince must observe the Tacitean maxim, in that he should “*be able to intermingle that which is profitable, with that which is honest.*”⁷² Following this, the prince, therefore, must be willing to deceive and act with disregard for the laws: “the Prince in desperat matters, *should alwaias follow that which were most necessarie to be effected, not that which is honest in speech.*”⁷³ In the face of necessity “let him decline gently from the lawes” if only to preserve himself: “[f]or *necessitie which is the true defender of the weakenesse of man, doth breake all lawes.*”⁷⁴ If the reader is in any doubt as to Lipsius’s argument here, Jones, the English translator of Lipsius’s work, helpfully provides his own pithy explanation: “The Authors prince must not be unjust, but a little, and that upon extreame necessitie.”⁷⁵ Tuck asserts that it was this kind of

⁷¹ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Qr. Lipsius cites Cicero, *Pro plancio*, 93 and Cicero, *De officiis*, 3.19. The passage from *Pro plancio* reads as follows “Furthermore, if none of these considerations moves me and if my politics are the same as they have always been, will you even then affirm that I enjoy no liberty of action? – a liberty which you assume to consist in the maintenance of a relentless hostility towards those with whom he has been once at variance. But this is very far from the truth; for we should look upon political life as a wheel, and since that wheel is always turning, we should make a choice of that party to which we are directed by the interest and well-being of the state”; see Cicero, *Pro plancio* in *Cicero The Speeches* ed. and trans. N .H. Watts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 529. The passage from *De officiis* reads as follows; see Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 287: “For it often happens, owing to exceptional circumstances, that what is accustomed under ordinary circumstances to be considered morally wrong is found not to be morally wrong.”

⁷² Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Qr. Lipsius cites Tacitus’s *Agricola* 8.1 here. Savile’s version reads as follows; see Savile, *Agricola*, 241: “Vnder him Agricola cunningly conforming himselfe to that humour, and not vnlearned to ioine profitable counsailes with honest, tempered the heate of his nature, and restrained from growing his hawty desires.”

⁷³ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Rijr. Lipsius cites Quintus Curtius Rufus, 3. The passage reads as follows see Quintus Curtius Rufus, *History of Alexander* trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), Book 5 chap,1, 329 “But Darius went on to show them that in times of adversity it was not at what was splendid to tell of, but at what was of actual service, that one must aim; that wars were waged with steel, not with gold, with men, not with the buildings of cities.”

⁷⁴ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Rijr. Lipsius quotes Seneca the elder’s *Declamations. Controversiae* IX; see The Elder Seneca, *Declamations*, vol. 2, Books 7-10 trans. Michael Winterbottom (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974), 209-349.

⁷⁵ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Rijr.

“irreligious” political pragmatism which found echoes in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England, and points to the dominance of this theme in the political stance of the Essex circle, highlighting how, for some in this period, necessity triumphed over commitment to moral absolutes.⁷⁶

However, in Gwinne’s *Nero* precisely the reverse is true. This uncoupling of actions and their moral value is something Gwinne appears to take issue with, preferring to consider moral values as things absolute, inherent and unconditional, rather than contextual and dependent on circumstance. Gwinne might take some inspiration from Montaigne’s cautious approach to necessity and prudence in the *Essais*.⁷⁷ In the opening essay of the third book Montaigne discusses whether the rhetoric of necessity or utility has a place in political life. He recognises the logic that inspires men to act in the name of necessity, but warns “[t]hey are dangerous examples, rare and crased exceptions to our naturall rules”.⁷⁸ “[G]reat moderation” and “heedie circumspection” is required in subverting moral conventions.⁷⁹ Montaigne distinguishes between private or personal gain, and the public benefits which may be attained through submitting to necessity: “No priuate commoditie, may any way deserue we should offer our conscience this wrong: the common-wealth may, when it is most apparant and important”.⁸⁰ Gwinne’s attitude is similar in that he characterises Agrippina as one whose mischief represents the unlawful and unreasonable use of the rhetoric of necessity.

Furthermore, Gwinne seems to recognise that there is little discernible difference between the prudent ruler and the tyrant. In this sentiment, Gwinne alludes to an idea which early Stuart critics of Lipsian inspired politicking would make explicit. McCrea has drawn attention to Sir Walter Raleigh’s uneasy relationship with Lipsius’s political thought, and she underscores how, for a time, he stood opposed to the Lipsian Tacitism of

⁷⁶ Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 104-108.

⁷⁷ For a discussion of Montaigne’s relationship with Machiavellian prudence, see Francis Goyet, “Montaigne and the Notion of Prudence,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne* ed. Ullrich Langer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122-127, where it is suggested that Montaigne seeks a balance between principles of honesty and utility. There is much merit in Collins’s rebuttal of Skinner’s assertion that Montaigne subscribes to reason of state philosophy in Robert J. Collins “Montaigne’s Rejection of Reason of State in ‘De l’Utile et de l’honneste,’” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 32, no. 1 (1992): 71-94, as although it is evident Montaigne resigns himself to accept necessity’s place in contemporary politics it is not clear that Montaigne himself considers this a good thing.

⁷⁸ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 481.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Prince Henry's circle.⁸¹ In particular, she highlights Raleigh's criticism of *prudencia mixta*, and his view that, by making the moral value of political actions dependent upon the context in which they are performed, Lipsius, and Lipsian inspired writers, were only one step away from breeding tyrants. In short, McCrea asserts, Raleigh "stressed the moral factor in politics", and countered a theory of politics that characterised "the realm of statecraft as one conditioned by criteria unique to itself."⁸² McCrea recognises that for Raleigh this attitude towards political behaviour "opened the gate for injustices to be done" as is clear in his *Maxims of State*.⁸³ Raleigh argues that the "*sophistical or subtile tyrant*" will "make shew of a good King, by observing a temper, and mediocritie in his Government", and is a "cunning Politian, or a Machiavilian" who will "pretend care of the Common-wealth; And to that end, to seem loath to exact Tributes, and other Charges; and yet to make necessity of it, where none is".⁸⁴ The same theme is conveyed in *Claudius Tiberius Nero* of 1607, where Tiberius uses the excuse of necessity to vent his wrath against those around him. When Germanicus, a more popular rival to Tiberius, receives the decree that he should be sent from Rome to serve in the East (an act which is a pretext for his murder) Piso, who is under orders to kill Germanicus, reveals, in an aside, Tiberius's true interest: "There's no resisting of necessitie".⁸⁵ Germanicus fully realises his impending fate and sardonically replies, "Yet gentle Piso, suffer me to greive,/If at nought else, yet at necessitie,/Too strickt for ouertoyle Germanicus".⁸⁶

Where Savile verged on sanctioning some form of mixed prudence, this philosophy has no place in Gwinne's conception of the stable and secure state. Gwinne's vision of the state is highly orthodox and centres on an understanding of virtue and power which refuses the legitimacy of reason of state and utility. In the second act an equestrian outlines a vision of the harmonious state and the role of the Emperor: "An emperor is life, power, and

⁸¹ McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 56-59.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Walter Raleigh, *Maxims of State written by Sir Walter Raleigh; Whereunto is Added his Instructions to his Sonne, and The son's Advice to his Aged Father* (London: W. Bentley, 1650), Wing R174, 46-47. McCrea also cites the same passage from Raleigh's *Maxims*; see McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 57.

⁸⁵ Anon., *The statelie tragedie of Claudius Tiberius Nero, Romes greatest tyrant truly represented out of the purest records of those times* (London: for Francis Burton, 1607), STC 24063a, sig. F1v.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Iclal Cetin has misread the playwright's presentation of Tiberius as a tyrant by interpreting the work as a subversive attack on James I's conception of sovereignty. Cetin suggests the playwright uses Neo-Stoic Tacitean language that James rejected to show how an absolute ruler was no different to a tyrant; see Iclal Cetin, "Tyrant, Thy Name is King: *The Tragedy of Tiberius* and Neo-Stoic Taciteanism," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 15, no. 1 (2009-10), <URL: <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/15-1/tibetrag.htm>>, [accessed April 21, 2015].

virtue to his subjects: virtue flows from his mind, power from his hand, life from all his parts. The body's health depends on the disposition of the head" (II.ii. 682-684).⁸⁷ Gwinne emphasises that the ideal sovereign has both the responsibility to be virtuous, and the responsibility to establish what it means to be virtuous. As the dialogue between the equestrians develops, Gwinne provides a clearer picture of how virtue is defined. The fourth equestrian equates virtue with feats which "garner honors" and implies that military ability is the mark of virtue by pointing to Augustus and Pompey as examples of virtuous men who "waged war as consuls" in spite of their youth (II.ii.697-699).⁸⁸ The third equestrian chastises the second for having made the suggestion that the influence of Seneca, Burrhus and Agrippina will provide a guide for the young Nero, and he points to the dubiety of Nero's succession (II.ii.701-708). "Reigns begotten of crime are freighted down by crime", he warns, and points to Silanus as a better successor to Claudius for he is "a grown man, innocent, distinguished, and a great-grandson of Augustus" (II.ii.709-711).⁸⁹ From this exchange there emerges a picture of a state guided by a virtuous and fair-handed ruler of sound reputation and ancestry. This is a model of sovereignty which undoes Machiavelli's challenge to the idea that a prince needs to "cultivate the full range of Christian as well as moral virtues".⁹⁰ Where Machiavelli counsels that the goals of "honour, glory and fame" can be achieved without behaving in a "conventionally virtuous way", Gwinne insists that the moral and Christian virtues, like justice and honesty, are axiomatic to the stability of the state, and to the honour of the sovereign.⁹¹ He confirms this in the epilogue to *Nero*, where he celebrates the multitude of virtues Elizabeth bestows on her subjects:

You can scarce tell whether she loves her subjects the more, or is more wellbeloved to them; whether she is greater by virtue of her position, or the better by the disposition of her virtue; whether she favors upright and loyal courtiers, or whether she creates them thus.... Her reputation, deeds, and

⁸⁷ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. D2r. "Est Imperator vita, vis, virtus suis:/Ex mente virtus, vis manu; vita vndique./Ex capitis habitu corporis pendet salus."

⁸⁸ Ibid., "Augustus annos bis nouem natus, minor/Pompeius anno, Consules bellum gerunt./Virtus honores ferre, non aetas, solet."

⁸⁹ Ibid., "Sunt grauida scelere regna, quae peperit scelus./Meliusque Iunius sceptrum Syllanus geret/Vir adultus, insons, clarus, Augusti abnepos."

⁹⁰ Skinner, *Foundations*, vol. 1, 131.

⁹¹ Ibid.

destiny are so disparate that nothing can be more different as our English goddess from Nero...⁹² (Epilogue. 5001-5009)

Moreover, Gwinne's ideal state is one that is harmonious and one where the deeds of the sovereign are intimately bound to the fortune of his subjects. This depiction of the polity as a corporeal entity stresses the centrality of the sovereign in giving life to the body's constituent parts. It is thus clear that Gwinne's attitude towards political engagement is, in essence, highly orthodox.

Gwinne's target here is not merely the ruler but the would-be ruler. Gwinne's immediate focus here must surely be the Earl of Essex and his circle, who had harnessed this language of necessity and who had honed the arts of prudence as a means to justify and disguise their proposed rebellion. The fact that Gwinne seeks to undermine this Essexian approach to politics is obvious if we explore how the philosophy found in Gwinne's *Nero* compares with that found in Hayward's *Henrie IIII*. In Hayward's history, Bolingbroke is largely considered (as he was by contemporaries) to be a figuration of Essex, as all those qualities for which Bolingbroke was praised mirror those, for which Essex was commended.⁹³ As revealed in the exchange between Bolingbroke and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Bolingbroke is particularly well versed in the rhetoric of necessity, and understands how a little deception can help secure a man's political security. Bolingbroke explains to the Archbishop that he is sympathetic to the grievances men have against the king, and recognises the unlawfulness of the action he would take in leading the rebels against Richard. The act of rebellion, he explains, cannot be described in terms of "easinesse or of lawfulness", because it is an act which "necessity doth enforce".⁹⁴ The power of necessity is unlimited: "Necessitie will beate thorow brazen walles, and can be limited by no lawes".⁹⁵ Bolingbroke, preparing to conspire to raise an army of followers to rebel against Richard, recognises that the rebels must proceed with caution and use "both secrecie and celerite" to prepare their assault.⁹⁶ Gwinne's approach to political behaviour

⁹² Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig.T3r. "...vix scias magis an suos/Amet, an ametur à suis; maior loco,/An melior animo,; faciat, an foveat magis/Probes, fideles aulicos:Patres suis/Magis an sequatur: an praeat; illi parem/Laudem an poeta fingat, an Princeps ferat./Tam fama, facta, fata, disparia,vt magis/Nihilesse possit, quàm Anglica Neroni Dea,..".

⁹³ Although Richard Tuck correctly points out that Hayward does present a balanced interpretation of Bolingbroke's rebellion; see Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, 106-107.

⁹⁴ John Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII* in *The First and Second Parts of John Hayward's The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII* ed. John J. Manning, Camden Fourth Series, vol. 42, (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1991), 117.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

stands in complete contrast to this, as is seen in his *Nero*, where those who behave like Bolingbroke are villains who embark upon a path of destruction.

Resistance and political change

Gwinne's attitude towards rebellion is unequivocal in that he does not sanction any form of resistance against a sovereign. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, Gwinne presents rebellion as an unlawful and unnecessary act, by adopting the traditional rhetoric of obedience which stressed that tyrants, however bad, ought to be obeyed, and that God would provide just remedy for the ills suffered by the tyrant's subjects. Gwinne's play, as Buckley has remarked, acts as a "firm rebuttal to the monarchomachal theory circulating on the continent" since Gwinne reaffirms the sanctity of monarchy and of the monarch's place within the cosmos.⁹⁷ Secondly, the theme of innovation and the damage caused by political intervention also recurs in Gwinne's handling of the rebellion faced by Nero, as Gwinne discourages individuals from taking action likely to cause chaos. He presents the rebels themselves as individuals who are easily beguiled by novelties and easily won over by the prospect of gaining political power. The behaviour and mentality of the rebels differs entirely from the behaviour and mentality that Gwinne recommends those perturbed by political life should perform and possess.

When confronting the resistance to Nero, Gwinne is not hesitant in condemning those who attempt to unseat an emperor. In act two, Agrippina, having realised that her influence will be stifled by the young emperor, begins to plot against her own son. In scene four, she recognises that she can no longer gain power over Nero through dissembling. She declares that "[n]othing is left of my deception, and nothing is sufficient" (II.iv.844), and while Pallas counsels her that she "must forgive a young man much, a prince everything", (II.iv.843) she insists that she must strike against Nero in order to prevent the throne passing to Acte.⁹⁸ Pallas urges caution, suggesting that Fortune grants no woman the rights to imperial gifts (II.iv.893), yet Agrippina continues to vie with Fortune by claiming that her own "[i]ndustry, wrath, worth, favor, and cunning will gain them" (II.iv.894).⁹⁹ In the following scene Seneca and Burrhus advise Nero to fear Agrippina's ambition and Nero

⁹⁷ Buckley, "Matthew Gwinne's *Nero* (1603)," 26.

⁹⁸ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. D4r. "*Agrippa*. Nihil est relictum fraudis; & nihil est satis"; "*Pallas*. ...Nonnulla iuueni, Principi ignosce omnia".

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. E1r. "*Pallas*. Fortuna vires faeminae tantas negat./*Agrippina*. Labor, ira, pretium, gratia, ingenium, ferent."

responds to such counsel by removing Pallas from his role as Agrippina's chief favourite. This hardens Agrippina's resolve to provoke Nero's fall and she moves to align herself with Britannicus's supporters and exclaims that she will reveal Nero's involvement in Claudius's death (II.v.961-988). In the second chorus Alecto passes judgment on Agrippina's attempt to undermine Nero's rule:

...A ruler, whether good or bad, is sent us by Jove. The bad is sent for chastisement, the good as a reward. Our Father's right hand is good, his left bad. Praise him if good, tolerate him if bad. For both the good and the bad are under God's special protection. Jupiter tolerates no scheming against the good, for he defends him who is like himself. Nor does he aid us against the bad, for revenge belongs to Jove, not to mankind....¹⁰⁰ (II.Chorus 2.1241-1248)

As the words of Alecto explain, even a bad ruler must be tolerated because man cannot pass judgement on a ruler. Here, Gwinne undermines the resistance theorists of the era by asserting that a king's power is inviolable. Gwinne's attitude towards the sanctity of monarchy is highly conventional, as he suggests that the only judge of a ruler is God, and that subjects who claim to act as adjudicators are merely rebels. The Pauline injunction (Romans 13:2) — "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God" — was often cited in defence of kingship against the avenging hand of a resister. Mark Goldie has stated that the fact that Paul wrote under the rule of Nero did not pass without remark, as is the case in the *Homilie Against Wylful Disobedience*.¹⁰¹ The homily warns subjects that "[t]he heart of the prince is in Gods hande", that sinful subjects are rewarded with an evil prince and that "to rebel against hym, were double and treble evyll".¹⁰² Dutiful subjects are ordered to "patiently suffer and obey suche as we deserve", for St Paul turned only to prayers and intercessions in order live a peaceable life.

This is Saint Paules counsel. And who I pray you was prince over the moste part of Christians, when Gods holye spirite by saint Paules pen gave them this lesson?

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., sig. F2r. "...*Princeps, seu bonus est, seu malus, à Iove:/In paenam malus est, in pretium bonus:/Patris dextra bonus, laeva manus malus./Ornes, si bonus est; sin malus est, feras./Curae sunt superis, et bonus, et malus./Non fert insidias Iupiter in bonum;/Defendit similem; nec iuuat in malum:/Nam non est hominum, sed Iouis ultio.*"

¹⁰¹ Mark Goldie, "Absolutism," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 287.

¹⁰² Anon., *The Homily Against Wylful Disobedience* in John Jewel, *The second tome of homilees* (London: Richard Jugge and John Cawood, 1571), STC 13669, 555.

Forsoothe, Caligula, Clodius or Nero? Who were not onely no Christians, but Pagans, and also eyther foolishe rulers, or most cruel tyrantes...¹⁰³

In his *Obedience of a Christen Man* William Tyndale devotes his chapter on the obedience of the subject to an extended exposition of Romans 13:1-2 in which he outlines that reverence is owed to the tyrant because even the tyrannical form part of a divinely ordered plan.¹⁰⁴ Gwinne's message of non-resistance, moreover, would no doubt provide comfort to James I who, in the *Trewe Law of Free Monarchies*, stressed that obedience, even to a ruler like Nero, is owed.

And vnder the Euangel, that king, whom *Paul* bids the *Romanes* obey and serue for conscience sake, was *Nero* that bloody tyrant, an infamie to his aage [sic], a monster to the world, being also an idolatrous persecuter, as the King of *Babel* was.¹⁰⁵

James continues by explaining that even where a tyrant wears the crown, God's "Spirit" is undeterred in commanding "his people vnder all highest paine to giue them [the ruler] all due and heartie obedience for conscience sake".¹⁰⁶ Where Gwinne asserts that the "good" ruler is sent for a "reward" and the "bad" for "chastisement", and that both must be duly tolerated, James similarly notes that subjects are given the ruler they deserve, and that no human revenge can be meted out against a tyrant.

...a wicked king is sent by God for a curse to his people, and a plague for their sinnes: but that it is lawfull to them to shake off that curse at their owne hand, which God hath laid on them, that I deny, and may so do iustly. Will any deny that the king of *Babel* was a curse to the people of God, as was plainly fore-spoken and and threatened vnto them in the prophecie of theircaptiuitie? And what was *Nero* to the Christian Church in his time? And yet *Ieremy* and *Paul* (as yee haue else heard) commanded them not onely to obey them, but heartily to pray for their welfare.¹⁰⁷

Gwinne's approach to resistance is equally conservative as he urges obedience to a divinely ordained ruler whether his rule is good or evil.

Gwinne not only stresses obedience as the necessary response to a ruler on the grounds of the sanctity of monarchy, but also points to the idea that man ought to submit to

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ William Tyndale, *The obedience of a Christen man...* (Antwerp: J. Hoochstraten, 1528), STC 24446, fo. Xxixr-fo.xlvii j.

¹⁰⁵ King James I, *Trewe Law of Free Monarchies*, in James I, *The Political Works of James I*, 60-61.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 67.

divine providence more broadly and not attempt to forestall the plans of God. As is seen in the discussion of Alecto's second chorus above, Gwinne adheres to the belief that there is an order and design to all things. The ruler, whether good or bad, forms a central plank in the structure of the state and of the universe, and to remove this is, Gwinne implies, to undo the work of the divine. In the concluding chorus delivered by the three furies together, Gwinne uses anaphora and epistrophe to underscore the idea that God's will works through all things:

ALECTO Behold; great things have been stricken down by great catastrophes, oppressed by the god.

MEGAERA Behold, the prince, has been rendered destitute, deserted by the god.

TISIPHONE Behold, his subjects have been avenged, by the avenging god.

AL. Hence great things are achieved by great powers. But may they acknowledge greater gods.

MEG. Hence princes are to be esteemed. But may they worship the reverend gods.

TIS. Hence subjects are to be freed. But may they pray for help from the gods.

AL. Thus great things will endure, if they are supported by the great god.

MEG. Thus princes will be defended, if they are defended by the god.

TIS. Thus subjects will be protected, if they are protected by the god.¹⁰⁸

(Chorus 5.4975-4992)

The point here is that Gwinne stresses that it is God to whom subjects must turn for their protection, and it is God who will avenge those who attempt to work against his will. The attitude here is typical of the literature on obedience from this period as the same sentiment is conveyed again by James I, who urges subjects that they cannot reverse divine ordinance. James claims that to practice "patience and humilitie" is the only resort for the subject for "he that hath the only power to make him, hath the onely power to vnmake him".¹⁰⁹ It is evident that Gwinne endorses what we are told was the commonly accepted view of human existence, since, in pointing to the divine basis for human affairs, he appears to accept the idea of a "great chain of being".¹¹⁰ The chorus concluding his play affirms the "unfaltering order" and "ultimate unity" of "God's creation" and underscores

¹⁰⁸ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. T2v. "Alecto. *En magna magnis cladibus/Plecti, premente numine./Megaera. En destitutum principem/Ex deserente numine./Tisiphone. En vindicatos subditos/A vindicante numine./Al. Hinc magna, magnus viribus/Maiora noscant numina./Me. Hinc diligendi principes/Colant veranda numina./Tis. Hinc liberandi subditi/Opem precentur numina./Al. Sic magna stabunt, maximo/Si fulciantur numini./Me. Sic munientur principes,/Si muniantur numini./Ti. Sic protegentur subditi/Si protegantur numini."*

¹⁰⁹ James I, *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, 57.

¹¹⁰ E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Penguin, 1990), 23.

the idea that even tyrants form a part of this divine plan. Men might be deceived into believing that the removal of what they perceive to be a particularly harmful aspect of this creation is beneficial, but, in fact, the removal of even one element of this creation causes irreparable harm.

There is more to Gwinne's vision of the universe, however. His aim is, arguably, to undermine the Tacitist vision of the universe, a vision where man has the potential to control fate and providence through the power of his human agency. Gwinne's chorus at the close of act two challenges the vision of the Tacitist cosmos. As has been explored above, Gwinne attempts to devalue the currency of a Machiavellian form of Tacitism by placing the rhetoric of Fortune, necessity and *prudential mixta* in the mouths of the play's most villainous characters. The choruses and commentaries spoken by ghosts and furies further undermine the "Machiavellian" Tacitist world-view by stressing that, contrary to the teaching of Machiavelli, no man can place himself beyond the reach of the divine. Where, in the twenty-fifth chapter of *Il Principe* Machiavelli points out that man can determine his own destiny, and urges man to out-master Fortune, Gwinne denies man such a role. Gwinne's apportioning of the action of the play reaffirms the divine cosmos by having all the action of the earthly realm take place within the larger schema of the divine. Characters like Agrippina may believe they are masters of their own destiny and consider themselves able, through overmastering Fortune, to topple kings from their thrones and ascend the ladder of power, yet ultimately they remain mere mortals controlled by the unseen hand of the divine.

As Peter Stacey has demonstrated, Machiavelli principally targeted the vision of princely virtue articulated by Seneca in *De Clementia* and part of this challenge constituted an unravelling of stoic cosmology.¹¹¹ Christopher Brooke has recently summarised Stacey's analysis of Machiavelli's treatment of Fortune, in which Stacey claims that Machiavelli considers man's submission to Fortune a form of servitude.¹¹² As Brooke explains, Stacey's analysis of the relationship between Machiavelli's political thought and stoic metaphysics highlights how Machiavelli sought to liberate men from the captivity imposed by stoic submission to Fortune:

When it comes to political psychology, writes Stacey, 'For Machiavelli, the Senecan view of *Fortuna* so widely endorsed is the height of imprudence, a

¹¹¹ Peter Stacey, "The Machiavellian Attack," part 5 in *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). I am more reliant on the discussion of Stacey's work in "Justus Lipsius and the Post-Machiavellian Prince," chap.1 in Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*.

¹¹² Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*, 24.

psychological debility inextricably caught up in the doctrine of princely servitude', the error being 'one of counting so heavily upon a benign rationality that you effectively commit yourself to a slavish dependency upon an illusory master', an attitude that 'threatens to make you dependent on all others in a very literal sense'.¹¹³

In short, Machiavelli turns the Senecan principle of constancy and acceptance of fortune on its head by presenting submission to Fortune as a form of captivity.

Gwinne, on the other hand, rejects this manipulation of the relationship between fortune and constancy. He seems more sympathetic to the vision of the universe found in Lipsius's *De constantia*, in spite of the fact that he is discernibly less comfortable, as has been discussed, with the other aspects of Lipsian philosophy, most notably the politics of prudence. Lipsius counters Machiavelli's argument by reasserting the role of providence or fate, whilst also accepting the Machiavellian maxim of prudence. As Brooke suggests, he combines "a partial appropriation of Machiavellian political theory" within a providential framework inspired by Seneca but wholly informed with reference to the omniscience of God's will.¹¹⁴ In *De constantia* Lipsius urges Lipsius that individuals must accept that public evils are imposed by God.¹¹⁵ Man possesses no power to alter the destiny which awaits him, nor is it beneficial to bemoan the fate when it comes:

Neither is this weeping of thine, vaine onely, but also wicked and vngodlie, if it be rightly considered. For you knowe well that there is an eternall Spirite, whome wee call GOD, which ruleth, guideth and gouerneth the rolling Spheares of heauen, the manifolde courses of the Stars and Planets, the succesiu [sic] alterations of the Elements, finally al things whatsoeuer in heauen and earth.¹¹⁶

Man can only accept providence and acknowledge its existence, without ever fully understanding the workings of the universe, but in this acceptance and acknowledgment man possesses great wisdom and liberty.

So let vs in this our war-fare followe chearfully and with courage whithersoever our generall calleth vs. *Wee are hereunto adiured by oath* (saith Seneca) *euen to*

¹¹³ Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*, 283, cited in Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*, 24. The passage has been paraphrased by Brooke. In full it reads "For Machiavelli, the Senecan view of *Fortuna* so widely endorsed is the height of imprudence, a psychological debility inextricably caught up in the doctrine of princely servitude. As Machiavelli points out, the error is one of counting so heavily upon a benign rationality that you effectively commit yourself to a slavish dependency upon an illusory master".

¹¹⁴ Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*, 27.

¹¹⁵ Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie. Written in Latine by Iustus Lipsius...* trans. John Stradling (London: Richard Jones, 1594), STC, 15694.7, sig. E3v- Fr.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. E4v.

*endure mortalitie, not to be troubled with those things which it is not in our power to auoide. Wee are borne in a kingdome, and to obey God is libertie.*¹¹⁷

Lipsius insists that man achieves wisdom and some form of comfort from the quiet acceptance of divine providence. Man loses his attachment to worldly misfortune if he accepts that even misfortune forms part of a divinely ordained plan. Gwinne, likewise, stresses this idea, as will be discussed in more detail in the following section, by pointing to the way in which the gods direct the action of the play and are, unseen by those except the wise, pulling the strings behind the scenes. The closing chorus, explored above, illustrates this conception of the cosmos, but throughout the play there are reminders that it is the gods who remain in control, with the mortals powerless to resist their fate. In the opening scene, for example, even Claudius, who seems to defy the wishes of the divine, acknowledges the likely fate that awaits his wife Agrippina. By pointing out that “this marriage of mine will not go unpunished” (I.iii.438-439), Claudius placates Britannicus who is angered by the marriage and by Nero’s adoption.¹¹⁸ He urges Britannicus to “[s]uffer this harsh step-mother, for [t]he gods have given me a destiny of tolerating my wives’ sins, and then of punishing them” (I.iii.443-444).¹¹⁹ Claudius’s remarks are prescient as Agrippina quickly embarks on a path which leads to her destruction. At the close of this act, in true Machiavellian fashion, Agrippina celebrates her power to overcome her destiny and exclaims: “She dared no crime, she suffered one; I have suffered none, because I am daring. Fortune afflicted the timid one, lifted up the bold” (I.v.597-598).¹²⁰ However, Tisiphone has the last word in declaring that “[p]unishment comes slowly but surely on her limping foot, the irrepressible avenger oppresses the sinner from behind” (Chorus I.629-631).¹²¹ Gwinne suggests that Agrippina’s self-assurance is misguided and the balance will be restored in favour of the divine. As Buckley has noted, “a just God frames the drama” but there is little evidence of godliness in the drama itself.¹²² Gwinne adapts the Senecan dramatic method by forcing the divine chorus to peer into the action of the play and pass judgement. This hierarchy forces the audience to view

¹¹⁷ Ibid., sig. F2r.

¹¹⁸ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. C2r. “Sit impudicum; impune coniugium mihi/Non erit”.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., “Mihi Dij dedere, coniugum vt primo feram/Flagitia, deinde puniam.”

¹²⁰ Ibid., sig. C4v. “Non ausa scelus, est passa; non passa, audio./Fortuna timidam afflixit, audentem extulit.”

¹²¹ Ibid., sig. Dr. “Sera sed certa est pede Poena claudo./Vltor à tergo premit irrepressus”.

¹²² Buckley, “Matthew Gwinne’s *Nero* (1603),” 26.

the action from “a providential perspective” and pass judgement on Nero’s Rome from the same vantage point of the gods.¹²³

In reasserting the idea that no man can stand as master of himself and attempt to influence his political fate, Gwinne seems to be engaging in an attempt to undermine much of the Machiavellian style of rhetoric associated with the Earl of Essex’s circle. As Alexandra Gajda indicates, the language of *occasione* and *fortuna* pervaded the Essex circle’s treatment of Elizabethan politics, particularly their attitude towards war with Spain.¹²⁴ In late 1596, the time seemed ripe for an English assault against Spain given that Philip II was facing a succession of financial problems, and Essex seized on this moment as one of hope, urging that “The opportunitie must be watched”.¹²⁵ Essex was equally attracted to the idea that his fortune rested in his own hands, as his response to Egerton’s letter of 1598, discussed in the first chapter, demonstrates. The Earl claims to remain a loyal servant to his country but possesses an unrealistic sense of his own power. He rebuts Egerton’s suggestion that he should learn from Seneca’s teaching and submit to fortune.

SENECA saith, we must give place unto fortune. I know, that fortune is both blind and strong, and therefore I go as far out her way as I can. You say, the remedy is not to strive. I neither strive nor seek for remedy.¹²⁶

Those around Essex, like Essex himself, it would appear, recognised that they had a capacity to bend fortune to their will. For example, in Hayward’s depiction of Henry IV, we again encounter the idea that men are able to harness the power of fortune for political gain. Bolingbroke, at this stage titled the Duke of Hereford, knows that his success or failure lies with riding with, or against, Fortune. Bolingbroke, seeing the following he had achieved in his mission against Richard, capitalises on his fortune and resolves to act without delay:

The Duke, finding this favour not onley to exceed his expectation, but even above his wish, he thought it best to followe the current whilst the streame was most strong, knowing right well that if fortune be followed, as the first doe fall out, the rest will commonly succede.¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 74.

¹²⁵ Ibid; “Earl of Essex to the Council,” 13 June 1596, S.P 12/259/12, f.30r T.N.A., *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Gale Document Number: MC430448093 also cited in Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 74.

¹²⁶ “Earl of Essex to Thomas Egerton,” 18th October 1598 in *Memoirs of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, 386-388, 387.

¹²⁷ Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, 119.

As Louis Montrose summarises, Hayward’s history “embraced an understanding of history and politics as processes shaped by the interaction of strumpet Fortune with the will and intellect of the individual human agent.”¹²⁸ It was this type of understanding of human endeavour that became associated with the Earl of Essex. As shown in Chapter One, the Earl was counselled, it seems, from all sides about the need to temper his behaviour and recognise what fortune had in store. Gwinne, arguably, adds his voice to this counsel and seems to reflect on the way in which a Machiavellian outlook had inspired Essex to think of himself as possessing a power capable of altering the preordained. Gwinne implies that this was a misguided assumption and the Earl’s subsequent rebellion was duly punished.

Gwinne handles the Pisonian conspiracy with obvious disdain by presenting resistance as the act of ambitious and misguided individuals. From the start it appears that the resisters possess little virtue, and Gwinne implies that their aims in opposing Nero are less than honourable. Compared with the *Tragedy of Nero*, Gwinne’s *Nero* devotes less time to exploring the motivations of those opposed to Nero, and the audience only encounters the malcontents in act five of the play. Rufus is the first to broach the issue of what type of response is most appropriate in times of public difficulty. He turns to Seneca for guidance: “How long, Seneca, should we be patient about controlling our fate? We complain: should we devote ourselves to our studies? Invent pious prayers? Ask the heavens for better things? Or do nothing?” (V.Pt.i.iii.3465-3467).¹²⁹ Gwinne absolves Seneca of any part in the conspiracy against Nero by making Seneca’s relationship to the political machinations of the conspirators clear. Seneca responds to Rufus by encouraging him to forget “private misfortunes” and by claiming “I would gladly suffer wrong, but I would not gladly do it” (V.Pt.i.iii.3485;3490).¹³⁰ Flavius approves of Seneca’s attitude and considers him a worthy replacement for Nero, but Seneca refuses, arguing that Nero is evil but an evil which must be tolerated (V.Pt.i.iii.3501). The pair of conspirators finally settle on Piso as the proposed head of their conspiracy, but in their nomination of Piso, Gwinne undermines the merit of their endeavour by drawing attention to Tacitus’s comments on Piso’s suitability to rule. In the *Annals* (15.48), Tacitus describes Piso’s honourable lineage yet notes that Piso had little “grautie in behaiour” or “moderation in pleasures”, and that

¹²⁸ Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 69.

¹²⁹ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. O1r-O1v. “*Fe. Rufus. Quousque Seneca patimur ad agendum fati?/Querimur, studemus?vota meditatur pia?/Meliora coelos poscimus?at agimus nihil?*”.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, sig. O1v. “*Rufe, quid tantum mala/Privata quereris?*”; “*Patiar lubenter, non lubens faciam scelus.*”

those around him permitted his behaviour, “thinking it not necessarie, that in so great sweetnes of vices, he, who was destined to highest rule, should be streight-laced or ouer seuer”.¹³¹ The effect of Tacitus’s narrative is, as E. E. Keitel argues in her study of the death narrative in the Neronian Annals, to underscore the similarity between Piso and Nero: “He [Piso] is an adroit manipulator of appearances but lacks any real substance” and “resembles the *princeps* in his lack of seriousness and his prodigality”.¹³² In appropriating the substance of Tacitus’s text in his description of Piso, Gwinne achieves the same effect by drawing out the similarity between Nero and Piso. Furthermore, in the process, he diminishes the rebellion itself. Gwinne distorts the narrative of the initial plotting by the conspirators by introducing a rumour (attributed to Flavius), which Tacitus records as having circulated after the conspiracy’s discovery, (*Ann.* 15.65), in which Flavius mocks the character of Piso.¹³³ Flavius considers Piso’s merits in a sarcastic tone: “An fine heir! How little it matters to an honest man if a zither-player is removed from this place of shame, so that a tragic actor may rule the stage as his successor! He is approved by no virtue, save for a certain appearance” (V.Pt.i.iii.3513-3515).¹³⁴ Gwinne not only undermines the character of Piso, as Tacitus does, but also insinuates that the conspirators themselves are disingenuous as they ridicule Piso yet are willing to use him as a figure-head for the rebellion with the future intention of disowning him and replacing him with Seneca. The impression Gwinne gives of the conspirators is that they are no less ruthless and manipulative than those they oppose.

Moreover, Gwinne suggests there is nothing virtuous about the rebels and their motives. Natalis recounts the motives of the men participating in the conspiracy: “some by reproaches and injuries they have received, some by love of revolution, some by fear, some because they have gone through their fortunes, some by hope of better days, others because

¹³¹ Grenewey, *Annales*, 237. For a more recent translation of this passage that captures Tacitus’s disapproval; see Tacitus, *The Annals* with an English translation by John Jackson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), Books XIII-XVI, (15.48), 289 He “gave full scope to frivolity, to ostentation, and at times to debauchery — a trait which was approved by that majority of men, who, in view of the manifold allurements of vice, desire no strictness or marked austerity in the head of the state”.

¹³² E. E. Keitel, “‘Is dying so very terrible?’ The Neronian Annals,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, 133-134. For quotations, 133.

¹³³ Grenewey, *Annales*, 243. Grenewey’s version reads: “The report was, that *Subrius Flavius*, with the Centurions in secret counsel, yet not without *Senecaes* priuitie, had determined, that after *Nero* should haue been slaine by the help of *Piso*, *Piso* should also haue been slaine; and the Empire deliuered *Seneca*, as one iust and vpright, chosen to that high authoritie only for the excellencies of his vertues: yea, and *Flavius* owne words were published to be these. “It skilleth not for the shame of the matter, if a minstrell be remoued, and an actor in a tragedie succede him: for as *Nero* had sung with the instrument, so *Piso* in tragicall attire.”

¹³⁴ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. O2r. “*Subr.Fla.* Egregius haeres: quàm nihil probro refert/Citharaedus vt subinde moueatur loco,/Trageodus et successor in scena regat?/Quem nulla virtus, aliqua si species, probat;Luxus, voluptas in scelea pronum ferent.”

Piso seems a good, substantial and decent man, and all by hatred of Nero” (V. Pt i.iii.3532-3536).¹³⁵ When Piso hopes to rally the disparate group together in the name of action against Nero, he touches on the beliefs they have in common: “See, as far as you and I are concerned good and evil are the same –and come from the same source. As befits friends, we like and dislike the same things. On the one hand good-will, power, reputation, freedom, and wealth offer themselves. On the other hand, poverty, judgment, death, and dread. These words speak for themselves, and the latter ones are terrifying” (V.Pt i.iii.3546-3552).¹³⁶ In this, Gwinne expresses the idea that those who oppose Nero are motivated not by any honourable aim, but by worldly gain. These individuals are, Gwinne implies, motivated by the *adiaphora* of the earthly realm and, in this, they are misled about the proper course of action. This suggestion is evidenced by the close parallel between the catalogue of benefits and evils, which Gwinne places in the mouth of Piso, and Lipsius’s list, in *De constantia*, of those things which distract a man from constancy. Languis urges the young Lipsius that there are two clusters of things which prevent man from attaining constancy: “FALSE GOODS, and FALSE EVILS”.¹³⁷ He defines these: “In the firste ranke I place Riches, Honour, Authoritie, Health, long life. In the second, Pouertie, Infamie, lacke of promotion, Sicknesse, death.”¹³⁸ Languis advises that false goods inflate man’s opinion of his worth and give him false ideals and false evils — public evils in particular, create a source of disquiet amongst men.¹³⁹ Clearly Gwinne fosters the notion that Piso’s men are drawn to action by false goods and act against false evils, and thus they possess little true virtue or liberty, for such false lights, as Languis counsels Lipsius, “do hurt and distemper the mind” and “doe bring it out of al order”.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, Gwinne suggests that the rebels falsly profess their loyalty and sorrow for their country since Piso reveals his true intentions in wishing for “popularity with the soldiers and citizens”

¹³⁵ Ibid., “Sua probra quosdam, iniuriae quosdam suae,/Quosdam nouarum rerum amor, quosdam metus./Fortuna quosdam exesa, quosdam spes rei/Melioris; aliquos Piso bonus, amplius, decens;/Omnes Neronis odia...”.

¹³⁶ Ibid., sig. O2v. “*C.Piso*. Non est quod addam de fide vestrá viri/Fortes, fideles: bona, mala, en vobis, mihi/Eadem, ab eodem: quod decet amicos, idem/Nolumus, idemque volumus; hinc sese offerunt/Gratia, potestas, fama, libertas, opes:/Illinc egestas, iudicia, mortes, metus./Quàm verba, suadent illa, & haec terrent magnis.”

¹³⁷ Lipsius, *Two Bookes*, sig. C4r.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., sig. C4v.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., sig. C4r.

(V.Pt.i.iii.3589-3592).¹⁴¹ These men, as Languis suggests to Lipsius in *De constantia*, feign sorrow for their country in order to seek personal advantage.¹⁴²

In his presentation of the Pisonian conspiracy Gwinne points to the skewed sense of authority the rebels possess. He draws attention to their misguided belief that their act of rebellion constitutes an act of service to the nation. In the dialogue with Seneca early in the fifth act, Rufus urges that the rebels “must be daring” and exclaims “[I]et something be done” (V.Pt.i.iii.3494-3496).¹⁴³ As the conspirators meet to persuade Piso to lead their cause, their sense of urgency is evident as Asper’s instructions to Natalis reveal: “Let him [Piso] make his preparations quickly, let him cast aside delays. It would harm him to put it off – does he hesitate? The work is afoot, there is need for action. But perhaps he broods, puts off the day, hesitates. He is betraying and destroying his followers. Speed is a good, delay an evil. He must banish delay”. (V.Pt. i.iii.3525-3529).¹⁴⁴ The conspirators are keen to act without necessarily considering what it is they hope to achieve. They are driven by their own sense of their heroism, their desire for power and their belief that they carry the people with them in their conspiracy. Subrius Flavius’s words betray this inflated sense of power as he claims himself to be “a double Brutus” and “a double Cassius” (V. Pt.i.iii.3503-3504).¹⁴⁵ The rebels identify Piso as the man to succeed Nero, pointing to the popularity of the man whose powers of demagogy have “already been stirring up the soldiers, the knights, the senators” (V. Pt.i.iii.3510-3511).¹⁴⁶ Piso’s success rests ultimately on his ability to command the loyalty of the military and the citizen body, and he depicts the intended assassination as an act of loyalty to the Roman people. Gwinne establishes the idea that these rebels are self-aggrandising men whose ambition leads them to act against the state they purport to serve.

The thread running through this passage in the play again ties Gwinne to the idea that those who speak boldly against established custom and tradition, and attempt to demonstrate their virtue through deeds of an excessive military nature, are fundamentally

¹⁴¹ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. O3r. “*Pis. In aede Cereris opperiar:necem/Post absolutam Rufus accersat, ferat/In castra, vulgi ac militum vt maior fauor,/Antoniamque Claudij cmitem volo.*”

¹⁴² Lipsius., *Two Bookes*, sig. D1v.

¹⁴³ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. O1v. “*Dura nisi facimus, patimur:audendum est: habet/Res acta caput, â capite, felicem exitum. Agatur aliquid.*”

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, sig. O2r. “*Asp. Parare properet: abijciat moras./Differre noceat: dubitat?incepto est opus:/Facto opus: at ille forte consultat; dies/Prolatat;haeret: prodit et perdit suos./Bonum, celeritas: mora, malum: pellat moram.*”

¹⁴⁵ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. O2r. “*.. Brutos duos/Hic esse, et in me Cassios credas duos.*”

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, “*Sulp.Asp. Odium Neronis, inque Pisonem fauor,/Iam concitauit, milites, equites, Patres.*”

misguided. Gwinne insists that men are deceived into thinking that with the removal of the perceived cause of political and social discomfort their ills will be alleviated, and implies that the act the rebels attempt to take is made using unsound reasoning. In this sentiment, Gwinne seems to reiterate Montaigne's understanding of social and political change. Montaigne explains that those who are eager for change often act impulsively and without due care and consideration for the likely impact of their actions. Montaigne explains that "in publike affaires, there is no course so bad (so age and constancie be joined vnto it) that is not better then change and alteration".¹⁴⁷ It is easy for opponents of a state "to beget in a people a contempt of his ancient observances" and the established leadership but it is difficult "to establish a better state in place of that which is condemned and raced out".¹⁴⁸ In Gwinne's narrative it is evident that Piso and the rebels can incite the demand for change and encourage a hatred for Nero, but they do not realise that their use of popular sentiment to overthrow a ruler is, in fact, an act harmful to the populace. Furthermore, in his exploration of the obedience owed to a sovereign, Montaigne refers directly to the Pisonian conspiracy in order to explain that "wee owe a like obedience and subjection to all Kings" and that even when subject to "vnworthie" kings "we are to endure them patiently, to conceale their vices... as long as their authoritie hath need of our assistance".¹⁴⁹ Only when "our comerce" with a bad ruler comes to an end can we truly speak out against them.¹⁵⁰ For Montaigne, the actions of Subrius Flavius, who conspired against Nero and openly spoke of his hatred of the emperor, are the actions of a foolish man who does not understand the necessity of maintaining "politike order".¹⁵¹ Whilst Montaigne suggests that those who spoke ill of Nero after his demise were free to do so, at this stage in his work, his attitude towards Flavius and the Pisonian conspirators is unambiguously hostile:

¹⁴⁷ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 380 also cited in Parmelee, *Good Newes from Fraunce*, 125.

¹⁴⁸ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 380.

¹⁴⁹ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* Here Montaigne is referring to an encounter in Book 15 of the Annals LXVII. Grenewey provides this rendition "Not long after, by their appeaching, *Subrius Flavius* Tribune was overthrown, first alleaging the dissimilitude of his maners and life for his defence, and that he being a man of armes, would never in so dangerous an enterprize, associate himselfe with unarmed effeminate persons: after that farther prest, imbracing the glory of confession, and demaunded of *Nero* for what reasons he had proceeded so farre as to forget his oath. I hated thee (quoth he:) neither was there any of the souldiers more faithfull unto thee then I, whilst thou deservest to be loved. I began to hate thee after thou becamest a parricide of thy mother, and wife; a wagoner, a stage-player, and a setter of houses a fire"; see Grenewey, *Annales*, 243.

The magnanimitie of those two Souldiers, may bee reproved, one of which being demaunded of *Nero*, why he hated him, answered him to his teeth; I loved thee whilst thou wast worthie of love, but since thou becomest a parricide, a fire-brand, a jugler, a player, and a Coach-man, I hate thee, as thou deservest. The other being asked, wherefore he sought to kill him; answered, Because I find no other course to hinder thy vncessant outrages and impious deedes.¹⁵²

Montaigne presents the Pisonian rebels here as individuals who put private grievance and the desire for change before the principle that obedience is owed to the sovereign power. Montaigne seems to single out the centurions in particular, to highlight the fact that they have distorted the notion of service by transferring the allegiance they ought to have for the emperor to the cause for change. Gwinne, likewise, draws out this aspect of the conspiracy in presenting the rebels as ambitious individuals able to whip up the public into supporting a cause ultimately at odds with the public good.

In this presentation of the Pisonian rebels Gwinne seems yet again intent on undermining the actions and beliefs of the Essexians. By presenting the rebels as a misguided group of individuals impatient for change and for personal renown, his play picks up the tone of the unfavourable literature that emerged both in the late 1590s after Essex's return from Ireland, and arose again in the rebellion's aftermath. Gajda draws attention to the way in which Essex's detractors "queried his [Essex's] hyper-humanist conviction that his magnificent virtue entitled him to a naturally pre-eminent public role, and the fruits of office and patronage."¹⁵³ Against the language of service to the *patria* and excessive virtue that characterised Essex's conception of his role, his critics established "definitions of an alternative ethic of service, which crowned personal obedience to the monarch as king of virtues."¹⁵⁴ Before the rebellion, Essex's critics seized on the Earl's persona as a soldier and drew the distinction between military bravura and political bravado.¹⁵⁵ The fact that Essex had garnered support from a number of prominent individuals was also considered a subversion of "the necessary bonds of allegiance that subjects owed the queen".¹⁵⁶ After Essex's return from Ireland, and after it had emerged that Essex had defied Elizabeth in carrying out his negotiations with the Earl of Tyrone, the criticisms of his character were moulded into a more tangible statement condemning the

¹⁵² Montaigne, *Essayes*, 6. Montaigne acknowledges, however, that Nero's character was as Flavius described. Elsewhere Montaigne criticises Nero himself; see *Essayes*, 429.

¹⁵³ Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 190.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*. For the rhetoric of the Essex circle see chapters 2, 4 and 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 191-192.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

Earl's actions.¹⁵⁷ The same reproach of Essex is found in Francis Bacon's *Declaration*, where Essex is taken to task for having soured the favour he had with Elizabeth through his excessive ambition and desire for political control. Bacon attributes Essex's rise to the "benefits and graces" of Elizabeth which, along with his "oath and allegiance" "tied" Essex to the Queen.¹⁵⁸ Yet these ties were merely straps, Bacon implies, for Essex to pull himself up with, as Essex quickly forgot the loyalty he once owed Elizabeth.

But he on the other side, making these her Majesties favours nothing els but wings for his ambition, and looking upon them, not as her benefits, but as his advantages, supposing that to be his owne mettall which was but her marke and impression, was so given over by God...as he had long agoe plotted it in his heart to become a dangerous supplanter of that seat, whereof he ought to have beene a principall supporter...¹⁵⁹

The Earl, it is alleged, aspired to a position "like unto the auncient greatnesse of the *Praefectus Praetorio* under the Emperours of *Rome*" and wished to have "all men of warre" dependent upon him.¹⁶⁰ As Bacon continues, he claims to expose Essex's desire to use his mission in Ireland to secure the country for himself, and he argues that Essex believed that by becoming "the first person in a kingdome", he could then launch an assault against Elizabeth.¹⁶¹ Bacon stresses that Essex's desire to act and instigate change rendered him ignorant of the fact that God "punisheth ingratitude by ambition, and ambition by treason, and treason by final ruine".¹⁶²

It is evident then, that Gwinne's presentation of the Pisonian rebels shares the censorious language directed at Essex by contemporaries. As in Bacon's criticism of Essex's actions, Gwinne targets the conspirators as individuals imbued with an unrealistic sense of their power and of their authority to affect change. The rebels, like Essex, are overweening and are eager to demonstrate their virtue by establishing themselves as rivals to the ruler to whom they owe obedience. Piso's ability to win the favour of the citizens and the soldiers seems to evoke the figure of Essex who was held in suspicion for his

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 196.

¹⁵⁸ Francis Bacon, *A Declaration of the practises & treasons attempted and committed by Robert late Earle of Essex and his complices...* (London: Robert Barker, 1601), STC 1133, sig. A4v.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., sig. A4v-Br.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., sig. Bv.

¹⁶² Ibid., sig. A4v.

“popularity”.¹⁶³ There is little doubt, however, that it is in Gwinne’s depiction of Subrius Flavius that it is possible to discern a hue of Essex. In the scene where the rebels plot how they will carry out Nero’s assassination, the men leave their meeting place spurred by the words of Piso. As they depart, two of the principal conspirators, Scevinus and Flavius, cry out: “SCEV. Hail Caesar – for a short time!/FLAV. Or nobody – within a short time!” (V.Pt.I.iii.3953-3594).¹⁶⁴ Flavius’s remark is particularly revealing for, as the play’s recent editor notes, here Gwinne seems to allude loosely to Caesar’s words in Plutarch’s *Lives*.¹⁶⁵ In this passage Plutarch explains that, while on military service in a village in the Alps, Caesar declared that his ultimate aim was to be second to none for he wished to secure the title of emperor for himself, saying that he would “rather be first here [in the village] than second at Rome”.¹⁶⁶ Shortly after this declaration, Caesar won over the support of the military and was declared Imperator by the soldiers. So, in placing these words in the mouth of Flavius, Gwinne underscores the idea that Flavius, though professing to act merely to rid Rome of misfortune and restore the liberty of its citizens, aspires to become sovereign himself. This passage in Gwinne’s drama recalls Bacon’s accusation directed at Essex. Bacon, as has been seen, claims that Essex, like Flavius, was guilty of having Caesarist ambitions and wished to be “the first person in a kingdome”.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Gwinne builds up the character of Flavius in his narrative to delineate precisely how Flavius was the chief architect of the rebellion and to stress how his betrayal of Nero was made worse by the fact that he had manipulated his standing within the military to turn the soldiers against the emperor.

The overall attitude towards rebellion is unambiguous. Gwinne uses the narrative of Nero’s Rome to convey the sentiment that resistance is unjustified because it subverts the social and political order. Moreover, men who think that it is their duty to remove a tyrant are usurping the role of God who is the only judge of a tyrant. What is more, Gwinne asserts, rebels rarely have the interests of the citizen body at heart, for if they did they would recognise the need to maintain custom and tradition.¹⁶⁸ Gwinne’s text reads as a condemnation of the actions of the Essex circle and he fuses the anti-Essexian rhetoric with

¹⁶³ Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture*, 200-206.

¹⁶⁴ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. O3r. “Scevu. Vale/Breui Imperator, Caesar.Flau. Aut nullus breui.”

¹⁶⁵ Sutton, “Notes,” l.3593.

¹⁶⁶ Plutarch, *Lives*, 469.

¹⁶⁷ Bacon, *A Declaration*, sig. Bv.

¹⁶⁸ One of the more virtuous characters involved in the conspiracy is Epicharis but her decision to conspire against Nero seems, for Gwinne, to undo some her more virtuous characteristics.

the political thought of Montaigne and Lipsius to demonstrate that the most honourable action involves obedience.

Types of virtue

Although Gwinne insists on the need to remain loyal and obedient to a sovereign, the form of obedience he advocates involves neither compliance nor complicity with a tyrant. Where individuals face political turmoil he suggests that quietism is necessary, but that this should not involve passive resignation. By adopting the position that the tribulation of the political world is merely material, and by establishing a sense of inner freedom, individuals are provided with the mettle to survive even the harshest masters. In this aspect Gwinne continues the approach taken by Savile where, as seen in the previous chapter, Agricola's prudence and Vindex's constancy in death provided a model to emulate. Gwinne's text provides a fuller exposition of this language of constancy and a finer distinction between internal and external freedom by incorporating much of Montaigne's philosophy into the representation of those who fall victim to Nero's rage.

In act one Narcissus establishes the character of Nero's Rome. It is a state beset by violence and murder, and one can do nothing but lament: "O harsh fates! In my misery, of what should I first complain?" (I.v.498).¹⁶⁹ He rails against the rule of Agrippina, and considers the sorrow of Britannicus and Octavia who have been subjected to Agrippina's whims (I.v.505). In the following act, Britannicus and Octavia sing of their grief: Britannicus suggests he cannot stand idly by and witness any more affronts to his and his father's honour, while Octavia attains a greater solace in accepting that which is destined for them.

BRIT. Oh the sorrow! My mother murdered by my father: oh the crime! My father murdered by my step-mother: oh the shame! I am born of Caesar, but another man is Caesar's heir.

OCT. My virtue has suffered worse: I hate. Time will bring me better: I hope. Let him who hopes for few goods not hate the bearing of many ills.

BRIT. I am distressed by my father's murder: I must bewail it. I am deposed from my father's throne: I must bear it. I make way lest I be murdered, I must take care for my father's murder and throne.

OCT. Downfall haunts the high places. Let Claudius' progeny, destined to perish in a grand holocaust, both bear witness to Claudius' fate and bear it.

¹⁶⁹ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. C3r. "Narcissus. O dura fata: quid miser primum querar?"

BRIT. How can I sing well of my destiny, accumulating misfortunes? Of myself, cravenly complaining of misfortunes? Of my death, the remedy for misfortunes?¹⁷⁰ (II.vii. 1077-1096)

In these lines we learn that there are two responses to the desolation caused by Nero's rule. Britannicus is aware that death is the only remedy for his misfortune but is unwilling to submit to his own destruction. He is compelled to action to defend his father's honour and to avenge his father's death. Octavia, on the other hand, suggests that she must, above all, salvage her virtue and patiently bear witness to the ills her family face. Destiny has prescribed a fate for each of them and it is futile to consider working against that which cannot be changed.

By the following act the misery of Claudius's progeny has reached its zenith: Britannicus has been murdered and Octavia remains shaken and grief-stricken. It seems that the path of *action* chosen by Britannicus has only hastened his destruction. Indeed, Gwinne indicates this as it is not merely the fact that Britannicus has a rival claim to the throne which prompts Nero to destroy him. Nero is compelled to carry out his planned murder of Britannicus after realising that Britannicus plans to take action. This is revealed in Nero's response to Britannicus's song, as it dawns on him that the "doeful song was sung by a boy scarce sorrowful", but by a boy who may still strike against him (II.vii.1099-1100).¹⁷¹ Octavia's life, however, is prolonged although it is one of sorrow. The suggestion Gwinne makes is that Octavia's path of quiet endurance is a fitter way to survive in Nero's Rome.

This suggestion is more pronounced in the exchange between Agrippina and Octavia which follows. It becomes apparent that it is Octavia's pattern of acceptance and steadfastness which allows her to continue to live at Rome unthreatened, for a time, by Nero's violent hands:

OCTAVIA Flow now, my tears, as the rain pours from the clouds, and as water floods everything when the dam has broken.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., sig. E3v-E4r. "Britann. *Proh dolor, patri genitrix peremta:/Proh scelus, caesus genitor nouercae:/Proh pudor, Caesar genitus, sed haeres/Caesaris alter./Octavia. Pertulit (sperno) grauiora virtus:/Afferet (spero) melior a tempus:/Multa ne spernat mala ferre, pauca/Qui bona sperat./Britann. Caede perturbor patriâ: dolendum./Sede deturbor patriâ:ferendum./Cedo ne caedar: patriâque caede et/Sede cauendum./Octavia.Sedibus summis proprior ruina./Cladibus magnis peritura magna./Claudiam sortem referat, feratq[ue]/Claudia proles./Britann. O meam sortem mala congerentem;/Me parum fortem mala conquerentem;/O meam mortem mala corrigentem/Quàm bene canto?"*

¹⁷¹ Ibid., sig. E4r. "Nero. Miseranda certè cantio haud miseri fuit./Sed enim beatos nunc dapes laetae vocant."

AGRIPPINA Pour forth now, my groans, as winds rush through the sky,
and as fire burns whatever withstands it, when the embers have been
scattered.¹⁷² (II.viii. 1157-1160)

Octavia mourns the death of Britannicus and Claudius while, although echoing the language of her step-daughter, Agrippina mourns the stifling of her own ambitions. Agrippina manipulates the language of plaint and attempts to draw Octavia to her side as a means of toppling Nero from his throne. By the end of the exchange it becomes apparent how the two seek resolution of their grief in different ways:

OCT. My virtue is feeble, time's salvation is late in coming.

AGRIP. Virtue is not easily overcome, time flies.

OCT. It flies amidst my sorrows, it limps along when bringing happiness.

AGRIP. A distracted mind thinks time protracted, but it will come, it will come. Consider me: either my hand will put him down, or his hand will carry me off. I seek allies against him, and leaders for these allies. Cleave to me, daughter, the avenger of your sufferings.¹⁷³ (II.viii.1209-1216)

Octavia seeks strength through virtue and claims she does not possess enough to provide salvation. Precisely what virtue means here is hinted at by Gwinne since Octavia, in the midst of her outpouring of sorrow for her losses, claims she does not possess virtue to overcome her grief. Virtue, then, is equated with steadfastness and resoluteness. Agrippina seeks time to overcome virtue and seeks salvation in political vengeance. Like Britannicus, Agrippina proposes *action* to recover her political losses but, by the end of the following act it is clear that in choosing this path of action she merely, like Britannicus, shortens her life. After the exchange between Octavia and Agrippina, Alecto reveals as much in the chorus concluding the act by stating that: "It is a rare rebellion that is fortunate, loyal, and decent. Betrayal, confused by great perils, disperses hither and thither in panic, and becomes manifest. Thus the traitor, hastening to betray, betrays himself" (II. Chorus 2. 1249-1252).¹⁷⁴ The individual who acts, indeed, who rebels, not only draws attention to himself and provokes their downfall, but also betrays the self.

¹⁷² Ibid., sig. E4v. "*Octauia*. Nunc fluite lacrymae, nubibus vt imbres fluunt,/Et vt aqua inundat obice perrupto omnia./*Agrip*. Nunc ruite gemitus, aëre vt venti ruunt,/Et vt ignis vrit cinere discusso obuia."

¹⁷³ Ibid., sig. F1v. "*Octauia*. Virtutis aegra, temporis sera est salus./*Agrip*. Haud facilè virtus vincitur, tempus volat./*Octau*. Volat in dolores, claudicat laeta afferens./*Agrip*. Animus iniquus tempus haud aequum putat,/Sed aderit, aderit; me vide: aut illum manus/Mea premet, aut me perimet illius manus./Partes in illum, & partibus quaeram duces./Me nata sequere vindicem aerumnis tuis."

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., sig. F2r. "*Foelix, fida, decens, rara Rebellio./Tantis Prodito falsa periculis/Hinc illinc trepidans, et scatet, et patet./Se prodit, properans prodere, proditor.*"

Gwinne's narrative suggests that amidst the chaos and violence of Nero's Rome, Octavia is one of the few characters who is able to survive relatively untouched by the horrors of the emperor's actions. Gwinne chooses not to dramatise Octavia's forced suicide, but he reveals how she acknowledges her death is imminent and explains that she is not perturbed by this fact. In act four, during an exchange with Seneca, she chastises the elderly stoic for having bred such a tyrant as Nero. "The both of you are evil, let the both of you pay the penalty for your evil", she exclaims, as she is forced into exile, and she warns Seneca that if he remains at court his fall will be imminent (IV.v.2717-2718).¹⁷⁵ She, on the other hand, is drawn into exile in Capua, and recognises that to complain and bemoan her fate is futile (IV.v.2680-2681). She claims she remains fearless, except for the fear that her name will be slandered after death, and she willingly accepts the fate which awaits her.

Is there worse? Has fear overwhelmed all my sufferings? Am I afraid lest I die? Not this. Lest I be banished? Not that. Lest I be banished and put to the torture? Not that. But slander is worse than any death I might suffer. As long as slander is absent, let death visit me.¹⁷⁶ (IV.v.2703-2707)

She acknowledges her destiny and does not flee from her fate. In displaying this resolve and constancy Octavia, as Seneca comments, "defeat[s] the philosophers"; she is a heroine and "surpass[es] the men" (IV.v.2730).¹⁷⁷ The notion conveyed here is that Octavia's constancy and fortitude in facing death makes her truly virtuous. As Seneca remarks in his soliloquy she can be sure that the divine look favourably on her: "O woman worthy of the highest praises, of marriage to Jove!" (IV.v.2728).¹⁷⁸

In this attitude towards Octavia's survival Gwinne reflects upon the stoic idea that true virtue consists in the possession of a "true and immovable judgement", and that the means to find quietness of mind is to enact this judgement and "disburthen thy selfe" of all external misfortune.¹⁷⁹ Gwinne here echoes the sentiments found in Lipsius's *De constantia*, where the philosopher advocates the cultivation of oneness with the self in order to preserve oneself against the ills caused during a time of public difficulty. The

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., sig. L2v. "...itane discebat Nero?/Nequiter vterque:vterque nequitiam luat."

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., "Amplius an aliquid? an metus omnes mala/Vicere nostra? an timeo ne moriar? nec hoc:/Pellar? nec illud: pulsa ne crucier? nec id./Sed crimen omni grauius exitio mihi./Modo crimen absit, adsit exitium mihi."

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., "Vincis philosophos faemina, virago viros."

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., "*Sen.solus*. O digna summis laudibus, thalamo Iouis".

¹⁷⁹ Seneca, *Epistles*, 294, 204.

relationship between Gwinne's text and Lipsius's is made explicit in an exchange between Poppaea and Nero, where Gwinne seems to recreate part of the dialogue between the characters of Languis and Lipsius in the *De constantia* by evoking the same allusion Lipsius borrows from Virgil. The fourth act of Gwinne's drama opens with the ghost of Agrippina declaring vengeance against Nero and his advisers: Agrippina wishes that Nero find no rest from his tortuous guilt, and hopes that he will remain forever polluted by her death (IV.i.2228-2297). Her wishes are met when the audience encounter Nero "distraught", according to the stage directions, in the subsequent scene, and wandering around the palace pursued by the ghost of Agrippina and followed by a bemused and "terrified" Poppea (IV.ii.2298-2316). As Sutton notes, this passage is largely based on Dio Cassius (62.14), where Nero is described as being tormented by his culpability in the murder of his mother.¹⁸⁰ Yet the drawn-out exchange between Poppaea and Nero conveys more than the terrors Nero is said to have experienced. Nero urges "Let us move elsewhere" but Poppaea refuses stating that it is pointless to change residence.

POP. You are fleeing like a stricken stag. The wound clings to it, the arrow remains its companion.

NERO We must move our home.

POP. A new home cannot amend your mind, mindful of its blood-guilt.¹⁸¹
(IV.ii.2316-2320)

This allusion to a stricken stag borrowed from the *Aeneid* is noted by Sutton, but he ignores the fact that in this there is most certainly an echo of Lipsius's *De constantia*, for the tenor of the exchange and the use of the same Virgilian allusion forge a parallel with the dialogue between Languis and Lipsius in Lipsius's work. Nero is, like Octavia in the scene mentioned above, stricken with grief, and he seeks consolation through fleeing the place of his mother's burial. In *De constantia* Lipsius relates his sorrow at the turmoil of the Low Countries to his friend Languis and claims that he has no option but to flee the troubled lands in order to seek consolation.¹⁸² Languis admonishes the young Lipsius and

¹⁸⁰ Sutton states that the passage alluded to here is from book 61. See, Dio, *Roman History*, 67: "Yet in spite of what he told the senate [Nero claimed to the senate that Agrippina was plotting his downfall] his own conscience was so disturbed at night that he would leap suddenly from his bed, and by day, when he merely heard the blare of trumpets sounding forth some stirring martial strain from the region where lay Agrippina's bones, he would be terror stricken. He therefore kept changing his residence; and when he had the same experience in the new place also, he would move in utter fright elsewhere."

¹⁸¹ Gwinne, *Nero tragadia nova*, sig. K1r. "Nero. Migremus aliò. Pop. Scilicet ceruus fugis/Percussus:haeret vulnus, & arundo comes./Nero. Mutanda sedes. Pop. Non potest sedes noua/Mutare mentem consciam caedis tibi."

¹⁸² Lipsius, *Two Bookes*, sig. B2r.

states that misery and affliction cannot be escaped by changing one's location: "It is the mind that is wounded, and all this external imbecilitie, dispaire & languishing, springeth from this fountaine, that the mind is thus prostrated and cast downe."¹⁸³ Languis advises Lipsius, as Poppea does Nero, that it is the mind, not the external circumstances, that causes tribulation, and persuades him that man cannot escape torment unless he learns to settle the disturbances of the mind. Languis explains:

Therefore you flie from troubles alwayes, but neuer escape them, not vnlike the
Hinde that... *Virgil* speaketh of,
Whō ranging through the chace, some hunter shooting far by chāce
All unaware hath smit, and in her side hath left his lance,
She fast to wildernes and woods doth draw, and there complaines,
But all in vaine: because as the Poet addeth,
--- *That underneath her ribbes the deadly dart remaines.*¹⁸⁴

The mind remains afflicted by the "dart of affections" even as one tries to find solace in changing location.¹⁸⁵ The close similarity between Gwinne's play here and the *De constantia* surely suggests that Gwinne is drawing attention to the valuable lessons of Lipsius's work. In the presentation of Octavia in particular, Gwinne outlines how the individual afflicted by passions and by anguish attains little solace. Octavia remains true to "herself" and in doing so, she achieves a greater power than that wielded by Nero. Whilst Nero attempts to conjure up a charge against Octavia in order to justify a divorce and her death, Octavia's serving girl, Pythia, and those close to Octavia, are unwilling to betray an honourable woman. Octavia, as Poppea bemoans (IV.vii), commands popular support as the people rescue the image of virtuous Octavia from destruction and transform "[r]iotous violence" into "Roman virtue" (IV.vii.3034-3035).¹⁸⁶

Octavia's virtue propels her to a greater power and to greater liberation through death, as is seen when her ghost appears in the following scene. She explains how although she has "yielded [her]... place on the throne to a mistress" (V.i.3132), she has gained greater benefits in heaven (V.i.3134).¹⁸⁷ Nero, like Agrippina, on the other hand, remains tortured by the evils he has committed. From the moment of his mother's death he is

¹⁸³ Ibid., sig. B2v.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. M3r. "Vis turbulenta nomine vocatur nouo./Romana virtus:imperat populus;iubet."

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., sig. M4v. "Nedum vxor, orba, patre, matre, & iam diu/Fratre spoliata, vidua viduanti viro,/Haurire coelom desij, at coelo fruor".

pursued by a haunting fury which propels him to commit greater evils and this ultimately leads to his fall. The words of the fury Nemesis in the chorus closing act four, succinctly celebrate the virtues of the constant mind and point to the suffering experienced by the afflicted mind.

The Fates beset a tyranny. No tyrannical rule is as savage as that of a guilt-stricken mind. Nobody terrifies it, but it feels dread. It flees, while nobody pursues, but in its flight it does not escape itself, when it flees others. This is like the Stygian hound, with its three heads of Wrath, Luxury, and Hatred. This is as like the three Furies, hostile, avenging, malevolent. Like the three streams of Dis it burns, it hurts, it howls. Many external evils beset the offender, but it is the internal ones that oppress him. ... Hateful to the gods, to himself, he often wishes for death, yet dreads it, enduring a living death. He quickly wishes them alive whom he had wanted to die, but does not call them back. Such are the evil fruits of an evil mind.¹⁸⁸ (IV.Chorus 4. 3101-3115; 3125-3130)

Thus, far from advocating action or retaliation in the face of tyranny, Gwinne appears touched by the Lipsian message of constancy. Octavia's virtue lies not in her actions against Nero nor in her defiance, but in her understanding that "[a]boue all things it behooueth thee to be CONSTANT: [f]or by fighting many man hath gotten the victory, but none by flying."¹⁸⁹

In his presentation of the benefits of inner constancy and resolve, Gwinne also repeats the attitude of Montaigne towards the public turmoil of the wars of religion. Montaigne identifies the Senecan philosophy of "resolution and constancie" as a "law", and notes that it prescribes that man cannot flee "from the mischieues and inconveniences that threaten-vs".¹⁹⁰ He outlines what it means to achieve constancy, claiming that "the parte of constancie is chiefly acted, in firmly bearing the inconveniences, against which no remedie is to be found."¹⁹¹ As Gwinne suggests through his handling of the fates of Britannicus and Octavia, discussed above, constancy, according to Montaigne, will

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., sig. M4r-v. "*VRgent fata tyrannidem./Tam trux nulla tyrannis est./Quàm mentis male consciae./Nemo terret, at haec timet:/Nemo cum sequitur, fugit:/Nec se, si reloquos, fugit./Nec se, cum fugit, effugit./Haec, haec, vt Stygius canis./Irâ, luxu, odio triceps./Haec, vt tres Furiae, iuuidens,/Vlsciens, cupiens male./Vt Ditis tria flumina,/Ardescit, dolet, eiulat./Vrgent multa foris mala;/Intùs plura premunt reum.Exosus superis, sibi,/Optat saepe mori, et timet,/Et viuens moritur tamen./Mox vult, quos voluit mori, Viuos, nec reuocat tamen./Tantum mens mala fert mali."*

¹⁸⁹ Lipsius, *Two Bookes*, sig. B4v.

¹⁹⁰ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 21.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

“defend-vs from the blowe meant at-vs” so there is no need to resort to an open conflict for the latter provides little advantage.¹⁹²

Furthermore, as is the case for Gwinne, Montaigne’s philosophy of constancy is bound up with his philosophy relating to political change. For Montaigne, those preoccupied with the desire for political change possess none of the virtue and constancy to which men ought to aspire. If virtue is attained through moderation and reason, and constancy consists in the ability to be un-afflicted by misfortune and material harm, then those men who are enraged enough to take action lack these qualities. In the essay dealing with custom and tradition, as William Hamlin has explained, Montaigne proposes that when man possesses a reasoned perspective on the world, and when he achieves constancy, he is unmoved by the afflictions of any external custom or political circumstance. Acting out of desire to change custom, fashion and habit is the characteristic of an unsettled individual:

...me seemeth, that all several, strange, and particular fashions proceede rather of follie, or ambitious affectations, then of true reason: and that a wise man ought inwardly to retire his minde from the common prease, and holde the same libertie and power to judge freele of all things, but for outward matters, he ought absolutely to followe the fashions and formes customarily received.¹⁹³

What this means, Hamlin suggests, is that Montaigne elaborates a form of “dual consciousness”: that is, where man preserves a form of inner balance and “social detachment” allowing “acquiescence to standard practice”, while engaging in cerebral consideration of this “standard practice”.¹⁹⁴ Montaigne explains that it is not for men of virtue to act to change political life for this is “beneath” them: it constitutes the ephemera of existence and the truly virtuous are not drawn by this dimension of existence. Montaigne states that “[p]ublicke societie hath nought to doe with our thoughts”, and that only aspects of our selves like “our actions, our travell, our fortune, and our life” must be shaped to conform with the service of the society or land in which we live.¹⁹⁵ Returning to Gwinne’s play, it is evident that in the exchange in the fourth act where Seneca and Octavia debate the merits of being exiled from Rome, Gwinne puts Montaigne’s theory of detachment from society under scrutiny. Octavia lampoons Seneca for having failed in his self-proclaimed role as philosopher, because all he taught Nero was how to become a

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 52 also cited in Hamlin, *Montaigne’s English Journey*, 72.

¹⁹⁴ Hamlin, *Montaigne’s English Journey*, 72.

¹⁹⁵ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 52.

tyrant. “A philosophical courtier is a monstrosity”, she claims, “I believe that one can be neither, when he strives to be both, for the two things do not harmonize” (IV.v.2719-2720).¹⁹⁶ Octavia continues by chastising Seneca for his attempts to ingratiate himself within the court, actions Seneca took in a vain attempt to change Nero’s nature, whilst he professed to remain detached from the material world. She warns him that he must guard against becoming a victim of his own pupil and of the tyranny he has taught. Seneca seems to recognise his wrongs and states the intention to live as a socially detached individual: one capable of outward conformity with the world but one able to contemplate the world’s ills and exist unmoved by them. Seneca explains the action he intends to take:

The pious man departs the Court. You should depart, Seneca, and return to yourself. I do not seek a place to hide. I do not depart helpless or as a refugee. ...I am returning from the city to the world, for the world is my fatherland. A great part is being abandoned, but a greater remains. ... Great fortune is a great servitude. Shun the great things. Take thought lest the multitude of wicked men make you wicked. Retire inside yourself.¹⁹⁷ (IV.v.2741-2746;2753-2755)

Gwinne forms Seneca’s philosophical approach here from a blend of Seneca’s own words, to create a philosophy similar to Montaigne’s which is based largely on the same Senecan maxims. Gwinne attempts to persuade that the most beneficial course of action is to retire to the stoic cosmos and observe political affairs from a distance, whilst preserving an external mask of obedience. The “greater part” of man is found through the contemplation of the political world we would create and inhabit, not through the dismantling of the world which we inhabit.

In spite of Gwinne’s apparent acceptance of the Senecan rhetoric of withdrawal, it is clear that Gwinne shies away from condoning Seneca’s attempt to translate this rhetoric into practice and Gwinne does not approve of Seneca’s manner of death. It is true that, in

¹⁹⁶ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. L2v. “Monstrum est philosophus aulicus: neutrum puto,/Vterque qui vult esse:conueniunt male.” Gwinne’s marginal annotation suggests an allusion to John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* I.5.c.10. see also Sutton “Notes,” l.2719 where Sutton refers to pp.329f of Webb’s edition; see Clemens C.I. Webb, *Ioannis Saresberiensis episcopi Carnotensis Policratici...* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909). Cary J. Nederman’s recent English translation in John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 91 reads: “For indeed the philosopher-courtier is a monstrous thing; and, while he affects to be both, he is neither one because the court excludes philosophy and the philosopher at no time engages in the trifles of the courtier.”

¹⁹⁷ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. L3r. “...pius/Aulà exit: exi Seneca, & in temet redi./Non quaero latebras: non abeo inermis, fugax:/ Sint salua reditu signa: referatur gradus./Ab vrbe in orbem redeo:patria orbis mihi./Pars magna deseratur; at maior manet. ... Fortuna magna,seruitus magna est:fuge/Fuge magna;coge temet:vt tu sis malus,/Numerus malorum ne faciat: in te redi.” Gwinne’s marginal annotations refer to Seneca’s *De tranquillitate anime* l.I.c.3 and c.10.f. Both chapters to which Gwinne refers deal with the benefits of withdrawal from public life; see Seneca, *De tranquillitate animae* in Seneca, *The Workes*, 638-641; 645-646.

his narrative of Seneca's death, Gwinne espouses a form of virtue closer to the stoic idea of steadfastness than to the supposedly heroic virtue displayed by those who would rebel against Nero, but the type of behaviour Gwinne advocates, if he advocates any, is that of Seneca's wife Paulina.

The passage which relates Seneca's death pays testament to the Senecan rhetoric of death as a form of salvation from the burden of life. Seneca attempts to calm the emotions of his wife and his close friends by persuading them that in his death he will enter "better life".

But I am not wretched, for the avenue to enduring bliss lies open. My mind is set on eternity. The last day of my previous life is the first of a new one. My dying-day is also my birthday. Thus life follows death, as death life – and a better life, that Nero will not steal.¹⁹⁸ (V.Pt. ii.vi.4023-4028)

There would seem to be an echo of Seneca's one hundred and second epistle here, where Seneca advises Lucilius that mortal existence is but an "heavie and earthly prison", and explains that "by these delayes of mortall life we make an entrance to that better and longer life".¹⁹⁹ Gwinne seems to acknowledge the idea that there exists a greater form of freedom, greater, that is, than the legal or political freedom to act without restraint, to which man naturally strives: a form of freedom obtained only through the annihilation of the earthly self.

However, Gwinne seems to recognise that this pagan philosophy stands firmly at odds with the Christian denunciation of suicide and, like the author of the *Tragedy of Nero*, which will be discussed in the following chapter, he manages to simultaneously deny that Seneca's death is an act to be applauded, whilst extracting the merits of the suicide's philosophical basis. He does this by introducing the dialogue Seneca has with Paulina, and by presenting the latter as the model to be emulated because she understands what it is to be truly virtuous. The narrative of Seneca's suicide and Paulina's similar attempt at death in act four of Gwinne's play shares the characteristics and tone of Montaigne's essay "Of three good women", where Montaigne draws attention to the virtue of Paulina in her devotion to her husband.²⁰⁰ In Gwinne's play, Paulina is well-versed in Seneca's philosophy, as her words demonstrate: she explains that death is the means "by which

¹⁹⁸ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. Q1r. "Nec miser:at aditus non recessurae patet/Foelicitati: spirat animus aeternum:dies/Vitae prioris vltimus, promus nouae./Natalis hic est vitae inextinctae dies./Sic vita mortem sequitur,vt vitam mori:/Et vita melior, quam nec eripiat Nero."

¹⁹⁹ Seneca, *Epistles*, 415.

²⁰⁰ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 428-430.

salvation is attained” and that it is futile to struggle against the unavoidable (V. Pt. ii.vi.4083-4095), and uses this to guide her as she attempts to follow her husband.²⁰¹ Yet Gwinne, like Montaigne, makes her the more worthy example as it is her model of patient endurance that spurs the philosopher himself onwards. Seneca points to her virtue in this respect:

How a woman, dedicated to something she wants or does not want, sees no less clearly than a man, and is more constant! It is scarcely decorous to die with her as a guide, or pleasant to die with her as a companion.²⁰²
(V. Pt.ii.vi.4104-4107)

Like Montaigne, in praising Paulina’s actions, Gwinne celebrates the “virtuous life” rather than the “virtuous “death””.²⁰³ As Timothy Hampton states, in Montaigne’s handling of the narrative, Paulina becomes the living embodiment of the “coherence of the self” since her physical body becomes a living epitaph to the Senecan ideal of sacrifice.²⁰⁴ Montaigne notes that Paulina became defined by her virtue as “she lived... as befitted her vertue,” and that her physical being — “the pale hew and wane colour of her face” — acted as a mark of her honour.²⁰⁵ Gwinne adopts the same approach by foregrounding Paulina’s attempt to follow Seneca’s act of suicide and by suggesting that the greater demonstration of virtue is found in her *life* rather than in her husband’s *death*. Seneca’s praise for Paulina, and Granius’s insistence that Paulina be kept alive because a “sufficiency of virtue has died in Seneca” (V.Pt.ii.vi.4134), underscores the idea that man need not act out his virtue in the manner of Seneca because it is enough that one possesses this virtue.²⁰⁶

Furthermore, both Gwinne and Montaigne employ the dialogue between Seneca and Paulina to stress the idea that the stoic death itself is not the most profitable aspect of Seneca’s death. What is most important, these writers suggest, is that in the hour of death

²⁰¹ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. Q2r (I quote Paulina’s words in full here): “*Paulina*. Per amara, dicas; quibus & accipitur: salus./Iam mihi videmur victimae ante aras sacrae./Vt taurus & iuuenca se ferro induant;/Caedamur, & cadamus,vt par est, piaie,/Placidae,innocentes, supplices, gratae Deo./Piaculum sit, si reluctetur mori/Deuota morti victima, vt scelera expiet./Si trahat eculeus, strangulet laqueus, cremet/Flamma, graue ferrum membra membratim secet,/Quid Seneca faciat, si nimis mollis gemat,/Sanguine fluente molliter;vt optat, mori?/Virtute clarus si vir haud praestet virum,/Mirumne, mulier mollior siquid labem?”.

²⁰² Ibid., sig. Q2r. “Quàm mulier, aliquid seu non velit,/Addicta, cernit non minus, constat magis!//Vix duce decorum, at comite sit dulce hâc mori./At vel volenti, sed seni,vt lentum est mori?”.

²⁰³ Timothy Hampton, *Writing From History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 172.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 430.

²⁰⁶ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. Q2v. “Virtutis vno perijt in Seneca satis.”

Paulina and Seneca recognise their oneness and their dependence on each other. What emerges from the death narrative, then, is the idea that men should consider their obligations to kin and company over the obligations they have to themselves. Both Gwinne and Montaigne appear to contort the death narrative of Seneca and Paulina into a statement affirming man's inherent sociability. They do this by constructing the account around Seneca's one hundred and fourth moral letter.²⁰⁷ Montaigne explains that "*Paulina* offreth willingly to leave hir life for hir husbands sake, & that hir husband had also other times quit death for the love of hir".²⁰⁸ Montaigne ends the account of Paulina and Seneca's exchange with a quotation from the epistle, which explains the way in which individuals, not just married men and women, are indebted to each other.

*...The soule must be held fast with ones teeth, since the lawe to live in honest men, is not to live as long as they please, but so long as they ought. He who esteemeth not his wife or a friend so much, as that hee will not lengthen his life for them, and will obstinately die, that man is over-nice, and too effeminate: The soule must command that unto her selfe, when the utilitie of our friends requireth it: we must sometimes lend our selves unto our friends, and when we would die for us, we ought for their sakes to interrupt our selves.*²⁰⁹

Montaigne understands the bond between Paulina and Seneca as the natural expression of the mutual obligations individuals have towards each other.

Gwinne, likewise, stresses the idea of the social bond between Paulina and Seneca in the exchange before Seneca's death. Paulina proclaims her affinity with Seneca in the words "Let me be nothing, if I am not yours", and by stressing that it will be a "single death" that eclipses them both (V. Pt.ii.vi.4044;4046).²¹⁰ It is in the earlier encounter with Paulina and Seneca, however, that this idea of stoic sociability and the words of the hundred and fourth epistle are most pronounced.²¹¹ Earlier in the final act of the play Seneca and Paulina debate whether Seneca ought to cast off his life, and Paulina convinces Seneca to preserve and prolong his existence. In Gwinne's rendition of the exchange Paulina out-masters Seneca with Seneca's own philosophy and with words borrowed from

²⁰⁷ James Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 319.

²⁰⁸ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 430.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. Q1v. "...nulla sim, ni sim tua."; "Sic destinatum est, vna mors perimet duos."

²¹¹ Sutton notes the borrowing from the epistle: see "Commentary Notes," notes to l.3385.

Josephus's *Jewish Wars* where Josephus denounces suicide.²¹² Paulina notes the bond the two share: "Live for me, if not for yourself. Bear in mind that my life depends on yours. You do not live or die for one. I, the younger, am spared in you, the elder. Or in one person poison would harm two, harming your spirit" (V. Pt.i.iii.3384-3388).²¹³ Gwinne's handling of the relationship between Paulina and Seneca, and his depiction of the latter's death, stresses that man must acknowledge that his interests, his health and his actions are ultimately bound to the interest, health and actions of those around him. He underscores the basic idea that man's wisdom, more specifically the form of wisdom Seneca possesses about his earthly existence, is only perfected through engagement with those around him. What Paulina and Seneca's relationship demonstrates is, as scholars have noted, that "relationships among rational human beings are so important for the Stoics because they consider reason to be intrinsically social", and Gwinne's negotiation of Seneca's death reiterates this point.²¹⁴

The political implications of this stance suggest that Gwinne considers it necessary for man to possess the type of stoic resolution that Seneca (and Octavia) demonstrate, but he argues that this must not drive men to deny the bonds and obligations they have to the social order. In relation to Elizabethan politics, it might be argued that this idea provides Gwinne with another means to defeat the values of the Essex circle where, Essex's critics had argued, the idea of stoic wisdom had been transformed into a heroic, almost selfish, form of pride. We see in literary dedications to the Earl, for instance, that he was being singled out as that "most abundant president of true Nobleness" and being invested with the power and celebrity to command a following greater even than Elizabeth herself.²¹⁵ Many sought to counter this by tempering Essex's sense of his particularly elevated

²¹² See Sutton "Commentary Notes," 1.3416. For the passage in Josephus see *Josephus* trans. H St.J Thackeray, vol.2, *The Jewish War, Books I-III* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927), 679-681.

²¹³ Gwinne, *Nero tragaedia nova*, sig. N4r. "...viue mihi, si non tibi./Vitam memineras in tua verti meam./Nec viuis vni, nec moreris: in te sene/Mihi iuniori parcutur:in vno duos/Violet venenum spiritus violans tuos./Mihi chare, mihi te commodes, viuas mihi."

²¹⁴ Gretchen Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 2005), 175.

²¹⁵ George Chapman, "To the Most Honored Earle," in *Chapman's Homer: The Iliad* ed. Allardyce Nicoll Bollingen Series XLI (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1998), 503-506, for quotations, 504. Chapman's praise singles the Earl out as a particularly important individual: "To you then, most abundant president of true Nobleness in whose manifest Actions all these sacred objects are divinely pursude, I most humblie and affectionatlie consecrate this President of all learning, vertue, valour and honour and societie, who (with his owne soule) hath eternizde Armies of Kings and Princes, whose imperiall Muse, the great Monarch of the world would say effected more of his conquests than his universall power". He is, according to Chapman, the "[m]ost true Achilles (whom by sacred prophecie Homere did but prefigure in his admirable object and in whose unmatched vertues shyne the dignities of the soule and the whole excellence of royall humanitie". I am grateful to Dr Richard Rowland for having drawn my attention to Chapman's dedication and the contrast between this and Gwinne's work.

position within the polity. For example, to return again to the correspondence between Egerton and Essex in 1598, it is evident that Egerton praises Essex's stoic virtue but warns Essex not to think himself able to dissolve his ties to those around him. As discussed in Chapter One, Egerton urges Essex "to conquer" himself, for in his present state of obstinate pride Essex fails in his duty towards his "country" his "sovereign" and to "the divine majesty of GOD".²¹⁶ In 1599, as Essex was embarking on his military campaign in Ireland, Francis Bacon wrote to the Earl expressing his misgivings about the wisdom of his military pursuits. Bacon conveys the idea that the man who is truly virtuous or wise is he who recognises the expression of this virtue has consequences for the society in which he lives. The letter reveals suspicions about Essex's motives for waging war in Ireland as Bacon seems to attribute Essex's belligerence to a heady mix of insolence, vainglory and the desire for personal revenge.²¹⁷ Bacon urges Essex to think of himself not as a "private soldier", but as a "General" and to remember "[t]hat merit is worthier than fame", and "[t]hat obedience is better than sacrifice".²¹⁸ The message here mirrors Paulina's cautious words to Seneca where it is made clear that those men who possess enough stoic fortitude and constancy to consider the worth of self-sacrifice must also be aware of their responsibilities to others. Similarly, Cornwallis, whose political career had taken a very different path compared to that of Essex (despite the two being connected through service in Ireland in 1599), recognises that which Essex seems to ignore, in arguing that stoic virtue or fortitude must be matched with social responsibility.²¹⁹ In the essay "Of Keeping State", Cornwallis pursues the same general theme as Gwinne does in his *Nero*, in that he stresses the need to maintain political stability and resist disrupting the general order of society.²²⁰ The equally important idea to emerge from Cornwallis's discussion in this essay is that stoic wisdom and adherence to the conventions of society go hand in hand.²²¹ Cornwallis makes this idea about bending virtue or wisdom to the needs of society more

²¹⁶ "Egerton to the Earl of Essex," 385-386.

²¹⁷ Francis Bacon, "A Letter of Advice to My Lord of Essex, Immediately Before his going into Ireland," March 1599 [?] in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 10, *The Letters and the Life*, vol.2, 129-133. Spedding suggests the letter must have been written in March shortly before Essex's departure on 27th March 1599.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

²¹⁹ For Cornwallis's career; see Arthur Kincaid, "Cornwallis, Sir William, the younger (c.1579–1614)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Oct 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6345. Cornwallis is also discussed in Chapter Three of the present study.

²²⁰ For a discussion of Cornwallis's treatment of obedience in this, and his other essays, see Parmelee, "Neostoicism and Absolutism in Late Elizabethan England," 16-17.

²²¹ Cornwallis, *Essays*. sig. O7r-P5v.

explicit in his essay comparing the merits of solitude and company. Cornwallis expresses the basic Stoic ideal that wisdom is coexistent with social relationships since he states that the latter is necessary to attain the former: “speech and reason love trafficke and exercise, the former of which is unecchoed without company, the last naked, for reason is made forcible by exercise.”²²²

Gwinne’s *Nero*, then, is a conservative text dealing with the problems caused by resistance and by individuals’ attempts to intervene in the natural course of human affairs. Gwinne’s depiction of Nero’s reign is deeply indebted to Montaigne’s philosophy and Gwinne shares his sceptical approach to political activity. While Gwinne may have, at one time, espoused a cynical and Machiavellian form of Tacitism associated with the Essexians, it seems that by the final years of Elizabeth’s reign Gwinne was keen to distance himself from the Earl’s rebellious actions. What emerges is a vision of politics grounded firmly in the language of custom, order and tradition. This vision would be challenged again in the early years of James’s reign by groups of men who shared a cultural and political inheritance from the Earl of Essex, but, as the next chapter demonstrates, a more cautious approach, like Gwinne’s, persists into the next reign.

²²² Ibid., sig. Dd3v.

Chapter Three:

The anonymous play, *The Tragedy of Nero*

In 1624, the London-based publisher, Augustine Matthews, published an anonymous Roman history play based on the life and reign of the emperor Nero. The *Tragedy of Nero* tells the tale of Rome razed to the ground by an unruly emperor who seems more preoccupied with his stage roles than with his role as ruler of a mighty empire. In this play Nero's opponents respond to his rule not with anger or indignation, but rather with dismay and regret, lamenting the misfortune of their once prosperous nation. In act three, Seneca's reaction to the fire at Rome epitomises the sentiment that runs throughout the play; he argues that there is nothing but sorrow and adversity to be found in engagement in political life.

Senec: Heauen, hast thou set this end, to *Roman* greatnesse?
Were the worlds spoyles, for this, to *Rome* deuided,
To make but our fires bigger?
You Gods, whose anger made vs great, grant yet
Some change in misery; We begge not now,
To haue our Consull tread on *Asian* Kings,
Or spurne the quiuerd *Susa* at their feet;
This, we haue had before¹

As Seneca's speech continues, he elaborates on the difficulties faced by the Romans, claiming that the greatest threat they face as citizens of the Empire is the emperor himself. The conflict Nero's Romans face constitutes a battle between life and death: "we begge to liue,/At least not thus to die".² Seneca explains that the opponents of Nero's rule do not deny his right to rule, rather, they dislike his style of rule, and the type of politics his royal representatives have propagated. Above all, the Romans fear their lives are being threatened by the vicious politics practised at Nero's court. In response to this perceived threat, Seneca continues, the Romans are engaged in a battle for their personal and national existence. The tone of the play is, in some respects, similar to that of Jonson's *Sejanus*, where a principled opposition in the form of Sabinus, Silius and Arruntius, rage against the corrupt and treacherous times in which they live. Although the classical scholarship underpinning the anonymous play is certainly less accomplished than Jonson's, it is

¹ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. E2r-v.

² Ibid., sig. E2v.

evident that, like Jonson, the playwright intends to offer a caricature of a hostile and murky political world.³ This court environment is ostensibly Roman, but it is also representative of the type of court that many of James I's critics believed had developed at the heart of England's government.

This chapter will demonstrate that the playwright's interaction with Tacitus, and with Stoic philosophy, produces a drama replete with cynicism and pessimism. Whereas in Gwinne's *Nero* and Savile's *End of Nero* there is evidence that the authors consider engagement in political life an option, it is less certain for the author of the *Tragedy of Nero* that an active political role is a possibility. The overriding emphasis is on protecting oneself from certain destruction, by withdrawing from public life. Whilst the playwright suggests that no profit is to be gained from engaging in court politics, there is no evidence that he believes that engagement in politics may be made any more palatable by the removal of monarchy itself. Like Gwinne and Savile, this anonymous author does not adopt an anti-monarchical or republican stance, and the text itself does not hinge on a comparison of these two constitutional forms. Instead, the author crafts a language borrowed from Tacitus and Seneca, and uses it to articulate his dissatisfaction with the character of court life. The reason for this, this chapter will argue, is that the play represents one variant of "new humanist" discourse which surfaced under the aegis of Prince Henry. If we accept the distinction Lisa Ferraro Parmelee makes between the strands of Tacitean Neostoicism that emerged in Jacobean England — with one strand concerned with the corruptibility of rulers, and another strand using Tacitus and Stoic teaching to evince a "monarchist political theory" — this chapter will suggest that the playwright ought to be considered a proponent of the first type of thinking.⁴ In his depiction of Nero's Rome, the playwright raises the prospect of a court dominated by Janus-faced individuals, whose artificial politicking plunges the state into chaos. However,

³ The playwright does not display a thorough grounding in the history of Nero's reign. He makes use of Tacitus's *Annals*, Suetonius's *Twelve Caesars* and Dio's *Roman History* along with Savile's *End of Nero*, *Histories* and *Agricola*, but, aside from his use of Savile's texts and the *Annals*, he only gestures towards the language of the historians themselves; see Teller, "The Anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* (1624)," xx-xxix. The playwright also repeats a common error in attributing a phrase uttered by Caligula in Suetonius's account to Nero. The phrase "O that the *Romanes* had but all one neck" is misattributed by the playwright, suggesting that the playwright is presenting a "popular" pastiche version of Nero rather than a historical Nero; see Anon, *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. F2r; Suetonius, *Caligula*, trans. Holland, 137.

⁴ Parmelee, *Good News from Fraunce*, 134. Although I suggest that the play belongs to this first camp of authors in which Tacitus and Stoic philosophy provide a language of pessimism towards court life I would not characterise *The Tragedy of Nero* as a work more Tacitean in style or content as Parmelee suggests works of this period were. There is more evidence to suggest that the playwright is most interested in Seneca's philosophy rather than Tacitus's histories.

as Ferraro Parmelee continues, even the adoption of this stance does not prevent the playwright from accepting that monarchical power is the most stable form of governance.⁵

The main body of the action in the *Tragedy of Nero* revolves around a conflict between, on the one hand, Nero and his minister Tigellinus, and, on the other, those opposed to the Roman ruler. What the playwright implies is that even while Nero's reign remained relatively free from war and strife, Nero's style of rule brewed a domestic conflict that in many ways resembled a war between nations. As Scevinus, one of the key leaders of the opposition, states in act four of the play, Nero and his chief ministers "freed the State from warres abroad, but twas/To spoile at home more safely".⁶ It would appear that the playwright picks up on Tacitus's own tone in the Neronian annals where, as Elizabeth Keitel has convincingly demonstrated, the language of war is used in a domestic context in order to stress how the princeps effectively waged war on its own subjects and caused internal dispute amongst the empire's citizens.⁷ The playwright frames Nero's reign as a form of internal war because such a historical situation provides a context in which to voice the sentiments felt by those contemporaries of the playwright who considered themselves fighting a war against the policy of peace advocated by King James.⁸

The *Tragedy of Nero*, therefore, is most aptly compared with those plays which, as Tristan Marshall has explained, revived the Sidneian rhetoric of Protestant belligerency in order to voice their opposition to the policy of peace.⁹ Although the playwright does not depict war itself, he paints Nero's opponents as a group of veterans who hark back to Rome's glorious warmongering past. He uses ideas and concepts from Seneca, particularly the language of *constantia*, to cast Nero's opponents as heroic individuals who seek an outlet to express their virtue, but who are ultimately stymied by a corrupt court. There are

⁵ Ibid., 134. Parmelee cites Malcolm Smuts's comment that "Taciteanism had not entered English political culture as an expression of opposition, a form of protest against absolutism" and that it remained part of a linguistic currency also used by rulers and those close to the court in England: see n63 where she refers to Smuts, "Court-Centered Politics," 40.

⁶ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G1r.

⁷ Keitel, "Is dying so very terrible? The Neronian Annals," 137. Keitel refers here to her earlier work in which she sets out the idea that Tacitus displays a latent hostility towards the viciousness of the principate though his use of war-like language to describe the relationship between princeps and people; see Elizabeth Keitel, "Principate and Civil War in the Annals of Tacitus," *The American Journal of Philology* 105, no.3 (1984): 306-325.

⁸ There has been no detailed attempt to root the *Tragedy of Nero* in historical context although in his edition of the play Stephen Teller notes that the final act of the play does seem to allude to James's involvement in the Thirty Years' War; see Teller, "The Anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* (1624)," xix.

⁹ Tristan Marshall, "That's the Misery of Peace': Representations of Martialism in the Jacobean Public Theatre, 1608-1614," *The Seventeenth Century* 13, no. 1 (1998): 1-21. Interestingly Marshall does not explore Stoicism as one idiom in which the opposition to the Jacobean peace was expressed.

references throughout the play to Rome's civil wars, and, at various points in the drama, the playwright alludes to the plight of Cato to describe the difficulties faced by the Neronian rebels. Nero's opponents are celebrated as virtuous reincarnations of Cato, not because of their anti-Cesarism, which might, on the surface at least, be said to inspire their attempt to overthrow Nero, but because they, like Cato, are willing to recognise when they are outdone and are willing to die for the name of Rome. Although the playwright implies that Nero's opponents should be commended for their steadfast commitment to their cause, and for their willingness to oppose Nero, the most significant victory these men achieve is not found in Nero's overthrow, nor in their militaristic resolve. The playwright suggests that the greatest victory of these men is in the constancy they attain by remaining true to themselves, by being willing to accept their place within a divinely ordained world, and by demonstrating their virtue. In other words, when faced with a polity seemingly ruled by machinating ministers and treacherous tyrants, what man ought to aim at is the establishment of an internal state of virtue. In this respect, the *Tragedy of Nero*, as this chapter explains, continues the emphasis on resisting change, maintaining the *status quo*, and pursuing the ethical ideals of "virtue" and "liberty" that are a feature of English "new humanism" throughout this period.

As discussed in the introduction to the present study, there has been much speculation about the identity of the play's author. Whilst this remains difficult to determine, it is clear that the playwright has much in common with the writers who used Tacitus and Seneca to develop a critique of the Jacobean policy of peace, and of the peace's impact on court life. The conclusion of peace with Spain in 1604 through the signing of the Treaty of London, and James's subsequent characterisation as Great Britain's Solomon or the peace maker, set the tone for the reign. James would play the role of negotiator, as he attempted to bridge the religious and political chasms that had been wrought across Europe. In 1613, a broadside ballad celebrated James's role in the "Ioyfull Peace" that had been concluded between the Kings of Denmark and Sweeden, and declared: "...if we once should feele wars stroak/Then would our Joyes decrease".¹⁰ James pursued an irenic policy, the foundations of which were to be the carefully negotiated dynastic unions he forged for Princess Elizabeth with the Elector Palatine, and the proposed marriage between a Spanish infanta and one of his sons.¹¹ However, hawks soon

¹⁰ Anon., *The Joyfull Peace Concluded Betweene the King of Denmarke and the King of Sweden by the Meanes of Our Most Worthy Sovereigne, James, by the grace of God, King of Great Brittain, France, and Ireland, &c. to the tune of Who list to lead a soldiers life* (London: Henry Gosson, 1613), STC 5193.

¹¹ Initially after the 1604 Treaty of London it was proposed that Prince Henry would marry Infanta Ana, but after Henry's death Charles and Maria became the focus; see Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 7-17.

began to circle in the form of an opposition group who argued that peace was not only a rejection of the martial values of the English nobility, but that James was neglecting his duty as a Christian in abandoning a battle against the “evils” of “Popery”. This celebration of martial action as the obligation of a true Protestant was a sentiment expressed most vociferously by groups who aligned themselves with the young Prince Henry. As J. W. Williamson has demonstrated, Prince Henry came to be associated with a cultural revival characterised by a celebration of martial honour, in which the young prince was cast in the role of a virile Protestant warrior, another Henry VIII to wage war against the new Roman Empire.¹² Those men who considered James and his ministers to be an “enemy within” because of their pursuit of a “treacherous” policy of peace, attached themselves to Prince Henry, and identified him as the true representative of English Protestantism.¹³ Henry’s natural aptitude for sport, and his interest in reviving rites of chivalric combat, made him the obvious figurehead for the pro-war party, who placed their hopes in the young prince as the saviour of England.¹⁴

The debate over foreign policy was played out openly, as seen in the publication of *Propositions for War*, a plea for a more activist foreign policy, and in the publication of Sir Robert Cotton’s staunch defence of the King’s peace.¹⁵ The advocates of war stated that action was necessary, since England must be prepared to defend itself against its foreign rivals, but also declared that, since England was a country founded on conquest, it was natural, indeed healthy, for Englishmen to have a disposition for war.¹⁶ In the *Propositions for War*, the war party makes explicit reference to the *Annals* to underline how, when war is wanting, “people should grow wanton through too much wealth and idleness”.¹⁷

¹² J. W. Williamson, *The Myth of the Conqueror. Prince Henry Stuart a Study in 17th Century Personation* (New York: AMS Press, 1979).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁴ James M. Sutton, “Henry Frederick, prince of Wales (1594–1612),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/12961.

¹⁵ See discussion in Robin Headlam Wells, “‘Manhood and Chevalrie’ Coriolanus, Prince Henry, and the Chivalric Revival,” *The Review of English Studies* n.s. 51, no. 203 (2000): 395-422.

¹⁶ Robert Cotton, *An Answer Made by Command of Prince Henry to Certain Propositions of War and Peace Delivered to His Highness by Some of his Military Servants Whereunto is Adjoined The French Charity, or, An essay written in French by an English Gentleman, upon occasion of Prince Harcourt’s coming into England, and translated into English by F.S.J.E* (London: Roger Daniel, 1655) Wing / C6477, sig. B1r.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. B2r. The marginal annotation refers to Tacitus *Annals* book 10 but the extract is actually found in book 16: see Tacitus, *Annals* Book XVI. 1, 338-339. The passage refers to Nero’s attempt to find the lost wealth of Carthage which had allegedly been hidden by Dido to prevent Carthage from being corrupted by riches.

Moreover, opponents of the peace expressed the fear that the peace would threaten the country's security. Winwood's speech of 9 April 1614, points to the combined threat of Ireland and Spain and urges: "If the King of Spain...will enter into the quarrel, H.M. in honor and safety cannot be *otiosus spectator* but must interpose himself though with the charge of a royal army."¹⁸ In addition to neutralising the immediate and material threat from Ireland and Spain, the pro-war party argued that it was the duty of all Christians to execute God's will: the Church militant ought to be militant. According to these men, history proved that peace only breeds licentiousness, laxity and luxury. As Michelle O'Callaghan has noted, although there may have been no clear distinction between a "court" and a "country" opposition, the language of court and country did form part of the rhetoric adopted by this militant Protestant group who embarked upon a Spenserian revival.¹⁹ In this rhetoric, the peace was a malign influence on the political culture of the court: "Whereas Jacobean panegyrist viewed peace as bringing prosperity to the country, Spenserian writers saw appeasement of Spain in terms of decay in the countryside and the decline of national energies".²⁰

As Malcom Smuts has noted, it is clear that this rhetoric describing the decline of Protestant belligerency was one dimension of an oppositional outlook in which it was also suspected that Spanish conspiracy and Machiavellianism was taking root in the English court.²¹ As in the 1580s and 1590s, this flowering of Tacitean and Stoic rhetoric represents one aspect of a court dialogue about how one could engage with political court culture. There is a clear continuity between the late Elizabethan period, and this mid-Jacobean period, both in terms of the themes which emerge from this dialogue, and in terms of the voices involved. As the Essexians had argued in the 1580s and 1590s, the Jacobean anti-peace "camp" claimed that, by failing to pursue an activist policy towards the European Catholic nations, England was, in effect, renegeing on its role as a Protestant nation, and choosing the luxurious and precarious rewards of peace over the more secure rewards offered by war. Furthermore, those who suddenly found themselves paralysed by the state of peace began to interrogate the value system of a court culture that denied military men the opportunity to exercise their virtue. They began to question the values of an

¹⁸ "Speech of Sir Ralph Winwood in the House of Commons," 9 April 1614, Downshire MS.XLVII, 82 (H.M.C. Downshire, 4:366-69) cited in *Proceedings in Parliament 1614 (House of Commons)* ed. Maija Jansson (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), 71-72.

¹⁹ Michelle O'Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation' Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

²¹ Smuts, "Court-centred politics," 36-37.

environment where chivalric virtue was something to be maligned and suspected, rather than celebrated. Men not only were denied an international arena in which to prove their martial ability, but, at home, were also prevented from participating in sports and activities traditionally regarded as symbols of strength and masculinity. As Markku Peltonen has explained, the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign converged with the celebration of the peace in Middleton's treatise, *The Peace-Maker*, where a general hostility towards troublesome nobles was expressed.²² There was, Peltonen continues, a general campaign against the "scourge" of the duel and this involved dismantling the system of honour that underpinned the activity.²³ To those targeted by this policy, and to those eager for war against the Spanish Habsburgs, it appeared that their identity was being slowly eroded. These men suggested that, in place of a court culture that enshrined the values of honourable service to the *patria*, there had arisen a culture dominated by faction, suspicion and deception. It is evident that the anti-peace baton had passed from the Essexians to a new group largely associated with the court of Prince Henry and they, like their forbears, used Tacitus and Stoic philosophy to problematise their roles in this court culture.

As Salmon has demonstrated, there was also a lineage of sorts connecting Essex and the personalities who became entangled in this court dialogue in the mid-Jacobean period.²⁴ Many of those who gravitated towards Prince Henry had once been allies with, or associates of, the Earl of Essex and his company of men. Cornwallis, the essayist, who was indebted to Montaigne in his work, had been knighted in August 1599, after having served in Ireland with the Earl of Essex's campaign, and would go on to spend the rest of Elizabeth's reign, and indeed James's, in pursuit of a relatively modest career at the royal court.²⁵ Robert Dallington, author of the Tacitean manuscript work *Aphorismes Civil and Militarie*, which was presented to Prince Henry (and later dedicated to Prince Charles on publication in 1614), had been imprisoned in February 1601 for his involvement in Essex's

²² Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness and Honour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 91; 142-143.

²³ *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁴ Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 208-217.

²⁵ Cornwallis was a member of James's privy chamber and later MP for Orford in Suffolk; see Kincaid, "Cornwallis, Sir William, the younger (c. 1579-1614)," *ODNB*. Salmon also explores Cornwallis's career, but is mistaken in his identification of a marital connection between Cornwallis and the Countess of Bedford's companion Jane Meutys as he has fallen into the trap which Kincaid points to in confusing the younger Cornwallis (1574-1614) with his uncle also named William (1551-1611); see Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 208.

rebellion, but soon found a position at Henry's court.²⁶ Thomas Gainsford, who produced a manuscript on military matters collected from Tacitus's texts, and used Savile's Tacitus to write his history of Perkin Warbeck, served in Ireland from 1597, a period which overlapped with Essex's military involvement there.²⁷

In the *Tragedy of Nero* there is evidence to suggest that the playwright was a cultural ally of this new breed of Essexians, if not a peripheral member of this group. We might even imagine that the anonymous playwright, like the author of the anonymous play the *Tragedy of Claudius Tiberius Nero*, was seeking the favour of Prince Henry.²⁸ In the *Tragedy of Nero*, as in the works listed above, there is a clear connection to the late 1590s. The play's author is largely dependent on the Tacitean works associated with the Earl of Essex: he uses an edition of Grenewey's *Annals*, and lifts several passages from Savile's *End of Nero*, and from the *Histories* and the *Agricola*.²⁹ The linguistic borrowing from Savile's work is unusual, as the playwright looks beyond the account of Nero, and turns his attention to the lessons in political resilience that Savile's other translations provide. Where the playwright selects snippets from Savile's treatment of Nero specifically, he does more than merely paraphrase Savile's work, and, because of the closeness between the playwright's work and Savile's text, we may imagine that the playwright has written his drama with Savile's work close to hand. The passage in the play's final act in which Epaphroditus, Nero's ally, brings the news that Vindex and the Gauls have broken away from Rome's sway, is particularly evocative of Savile's text:

²⁶ For biographical information on Dallington see C. S. Knighton, "Dallington, Sir Robert (1561–1636x8)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2011, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/7042; Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 208–216.

²⁷ S. A. Baron, "Gainsford, Thomas (*bap.* 1566, *d.* 1624)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/10284. Thomas Gainsford's manuscript "Observations of State, and military affaires for the most parte collected out of Cornelius Tacitus," 1612 MS Huntington Lib. EL 6847 is discussed by Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 217; Thomas Gainsford, *The True and wonderful history of Perkin Warbeck...* (London: Edward Griffin for Nathaniel Butter, 1618), STC 11525, "Preface". See also the discussion in the introduction to the present study.

²⁸ Anon., *The statelie tragedie of Claudius Tiberius Nero*. Francis Burton dedicates the prefatory epistle to Prince Henry's associate Sir Arthur Mannering.

²⁹ Teller, "Tragedy of Nero (1624): A Critical Edition," xxi. Teller notes that both the anonymous playwright and Grenewey misname the leader of the conspiracy against Nero, Piso, as Lucius Piso rather than Gaius Piso. Teller cites the example of Grenewey, *Annales*, 237; cf the introduction to the present study. There are also other notable similarities between the play and Grenewey's text to which Teller draws attention. For example there is a similarity between Piso's hesitancy in act two of the play where he argues he ought not to assassinate Nero in his (Piso's) house and the language used by Grenewey to describe Piso's stance on the place of assassination: see Teller, "Tragedy of Nero (1624): A Critical Edition," xxi; Anon, *Nero*, sig. D1r; Grenewey, *Annales*, 238. Further to this Teller notes an echo of Grenewey in Flavius's admonition of Nero as "[a] Player on the Stage a Waggoner/A burner of our houses and of us/A Paracide of Wife, and Mother": see Teller, "Tragedy of Nero (1624): A Critical Edition," xxi; Anon, *Nero*, sig. G2r; Grenewey, *Annales*, 243.

Epaph: But for a stranger with a naked prouince,
Without allies, or friends, ith'state to challenge
A Prince vpheld with thirty Legions
Rooted in foure discents of Ancestors,
And fourteene yeares continuance of raigne,
Why it is -----³⁰

Savile's text describes Vindex's charisma in a similar manner, and suggests that the leader's personal attributes have inspired men to join his cause:

*This ende had Iulius Vindex, a man in the course of this action more vertuous then fortunate, who hauing, no armie prouided, no legion, no souldier in charge, whiles others more able lookt on, first entred the lists, chalenging a Prince vpholden with thirty legions, rooted in the Empire by fower descents of ancestours, and fourteene yeares of continuance of raigne....*³¹

In the *Tragedy of Nero*, it is almost as if Epaphroditus is cut off mid-sentence before he can launch into a recitation of Savile's text. Here, the playwright appears to find humour in the way in which Savile's text has slipped into early modern popular consciousness, and suggests that, for early modern readers, there was little difference between Savile's rendition of Nero's reign, and Tacitus's historical account. The parallels with Savile, however, reach beyond language as it is evident that the playwright reiterates Savile's political concerns about the decline of martial virtue, and, like Savile, problematises how one might project a model of virtue from within the shadows of contemporary politics.

The playwright situates his work within the context of the debate over the Jacobean peace and, like Savile, is keen to stress that in this hostile environment of the court it is preferable to lie low and survive, rather than to draw attention to oneself. Smuts notes that this lesson was learnt by those who, like Sir John Holles, had bought into the rhetoric of Protestant belligerency in Prince Henry's household, but then found themselves victims of fortune after Henry's death.³² Holles came to accept what might be considered the motto of the *Tragedy of Nero*: "that safety dwelleth not in doing well or ill, but in doing nothing".³³

³⁰ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. H3v.

³¹ Savile, *End of Nero*, 6, also cited in Teller, "*Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition," xxvi.

³² Smuts, "Court-centred politics," 35.

³³ "Holles to Lord Norrice, August 1614," in P. R. Seddon ed., *Letters of John Holles 1587-1637*, Thoroton Society Record Series, 31 (Nottingham, 1975), 57 cited in Smuts, "Court-centred politics," 35. Also cited in Peltonen, *Classical Humanism*, 131 and Chernaik, *The Myth of Rome*, 20. Chernaik makes the point that Holles is quoting Savile inaccurately. For the passage in Savile see *End of Nero*, 1-2, it reads "*Galba, in whom age had abated the heate of ambition, experience and dangerous times engendred a warie and fearefull proceeding, thought as then vpon nothing leße then diademes and kingdomes, having given himselfe*

Many of the themes addressed in the first chapter of this thesis reemerge in the current chapter. In the first section we will explore how the playwright seeks to persuade the opponents of the peace that there is just as much heroism involved in conquering the passions and in remaining true to oneself as there is in excelling on the battlefield. The playwright's recommendations about how men can survive in this politically corrupt environment are discussed in the following three sections of the chapter. What the playwright advocates is that men alter their perspective, and recognise that the material world is merely a construct. True liberty comes from realising that the political self is not the natural self, and from accepting that political life is not the most natural state of man's existence. The playwright calls for men to return to a more natural self and uses Stoic philosophy to point to the existence of an authentic state to which men must aspire. The final section of this chapter explains that, for the playwright, this authentic state of nature is an expression of the "country" life that critics of the Jacobean court celebrated.

Heroic constancy and the performance of virtue

In the *Tragedy of Nero*, Nero's opponents are presented as heroic, military individuals desperate for an opportunity to display their valour. The playwright allies the Neronian rebels with the Jacobean opponents of the peace by placing the rhetoric of the "war party" that coalesced around Prince Henry into the mouths of Nero's principal opponents, Scevinus and Piso. This rhetoric was one that conveyed fatigue with the peace, and expressed dismay that a once triumphant nation was waning during the apoplexy of inaction. The anti-war party sought, above all, a return to a type of politics where the military man could exercise his virtue, and this too, is the desire of the Neronian rebels. The opponents of the peace in both cases argued that so long as the peace continued, their identity was threatened and their nation's security was compromised. For instance, in his 1617 work, *The Souldiers Honour*, Thomas Adams signals that the peace constituted a form of emasculation or disenfranchisement of the nation's most valorous figures, and questioned the purpose of the peace: "*Shall warre march against vs with thundering steps; & shall we only assemble our selues in the Temples, lie prostrate on the pauements, lift vp*

over, for certaine yeares past, to an idle and obscure kinde of life, sequestred as it were, and retired from affaires for feare of Nero vnder whom to doe ill was not alwaies safe, alwaies vnsafe to doe well, and of doing nothing no man was constrained to yeelde an account."

our hands & eyes to heauen, & not our weapons against our enemies?”³⁴ In the *Tragedy of Nero* the playwright characterises Nero’s opposition in a similar way, by presenting them as a group hungry for war and nostalgic about their glorious past. However, according to the playwright, to vocalise this opposition is one thing, but to act to remedy the wrong is another. In the drama we witness an anti-peace camp which attempts to overthrow Nero because of its opposition to his politics, and the playwright refuses to condone such an action. Whilst there is no suggestion that the Jacobean war party contemplated a similar act of deposition, the playwright seems to address the group’s most belligerent members in warning against action. In his play he points towards an alternative means by which the war party might demonstrate their virtue. He suggests that bluster and belligerency are not marks of the virtuous man, for the truly virtuous individual possesses a steely and rock-like core, and is a warrior not against his fellow men or monarch, but against those harmful passions that seek to disrupt his own character.

The debate concerning the merits of peace runs through the heart of the *Tragedy of Nero*. From the start of the play, the audience is alerted to a contrast between the reputation of Nero, and that of Augustus, and it is made apparent that Nero’s achievements pale into insignificance when compared with those of his more valiant predecessor. The opening words of the first Roman act almost as a prologue before Nero appears onstage, and prepare the audience for what is to follow.

Rom. Whether *Augustus* Tryumph greater was
I cannot tell: his Tryumphs cause I know
Was greater farre, and farre more Honourable.
What are wee People? or our flattering voyces,
That alwayes shame and foolish things applaud
Hauing no sparke of Soule; All Eares, and eyes,
Pleas’d with vaine showes, deluded by our senses
Still enemies to wisdom, and to goodnesse.³⁵

Nero, as Poppaea mockingly acknowledges, prefers “safe spoyles, wonn without dust, or blood”, and has little interest in “that headie, and aduenturous crew,/That goe to loose their owne, to purchase, but/The breath of others”.³⁶ In the final act, after the discovery of the Pisonian conspiracy, it is made obvious that the policy of peace was the cause of the

³⁴ Thomas Adams, *The souldiers honour...* (London: Adam Islip and Edward Blount, 1617), STC 127, sig. B1r.

³⁵ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. B1r.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, sig. B1r; sig. B1v; sig. B2r.

opposition to Nero. Scevinus, the chief figure involved in uniting the resistance against Nero, takes issue with Nymphidius's "official" description of Nero's rule:

Nymph. Why, what can you ith'gouernment mislike?
Vnlesse it grieue you, that the world's in peace,
Or that our armies conquer without blood.
Hath not his power with forraine visitations,
And strangers honour more acknowldg'd bin,
Then any was afore him? Hath not hee
Dispos'd of frontier kingdomes, with successe,
Giuen away Crownes, whom he set vp, preuailing?
The rival seat of the *Arsacidae*,
That thought their brightnesse equall vnto ours,
Is't crown'd by him, by him doth raigne?
If we haue any warre, it's beyond *Rheme*,
And *Euphrates*, and such whose different chances
Haue rather seru'd for pleasure, and discourse,
Then troubled vs; At home the Citie hath
Increast in wealth, with building bin adorn'd;
The arts haue flourisht, and the Muses sung,
And that, his Iustice, and well tempred raigne,
Hath the best Iudges pleas'd the powers diuine;
Their blessings, and so long prosperitie
Of th'Empire vnder him, enough declare.

Scevi: You freed the State from warres abroad, but twas
To spoile at home more safely, and diuert
The *Parthian* enmitie on vs, and yet,
The glory rather, and the spoyles of warre
Haue wanting bin, the losse, and charge we haue.
Your peace is full of cruelty....³⁷

The language used by the playwright here chimes with that used by Jacobean contemporaries when discussing the policy of peace, and there can therefore be little doubt that what the playwright touches on here is the Jacobean Peace. Thomas Middleton, for example, in his panegyric on the peace, celebrates the fruits of peace and, like Nymphidius, describes the many artistic and material gains peace provides for a kingdom.³⁸ Similarly, in his manuscript poem on the peace with Spain, Edmund Bolton, author of *Nero Caesar*, shares the approach of listing the great gifts peace has bestowed on England as an illustration that only harmony provides sustenance for a prosperous nation.³⁹ On the other

³⁷ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G1r.

³⁸ Thomas Middleton, *The Peace-Maker...* (London: Thomas Purfoot, 1618), STC 14387.

³⁹ Edmund Bolton, "Holograph, incomplete heroic poem addressed to Buckingham "Vindex", MS Tanner 73/2 ff.420r-421v, Bodleian Library, Oxford. The similarity between Nymphidius's speech and Bolton's description of James's peace is noteworthy, and it is not inconceivable that Bolton would have read and digested this play given that it appeared in print in the same year his own *Nero Caesar* was published.

side, Scevinus's anger at the paralysis caused by peace and by Nero's suppression of Rome's honour likewise echoes the views of the Jacobean militarists. For instance, Dallington's *Aphorisms* explains that peace causes a state to become bloated and idle so that if a peace-time state is attacked, the damage is greater, because the state is too slow to mount a defence.⁴⁰

Moreover, the playwright makes it clear that Nero's opponents oppose the policy of peace specifically, and are not opposed to the idea of imperial rule more generally. Scevinus stresses that their aim is not, in any terms, to attempt a restoration of the republic: "We seeke not now (as in the happy dayes)/O'th common wealth they did, for libertie;/O you, deere ashes, *Cassius* and *Brutus*/That was with you entomb'd, there let it rest,/We are contented with the galling yoke,/ If they will only leaue vs necks to beare it".⁴¹ The important phrase here is "there let it rest". There will be no resurrection of the spirit of Cassius and Brutus, and no resurrection of the republic. As Paleit concedes, the conspirators do not aim at restoring the republic, rather they wish to install Piso as their ruler and complete a return to a noble Roman government.⁴² Their rebellion is not couched in republican language, but in "a language of aristocratic Roman virility".⁴³

The grievance expressed by the Pisonian rebels is that Nero has not allowed them to demonstrate their true virtue. They have been given no opportunity to test their resolve and prove themselves glorious in combat. In the *Tragedy of Nero* there is nothing resembling "the well try'd vallor/ Of *Iulius*, or stayednesse of *Augustus*" under the "shame, and Womanhood of *Nero*".⁴⁴ "*Neroes* men", as Scevinus mocks, are "like *Nero* arm'd/With Luts, and Harpes, and Pipes, and Fiddles-cases" and are unfit to perform in battle because they are "Souldyers to[']th shadow traynd, and not the field".⁴⁵ The sense is that all honour won through military virtue is not only suffocated but despised, as Nero transforms those men who once performed their duty to Rome through conduct in the field

⁴⁰ Dallington, *Aphorismes*, 1.

⁴¹ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. C4v. Edward Paleit suggests that, here, "commonwealth" means a specifically non-regal system of government, a necessary precondition for the establishment of "liberty"; see Edward Paleit, *War, Liberty, Caesar: English Responses to Lucan's 'Bellum Ciuile' c. 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 159. However, this stretches the point as "common wealth" is the term used throughout the play to refer to Rome's government and is even used by future emperor Galba who proclaims Nymphidius an enemy to the commonwealth at the close of the play; see Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. I3r.

⁴² Paleit, *War, Liberty, Caesar*, 157.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. C4r.

⁴⁵ Ibid., sig. B3r.

into idle spectators to the tragic downfall of their own nation. It is evident from Scevinus's speech, that the dissatisfaction voiced by the Pisonian rebels stems from the fact that these former soldiers feel emasculated and disempowered by Nero's reign.

We seeke no longer freedome, we seeke life
At least, not to be murdred, let vs die
On Enemies swords; Shall we, whom neither
The *Median* Bow, nor *Macedonian* Speare
Nor the firce *Gaule*, nor painted *Briton* could
Subdue, lay downe our neckes to Tyrants axe?
Why doe we talke of Vertue, that obay
Weakenesse, and Vice.⁴⁶

Scevinus stresses that, by denying the Romans the opportunity to perform in battle and display their military virtue, Nero may well, in fact, murder them himself, since their identity as men is bound up with their identity as warriors. This idea that the opponents of Nero's reign have lost the ability to express their true character is also conveyed later in the play, as Piso and Scevinus reminisce about their previous military exploits. Scevinus urges Piso not only to remember the battlefield, but also to relive the battle. The spirit which once fired him as a soldier must now guide his defence of his and Rome's virtue.

Scevi: And at aduventure: what by stoutnesse can
Befall vs worse, then will by cowardise?
If both the people, and the souldier failde vs,
Yet shall we die at least worthy our selues,
Worthy our ancestors: *O Piso* thinke,
Thinke on that day, when in the *Parthian* fields
Thou cryedst to th' flying Legions to turne,
And looke Death in the face; he was not grim,
But faire and louely, when he came in armes.
O why, there di'd we not on *Syrian* swords?
Were we reseru'd to prisons, and to chaines.
Behold the Galley-asses in euery street,
And euen now they come to clap on yrons;
Must *Pisoes* head be shewed vpon a pole?⁴⁷

Nero's opponents demand the opportunity to demonstrate their virtue in the public arena as they had once been able to during combat on the battlefield. In discussing the plans for Nero's overthrow, Scevinus stresses his belief that virtue is something to be displayed:

Our deed is honest, why should it seeke corners?
Tis for the people done, let them behold it;

⁴⁶ Ibid., sig. C4v.

⁴⁷ Ibid., sig. F3v.

Let me haue them a witsesse of my truth,
And loue toth' Common-wealth; The danger's greater,
So is the glory.⁴⁸

What the playwright articulates here is the idea that virtue, associated with military might and valour, is something which must be performed: “let vs die”, Scevinus implores, “[o]n Enemies swords” for men cannot “talke of Vertue, that obay/Weakenesse, and Vice.”⁴⁹ Virtue cannot be exercised if it is not tested and demonstrated through some form of action.

Although this notion of performing virtue seems to cohere with the classical republican notion that virtue, or true nobility, was intimately connected with citizenship or active service in the name of the common good, in the *Tragedy of Nero*, the notion of *demonstrating* virtue is definitely more Stoic in character.⁵⁰ Scevinus' and the conspirators' obsession with displaying virtue arguably reflects the playwright's engagement with the Senecan concept of virtue as a performance. In *De providentia*, as Geoffrey Miles has shown, Seneca outlines how it is not enough to be virtuous in words, since virtue is proved through deeds, and through proving virtuous when tested.⁵¹ Seneca suggests “virtue, to be virtue, must be seen in action”: “Vertue hath no vertue, if it be not impugned, then appeareth it how great it is, of what value and power it is, when by patience it approueth what it may”.⁵² The playwright argues that the rebels are right to seek an outlet to prove their virtue, but he points to the fact that the war they desire will not provide this.

The playwright argues that the Pisonian rebels conspire against Nero because he leaves them no room to express their virtue, but he also suggests that their act of resistance does not itself constitute a demonstration of virtue. He uses the character of Melichus, who reveals the plot to Nero, to condemn the rebellion and to articulate that their proposed act is not only futile but also impious, since it is wrong to interfere in the “affaires/Of Princes”.⁵³ As Shakespeare does in *Coriolanus*, a play which Robin Headlam Wells notes similarly filters contemporary debate concerning the Jacobean peace, the playwright seems

⁴⁸ Ibid., sig D1v.

⁴⁹ Ibid., sig. C4v.

⁵⁰ Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 11.

⁵¹ Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 51-52.

⁵² Seneca, *De providentia* in the *Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 499 also cited in Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 52.

⁵³ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. E4v.

to undermine the view that “valour is the chiefest virtue”.⁵⁴ Where, as Miles suggests, Coriolanus displays an “excess” of virtue “[a]s if a man were author of himself/and knew no other kin”, the playwright similarly implies that no virtue lies in acts of military aggression which prompt men to turn against the values and customs of the state in which they live.⁵⁵ The notion, that the fascination with military values represented a threat to order and stability, was similarly conveyed, as Smuts notes, in Robert Cotton’s survey of military history published in response to the *Propositions for War*.⁵⁶ “Military education”, Cotton argues, alters the “disposition” of men so that they desire nothing but war in order to prove themselves.⁵⁷ Such men, he continues, draw attention to themselves at the expense of public harmony:

And every age breeds some exorbitant spirits, who turn the edge of their own sufficiency upon whatsoever they can devour in their ambitious apprehensions, seeking rather a great than a good Fame, and holding it the chiefest Honour to be thought the Wonder of their times: which if they attain to, it is but the condition of Monsters, that are generally much admired, but more abhorred.⁵⁸

While Cotton was a member of the anti-war camp, the playwright is unapologetically anti-peace, but he, like Cotton, recognises the danger of excessive militarism. The idea that virtue is feared by rulers had been expressed by Savile and Essex. The idea also resonates in the *Tragedy of Nero*, where the playwright adapts the account of imperial Rome found in Savile’s translation of the *Agricola*, and reveals, through Scevinus’s agonistic dialogue with Nymphidius, that in Nero’s Rome virtue only attracts suspicion.⁵⁹

Scevin: Vertue, and power suspected, and kept downe:
They whose great ancestors this Empire made,
Distrusted in the gouernment thereof;
... Our priuate whispering listned after; nay,
Our thoughts were forced out of vs, and punisht:⁶⁰

⁵⁴ William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 2.2.80, (p.2819), also cited in Headlam Wells, “Manhood and Chevalrie” 398;399;405;409.

⁵⁵ Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 5.3.36-37; Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 111. See also his discussion of the play in chapter eight of his work. Miles cites the same passage from *Coriolanus*.

⁵⁶ Smuts, “Court-centred politics,” 37-38.

⁵⁷ Robert Cotton, *Warrs with forreign [sic] princes dangerous to our common-wealth...* (London: for William Shears, 1657), Wing C6505, 20-21.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁹ Wilfred P. Mustard, “Notes on the *Tragedy of Nero*,” *Philological Quarterly* 1 (1992): 177. Also cited in Teller, “*Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition,” 226 notes to lines 312-17.

⁶⁰ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G1r-v.

The playwright uses the plight of the Pisonian conspirators to suggest that, in light of the assault on virtue, men ought not to seek redress by provoking war, but instead should cultivate the ideal of constancy. Constancy, the playwright suggests, is the greater demonstration of virtue because the constant man can endure all forms of conflict, even that conflict presented by the most vicious opponent. The constant man remains the eternal victor, whereas a military man will endanger himself and those around him, will experience suffering and will eventually succumb to defeat.

The playwright's belief that constancy is the greater virtue is manifested in his presentation of the rebels. All those opposed to Nero's actions as ruler are self-effacing individuals who demonstrate heroism in their ability to quench their passions, and who endeavour to continue their campaign against Nero regardless of all possible punishment. From the beginning of the drama, the playwright develops the idea that the opponents of Nero must be commended not for their political actions, but for their Stoic characters. His portrait of Flavius, in particular, seems to exude admiration for the way in which Flavius casts aside his own life in the name of Rome.

Scevi: Stoutly, and like a Souldier, *Flavius:*
Yet, to seeke remedie to a Princes ill,
Seldome, but it doth the Phisitian kill.
Flavi: And if it doe *Sceuinus*, it shall take
But a deuoted soule from *Flavius*,
Which, to my Countrey, and the Gods of Rome,
Alreadie sacred is, and giuen away,
Death is no stranger vnto me, I haue
The doubtfull hazard in twelue Battailes throwne,
My chaunce was life.⁶¹

The playwright suggests that such individuals are heroic because they are able to neutralise their emotions, and because they possess the capacity to make themselves immune to the chaos which surrounds them. He taps into the rhetoric of the Senecan epistles which, as Felicity Green has noted, constructs the virtue of constancy in "heroic and martial terms".⁶² The playwright's approach to constancy follows this Senecan model in stressing the idea that the strength required to subdue the passions and remain steadfast is equivalent to the strength required of a military leader.

⁶¹ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. B3v.

⁶² Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom*, 83.

Further to this, the playwright argues that the ultimate demonstration of virtue is found in the way in which the rebels courageously and willingly face the torment of death without fleeing. By borrowing from Tacitus's description of Agricola to dramatise Seneca's death, the playwright draws attention to his engagement with the Senecan idea of heroic constancy and makes an explicit comparison between the military commander and the sage. The playwright turns to Savile's translation of the *Agricola* to emphasise the similarity between Seneca's stoic fortitude in quenching his passions, and Agricola's military fortitude. Teller notes the borrowing here, but omits mention of the striking aspect of this adaptation of Tacitus's words.⁶³ Seneca's companion muses on his friend's stoic death:

2. *Friend*. If there be any place for Ghosts of good men,
 If (as we haue bin long taught) great mens soules
 Consume not with their bodies, thou shalt see,
 (Looking from out the dwellings of the ayre)
 True duties to thy memorie perform'd;
 Not in the outward pompe of funerall,
 But in remembrance of thy deeds, and words,
 The oft recalling of thy many vertues,
 The Tombe, that shall th'eternall relickes keepe
 Of *Seneca*, shall be his hearers hearts.⁶⁴

Here Seneca is mourned using Tacitus's words on the death of Agricola, and thus in an odd moment the figure of Seneca, the celebrated personification of *otium*, is transformed into the heroic military commander and embodiment of *negotium*, Agricola.

If there bee any place for the ghosts of good men, if, as wise men define, the soules of great persons die not with the body, in peace mayest thou rest, and recall vs thy posterity from impatient and womanish waylings to the contemplation of thy vertues, which are in no sort to bee sorrowed for, or bewayled, but rather admired. * * * * *. This is true honor indeede, & this is the duety of nearest kinsfolkes. So I would counsaile thy daughter and wife to reuerence the memory of their father and husbände, with often remembering his doings and wordes, recognizing the glory and image of his mind, rather then of his body....⁶⁵

The comparison with Agricola is cemented by Seneca himself, who borrows Tacitus's closing remarks on the life of Agricola — “[t]hat of Agricola which wee did loue, which

⁶³ Teller, “*Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition,” 228 notes to l. 449-458.

⁶⁴ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G3v.

⁶⁵ Savile, *Agricola*, 266-267.

wee admired, remayneth, and so will remaine, in the mindes of men, in the continual succession of ages, in fame and renowne” — to describe himself.⁶⁶

Senec: ... Death from me nothing takes, but what's a burthen,
A clog, to that free sparke of Heauenly fire:
But that in *Seneca*, the which you lou'd,
Which you admir'd, doth, and shall still remaine
Secure of death, vntouched of the graue.⁶⁷

Seneca, then, is celebrated not as the elderly victim of Nero's cruelty who approaches death with fortitude and calm, but as the virile and glorious military hero and long serving provincial commander who died at the hands of Domitian. The playwright's intention is to compound the idea that, while those opposing Nero may not be engaging in war in the traditional sense, they are, in fact, able to prove their virtue and fortitude in another way, by stoically enduring their misfortune. Their ultimate act of self-annihilation, the playwright implies, reveals their virtue because they are fearless even when facing death. Men like Seneca, the playwright suggests, possess a more valuable virtue — their constancy — and this virtue ought to be celebrated more than any display of martial heroism. The playwright is unambiguous in this idea that “[v]ertue is paid her due, by death alone”.⁶⁸ He recalls Savile's cautionary tone, in that he suggests men of virtue truly display this quality through careful observation of the times in which they live, and through their ability to know when they are outdone.

Moreover, the playwright suggests that what makes the conspirators' actions truly virtuous is the *spectacular* nature of their deaths. The playwright is concerned with demonstrating how each character manifests his virtue according to the Senecan exit narrative, where, as T. S. Eliot noted, the emphasis is placed on the spectacle of virtue encapsulated in a pose or posture at the moment of death.⁶⁹ It is through Melichus's interpretation of Scevinus's behaviour, that the playwright underscores this art of dying well as a motif in the play. As Scevinus sharpens his sword to take revenge against Nero,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 267.

⁶⁷ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G3r, also cited in Teller, “*Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition,” 228 and Mustard, “Notes,” 177-178.

⁶⁸ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G3v.

⁶⁹ T. S. Eliot, “Seneca in Elizabethan Translation,” in T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* 3rd edn. (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), 72, also cited in Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 52. Eliot describes the idea of the pose: “The ethic of Seneca is a matter of postures. The posture which gives the greatest opportunity for effect, hence for the Senecan morality, is the posture of dying: death, gives his characters the opportunity for their most sententious aphorisms...”.

Melichus recognises that the ideal demonstration of his master's virtue would not come from taking arms against Nero, but in Scevinus turning the sword on himself:

Melic: Sharpning of swords, when must wee then haue blowes,
Or meanes my Master, *Cato*-like, to exempt
Himselfe from power of Fates, and cloy'd with life,
Giue the Gods backe their vnregarded gift,⁷⁰

The playwright has Melichus refer here to the same example Seneca uses to illustrate the perfect expression of virtue: the death of Cato. In *De providentia*, as Geoffrey Miles explains, Seneca presents Cato's suicide as a form of gladiatorial display in which the gods take pleasure in the spectacle of human virtue triumphing over fortune.⁷¹ Seneca theatricalises Cato's dying actions:

I see not, say I, what thing *Iupiter* hath more admirable vpon earth, if he would fix his mind vpon the same, then to behold *Cato* remaining firme and resolute after his confederates had been more then once defeated, and inuincible amiddest his countries ruines....I assure my selfe, that the gods with great ioy beheld, when this great and worthie personage, a powerfull protector of himselfe, trauelled to saue others, and gaue them meanes to escape: who likewise, in that last night of his life, followed his studie, whilst he thrust his sword into his belly, whilst he scattered abroad his bowels, and with his hands drew out of his bodie that so blessed soule....⁷²

In the *Tragedy of Nero*, the playwright, like Seneca, seems keen to stress that Cato's model of realising virtue through annihilation of the self is ultimately preferable, and perhaps more possible to achieve, than embarking on an herculean effort to overthrow a monarch and to rebel against king and kin in order to demonstrate virtue. He shares Cornwallis's veneration of Cato as a model to emulate, but, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the playwright, like Cornwallis, recognises the ethical problem raised by Cato's actions. Cornwallis weighs up Cato's manner of death and concludes that there is much good in the man:

If thou likest a seuere honest grauitie, looke vpon *Cato*, this fellow sure was naturally good; but somewhat too well contented to bee thought so: If I were not a Christian, I should like well of his death, especially of the manner of it: It is nothing to die, but that night to studie earnestly, I do infinitely allow: since I may not admire him, I will pittie his death, and withal, the feeling the points of the two

⁷⁰ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. E4v.

⁷¹ Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 51.

⁷² Seneca, *De providentia*, in *Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 500 also cited in Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 51.

swords, that was not sutable, I am afraid he was afraid of paine, I am sorry for this, the rest was very good, his other calmenesse shall make me pardon this motion.⁷³

This is the same picture of Cato that would later be painted in George Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey* where, as Giles Monsarrat implies, once he realises that there is no possible outlet for the exercise of political virtue, Cato resolves to demonstrate his virtue through liberating himself from the world.⁷⁴

In the *Tragedy of Nero*, whilst Melichus scornfully suggests that Scevinus has neither the "minde, nor cause" of Cato to articulate his virtue through the act of self-sacrifice, the playwright is clearly convinced that the other rebel, Piso, ought to be revered as a man cast in Cato's mould.⁷⁵ In act four, with the discovery of the conspiracy against Nero, the conspirators are scattered, and left to seek out what specks of glory remain. Scevinus urges Piso to continue and muster up the strength and valour he once showed on the battlefield, but Piso plans for a greater gesture.

Piso: Part of vs are already tak'n, the rest
Amaz'd, and seeking holes; Our hidden ends
You see laid open, Court, and Citie arm'd,
And for feare ioyning to the part they feare.
Why thould we moue desperate, and hopelesse armies
And vainely spill that noble bloud, that should
Christall *Rubes*, and the *Median* fields,
Not *Tiber* colour: and the more your show be
Your loues, and readinesse to loose your liues,
The lother I am to aduenture them.
Yet am I proud, you would for me haue dy'd,
But liue, and keepe your selues to worthier ends;
No Mother but my owne shall weepe my death,
Nor will make by ouerthrowing vs,
Heauen guiltie of more faults, yet from the hopes,
Your owne good wishes, rather then the thing
Doe make no vse, this comfort I receiue
Of death vnforst. O friends, I would not die
When I can liue no longer; 'Tis my glory,
That free, and willing I giue vp this breath,
Leauing such courage as yours vntri'd.
But to be long in talke of dying, would
Shew a relenting, and a doubtfull mind:
By this you shall my quiet thoughts intend;
I blame nor Earth nor Heauen for my end. *He dies.*⁷⁶

⁷³ Cornwallis, *Essayes*, sig. K1v-K2r.

⁷⁴ Monsarrat, *Light from the Porch*, 200-201.

⁷⁵ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. E4v.

⁷⁶ Ibid. sig. F3v-F4r.

Piso, the playwright implies, reveals his true courage and virtue through his willingness to die and through his desire to provide a model for others to emulate. In his dying act, Piso is able to perform his virtue and courage, while those like Scevinus and Lucan, who seek to demonstrate their own virtue, as Piso himself notes, only possess “courage vntri’d”. Moreover, the playwright depicts Piso’s death as glorious through presenting Piso as having chosen to die “free, and willing” rather than continue living a slave, not to Nero, but to Fortune. Piso, it is implied, achieves the same form of liberation as Cato did when, as Seneca writes in the epistles, his virtue led him to out-master Fortune:

[Cato] hauing his sword drawne, which vntill that time he had kept pure and neate from all murther. Thou hast not O Fortune; said hee, as yet done any thing against me, in opposing thy selfe against all my designes and enterprises. I haue not yet fought for mine owne, but my countries libertie, neither haue I endeouored so much to liue free, as to liue amongst free men. Now since the affaires of humane kind are desperate, *Cato* will well finde a meanes to set himselfe at libertie.⁷⁷

The means, Seneca continues, was by taking arms against himself and, in dying in this manner, there was “nothing lost of the greatnesse and goodnesse of his minde”.⁷⁸ The playwright articulates the same idea in his presentation of Piso, where he hints at the idea that Piso’s greatness and courage is proved in the act of turning the sword on himself. Lucan’s interpretation of Piso’s death encapsulates the playwright’s view that great courage, and great sorrow, lie in the act of suicide: “O that this noble courage had bin shewne,/Rather on enemies breasts, then on thy owne.”⁷⁹ While Cato’s death surely informs Piso’s, in that the playwright underscores Piso’s death as a celebration of the triumph of human constancy over fortune, it is also evident that the playwright cements this notion of the stoic death as a heroic victory, through the subtle parallel he draws between Piso and the future emperor Otho. As scholars have noted, in Piso’s speech before his suicide, the playwright adapts Savile’s translation of the words Otho speaks before his own suicide.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Seneca, *Epistles in Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 205.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. F4r.

⁸⁰ Mustard, “Notes,” 176. It is Teller who notes that it is Savile’s translation upon which the playwright is reliant: see Teller, “*Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition,” 222.

“The more hope you doe shew, if I listed to liue, the more commendation will bee of my death, as being voluntary and not by constraint. Fortune & I haue had good experiēce the one of the other: & nothing the lesse for that my time hath beene short: I tel you, it is harder to moderate a mans selfe in felicity, the which he looketh not long to enioy. The ciuill warre beganne on Vitellius party, and thence grew the first occasion to contend with armes for the Empire: but to contend no oftener but once, I for my part am purposed to giue the example. And hereby let posterity iudge and esteeme of Otho. Through my benefit Vitellius shall enjoy his brother, his wife, and his children: I seeke no reuenge, I haue no neede of such comforts. others haue kept longer the Empire, but let it be said, that none hath euer so valiantly left it. Shall I suffer so much Roman bloud againe to be spilt, and the common welth depriued of so worthy armies? Let this minde accompany me to my graue, and so surely it shal, that you for your parts would haue died for my sake,; but tary you and liue, and let not me be any longer a hinderance to your obtaining of pardon, nor you to my determination and purpose. To speake more of dying, or to vse many words in that argument, I take to proceede of a cowardely courage. This take for a principall prooffe of my resolutenesse, that I complaine not of any. For to blame gods or men is their property that gladly would liue.”⁸¹

In the *Histories*, Otho delivers this speech before his suicide after the Battle of Bebricum where, backed by the praetorian guard, who had named him emperor, he fought with Vitellius for the imperial crown. As Tacitus’s words suggest, although Otho had encountered a formidable force, and while he had reserves remaining to counter Vitellius, he took his own life and recognised the fact that greater benefit would be attained both by him, and by Rome, through his death. In bonding these two deaths together, the playwright underlines the idea that this act of self-annihilation is itself an act of valour equivalent to the deeds performed by military men. What Otho and Piso recognise is that greater liberty and glory flow from this apathetic disregard for the self, and what the playwright instils in his depiction of these stoic heroics is Seneca’s lesson: “It was much to conquer *Carthage*, but more to conquer death”.⁸²

Although it would appear that this stance brings the playwright close to commending the act of suicide, it is clear that he elaborates a philosophy that does not entail the literal annihilation of the self. What the *Tragedy of Nero* celebrates, as will be explained later in this chapter, is the relinquishing of the political self. It points towards the need for men to attain some form of oneness with a “real” or internal self. The playwright argues that, in order to attain this, men need to identify the “constant” self as a form of stability in a world of perpetual change. As Ben Jonson suggests in his *Discoveries*, man’s strength and liberation come from within. Jonson explains that he will rely on his inner

⁸¹ Savile, *Histories*, 81-82, also cited in Teller, “*Tragedy of Nero* (1624): A Critical Edition,” 222.

⁸² Seneca, *Epistles in Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 205. Seneca speaks here of the death of Cato.

self: “make my strengths, such as they are,/Here in my bosome, and at home”.⁸³ As Katherine Eisaman Maus explains, for Jonson, “personal identity seems comfortingly continuous and inalienable”, and Jonson insists that man must return to his true self in order to survive the “misfortune, sicknesse, griefe” of the real world.⁸⁴ In the *Tragedy of Nero* the playwright seizes on this idea of the constant man as the true self, and argues that, in order to attain virtue, man must reject the impulse for revenge that actions like Nero’s would normally inspire. Instead man must shed that persona in favour of adopting the persona of the sage. The examples of Seneca and Piso in the narratives discussed above, then, represent the victory of the “constant man”. These men detach themselves from the external misfortune of Nero’s Rome and conquer all the emotions caused by their political climate. They do not achieve virtue through seeking redress for their grievances, but through relinquishing the bodies afflicted by the harm of Nero’s Rome.

Liberty and liberation

In the playwright’s treatment of the deaths of Seneca and Piso, it is clear that he engages with what it means to be free, using the same vocabulary of “being free” and “being enslaved” we find in Savile’s and Gwinne’s work. The playwright, as in the works discussed in previous chapters, formulates a theory of liberty where freedom entails being ethically *sui iuris*. In this theory, the free man is he who remains in possession of himself, and is free not only from domination by passions, but is also free to determine his own path, unchecked and unbeleagured by the power of fortune. As in Savile’s *End of Nero*, the playwright engages with the Senecan *exitus* narrative to demonstrate that the ultimate freedom is found by breaking the confines of one’s material existence. By adopting this stoic theory of liberty, the playwright develops a political philosophy that allows man to survive political domination whilst remaining free.

In the playwright’s treatment of the Pisonian conspiracy he outlines how the rebels are guided not by the desire to return to the constitution of the Republic (see above), but by the idea that they are liberating Rome from the rule of a tyrant. Their actions against Nero, as Scevinus declares, are conceived as something “honest” and “for the people done”,

⁸³ Ben Jonson, “To the World: A Farewell for a Gentle-woman, Vertuous and Noble,” III in *The Forest in Ben Jonson*, ed. Herford and Simpson, vol. 8, 102.

⁸⁴ Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 14; “To the World,” 102.

since they aim to remove Nero, who is nothing more than “*Alcmeon, or blind Oedipus*”.⁸⁵ The rebels’ reverence for the institution of the princeps is professed in their praise for Augustus, and thus it is only the *person* of Nero they oppose, not the idea of being ruled by an emperor.⁸⁶ The playwright does not even accept the idea of objecting to a particular monarch. Instead, the playwright prefers to reframe the whole discussion of liberty in terms extrapolated from Stoic philosophy. In his presentation of the fate of the Pisonian rebels, the playwright stresses the idea that the rebels encounter some form of epiphany after their conspiracy has been discovered. The playwright indicates that the rebels realise that the freedom they desire comes only with the triumph over Fortune at the point of their death, and with release from earthly existence.

Piso, in his closing speech, stresses that he wishes to die a “death vnforst”.⁸⁷ Recognising his change of fortune, he seeks to pre-empt his destruction at the hand of another: “O friends, I would not die/When I can liue no longer”.⁸⁸ As his words suggest, there is a marked difference between *choosing to die* and *living no longer*. In placing this emphasis on Piso’s self-mastery at his point of death, the playwright draws upon the Senecan ideal of dying the most fitting and courageous death. Surely Piso’s words are crafted with Seneca’s seventieth epistle in mind, in which Seneca teaches that “a wise-man liueth as much as he ought, not as much as he can.”⁸⁹ Piso seems to consider the truth of this maxim, and understands that by living “as much as he ought” he is assured his freedom in death. He has, like Savile’s *Vindex*, purchased his freedom by controlling his fate.

Moreover, in his handling of Seneca’s death scene, the anonymous author is similarly indebted to Senecan philosophy, which explains that liberty consists of the act of being released from terrestrial existence. Seneca urges his soul to “goe cheerefully/To thy owne Heauen, from whence it first let downe”, now freed from this “imprisoning flesh putst on”.⁹⁰ It seems that the playwright explores two concepts of liberty: a false material liberty and a true liberty related to the essence of man. This idea of conflicting forms of

⁸⁵ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. D1v-D2r.

⁸⁶ See for example *Ibid.*, sig. B3r.

⁸⁷ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. F4r.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Seneca, *Epistles in Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 286.

⁹⁰ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G3v.

liberty finds expression in Pierre Charron's *Of Wisdom*. Charron explains in his first book that there are two forms of liberty:

There is a twofolde libertie: the true, which is of the minde or spirit, and is in the power of euery one, and can not be taken away, nor indamaged by another, nor by Fortune it selfe: contrariwise, the seruitude of the spirit is the most miserable of all others, to serue our owne affections, to suffer our selues to be deuoured by our owne passions, to be led by opinions. ô pitifull captiuitie! The corporall libertie is a good greatly to be esteemed, but subiect to Fortune: and it is neither iust nor reasonable (if it be not by reason of some other circumstance) that is should be preferred before life it selfe, as some of the ancients haue done, who haue rather made choice of death, than to lose it...⁹¹

This idea of celebrating that “spiritual” form of liberty, that is, an eternal and unwavering liberty, is surely echoed in Seneca's words in the *Tragedy of Nero*. After the discovery of the Pisonian conspiracy, Seneca consoles himself with the fact that death reignites that greater liberty which resides within him.

Senec. ... Leaue, leaue these teares,
Death from me nothing takes, but what's a burthen,
A clog, to that free sparke of Heauenly fire:
But that in *Seneca*, the which you lou'd,
Which you admir'd, doth, and shall still remaine
Secure of death, vntouched of the graue.⁹²

Seneca possesses a greater gift, the playwright implies, because his freedom is internal and untouched by any other. Moreover, the other conspirators, like Lucan and Secvinius for example, are painted as those misguided, as Charron suggests, by the false light of some “corporal freedom” and are willing to die in its name.⁹³ The implication of the playwright's approach is that it renders all action in the name of liberty null: if *true* liberty is an inner state then any external freedom gained by the overthrow of a ruler is false and irrelevant.

While Piso and Seneca only learn the true meaning of freedom through their death, the playwright suggests it is not necessary to be brought to the brink of self-destruction in order to attain freedom. For the playwright, the examples of Piso and Seneca are instructive, because they teach man that liberty resides within himself, and that his freedom can be attained if man does not fear what fortune may hold. Although Piso and Seneca carry out the act of suicide, the playwright implies that their freedom is actually achieved

⁹¹ Charron, *Of Wisdome*, 209-210.

⁹² Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G3r.

⁹³ See for example the exchange between Lucan, Scevinius and Flavinus in Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. B3v-B4r.

not at this point, but at the point at which they recognise that their terrestrial existence is transitory and material, and become aware that they possess the power to overcome Fortune. It is in adopting this perspective on the world that they become liberated.

Theatrical selves

A further reflection of the anonymous playwright's "new humanism" is found in his handling of the art of politics, and indeed the material world, as a theatrical craft. The rule of an emperor whose entire personality involves impersonation provides the perfect opportunity for the playwright to illustrate an idea recurrent in Stoic works: that human existence is inauthentic. On the one hand, the play exudes a sense of dissatisfaction with a political culture which reveres expert Machiavels, those "wheeling turning politician[s]", and "changing Proteus[es]", and counters the idea that casuistry forms the foundation of successful politicking.⁹⁴ On the other hand, through his depiction of Nero's unravelling, the playwright recognises the sobering fact that all earthly existence is itself a form of posture or a form of detachment from the real or authentic self. The playwright here adopts an approach similar to that which McCrea suggests Walter Raleigh pursued. The playwright condemns the spread of dissimulation and "bad" reason of state, whilst also realising the futility of this condemnation given man's natural propensity for dissembling.⁹⁵ However, the playwright's cynicism is denser than Raleigh's, and there is a palpable sense of weariness in the playwright's words as he presents withdrawal into the self as the only solution for one wishing to escape the trappings of the world's stage.

In Nero's Rome no man is quite what he seems. The men around Nero flatter the emperor and attach themselves to his person only in order to advance themselves and secure their wealth and power. Nimphidius, in particular, is presented as the master of word-play and cunning, able to outwit those around him. In the opening act of the play, he reveals that his true ambition is to secure Nero's crown for himself, and that he intends to use Poppaea and those around Nero as mere instruments to elevate himself.

.... Tis not *Poppeas* armes,
Nor the short pleasures of a wanton bed,
That can extinguish mine aspiring thirst
To *Neroes* Crowne; By her loue I must climbe,
Her bed is but a step vnto his Throne. ...
Thus, I by *Neroes*, and *Poppeas* favour,

⁹⁴ Anon. *Claudius*, sig. D1v.

⁹⁵ McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 58.

Rais'd to the enuious height of second place,
May gaine the first: Hate must strike *Nero* downe,
Love make *Nimphidius* way vnto a Crowne.⁹⁶

Nimphidius continues to work against Nero's interests throughout the play, while pretending to serve him loyally. He deflects attention away from his ambition by raising Nero's suspicions about those around him. When news of the Pisonian conspiracy is broken, Nimphidius is quick to express concern about the loyalty of Piso and Scevinus, but the words he uses against them read as an accurate reflection of his own ambitions.

Nymph: Piso that thought to climbe by bowing downe,
By giuing a way to thriue, and raising others
To become great himselfe, hath now by death
Given quiet to your thoughts, and feare to theirs
That shall from treason their aduancement plot;
Those dangerous heads, that his ambition leand on,
And they by it crept vp, and from their meannesse
Thought in this stirre to rise aloft, are off...⁹⁷

Nimphidius continues to manipulate Nero until news of the emperor's impending overthrow reaches him. At this point, Nimphidius recognises that the only way he can preserve his chances of power is to switch allegiance to Galba. To save himself, he abandons Nero to his fate.

Slow making counsels, and the sliding yeere
Haue brought me to the long foreseene destruction
Of this misled yong man; his State is shaken,
And I will push it on...
I his distracted counsels doe disperce
With fresh despaires, I animate the Senate
And the people to ingage them past recall
In preiudice of *Nero*, and in brief;
Perish he must, the fates and I resolute it;
Which to effect, I presently will goe,
Proclaime a *Donatiue* in *Galbaes* name.⁹⁸

Nimphidius's dissembling is, in fact, representative of the culture at Nero's court, as Cornutus, the historian advising Nero on his attempts to write a history of Rome, reveals. Nero looks for "flatterie", Cornutus states, and the men around the emperor know neither "Truth" nor "Vertue", because they sing praises of that which Nero commends, and scorn

⁹⁶ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. B2r-B2v.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. H2r.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. H4r.

that which Nero condemns.⁹⁹ All those around the emperor, as Antonius admits in act two of the play, present a “false glasse/Of outward difference” to the world, and hide their true character.¹⁰⁰

In this depiction, the playwright taps into contemporary anxieties about the culture of the court that had grown around James during this period. The concerns here echo those found in Jonson’s *Sejanus*, where, as Smuts indicates, Jonson expresses his suspicion of silver-tongued ministers, and represents them not as pragmatic or prudent, but as ambitious and amoral individuals.¹⁰¹ Jonson’s “distrust of verbal agility and the manipulation of appearances” is shared by the playwright who, through the mouthpiece of Cornutus, indicates how the bending of words and falsification of appearances ought to be considered abhorrent practices rather than skills to cultivate.¹⁰² In the play, Cornutus is faced with punishment for speaking the truth to Nero, and he criticises the culture of Nero’s court, where the truth has no value and words have no fixed meaning:

Cornu: And why should Death? Or Banishment be due?
For speaking, that which was requir’d, my thought:
O why doe Princes loue to be deceiu’d?
And, euen, doe force abuses on themselues?
There Eares are so with pleasing speech beguil’d,
That Truth they mallice, Flatterie, truth account,
And their owne Soule, and vnderstanding lost,
Goe (what they are) to seeke in other men.¹⁰³

Cornutus’s words reveal the concern that in this world, where no airing is given to the truth, and where words are used without consideration for ideas conveyed by them, all meaning and understanding will be lost. *Sejanus* similarly confronts the political and ethical consequences of living in a world in which word and meaning have become uncoupled as Silanus observes. Silanus, speaking of Latarius in particular, wishes that the ministers around Tiberius “[h]ad but a mind allied unto [their] ... words”.¹⁰⁴ Instead the “grace” of the emperor’s ministers is “merely but lip-good”, and the emperor is numb to

⁹⁹ Ibid., sig. C3v.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., sig. C1r.

¹⁰¹ Smuts, “Court-Centered Politics,” 32-33.

¹⁰² Ibid., 32.

¹⁰³ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. C4r.

¹⁰⁴ Jonson, *Sejanus*, 1.1.400-401 (p123).

the proper sense of all their rhetoric “[a]s (dead to virtue) he permits himself/Be carried like a pitcher, by the ears.”¹⁰⁵

In the *Tragedy of Nero* the playwright conveys a warning about the power courtiers and ministers possess through their command of language and appearances, and writes against a Machiavellian approach to power in which, as Jonas Barish summarises, the true measure of success in politics revolves not around sincerity, but around how effectively man is able to “cultivate a pattern of appearances” to “serve the tactical ends of rule.”¹⁰⁶ Machiavelli’s advice to the new prince is that he should capitalise on man’s gullibility and put on a beguiling show of clemency and honesty and hide his true intent: it is necessary to play the fox in order to maintain power.¹⁰⁷ Machiavelli seeks to persuade us that men “are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find some one who will allow himself to be deceived.”¹⁰⁸ While Lipsius, in chapters thirteen and fourteen of the *Politica*, accepts a degree of Machiavellian deception as a necessity in governance, those around the young Prince Henry go further in advocating insincerity as the foundation of political success.¹⁰⁹ Thus Dallington recommends the use of deception in political life in his work *Aphorismes civil and militarie*. In the twelfth aphorism, Dallington draws upon chapter fourteen of the *Politica* to express the idea that, while a private man must be virtuous and seem so, it is considered one of those “*necessary evils*” for a public man to dissemble to avoid harming himself or arming his enemies through being “*overt [sic] in expressing his nature, or free in venting his purpose*”.¹¹⁰ Politics, Dallington urges in the third book of his aphorisms, is inherently theatrical and to succeed man must be able to assume any role.

*HE that weareth his heart in his fore-head, and is of an overt and transparent nature, through whose words, as through cristall, ye may see into euery corner of his thoughtes: That man is fitter for a table of good-fellowshippe, then a Councill table: For upon the Theater of publick employment either in peace or warre, the actors must of necessity weare vizardes, and change them in euerie Sceane.*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 1.1.410; 416-417 (p123).

¹⁰⁶ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 96.

¹⁰⁷ Machiavelli, *Machiavelli's Prince*, 142-143.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 143.

¹⁰⁹ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Qr; sig. Rijr.

¹¹⁰ Dallington, *Aphorismes*, 15.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 176. Also cited in McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 57.

As McCrea notes, Dallington appears to accept this idea that some form of prudence or deception is a necessary part of politics.¹¹² Dallington suggests that, if a man wants to participate in political life, he ought to recognise that very few men succeed through the honest articulation of their thoughts and intentions.

The anonymous playwright, however, perhaps also writing with the young Prince and his followers in mind, undercuts this type of argument by foregrounding the idea that far from being malleable to political circumstance, the best way to survive political life is to adhere to the Stoic principle of remaining true to oneself. As noted in the previous sections, for the playwright, the true self is only found through the annihilation of the theatrical self, that is, the persona inhabited in the world. Throughout the play, he applies the Senecan analogy of life as a work of theatre, to express how the world is transitory and that each man merely assumes a part upon the world's stage.¹¹³ In the presentation of Nero, it is evident that the playwright confronts this idea that the "real" persona — that earthly presence shown to others — is just as much an illusion as is any theatrical role. There is no difference between Nero when he is performing his duties as emperor, and Nero when he is acting the roles of "*Alcmeon, or blind Oedipus*".¹¹⁴ Nero's role upon the stage is as transitory and meaningless as that of his role as emperor, and the ease with which he switches between these roles is a demonstration of this.¹¹⁵ Petronius recognises the power of theatre in prompting men to take action, but also hints towards Nero's ability to cast off his identity and assume another role when presented with danger.

Petron: ... How oft, with danger of the field beset,
Or with home mutineys, would he vnbee
Himselfe, or, ouer cruell alters weeping,
Wish, that with putting off a vizard, hee

¹¹² McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 57.

¹¹³ Seneca, *Epistles in Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 323-325, also cited in Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca*, 115-116. Ker notes that Seneca's use of this theatrical trope to describe man's relationship to the world has three variants which often collide "(1) being one's natural self rather than playing a role, (2) playing one role rather than many, and (3) emulating an exemplary character"; see Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca*, 117. Here the anonymous author of the *Tragedy of Nero*, I argue, engages with the first form of this theatrical metaphor.

¹¹⁴ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. D2r.

¹¹⁵ The playwright here may be picking up on Dio's attitude towards Nero's theatricality as he stresses how Nero preferred the roles of Alcmaeon or Orestes to the role of emperor: "What stranger victory than one for which he received the crown of wild olive, bay, parsley or pine and lost the political crown? Yet why should one lament these acts of his alone, seeing that he also elevated himself on the high-soled buskins only to fall from the throne, and in putting on the mask threw off the dignity of his sovereignty to beg in the guise of a runaway slave, to be led about as a blind man, to be heavy with child, to be in labour, to be a madman, or to wander an outcast, his favourite roles being those of Oedipus, Thyestes, Heracles, Alcmeon and Orestes?"; see Dio, *Roman History*, 151-153.

Might his true inward sorrow lay aside...¹¹⁶

Nero's desire to reject his role as emperor and assume some other role is not only a reflection of his theatricality and the hold which playing and performance have over him, it is also a demonstration of how every pose and posture man takes in the material world is just another "mask" hiding the real self. The playwright's exploration of this theme is subtle, but it is evident that, in Nero's "vn-being" of himself, the playwright hints at the malleability of man's earthly temperament and persona.

This theme is more pronounced when the playwright explores death as the destruction of the theatrical self. This transition from the theatrical to the "true" self is most obviously encapsulated in Nero's self-destruction. As news of Vindex's and Galba's revolt reaches Nero, he reveals his anxiety at having been cast in the role of emperor, since his role is insecure and under threat. He laments his sorry position, and wishes instead to play "a ragged Magistrate" or "a Iudge of measures, and of corne", rather than "the adored Monarke of the world" who has been elevated "from a priuate, and sure state" to "this slippery hill of greatnesse".¹¹⁷ This is the first step in the unravelling of Nero's identity, as a few scenes later his worldly identity is completely destroyed:

Nero: O now I see the vizard from my face
So louely, and so fearefull is fall'n off
That vizard, shadow, nothing (Maiestie)
(Which like a child acquainted with his feares,
But now men trembled at, and now contemne)
Nero forsaken is of all the world.¹¹⁸

This scene evokes the similar destruction of Richard II in Shakespeare's play, and there is certainly an element of this informal deposition scene that suggests that monarchy is, in the playwright's view, nothing more than ceremony and trappings, since Nero reveals he is only wearing a mask of majesty and that there is nothing magisterial about his character or person. However, what the playwright stresses here is that Nero, like any other man, inhabits an external role for the duration of his life, and that he is only returned to his own character through death. The death and unmasking of Nero resembles that of Seneca in the previous act. As we have seen in the earlier sections, Seneca stresses that in his act of suicide, he is liberating himself from his earthly role, and divesting himself of the external

¹¹⁶ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. E1v.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., sig. F3r.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., sig. I1r-v.

persona he has inhabited. In death, he suggests, he is liberated and returned to his true “inner” self:

Senec: Be not afraid my soule, goe cheerefully,
To thy owne Heauen, from whence it first let downe,
Thou loath by this imprisoning flesh putst on,
Now lifted vp, thou rauisht shalt behold
The truth of things, at which we wonder here,
And foolishly doe wrangle on beneath;
And like a God shalt walke the spacious ayre,
And see what euen to conceit’s deni’d. ...
... And combat of my flesh, that ending, I
May still shew *Seneca*, and my selfe die.¹¹⁹

It is this idea of living a life based on conceit and impersonation which comes through in both Seneca’s and Nero’s deaths. The crucial aspect of their deaths is that they act as a form of liberation and demonstration of the true identity, as Seneca’s final words indicate: he is Seneca, dying as *himself*. The anonymous playwright writes the exits of Nero and Seneca borrowing from the analogy found in Seneca’s *Epistles*, where death is likened to the drawing of the final curtain on the external persona. In the twenty-sixth epistle Seneca notes that his old age has prepared him for the final performance he must give:

Thus prepare I my selfe couragiously for that day, wherein I will pronounce of my selfe and iudge, all crafts & subtilties laide aside, whether I speake or thinke constantly, whether the contumacious wordes, whatsoeuer which I vrged and darted out against fortune, were dissembled or fained. Remoue the estimation of men, it is alwayes doubtfull and diuided on both parts. Remoue thy studies, thou hast handled all thy life time, death must pronounce of thee.¹²⁰

By presenting death as the pronounciation or revelation of the self, the anonymous playwright draws attention to the fragility and emptiness of the world and any roles within the world that man assumes.

This exploration of the temporality of identity taps into the themes evident in the work of Montaigne. In her exploration of Montaigne and the concept of freedom, Felicity Green has built on the work of Richard Regosin, who had identified the theme of selfhood as being central to the *Essais*.¹²¹ She notes, using Regosin’s words, that there is an emphatic distinction in the *Essais* between the internal and external self:

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. G3v.

¹²⁰ Seneca, *Epistles* in *Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 209.

¹²¹ Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom*, 61- 69; Richard L. Regosin, *The Matter of My Book: Montaigne’s Essais as the Book of the Self* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977).

The text dramatizes a ‘constant tension between inside and outside, between private self and public persona [...] between the parts played and the real, essential dimension of being’ – between ‘the borrowed form of the actor (*forme empruntée*)’ and ‘that personal ruling pattern (*forme sienne, forme maistresse*) which is the very heart of individuality.’¹²²

As Regosin notes, Montaigne emphasises the theatricality of life and stresses the idea that man merely inhabits his character, an idea that comes to the fore in the tenth chapter of the third book of the *Essais*.¹²³ Montaigne provides the following analysis of life:

*Mundus uniuersus exercet histrioniam. All the world doth practise stage-playing. We must play our parts duely, but as the part of a borrowed personage. Of a visard and apparance [sic], wee should not make a reall essence, nor proper of that which is anothers.*¹²⁴

This idea of the world as a stage is similarly explored by Lipsius in the *De constantia*, where Languis scoffs at men who claim to be afflicted by their country’s misery:

One saith *The whol world is a stage-play*. Trulie in this case it is so. Some crie out, These ciuil warres torment vs... Is it so? I see your sorrow indeed, but the cause I must search out more narrowly. Is it for the common-wealths sake? O player, put off thy vizard...¹²⁵

However, as Regosin notes, in Montaigne’s work the theatrical metaphor moves beyond the idea that “[s]ocial man assumes postures and puts on airs in the public arena” to the idea that “the playing of roles itself remains an inextricable part of human existence.”¹²⁶ The author of the *Tragedy of Nero* adopts an approach to this metaphor of “world as stage” which is undoubtedly closer to that taken by Montaigne than it is to Lipsius’s approach, and this is most noticeable in their shared interpretation of the death of man as representing the end of the performance. For Montaigne, as Regosin observes, it is the transition from life to death which marks man’s re-assumption of his true self.¹²⁷ In the essay “*That we*

¹²² Green, *Montaigne and the Life of Freedom*, 61. Green cites Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, 233-234 but she has slightly altered his analysis by removing the idea that there is a battle between inner and external self: “The borrowed form of the actor (*forme empruntée*, [838]) obscures and endangers that personal ruling pattern (*forme sienne, forme masitresse*, [III,2,811]) which is the very heart of individuality”.

¹²³ Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, 234.

¹²⁴ Montaigne, *Essays*, 604. The French of the same passage is cited in Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, 234.

¹²⁵ Lipsius, *Two Bookes*, sig. D2r.

¹²⁶ Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, 234.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

should not iudge of our happinesse, untill after our death”, Montaigne identifies how man ends his performance through dying.

...the resolution and assurance of a well ordered soule, should never be ascribed vnto man, vntill he have bin seen play the last act of his comedie, and without doubt the hardest. In all the rest there may be some maske: either these sophisticall discourses of Philosophie are not in vs but by countenance, or accidents that never touch vs to the quick, give vs alwaies leasure to keepe our countenance setled. But when that last parte of death, and of our selves comes to be acted, then no dissembling will availe, then is it high time to speake plaine english, and put off all vizardes: then whatsoever the pot containeth must be shewne, be it good or bad, foule or cleane, wine or water.¹²⁸

A passage from Lucretius summarises the essence of Montaigne’s analysis: “For then are sent true speeches from the heart,/We are our selves, wee leave to play a parte.”¹²⁹ Regosin’s translation of the passage is more accurate here than Florio’s: “At last true words surge up from deep within our breast,/The mask is snatched away, reality is left.”¹³⁰ In the *Tragedy of Nero*, this is exactly what happens to Seneca and Nero in death. As noted above, Seneca is *himself* through the act of death, and Nero’s mask falls from his face at the point of death: both return to their authentic selves. The playwright must surely have been familiar with Montaigne’s work or was consciously writing in a “tradition” in which this idea of the “performed self” had gained currency. It is clear, for example, that Cornwallis accepted Montaigne’s idea of conflict between the internal and external self as valid, because he repeats the argument in his own essay “Of Vaine-glory”:

Z[e]ale and Contemplation, haue likened the earth to a Theater, humane natures to Actors, whose partes deliuered, they deliuer their stage to the next, witnessing by this, the shortnesse of mortalitie. Let me lengthen this suite made for the worlde, and resemble our knowledges to a common Plaiers; who gets his part by hart without the knowledge of his heart, speaking not vnderstanding. Who beleeues me not, let him beholde my subiect, whose sight bleared with folly, neuer sawe, nor euer shall see the light of knowledge.¹³¹

The playwright writes in a similar tone in the *Tragedy of Nero* where, far from being concerned with how man might engage in the political world, the author is preoccupied

¹²⁸ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 29 also cited in French in Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, 234.

¹²⁹ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 29. Montaigne cites Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 3:57 see Lucretius, *De rerum natura III* ed. and trans. P. Michael Brown (Westminster: Aris and Phillips Ltd., 1997), 23. The passage reads “This makes it more appropriate to examine a man in time of doubt and trial, and to discover his character in adversity, because this is the time when truthful words are elicited from the depths of his heart and the mask is snatched away; the reality remains.”

¹³⁰ Regosin, *The Matter of My Book*, 234.

¹³¹ Cornwallis, *Essayes*, sig. Gg2v.

with demonstrating the futility of engagement since the political world forms part of what is, more generally, a merely fabricated existence.

In adopting the approach that political existence or the political self is merely a performance, the playwright also shares the attitude of Jonson. Jonson similarly viewed politicking from the perspective of a detached observer, and scorned the material world as an inauthentic one far removed from the state in which man should live. In the *Discoveries*, as Katherine Eisaman Maus has shown, Jonson engages with the ideal of Stoic sagehood and dwells upon the idea that the material world is a construct.¹³² He explains his perspective:

*I have considered our whole life is like a Play: wherein every man, forgetfull of himselfe, is in travaile with expression of another. Nay, wee so insist in imitating others, as wee cannot (when it is necessary) return to our selves; like children, that imitate the vices of stammerers so long, till at last they become such; and make the habit to another nature, as it is never forgotten.*¹³³

As will be explained in the next section, Jonson calls for a return to a more natural self and the relocation of this self to the natural world where man and his surroundings exist in harmony. Furthermore, as Thomas Greene demonstrated, Jonson builds a view of the world where the stable, unchanging and inner self is something to be celebrated. Greene explains that Jonson's writing uses the motif of the circle as a symbol of order and unity and, in Jonson's verse in particular, these circles have the tendency to diminish and "shrink towards their center, toward the Stoic individual soul, self-contained, balanced, at peace within itself even in isolation."¹³⁴ In the epigram "To Sir Thomas Roe", Greene explains, Jonson celebrates the man who rests upon the inner self as a source of strength:

T[h]ou hast begun well, ROE, which stand well too,
And I know nothing more thou hast to doo.
He that is round within himselfe, and streight,
Need seeke no other strength, no other height;
Fortune vpon him breakes her selfe, if ill,
And what would hurt his vertue makes it still.
That thou at once, then, nobly maist defend
With thine owne course the iudgement of thy friend,
Be alwayes to thy gather'd selfe the same:
And studie conscience, move then thou would'st fame.
Though both be good, the latter yet is worst,

¹³² Eisaman Maus, *Ben Jonson and the Roman Frame of Mind*, 33.

¹³³ Ben Jonson, *Discoveries* in *Ben Jonson*, vol.8, ed. Herford and Simpson, 597.

¹³⁴ Thomas M. Greene, "Ben Jonson and the Centered Self," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 10, no.2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (1970): 330.

And euer is ill got without the first.¹³⁵

Jonson explains that the retreat to this real, internal self provides shelter against the afflictions of Fortune. The playwright adopts the same position as Jonson by pointing to the fact that the external world is based on artifice, and by urging man to shrink from this world and return to the authentic self as a means to survive the mutability of the real world. In viewing the world from this perspective he is able to develop the idea that investing in the artificial world of politics is pointless.

The playwright's attitude towards the instability and inconstancy of the political world goes beyond the outlook of Lipsius in the *De constantia*, where Lipsius urges man to put his material suffering into perspective and advises man to pursue constancy if he wishes to remain un-afflicted by the external world. As this section has demonstrated, the playwright's approach to political engagement involves compartmentalising the world into the internal or "real" and external or "fictional". If man accepts, the playwright implies, that the external world unreal and man's role within it merely a posture, then there is no profit to be gained from entrenching oneself in this fictional realm, for it is an illusion which masks the "real" dimension. In adopting this division between the "real" and "fictional" world the playwright adopts the familiar stance of the court satirist where the critic of court life extracted himself from "the false and empty world of 'courting vaine'" and instead celebrated the virtue of "the rustic simplicity of the pastoral life".¹³⁶ What the playwright would have men contemplate is the idea that the court life represents the theatrical world and that there exists a more simple and more natural form of existence to which men ought to aspire.

Worlds apart: Stoic cosmopolitanism

In addition to the idea that man must accept a degree of difference and conflict between his "internal" and "external" selves, the playwright engages with the idea that man exists and acts within a dual framework. Having suggested that, in the external world, man's real identity is concealed, and is only revealed through departure from this external space, it follows logically that man possesses an identity in two realms: an earthly or external realm and a celestial realm where man's inner self is revealed. In this, the playwright articulates a form of "stoic cosmopolitanism", that is, the idea that man

¹³⁵ Ben Jonson, "To SIR THOMAS ROE," xcvi in *Epigrams in Ben Jonson*, vol. 8, ed. Herford and Simpson, 63 also cited in Greene, "Ben Jonson and the Centered Self," 330-331.

¹³⁶ Catherine Bates, "Literature and the Court," in *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature* ed. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 366.

possesses citizenship at a basic level in terms of participation in a social structure, and on a greater level in the cosmos. This idea had been explained by early Stoic writers, and also found expression in Senecan philosophy.¹³⁷ The idea was picked up by the early modern “new humanists”, who, enamoured by the idea that constancy provided man with the means to become truly *sui iuris*, suggested that man’s self-mastery and withdrawal did not constitute a rejection of citizenship, but the expression of a form of ultimate citizenship as part of a land without terrestrial confines. This section argues that, by adopting this approach to citizenship, the playwright undermines any notion of citizenship that might be considered “republican” in nature. The playwright does not emphasise the sociable nature of the citizen, nor does he stress that the pursuit of the *vita activa* in the name of the public good is a demonstration of citizenship. Instead, he prompts men to consider their existence within something wider, and asks them to identify themselves as citizens of the cosmos. While it may appear that the playwright is dealing here with an idealised or hypothetical form of “community” or “city”, it is clear that this wider or general cosmos shares the hallmarks of the idealised “country” life that satirists of the court were describing in this period. Therefore, when the playwright calls for man to renounce his worldly citizenship in favour of a cosmic citizenship, what we are really dealing with is a plea for men to reject the corrupt and capricious world of the court in favour of a return to a natural and wholesome life of the “country”. The playwright criticises the *culture* of the court but does not, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, call for an overthrow of the monarch enshrined at the heart of that culture. Instead, the playwright calls for those dissatisfied with the court to recognise that, by adopting the position of the sage, adhering to the “true” self and living at one with the ordered universe, they can emerge unscathed.

In act two of the *Tragedy of Nero*, the author, Cornutus, rails against the state of Nero’s court where, as outlined above, flattering voices soothe the ear of the emperor. Tigellinus decrees that Cornutus should be banished from Rome for having ridiculed Nero’s attempt to write the history of the Romans. Cornutus responds to his banishment with sarcastic but also genuine gratitude for being cast out of the imperial court. He replies to Tigellinus, claims that he would rather be anywhere than in Rome, and points to the fact that his earthly banishment means nothing when he remains within a cosmos governed by a greater, and more worthy, ruler.

Cornu:... To banish me from thee? O let me goe

¹³⁷ Malcolm Schofield, “The Cosmic City,” chap. 3 in *The Stoic Ideal of the City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

And dwell in *Taurus*, dwell in *Ethiope*,
So that I doe not dwell at *Rome*, with thee.
The farther, still, I goe from hence, I know,
The farther I leaue Shame and Vice behind.
Where can I goe, but I shall see thee, *Sunne*?
And *Heauen* will be as neere me, still as here.
Can they, so farre, a knowing soule exyle,
That her owne roofe she sees not ore her head?¹³⁸

As Cornutus's words suggest, for a man with a "knowing soule" there is no such thing as exile, because such a man inhabits a vast world where, wherever he is, Heaven provides the "roofe" to his world. The implication of such a world-view is that man's earthly existence is, like his earthly identity, merely transitory. Men are, the playwright suggests, citizens of a wider order and thus any attachment to a political or social structure is temporary. In the play this idea is conveyed by Seneca in his death sequence, where, as we have discussed before, he returns to his natural self. He urges his soule to "goe cheerefully,/To thy owne Heauen, from whence it first let downe", implying that his natural state of existence lies within the celestial realm and that his connection with Rome, where his soul happens to reside, is, in the typically Senecan metaphor, a form of confinement.¹³⁹

The playwright's exploration of citizenship, therefore, is more closely indebted to the idea of Stoic cosmopolitanism than it is to a classical republican definition of what it means to be a citizen. The concept of two planes of existence is most clearly expressed in Seneca's *De otio*:

L[e]t vs imagine two Common-weales, the one great and truely publique, the which comprehendeth both gods and men: wherein we cannot confine our eye within this or that limit, but wee measure the extent of the same with the Sunne: and the other, that where Nature hath caused vs to be borne. This shall be either Athens, or Carthage, or some other Citie, which appertaineth not vnto me, but to certaine men only. Some men at one time serue both these Common-weales, other some the lesser onely, and some other the great, and not the lesse.¹⁴⁰

Seneca's adoption of this idea of a distinction between greater and lesser "commonwealths" follows naturally, as Samuel McCormick has explained, from Seneca's understanding of the role of the sage within society. Seneca, McCormick suggests, shuns

¹³⁸ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. C4r.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, sig. G3v.

¹⁴⁰ Seneca, *De otio* in *Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 908. Also cited in Samuel McCormick, "In Defense of New Stoicism: Public Advocacy and Political Thought in the Age of Nero," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 14 no. 1, (2011): 55.

the type of Stoicism associated with Thræsea Paetus and his act of defiance against Nero's murder of Agrippina, because he (Seneca) believed that Thræsea had politicised the language of *otium* and Stoic philosophy more generally by associating withdrawal from public life with dissent.¹⁴¹ Instead, McCormick continues, Seneca adopts the stance that *otium*, or the life of philosophic contemplation, is, in fact, a form of service or action, and thus, even when the philosopher is forced to withdraw from public life, and resign from some discrete or definite role within society, he continues to perform a kind of service to society as a whole through his meditations.¹⁴²

One can understand, therefore, why such a conception of "service" and "citizenship" appealed to those who, like the anonymous author of the *Tragedy of Nero*, found themselves debating whether withdrawal, and the protection of the self, was preferable to engaging in, and serving, a seemingly "corrupt" regime. The Senecan formulation neatly redefines the idea of participation, by removing the notion that participation meant, in practice, being involved in a morally debased political realm, like that of Nero's Rome or, indeed, of Jacobean England, and by suggesting that withdrawal constitutes a form of service. The same approach to citizenship is found in Lipsius's *De constantia*, where the maintenance of perspective and the belief that man is a citizen of the world, acts as a buffer against any fear man has for his country:

Thinkest thou that this little plot of ground enuironed by such and such mountaines, compassed with this or that riuer, is thy countrey? thou are deceiued. The whole world is our countrey, wheresouer is the race of mankind sprong of that celestiall seed *Socrates* being aksed of what countrey he was, answered: *Of the world*.¹⁴³

In the *Tragedy of Nero* Seneca and Cornutus are escaping a form of conflict akin to the civil conflict Lipsius addresses, and the playwright, much like Lipsius, suggests that they find consolation in the fact that in their act of withdrawal they are returning to a more profitable form of existence in the greater commonwealth. The suggestion, arguably, is that those dissatisfied with the Jacobean court ought likewise to consider themselves citizens of the world.

Moreover, as noted above, Stoic cosmopolitanism, or the possession of what McCormick describes as a form of "dual citizenship", provides a resolution to the perennial problem of the conflict between *otium* and *negotium*, which, for example,

¹⁴¹ McCormick, "In Defense of New Stoicism," 52-53.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 52-57.

¹⁴³ Lipsius, *Two Bookes*, sig. D2v.

Cornwallis encapsulates in his essays, by suggesting that man must remember he forms part of a larger whole, where *otium* in the lesser commonwealth constitutes a form of *negotium* in the greater realm.¹⁴⁴ In this interpretation of citizenship, the sage is placed in the unusual position of being both part of, and apart from, the terrestrial realm because he has retreated to the greater commonwealth, but still has the power to influence the lesser.¹⁴⁵

In this sense, he [the Stoic] is not an infracitizen, shamefully excluded from the affairs of state. Nor is he simply one among many Roman citizens. As the only political subject with privileged access to the “greater” commonwealth, the Stoic sage is an *ultracitizen* — a citizen above and beyond the rest, equal only to the concept of citizenship itself.¹⁴⁶

The idea of the sage as the “ultracitizen” — a person whose withdrawal has allowed him to become acquainted with the workings of the “greater commonwealth”, and who finds an alternative way to serve the “lesser commonwealth”, that is, by imparting his new-found knowledge to others — is conveyed in Seneca’s words in the *Tragedy of Nero*. Seneca describes himself as floating above Rome, elevated and deified, but from this position he provides a guide for his Roman citizens.

Senec:... Now lifted vp, thou raiisht shalt behold
The truth of things, at which we wonder here,
And foolishly doe wrangle on beneath;
And like a God shalt walke the spacious ayre,
And see what euen to conceit’s deni’d.
Great soule oth’world, that through the parts defus’d
Of this vast All, guid’st what thou dost informe;
You blessed minds, that from the [S]pheares you moue,
Looke on mens actions not with idle eyes...¹⁴⁷

Even in death, this final act of withdrawal, Seneca is not “idle”. He gains greater wisdom and knowledge of that which lies beyond the reach of men at Rome. He is the “ultracitizen”: at once part of the terrestrial world, but also possessing an identity more ethereal and more celestial.

¹⁴⁴ McCormick, “In Defense of New Stoicism,” 55; Cornwallis, *Essayes*, sig. L2v.

¹⁴⁵ McCormick, “In Defense of New Stoicism,” 59-60.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 60. McCormick explains this idea of the sage being equal to the concept of citizenship by noting that the philosopher’s withdrawal from the lesser commonwealth creates a kind of vortex through which the sage’s knowledge of the greater commonwealth is filtered back into the lesser. The sage provides a form of instruction in the workings of, or acquaintance with, the greater commonwealth by informing men in the lesser realm that they form part of something larger: see 59-60.

¹⁴⁷ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. G3v.

If we think about how this language of cosmopolitanism relates to the rhetoric used to describe contemporary politics, it seems that here the playwright taps into the idea of the subject or courtier inhabiting two conflicting environments. The lesser world is the court environment, as has been discussed in the previous section, and it is an earthly construct based on artifice and show. The greater world is a more organic or natural form of existence associated with the simple “country” life. Again, it is interesting to compare the playwright’s attitude with that of Jonson, who adopts a similar position in his poetry. In the *Epigrams*, as Leah Marcus has summarised, Jonson displays contempt towards courtiers and their characters.¹⁴⁸ Jonson chastises the figure of the courtier, and characterises him as a strutting peacock, a figure who preens and prances, and who values nothing but that which is fashionable. The “Courtling”, Jonson explains, “dost dine and sup/At MADAMES table” and “mak’st all wit/Goe high, or low” as he “wilt value it”.¹⁴⁹ As Jonas Barish notes, the type of world this creature inhabits is encapsulated in Jonson’s satirical treatment of Inigo Jones in the piece “On the Townes Honest Man”, where town men are “loud, and baudy”, and live in a place of “newes, and noyse”.¹⁵⁰ This type of town dweller has an ear for gossip, and allies himself with those in favour, while showing contempt for those out of favour. The man Jonson describes is engaged in constant “shifting” of his faces, and “doth play more/Parts” than an actor.¹⁵¹ This busy world of posture and performance is far removed, Jonson suggests, from the ideal natural state of man which he depicts in “To Penshrst”. In this piece, Jonson paints a picture of the golden “untouched” greater world to which man belongs.¹⁵² This is a golden world of rustic and noble simplicity, where life is crafted from the purest elements. The Penshurst estate, he explains, is “an ancient pile” not “built to enuious show”.¹⁵³ Its principal features are not ornamental, but natural, and earthy:

Thou hast no lantherne, whereof tales are told;

¹⁴⁸ Leah S. Marcus, “Literature and the Court,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, 493.

¹⁴⁹ Ben Jonson, “To Cour-ting,” LXXII in *Epigrammes in Ben Jonson*, vol.8 ed. Herford and Simpson, 50.

¹⁵⁰ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 145; Ben Jonson “On the Townes Honest Man,” CXV in *Epigrammes in Ben Jonson*, vol. 8 ed. Herford and Simpson, 74-75.

¹⁵¹ Jonson, “On the Townes Honest Man,” 74.

¹⁵² Barish makes this same point by pointing to the “bias” in Jonson’s work “in favor of the “real” – the undisguised, unacted, and unchanging” where “simplicity” is revered more than “ornament”. In “To Penshurst” Jonson claims that simplicity and authenticity is more virtuous than ostentation. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* 151-152.

¹⁵³ Ben Jonson, “To Penshrst,” II in *The Forrest in Ben Jonson*, vol. 8 ed. Herford and Simpson, 93.

Or stayre, or courts; but stand'st an ancient pile,
And these grudg'd at, art reuerenc'd the while.
Thou ioy'st in better markes, of soyle, of ayre,
Of wood, or water: therein thou art faire.¹⁵⁴

This world is an hospitable place where all are welcome, and it has been created at no-one's expense. It is a place "rear'd with no man's ruine, no mans grone" where "all come in, the farmer, and the clowne".¹⁵⁵ Moreover, Jonson celebrates this natural world for its permanence and timelessness:

Now, PENSHVRST, they that will proportion thee
With other edifices, when they see
Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,
May say, their lords haue built, but thy lord dwells.¹⁵⁶

It is possible to link the idea of the greater commonwealth to Jonson's vision of Penshurst because there is something heavenly about the estate Jonson describes. It is an environment in which every man has his place, and which is watched over by its designer/owner. For Jonson, Penshurst represents the type of existence men ought to seek. As Kevin Sharpe has explained, Jonson understood that "[k]nowledge of nature was the goal of man", and thus in Jonson's writing we encounter the idea that man has fallen away from the state of nature and that life represents a process of seeking to reclaim and return to that most natural state.¹⁵⁷

As Sharpe has explained, in the seventeenth century the term "nature" became a shorthand way of describing the guiding energy or force of God that regulated human life and behaviour.¹⁵⁸ This divine "creative force" "regulated and ordered the material world" and "enshrined the codes and mores by which man might live rightly and happily in it".¹⁵⁹ However, although the material world in which men lived was rarely ordered and harmonious "because men had fallen from perfect nature and had corrupted nature", the possibility of re-entering this "moral, ordered universe" still existed.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 94.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 96.

¹⁵⁷ Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: The Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 268.

¹⁵⁸ Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 267.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Whilst this world-view must be recognised as a typically Christian interpretation of man’s post-lapsarian state, it is also possible to note how this idea of living according to nature and returning to a perfect ordered world is also echoed in Senecan philosophy. The interest the anonymous author of the *Tragedy of Nero* shows in the idea of Stoic cosmopolitanism is not as lofty or hypothetical as might first be assumed, since it would seem that the idea of returning to the greater cosmos is perhaps another way of expressing the difference between the court and country life. There is an obvious similarity between the world-view expressed using the rhetoric of “court” and “country”, and the language found in Seneca’s philosophy. For instance, in *De otio*, as outlined earlier in this section, the philosopher insists that “the soueraigne good is to liue according to nature” and he urges man to work towards the assumption of a celestial form of citizenship within the greater schema of God’s existence.¹⁶¹ This Senecan idea chimes with Jonson’s thought. For Jonson, as Sharpe has summarised, “nature was synonymous with what was ordered and good” and he believed that poets played a vital role in depicting this perfect natural state in order to provide men with a glimpse of the world which “might restore man to knowledge and virtue”.¹⁶² As Sharpe illustrates, Jonson conveys this idea of restoring a fallen state in his discussion of nature in the *Discoveries*.¹⁶³ He explains the difference between the two worlds man inhabits:

I cannot thinke *Nature* is so spent, and decay’d that she can bring forth nothing worth her former yeares. She is alwayes the same, like her selfe: And when she collects her strength, is abler still. Men are decay’d, and *studies*: shee is not.¹⁶⁴

In contrast to this life of virtue associated with the natural world, is a life of vice associated with the man-made world. The “[v]ices” Jonson presents in his works “are expressions of artifice, of the unnatural”, and are most commonly associated with the material world of the city or court.¹⁶⁵ In the *Tragedy of Nero*, we see a literal return to the greater world in the depiction of Seneca’s death, but a more figurative “greater world” is described elsewhere in the play, where nature is equated with the organic cosmos. For example, in the play’s opening act, Petronius contrasts the “[c]hastitie” of “meane, and countrey

¹⁶¹ Seneca, *De Otio* in *Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 908.

¹⁶² Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 268.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Ben Jonson, *Discoveries* in *Ben Jonson*, vol. 8, ed. Herford and Simpson, 567.

¹⁶⁵ Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment*, 268.

homes” with the “ease, and riches” of “great mens Pallaces.”¹⁶⁶ Later, in Petronius’s death scene, the playwright engages with the idea that a return to greater cosmos constitutes a return to nature. Petronius explains that “Death” guides men to “the doore” beyond which lies a world of natural beauty and pleasure:

A troupe of beauteous Ladies from whose eyes,
Loue, thousand arrowes, thousand graces shootes;
Puts forth their faire hands to you, and inuites
To their greene arbours, and close shadowed walles,
Whence, banisht is the roughnesse of our yeeres:
Onely the west wind blowes; Ith euer Spring,
And euer Sommer...¹⁶⁷

For Petronius, as is the case in Jonson’s “To Penshrst”, there is something liberating about this natural world. Petronius urges Antoninus to follow him to “that world”, but Antoninus refuses and prefers instead “the base delights/Of common men”, and his simple possessions such as “[a] wench”, “a house” and “a garden”, shunning the life Petronius offers.¹⁶⁸ It is clear, therefore, that the playwright’s language of Stoic cosmopolitanism is connected to his understanding of the difference between the natural and man-made world, and that his engagement with this idea reflects his participation in contemporary rhetoric. This rhetoric condemned the artifice of the court, and the type of citizenship associated with the court environment, and celebrated the authenticity of the “country” and the virtuous citizenship associated with the natural world. The playwright suggests that the individual who is perturbed by the world of the court, as Petronius is, ought to return to themselves in the natural world and establish themselves as citizens of this greater world.

The *Tragedy of Nero* is a work is designed for those whose opposition to the culture of the royal court and to the policy of peace leads them to feel marginalised. Although the playwright recognises the viewpoint of the opponents to Jacobean court culture, and seems to sympathise with their opposition to the Jacobean peace, his overriding emphasis is on the need for this opposition group to be cautious in their behaviour. The playwright’s engagement with the arguments favouring action against the policy of peace is undercut by a rhetoric that stresses the ephemerality of the political realm. When man steps back, the playwright suggests, and surveys the entirety of

¹⁶⁶ Anon., *Tragedy of Nero*, sig. A3v.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. G4v.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, sig. H1r.

existence, the whole question of whether one favours one policy or another becomes immaterial. The *Tragedy of Nero* reveals that there is greater gain in recognising that these daily affairs are minutiae, and in realising that when one is out-matched in the court or in the field, there is consolation in the knowledge of what it means to be truly virtuous. Above all, the play advocates that power and freedom are achieved through self-knowledge. Being possessed with the knowledge that a truly wise man is an “ultracitizen” not only insulates the courtier from the perils of political life, but empowers him by providing him with the capacity for engagement with a corrupt world without moral harm. Although this image of “the sage” was intended to provide an antidote to rebellion, it was precisely this image of the courtier or subject, that provoked discontent amongst other “new humanists”, who, as will be explained in the final chapter, saw this deification of man as a form of political subversion.

Chapter Four:

Edmund Bolton's *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie Depraved*

In 1624, the historian and antiquarian, Edmund Bolton, published a history of Nero's reign, and dedicated it to James I's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham.¹ Bolton declared his *Nero Caesar* would educate the reader by revealing the truth about one of Rome's most notorious emperors. Bolton intended that his work would revise the history of Nero's reign and salvage its better aspects from oblivion. In the second edition to his work, published in 1627, Bolton made a more explicit statement announcing his motives in writing Nero's history. In this later edition the reader is informed, via the dedicatory epistle to King James, that the work is designed to satisfy royal tastes, since it was James himself who had expressed great interest in how historians had depicted Nero.²

Nor was there cause to trouble your sacred Maiestie with any but only *Nero*. For he is the man whom your most Princely detestation of his manners noted out vnto mee, with the proper word of his merits, *Villaine*. Yet hee notwithstanding (for the great aduantage of truth) will teach this pretious secret; *No Prince is so bad as not to make monarckie seeme the best forme of gouernment*.³

Bolton aims to reconstruct Nero's reign to counter those "popular Authors" who have "busied themselues to lay open the priuate liues of Princes in their vitious, or scandalous qualities", and he wishes to prove that even the actions of the most tyrannical ruler cannot undermine the idea that monarchy is the most stable form of government.⁴ This chapter argues that Bolton attempts to rescue Tacitus and Seneca from the hands of interpreters like the anonymous author of *The Tragedy of Nero*. In the 1620s, as discussed in the

¹ Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved...* (London: Thomas Snodham and Bernard Alsop for Thomas Walkley, 1624), STC 3221, sig. A1r. All quotations are taken from this edition and both page numbers and signature numbers have been provided where they exist.

² In the 1627 edition Bolton implies that the project to write the history of Nero's Rome was royally sanctioned or perhaps even sponsored and presented in manuscript form in 1622; see Edmund Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved...* (London: Thomas Snodham and Bernard Alsop, 1627), STC 3222, sig. A3v. Alan Bradford has underlined James I's involvement in the project suggesting that there was certainly a close proximity between the king and Bolton's Roman work drawing the conclusion that Bolton may have used James's own copy of Boccalini's *I Ragguagli di Parnasso* sent by Boccalini to James in 1612; see Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," 138.

³ Bolton, *Nero Caesar, or Monarchie depraved...* (1627), sig. A3v.

⁴ *Ibid.*, sig. A3r.

previous chapter, certain writers used ideas and concepts found in Tacitus and Seneca to formulate a pessimistic and isolationist “new humanism”. This version of “new humanism” stressed the importance of preserving the self and protecting the self from the corruption of public life. Bolton writes in response to these men and creates, or indeed resurrects, a more optimistic type of “new humanism” centred on the need for rational political engagement, obedience and the maintenance of custom.

If we return to consider the 1627 dedicatory epistle, it is evident from Bolton’s work that those “popular Authors” he wishes to undermine are those who denigrate Nero’s character and celebrate the virtuous actions of the Stoic heroes, Seneca and Thræsea Paetus. As we might expect, it is Lipsius who is Bolton’s main target. Bolton unravels the hagiographic celebration of Seneca Lipsius had offered in his 1605 *Opera omnia*, and instead seeks to demonstrate that Seneca was an unscrupulous tutor who ultimately toppled Nero from his throne. Seneca’s faults, Bolton explains, were not only that he provided poor counsel to the young emperor, but also that he conspired against his master. In the *De constantia*, and in the *Vita* prefacing the 1605 edition of Seneca’s works, Lipsius had identified Senecan philosophy and Seneca’s actions as models to be emulated. The lasting impression provided by the *De constantia* stresses the idea that the attainment of sagehood was the ultimate goal for any individual, and that individuals should recognise any patriotic or civic responsibility as merely a worldly construct. Furthermore, in the preface to the *Opera*, Lipsius invites his readers to consider Seneca a model deserving of great admiration. He explains that Seneca’s writing instructs individuals to step back from worldly tribulations and recognise that withdrawal from the world can provide some form of sanctuary.⁵

Bolton rebuts Lipsius’s presentation of both Seneca’s philosophy and Seneca’s life. He does this in his presentation of Nero’s reign by dismantling the connection forged in Lipsius’s neo-Senecan philosophy between liberty and *otium*, and by re-crafting a role for the individual within the ordered state. Bolton’s advocacy of political activity, does not, however, lead him to articulate a concept of citizenship similar to that associated with civic or classical republicanism. Rather, he suggests that each citizen attains selfhood and liberty through obedience to a single rational sovereign.⁶ Bolton’s vision of the state, therefore, is

⁵ Lipsius, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, “To the Courteous Reader,” sig. b2r-b4v.

⁶ Bolton appears uninterested in any notion of active citizenship or civic republicanism. In his work on the system of apprenticeships in London *The Cities Advocate* he uses the term citizen throughout to denote a city dweller and notes how a citizen is the term usually applied to a member of one of the corporations of London and that a man can be both a gentleman by birth and a citizen in terms of their locality in London: see Edmund Bolton, *The Cities Advocate* (London: William Lee, 1619) STC 3219, sig. G4r-I3v. The same use

conservative. He shares Gwinne's acceptance of the idea that the state constitutes a body of individuals working in harmony under the leadership of a divinely appointed sovereign, but he elaborates a more complete philosophy detailing the relationship between the subject and the sovereign.

As previous scholars have implied, there is little doubt that Bolton's *Nero Caesar* acted as some form of quasi-official pronouncement on the use and interpretation of Tacitus and Seneca in and around the royal court.⁷ As early as 1610, when in conversation with Isaac Casaubon, James had made clear his disapproval of the political use of Tacitus.⁸ The precise relationship between Bolton's text and James's attitude towards Tacitism is unclear, but it is reasonable to assume that James had been involved, in one way or another, in this attempt to settle the disquiet caused by interest in Tacitus and Seneca.⁹ The evidence for this royal sanction is found in the fact that "[a] Booke of *the life of NERO*", presumably the *Nero Caesar*, was entered into the Stationers' Register by "his Maiesties speciall command" on 21 April 1623.¹⁰ It is clear that Bolton maintained a connection, of sorts, to the royal court throughout James's reign, and that he was eager to impress those at the heart of governance. As Woolf sums up, Bolton acted as "an intellectual firefly who flitted from patron to patron and project to project", since he seems to have been desperate to make inroads into the royal household and gain sponsorship for his academic activities.¹¹ With his marriage to Margaret Porter, sister of Endymion Porter, a man who

of the term is found in the only three uses of the word citizen in *Nero Caesar*: see *Nero Caesar*, (49) sig. H1r; (210) sig. Ee1r; (222) sig. Ff3v.

⁷ Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," 138-139; Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 223-224; Smuts, "Court-Centred Politics," 39-42.

⁸ Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon 1559-1614 ...* 2nd edn. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1892), 280. Pattison cites *Isaaci Casauboni epistolae* ed. Theodoro Janson ab Almeloveen (Rotterdam: Casparis Fritsch and Michaelis Böhm, 1709), 704.

⁹ Parry has suggested that the manuscript of *Nero Caesar* was presented to King James sometime in 1622 following a conversation about Nero but there seems to be little definitive evidence to suggest how, and why, James was involved in the commissioning of *Nero Caesar* (see n2); see Graham Parry, "Ancient Britons and Early Stuarts," in *Neo-Historicism: Studies in Renaissance Literature, History and Politics*, ed. Robin Headlam Wells, Glenn Burgess, and Rowland Wymer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 172.

¹⁰ Edward Arber, ed. *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554-1640, A.D.*, vol. 4, (London, 1877), 56. Also cited in Thomas Harold Blackburn, "Edmund Bolton, Critic, Antiquary, and Historian: A Biographical and Critical Study with An Edition of Hypercritica," (PhD thesis, Stanford University, 1963), 67.

¹¹ D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and 'The Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 190. See also D. R. Woolf, "Bolton, Edmund Mary (b. 1574/5, d. in or after 1634)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, University Press, 2004, accessed September 12, 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/2800; Thomas H. Blackburn, "Edmund Bolton's *The Cabanet Royal*: A Belated Reply to Sidney's Apology for Poetry," *Studies in the Renaissance* 14 (1967): 160; Osmond, "Edmund Bolton's Vindication of Tiberius Caesar," 335-337.

would become an ally to the Duke of Buckingham, Bolton came closer to gaining the patron he desired. However, it seems that, in the early part of James's reign, Bolton was destined to remain shut out from the favour of the court, since he seems to have conducted business with men of influence through a series of fawning letters asking for assistance.¹²

The 1620s proved a more profitable time for Bolton since his proposals to establish a learned academy of individuals, the "Academ Roiall", seem to have been given serious consideration by Buckingham and those close to James.¹³ Bolton's connection with Buckingham seems to have buoyed his hope for some form of royal sponsorship. In a record of encounters and correspondence with Buckingham, presumably collated for the attention of the Duke himself, Bolton lists the "most gracious affections" the Duke had shown towards him in the years before Buckingham left for Spain in 1624.¹⁴ It seems, if we are to take Bolton's descriptions in their literal sense, that he was "brought... to his Ma.^{ties}" for the first time at Newmarket in 1619, and that he engaged in a healthy correspondence, and experienced amicable meetings, with Buckingham for the next five years.¹⁵ In an undated letter to Buckingham, Bolton refers to *Nero Caesar* as "his Ma.^{ties} NERO", and attempts to persuade Buckingham to sell the idea of the "Academ Roiall" to James by demonstrating how the planned academy will project an image of the king as a learned man and educator.¹⁶ The idea of the "Academ Roiall" was presented to the House of Lords in the early 1620s, but Bolton's proposals soon came to nothing and were not pursued during the reign of Charles I, despite Bolton's attempt to resurrect the idea in the

¹² "A neatly written letter of Edmund Bolton," 18 April 1608, MSS Lansdowne Vol/90, ff. 180, British Library, *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, Gale Document Number:MC4305087790, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4305087790&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript> . In this 1608 letter Bolton petitioned Cecil and sent him "a litle Latin rourk" of his composition. In 1611 Bolton wrote to the Earl of Northampton and outlined various revenue-raising projects the King might like to consider; see "Edmund Bolton, to the E. of Northampton Ld. privy seal; projects for raising money, &c. March 11, 1611," MS Cotton Titus B/V f.211, British Library, *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2015, Gale Document Number: MC4318871860, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4318871860&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript> .

¹³ Blackburn, "Edmund Bolton," 47.

¹⁴ "The chrystal tablet in which I alwayes carrye about with mee the image of your L.^{ps} noble minde, and gracious affections in my par-ticular case, from time, to time, til this present Newyere 1624 BEFORE YOUR JOURNEY INTO SPAIN," MS Tanner 73/2 ff.328r-ff. 329r , Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹⁵ "The chrystal tablet," MS Tanner 73/2 ff.328r, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹⁶ "Edm Bolton to the duke of Buckingham," MS Tanner 89, ff.56r-57r, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

form of the “Cabanet Royal”.¹⁷ Ultimately, Bolton’s attempts to secure access to the court, and gain a patron, were frustrated. In July 1630, in his correspondence with his brother-in-law, Bolton appears resigned to his failure.

After you had some yeares layn fallowe from any tillage of my requests, the nature of the cause compelled mee to write that, unto which it pleased you to answer, that you would further mee wth what powr you had, and with the affection of a loving brother..... Therefore, so far am I from beeing dejected in spirit by your tearing into peices the enclosed scroll (guiltie of mine offer) as I am proudly glad, that neither mine offer (which I defend not) nor my calamitie itself could drawe you otherwise to concur to my help, then as it was originallie founded in your free and first goodwill.¹⁸

By the time of writing in 1630, Bolton’s fortunes had declined significantly. In 1628 he had been fined for recusancy, imprisoned in Marshalsea, and was seeking support to raise revenue to pay off his debts. His brother-in-law’s refusal to assist him prompted Bolton to present various works to other patrons to help raise funds to secure his release. As Woolf has suggested, this included one of two of Bolton’s works on the emperor Tiberius, which was sent to John Coke in 1634.¹⁹ Bolton’s attempts to secure his release were unsuccessful, and it is presumed he died in Marshalsea around 1634.

Bolton’s literary career was no more successful than his political career. Again it seems that Bolton remained on the periphery of a group of more prominent and fortunate individuals. The dedicatory poems he provided for works by Michael Drayton and Ben Jonson suggest some informal circle in which these men operated.²⁰ The likelihood of the association with Jonson, and with the Mermaid Club, is also suggested by Bolton’s

¹⁷ Blackburn, “Edmund Bolton’s The Cabanet Royal: A Belated Reply to Sidney’s Apology for Poetry,” 159-171.

¹⁸ “Edmund Bolton to [Endymion Porter],” 2 July 1630, Document Ref.: SP 16/170 f.23 Folio Numbers: ff. 23-, *C.S.P. Domestic July 1629-Mar 1631* Entry Number: VOL.CLXX, Page Number: 300, *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2015, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4324182522&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript>, Gale Document Number: MC4324182522.

¹⁹ Woolf, “Bolton,” *ODNB*. This work on Tiberius, believed by Woolf to have been lost, has recently been found and identified by Patricia Osmond (Osmond-DeMartino) as the work known as the *AUERRUNCI, or the Skowrers. Ponderous and new considerations upon the first six books of the Annals of CORNELIUS TACITUS concerning TIBERIUS CAESAR* shelved as MS AIV 5 in the private library of the Biblioteca Durazzo in Genoa; see Osmond, “Edmund Bolton’s Vindication”. An edition of this work is currently being prepared by Patricia Osmond-DeMartino and Robert Ulery Jr. and will be published by the Renaissance English Texts Society.

²⁰ Blackburn provides the most detail on this connection; see Blackburn “Edmund Bolton,” 12- 27. Bolton provided a sonnet for Drayton’s *Mortimeriados* in 1596 and it might be that Bolton knew Drayton through the association with the Inner Temple. Blackburn also explains that Bolton defended *Sejanus* in 1605 and that, given the similarity between Bolton’s poem for the 1607 edition of *Volpone* and that prefacing *Sejanus*, it may have been Bolton who provided the poem for Jonson’s earlier work.

friendship with Hugh Holland, a prominent member in this literary coterie.²¹ As Blackburn explains, the idea that Bolton “was a frequent visitor” to the “fringes” of “London literary life” is further implied by a 1605/6 indictment for recusancy that charges Bolton alongside Jonson and Holland.²² However, it appears that Bolton’s preoccupation with the plans for the academy of learned men, and his desire to gain royal favour through petitioning individuals at court, drew him further away from these more successful literary men and into relative obscurity. Aside from his *Nero Caesar* and his translation of Florus, Bolton seems to have experienced only limited success.²³

While Bolton’s personal relationship with men such as Jonson remains unclear, his intellectual sympathy with these men is more obvious. There is no doubt that Bolton, like Jonson, remains convinced that there are political and moral lessons to be gleaned from reading Tacitus and Seneca. Although at one time Bolton may have defended Jonson’s resurrection of Tacitus’s corrupt court environment in *Sejanus*, it seems that, by 1616 when he was writing the *Hypercritica*, and even more so by the time he was writing the *Nero Caesar*, Bolton was moving away from Jonson’s interpretation of Tacitus.²⁴ In particular, as has been discussed above, Bolton targets the Lipsian legacy in England. In his negotiation of “new humanism”, Bolton engages with and attempts to reveal a tension within Lipsian philosophy. On the one hand, he rejects Lipsius’s Senecanism, embodied in

²¹ Ibid., 23-26. Blackburn explains that Bolton is the E. B. who wrote poems for Holland’s *Pancharis* because Holland is included in the list of poets to be members of the Academ Roiall and because Holland provided prefatory material for Bolton’s 1610 work *The elements of Armories*. As Blackburn notes, Holland contributed poems to Jonson’s 1616 Folio and so there might have been some tenuous connection between Bolton and Jonson.

²² Ibid., 26; 27. For the recusancy charge Blackburn cites Dom High Bowler, ed. *London Sessions Records, 1605-1685* (London: Catholic Record Society, 1934), xlv, 8. The details of Jonson’s recusancy charge are discussed in *Ben Jonson* ed. Herford and Simpson, vol. 1, 200-223 under the section “Citations of Jonson and his wife for recusancy, 1606” where the editors cite *A Book of Corrections or Presentments of the Consistory Court of London, Book 1605-6* fol.23 verso. Entry for the Parish of St. Anne’s, Blackfriars, Friday 10 January 1605-6.

²³ Blackburn notes that Bolton prepared verses on the internment of Mary Queen of Scots which remain in manuscript in the British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian C.xiv, f.227ff; see Blackburn, “Edmund Bolton,” 47. Bolton’s *Hypercritica* remained in manuscript until 1722: see Haslewood, *Ancient and Critical Essays*, xvi. Bolton also produced a poem on the Spanish Match which exists in manuscript form: see Edmund Bolton, “Holograph, incomplete heroic poem addressed to Buckingham “Vindex”, MS Tanner 73/2 ff/420r-421v, Bodleian Library, Oxford. It was included in an appendix to Blackburn’s 1963 thesis. It is also thought that Bolton produced a manuscript history of James I’s reign: see Edmund Bolton (?), “Commencement of a work entitled “The End of King James his reign, and the beginning of King Charles,” SP 16/13 ff.1- Undated (1625), *C.S.P. Domestic Mar 1625-Dec 1626* Entry Number: VOL.XIII,1, Page Number:195 *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning 2015, accessed November 28, 2012, <http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4319681900&v=2.1&u=uniyork&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript>. Gale Document Number: MC4319681900.

²⁴ Haslewood points to a date of 1616 for the *Hypercritica* since Bolton refers to the publication of his Florus (1616) and seems to refer to a 1616 edition of James I’s works: see Haslewood, *Ancient and Critical Essays*, xvi.

De constantia and the *Vita*, by identifying Seneca himself and his philosophy as subversive, yet, on the other hand, he implicitly applauds the model of statecraft expressed in the *Politica*, where Neostoicism “demanded self-discipline and the extension of the duties of the ruler” in order to safeguard the state against ill fortune.²⁵ This chapter will explain how Bolton’s vision of the state centres on the orthodox notion of individuals working obediently under a sovereign to maintain the health and prosperity of both the community and the sovereign they serve. Bolton’s idea of the state may be explained using the popular contemporary metaphor of the bee-hive, where, as Canterbury explains in *Henry V*, each individual is “in continual motion” guided by the principle of obedience.²⁶ When one bee pulls away from the hive or changes this motion, it threatens the stability of the whole. Therefore, for Bolton, the Lipsian philosophy of Stoic sagehood, which encourages men to place themselves beyond the state, is highly subversive because it undermines the organic hierarchy of the state.

Bolton is far more convinced, however, by Lipsius’s vision of statecraft in the *Politica* where it is suggested that strength comes through unity under a single sovereign. For Bolton, though, this single sovereign power does not resemble the Machiavellian “foxe” of Lipsius’s work but is, instead, a strong, benevolent and rational monarch. To return to the idea of the bee-hive, Bolton identifies the sovereign as sharing in the aim of the hive, because the sovereign, like all subjects, owes obedience to the ultimate master, God. The sovereign, therefore, guides the hive and gives it motion, but all work together to uphold justice, honour and fairness. Bolton accepts the Lipsian idea that the “good and publike profit” are “always conioyned” to “*the benefit, and profit of the Prince*”, but does not, as a consequence of this connection, accept that the prince may act dishonourably and deceitfully in order to secure profit and public good.²⁷ Instead, Bolton reiterates the idea of divine and virtuous kingship that James I stresses in his political philosophy, and maintains a strict distinction between good kingship and tyranny.

²⁵ Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* ed. Brigitta Oestreich and H. G. Koenigsberger and trans. David McLintock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 7.

²⁶ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1.2.1.183-204, p. 1461. Canterbury’s words read as follows: “True. Therefore doth heaven divide/The state of man in divers functions,/Setting endeavour in continual motion;/To which is fixèd, as an aim or butt./Obedience. For so work the honey-bees,/Creatures that by a rule in nature teach/The act of order to a peopled kingdom./They have a king, and officers of sorts,/Where some like magistrates correct at home;/Others like merchants venture trade abroad;/ Others like soldiers, armèd in their stings,/Make boot upon the summer’s velvet buds,/ Which pillage they with merry march bring home/To the tent royal of their emperor,/Who busied in his majesty surveys/The singing masons building roofs of gold,/The civil citizens lading up the honey,/The poor mechanic porters crowding in/Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate,/The sad-eyed justice with his surly hum/Delivering o’er to executors pale/The lazy yawning drone. ...”.

²⁷ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Q1r.

This chapter argues that Bolton counters the cynical version of “new humanism” which, as J. H. M. Salmon and David Burchell have separately argued, presented rebellious resignation as the best stance for those opposed to the idea of participation in a corrupted “state” or court.²⁸ In attacking this brand of “new humanism”, or, more specifically, this interpretation of Lipsius that had flourished in the royal court and its surroundings, Bolton, much as Hobbes would later do, creates a philosophical mix of Tacitus and Seneca, paving “the way... for rational statecraft and the prudential participation of the citizen as the servant of the absolutist state”.²⁹ In the first section of this chapter we shall explore how Bolton dismantles this type of pessimistic “new humanism” by presenting those who seek to withdraw from public life as subversive individuals. The second and third parts of the chapter return to the themes of discipline and order that we encountered in discussing Savile’s and Gwinne’s work. Bolton, like these other writers, adopts the stance that liberty exists only within a situation where the rights and obligations of the individual are framed by laws and protected by the sovereign. Any attempt to create a form of freedom through the overthrow of a sovereign results only in chaos. The final section of this chapter explores how Bolton suggests, much like Gwinne, that all political life is made far more palatable if men consider how the mortal realm forms part of a divine existence. Above all, Bolton uses Nero’s reign to reinforce James’s political philosophy. As Bradford has summarised, Bolton’s *Nero Caesar* acted as a project designed to “provide empirical support for the King’s ideological position”, since Bolton wished to prove that “no tyranny can conceivably be so odious”, as to undermine the idea that monarchy is the best form of governance.³⁰

The Sage and the subject

In the *Nero Caesar* Bolton tackles the emphasis men like Lipsius, and those inspired by him, had placed on man’s capacity for sagehood. Where, in *The Tragedy of Nero*, the author had suggested that man ought to harness the virtue of constancy both to cocoon himself, and to elevate himself above the mire of the political world, Bolton instead

²⁸ Salmon, “Stoicism and Roman Example,” 224; David Burchell, “The Disciplined Citizen: Thomas Hobbes, Neostoicism and the Critique of Classical Citizenship,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 45, no.4 (1999): 520. Both authors explain that English engagement with Lipsian Neostoicism and Tacitism reflected a preference for *otium* and a weariness with engagement in a polluted state.

²⁹ Salmon, “Stoicism and Roman Example,” 224. For two discussions of Hobbes’s indebtedness to Lipsian philosophy see Burchell “The Disciplined Citizen,” 506-524 and Brooke, “From Lipsius to Hobbes,” chap. 3 in *Philosophic Pride*.

³⁰ Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism,” 140.

suggests that man's preservation is found through remaining an active member of society. The act of withdrawal and the annihilation of the political self is, Bolton asserts, a selfish act, since this involves a rejection of the obligations man has towards society. What is more, Bolton implies that men who think that their salvation and liberty lies in detaching themselves from society are misguided. For Bolton, man must accept and fulfil his place within society, and, part of this involves maintaining bonds with society and accepting that no man can place himself beyond God, who is the head of society's hierarchy.

In the prefatory epistle to his 1605 *Opera omnia*, Lipsius presents Seneca's life and his precepts of philosophy as the perfect illustration of how man ought to live and die.³¹ The *Vita*, which follows, opens with an account of Seneca's birth in Corduba and details his ancestry, before tracing his political career through the reigns of Claudius and Nero and ending with a survey of the philosopher's extant works. Lipsius attempts to defend Seneca from the defamatory accusations made by Dio Cassius in the *Historia Romanum*. Throughout his account, Lipsius stresses that Seneca rejected all riches and self-glorification, and claims that "[t]he Court corrupted him [Seneca] not, neyther inclined he vnto flatterie, a vice almost familiar, and allied to such places."³² As Lipsius makes clear in the section narrating Seneca's death, the work itself is indebted in part to Tacitus's account of Seneca: "AND let vs see the commoditie thereof, but from whence should we gather it rather then from *Tacitus*, the most faithfullest of all other Writers?"³³ The entire account of Seneca's suicide is taken from Tacitus and is an evocative and protracted account of Seneca's constancy in death. In preserving Tacitus's words intact, as James Ker notes, Lipsius is dutifully continuing the task he had embarked upon as Tacitus's editor: to record Tacitus without blemish or emendation.³⁴ Lipsius claims that Seneca's model of patient withdrawal and self-restraint, and his rejection of worldly ephemera ought to provide inspiration for individuals seeking a guide to help them negotiate contemporary politics.

This shalt thou learne in our *Seneca*, whose diuine sentences, wholesome counsailes, serious exclamations against vices, in being but a Heathen, may make vs ashamed being Christians; when we consider how backward acourse wee haue runne from the right scope, by being buried in vaine readings, besotted with selfe opinion, by apprehending vertue no more, but in a shadow, wich serues for a vaile to couer many vices. ... But seeing the worlds Lithargie so farre growne, that it is

³¹ Lipsius, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*... "To the Courteous Reader".

³² *Ibid.*, sig. d2r.

³³ *Ibid.*, sig. d3r.

³⁴ Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca*, 211-212.

benumbed wholly with false appearance, I made choice of this author, whose life was a pattern of continence, whose doctrine a detection and correction of vanities, and whose death a certain instance of constancy.³⁵

Senecan constancy, as Geoffrey Miles suggests, is heroic in character.³⁶ The constant man is invulnerable and un-afflicted by any external harm.³⁷ As Miles notes, Seneca's philosophy illustrates that the ideal sage possesses the ability to exist upon a higher plane, exalted above the vicissitudes of mortal life.³⁸ This Senecan model of constancy was imprinted upon Lipsius's own philosophy in the *De constantia*, where he contrasts constancy that "right and immoueeable strength of the minde, neither lifted vp, nor pressed downe with externall or casuall accidentes" with the vicissitude and irrationality of opinion.³⁹ The constant man feels no hurt or harm from misfortunes which befall himself or his country for he recognises the almighty power of providence and remains detached from the "inconstant variableness of all things".⁴⁰ Liberty, in Lipsian thought, is attained through the negation of emotion: the constant man is "only subject unto God, enfranchised from the servile yoke of Fortune and affections."⁴¹ As Geoffrey Miles has argued, the godlike quality of the Stoic *sapiens* is evident: "The image of the *sapiens* as godlike, *diis aequa*, sums up the Stoic aspiration to absolute perfection and power over oneself."⁴²

Throughout the *Nero Caesar*, Bolton seeks to counter this view of Seneca and aims to unravel the Neostoic philosophy of self-perfection. From the start of the narrative, Bolton blames Seneca for the ills of Nero's reign. Bolton suggests that Seneca's ambition led him to transform his young pupil into a tyrant since he provided Nero with schooling in only wit and rhetoric, without engraining any "true" divine wisdom in Nero's character. Bolton's vision of Nero seems to channel the Platonic concept of the tyrant. Plato's tyrant is one who, through the failure of instruction and experience, has been unable to learn how to control the power of *eros* and instead remains a man who pursues a life dominated by

³⁵ Lipsius, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*... "To the Courteous Reader".

³⁶ Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 39-47.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Miles quotes from Lodge's edition of Lipsius's translation of *De constantia* in *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 660-663 where Seneca dwells upon the story of the philosopher Stilbon.

³⁹ Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancy*, sig. C1r.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, sig. G1r.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, sig. C3v.

⁴² Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 46.

the need to satisfy his basest impulses. In book nine of the *Republic* Plato outlines the early development of the character of the tyrant and points to the importance of kin and counsel in deterring an individual from embarking upon a tyrannical path. Whilst most men are capable of achieving moderation in the pursuit of their passions, “[h]e [the young man, soon to become a tyrant] is drawn toward utter lawlessness” and while his father attempts to temper his youthful wildness “dread magi and king-makers” implant in the young man a “monstrous winged drone” which undermines all capacity for decency and shame.⁴³ The young man becomes prey to those who seek to establish a tyranny and falls victim to a malicious form of instruction. In Plato’s description of the tyrant the roles of the “dread-magi” who “keep the young man for themselves and their political plans for tyranny” are perfectly filled, in Bolton’s account of Nero, by Burrus and, most obviously, by Seneca.⁴⁴ There are echoes of this transformation from young man into tyrant in Bolton’s description of Nero’s early education, where Nero is cast as the archetypical tyrant and Seneca and Agrippina are those “dread-magi”. There is little doubt, as Bolton explains, that Nero was a tyrant, guided only by his passions and by his basic impulses:

For what else made NERO himselfe miserable, but the wilde, and vndistinguisht pursuit of appetites? Or what turned him out of a prince, into a tyrant, but captiuitie to passions? No man becomes miserable but by such suiection. Tyrants, (and what a kinde of creature a tyrant is, I haue toucht before) are the worst of all wilde broods. Wolues, and beares, in regard of them, are meeke and tractable.⁴⁵

The reason for Nero’s tyranny is explored in chapters two and three of *Nero Caesar*, where Bolton explains that Nero’s failure in government stemmed from the detrimental instruction of his royal tutors. Agrippina, Burrus and specifically Seneca, neglected their obligations towards Nero and allowed the young ruler to embark upon a path of tyranny. Bolton first chastises Agrippina for having “auerted his [Nero’s] affections from the studie of all philosophie, as a thing vnfit for a Souereign”.⁴⁶ This, Bolton continues, was “[an] opinion worthy of a gracelesse woman, and orginallie the most certaine cause of his ouerthrow.”⁴⁷ Agrippina’s error in preventing Nero’s education in philosophy ultimately

⁴³ Plato, *The Republic* trans. Paul Shorey, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 341-343.

⁴⁴ Richard D. Parry, “The Unhappy Tyrant and the Craft of Inner Rule,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic* ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 395.

⁴⁵ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (241), sig. Iir.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, (4), sig. B2v.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

led him to be a weak and vain ruler who delighted more in “showes, and seemings” and “crownes of leaues, or garlands, for singing, fidling, piping, acting on stages, and the like ignobler trials” than he did in governing well.⁴⁸ Nero’s revelry in performance and triumphant theatrical displays were, according to Bolton, “the errour of his breeding” as Nero had been encouraged, by his closest advisors to consider these shows and performances “transcendently heavenly guifts”.⁴⁹

Here Bolton contradicts the account of Nero’s youth found in Tacitus, by focussing attention upon the role played by Burrus and Seneca in creating Nero’s character. In book thirteen of the *Annals* Tacitus points to the defects in Nero’s character and lauds the efforts of the imperial tutors who attempted to counter Nero’s natural wildness.

With no lesse speede *Claudius* freed man, *Narcissus* (of whose iarring with *Agrippina* I haue already spoken) was brought to his end, by hard imprisonment, and extreame necessitie, against the Princes will; whose vicious humors yet vnknowne, he did exceedingly well fit in couetousnes and prodigality; and had gone forward in murders, if *Afranius Burrhus*, and *Annaeus Seneca* had not stayed them. These two were the yong Emperors guides and gouernors; and in equall authoritie, well agreeing, bare equall stroke in diuers faculties. *Burrhus* in militarie discipline and grauitie of manners; *Seneca* in precepts of eloquence, and courteous carriage; helping one the other in their charge, the easier to bridle the youths slipperie age with honest and lawfull pleasures, if he contemned vertue.⁵⁰

In Tacitus’s account it is Nero’s natural character which needs to be bridled by the imperial guardians. The influence of these guardians was benevolent and would have been beneficial were it not for the unruliness of Nero’s character. Tacitus’s narrative of Nero’s early years is echoed by Edmund Bolton’s contemporaries who emphasise the depravity of the emperor and celebrate the efforts of Nero’s tutors. For example, in his 1571 chronicle of Roman history, Richard Rainolde explained that “Seneca bestowed much care and dilligence to frame so monstrous a nature into an excellent parsō worthy to rule, but education toke small effecte in him”.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Grenewey, *Annales*, 178. For a more recent translation: see Tacitus, *Annals*, (13.2), 5. “The tendency, in fact, was towards murder, had not Afranius Burrus and Seneca intervened. Both guardians of the imperial youth, and – a rare occurrence where power is held in partnership – both in agreement, they exercised equal influence by contrasted methods; and Burrus, with his soldierly interests and austerity, and Seneca, with his lessons in eloquence and his self-respecting courtliness, aided each other to ensure that the sovereign’s years of temptation should, if he were scornful of virtue, be restrained within the bounds of permissible indulgence.”

⁵¹ Rainolde, *A chronicle of all the noble emperours of the Romaines*, sig. Ciiir.

Bolton, however, places the responsibility for Nero's misrule squarely at the feet of the imperial tutors and does so by foregrounding the accounts provided by Suetonius and Dio Cassius over that of Tacitus. Bolton bases his account of Nero's education on Suetonius's *Nero* 52:

Of all the Liberrall Sciences in manner, he had a tast when he was but a child. But from the Studie of Philosophie his mother turne his minde; telling him, It was repugnant to one who another day was to bee a Sovereigne: and from the knowledge of auncient Oratours, his Maister SENECA withdrew him, because hee would hold him the longer in admiration of himselfe.⁵²

After condemning Agrippina (see above) Bolton turns his attention to Seneca and declares that the royal tutor was not "without a part in the blame" in creating such an unfit ruler:

[Seneca] kept him [Nero] from solid eloquence proper to the antient orators, to hold him the longer in admiration of himselfe, Who taught him how to answer readily, who much more profitably might haue taught him how to thinck deeply.⁵³

In borrowing Suetonius's account in this way, Bolton charges Seneca with a lack of humility. Not only does Bolton imply that Senecan teaching is without the "solid" foundation of ancient orators but he also suggests that Seneca thought only of self-promotion and deterred Nero from learning "solid eloquence".

Seneca's failings as a tutor, however, have more sinister foundations, according to Bolton. In his narrative, it is clear that Bolton considers Seneca to have harboured the desire to be ruler himself, with Nero as no more than a puppet. In each of Seneca's actions Bolton draws attention to darker motives: selfishness, revenge and anger. In Bolton's overall attitude towards Seneca's role in Nero's early education there is an echo of Dio Cassius's account of Nero's tutelage. Dio passes judgement on the role played by Seneca and Burrus:

His two advisers, then, after coming to a common understanding, made many changes in existing regulations, abolished some altogether, and enacted many new laws, meanwhile allowing Nero to indulge himself, in the expectation that when he had sated his desires without any great injury to the public interests at large, he would experience a change of heart; as though they did not realize that a young and self-willed spirit, then reared in unrebuked licence and absolute authority, so fare

⁵² Suetonius, *Nero* trans. Holland, sig. T2r.

⁵³ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (5), sig. B3r.

from becoming sated by the indulgence of its passions, is ruined more and more by these very agencies.⁵⁴

Bolton's *Nero Caesar* presents a similar picture of Nero's early reign, in demonstrating how the reins of government were wrested from the hands of the young emperor and held instead by Burrus and Seneca. Seneca is portrayed as a machinating counsellor who manipulates Nero and the imperial regime for his own benefit. Bolton particularly condemns Seneca's role in Nero's auspicious accession, and suggests that the two speeches written by Seneca for Nero's accession were motivated by Seneca's personal hatred of Claudius together with a desire to humiliate publicly the new emperor.⁵⁵

The first oration of the two, pretended by all sort of praises to make him seem worthy the title of a god, which together with all diuine honors was accordingly decreed vnto him: yet this had some such passages in it, as publicly moued the hearers to laugh, and so hee went out ridiculous deitie. The second speech (summd by TACITVS) while it gaue them an idea of what should bee otherwise vnder him, and better then before, did abatingly insinuate the wants of his predecessor.⁵⁶

According to Bolton, by having the young emperor disingenuously venerate and simultaneously denigrate the memory of his predecessor, Seneca maliciously confirmed suspicion that Nero had been responsible for Claudius's murder. For Bolton, these speeches represented "flashes of ambitious wit" distasteful to all men "who esteeme the conscience of moral, and ciuil duties".⁵⁷ Bolton concedes that there is much "good" in Seneca's writings in terms of "wisdome", "eloquence" and "concept", but suggests that, by acting in his own personal interest, Seneca failed in his civic duty.⁵⁸ Here Bolton is plainly confronting Lipsius's vision of Seneca. In the tenth chapter of the *Vita*, Lipsius acknowledges the common charge against Seneca: "his calumners obiect against him to

⁵⁴ Dio, *Roman History*, LXI, 41.

⁵⁵ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (8), sig. B4v. Bolton remarks that Seneca "did not only not loue CLAVDIVS, but in a libell persecuted his memorie also".

⁵⁶ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (8), sig. B4v. The reference to Tacitus here is to the *Annals* 14:3. The extract translated by Grenewey reads "The day of his funerals, *Nero* made the oration in his praise, & as long as he spake of the antiquitie of his stock, of the Consulships, & triumphs of his ancestors, he & the rest were attentive: and likewise whilst he spake of the love he bare to liberall sciences, and that during the time of his government the common wealth was not molested by forren powers, all men gave good eare: but after he descended to his providence and wisdome, no mane could forbear laughing; although the oration composed by *Seneca* shewed the exquisite skill of that mans pleasant vaine, fitted and applied to the eares of the time. The old men (which were at leasure to compare things past with the present) noted that *Nero* was the furst Emperour that needed another mans eloquence"; see Grenewey, *Annales*, 178-179.

⁵⁷ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (10), sig. C1v.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Nero; For they objected against him that hee got the praise of eloquence to himselfe only, and wrote verses very often, after that he knew that *Nero* was in loue with them.”⁵⁹ Lipsius, however, points to Seneca’s lack of ambition, and to his “perpetuall honour” as “both the teacher and gouernour of a Prince”, and states that Seneca’s virtue remained intact throughout his involvement in educating the young emperor.⁶⁰ Bolton, in contrast, suggests that even Lipsius cannot disguise the fact that Seneca cajoled Nero into publicly humiliating Claudius, and that Lipsius cannot deny that Seneca was complicit in Nero’s involvement in Claudius’s demise.

These beginnings [the speeches] therefore thus vnderstood, do seeme to haue conferred somewhat towards the weakening of pious respects in NERO, who leauen’d with the scoffings of his Maister (for even LIPSIVS notes that euill spirit in SENECA) did shoue himselfe afterwards no vndexterous disciple, breaking sundrie bitter iests (remembred by SVETONIVS) vpon his dead adoptiue father, the creator of his vnderdeserued fortunes.⁶¹

Bolton’s treatment of the history of Nero’s early years implies that, from the outset, Seneca eyed the imperial crown for himself and strove to undermine Nero by entrenching the emperor’s most un-princely qualities and by failing to instil those characteristics required of a good and clement ruler. Thus the episode in which Bolton recounts Seneca’s responsibility for Claudius’s eulogy is constructed to foreshadow Bolton’s account of the Pisonian conspiracy.

Bolton suggests that, since Seneca had always aspired to imperial office, it was he who was principally responsible for the Pisonian conspiracy. Bolton explains his reasoning: “...but SENECA (saith DIO) was a principall, and PISO (saith TACITVS) was onely vsed (as it was thought) for a stale: the Philosopher himselfe the man intended for the succession.”⁶² That Seneca should aspire to power himself, Bolton suggests, should come as little surprise as the philosopher’s character bore little resemblance to the self-effacing sage Seneca had crafted in his writings. As outlined earlier in this section, Bolton prefers Dio’s account of Seneca’s life and has little hesitation in repeating the historian’s charges: “DIO chargeth him with many pointcs in practise of things contradictorie to his

⁵⁹ Lipsius, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, sig. d7r.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, sig. C5v.

⁶¹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (8), sig. B4v. It is unclear precisely where Lipsius makes this comment.

⁶² Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (232), sig. Gg4v.

doctrines, as with *auarice*, with *incontinencie*, with *flatterie*.”⁶³ Concerning the first charge, Bolton reports that Seneca “had gathered an estate of money of fifteen hundred thousand pounds sterling” thus confirming Bolton’s earlier assertion, borrowed again from Dio, that Seneca’s usuries were the prime cause of the revolt of the Britons during Nero’s reign.⁶⁴ Seneca’s inconstancy is proved by his affair with Julia, daughter of Germanicus: “As for *incontinencie*, for which he was both accused vnder CLAVDIVS, by PVBLIVS SVILIVS, and banished also, the same SVLIVS affirmed vnder NERO, that SENECA was most iustly sentenced for defiling the house of the CAESARS, meaning the person of the ladie IVLIA”.⁶⁵ Finally, Seneca’s flattery is demonstrated by his attempts to win favour with those, such as Agrippina, who held most sway at court.⁶⁶ Throughout this attack on Seneca’s character, it is Lipsius’s favourable presentation of Seneca that remains firmly in Bolton’s sight. Lipsius, he claims, “would haue SENECA’s honour remaine entire, though it were against that wholenesse of truth which the lawes of historie doe exact”.⁶⁷ Dio, Bolton argues, “onely reports what he found, and is not found to haue fained any thing” and thus Lipsius is incorrect to reject Dio’s account and to claim that Dio was guilty of partiality against Seneca.⁶⁸

Furthermore, Bolton builds upon this discussion of the disconnect between the philosophy and the actions of Seneca by rebutting Lipsius’s analysis of Senecan philosophy as pseudo-Christian. In Lipsius’s *Vita*, and in Lipsian philosophy more generally, Senecan Stoicism is Christianised.⁶⁹ In the *Vita* Lipsius draws attention to a passage in *De ira* and to Seneca’s ninety-sixth epistle to argue that Seneca’s philosophy of introspection and of abnegation is close to Christian teaching:

Againe he himselfe, I vse this power, and daily examine my selfe when the light is out and my wife is silent, which is now priuie to my custom. I examin the whole day that is past by my selfe, and consider both mine actions and wordes. I hide nothing from my selfe, I let nothing slip: for why should I feare any of mine

⁶³ Ibid., (234), sig. Hh1v

⁶⁴ Ibid., (234), sig. Hh1v; (98) sig. O1v.

⁶⁵ Ibid., (234), sig. Hh1v.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., (235), sig. Hh2r.

⁶⁸ Ibid. Lipsius claims of Dio “Whether he spake this truely or no I know not; for euery wayes he was a mortall and professed enemy of our *Seneca*” in Lipsius, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, sig. d1r.

⁶⁹ For a general discussion of Lipsius’s Christianization of Senecan stoicism, see Kenneth C. Shellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (Chicago and London; The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 137-138; McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 6-9.

errours? When as I may say, see that thou doe this no more, for this time I pardon thee...I will set downe one thing that I gathered from him: If thou beleueest me any waies, when I discover my most inward affections to thee, I am thus formed in all occurrents, which seeme either difficult or dangerous. I obey not God, but I assent vnto him; I follow him from my heart, and not of necessitie.... Yea, some of that vnstained pietie that *Tertullian* and the Auncients call him Ours.⁷⁰

Bolton responds forthrightly to Lipsius's assertion by pointing to the precise slant of Tertullian's words. The verbal parallel and the construction of Bolton's argument (in which he earlier alludes to Lipsius's defence of Seneca's reputation) in his rebuttal, make it obvious that Lipsius is the target: "Some haue reputed him a *Christian*, but TERTVLLIAN hath all in a word, HEE IS OFTEN OVRS".⁷¹ Bolton continues by drawing attention to a number of Seneca's actions that undermine the Lipsian depiction of Seneca as a pious Christian.

His extant writings make TERTVLLIAN'S censure of him true, and his last words (repeated by TACITVS) ending in a friuolous ceremonie to IVPITER, conclude on behalfe of paganisme...And if other arguments were wanting, this one alone might serue in stead of a multitude, that hee had not the right spirit, who (besides the doctrine of *selfe-murther*, by him commended) would meddle in the violent deposing of his soueraigne Lord.⁷²

It is the last act in Bolton's list, that of deposing a ruler, that he considers most heinous. As Edward Paleit underlines, in Bolton's view tyrannicide is an irreligious act, and thus the conspirators (Paleit is particularly concerned with the presentation of Lucan) are charged with committing an act of sacrilegious destruction.⁷³ Bolton adopts the conventional view of the inviolability of the tyrant that we encounter in, for example, William Tyndale's *The Obedience of the Christen Man* and in *A Homilie against Wilful disobedience*, in which resistance is expressly condemned with reference to the Pauline Injunction in Romans

⁷⁰ Lipsius, *The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, sig. D2v. The passage from *De ira* reads as follows (see *Epistles in The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 412): "I vse this power, and daily pleade before my selfe, when the candle is taken from me, and my wife holdeth her tongue, being priuie to my custome. I examine the whole day that is past, and ruminat upon actions and wordes. I hide nothing from my selfe, I let slip nothing: For why should I eare any of mine errours, when as I may say: See thou doe this no more: for this time, I pardon thee." See *Of Anger in The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 577. The full quotation from epistle ninety-six reads: "If thou thinke me to be a true man, when I discouer freely vnto thee what I thinke, know that in all accidents which seeme aduerse and hard, I am so formed. I obey not God forcibly but freely, I follow him with a free heart, and not enforced."

⁷¹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (235), sig. Hh2r.

⁷² *Ibid.*, (235-236), sig. Hh2r-Hh2v.

⁷³ Paleit, *War, Liberty and Caesar*, 155. Paleit cites Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, 236 in particular.

13.1.⁷⁴ Bolton condemns Seneca's participation in rebellion and remarks that Seneca had "profited little in his supposed familiaritie with *Saint PAVL*, who in these very times of NERO, and to these very ROMANS taught quite the contrary...".⁷⁵ For Bolton, it is impossible for a pious and godly Christian to consider, let alone conspire to bring about, the overthrow of a ruler and this argument is used to overrule any arguments favouring Seneca as a proto-Christian martyr.

Bolton's overall aim in his presentation of Seneca is to counter any aspect of Lipsius's portrait that celebrates the heroic and god-like character of Seneca himself, and of the *sapiens* which Senecan philosophy constructed. Where individuals like Cornwallis harness the image of man who "becomes in this like unto God" through knowing the self, Bolton makes the point that Seneca's philosophy of the constant mind, in fact, teaches man that he is greater than God himself.⁷⁶ According to Bolton, the vision of the constant man, who withdraws himself from the world, inspires selfishness and impiety, as Seneca's life demonstrates. Moreover, by pointing to Seneca's inability to conform to the ideal he himself had established, Bolton challenges the notion that man could become a *sapiens* who places himself outside society. For Bolton, it is evident, as explored in the next section, that any philosophy that contradicts both the idea that man is inherently a social animal and the idea that man exists within a divinely ordered universe is subversive.

In this approach Bolton echoes the political philosophy of his royal sponsor. For King James, Lipsius's belief in man's capacity to attain sagehood represented an act of subversion as it elevated man to the realm of the divine, not only undermining the divine representative on Earth, but also deifying mere mortals. In *Basilikon Doron*, James condemned that "Stoicke insensible stupiditie, wherewith many in our dayes, preassing to winne honour, in imitating that ancient sect, by their inconstant behaiour in their owne liues, belie their profession."⁷⁷ The Stoic certainty that man could attain moral perfection through the quenching of passion and through acquiescence to reason, gave man an inflated sense of the self. As shown in his correspondence with Cecil, Bolton shared James's dislike of the contemporary vogue for Stoic philosophy, and likewise suggested that Stoicism created overweening men misled by a false sense of their own capabilities.

⁷⁴ Tyndale, *The obedience of a Christen man*, f.Xxixr-f.xlviiij; "A Homilie against wylful disobedience," 555.

⁷⁵ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (236), sig. Hh2v.

⁷⁶ Cornwallis, *Essayes*, 165-6 also cited in Miles, *Shakespeare and the Constant Romans*, 78.

⁷⁷ James I, *Basilikon Doron* in *The Political Works*, 41-42. For a discussion of James's Tacitism; see for example Mellor, "Tacitus, Academic Politics, and Regicide," 153-193 and Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example," 199-225.

And if Philosophie, chiefly Stoick, or rather (not to blame divine Philosophie) the error of students, hath any Sand more dangerous then other, I knowe none rather then Over=weening: Which I add, for that (my most honored Lord) in mistakeing mine heigth, I am thought to have run...with great vigilancie, and care=takeing, upon a very Rock....⁷⁸

While James elaborated a philosophy of obedience to counter the philosophy of stoic perfection articulated by men such as Lipsius, it is also clear that James sought to undermine the idea that men who suffered for their religion attained some form of perfection as martyrs. In his *Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance* James, developing a similar argument to that he had used against Lipsius in *Basilikon Doron*, condemns the pride of those who think they attain a form of godliness through displaying fortitude in times of persecution. Writing to counter Paul V's response to the Oath of Allegiance, James criticises the Papacy for its statement exhorting English Catholics to manifest "*the constancie*" of their faith "*which is tried like gold in the fire of perpetuall tribulation*".⁷⁹ The Papacy's suggestion is that godliness and perfection can be achieved through faithful obedience to God alone, rather than to the temporal ruler, if these two masters are in conflict. James responds by yoking the perfection of the self to the cultivation of an obedient subject, and implies that there can be no separation of the personal or religious "self" and the "political" self.⁸⁰ Those who seek to bypass the temporal sphere and become martyrs in matters of religion are merely subverting the divine, and cannot attain a form of divinity since the perfect subject recognises that his salvation is attained through obedience to God's representative on Earth.⁸¹ What the Papacy encourages, James asserts, is the subversion of royal authority, and in the case of his English subjects, the dissolution of their obligations and duties towards their Prince. James's political philosophy rests ultimately on the need for obedience and order, and thus it is easy to see why both the Stoic philosophy of sagehood and the political philosophy of the Papacy were targeted using similar language. In the *Nero Caesar* this overall emphasis on undercutting subversion is evident, since Bolton affirms how pride and self-aggrandisement, in any

⁷⁸ "A neatly written letter of Edmund Bolton" 18 April 1608.

⁷⁹ James I, *Triplici Nodo, Triplex Cuneus. Or an Apologie for the Oath of Allegiance. Against the Two Breves of Pope Pavlvs Qvintvs, and the Late Letter of Cardinall Bellarmine to G. Blackwel The Arch-Priest* in James I, *Political Works*, 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

form, are not to be tolerated. Thus, in the *Nero Caesar* Bolton aims to de-mythologise the figure of the Stoic sage: by taking the example of Seneca and stripping him of all the heroic qualities attributed to him by Lipsius. Instead Bolton shows Seneca as nothing more than a proud and seditious individual whose philosophy led him to overreach his own power.

Bolton, undoubtedly seeking to construct an argument that echoes King James's views on the subject, provides an intervention into the ongoing "debate" concerning the political implications of "new humanism". This intervention betrays the characteristic assumptions — as summarised by Christopher Brooke in his analysis of Jacobean anti-stoicism — of those who viewed the *sapiens* as a political threat. Brooke explains that, for those who presuppose "that a well-ordered political community is one in which the citizens share an appropriate conception of justice", there is a "perennial anxiety regarding those who represent themselves as Stoics", because "however assiduously they may be seen to be performing their various offices, they [Stoics] threaten to disrupt the smooth workings of a hierarchical political regime, substituting their own scales of values — regarding justice or honour, for example — for those that are officially recognised and socially sanctioned, and always placing their paramount concern with their own virtue above what others take to be the needs of the commonwealth for orderly, stable government."⁸² In Bolton's presentation of Seneca it is clear that Bolton sees Stoic philosophy as promoting a breakdown of the shared system of political and ethical values which he considers to be the foundation of an ordered state. In short, the promise that Stoic philosophy sustains, of liberty, virtue and selfhood, works directly against the attainment of these values within the construct of the state.

Discipline and sovereignty

Bolton's theory of sovereignty stresses the obligations and mutual responsibilities of the ruler and the ruled, and asserts that the most secure form of political organisation harmonises the will of individual subjects through the institution of a single sovereign power. In this, Bolton articulates a theory of sovereignty very similar to that expressed by Lipsius in the *Politica*, where monarchy is celebrated as a form of governance that provides order to a fragmented and chaotic political existence. Bolton, like Lipsius, places emphasis on the need for subject and prince to behave as rational individuals by containing their harmful passions. However, while some "new humanists", as discussed in the

⁸² Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*, 68-69.

previous chapter, sought to identify the immovable rational being as a model for those seeking withdrawal from political life, Bolton makes this being the foundation of political life. The balanced, “rock-like” subject is, for Bolton, the vision of the perfect disciplined subject who maintains unwavering obedience both to King and God.

As he outlines in his prefatory epistle to King James, Bolton’s aim is to demonstrate how the office of monarchy is invulnerable even against the type of turmoil and danger provoked by Nero’s reign.⁸³ In his exploration of Nero’s murder of Agrippina, Bolton underlines the strength of monarchy by reflecting how the Roman imperial office was untarnished by Nero’s most heinous actions.

T[h]at sacred monarckie could preserue the people of ROME from finall ruine, notwithstanding all the prophanations, blasphemies, & scandals of tyranous excesses, wherewith NERO defiled & defamed it, is the wonder which no other forme of gouernement could performe, and is the principall both of his time, and of pryncedome it selfe.⁸⁴

Monarchy, according to Bolton’s estimations, was the only safeguard of the Roman people, and governance by an emperor was the only way by which the unity of the Roman nation remained intact. The institution of monarchy united subjects, even amidst Nero’s cruelty, and only when it was removed did Rome itself, as Bolton will go on to argue, suffer collapse.

In his treatment of Nero’s reign Bolton seizes upon the notion of the king’s two bodies which had become central to debates during the Elizabethan succession crisis.⁸⁵ He draws attention to the distinction between the king’s mystical and private personae, describing how, during Nero’s reign, there was, “[a] wonder of imperiall maiestie within the wonder of most extreame vnworthynesse.”⁸⁶ However, Bolton’s interest in the “two bodies” theory lay not in suggesting the ways in which a king can be “un-kinged”, as is the case in *Richard II* for example, but in pointing to how these two bodies form an unbreakable union. The person of the king is bound to the role of king, by unction and by God. For Bolton, there is nothing that can uncouple the body public and body private and no other representative authority, such as parliament, can divest the king of his public

⁸³ See the discussion on page 190 of the present study.

⁸⁴ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (69), sig. K3r.

⁸⁵ See Chapter One of the present study.

⁸⁶ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (69), sig. K3r.

office.⁸⁷ Bolton argues that, despite the existence of this division, man cannot, and should not, attempt to break the mystical amalgam of the two. It is God, Bolton argues, who has bound the two bodies together and only he can dissolve the union. Bolton reflects this argument in the narrative which follows, by first stressing that Nero's cruel and corrupt actions could not detract from the divinity of the office of monarchy.

And if NERO, (in whom alone all the corruptions which had been engendred in ROME, from the birth of ROME till his owne dayes, seem'd drawne together into one apostem, or bile) could not putrifie those strengths which princedome gaue more vnto the state, then either the commons, or the nobles when they ruled all, who can enough admire, or reuerence that sacred institution which vertue crownes, and vice cannot dissolue?⁸⁸

The unity provided by a divinely ordained monarch, Bolton suggests, outweighs any injustice committed by the monarch himself. Furthermore, whilst the two bodies are united in accordance with God's will, the office of monarchy gains strength precisely because it is divinely crafted.

The excellencies of it [the institution of monarchy] speake their author: for so diuine a good as the fast connection of mankinde together in one vnder one, could bee the gift of onely God, who in his gouernement of heauen, and earth, doth vse none other forme; himselfe a King and monarck.⁸⁹

As Bolton will go on to argue in his discussion of the rebellions against Nero (see below), no man can aim at this divine office and attempt to uncouple the union of the body natural and body politic. Only God will dissolve the union when the body natural errs or becomes a tyrant, as Bolton explains: "For when was it seene, that the heavy hand of God did not finally infelicitate a tyrant?"⁹⁰ Until that point, the king's two bodies remain fused together and the unity of the country is preserved.

⁸⁷ In Ernst Kantorowicz's classic statement the idea of the "two bodies" as it applies to *Richard II* represents an oppositional language which asserts the role played by parliament in the body politic. Norbrook has refuted this reading suggesting that Kantorowicz is too deferential to the Whig tradition. He states that the application of the two bodies metaphor in early modern England should not be considered "a major origin of the English Revolution" because those who "invoked the theory at this time tended to want the succession to be determined without Parliament": see David Norbrook, "The Emperor's New Body? *Richard II*, Ernst Kantorowicz, and the Politics of Shakespeare Criticism," *Textual Practice* 10, no.2 (1996): 343. Bolton's use of the metaphor is similar in that he uses the idea to reinforce royal authority.

⁸⁸ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (70), sig. K3v.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, (70-71), sig. K3v-K4r.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, (240), sig. Hh4v.

Bolton, like other writers of the time, employs the theory of the “two bodies” to reinforce royal authority.⁹¹ As Glenn Burgess has noted, in *Calvin’s Case* of 1608 concerning the inheritance rights of the Scots, the idea of the king’s two bodies was used to assert that there was no division between the body politic and body natural, since the authority of the law confers on the natural body the status of a body politic.⁹² As Coke explained in this case, the “King hath two capacities in him: one a natural body... the other is a politic body or capacity, so called, because it is framed by the policy of man”.⁹³ The former is “the creation of Almighty God, and is subject to death, infirmity, and such like” whereas the latter “is called a mystical body” and is “immortal” and “invisible”.⁹⁴ These two capacities are bound together, Coke affirms, “by the policy of the law” which transforms the King, his natural person, into “a body politic, immortal and invisible, whereunto our liegance cannot appertain.”⁹⁵ The same idea finds an echo in James’s own political philosophy. For example, in his *Remonstrance for the Rights of Kings*, he asserts that the natural and politic bodies of the king are tied together in such a way that it is impossible to renounce the latter without destroying the former. As James explains, a king “cannot fall from the loftie pinnacle of Royalty, to light on his feet vpon the hard pauement of a priuate state, without crushing all his bones in pieces.”⁹⁶ In *Nero Caesar* Bolton reflects something of James’s political philosophy by suggesting that Nero’s politic identity is bound to his personal character and that, in spite of his personal failings, the stability and immortality of the politic identity ensured Rome’s Empire was maintained in a degree of order.

The idea of the two bodies is only one metaphor Bolton uses to articulate his theory of sovereignty. He also expresses the notion that the body politic rests upon the harmonious ordering of individuals under the capstone of the monarch. Drawing upon the commonplace idea of the human body and its constituent parts, working together and given motion by the head or mind, Bolton stresses that monarchy provides the most stable form of governance for a nation. This same metaphor had been employed in his translation of

⁹¹ Norbrook “The Emperor’s New Body?,” 343-344.

⁹² See the discussion in *Ibid.*

⁹³ Edward Coke, *The Reports of Sir Edward Coke Knt.* ... ed. John Henry Thomas and John Farquhar Fraser, vol. 4, *Parts 7-8*, (London: Joseph Butterworth and Son, and Dublin: J. Cooke, 1826), 17.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹⁶ King James I, *A Remonstrance for the Rights of Kings, and the Independance [sic] of their Crownes...* in James I, *Political Works*, 169-268, 245.

Florus to describe the way in which Augustus's leadership gave motion to the whole Roman nation united after the civil wars: "by his wisdom, and dexterity reduced into order the body of the empire, shaken, and distempred on all sides, which without all doubt could neuer have been brought together, and made to agree, vnlesse it had bene gouerned by the authoritie of some *worthie* one, as with a soule or mind".⁹⁷ The first use of this metaphor in the *Nero Caesar* is combined with Bolton's discussion of the two bodies, where he explains that the benefit of monarchy is its ability to synchronise the will of the nation as a whole. He borrows from Seneca's evaluation of the role of emperor:

But the ioynts, and compactures of the empires fabricke vnder an head, were so supple, and solid, that what SENECA worthely praised in generall, as the prerogative of monarckie, is exemplified true in this. ... But whereas the sentence points vpon CLAVDIVS, who was that olde, and feeble man, it holds good not only to olde, and feeble, but to all sorts of princes persons, whether olde, or young, tame or violent, ciuil or sauage.⁹⁸

The sentiment expressed here regarding the unity provided for the body politic by the monarch, echoes the overriding tone of Lipsius's *Politica*, in which the monarch acts as both the life-source and guide for the entire polity.

We that are commanded, are linked together as it were with a straight chaine, with him that commandeth. And as the mind in mans bodie, cannot either be whole, or diseased, but the functions thereof in like maner, are either vigorous, or do languish: euen so is the Prince, in this societie.⁹⁹

Bolton, like Lipsius in the above extract, stresses the importance of a centralising and unifying authority.

Furthermore Bolton, again like Lipsius, demonstrates the way in which the removal of this central structure causes an irreparable fracture in the political order. The whole narrative of the *Nero Caesar* rests on the dichotomy between order and chaos: the former guaranteed by the presence of a clement and just monarch, the latter inevitable in the absence of such a ruler. In his treatment of Seneca's role, as seen earlier in this chapter, Bolton draws attention to the ways in which undermining the foundations of monarchy causes the state to collapse from within carrying "it selfe and with it selfe all the rest, either

⁹⁷ Lucius Julius Florus, *Epitome of Roman History*, trans. Edmund Bolton as *The Roman Histories of Lucius Julius Florus, from the time of ROME till Cesar AUGUSTUS...* (London: Wil Stansby, 1619), STC 11103, sig. V6v-V7r, (438-439).

⁹⁸ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (69-70), sig. K3r-K3v.

⁹⁹ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, "The Author his Epistle,".

into obliuion, or infamie”.¹⁰⁰ Bolton goes on to demonstrate, in his narratives of Boudicca’s rebellion and the Pisonian conspiracy, that the removal of monarchy causes a breakdown of order. He concludes with the same theme, affirming monarchy to be “the pole of the world”, whose removal causes “vniuersall perturbations” to reverberate throughout a commonwealth.¹⁰¹ This obsession with the confusion and instability caused by the removal, or indeed the absence, of a monarch, pervades the *Politica*, a work which exudes Lipsius’s anxiety about the perpetual threat of religious war. In the second book of the *Politica*, government is characterised as being primarily concerned with “order” and “obeying”, and it is noteworthy that both Lipsius and Bolton borrow from Seneca’s *De clementia* to describe the benefits of rule by a single sovereign.¹⁰²

Surely, *this is the chaine, by which the common wealth is linked together, this is the vitall spirit, which so many millions of men do breath, and were this soule of commanding taken away the common wealth of it selfe should be nothing but a burthen, and open prey.*¹⁰³

Whereas Lipsius speaks in abstract terms about the nation “where this settled vnderprop is wanting”, Bolton’s portrait is based on historical events, since he uses Nero’s overthrow as the perfect illustration of the damage caused by a monarch’s deposition.¹⁰⁴

In addition, it is evident that Bolton understands monarchy to be necessary to prevent each individual subject from pursuing his own benefit or from living according to his personal desires. As Bolton implies in his depiction of Seneca, each individual possesses a self-awareness that often leads him to act selfishly and against the interests of others in society. It is because of this that Bolton commends monarchy as a form of glue which binds all individuals together, and prevents the constituent parts of the body politic from pulling in opposite directions. Man’s selfish nature is highlighted in Bolton’s

¹⁰⁰ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (9-10), sig. C1r-C1v.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, (287), sig. Oo4r.

¹⁰² Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Ciiijv.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, sig. Ciiijv - sig. Dr. The passage from *De Clementia* reads as follows (Lipsius, *Of Constancy in The Workes of Lucius Annaeus Seneca*, 586): “[h]ey therefore loue their owne safetie, when as for one man they leade ten legions to the battell, when they runne resolutely to the charge, and present their breasts to bee wounded, to the end their Emperours colours should not be taken. For he it is that is the bond, whereby the Common-wealth is fastened together; he is that vitall spirit by which so many thousands liue: of her selfe shee should be nothing but a burden and pray, if so be that soule of the Empire were taken from her.”

¹⁰⁴ Lipsius *Two Bookes*, sig. Dr. Lipsius quotes Sophocles, *Antigone* here: “*There is no greater mischiefe in the world then want of gouernement, it is the destruction of Cities, it ouerthroweth houses, and leaueth them wast, it causeth the souldier to turne his backe in battell: but obedience preserueth the substance and life of such as follow her.*” See Chapter One of the present study, n144.

description of the way in which Nero's murder of Agrippina went unremarked by the senate. "[S]o long as it went well with themselves", Bolton argues, the people "had very small care, or feeling in generall what the prince did vniust".¹⁰⁵ Bolton's theory of sovereignty argues that monarchy's role is to quell men's private and selfish desires, and the removal of a prince leaves men, as it did with Nero's overthrow, free to pursue their own atavistic wishes.¹⁰⁶

As discussed in the analysis of Gwinne's *Nero tragaedia nova*, this idea that monarchy formed the foundation of an ordered state was an orthodox one. This evaluation of monarchy was central to James's political philosophy as, throughout his reign, he stressed the fundamental importance of monarchy to the maintenance of order, justice and stability. In his speech of March 1609 James employed the metaphors Bolton uses in the *Nero Caesar* to stress how the person of the monarch acts as the cement for the nation. James explains:

There bee three principall similitudes that illustrates the state of MONARCHIE: One taken out of the word of GOD; and the two other out the grounds of Policie and Philosophie. In the Scriptures Kings are called Gods, and so their power after a certaine relation compared to the Diuine power. Kings are also compared to Fathers of families: for a King is trewly *Parens patriae*, the politique father of his people. And lastly, Kings are compared to the head of this Microcosme of the body of man.¹⁰⁷

Bolton also shares in James's concept of the monarch as the head of an ordered state. Both Bolton and James stress the role of the monarch in providing direction for a body of individuals working for the benefit of the whole. James's speech in response to the Gunpowder Plot reasserts his vision of the ordered state "composed of a Head and a Body".¹⁰⁸ Under the direction of the head are the body's other parts: "[t]he Vpper and Lower House" each composed from men of rank and reputation.¹⁰⁹ James reaffirms the idea of harmonious cooperation in order to pacify those demanding revenge over the Gunpowder Plot. He explains that the function of the assembled parliament is to put an end

¹⁰⁵ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (57), sig. 11r.

¹⁰⁶ See Bolton's description of the year of the four emperors; see Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (286-287), sig. Oo3v-Oo4r.

¹⁰⁷ James I, *A Speach to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at White-Hall, On Wednesday the XXI. Of March. Anno 1609* in James I, *Political Works*, 307.

¹⁰⁸ James I, *A Speach in the Parliament Hovse, as Neere the very words as covld be gathered at the instant* in James I, *Political Works*, 287.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

to discord and enact “the right interpretation and good execution of good and wholesome Lawes.”¹¹⁰ The meeting of the the body of the state is no place for any “rash and harebrained fellow to propose new Lawes of his owne inuention” nor is it a place “for priuate men vnder the colour of general Lawes, to propose nothing but their owne particular gaine, either to the hurt of their priuate neighbours, or the hurt of the whole State in generall”.¹¹¹ James insists that parliament works “only for the aduancement of God[']s glory, and the establishment and wealth of the King and his people”, and seeks to nullify the influence of “particular men” who “vtter there their priuate concepits”.¹¹² It is no place “for the satisfaction of their curiosities” nor is it a place for men “to make shew of their eloquence by tyning the time with long studied and eloquent Orations”.¹¹³ For James, then, as for Bolton, it is the duty of the King assembled in parliament to harmonise those elements of the state that aim to gain personal advantage or wealth. Bolton argues that individual subjects come together in order and harmony because they recognise that their own private interest is intimately bound to the preservation of the state as a whole. In the *Nero Caesar* he conveys this idea in his description of the ability of monarchical power to cement people together in the name of national interest: “for thousands to take weapon in hand for the defense of one person, or with many deaths to redeeme the single life of an olde perhaps, and feeble man, for they tender their proper safeguard, while they fight for their princes, in whose weale, or woe their owne is comprehended.”¹¹⁴ The state consists of the body working in unison, guided by the person of the king, and it is his responsibility to quell the tide of individual passions and individual self-interest, and instead propagate the idea that the subject rises or falls with the state as a whole.

Bolton’s concept of the state, unsurprisingly, mirrors that held by James. However, it is also the case that Bolton’s political thought seems to anticipate a theory of sovereignty that would be crystalised by Hobbes later in the century. Bolton, who may be seen as a bridge between the political thought of Lipsius and Hobbes, appears to refine the ideas found in the *Politica* into a monarchist theory of governance based on the cooperation of individuals united by the desire to preserve the state and the self. All three men, Lipsius, Bolton and Hobbes, seem to have found in Tacitus a pessimism concerning man’s ability

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 288.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (70), sig. K3v.

to form a coherent polity without the presence of a single sovereign. As stated in the discussion of Savile's work, Tacitus, in his handling of the transition from Nero to Galba in particular, seems to suggest that the rule of a sovereign, even an emperor like Nero, is preferable to the "sundry changes, bloudie battailes, violent mutinees, a peace full of cruelty and perill: foure Emperors slaine with sword, three ciuill warres, forraine many mo[re]" which occur in the absence of a prince.¹¹⁵ Lipsius expresses the same sentiment based on his own reading of Tacitus, and Roman history more generally, in commending the "gouernment of one, imposed according to custome, and lawes, undertaken, & executed for the good of the subiects" as the form most agreeable to nature and reason in its capacity to draw together subjects into one voice.¹¹⁶ In his essay on the opening section of the *Annals*, Hobbes, as Richard Tuck notes, articulates the idea that what Roman history teaches about governance is that civil war and sedition are to be avoided at all costs and that the rule of one benevolent and absolute sovereign secures the fortune of a polity.¹¹⁷ Benedetto Fontana concurs with this analysis of Hobbes's wider use of Tacitus for lessons in sovereignty, by demonstrating how at the heart of Hobbes's thought lies a preoccupation with the threat of disorder: "In both Tacitus and Hobbes the tangible and constantly hovering threat of civil war requires such an all-powerful prince", one "whose power is absolute but not arbitrary, whose rule is unchallenged but not tyrannical or despotic".¹¹⁸

Bolton's *Nero Caesar* stands midway between Lipsius's *Politica* and Hobbesian political thought in its appropriation of Tacitus to express a monarchical theory of absolute sovereignty. Bolton echoes Lipsius's emphasis on the order and the unity provided by a monarch but also goes beyond Lipsius to articulate a theory of liberty which begins to resemble that which would be later developed by Hobbes. As Christopher Brooke has recently explained, Hobbes seems to craft his vision of politics around Lipsius's remarks about the danger of civil war and the liberty of the individual, found in the final book of the *Politica*.¹¹⁹ Lipsius describes the actions of those who seek to defend their liberty against the sovereign:

¹¹⁵ Savile, *Histories*, 2.

¹¹⁶ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. D_{ijr}.

¹¹⁷ Richard Tuck, "Hobbes and Tacitus," in *Hobbes and History* ed. G. A. John Rodgers, Thomas Sorrell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2000), 99-111.

¹¹⁸ Fontana, "Ancient Roman Historians and Early Modern Political Theory," 367.

¹¹⁹ Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*, 72.

Immediatly [sic] after, they proceede with more boldnesse, *by the meanes of other ministers of sedition who are in a readinesse*: and do openly couer themselues with this word *libertie*, and other glorious names. But how falsely this is? For *to the intent they may ouerthrow the estate, they prefer libertie, which if they could get the upper hand, they would set upon.*¹²⁰

This passage from Tacitus's account of the trial of Thrasea Paetus forms the foundation, Brooke demonstrates, of Hobbes's political theory. The figure of Thrasea, the Stoic hero who defended his liberty against the tyranny of Nero, becomes the Hobbesian everyman, a figure with the potential to destroy the fabric of the polity. As Brooke explains, where Lipsius criticised the Stoics, and Thrasea specifically, Hobbes seizes on "[t]he figure of the potentially destabilising, glory-seeking Stoic senator or courtier" as a target for suspicion because for him "all politicians, whether in the aristocratic court or the popular assembly, vying one with another for superiority, could pose the same danger as the Jacobean's Stoic, fomenting social disunity, generating faction, and ultimately provoking civil war and a return to the state of nature."¹²¹

The passage, taken from the Neronian section of the *Annals*, is equally central to Bolton's political vision (as will be demonstrated below), as he uses the passage to argue in favour of monarchical authority. The *Nero Caesar* concludes with Cossutianus Capito's words, taken directly from Thrasea's trial, where it is argued "That *to ouerthrow souereignty, liberty was cryed vp, but if souereignty was thereby ouerthrowne, then would liberty it selfe be set vpon*".¹²² Bolton demonstrates that the lesson readers ought to take from his work is that those who seek to uproot the foundations of peace and stability are merely glory-seeking and selfish individuals. Furthermore, as Bradford has explained, Bolton undermines the worth of Thrasea's actions by implying that the philosopher was led

¹²⁰ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Ccijr. Lipsius cites Tacitus, *Annals* 1 and 16, and *Histories*, 4.

¹²¹ Brooke, *Philosophic Pride*, 73. Although it must be noted that Lipsius had initially favoured Thrasea's model of defiance: see Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 151. Morford explains that Lipsius had planned a work on Thrasea but Lipsius possibly understood that "Thrasea undoubtedly was the ideal that he recognised he could not himself achieve". Morford also notes that in Lipsius's commentary on the *Annals* it is the passage relating Thrasea's actions which seems to move Lipsius to "an extended expression of emotion". Morford cites Lipsius's commentary on 297-298 from the 1607 edition: "Hail, o hail, great man, a name among Roman philosophers to be revered. You were the great glory of the Gallic race; you were the ornament of the Roman Senate: you were the golden star of that dark age. Your life, lived among men, was not the life of a man: unique was your integrity, constancy, dignity, and the tenor of your life and death was unchanged." Lipsius's words read as follows; see Tacitus, *C. Cornelii Taciti Opera Quae Exstant* ed. Justus Lipsius (Antwerp: Plantin Press, 1607), 297-298 n.38. "Salve, ô salve vir magne, & inter Romanos sapientes sanctum mihi nomen. Tu magnum decus Gallicae gentis: tu ornamentum Romanae curiae: tu aureum sidus tenebrosi illius aui. Tua inter homines, non hominis vita: noua probitas, constantia, grauitas: & vita mortisque aequabilis tenor."

¹²² Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (287), sig. Oo4r.

astray by the counsel of Demetrius the Cynic.¹²³ Demetrius is to be blamed for acting as “[a] corruptor of THRASEA, and of all his other disciples, by breeding contumacie in them towards superiors.”¹²⁴ When Thrasea spoke out against Nero it was not a principled act of defiance but the act of a man who merely had contempt for those in power. Demetrius, Bolton claims, had inspired this jealousy and irreverence in Thrasea since it was Demetrius who had incited discontent against Nero.¹²⁵ However, Bolton’s aim here is to denigrate Seneca’s character, portraying him as no better than Thrasea. Lipsius had rejected the example of outspoken Thrasea as the model for heroic stoicism, and had replaced him with Seneca’s example of impervious constancy.¹²⁶ For Bolton, however, Seneca is as subversive as Thrasea, since both men seem to have been supporters of Demetrius, and both applauded the Cynic in spite of his involvement in inciting rebellion.¹²⁷ For Bolton then, both Thrasea and Seneca represent harmful elements within the state since both men broke the bonds of allegiance in the name of glory. There is no place, Bolton argues, for such men in the ordered polity and the monarch is vital in stifling their ambitions. In summary, Bolton’s engagement with Tacitus takes inspiration from Lipsius’s political *sententiae* and anticipates Hobbes’s more complete vision of the polity in the emphasis on the necessity for the sovereign power to circumvent the potentially destabilising motion of individual liberty.¹²⁸

¹²³ Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism,” 145-146.

¹²⁴ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (261), sig. L13r, also cited in Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism,” 145.

¹²⁵ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (261), sig. L13r.

¹²⁶ Ker, *The Deaths of Seneca*, 211.

¹²⁷ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (260-261), sig. L12v-L13r.

¹²⁸ In drawing this connection between Hobbes and Bolton I mean to point to a shared vision and use of Tacitus’s histories. Jürgen Overhoff has described Hobbes’s Tacitism as belonging to the “black” Tacitist tradition (see *Hobbes’s Theory of the Will: Ideological Reasons and Historical Circumstances* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 95-96) and labels both Hobbes and Lipsius as absolutist Tacitists. A fuller comparison of his and Hobbes’s theories of sovereignty and indeed their dependence upon Tacitus (and their use of Lipsius as a “filter” for the language of prudence and reason) lies beyond the scope of the present study. Bolton’s language in his discussion of the relationship between the subjects and the sovereign authority — “Therefore it was possible, that the empire should be kept together for the uses of the people of ROME, by permitting all power to one...” — (*Nero Caesar*, 70, sig. K3v) — particularly the idea of “permitting” or granting power to one ruler does hint towards the Hobbesian notion of the existence of a contractual relationship between sovereign and subjects and intimates that the sovereign is obligated to those who constitute a polity for his power.

Custom, chaos and freedom

In Bolton's discussions of Boudicca's revolt of the Britons and the Pisonian conspiracy, it is plain that Bolton intends to counter a language of liberty, which he considers detrimental to political and social harmony. This language is both political and ethical. On the one hand, it articulates the idea that freedom for an individual or group is obtained through the removal of a coercive and overbearing sovereign power. On the other hand it concerns the freedom of an individual to be master of himself (i.e. able to live according to his own value systems and moral precepts). For Bolton the freedom of the individual or group, and the existence of a strong sovereign authority are axiomatic: civil liberty exists only within a divine and patriarchal hierarchy. The ethical freedom of the individual is similarly safeguarded, according to Bolton, through the existence of a shared structure of values protected by a strong centralising authority.

Bolton begins by demonstrating that rebellion in the name of liberty is both misguided and unnecessary. Those who consider it laudable to overthrow a tyrant in the name of freedom base their actions on a misconception of what it means to be free. For Bolton, any unseating of a sovereign, or disruption in constitutional order, creates chaos and confusion rather than liberty. According to Bolton's narrative, Boudicca was able to incite frenzy amongst the Britons, as she "unlockt all hearts and tongues", encouraging each Briton to "laye(s) open his griefes".¹²⁹ This desire for "[r]ight, and common libertie" unleashed a catastrophic confusion amongst the Britons and led them into a battle without any coherent aim.¹³⁰ The only guiding aim was "*the recouerie of common libertie*", but Bolton suggests that this vague aspiration merely led the rebels to act out of petty vengeance: "the *Boadician* BRITANNNS not onely striuing to be euen with their oppressours, for the wrongs they had done, but also to get before-hand with them, by worse, and greater."¹³¹ Bolton explains how the Britons considered that the "carriage of some of the ROMANS" could no longer be "endured" and thus the rebels were convinced that action was necessary to alleviate the pains suffered under Roman rule.¹³² Boudicca's

¹²⁹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (110), sig. P3v.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., (151), sig. V4r.

¹³² Ibid., (189), sig. Bb3r.

rebellion was, according to Bolton, born out of the idea that the removal of the source of domination would provide remedy for the suffering of the dominated.

It is evident here that Bolton considers Boudicca's rebellion to have been inspired by the desire for self-mastery in place of slavery. Bolton explains that the Britons thought that, by striking against Neronian rule, they would assume full control of their fate and fortune.

But the carriage of some of the ROMANS could not bee endured: and it is most honest, iust, and noble to dye for common good. Therefore MARCVS CICERO (of all the gowned ROMANS one of the best patriots that euer ROME *Ethnick* could boast) oraculously pronounced, that *no worthie man did euer forgoe his freedome, but together with his life*. For what other thing is life it selfe, but a most settred condition of humane being, and after a manner void of vse, or motion, when it onely hangs vpon a tyrants will? In such a case, the choise of dying free vpon defense, is sweeter then to remaine in life a slaue. Hence came her armes, and hopes: which propounded to themselues the making of such an example, as should for euer secure the iland from inuasion, and encourage the rest of the world to follow. Most loftie propositions, and which failing, it must needes be neuethesle confest that she went vpon highest darings.¹³³

He presents their understanding of liberty as one based on the distinction between “slave” and “free” where, as Skinner suggests, absolute freedom entails being free from domination.¹³⁴ As Skinner has outlined, in the “neo-roman” theory of liberty, the maintenance of freedom is only guaranteed “under a political system in which there is no element of discretionary power” and thus man is not free if he lives “under any form of government that allows for the exercise of prerogative or discretionary powers outside the law”.¹³⁵ Bolton counters this form of liberty — in which the removal of the prospect of domination is equated with freedom — by suggesting that nothing but chaos is created by tampering with the prevailing structure of power. In his discussion of Boudicca's rebellion, he refutes the idea that the only way to attain liberty is by the removal of all constraint upon the individual. By extension, Bolton undermines the notion that liberty is only attained within a free state. There can be no freedom gained through the overthrow of a sovereign, for what is actually created, Bolton argues, is a breakdown of all order.

¹³³ Ibid., (189-190), sig. Bb3r-Bb3v.

¹³⁴ Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 39-74.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 74; 70. Skinner's theory of non-domination rests upon the distinction between slavery and liberty found in Justinian's *Digest*: see Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, 39-40. Bolton's familiarity with this distinction and his own application of the idea of bondmen and freemen is evidenced in *The Cities Advocate*... (London: Miles Flesher for William Lee, 1629), STC 3219, 3-16.

The names of libertie, and reformation are the vsuall markes of faction; and libertie it selfe, after a short while is rarely any-where lesse then vnder the new lords rule. Things, fit for all times, and nations to consider, lest too late they finde true; *The vniustest peace is to bee preferred before the iustest warr.*¹³⁶

In Bolton's analysis of Boudicca's rebellion he draws attention to how the Britons were misled by a "false" liberty and counters the idea that liberty involves the absolute freedom of the individual from coercion and dependence.

In short, Bolton argues not merely that liberty and monarchical power can coexist, but that the benefits of liberty are concomitant with rule by a single sovereign. He stresses this in the concluding remarks to his *Nero Caesar*, as alluded to in the previous section, by quoting from Tacitus's account of the trial of Thrasea Paetus. Bolton appears to align his views on sovereign authority with those held by Thrasea's accuser, Cossutianus Capito, who charged the Stoic philosopher with having forsaken his public life in the name of private freedom.¹³⁷ As Mark Morford has explained, the crux of Thrasea's trial rested on two opposing conceptions of liberty: that of Thrasea, in which *libertas* was conceived as the state of withdrawal from the external world in protest against Nero's rule, and that of Cossutianus, who considered *libertas* to be intimately tied to service in the name of the state or princeps.¹³⁸ Cossutianus's view that "the Princeps [was] the only guarantee of an ordered state" is shared by Bolton, who argues that obedience to the person of the monarch provides freedom.¹³⁹ All the natural and civil liberties of each man are cast aside if the uniting force of monarchy is removed, as was the case, Bolton argues, when Nero was overthrown:

Adde, that the very sinews, and shot-anchor of humane prouisions was violently dissolved, when the soldiers (contrary to honesty and discipline) were taught to despise their allegiance, and gownmen to concurre in like periurie with the soldiers. ... Or what must not that state suffer hazardous, whose principall tyes shall sodeinly be dissundred, before new can possibly be so prouided as withall to be timely fastned?¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (193), sig. Cc1r.

¹³⁷ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (287), sig. Oo4r. In Grenewey's translation of Cossutianus's speech prosecuting Thrasea the conflict between Thrasea's belief that his identity was based upon stoic contemplation and withdrawal from public affairs and Cossutianus's view that the identity of Roman citizens was intimately tied to their public role is made explicit: see Grenewey, *Annales*, 253-257.

¹³⁸ Mark Morford, "How Tacitus Defined Liberty," in *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Römischen Welt. Geschichte Und Kultur Roms im Speigel der Neueren Forshung, Teil II: Principat, 33:5 Sprache und Literatur* ed. Wolfgang Haase and Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1991), 3446.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (287), sig. Oo4r.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Bolton uses Cossutianus Captio's prosecution of Thrasea Paetus in precisely the same way as Hobbes and Lipsius, to stress that, without the existence of a sovereign to which each man owes allegiance and loyalty, there can be no guarantee of freedom. As Bolton states in his conception of the ordered state, it is only the presence of a strong sovereign authority that provides security and harmony, and only through this, can the citizen possess liberty.

Furthermore, Bolton asserts, liberty is always preserved in a constitutional system which allows its subjects due redress. There is little wisdom in attempting to dismantle a system of governance when that system itself contains the mechanisms for settling grievances. A rash and hasty act of rebellion is one "whereunto reason is forein", Bolton explains, and those men who subvert the order of the state are individuals who do not know what it means to be truly free.¹⁴¹ Those, like the Britons, who rebel in the name of freedom, act out of petty vengeance, since all forms of governance contain the means to provide redress:

For nothing is so peculiar to barbarousnesse as to be ouer-indulgent to passions. And to bee so deceiued with the name, or sound of freedome, (the ordinarie miserie of the common sort) as but meerely to proue instrumentall to particular ends, or reuenges, and not to obtaine reliefe, is fit for none of the wise. Then, then should the IEWES haue concurred with one consent to defend their liberties by manhood, when POMPEI first assailed them. So disputes king AGRIPPA. The BRITANNNS in like sort should haue done their vtmost to keepe off the ROMANS, and to empeach their setlings. For, vntill then, that was iust resistance, which seemed afterwards plaine rebellion.¹⁴²

Bolton claims that there is a fine line between resistance and rebellion. Men may resist an abuse of power through appealing to their ruler or through lodging complaint, but cannot go as far as undermining the power of the prince as a means of complaint, since this is nothing less than rebellion or treason.

Bolton's approach to freedom and obedience here mirrors the overall sentiment of Pierre Charron's political philosophy relating to the benefits of monarchy. In *Of Wisdome* Charron demonstrates how obedience, stability and the liberty of the subject are ultimately connected. As Charron explains, in the chapter "Of Commanding and Obeying", the security and freedom of subjects depends on their willingness to obey:

¹⁴¹ Ibid., (190), sig. Bb3v.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Many States haue a long time continued and prospered too vnder the command of wicked Princes and Magistrates, the subiects obeying and accommodating themselues to their government: and therefore a wise man being once asked why the Common-wealth of *Sparta* was so flourishing, and whether it were because their Kings commanded well? Nay rather, saith he, because the Citizens obey well. For if the subiects once refuse to obey, and shake off their yoke, the state must necessarily fall to the ground.¹⁴³

Bolton's understanding of governance also points to the vital connection between subject and sovereign where the subject's prosperity rises or diminishes with the strengthening or weakening of government.

In his condemnation of rebellion, and in the assertion that the liberty of the subject is safeguarded by monarchical power, Bolton endorses the view held by James I in his political philosophy. There is an obvious topicality to Bolton's discussion of the balance between the liberty of the subject and obedience to the sovereign since his *Nero Caesar* seems to channel the dispute that emerged during the sitting of the 1621 parliament. The 1621 parliament convened in sessions plagued by mutual suspicion. The impeachment and downfall of Francis Bacon, as Andrew Thrush has suggested, buoyed some members into pressing for action against the Duke of Buckingham when his involvement in the abuse of monopolies was discovered.¹⁴⁴ Both James and the Parliament were concerned over the developments in Bohemia, but both sought to maintain sets of conflicting religious and diplomatic networks: James clung to the prospect of the Spanish Match and so feared allying against Spain, while Parliament encouraged intervention in support of the Protestant cause and sought assurance from the King that the royal heir would be married to a Protestant bride. The discussion of the royal match brought this distrust and tension to a head and resulted in a contest of words over the function of parliament. In his response to the Parliament's Petition of December 1621, in which the members pleaded for James to issue a clear statement limiting the rights of Catholics, James examines the theme of order and obedience that Bolton treats in the *Nero Caesar*. James condemns the "fiery and popular spirits" of the Commons, who have begun to encroach on matters of royal prerogative in attempting to "argue and debate publicly of matters far above their reach and

¹⁴³ Charron, *Of Wisdome*, 174-175.

¹⁴⁴ Andrew Thrush, "The Parliament of 1621," in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1604-1629* ed. Andrew Thrush and John P. Ferris (Cambridge: History of Parliament Trust and Cambridge University Press, 2010), History of Parliament Online, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/parliament-1621>.

capacity”.¹⁴⁵ James explains the role of his parliaments, warning the members against “insolent behaviour” and castigating those who would take it upon themselves to meddle in matters of state.¹⁴⁶ Parliament responded on 9 December 1621 in the form of a Petition of the House of Commons, which stressed that the effect of the king’s statement was to limit the “ancient liberty of parliament for freedom of speech”.¹⁴⁷ Like the Britons in Bolton’s narrative of Nero’s reign, the parliamentarians assert their freedom as a basic and ancient right:

.... a liberty which, we assure ourselves, so wise and so just a king will not infringe, the same being our ancient and undoubted right and an inheritance received from our ancestors, which we cannot freely debate nor clearly discern of things in question before us, nor truly inform your Majesty...¹⁴⁸

James’s answer to the parliamentarians suggests that the members do not understand what it means to be free since their freedoms and rights “were derived from the grace and permission” of previous kings, and underscores the idea that their interference in royal affairs is tantamount to “high treason”.¹⁴⁹ Undeterred, Parliament responded on 18 December 1621 with the “Protestation for the Freedom of Speech” asserting the Commons’ “freedom from all impeachment, imprisonment and molestation” when dealing with the business of the realm.¹⁵⁰ James’s response was to dismiss parliament, doing so in terms similar to those Bolton used against the revolt of the Britons. James implies that the behaviour of parliament, in this instance, amounted to the the overthrow of sovereignty in the name of liberty but he, like Bolton, as discussed above, insists that “*if sovereignty was thereby overthrown, then would liberty it selfe be set upon*”.¹⁵¹ In James’s view the “protestation” presented a real threat to sovereign authority as it “might serve for future times to invade most of our inseparable rights and prerogative annexed to our imperial

¹⁴⁵ “The King’s letter to the House of Commons, 3 Dec., 1621,” in *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I* ed. G.W. Prothero, 2nd Edition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), 310.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 310-311.

¹⁴⁷ “Petition of the House of Commons, 9 Dec., 1621,” in *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents*, 311.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹⁴⁹ “The King’s answer, 10 Dec., 1621,” in *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents*, 313.

¹⁵⁰ “Protestation of the House of Commons, 18 Dec., 1621,” in *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents*, 314.

¹⁵¹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (287), sig. Oo4r.

crown”.¹⁵² It is clear, then, that Bolton’s *Nero Caesar* reinforces the royal stance on liberty and sovereignty by suggesting that those who interfere with, or seek to alter, the royal prerogative merely dismantle the system that enshrines their freedoms.

Furthermore, throughout Bolton’s discussion of the ways in which rebellion against a sovereign is inimical to liberty, there runs an evident hostility to the idea of innovation. As noted above, Bolton is vehement in his condemnation of Nero’s overthrow and develops Tacitus’s analysis of Nero’s downfall by linking the political turmoil of Rome’s year of the four emperors to the unseating of the last Julio-Claudian. He goes further, however, than merely noting that the revelation of the “secrets” of imperial power unleashed political disruption. He suggests that the problems created by the unravelling of customary habits of power were cataclysmic. The abandonment of custom in the name of freedom resulted in “the election of emperours being translated thereby after seauen succesions, from a certaine family” becoming “the meed of most voices in the armies, and they the vendible ware of popularitie, donatiues, and congiaries.”¹⁵³ Similarly, earlier in his exploration of the habits of Roman Britain, Bolton draws attention to the way in which the allure of novelty can be politically damaging:

New formes while they pretend to polish parts, doe oftentimes file euen manhood it selfe away. Old rudenesse notwithstanding is happely changed for faire humanitie. The golden mean alone can take vp the matter so, that freedome may subsist by the force of a generous spirit, and yet smooth arts retaine their tast and luster.¹⁵⁴

In Bolton’s analysis, the Britons’ willingness to adapt to new Roman customs transformed them into nothing more than slaves to innovation, for “they soone grew too much *Romanised*” by adopting habits which “were fetters indeed, and a bondage”, and this destroyed their ability to defend themselves from conquest.¹⁵⁵

In this belief in preserving the status quo and maintaining custom, Bolton shares the disdain expressed by Montaigne for the power of “new forms”, and their tendency to distract men into desiring change. In his essay “Of custome, and how a received law

¹⁵² “The King’s Proclamation on dissolving Parliament, 6 Jan 1622,” in *Select Statutes and Other Constitutional Documents*, 316.

¹⁵³ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (287), sig. Oo4r.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, (94), sig. Nn3v.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, (93), sig. Nn3r. Bolton suggests that the Britons quickly became servile subjects rather than obedient subjects under Roman power when they abandoned their customs: see Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (92-94), sig. Nn2v-Nn3v.

should not easily be changed” Montaigne points to the way in which the overthrow of sovereignty and the disregard for tradition and custom plunge a state into disarray:

Those which attempt to shake an Estate, are commonly the first overthrowne by the fall of it: he that is the first moover of the same, reapeth not alwaies the fruite of such troubles; he beates and troubleth the water for others to fish in. The contexture and combining of this monarchie, and great building, having bin dismist and dissolved by it, namely in hir olde yeares, giveth as much overture and entrance as a man will to like injuries. Royall Majestie doth more hardly fall from the toppe to the middle, then it tumbleth downe from the middle to the bottom.¹⁵⁶

For Montaigne, as for Bolton, those who tamper with an established constitutional arrangement often unleash a greater catastrophe than any created by a tyrannical ruler. Montaigne continues by asserting that “[a]ll sortes of new licentiousnesse” and “images and patterns to trouble our common-wealth” are bred from the new sovereign or source of power which itself, as described in the extract above, is often the first victim in the name of change.¹⁵⁷ Bolton concurs by underlining how there can be no benefit or political gain from the destruction of a well-tryed constitutional structure. Moreover, he shares Montaigne’s scepticism about the likelihood that any new ruler would provide greater stability and liberty than the old: “Without some very speciall feelings, or ends of their owne, few or none of the mightie lead onward to the remove of an evill for common reliefe...and libertie it selfe, after a short while is rarely any-where lesse then under the new lords rule.”¹⁵⁸

Again, Bolton’s political thought here resonates with James’s perspective, in the insistence that innovation should be avoided at all costs. In his speech of 1609, discussed above, James explains that, in a settled kingdom, all subjects owe their allegiance to the king, who is both maker and upholder of the laws of the realm.¹⁵⁹ According to James, the function of the assembled parliament is to provide assistance to the king in matters of governance and it is not, he asserts, the place for men to present demands for change. Altering the established laws of the kingdom and undoing long-held privileges is a hindrance to governance:

¹⁵⁶ Montaigne, *Essayes*, 53.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (192-193), sig. Bb4v-Ccr.

¹⁵⁹ *A Speech to the Lords and Commons in James I, Political Works*, 309.

All nouelties are dangerous as well in a politique as in a naturall Body: And therefore I would be loth to be quarrelled in my ancient Rights and possessions: for that were to iudge mee vnworthy of that which my Predecessors had and left me.¹⁶⁰

James stresses that the unnecessary alteration of existing rights and privileges not only causes harm within the polity, but devalues his inherited position and prerogative. In the *Nero Caesar* Bolton concurs with this idea by attempting to dissuade men from taking actions likely to cause change and irreparable harm to the state.

Underpinning Bolton's attitude towards resistance and political change is the belief that rebellion is unnecessary, since rulers, both the bad and the good, form part of a divine plan which cannot be altered. Bolton states, as in Gwinne's *Nero*, that, where a monarch errs or falters, God possesses the capacity to pass judgement on the monarch's actions. From this it naturally follows that it is the responsibility of the monarch to behave in a just and godly fashion, and that, where he fails to live up to a model of good kingship, he risks being dispossessed by a higher power. In his exploration of the practical arts of politics, Bolton is explicit in indicating that prudence or an awareness of what is "useful" rather than "honest" has no role to play political life. In the *Politica* Lipsius stresses the value prudence, or "*knowledge of worldly matters which we have either seene or had the handling of*", has in maintaining power.¹⁶¹ The successful king, Lipsius notes, will recognise that "without *Prudence*" government "is not only weke and feeble" but is practically non-existent.¹⁶² Bolton, however, disagrees completely. In the fourth chapter in which he describes Agrippina's mind Bolton provides a specific and unambiguous refutation of Lipsius's doctrine of prudence.

O[n] the other side, to reigne ouer the world seemed to his mother AGRIPPINA, a thing so dazling [sic] and diuine, that all things else stood far to her on hither side thereof. Therefore in making her way, shee neuer distinguish either of methods, or efficients, for want of knowing that which is a much greater thing then to rule the whole world, the ouer-ruling of herselfe for higher ends.¹⁶³

As he continues his tirade against Agrippina's machinations, Bolton makes it clear that Agrippina's actions are those of an ungodly upstart whose main fault was in heeding the advice of the practitioners of amoral politics.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 315.

¹⁶¹ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Cijv.

¹⁶² Ibid., sig. G1r.

¹⁶³ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (5), sig. B3r.

The study of true philosophy (for some philosophies are neither fit for kings nor subjects being falsely called wisdom) would have taught her to consider, how much more glorious it is, to affect honest things rather than great, or to compass great things honestly. For there can be no pleasure in the fruition of brauerie and power, which in the least degree, can be worthy of an euill conscience, end, and fame.¹⁶⁴

The philosophy “falsely called wisdom” which Bolton aims to counter here is the philosophy of prudence expounded by Lipsius. In his discussion of prudence Lipsius explains that it is best described as a form of *wisdom* which must be put into practice: “*for it is not sufficient for us to obtaine wisdom onely, but we must likewise use it, and take profite thereby.*”¹⁶⁵ Whereas Lipsius counsels the prince to be prudent in recognising the flexibility of morality, and advises that a successful ruler will mix “*that which is profitable, with that which is honest*”, Bolton restates the need to uphold the value of honesty before all others.¹⁶⁶ The most important lesson Bolton has for any monarch is that in order to rule well he must possess virtue, rather than prudence.¹⁶⁷ Virtue, as Lipsius outlines, “*being the proper good appertaining to man*” consists of two parts, piety and goodness.¹⁶⁸ Bolton emphasises this aspect of Lipsius’s teaching and advises rulers that they must rule virtuously. For example, what Bolton suggests a ruler should glean from the history of Boudicca’s rebellion is that a prince can prevent insurrection only if he bases his rule on Christian virtue: “A lesson for soueraigne princes; by iustice, and other the vertues of that superexcellent function, to sustaine themselues from sodein slidings beneath their proper values.”¹⁶⁹ This emphasis on the merits of remaining an honest ruler is also evident in Bolton’s discussion of Nero’s education. It was Nero’s tutors, Bolton argues, who deterred the young prince from “the onely true grounds of glorie” — these being “the knowledge of honesty, and worth” — and towards more ignoble pursuits unfitting of a king.¹⁷⁰

Those rulers who fail to adhere to this model of kingship are tyrants, Bolton explains, but even these tyrannical rulers cannot be deposed by mere mortals. In chapter twenty of his work Bolton expresses the idea that “the author of all power, will certainly

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Ciiijr.

¹⁶⁶ Lipsius, *Six Bookes*, sig. Qr.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., sig. br.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., sig. br; sig. bv. Lipsius quotes Tacitus 4 *Histories*.

¹⁶⁹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (187), sig. Bb2r.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., (4), sig. B2v.

prouide”, and that an “abuse of *fiduciarie* power... shall neuer passe vnpunished.”¹⁷¹ As outlined earlier in this chapter, Bolton considers tyrants to be men who have surrendered their freedom to their basic instincts or passions, and in doing so, have become destined for a life of tribulation. “[E]very Tyrant liues tormented within himselfe”, he claims, and remains hostage to “the scourge, and knife of his inward feelings, and outward feares”.¹⁷² This torment, it is implied, forms part of divine judgement, and it is God who ultimately provides relief from a tyrant’s rule, since “when was it seene, that the heauy hand of God did not finally infeliciate a tyrant?”¹⁷³ Bolton shows divine judgement at work against Nero in his account of the persecution of the Christians, where he notes that God, being “offended” by Nero’s “licence”, attempted to interuene against Nero by whipping up “cogitations” amongst “good men” who sought to “free the world from so prophane, and dire an euill.”¹⁷⁴

As might be expected, Bolton again affirms James’s view of political affairs. In the advice provided in *Basilikon Doron*, James outlines that the good king is a ruler who “acknowledgeth himselfe ordained for his people,” and explains that the good king rules according to the principles of justice and fairness.¹⁷⁵ A tyrant, James states, lives a “miserable and infamous life” and gives his subjects due cause for rebellion.¹⁷⁶ The king’s power, James explains, is gifted by God and the sins and failings of the sovereign weigh heavier on him than on any other man.¹⁷⁷ As James argues elsewhere, the power invested in the sovereign is given by God and it is he who will rescind it should the prince fail to govern in the pattern of divinity: “he that that the only power to make him, hath the onely power to vnmake him”.¹⁷⁸

Bolton uses the narrative of Nero’s reign to craft a conservative theory of sovereignty. He takes Tacitus’s account of the conflict between Cossutianus and Thrasea as the basis for a discussion of the relationship between liberty and obedience to the state.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., (240), sig. hh4v.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., (241), sig. li1r.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., (231), sig. Gg4r.

¹⁷⁵ James I, *Basilikon Doron*, 18.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁷⁸ James I, *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, 57.

Bolton constructs a vision of the state where the subject's freedom is dependent upon the subject's willingness to participate in the state. At a basic level, Bolton's theory of statecraft, as discussed in the introduction to the chapter, resembles the idea of the hive where the individual subject is protected and sustained by the whole. According to Bolton, the subject's freedom is protected by the laws, which are maintained by the sovereign to whom the subject owes obedience. If the obedience is withdrawn, then the legal rights, and consequently the freedoms of the individual, are destroyed.

Divine knowledge and liberty

Bolton admonishes Seneca and criticises Stoic philosophy for its emphasis on cultivating the inner self through acquiring a sound appreciation of the transitory nature of the external world. In spite of this, Bolton does not reject the idea that man's life must be guided by a philosophy that acknowledges man's earthly existence as a small part of a greater scheme or plan. In Bolton's theory of sovereignty, as has been discussed, the good and obedient subject will recognise that they form part of an ordered constitution. In his analysis of Nero's reign, Bolton explains that recognition of this providential plan provides man with the capacity to realise a greater freedom than any that earth can provide.

In his discussion of the Pisonian conspiracy, Bolton explores this idea that freedom is dependent on man's understanding of, and surrender to, a divine plan. As outlined in the previous section, Bolton explains that those who rebel against a sovereign authority in the name of liberty are not only incorrect in their belief that only the removal of a sovereign authority can safeguard civil and natural liberty, but are also wrong to covet these forms of liberty. For Bolton there is a form of positive liberty to which all men should aspire: a form of self-realization or wisdom attained only by those who recognise the role of divine providence in the affairs of men. He begins by suggesting that it may seem reasonable to assume that living under the rule of a tyrant undermines natural freedom:

T[h]ey may be thought insensible of common, and naturall freedome (the life it selfe of all honestie and noblenesse) who should but thinke towards the impunitie of such a man as NERO; and it sounds both harsh and dull to propose the counsell of such a patience.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (240), sig. Hh4v. Bolton here seems to align this "naturall freedome" with common freedom.

Bolton criticises the argument that a tyrant would seem to infringe “naturall freedome” by denying man some basic and rude form of freedom to act according to one’s will. This view, he continues, also supposes that tyranny is anathema to legal liberty or civil liberty.¹⁸⁰

For it will vndoubtedly be askt, what shall become if legall liberty, and acts of goodnesse, if, according to all the old schooles of the ETHNICKS, it shall not bee held a most faire, and honourable deed to take away the life of a tyrant?¹⁸¹

The rule of a tyrant would seem, according to some, to take away man’s freedom by destroying all the natural freedoms of an individual, and by undermining any liberties secured by rule of law. Yet, Bolton claims, these forms of liberty — natural and legal — are false lights. True liberty, he argues, is not a purely political condition: “[t]o this I answere; they know not what liberty, and goodnesse meane, who thinke those habits are subiect to outward force: for none are free but the wise, and none are wise but the good.”¹⁸²

Liberty, then, is best described as an internal condition attained by those who are truly wise. As Bolton explains, the man who lives freely and is truly *sui iuris* is he who achieves an understanding of his place within the world. His is an ethical understanding of liberty in which those who are free are those who, through their wisdom, possess a sound understanding of doctrine. This doctrine, Bolton suggests in what follows, concerns the recognition that the universe is divinely ordained and that providence guides the affairs of men, even providing a remedy for the ills caused by a tyrant.¹⁸³ Even tyrannical rulers, unless they recognise and accept the omnipotence of the divine, will remain slaves because they remain captive to their irrational instincts and blind to the wisdom of divine authority. Bolton explains the form of captivity these slaves suffer:

There is in all generous natures a rising against great mens violences, and who is hee that can resist the first heats, and boilings of indignation, or would not wish reuenge? But they who account it liberty to obey such vncorrected rulers, doe serue but vnruely maisters, and rarely sit downe without repentance, if perhaps they perish not before. For what else made NERO himselfe miserable, but the wilde, and vndistingisht pursuit of appetites? Or what turned him out of a prince, into a

¹⁸⁰ Bolton’s use of the term “legal liberty” here ought to be taken to mean civil liberty or rights and freedoms prescribed by law.

¹⁸¹ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (240), sig. Hh4v.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

tyrant, but captiuitie to passions? No man becomes miserable but by such subiection.¹⁸⁴

For Bolton the distinction between freeman and slave, and thus his definition of liberty, is not connected with the political or constitutional rights of man, but with the ethical status of man. This freedom stems from faith in God's power and adherence to his doctrines, as Bolton makes explicit in his description of the difference between Stoic philosophers "who were perilous to empire, vnder the pretext of freedome" and the Christians "who knew a better freedome."¹⁸⁵ Although there is a divergence of opinion between Bolton and Lipsius over whether Seneca is a fit model to emulate, in their insistence that man can only liberate himself if he acknowledges God's hand in human affairs, the two writers are drawn together. The acceptance of providence is one of the key lessons provided in Lipsius's *De constantia* where, as in Bolton's *Nero Caesar*, man is said only to be truly free if he lives by the guide of reason and relinquishes himself to the destiny God has ordained. Languis counsels the character of Lipsius that "there is an eternall Spirite, whome wee call GOD, which ruleth, guideth and gouerneth the rolling Spheares of heauen, the manifolde courses of the Stars and Planets, the successiu alterations of the Elements, finally, al things whatsoeuer in heauen and earth."¹⁸⁶ Unless man accepts this governing hand and surrenders his fate to that which God has planned he cannot truly be free: "*Wee are borne in a kingdome, and to obey God is libertie*".¹⁸⁷ Bolton similarly underlines how political freedoms are secondary to the fundamental freedom obtained through man's acceptance of God's will. In *De constantia*, as McCrea argues, Lipsius crafts human freedom as the sum of man's constancy in the face of divine providence: Lipsius promotes the notion that "[a]n adjustment of perspective" allows man to "maintain his position in the world" in spite of the instabilities of day to day existence.¹⁸⁸ Bolton maintains this viewpoint in his *Nero Caesar* by arguing that man can, and indeed should, maintain his position in society, even under the rule of a tyrant like Nero, because, wherever man might perceive his freedoms to be curtailed, a greater freedom is provided through the acceptance of divine providence.

The same approach to liberty is found in Charron's *Of Wisdome* which, as has been discussed earlier in this chapter, shares something of Bolton's political stance in expressing

¹⁸⁴ Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (241), sig. li1r.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, (265), sig. Mm1r.

¹⁸⁶ Lipsius, *Two Bookes*, sig. E4v.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. F2r.

¹⁸⁸ McCrea, *Constant Minds*, 9.

the manifold benefits of monarchical governance. Like Bolton, Charron recognises that many men have deemed death preferable to living a life of political servitude. He explains, “that many haue chosen rather to die a cruell death, than to be made slaues, or to see either the publike good or their owne priuate indangered.”¹⁸⁹ As we may recall from the discussion in the previous chapters, Charron explains that, however noble such a view might be, it is fundamentally a misguided one. There is, Charron demonstrates, “a twofolde libertie”: a liberty “which is of the minde or spirit, and is in the power of euey one, and can not be taken away, nor indamaged by another, nor by Fortune it selfe”, and a “corporall libertie... subject to Fortune”.¹⁹⁰ It is the first form of liberty that Charron urges men must covet. For it is possible, he explains, to be like “[m]any great and wise men” who have served “euen those that were wicked”, but who have possessed “in effect and truth” more liberty than those they served.¹⁹¹ Bolton’s argument that “none are free but the wise, and none are wise but the good” is paralleled in Charron’s philosophy, where liberty and divine wisdom are allied.¹⁹² The “entire, and vniuersall libertie of the mind”, Charron claims, acts as preparation for man to receive divine wisdom and this wisdom provides the ultimate form of freedom from the tribulation of earthly existence.¹⁹³ In Bolton’s *Nero Caesar* the same argument is pursued, where freedom is identified as an inward condition of the mind and, because this freedom lies deep within man, it is entirely possible for man to be free and live within a state where external rights are proscribed.

For Bolton, as for Charron, the pursuit of this divine form of liberty does not prevent men from being loyal subjects to the prince. In fact, as has been explained earlier in this chapter, for Bolton, the freedom of the individual is wholly dependent on their obedience to the sovereign, since to disobey a sovereign is to renounce the divine, and the individual who embarks on this path surely cannot possess this inner liberty. In this argument Bolton echoes the view of James I who used similar logic to refute Cardinal Bellarmine’s praise of those English Catholics who defied the call for the Oath of Allegiance as martyrs. Where Bellarmine celebrated the Archpriest Blackwell as one who set “*the liberty of the glory of the Sonnes of God*” before “*temporall liberty*”, James expresses astonishment, and declares that the subject’s soul, and hence his liberty, cannot

¹⁸⁹ Charron, *Of Wisdome*, 209.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 209-210.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 210.

¹⁹² Bolton, *Nero Caesar*, (205), sig. Dd4r

¹⁹³ Charron, *Of Wisdome*, 221.

be extracted from his political duty.¹⁹⁴ There is no opposition, James explains, between “the profession of the naturall Allegiance of Subiects to their Prince” and “the faith and saluation of soules” and all subjects “are bound to obey their Princes for conscience sake”.¹⁹⁵ In short, that inner wisdom described by Bolton, which James associates here with the conscience and faith, is secured through the subject’s upholding and obeying the prince, since the prince himself is one aspect of the pattern of divine wisdom.

Bolton’s “new humanism” expounds a political philosophy which is entirely sympathetic towards monarchical government. His approach to the Continental revival of Tacitus and Seneca, particularly his approach to Lipsius, is complex. On the one hand, Bolton seems to reject the Lipsian philosophy of resignation found in *De constantia* and undermines Lipsius’s depiction of Seneca by repainting the Stoic philosopher as a proud malcontent whose sole aim was to unravel Nero’s power. On the other hand, in this rejection of the idea that Stoicism provides a philosophy for those wishing to insulate themselves against the world, Bolton perhaps comes closer to Lipsius’s intentions by providing Seneca as a model for those who wish to participate in the political world. Bolton’s subject, like that of Lipsius, is one who lives according to reason and one who acquiesces to God’s divine plan. This subject, who lives in accordance with divine order, is just one cog in what Bolton envisages as a well-oiled machine, given motion by the commanding authority of the God-fearing sovereign. In Bolton’s *Nero Caesar* what emerges is, in part, a theory of monarchical power very similar to the patriarchal and hierarchical patterns of governance which would, no doubt, have been familiar to readers. It is also, in part, an image of power and statecraft which anticipates monarchical models that would emerge during the late 1640s and 1650s.

¹⁹⁴ James I. *Triplici nodo*, 84.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

Conclusion

Some time between 1649 and 1651, shortly after the execution of Charles I, John Milton was commissioned to write a defence of the act of regicide. His *Defense of the People of England* was published in February 1651 and acted as a response to the royalist defence, *Defensio regia*, published by Salmasius in November 1649.¹ Salmasius condemned the regicides and used the Pauline Injunction to argue that men should serve loyally even the most tyrannical rulers. He continued his attack on the regicides by claiming that, in seeking the death of their own monarch, they had been more vengeful than Nero. Who could deny, he suggests, that the Englishmen who decried Charles as another Nero were as guilty of tyranny as he?

N'est ce pas ainsi que ces nouveaux Nerons Anglois font toutes choses sous le nom du peuple, en qui ils auoient de bouche que reside l'autorité Souueraine, qu'ils attirent neantmoins toute entiere à eux mesmes par effet; lors qu'ils exercent sur luy vne tyrannie plus cruelle que celle de Neron?²

In his *Defense*, Milton responded to the comparison with Nero by turning the focus on Charles, and by insisting that Charles, not the parliamentarians, ought to be considered a reincarnation of Nero. Milton claims that it is more appropriate to compare *Charles* with Nero.

'Nero', you say, 'killed his own mother' with a sword. Charles did the same with poison to his father who was also the king. For to pass over other proofs, he who snatched from the clutches of the laws the duke who was charged with the poisoning, cannot but have been guilty himself too. Nero killed many thousands of christians; Charles many more. There were some, on the testimony of Suetonius, who praised Nero after his death, who missed him, who for a long time 'decorated his tombe with spring and summer flowers' and predicted all sorts of evils for his enemies: and there are some who miss Charles with the same madness, and exalt him with the highest praises, of whom you, gallows-knight, lead the company.³

¹ Martin Dzelzainis ed. *Milton: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xix-xx.

² Claude de Saumise, *Apologie Royale povr Charles I Roy D'Angleterre* (Paris: Matin Dupuis, 1650), 745. The comparison with Nero runs over several pages; see 743-749.

³ John Milton, *A Defense of the English People* in *Milton: Political Writings* ed. Martin Dzelzainis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 176.

Both Nero and Charles had been condemned by their subjects because of their tyrannical rule, and Nero now became the focal point in arguments about exactly how far Charles I could be considered a tyrant. Milton suggests that Nero's actions pale into insignificance in comparison with those of Charles I. Milton then responds to Salmasius's description of the parliamentarians as "Nerons Anglois". He suggests that because Charles was more tyrannical than Nero, the English parliament would have been justified were they to have prescribed him a more harsh punishment than that approved for Nero by the Roman Senate. Parliament had acted "much more mildly and moderately" than the Senate, in approving the death of Charles.⁴ Moreover, Milton continues, it is commonly accepted that rulers like Nero or Charles should not be tolerated by their subjects. Not even Seneca, Milton argues, could deny that to rid the world of such a ruler was an act deserving of great praise, since a tyrant must be removed.⁵

By the time of the regicide, the rise and fall of the emperor Nero had become the centre-piece in arguments concerning the overthrow of Charles I. Furthermore, as Milton's argument suggests, the Senate's actions in declaring Nero an enemy to the state and in sentencing him to a violent and public death, were used as a precedent to justify the deposition and execution of England's king.⁶ The histories of Tacitus and the political philosophy of Seneca provided Englishmen with a precedent to use as a reference during one of the most radical periods of political transformation in their history.

A few decades earlier, however, few would have predicted that Englishmen would turn to the example of the Senate's declaration against Nero to justify the execution of their own monarch, and to establish the supremacy of parliament. Moreover, it would have been impossible to envisage a period where open and obvious comparisons between England's king and Nero were tolerated. Earlier in Charles's reign, there was little sense that "new humanism" was informing a republican ideology, even if it had the potential to cause discontent and discomfort amongst those involved in governance. In 1627 the Dutch scholar Isaac Dorislaus, was appointed to take up the position of the first chair of history at Cambridge University. The subject of the inaugural lecture series was Tacitus's *Annals*, and Dorislaus focused specifically on providing an exposition on the difference between good kingship and tyranny.⁷ While the lectures attracted the attention of Charles, who

⁴ Ibid.,172.

⁵ Ibid., 171.

⁶ Ibid., 172; Gwyn, "Cruel Nero," 421-422.

⁷ Mellor, "Tacitus, Academic Politics, and Regicide," 153-913.

promptly silenced Dorislaus, there was little sense that “republicanism” had any bearing on the scope and content of the lectures.⁸ Dorislaus was doing little more than others before him, in using Tacitus’s histories to illustrate the difference between benevolent kingship and tyranny.

This thesis has demonstrated that in the period 1580-1630 there was no connection between “new humanism” and republicanism. When early modern writers turned to the works of Tacitus and Seneca, they did not extract an anti-monarchical ideology from them, but selected a number of concepts and ideals from these writers and used them to create a philosophy which enabled the disaffected courtier or subject to survive political difficulty. While the example of Nero and his condemnation by the senate provided Milton with a paradigm by which to justify the action of the regicides, up until the execution of Charles I there is little evidence that Nero’s reign was being used to inform an anti-monarchical ideology.

In the first and third chapters of the present study we explored how the authors’ depictions of Nero used themes taken from Tacitus and Seneca to develop a critique of the policies and culture associated with Elizabeth I and James I. While criticism was voiced, this discontent never developed into a rhetoric condoning resistance to monarchy or proposing the idea that a republican constitution might be a better safeguard of individual liberty. Henry Savile, much like the author of the anonymous play *The Tragedy of Nero*, used the decline in virtue and martial spirit associated with the lethargy of Nero’s reign to propose a more vigorous and ambitious foreign policy for England. While they criticised Elizabeth I and James I for their approach to war with England’s rivals, they stopped short of advocating the type of action taken by men like Piso or Vindex. Instead, these two writers looked for other examples of virtuous fortitude that men ought to emulate. For Savile, Agricola’s pragmatism represented the most sensible behaviour for men faced with their own Nero or Domitian. The anonymous playwright looked to Piso and Seneca for inspiration, and pondered how men could retire inside a more organic self in order to survive political misfortune.

In the second and final chapters of the present study we encountered a more optimistic vision of political life, where it was argued that the rebellion against Nero unleashed a far worse form of political chaos than any created by Nero. In his *Nero tragaedia nova*, Gwinne reminds readers that Nero held sway over only a small part of a

⁸ Mellor makes this point about Dorislaus and republicanism; see *Ibid.*, 176. Peltonen, on the other hand, suggests that Dorislaus’s topic dealt with the specific criticisms directed at Charles I and was possibly a reflection of the dissatisfaction felt as a result of the Forced Loan, and did reflect a more general appeal to the benefits of a republican constitution; see Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 275.

much wider cosmos. Nero may command at Rome, he suggests, but God commands all, and will provide salvation for those suffering the rule of a tyrant. The models of Octavia and Paulina provide Gwinne with perfect illustrations of how patient endurance strengthens, rather than undermines, the liberty of the individual. Bolton concurs with Gwinne's assessment of political life, but suggests that it is the responsibility of the subject to provide strength and support for the monarch. Obedience does not involve passively and reluctantly tolerating the rule of a monarch, rather, it involves demonstrating allegiance to a monarch. Bolton holds a view of the state as a community of loyal individuals kept in check by the rule of a sovereign, and there is no place in this state for men who preach a philosophy of sagehood and not only permit, but encourage, men to retreat from the community in which they live.

Both Gwinne's *Nero tragaedia nova* and the anonymous *Tragedy of Nero* enjoyed afterlives beyond 1630. Gwinne's work was printed again in 1637 and 1639, probably with the aims of silencing the opponents of John Hampden's prosecution for refusal to pay the Ship Money and of deterring rebellion such as that in Scotland over the question of religious reform. Gwinne's concluding refrain, in which it is declared that God-fearing subjects are protected by God, would surely caution those proposing rebellion. It is perhaps unsurprising that the *Tragedy of Nero*'s reissue occurred in 1633, the year which saw the publication of Prynne's *Histriomastix*. The playwright's presentation of Nero's wayward army suited only to the stage, and his depiction of a profligate and artificial court wooed by performances, would surely complement Prynne's acerbic attack on the theatre and its place within the royal court. The political significance of these plays in this environment of the Personal Rule, however, would no doubt be different from that conveyed at the time of their writing and first publication. The surface discourses created by the immediate political context had, by the time of Charles I's reign, been altered.⁹ For example, the anti-court discourse of the early 1620s, which condemned the artifice and corruption of courtiers like Narcissus for their ability to manipulate the royal person, is different from the anti-court discourse that emerged in the late 1620s, when the particular influence of Buckingham as royal favourite came under parliamentary scrutiny. The figure of Narcissus at Nero's court, who manipulated Nero in order to gain the imperial crown for himself, was no doubt "reenacted", that is, read and understood, in a way completely different from that envisaged by the playwright, or from that practised by readers of the

⁹ Pocock, "Texts as Events," 29-30.

text in the early 1620s.¹⁰ A close study of the way in which Tacitus's and Seneca's works were used to portray Nero in the period beyond 1630 would, no doubt, indicate that Nero's reign continued to be used as an illustration of the character of a tyrant. Such a study might also indicate, however, that those who used Nero in this way were, like Milton, more convinced of the benefits of a republican constitution than those writers that came before them.

The present study has contributed to existing scholarship concerned with the political dimensions of "new humanism" in the later part of Elizabeth's and the early part of James's reign. The current analysis has challenged the assumption that the turn towards Tacitus's pessimistic view of imperial Rome and towards Seneca's philosophy of consolation signalled a rejection of monarchy and an endorsement of a republican ideology. Moreover, it has suggested that scholars have tended to overlook the fact that the use of terms we might associate with constitutional republicanism, terms such as "commonwealth" and "liberty", were often grounded in the ethical outlook of Stoicism, rather than informed by a republican ideology. Scholars have tended to downplay the orthodoxy of the texts considered in this study, or, in the case of Bolton's work, have attempted to identify any orthodoxy as a backlash against a more radical political outlook. This study has shown that Nero's reign taught late Elizabethan and early Stuart thinkers that, in times of political dissatisfaction, it was more virtuous to avoid confrontation than to challenge the status quo. Subjects living under rulers like Nero found themselves in a predicament: they recognised the need to address flaws in existing political culture, but also recognised the futility of taking action to remedy these. Early modern writers understood this predicament and presented men with a way out. The writers addressed in the present study elaborated a form of "new humanism" in which inaction, passivity and submission were transformed into virtues and presented as the alternative courses for those faced with rulers like Nero. The authors of the Neronian texts recognised the appeal of "*an idle and obscure kinde of life*", where a Senecan philosophy of constancy allowed them to live unaffected by the type of corrupt and capricious rulers described by Tacitus. When faced with a ruler such as Nero "*vnder whom to doe ill was not alwaies safe, alwaies vnsafe to doe well*", there was only one course of action: to do nothing, for "*of doing nothing no man was constrained to yeelde an account.*"¹¹

¹⁰ I use the term "reenact" here in the same sense as Pocock uses it when explaining the way in which subsequent generations of readers interact with a text; *Ibid.*, 29-30.

¹¹ Savile, *End of Nero*, 1-2.

Abbreviations

- C.S.P. Domestic 1598 - 1601* *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1598-1601* ed. M. A. E. Green (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1867). *State Papers Online*, Gale Cengage Learning 2015.
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