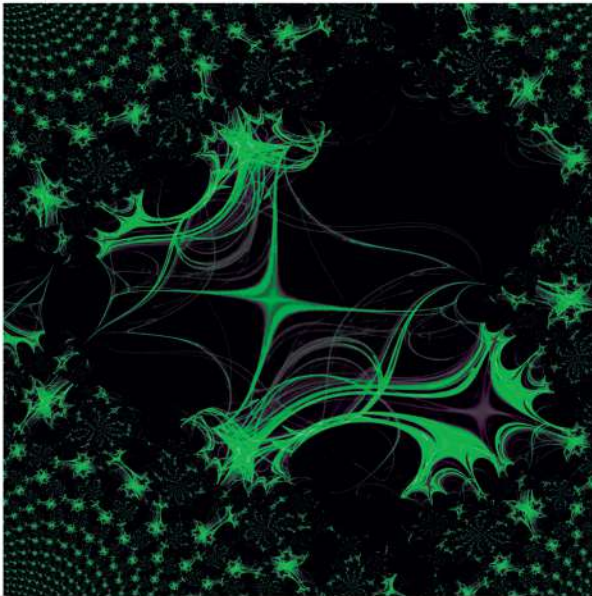


Igor Kąkolewski

Melancholy of Power

Perception of Tyranny in European Political Culture
of the 16th Century



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The book discusses how the most severe abuses of political power, traditionally termed from the ancient times as 'tyranny', were presented in 16th century political philosophy, propaganda, and literature in Italy, France, England, Scotland, German countries, and Poland-Lithuania. Using a unique interdisciplinary methodology, the book is both timeless and timely as it demonstrates various approaches of acknowledged Renaissance intellectuals to the problem of tyranny and how best to avoid or fight it. The author consciously avoids categories of the classic history of ideas or political thought and instead reveals broader intellectual and cultural connections in the perception of tyranny in the 16th century and its impact on modern debates on different dangers of political abuses of power.

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Melancholy of Power

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PETER LANG



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Foreword

The present book is an English translation of my essays on the perception of tyranny in the 16th century that were published in Polish in 2007. My considerations refer to a limited number of selected primary and secondary sources on the subject and a somewhat narrow geographical scope. As a result, many important European sources and literature, including those from early modern Spain, were not analyzed and presented in this book. The essayistic form allowed me to merely touch upon some general aspects related to the political culture of the early modern era as far as they seem to be important for our contemporary perception of politics and history. The pressure of time and difficulties posed by the pandemic, during which the book was translated, also made it impossible for me to update my considerations based on the state of art and literature published after 2007. Due to lockdown restrictions in Germany, my access to book collections that included English translations and critical editions of the primary sources was extremely limited.

I would like to express my gratitude to those who contributed to the publication of this text. Publishing a book is often difficult in the best of circumstances, and as I mentioned previously, doing so during a worldwide pandemic was particularly challenging. Above all, I would like to thank my wife, Rebecca Denton, for her help and understanding. Without her support, I would not be able to complete this work. I also would like to express my acknowledgments to Mr. Thomas Anessi, for his translation of my essays and his suggestions of corrections of the original text, and to the editors Mr. Jan Burzyński, Mr. Łukasz Gałecki, Mr. Adam Gorlikowski, and Mr. Rafał Szklarski from the Peter Lang Verlag for their work, support and patience with me.

Introduction: From Word to Concept and Antinomy: The Critique of Tyranny and Praise of Monarchy in Antiquity and the Middle Ages

*Just as the government of a king is the best,
so the government of a tyrant is the worst.*
Thomas Aquinas, *De regno (On Kingship)*¹

Tyranny as a Problem and Element of Discourse in the Twentieth Century and the Present Day

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, use of the terms ‘tyranny’ and ‘tyrannical’ has become increasingly common in political science and public discourse on politics, taking a place alongside such terms as ‘authoritarian’ and ‘authoritarianism.’ Not long ago, the term ‘tyranny,’ related to a monocratic degenerate form of government, would have seemed outdated. Since the early twentieth century, as republican forms of government in Europe began to replace monarchies, it has ceased to be frequently used as a systemic concept in textbooks on political philosophy in which mainly the notion of collective ‘tyranny of majority,’ a warning against excesses of democracy, has remained relevant. However, the emergence of new forms of dictatorship also fostered the development of new concepts such as ‘authoritarianism’ and ‘totalitarianism.’ The latter was precisely defined and analysed following the rise and expansion of various forms of fascism and communism in the first half of the twentieth century and during the Cold War era.

After the Second World War, a profound discussion of different symptoms of ‘tyranny,’ based on his research of the ancient Greek political thought,² was initiated by a German-American political philosopher Leo Strauss, who critically distanced himself from both fascists and communists regimes³. However, in Western political discourse, shaped by the development of mass ideologies and new mass media, the concept of ‘totalitarianism’ in the postwar era acquired a much more sinister and relevant connotation: it was perceived as a modern form of degenerate political system, which had previously been referred to as ‘tyranny’ for more

1 T. Aquinas, *De regno. (On Kingship)*, trans. G.B. Phelan, Belmont, N.C. 2014, 15.

2 L. Strauss, *On Tyranny: An Interpretation of Xenophon's Hiero*, New York 1948.

3 *Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss: German Émigrés and American Political Thought After World War II*, ed. P. Graf Kielmansegg, H. Mewes, E. Glaser-Schmidt, Cambridge 1997.

than 2,000 years.⁴ In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Hannah Arendt argues that totalitarianism was a ‘novel form of government’ that ‘differs essentially from other forms of political oppression known to us such as despotism, tyranny and dictatorship.’⁵ In another classic work, Arendt states that tyranny stands in direct contradiction to the essence of power, understood in the Aristotelian tradition as a structure that functions according to laws and norms that protect the community from chaos. In her opinion, ‘while violence can destroy power, it can never become a substitute for it.’ Thus, tyranny is tantamount to the powerlessness of the ruler, which is why, sooner or later, it destroys all power.⁶ Despite the prevalence of the concept of totalitarianism in the public discourse in the latter half or the twentieth century the classic Aristotelian model of tyranny was still applied for analyzes of various symptoms of the totalitarian regimes.⁷

Francis Fukuyama, the famed advocate of liberal democracy, analysed tyranny in a similar vein in the late twentieth century. Whether it referred to a classic ancient form, such as autocracy, or twentieth-century forms of government, such as totalitarianism and authoritarianism, Fukuyama saw tyranny as a pathology – a dead end or a side road – and a discontinuity in a linear historical process that was to lead humanity to liberal democracy, culminating in the ‘end of history.’ He emphasized the antinomy between tyranny and freedom. In its violation of basic human rights (including property rights), tyranny embodies the most extreme violation of freedom. He also argued that people’s natural preference to define themselves as equal and free, rather than as slaves, stands in direct contradiction to tyranny.⁸ A similar assessment of tyranny can be recently found in Timothy Snyder’s short collection of essays, *On Tyranny*. However, Snyder presents a much more pessimistic approach to the political reality of the 2000s, encouraging the reader to draw conclusions from the sad ‘history lesson’ of the 1920s and 1930s.⁹

4 In the first years after the Second World War, the word ‘tyranny’ was still used in the historiography to describe totalitarian dictatorship, for example, in the first comprehensive biography of Adolf Hitler published by Allan Bullock first in 1952, A. Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny*, New York, 1991.

5 H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York 1976, 460.

6 H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago 2018, 202.

7 A. Heuss, ‘Aristoteles als Theoretiker des Totalitarismus,’ *Antike und Abendland*, 17 1971, 1–44.

8 F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, 1992,

9 See T. Snyder, *On Tyranny. Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, New York 2017, 9–11.: ‘History does not repeat, but it does instruct. [...] History can familiarize, and it can warn. In the late nineteenth century, just as in the late twentieth century, the expansion of global trade generated expectations of progress. In the early twentieth

By the end of the twentieth century, the notion ‘tyranny’ had already begun to be used again more frequently as a systematizing concept, mainly as a defining element of contemporary dictatorships. In his book *Modern Tyrants*, Daniel Chirot made a distinction between classic tyranny exercised by the individual for selfish purposes (*old-fashioned tyranny*) and modern *ideological tyranny*. Contemporary nationalism and scientific doctrines in the spirit of social Neo-Darwinism gave rise to the latter. This is why Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and Pol Pot were the most sinister ‘ideological’ tyrants of the twentieth century.¹⁰ However, a sad ‘history lesson’ may be that the contemporary crisis caused by the return of nationalism, xenophobic resentments, and populism, let alone the economic and political chaos caused by the current coronavirus pandemic, can feed new forms both of the monocratic tyranny and multi-headed tyrannies of ‘majority’ (related to majoritarianism) or ‘minority’ (related to minoritarianism) in the twenty-first century.

In the Beginning Was the Word...

The ancient Greek word ‘tyrant’ (*tyrannos*) is most likely a borrowing from the Lydian language, once spoken in Asia Minor. Perhaps, it was used in Greek already in the times of Homer and Hesiod, who, however, never employed it in their works. The term ‘tyranny’ (Greek: *tyrannis*) first appeared in the seventh century BCE to describe the reign of Gyges (ca. 685–657 BCE) – a historical ruler of Lydia in Asia Minor, who is also mentioned in Greek mythology in which his name was associated with political murder and usurpation. In the fifth century BCE, Herodotus claimed that Gyges seized power after murdering a descendant of Heracles, the Lydian King Candaules.¹¹

century, as in the early twenty-first, these hopes were challenged by new visions of mass politics in which a leader or a party claimed to directly represent the will of the people. European democracies collapsed into right-wing authoritarianism and fascism in the 1920s and ‘30s.’

- 10 D. Chirot, *Modern Tyrants. The Power and Prevalence of Evil in Our Age*, Princeton 1996, esp. 14 ff., 16–23, 167–173 and 427. Cf. also G. Besier, *Das Europa der Diktaturen. Eine neue Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munchen 2006.
- 11 On the etymology and the original meanings of the words ‘tyrant’ and ‘tyranny’, see esp. H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck, vol. 6, Klett-Cotta 1990, 651–706, here esp. 652 ff.

The word ‘tyrant’ originally did not have a pejorative connotation. It probably meant ‘lord’ or ‘ruler.’¹² It was only at the end of the sixth century BCE – which is to say, when Peisistratos and others seized power in the Greek *poleis* – that it began to be associated with power gained by force. However, the original morally neutral meaning of the word in the sense of ‘lord’ or ‘ruler’ did not disappear, neither in Antiquity nor later.¹³ The archaic Greek *aesymmetae*, or ‘elective tyranny,’ mentioned in Aristotle’s *Politics*, referred to a situation when an autocrat ruled with the consent of ‘willing’ subjects, and his rule was not hereditary.¹⁴ Earlier on, Herodotus had presented Peisistratos’ tyranny in Athens in a rather positive light, and mentioned that his rule in the city followed its established laws. In turn, in the dialogue *Hiero* Xenophon presented the tyrant of Syracuse, Hiero I, though with critical overtones, as a leader who struggled for the common good of his subjects. Despite his own failure to convert another tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysus II, Plato argued in the *Laws* that, in order to create the best state and legal system, a wise legislator should cooperate with a ‘virtuous’ tyrant. Sophocles, besides his criticism of tyrannical rule in *Antigone*, also used the term ‘tyrant’ without a negative connotation in the title of one of his most famous tragedies, *Oidopous tyrannos* (better known as *Oedipus Rex*).¹⁵ However, we might wonder whether his use of the word ‘tyrant’ in reference to the main character was not meant to signal the destruction of moral norms and the human psyche, or even the political schizophrenia, associated with power as such – especially when exercised by a king whose rule is both legitimate and illegitimate, an usurper and heir to the throne in one person.

The archaic and neutral, or ethically indifferent, connotation of the word ‘tyrant,’ in the sense of a ruler who seizes power thanks to military genius and personal strength, survived to the early Middle Ages.¹⁶ Such ‘tyrants’ can be found

12 Ibid., 651. Cf. also H. G. Schmidt-Lilienberg, *Die Lehre vom Tyrannenmord*, Tübingen 1901 (reprint 1964), 1.

13 F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter. Studien zur Geschichte des Tyrannen-begriffs und der Tyrannenmordtheorie insbesondere in Frankreich*, Berlin 1938, 26.

14 Cf. Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. C. Lord, Chicago 1984, Book 3, Chapter 9, 97–100, and Book 4, Chapter 8, 129–131.

15 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 656.

16 This is reflected in St Augustine’s *The City of God*, in which he contrasts a tyrant – a bad monarch and an archaic tyrant – to a ‘brave man,’ in his commentary on a fragment of the Old Testament (Proverbs 8:15): ‘“By me kings reign, and tyrants possess the land.” But, that it may not be thought,’ writes Augustine, ‘that by “tyrants” is meant, not wicked and impious kings, but brave men, in accordance with the ancient use of the word, as when Virgil says, “For now that treaty may not stand Where king greets

in England in the fifth and sixth centuries – during the times of the legendary King Arthur.¹⁷ In the early thirteenth century, the Polish chronicler, Wincenty Kadłubek, also wrote about legendary tyrants, including the ‘Alemanni [i.e. German – I.K.] tyrant’ rejected by Princess Wanda, the daughter of Krakus, the legendary founder of Kraków.¹⁸

Tyranny in Antiquity: From Word to Systematic Concept

The difference between words and terms consists in the systematization and normalization of words and the contexts in which they are used, including philosophical and scientific concepts and legal norms. The processes of appreciation, relativization, ethical neutralization, and objectification all play a role in how a given term is used. Words, like terms and concepts, are subject to interpretation – their meaning thus changes over time. Words and terms can become taboo, or, just the opposite – they can regain popularity.

Such a conceptual evolution of the word ‘tyrant’ can be seen in Greece in the fifth and fourth century BCE. In his *Histories*, Herodotus discussed three basic proper forms of government in the Greek *poleis*: democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. Apart from his description of Peisistratos’ tyrannical rule, he mainly associated tyranny with the transgression of traditional laws by a single ruler, using the word *tyrannos* interchangeably with a more neutral term ‘king’ (*basileus, monarchos*), and stated that freedom, justice, and equality – the fundamental values of democracy – are the opposites of tyrannical government.¹⁹ In a similar vein, Xenophon, despite his rather critical approach to the Athenian democracy, argued in *Hellenica* that tyranny is a synonym for the ultimate bad monocratic or collective government, where the laws and the rights of the people are violated, like during the rule of Thirty Tyrants in Athens (404–403 BCE), imposed by Sparta after the Peloponnesian War. In the *Republic* and the *Statesman*, Plato discussed the opposition between monarchy and tyranny in

king and joins not hand,” in another place it is most unambiguously said of God, that He “maketh the man who is an hypocrite to reign on account of the perversity of the people.”; A. Augustine, *The City of God, Volume I*, trans. M. Dods, Edinburgh, 1871, Book V, Chapter 19, 122.

17 C.A. Snyder, *An Age of Tyrants. Britain and Britons, A.D. 400–600*, University Park 1998.

18 J. Banaszkiwicz, ‘Rüdiger von Bechelaren, którego nie chciała Wanda. Przyczynę do kontaktu niemieckiej Heldenepik z polskimi dziejami bajecznymi,’ *Przegląd Historyczny* 75, 1984, 239–247 k.

19 *Ibid.*, 654 ff.

more detail, claiming that tyrannical governments, which may also frequently arise out of the excesses of corruptible democracy, were disastrous for their subjects. He identified tyranny with an extensive catalogue of moral and political abuses, which later became a *topos* in classic Greek political philosophy.²⁰

A fundamental contribution to the systematization of the concept of tyranny was made by Aristotle in *Politics*. Apart from the above-mentioned archaic neutral meaning (*aesymnetae*), the notion *tyrannis* has here at least three additional meanings. First, it is a degenerate form of 'kingdom' (*basileia*), that is, a proper monarchical system. Second, it is a form of political autocracy in the Greek *poleis* – unlike despotism (*despoteia*), which mainly referred to political systems, but only in the 'barbarian' world. Third, it is a usurpation of power by leaders of the people (e.g. in democratic systems) or due to factional strife (e.g. in oligarchic governments) through a coup.²¹ Moreover, the phenomenon, which we would define as a 'many-headed tyranny,' could emerge from oligarchic, but especially democratic governments, which, in Aristotle's argument, are by themselves degenerate forms of the proper governments, i.e. aristocracy and *politeia*, the latter being a mixture of oligarchic and democratic elements, and recommended by him as the best form of government. The many-headed tyranny in the democratic systems, in a form of the 'mob rule' (ochlocracy), disregarding the rule of law, usually becomes a breeding ground for monocratic tyranny of the demagogues.²²

In the context of the antinomy between the kingdom and tyranny, Aristotle characterized the tyrant, first, as a ruler who disregards the good of the people, the essence and purpose of every state, to fulfil his selfish interests. Second, as a ruler who, unlike a king, does not want to achieve moral qualities but

20 Ibid., 655 and a more extensive discussion on the use of this term by Xenophon and Plato; cf. also H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht. Studien zur deutschen politischen Theorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt–Neuwied 1974, 23–27.

21 In reference to democracy, Aristotle (*The Politics*, Book 5, Chapter 5, 156) emphasizes that 'most of the ancient [Greek – I.K.] tyrants arose from popular leaders.'

22 Ibid., 126: 'At any rate, such a people, being a sort of a monarch, seek to rule monarchically on account of their not being ruled by law, and become like a master: flatterers are held in honor, and this sort of [rule of] the people bears comparison with tyranny among the forms of monarchy. Hence their character is the same as well: both are like the masters with respect to the better persons.' Cf. also *ibid.*, 127 ff. An overview of this problem can be found in H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie', 656 ff. and in more detail in her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 17–40.

only ‘use’ different goods.²³ In an extensive list that was adopted a few centuries later by political philosophers of the Middle Ages and early modern times, followed by eighteenth-century theorists of revolution in Europe and America, Aristotle presented the most important flaws of ‘traditional’ tyrannical governments. In his view, they encourage political murders, especially those of outstanding individuals, and thereby limit the freedom of association and assembly, as well as educational opportunities. Out of the ruler’s fear of conspiracies and coups, the people are subjected to extensive control and invigilation. They are deprived and divided so that they can be easily manipulated. The tyrant strives to obtain funds to finance mercenaries as his guards, composed of foreigners and not native citizens, and remains in a state of permanent war with its neighbours, in order to divert attention from internal problems of the state and strengthen the need for a strong ruler.²⁴

Indeed, tyranny destroys freedom and interpersonal relations (friendship), and is the main cause of the corruption of political life.²⁵ Hence, because of its destructive nature, it is doomed to fail, collapse in confrontation with the ruled and their desire to live in a community whose natural goal is ‘common good’ and the happiness of the community. Tyrants are usually overthrown when conflicts arise within the group supporting them or as a result of attacks by oppressed subjects, who are driven by fear, contempt, ambition or honour.²⁶ At the same time, however, Aristotle discusses a more optimistic scenario, which can be described as ‘tyranny therapy’ (Hela Mandt), where the ruler tries to mitigate the effects of his tyrannical regime by creating appearances and pretending to be a real king.²⁷

Moreover, Aristotle also used the term ‘despotism’ (*despoteia*) as a systemic concept in his political philosophy. The word ‘despot’ (*despotes*) most likely

23 Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 5, Chapter 8, 164–165.

24 Ibid., Chapter IX, 163 ff. See also the analysis by H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 37 ff. Cf. a more extensive discussion on the medieval reception of Aristotle’s list of tyrants’ flaws in Part One, Chapter 1 of the present book (sections on Aegidius Romanus and Bartolus de Saxoferrato).

25 An important supplement to elaborate arguments in *Politics* are reflections on ‘friendship’ in different political systems, included in: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. D. Ross, 154–157.

26 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 36.

27 Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 5, Chapter 9. 165–167. See the analysis in H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 38 ff. Cf. also a more extensive discussion on this subject in Part One, Chapter I of the present book.

has Indo-European roots. In the fifth century BCE in Greek, it already had two meanings. It referred to the 'private power' exercised by the head of a family in a given 'household' (*oikos*) and the absolute unlimited power of the gods.²⁸ For Aristotle, the terms 'despotism' and 'despotic' had also two meanings. In the traditional, narrow sense, he used them to define the power of the master of the house and the father of a family in the private sphere, i.e. as in the art of household management (*oikonomia*). It takes different forms: the husband's power over his wife, the father's power over his children, and the master's power over his slaves. Despotic rule understood in this way is the opposite of political power, that is, governing free individuals who comprise the state. Second, following earlier authors and a popular opinion in ancient Greece, Aristotle concludes that this 'private' and arbitrary despotic power, based as a rule on the hereditary right of succession to the throne, and the consent of the subjects, was widespread in barbarian and Asian states. According to him, unlike the Greeks, the barbarian peoples were slaves by nature, hence they were less able and inclined to rise up in a revolt.²⁹ Thus, despotic rule can be described as semi-tyrannical – because it is exercised only according to the will of the ruler – and semi-monarchical – because it is derived from 'tradition and law' and therefore has a legal basis. Finally, Aristotle sometimes used the adjective *despotikon* in the sense of 'tyrannical' to describe any degenerate form of power: tyranny, oligarchy, or democracy, and the situation in which the ruler treats his subjects as slaves.³⁰

The division between the king, despot and the tyrant thoroughly systematized by Aristotle became the basic *topos* in discourses on power and the political literature of late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and early modern era.³¹ However, in the literature of Latin Antiquity and in the Roman empire, the term *dominus* (master, owner) mainly began to be associated with the Greek *tyrannos*, but also with

28 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 654. On the subject of the different meanings and contexts for the use of this word and notion, cf. also: R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* 13, 1950, 275–302.

29 Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 3, Chapter 9, 97–99.

30 Cf. an analysis of various meanings of the words 'despotia' and 'despotic' as used by Aristotle in his *Politics* in H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 656 and R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' 276 ff.

31 H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft. Semantik und Theorie der Einherrschaft in Deutschland von der Reformation bis zum Vormärz*, vol. 1: *Semantik der Monarchie*, Köln–Weimar–Wien 1991, esp. chapter *Der normative Aspekt: König, Tyrann, Despot*, 139 ff.

despotes (lord). Finally, *dominus* was recognized in the official title of the Roman Emperors under Diocletian, whereas the Greek term *despotes* in Byzantium was occasionally used as a part of the imperial title, and later in the Middle Ages was bestowed on the high ranked courtiers and sons or sons-in-law of reigning emperors. The Latin medieval translation of Aristotle's *Politics* in the thirteenth century made the term popular (in a Latinized form: *despoticum*, *despoticus*, *despotice*, *despotizare*) in Western Europe. Since the fourteenth century, it even appeared in national languages, mainly in relation to oriental states.³²

The Latin terms *tyrannus* and *tyrannia*, borrowed from Greek, became important notions in the political culture of ancient Rome. In the period of the Republic, they were rather not used in the context of the antinomy between king and tyrant, largely due to a common antipathy towards ancient Roman kings, accused of the most serious abuses of power. Cicero described politicians seeking domination and destroying the freedom of citizens, using the term *tyrannus* as a synonym both for *dominus*, and 'unjust king' (*rex iniustus*). Because of these connotations, Augustus decided to assume the title *princeps* at the beginning of his imperial rule. In the early Principate period the term 'tyranny' was still oft associated with the politicians who, like Julius Cesar, were accused of overthrowing the republican constitution of Rom. Besides, it was applied for moral judgment of cruel emperors, like, e.g. Caligula, Neron, Domitian, or Diokletian. During the final three centuries of the Roman empire, a time of widespread conspiracies and coups, the 'tyrant' meant not only a ruler who ruled by force and violated the law but also a usurper who gained power without the legal title to exercise it. At the same time, usurpers who took power through coups often accused their overthrown predecessors of tyranny. However, the antinomy between 'tyranny' and 'civil freedom' considered by Latin authors from the perspective of the idealized republican Rome as a perfect 'mixed' (Polybius, Cicero) form of government, combining elements of monarchical, aristocratical and democratical systems³³, in the Middle Ages and Renaissance era still dominated both among advocates of the idealized liberties of the Roman Republic, praising those, like Brutus, who murdered the 'tyrant' Cesar, as well as supporters of the 'limited monarchy' or *monarchia mixta*, in which the influence of the monarch and the ruling etates were balanced.³⁴

32 H. Mandt, 'Tyranis, Despotie,' 660, 664; R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' 278–281. Cf. also Part Two, Chapter III of the present book.

33 H. Mandt, 'Tyranis, Despotie,' 658 ff.; her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 67 ff.

34 F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 27 ff.

Tyranny in the Middle Ages: Tyranny as the Antinomy of the Kingdom

The antinomy between king and tyrant resurged in the early Middle Ages, mainly under the influence of Christianity. Christianity, in turn, strengthened the ethical dimension of the concept of 'tyranny,' dismissing or even ignoring its legal and systemic connotations, and thus contributed to the personalization of the concept. The cornerstone for this was laid by St Augustine in *De civitate Dei*, who, drawing on Cicero, identified the concept of *tyrannus* with *rex iniustus* and argued that tyrannical rule was above all a violation of the basic norms of Christian morality: peace (*pax*), justice (*iustitia*), charity (*caritas*), and devotion (*pietas*). Thus, tyrannical rule was also seen as 'God's scourge,' sent by Providence as punishment for the sins of the subjects.³⁵ In the seventh century, Isidore of Seville pursued a similar line of argument in his *Etymologies*. He argued that the word *rex* was derived from 'do it right' (*recte facere*) and 'govern' (*regere*), connecting them with the fundamental values of Christian political ethics: *iustitia et pietas*. He thereby strengthened the meaning of the antithesis between king and tyrant, describing tyrants as the 'worst, and wicked kings' ('*pessimi atque improbi reges*'). Similarly, other medieval authors emphasized the ethical dimension of the concept of 'tyranny,' associating it with the ruler's *superbia*, and punishment sent by God for human sins, or, from an eschatological perspective, with activities of the Antichrist. The classic Aristotelian legal and political connotations were here disregarded; instead, the concept of *tyrannus* was used in opposition to *rex iustus*, which was to become in the medieval political thought the embodiment of the Christian humbleness and piety.³⁶

At the end of the sixth century, Saint Gregory the Great in *Moralia* developed a more diverse typology of tyrannical rule. He distinguished between five types of tyrants (in the state, in the province, in the city, at home, and also 'in the mind' – the latter category referring to an individual whose intentions were unlawful. He thereby moved tyranny beyond a purely political context, endowing the concept with a moral quality and endowing the tyrant with psychological complexity.³⁷

35 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 661 ff. Also of major importance to these issues are J. Miethke, 'Tyrann, Tyrannenmord,' in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 8, München 1997, 1135–1138, esp. 1136 and W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' *The Review of Politics* 4, 1942, no. 2, 129–143, here 129.

36 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 661; J. Miethke, 'Tyrann, Tyrannenmord,' 1136; W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' 131 ff.

37 The typology of Gregory I was also presented in the fourteenth century by Bartolus of Sassoferato, and I quote the typology presented by him. See Bartolus of Sassoferato,

Wilhelm von Moerbecke's Latin translation of *Aristoteles politicorum libri octo* (c. 1268) and, most importantly, the works of Thomas Aquinas, gave rise to a different understanding of the concept of 'tyranny,' one that moved away from morality in favour of a more objective legal definition.³⁸ In his discussion on the state Thomas Aquinas introduced the opposition between the kingdom as the best system of government, and tyranny as a degenerate system and the most unjust one. Drawing on Aristotle, he argued that the ruler should care for the common good (*bonum multitudinis*), and in relation to traditional Christian theory of monarchical rule, he stressed that God entrusted the ruler with an 'office' (*officio*). According to Aquinas, it was not the ruler or people who are the sovereign, but the law established by the ruler and the people in *consilium*. That led him to argue that 'limited monarchy' was the best form of government.³⁹ At the same time, summarizing the classic distinction that dates back to Greek Antiquity, Aquinas updated the typology of tyranny based on legal categories, distinguishing between two basic types of tyrants, which were earlier mentioned by Augustin. The first type was *tyrannus quantum ad modum acquirendi praelationis*, i.e. a usurper who gained power by illegal means. The second type was *tyrannus quantum ad usum praelationis*, a tyrant 'in the manner of exercising power,' i.e. a ruler who admittedly took the throne legally, but violated basic legal norms.⁴⁰ The typology of tyranny created by Thomas Aquinas, formulated in objective, legal and ethical terms, did not supersede the traditional Christian 'moral' concept of tyranny. However, the new approach developed concurrently with the medieval republican-constitutional ideal and the formation of city-states in northern Italy. In the mid-fourteenth century, Bartolus de Saxoferrato created in such a context a precisely defined and objective legal typology, based partly on Thomas Aquinas' concepts, distinguishing among others: a tyrant-usurper

'On the Tyrant,' in: *The Renaissance*, ed. E. Cochrane, J. Kirshner, Chicago 1986 (Readings in Western Civilization, 5), Chapter II, 11. Cf. also J. Spörl, 'Gedanken um Widerstandsrecht und Tyrannenmord im Mittelalter,' in: *Widerstandsrecht und Grenzen der Staatsgewalt. Bericht über die Tagung der Hochschule für politische*, ed. B. Pfister, G. Hildmann, Berlin 1955, 11–32, here 20; W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' 130.

38 Among the works of Thomas Aquinas in which he presents the issue of tyranny, the most important one is his late unfinished treatise *De regno* or *De regimine principum*. See T. Aquinas, *De regno. (On Kingship)*, esp. Book I, Chapters 4–6, 15–28.

39 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 68 ff.

40 F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 38; cf. also J. Spörl, 'Gedanken um Widerstandsrecht und Tyrannenmord im Mittelalter,' 19.

(*tyrannus ex defectu tituli*); a tyrant 'in the manner of exercising power' (*tyrannus ex parte exercitii*); a 'manifest' tyrant (*tyrannus manifestus*), who openly flaunted the law; and a 'concealed' or 'tacit' tyrant (*tyrannus vellatus et tacitus*), who hid behind the appearances of the law.⁴¹

As a result of changes in the structure of monarchical systems between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, including the ongoing depersonalization of the concept of royal power and the emergence of the legal concept of the 'Crown of the Kingdom' as well as the problem of legalizing new ruling dynasties, the traditional opposition between king and tyrant began to be relativized in certain situations. For example, during the reign of King Roger II (d. 1154), the founder of a centralized Sicilian state with its capital in Palermo, the concept of a 'useful tyrant' (*tyrannus utilis*) first appeared. A 'useful tyrant' was a ruler who took to the throne illegally but brought prosperity to the state and his subjects. In turn, in the mid-thirteenth century, the concept of a 'useless king' (*rex inutilis*) was introduced into canon law by Pope Innocent IV and employed in 1245 to depose Sancho II in Portugal. A 'useless king' was a legitimate ruler who, due to his weakness and incompetence, brought misfortune to the country and his subjects.⁴²

In the political philosophy of the Middle Ages, the right of the subjects to resist the ruler who violated the law, which in consequence often led to his deposition, was usually legalized with the help of arguments that hinged upon the traditional antinomy between king and tyrant. Selected passages from the New Testament, calling for obedience to secular authority, and the Augustinian concept of the tyrant as 'God's scourge' and punishment for the sins of the people, gave subjects the right to passive resistance only in the situation when they were encouraged by the ruler to violate basic moral and religious principles. Nevertheless, the early Christian tradition was but one of the two main sources of medieval doctrines relating to the right of resistance. The second source was the Germanic tradition, according to which subjects had the right to dethrone a legitimate monarch when he failed to comply with generally applicable norms.⁴³ The assumption that the relationship between the ruler and his subjects is based on the principle of reciprocity and a covenant sanctioned by God, and that it

41 F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 48 ff.

42 E. Peters, *The Shadow King. Rex inutilis in Medieval Law and Literature, 751–1327*, New Heaven–London 1970, 18 ff.

43 Cf. J. Spörl, 'Gedanken um Widerstandsrecht und Tyrannenmord im Mittelalter,' 15 ff.; H.G. Schmidt-Lilienberg, *Die Lehre vom Tyrannenmord*, 19–25.

remains valid as long as the ruler respects it, became one of the most important rules in the late medieval and later the early modern monarchies. This principle had been developed by the ninth century, and became binding alongside two other fundamental assumptions: (i) that Christians are free people, and their rulers should serve their subjects rather than *vice versa*, and (ii) that in contrast to the tyrant, the king serves the interests of his subjects and does not merely pursue selfish goals.⁴⁴ The Investiture Controversy, which began as a dispute and power struggle in the eleventh century, and the assumption that a ruler who violated the norms imposed by the Church could be excommunicated and removed from power, marked a breakthrough in the Western Christian world, resulting in long-lasting transformations in political thought.⁴⁵

The most extreme application of the right of resistance was the medieval theory of tyrannicide. Neither in Antiquity nor in the Middle Ages was a coherent and fully systematized theory of political murder developed.⁴⁶ A crucial step in this direction was made shortly after the height of the Investiture Controversy, during the twelfth-century renaissance of classic Antiquity. Drawing on antique authors, John of Salisbury argued in favour of tyrannicide in *Policraticus* (1156). It is precisely by drawing on ancient concepts and Old Testament models that the author was able to distance himself from the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, who criticized active forms of resistance. In his argumentation, John of Salisbury used medieval Christian concepts and images of power. While the monarch is *imago Dei*, the tyrant is *imago diaboli*, and commits the worst offenses against God. Hence, the tyrant is not only an enemy of his subjects but also commits a mortal sin against God. Therefore, the murder of a tyrannical ruler by a private individual was an act that pleases God. In parallel to religious reasoning, he also used philosophical arguments. Every individual who enjoys membership in the 'body' of political community, has a duty to protect the common good and justice, first by expressing together with other people disapproval and recommending to an unjust ruler corrective measures. Only if they fail, the individual has a duty and right to kill an incorrigible tyrant.⁴⁷

44 W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' 135.

45 Cf. H.G. Schmidt-Lilienberg, *Die Lehre vom Tyrannenmord*, 38; W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' 137 ff.; J. Spörl, 'Gedanken um Widerstandsrecht und Tyrannenmord im Mittelalter,' 17; J. Miethke, 'Tyrann, Tyrannenmord,' col. 1136 ff.

46 F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter*..., 30 ff., 35.

47 Cf. most importantly J. Spörl, 'Gedanken um Widerstandsrecht und Tyrannenmord im Mittelalter,' 22–26; W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' 139 ff.; and

Even more important observations, despite certain internal contradictions, can be found in Thomas Aquinas' discussion of tyrannicide. On the one hand, though he favoured non-active means of resistance to a 'mild' form of tyranny, he did not necessarily see active resistance against a tyrant as an act of rebellion, considering rather tyrannical rule as a form of rebellion against God.⁴⁸ On the other hand, he argued that active resistance could have even worse consequences than tyrannical governments. The difference between the early views of Aquinas, which seem similar to those of John of Salisbury, insofar as he accepted tyrannicide committed by a private individual, and his later views, when he granted the right of resistance only to 'public authorities',⁴⁹ is important. Indeed, although the interpretation according to which Aquinas only approved of the murder of a tyrant-usurper, but not a tyrant 'in the manner of exercising power,' is still treated in historiography as hypothetical,⁵⁰ his concept of resistance by 'public authorities' exerted a huge influence on sixteenth-century concepts of the active right of resistance. Alongside this, there was an almost atavistic fear of chaos and anarchy resulting from tyrannicide: 'if there be not an excess of tyranny it is more expedient to tolerate the milder tyranny for a while than, by acting against the tyrant, to become involved in many perils more grievous than the tyranny itself.'⁵¹ This peculiar *horror anarchiae*, which dates back to Antiquity, will become a *topos* in sixteenth-century political philosophy, inspiring attempts to create 'institutionalized' theories of the right of resistance in the sixteenth century when Europe was being torn apart by religious conflicts.⁵²

At the end of the Middle Ages, in the turbulent fifteenth century, marked by upheavals and dethronements, the right of resistance gained special importance, becoming the subject of two fierce international debates. The first discussion

H.G. Schmidt-Lilienberg, *Die Lehre vom Tyrannenmord*, 25 ff.; J. Miethke, 'Tyrann, Tyrannenmord,' col. 1137.

48 See an extensive analysis of the concept of tyrannicide as understood by Saint Thomas Aquinas in: F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 36–45 and encyclopedic remarks in: J. Miethke, 'Tyrann, Tyrannenmord,' col. 1137.

49 Such as a Pope, Emperor or feudal lord to their vassals. T. Aquinas, *De regno. (On Kingship)*, Book 1, Chapter 7, 25–30 and commentary by W. Parsons, 'The Medieval Theory of the Tyrant,' 141.

50 Cf. arguments following this interpretation in: F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 44 ff. and a critical remark in: J. Miethke, 'Tyrann, Tyrannenmord,' col. 1137.

51 T. Aquinas, *De regno. (On Kingship)*, 25 and his critique of tyrannicide in Book 1, Chapter 7, 26–27.

52 On this subject, cf. Part Two, Chapter I of the present book.

began in Italy at the end of the fourteenth century and continued well into the sixteenth century, mainly among Renaissance intellectuals, who drew on the ancient *topos* of Brutus' right to murder Caesar.⁵³ Second, the murder of unpopular Louis I Duke of Orléans, who tried to gain the guardianship over his insane brother King Charles IV of France, in Paris in 1407 and the apology of this act and its main inspirer, Duke of Burgundy John the Fearless, by a French theologian, Jean Petit, sent shock waves across Europe. For Petit, the tyrant was a traitor guilty of *crimen laese majestatis* (high treason against a sovereign), which was a crime equal to heresy, and therefore tyrannicide, even by resorting to a secret plot, poison or feigned friendship, was the duty of any subject, who should be awarded and not punished for killing a tyrant⁵⁴. These views sparked a furious polemic with the Chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Charlier Gerson. In 1415 the Council of Constance condemned Petit's most radical theses as 'erroneous,' 'heretical,' and leading to anarchy.⁵⁵

'The Unity of Opposites': The Opposition Between Monarchy and Tyranny and the Relativization of Tyranny

Regardless of the numerous classic definitions of the tyrant and tyranny in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, i.e. a time when monarchical systems dominated in Europe, the basic *topos* in the discourse on power was the antinomy between king/kingdom and tyrant/tyranny. An understanding of this opposition, which is closer to our contemporary republican and liberal-democratic mentality, namely the opposition between tyranny (construed as slavery, a lack of freedom) and freedom (understood as civil freedom to act within the law) appeared also in political thought in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. On the one hand, it was discussed by authors who cherished republican values, for example, as embodied in an idealized republican Rome, and the defenders of the republican system and liberties of city-states in late-medieval Italy. On the other hand, it was discussed by followers of a model of limited monarchy, e.g. by those who criticized the 'absolutist' rule of the Stuart dynasty in England.⁵⁶ However, taking into consideration

53 On this subject, cf. Part One, Chapters I and II and Part Two, Chapters I and II of the present book.

54 Cf. an extensive discussion on this subject in: F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, esp. 14, 30, 57 ff.; and remarks in J. Spörl, 'Gedanken um Widerstandsrecht und Tyrannenmord im Mittelalter,' 12, 28 ff.

55 F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 82–108, 109 ff.

56 On the latter subject, see Q. Skinner, 'Classical Liberty and the Coming of the English Civil War,' in: *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, vol. 2: *The Values of*

several thousand years of dominant monarchical rule, the opposition between the lack of freedom (tyranny) and (civil) freedom seems complementary to the fundamental opposition between monarchy and tyranny. Despite differing views on the role of the monarch, the antinomy between monarchy and tyranny was used both by the supporters of more centralized absolutist monarchies, in which the role of the sovereign was played by the monarch, as well as by advocates of limited monarchy, for example, that of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where the nobility claimed the sovereignty of the law over the monarch. Indeed, in the Commonwealth any attempts at strengthening royal power were seen as tyrannical, threatening the 'golden liberty' of the Polish nobility.⁵⁷

The antinomy between monarchy and tyranny remained a fundamental concept in the philosophy and political mentality of early modern Western and Central-Eastern Europe: from Scotland to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. From the historian's point of view, this antinomy can be seen as contradictive, involving mutually exclusive oppositions (e.g. white-black). It may also be seen ontically as privative opposites (e.g. healthy and sick) or polar opposites, i.e. concepts which, under certain conditions, have intermediate degrees (e.g. male and female). Depending on the historical context as well as the beliefs and worldview held by an author perceiving and evaluating a given state of affairs in terms of the opposition between monarchy and tyranny, this antinomy can be construed in terms of any of the above-mentioned oppositions. However, I believe that a more ontological (and systematic) perspective of the 'unity of opposites' (*coincidentia oppositorum*) should be employed here. Dating back to the ancient Greek philosophy it was systematically discussed in the fifteenth-century theology and philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa (God as *coincidentia oppositorum*) and applied by Renaissance Neoplatonists to man (man as a convergence of opposing natures), *coincidentia oppositorum* characterized the philosophical culture of the Renaissance.⁵⁸ It seems that in the context of the discovery of the 'objective' human condition, based on the

Republicanism in Early Modern Europe, ed. M. van Gelderen, Q. Skinner, Cambridge 2002, 9–28.

57 Cf. Part One, Chapter IV and Part Two, Chapter I of the present book.

58 U. Nicola, *Filozofia*, translated by M. Salwa, Warszawa 2006, 220 f. 230 f.; cf. J. Kolarzowski, *Filozofowie i mistycy. Na drogach neoplatonizmu*, Warszawa 2005, 46; B. Wieczorek, 'Mistyka i dialog międzywyznaniowy w filozofii Mikołaja z Kuzy', *Studia Warmińskie* 41–42, 2004–2005, 153–184, esp. 158 f.; J. Stallmach, *Ineinsfall der Gegensätze und Weisheit des Nichtwissens. Grundzüge der Philosophie des Nikolaus von Kues*, Münster 1989, esp. 19–34.

unity of opposites in the Renaissance, the antinomy between monarchy and tyranny might be also interpreted in terms of *coincidentia oppositorum*. In political philosophy, Renaissance realism also contributed to this ‘discovery.’ Niccolò Machiavelli’s thought and his *systemic relativization of the problem of tyranny*⁵⁹ – the starting point for my considerations and the basic problem discussed in this book – was a milestone in this respect.

Jacob Burckhardt and the Myth of Renaissance ‘Despotism’

The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (first published in 1860) proved to be one of the greatest bestsellers of contemporary historiography. Burckhardt’s concept of the Renaissance as an era permeated with the ‘spirit’ of anthropocentric individualism and secularism, as well as pagan Antiquity, remains valid today. Indeed, while Burckhardt himself is not always acknowledged, the concept can be found both in academic monographies of European history and school textbooks.

An intriguing puzzle in Burckhardt’s concept of the Renaissance, repeatedly criticized in later years,⁶⁰ is the connection between the revival of individualism and Renaissance tyrants, or, as Burckhardt put it, ‘despotic’ governments, especially in late-medieval and early-renaissance Italy. In Part I of his book, enigmatically entitled *The State as a Work of Art*, Burckhardt presented his own historical typology of Italian ‘despotic’ governments. The oldest thirteenth-century type is fully embodied by the south-Italian monarchy of the King of Sicily and later Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II as the first ‘modern’ ruler.⁶¹ The second,

59 Cf. Part One, Chapter I of the present book.

60 P. Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, Princeton, 2014, esp. 1–5, 35–39.

61 According to Burckhardt, the reforms of Frederick II in his Sicilian and Neapolitan kingdom were ‘aimed at the complete destruction of the feudal State, at the transformation of the people into a multitude destitute of will and of means of resistance, but profitable in the utmost degree to the treasury.’ This fiscalism was modelled after practices accepted in the East and was ‘cruel and vexatious.’ The author then emphasizes the centralization of the judicial and political administration on a scale previously unknown in Western European countries, the restriction of the freedom to study at the University of Naples (unheard of in Eastern countries), monopolistic practices in trade (‘in accordance with Muhammedan usages’) directed against the subjects’ freedom of commerce, and finally, mentions the religious Inquisition, the persecution of heretics, and the creation of a strong internal police force composed of Saracens; J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Princeton 1990 [1860], 20.

fourteenth-century type is represented by tyrant-aristocrats, such as the Visconti of Milan who managed to gain power at the time of when city-states were in crisis.⁶² And finally, there are the Italian despots of the fifteenth century, who were described by the Swiss historian in the greatest detail. They are tyrants-condottieri who seized power after having served as military leaders hired to protect rich princes or city republics. The armies led by condottieri often turned against their employers, who were removed from power by mercenary forces. Referring to the amoral concept of power expressed in Machiavelli's *Prince*, Burckhardt thus characterized this type of tyrant-*condottiero*: 'Good and evil lie strangely mixed together [emphasis mine – I.K.] in the Italian States of the fifteenth century. The personality of the ruler is so highly developed, often of such deep significance, and so characteristic of the conditions and needs of the time, that to form an adequate moral judgment on it is no easy task.'⁶³

Jacob Burckhardt closely links the emergence of modern individualism in the Renaissance, seeing it in opposition to medieval corporatism, with the rule of despots. This problem is discussed in the greatest detail in the second part of the book entitled *The Development of the Individual*. According to Burckhardt, tyrannies in the Renaissance shaped the revival of anthropocentric individualism in three ways. First, the individualism of the tyrant developed most fully under this form of government. Ironically speaking, we cannot object to the following observation: 'despotism, as we have already seen, fostered in the highest degree the individuality not only of the tyrant or Condottiere himself.' However, the second part of this sentence remains questionable: 'but also of the men whom he

62 Burckhardt does not characterize this type of ruler in more detail, but merely mentions that in the fourteenth century, the 'prudent ruler' avoided raising taxes and borrowing money from their subjects, and that some tried to strengthen their illegitimate rule by supporting poets and artists. As a reward, they could sometimes count on being described by a genius poet as 'the father of thy subjects.' He places first the Visconti of Milan, a family of Northern-Italian aristocrats who had actually ruled Milan since the thirteenth century and were awarded the title of Dukes of Milan by the Luxemburg dynasty in 1395. They subsequently took over the whole of Lombardy, but their line came to an end with the death of the last male descendant in 1447. Burckhardt presents a blunt description of rulers from this family: some of them gathered enormous riches thanks to their uncompromising fiscalism, some believed that the most important goal of the state was to hunt boars and brutally murder one's opponents (Bernabò), and some had 'that passion for the colossal which was common to most of the despots,' especially with regard to architecture and irrigation systems (Gian Galeazzo), or became famous because of their dogs, used 'for tearing human bodies' (Giovanni Maria); *ibid.*, 22–26.

63 *Ibid.*, 28.

protected or used as his tools – the secretary, minister, poet, and companion.⁶⁴ Burckhardt is probably referring here to the artistic patronage of the Italian princes in the Renaissance and the bureaucratic apparatus of power created by them. However, the twentieth century has taught us that ‘ideological tyrannies’ constrain the freedom of the individual and the freedom of art. Thus, the contemporary reader may find it difficult to understand the relationship between political oppression and the lack of creative freedom.

An even stranger explanation behind the connection between tyranny and individualism can be found in the following line of argument: due to their political powerlessness, the subjects of the tyrant-despot withdraw into the sphere of private life and thus develop their individualism.⁶⁵ Again, for modern people, who recognize the power of liberalism and believe that only personal freedom and democratic values foster the development of the self, Burckhardt’s point seems bizarre. For us, who know the history of twentieth-century ‘ideological tyrannies,’ it is a given that a centralized government or a police state restrains all manifestations of individualism among its citizens and places group interests above the good of the individual. Forced to withdraw into their private life, man is deprived of development opportunities in the public sphere. Respectively, Burckhardt describes tyrannicide with irony, writing about a peculiar fifteenth-century fashion to attack tyrants in churches. He also sarcastically comments on ancient tyrannicides and two defenders of republican values, Brutus and Cassius, who served as role models for contemporary assassins. In a word, all tyrannicides: ‘Like bad physicians, they thought to cure the disease by removing the symptoms.’⁶⁶

And finally, fascinated by the culture of Renaissance Florence, which was formally a republic until the beginning of the 1530s, Burckhardt admits that republics could also in certain situations foster the development of the individual. Especially when, due to internal struggles, power was held by an outstanding individual,⁶⁷ who did not tolerate his opponents. ‘The members of the defeated parties [...] often came into a position like that of the subjects of the despotic

64 *Ibid.*, 99.

65 *Ibid.*: ‘No doubt it was often hard for the subjects of a Visconti to maintain the dignity of their persons and families, and multitudes must have suffered in moral character through the servitude they lived under. But this was not the case with regard to individuality; for political impotence does not hinder the different tendencies and manifestations of private life from thriving in the fullest vigor and variety.’

66 *Ibid.*, 54.

67 *Ibid.*, 98.

States.⁶⁸ Thus, they could choose between internal emigration, escapism, withdrawal into the private sphere, or actual emigration. In turn, exile life, in the case of particularly resistant and talented people, could also foster the development of their personality by shaping cosmopolitan attitudes. With a conservative emphasis, Burckhardt concludes: “The cosmopolitanism which grew up in the most gifted circles is in itself a high stage of individualism.”⁶⁹

Although this thesis is difficult to understand from our contemporary perspective, the close relationship between the development of Italian Renaissance ‘despotism’ and the birth of anthropocentric individualism must be seen through the prism of the times in which the Swiss scholar lived. On the one hand, it should be assessed in the context of the critique of monarchical absolutism as monocratic tyranny and ‘despotism’ by German democrats and socialists (and before 1848 also by liberals). On the other hand, it must be viewed in the context of the liberal critique of democracy as the multi-headed tyranny of the majority, especially the conservative attack on the so-called parliamentary and party despotism.⁷⁰ It was from a conservative point of view that Jacob Burckhardt – who was, after all, a member of the wealthy Basel patriciate, a representative and admirer of elite culture – observed with horror the massification and democratization of European culture, and consequently developed his concept of ‘the despotism of the masses’ (*Massendespotismus*).⁷¹ Thus, in opposition to the *Massendespotismus*, he saw Renaissance monocratic ‘despotism’ as a positive factor in the development of modern European culture. In addition, the nineteenth-century renaissance and the growing popularity of Machiavelli as a political thinker, especially since the 1850s, and the unification of Italy and Germany, must have had a significant impact on his views. The critique of plans to democratize the republican system in Florence, discussed in the part entitled ‘The State as a Work of Art’ demonstrates that Burckhardt found Italian Renaissance ‘despots’ and rulers, who resembled Machiavelli’s ‘new prince,’ more fascinating – since ‘thoughtful men like Machiavelli knew well enough that Milan and Naples were too ‘corrupt’ for a republic.’⁷²

Burckhardt’s line of argument, i.e. the fact that he saw a connection between the development of ‘despotism’ in Renaissance Italy and the birth of anthropocentric

68 Ibid., 100.

69 Ibid.

70 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 688–694.

71 Ibid., 697 ff.

72 J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 42 ff.

individualism, can be explained if we take into account the historical moment, or 'the spirit of the time' (*Zeitgeist*) – to use a word favoured in the nineteenth century by German-speaking cultural historians.⁷³ However, more than 150 years after *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* was written, critical reflection on Burckhardt's methods of historical research and narrative leads us to believe that his thesis is a kind of historiographical myth. Burckhardt's book mostly reflects a certain way of thinking characteristic of conservative intellectuals in the mid-nineteenth century and their views on the state of contemporary culture. Still, it fails to tell us the historical 'truth' about the culture of the Renaissance.

Despite its ahistorical approach, Jacob Burckhardt's thesis can inspire us to pose the following question: How did changes in the understanding of tyranny in the sixteenth century affect the 'discovery' of various aspects of human personality in the context of the broadly understood political culture of the Renaissance? Or, to put it differently, how did Renaissance reflection on political evil associated with the tyranny shape early modern thinking about the role of man – both the ruler and the ruled – as a political being? I pose this question with scepticism, acknowledging that an answer to it will also be an attempt to read the culture of my times through the prism of the past.

A Different History of Ideas: Methodology

Naturally, an answer to such a question faces numerous methodological problems. First, regarding the choice of chronological and territorial frames. To analyse the problem in more detail, I have decided to concentrate on two sixteenth-century 'sections.' The first 'section' concerns the 1520s, i.e. the time when Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. The second section concerns the 1570s, i.e. the time when anti-Machiavellian trends became dominant in Europe. I argue that it is precisely an analysis of the problem of tyranny in the political culture of one century, but in the periods divided by 50 years, that makes it possible to define changes which took place at that time more accurately, without losing sight of the most important inspirations found in Antique and Medieval political thought, which fuelled the Renaissance culture and political mentality. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain a broad territorial perspective, insofar as a comparative look at the political culture of the Europeans in the sixteenth century is required. In order to discover what is common and predominant, I discuss political thought and mentality in some Western and Central-Eastern European

73 F. Gilbert, *Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, Princeton 1990, esp. 46–50 and 81–85.

countries (Italy, France, the Holy Roman Empire, England, Scotland, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Duchy of Prussia, and Sweden, though I mainly refer to Polish sources in the latter case).

My book is not a work on the history of political thought, defined as the evolution of political concepts. Neither was my aim to discuss the doctrines developed by various political thinkers. Instead, I wish to present the history of ideas more as the history of political culture and political mentality 'in interaction with history of politics'. To that end, my approach brings to a focus the problem of the transfer of tradition and the values of culture over time.

We read past historical epochs like books in which other historical epochs, which preceded them and inspired them, are hidden and described. The Renaissance was a time of a rediscovery ('rebirth') of classic Antique texts, which were read together with a central text for the Middle Ages, namely the Bible. However, at the same time we also project our own present on the interpretation of the past through readings of various books relevant for our times. The fundamental point is that in certain periods and in certain areas of collective, and sometimes only individual (i.e. among believers, doctrinaires, and certain scholars) thinking, *the Book* governs all aspects of life, be it the Bible or Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. A certain canonical text is often the key to understanding, at least partially, a particular cultural code of a past in connection with our present time.

The canon of books for my perception of tyranny in the sixteenth century includes mostly the works of Machiavelli, More and Shakespeare. They sometimes achieved a monopolistic position in the culture of a given epoch, and not necessarily the one in which they were created. 'Discovered' later, through new interpretations, they take on new meanings depending on the historical context. For the historian, they may also become 'canonical sources.' The main difficulty in studying them lies in the enormous number of cultural references, as well as the volume of literature on the subject, which is practically impossible for a single researcher to navigate. An additional problem is that, in the process of analysing 'canonical sources,' the historian also needs to read secondary sources related to them critically, in the context of the time when they were written, and not merely as 'objective' studies.

The canon of ideas: a set of premises, assumptions, problems, theses, concepts, doctrines, and norms (including legal norms) discussed in various types of texts, including non-canonical texts. They constitute classic historical sources which should be studied using traditional methods of scholarly criticism. Transformed from one epoch to the next, the canon of ideas is not only re-adopted as 'orthodox,' but also amplified, paraphrased, mythicized, censored, questioned and undermined, giving rise to anti-doctrines, such as anti-Machiavellism.

The canon of examples: conventional images which function in canonical and non-canonical sources, and sometimes even become 'icons' in a given culture (e.g. as symbolic or allegorical representations). Found in canonical texts, they can often be used in various texts or iconographic representations, even disregarding their original meaning, depending on the needs and context of a given epoch.

The canon of instruments, which consists of: a) material media, which are the 'carriers' of the three above-mentioned canons (e.g. handwritten or printed texts); they enable a more intensive and extensive circulation and exchange of texts, information, and ideas; b) formal media, i.e. forms of communication and transmission of the three above-mentioned canons; formal media in the sixteenth century included, public theatres, but also new literary genres (e.g. the novel). Material and formal media not only serve the purpose of transmitting and distributing 'books,' 'ideas' and 'examples' in time and space. The emergence of new formal media gives rise to new interpretations of 'books,' 'ideas,' and 'examples' and endows them with new meanings in a given epoch.

Taking into account the four above-mentioned canons, we can try to at least selectively understand the mentality and broadly defined political culture of a given epoch.⁷⁴ However, such a perspective requires numerous and diverse sources. On the one hand, 'canonical texts' require a specific approach to the critical texts which discuss them. On the other hand, the researcher should be familiar with non-canonical sources that require a more classical historical and critical approach. This concerns both scholarly works of political philosophy and history, as well as more 'vulgar' and journalistic and propaganda texts, and iconographic representations, too.

Literary texts of the era are of particular importance. Neither in Antiquity nor in the Middle Ages was the concept of the tyranny defined solely on the basis of political philosophy or legal treaties. Fiction, including dramas, was also important. In his fascinating essay devoted to the *topos* of the tyrant in medieval and Renaissance literature, written during the political crisis in Germany that preceded Nazi totalitarian 'tyranny,' Ernst Walser distinguished between two conventional medieval literary figures: the tragic tyrant (e.g. certain Roman

74 To the four canons listed here as creating the code of the political culture in a given epoch, one should add another, the 'canon of rituals,' understood as a canon of certain ceremonious signs with a specific meaning in political life. On the meaning of the term 'political culture' in contemporary historiography and reflections on rituals, see P. Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy*, 14.

emperors described in the hagiographies of early-Christian martyrs) and the comic tyrant (also described in hagiographies or rhetorical texts). Sometimes the same figure, for example, the biblical Herod, was endowed with both tragic and comic features in liturgical dramas and mystery plays. The origins of both these *topoi* date back to ancient literary representations of the ‘vulgar tyrant,’ and they were both often popularized in medieval written culture through textbooks on classic rhetoric.⁷⁵

Respectively, thanks to the expansion of printed texts and the emergence of new literary genres, the Renaissance created new opportunities for an increasingly diversified and nuanced representation of the human condition, including the problem of tyranny. Certainly, the popularization of print in the sixteenth century can be seen as a ‘media revolution’ that irreversibly changed European culture, transforming it into ‘the Gutenberg Galaxy.’⁷⁶ As a result, the circulation of information and its social impact dramatically increased, facilitating social communication. These developments (within the canon of instruments) also had to have an impact on culture in general, including the political culture of the era (the canon of the book, ideas, and examples). Hence, in my book, I focus on printed sources – be they old prints or newer editions – although I sometimes also refer to critically edited primary sources that were created and intended for circulation as handwritten texts.

75 E. Walser, *Die Gestalt des tragischen und des komischen Tyrannen in Mittelalter und Renaissance*, in: *Kultur- und Universalgeschichte. Walter Goetz zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, Leipzig 1927, 125–144, here esp. 131–136.

76 See M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, Toronto 2011 (1962).

Part One: The Machiavellian Coup: Tyrant à rebours. The Onset of a New Era

Chapter I. The Machiavellian Paradox: Machiavellian ‘Paradoxes’ and ‘Moments’

Niccolò Machiavelli is one of the most commonly referenced political authors of the modern era. While his name is associated with a number of commonly-used expressions carrying morally pejorative connotations, such as ‘Machiavellian’ and ‘Machiavellism,’ as a rule these terms have little in common with Machiavelli’s thought in its original form. What they represent are interpretations, often distorted ones, of fragments of his work that seemed particularly relevant to authors in various historical periods. The same applies to academic interpretations of Machiavelli’s writings. Analysing works devoted to him since the mid-nineteenth century, i.e. since history became a science in today’s understanding, we can see that such texts are in fact more a reflection of the traditions and political culture of the time and place they were written. They often speak more about the moment in which they were produced than about the era in which Niccolò Machiavelli lived.¹ They have also been used as subtexts for the discourses of historians, political scientists, sociologists, and even politicians.

Konstanty Grzybowski, a Polish expert on the political thought of the Renaissance, writing in the changing political climate of the late 1960s, saw a key notion – one expressing the essence of Machiavelli’s doctrine and the era from which it came into being – in the word ‘paradox’:

A realistic analysis of reality was subordinated to a utopian and idealistic goal: the unification of Italy. And this is why *Il Principe* is perhaps the most paradoxical political treatise. At the same time, it is both deeply moral and amoral, pro-absolutist and

1 In the introduction to the classic English edition of Niccolò Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, ed. A.L. Burd, Oxford 1891, [hereinafter *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd)], Lord Acton, the father of one of the most famous political aphorisms of the twentieth century, in his characterization of nineteenth-century evaluations of Machiavelli’s work emphasized the relevance and accessibility of his thoughts in the nineteenth century: ‘He is the earliest conscious and articulate exponent of certain living forces in the present world. Religion, progressive enlightenment, the perpetual vigilance of public opinion, have not reduced his empire, or disproved the justice of his conception of mankind [...] *he is more rationally intelligible when illustrated by lights falling not only from the century he wrote in, but from our own, which has seen the course of its history twenty-five times diverted by actual or attempted crime*’ [emphasis mine – I.K.], xl.

democratic, a timely political pamphlet and a timeless treatise on the characteristic features of rulers and the ruled, an expression of extreme political and irrational realism, and in the era in which it was written, a longing for state unification. It is full of internal contradictions, like the Renaissance itself. But within these contradictions, it is consistent and logical – like the Renaissance itself. It is medieval but at the same time rejects medieval thinking – like the Renaissance itself. It addresses questions concerning the nation but also humanity as a whole – like Renaissance humanism itself.²

This quotation comes from Grzybowski’s introduction to the 1969 Polish edition of *The Prince*. The date here is important: in that year, some experts in the Polish People’s Republic were marking the 500th anniversary of Machiavelli’s birthday with a conference devoted to his person and work, and the publication of papers delivered during the event in a book titled *Niccolò Machiavelli. Paradoxes of the Fate of Doctrine*.³ One of many paradoxes concerning Machiavelli’s legacy in the Polish context is its relevance to the anti-Semitic demonstrations incited by the Poland’s communist authorities in 1968, as a result of which purges were carried out both within the power apparatus and in academic circles. The political measures, including social manipulation, successfully employed by those in power during the course of these events could be described as ‘Machiavellian’ in the popular sense of the word.

In the late twentieth century, during a period of ‘hard times’ for dictatorships, themes related to Machiavelli remained popular in historical research. Academics focused on him not so much as the father of political realism, as historians – like Friedrich Meinecke – had it in the first half of the century,⁴ but rather as the author of *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Titio Livio* and a proponent of republicanism whose ideas influenced modern political philosophy. Thus, the historian of political thought John Greville Agard Pocock coined the term ‘Machiavellian moment’ to describe how Machiavelli’s thought regained its relevance at certain points in history, thereby emphasizing the reemergence and reception of the Florentine thinker’s ideas in specific historical moments (English Civil War, American Revolution).⁵

2 Mikołaj Machiavelli, *Ksiązę*, trans. W. Rzymowski, ed. K. Grzybowski, Wrocław–Warsaw–Krakow 1969, lxxiii.

3 *Niccolò Machiavelli. Paradoxy losów doktryny*, Warszawa 1973.

4 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, München 1960. This is the second edition of a book by one of the most prominent German historians of the twentieth century, whose research on Machiavelli’s doctrine goes back to the early 1920s.

5 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton–London 1975. The title of this widely discussed work

The titles of works devoted to Machiavelli can be important for properly understanding subsequent 'moments' and 'paradoxes' in both the Machiavellian tradition and in anti-Machiavellism. I will therefore not only try to provide an overview, though very incomplete, of the most important research on Machiavelli's heritage but also touch upon the times in which these studies on his oeuvre were produced. It seems that *The Prince* eludes attempts to treat it as an ordinary historical narrative source. Both the content of this work and the school of interpretation and canons of criticism and *apologia* that grew out of it in the next centuries raise it to the rank of a 'canonical source' that cannot be analysed without taking into account the historical contexts in which various research traditions arose.

In discussions and analyses of the concepts contained in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, two approaches can be distinguished. The first, 'political' approach, commonly seen in studies on the history of political philosophy and doctrines, emphasizes the originality of Machiavelli's notion of a 'double morality' – one for the realm of politics, the other for actions outside of this sphere – and his 'discovery' of certain principles of social manipulation and the doctrine of political realism, which were 'rediscovered' in the mid-nineteenth century. Machiavelli appears here as an important precursor of study of the art of governance, and thus as the forefather of modern political science. However, this approach does not exclude more traditional and critical assessments of Machiavelli's doctrine by political philosophers as 'immoral and irreligious' teachings, as Leo Strauss has argued, though he also admitted: 'Even if, and precisely if we are forced to grant that his teaching is diabolical and he himself a devil, we are forced to remember the profound theological truth that the devil is a fallen angel'⁶.

In a fascinating attempt to systematize the European tradition of political philosophy, the German philosopher and political scientist Dolf Sternberger, writing shortly after an era marked by the stigma of totalitarianism, attributed to Machiavelli the creation of one of the three intellectual foundations, or 'roots,' of modern European political thought. The dominant one is the Aristotelean 'political root' – a doctrine that sees the genesis of the state in man's nature as a 'political animal,' and the state's main goal as providing for the 'common good' for members of the community. The second is the Augustinian 'eschatological root,' which treats power and man's 'earthly' state as temporal entities created by God,

was suggested to the author by the outstanding British historian of republican thinking Quentin Skinner, see: *ibid.*, 'Introduction,' viii.

6 L. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, Chicago 1958, 12 f.

whose primary aim should be to guarantee 'eternal salvation' of the individual. The third and final root would be the 'demonological' Machiavellian root. Its essence is expressed in a vision of state power as a product of the dominant position of those who rule, who have at their disposal various means of exercising violence over those under their control. The latter, out of fear for their own safety and of the chaos of anarchy, are willing to exchange 'freedom' for 'security'. The ideologies of twentieth-century totalitarianism grew out of this root.⁷ Although Sternberger critically distinguishes the ideas originally expressed by Machiavelli from simplified and distorted interpretations of them – that is, from the 'demonization' of his writings in his opponents' and supporters' readings of them – it seems that in the light of the experiences and traumas of the twentieth century, a complete separation of Machiavelli himself from the demonized Machiavelli is difficult.

In the second, more 'historical' approach in research on Machiavelli's intellectual legacy, the originality and realism found in his perception of the world of politics frequently come to the fore, though the dominant tendency is to associate his thought with the political and cultural contexts of the Renaissance era, including efforts to find affinities with the views of his contemporaries and even his predecessors. In this and following chapters, I will try to work from within the 'historical' approach in analysing Niccolò Machiavelli's doctrines, though at times I will also refer to concepts representing the 'political' approach.⁸ Analysing and comparing his most important theories to the views and experiences of other contemporary authors allow us to better understand the 'historical moment' of Machiavelli's day, understood here as a set of ideas and reflections that were fashionable in those circles that 'set the tone' for the intellectual culture of this phase of the Renaissance.

Il Principe Nuovo: Moses or Cesare Borgia? In Search of a Positive Model

It seems that Machiavelli's most famous work, *The Prince*, is crucial to understanding the Italian and Renaissance interpretation of tyranny, although this

7 D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' in: his, *Schriften*, vol. II, Frankfurt/M. 1978, in particular, the section titled 'Machiavelli oder Dämonologik.'

8 An excellent attempt to reconcile these two trends and research traditions can be found in: H. Münkler, *Machiavelli. Die Begründung des politischen Denkens der Neuzeit aus der Krise der Republik Florenz*, Frankfurt/M. 1982. This is one of the most thorough studies on Machiavelli's political doctrine in contemporary German historiography.

word does not actually appear anywhere in the book. Moreover, even though the book was known mainly from passages quoted ‘second hand’ by other authors, as it fell under an official ban in Italy and other Catholic countries after its inclusion in the *List of Prohibited Books* in 1559 (and again in 1564), and under general condemnation in Protestant countries, it had a huge impact on political doctrine and the image of the tyrant in propaganda throughout the early modern era. The term ‘Machiavellian,’ coined in the latter half of the sixteenth century, became synonymous with political abuses and cruelty – the equivalent of the adjective ‘tyrannical.’⁹ But was Machiavelli really a Machiavellian? To begin with, let us focus on the main themes, ambiguities and paradoxes found in the concepts explored in *The Prince*.

The exact time when this work was written has long been a subject of debate among historians. The prevailing opinion is that most of it (Chapters I–XXV) was written between July and December 1513 or, at the latest, during the first months of 1514,¹⁰ i.e. about a year after the fall of Pier Soderini’s republican government in Florence, and the return of the Medici family, which had been exiled 18 years earlier. These events put an end to Niccolò Machiavelli’s hitherto promising career during the Republican period (1498–1512), which included participating in many of the Republic’s diplomatic missions and holding the prominent offices in the Second Chancery and of Secretary of the Ten of Liberty and Peace (*Signoria*). He was relieved of his political offices in November 1512, and sentenced to one year’s exile outside the city walls; soon afterwards, he was suspected of taking part in a conspiracy against the restoration of the Medici and was imprisoned once again for a short time (between February and March 1513). After his release, forbidden to leave the borders of the Florentine Republic, he went

9 For more on this subject see Part Two, Chapter I of the present book.

10 The results of research and the controversy surrounding the dating of the writing of *Il Principe* are presented in more detail in A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, Darmstadt 1985, 58 ff. He cites, among other things, the research findings of Federico Chabod, accepted by most historians, which point to the work’s compositional uniformity. According to Chabod, between July and December 1513 Machiavelli wrote the treatise *De Principatibus*, which he mentions in a letter dated 10 December 1513 to his friend Francesco Vettori, at that time a Florentine envoy in Rome. In the early months of 1514, Machiavelli is said to have completed *The Prince* in its nearly final form. See F. Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, London 1960, 12 ff., 33 ff. Also see Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 1981, 54 he dates the writing of *The Prince* to the latter half of 1513 on the basis of Machiavelli’s correspondence with Vettori; an outline of the work was first produced, according to Skinner, and the book was completed by Christmas of that same year.

into exile at a small family estate – the villa of Sant Andrea in Percussina – near San Casciano, where he spent the next seven years. This period proved a particularly fertile one in his literary life, producing two of his most famous works. Not only did he complete *The Prince* (*Il Principe*) at that time but he also began writing *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* (*Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*).¹¹ However, the political meaning of the two works, which appeared in print only posthumously (*Discorsi* – 1531, *Il Principe* – 1532),¹² was quite different.

Il Principe, finished most likely in the latter half of 1516, was dedicated to Lorenzo Medici (grandson of the famous Lorenzo Il Magnifico).¹³ Although the content of the dedication was meant to provide testimony to the author’s proficiency in the art of rhetoric and his intellectual superiority over the addressee of the work, it also had – as one might suppose – a very private, even opportunistic purpose.¹⁴ Machiavelli’s aim was to get into the good graces of the Medici

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- 11 Niccolò Machiavelli. *Discourses on Livy*, trans. H.C. Mansfield & N. Tarcov, Chicago 1996.
- 12 The first edition of *Il Principe* (1532) was published in Rome by the printer Antonio Blado with papal approval. For the most important Italian and foreign editions (including translations) of *The Prince* in the sixteenth and later centuries, and its inclusion in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1559, see the publisher’s introduction to *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 1–69; the largest number of early editions appeared in Venice (1537, 1539, 1540, 1546, 1550, 1554), which remained a ‘window on the world’ for this work even after its inclusion in the *Index*.
- 13 Cf. A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 59, cites more recent Italian studies, according to which both Chapter XXVI and the final dedication were written between September 1515 and September 1516. The person to whom the dedication is addressed – ‘To Lawrence the Magnificent’ – should not be misunderstood. Machiavelli originally wanted to dedicate his work to Giulano Medici, who died in March 1516, but ultimately the dedication was made to Lorenzo (son of Piero, 1471–1503), who in May 1516 assumed the office of *Capitano Generale* of Florence, and in September of that year was also granted the title of Duke of Urbino. The fact that Lorenzo was named ‘Magnifico’ and not ‘Duca’ in the dedication would indicate that *the terminus ante quem* of the dedication’s creation is 8 October 1516. D. Hoeges believes that work on *Il Principe* must have been completed before 1519, when Lorenzo died shortly after marrying Madeleine de La Tour d’Auvergne, who was related to Francis I, the King of France. Catherine de’ Medici was a product of this marriage. See D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmie*, München 2000, 17 ff.
- 14 D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmie*, 25 ff., makes a thorough analysis of the text of the dedication, showing how Machiavelli’s skilful rhetoric is permeated with a sense of intellectual superiority over the politicians to whom he wanted to dedicate his work: ‘*Die rhetorische Souveränität Machiavellis erweist sich in der geräuschlosen Herabsetzung des Adressaten und der damit einhergehenden*

family, which since the reign of Cosimo (the Elder) de' Medici (1434–1464) and the tenure of Lorenzo the Magnificent (1469–1492) as Gonfalonier of Justice, had dominated in the (still formally) Republic of Florence. The family's further rise after Machiavelli's death in 1527 saw its members ascend to the French throne (Catherine de' Medici [1547–1589]; Marie de' Medici [1600–1630]) and be granted the hereditary titles of Duke of Florence (1532), and Grand Duke of Tuscany (1569). Nevertheless, even before its publication, and perhaps even before 1519, *Il Principe* had become known in manuscript form to (at least) the author's friends among Florentine circles.¹⁵

The very first passages of Chapter I of *The Prince* must have left readers puzzled. The author, resigning from the commonly accepted Aristotelian division of systems of government into ideal types (monarchy, aristocracy, *politea*) and their degenerations (tyranny, oligarchy, democracy), begins the book by introducing his own – simplified – division into republics and principalities, i.e. monarchies. The latter, in turn, are divided into hereditary, mixed, and new principalities. The basic category of division is the means by which the ruler comes to power, not differences in the political system. This typology reflected the political reality of Renaissance Italy from the fourteenth to the early sixteenth century: the disappearance of republican city-states (with the exception of Venice, Genoa, and formally Florence), which, torn by internal conflicts and factional infighting, gave way to new principalities, founded either by representatives of the wealthiest local families or by Italian *condottieri*. Again, however, internal struggles and constant warfare between the Italian states meant that the families ruling them were rarely able to stabilize their power for a longer period.¹⁶ Hereditary monarchs, who rule 'by the grace of God,' are touched upon only briefly by Machiavelli. This is no surprise given that

Selbstüberhöhung.' Later dedications, also constructed according to the principles of *ars rhetorica*, e.g. those in *Discourses on Livy* or *Life of Castruccio Castracani*, are filled with the author's criticism or distancing himself from the Medici, *ibid.*, 37 ff.

- 15 D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmeichelei*, 17, mentions the possibility of Machiavelli sharing the first versions of *The Prince* before Lorenzo's death in 1519.
- 16 See the discussion of the 'extension and consolidation of increasingly despotic forms of princely rule' on the Apennine Peninsula from the late thirteenth to the sixteenth century in the context of developments in Italian political philosophy in: Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Early Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1: *The Renaissance*, Cambridge 1978, Chapter Five, 'The Age of Princes,' 113 ff. and his, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2: *Renaissance Virtues*, Cambridge 2002, in particular the chapters titled: 'The Rediscovery of Republican Values,' especially 22–28, and 'Republican Virtues in an Age of Princes,' 118 ff.

there were almost no hereditary monarchs on the Apennine Peninsula at that time, save for the Kingdoms of Sicily and Naples, which, due to frequent dynasty changes during the era of the Italian Wars (1494–1559), could hardly be described as possessing a stable means for regulating the succession of power. Machiavelli also treated the Papal States with an ironic distance,¹⁷ especially the question of their divine provenance, signalling his appreciation of the instrumental use of religion.¹⁸ However, it would be too hasty to judge Machiavelli on this basis as an unbelieving or unreligious man.¹⁹

He focused somewhat greater attention on what his calls 'mixed' principalities. These are the states that most often have been annexed or subjugated by other countries as a result of conquest, such the Kingdoms of Naples (from 1501) and Sicily (from 1504) falling under the rule of Ferdinand the Catholic, King of Aragon and Castile, or the Duchy of Milan occupied by the French King Louis XII after the expulsion of Ludovico il Moro Sforza (1499/1500). This theme seemed particularly topical during the period of constant warfare and territorial shifts caused by French expansion in Italy begun by Charles VIII and Louis XII at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Machiavelli devoted significant space²⁰ to means for consolidating power in newly conquered territories, including establishing colonies in them, and exiling and depriving members of the local aristocracy of their property. He levelled devastating criticism at the

17 N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. Q. Skinner, R. Price, Cambridge 1991, Chapter XI: 'Ecclesiastical Principalities,' 39–41 [hereinafter: *The Prince*].

18 *Ibid.*, Chapter XXI, 97.

19 It is precisely because of the sarcastic and critical statements made about the papacy, especially the instrumental treatment of religion (likewise in *Discourses on Livy*, where the pagan Roman religion was appreciated for strengthening the state and Christianity criticized for contributing to the fall of Rome, that Machiavelli's works were on the Vatican's *Index* and gave rise to criticism of the author's alleged atheism. In turn, since the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially in the twentieth century, in an era of progressive secularization, they were interpreted as a manifestation of 'anticlericalism' or at best treated as Renaissance 'paganism.' However, S. de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*, New York–Toronto 1989, indicates new interpretative possibilities. On the basis of a detailed analysis of the language and basic concepts used by Machiavelli in *The Prince* and *Discourses*, De Grazia presents him as a humanist, a republican, and, at the same time, a believer (albeit a very unorthodox one), who perceiving the need to reform the Church, introduced new interpretations of existing ethical values, i.e. as De Grazia writes, he 'revamped hell'; see *ibid.*, especially 339–340, and also Chapter II: 'God's Friends and Machiavelli's' and Chapter III: 'The Heavenly Host.'

20 *The Prince*, Chapter III: 'Mixed Principalities.'

policies of Louis XII,²¹ pointing out his errors and inconsistencies that led to the defeat of the French in Italy. This issue seems to have been of particular interest to Machiavelli's Florentine readers, regardless of whether they supported the Republic (seeking French aid) or the Medici's, since Florence had been trying unsuccessfully for two centuries to annex the Tuscan republics of Siena and Lucca.

Machiavelli's primary focus in *Il Principe* was on new principalities, i.e. those not based on a traditional succession to the throne by a member of the ruling dynasty and a concept of power based on divine right. The new principalities were further sub-categorized based on how the ruler had taken power into those who had used their own arms and ability; those who had come to power through the arms and good fortune of others; those who had seized power by illegitimate means; and those in which the ruler was chosen by his fellow citizens.

Let us start with the latter. In Chapter IX, on the transfer of power by the people, Machiavelli refers to such states as 'civil' principalities (*principato civile*), i.e. those in which power is exercised through the support of the nobles or the people.²² Few historical examples are provided here of power being assumed by such means. Nabis, the Spartan *tyrannos* (205–192 BCE), is mentioned as an example of a ruler who, by supporting the people at the expense of the nobility, succeeded in repelling an attack on the city by Roman forces. Two other examples: the Gracchi in Rome and the Florentine leader Giorgio Scali (executed in 1282) are cited merely to support the sarcastic thesis that the people should not be expected to come to the rescue when their leader finds himself in deep waters. The tone of Chapter IX as a whole, however, is marked by a clear dislike for the aristocracy. On the one hand, the nobility are inclined somewhat naturally to oppress the people. As Machiavelli points out: 'the people do not want to be dominated or oppressed by the nobles, and the nobles want to dominate and oppress the people.' On the other hand, even if the wealthy grant power to one of their own, they will soon be an obstacle to that very rule because they 'consider that they are his equals.'²³ In short, it is easier to maintain rule given by the people than by the magnates.

This chapter appears to have been addressed to the Medici in particular and was intended as a warning to them against relying on the Florentine oligarchy. In any case, Chapter IX covers issues that were particularly topical in Florence

21 *Ibid.*, 11–14.

22 *Ibid.*, Chapter IX, 33.

23 *Ibid.*, 33–36.

during the transition from a republican to monarchical form of rule under the Medicis. In addition, Machiavelli strikes a tone here that is particularly close to other works of his with more of a republican tint than *Il Principe* – an affection for a specific notion of 'the people' and an aversion to patricians and aristocrats.²⁴

The majority of the Florentine author's deliberations are devoted to the three remaining types of new principalities. The first of these is Chapter VI: 'New Principalities Acquired by One's Own Arms and Ability'. However, the 'ability' in the language of the original is rendered by the word *virtù*, which denoted an untranslatable cluster of notions: the ability to make decisions, life energy, the will to fight, courage, power, bravery, and political virtue – and not merely ethical values.²⁵ As examples, the author mentions a number of biblical (Moses) and mythical (Theseus, Romulus) characters, as well as ancient rulers, such as Cyrus, and at the end of the chapter, Hiero II (ca. 369–215 BCE), a strategist from Syracuse and an ally of Rome, who was chosen by his fellow citizens as their ruler, and thanks to his military prowess and *virtù*, he was able to rise to princely power. Apart from Hiero II, all of these characters created new states that became dominant politically, militarily or culturally. Their creators pursued their own ideas, although they were often helped by *occasione*, i.e. 'coincidence' or 'chance'. Without *virtù*, that is, a life of courage and virtue, they would not have been able to take advantage of the opportunities with which they were presented. They were also great reformers and – as Machiavelli calls them 'innovators' (*innovatori*) – who had to overcome resistance arising out of an attachment to tradition among the ruled.²⁶

It is interesting to note that, in this chapter, there are no figures from among Machiavelli's contemporaries serving as positive examples of this type of 'new prince.' The only figure of the day who appears here is Girolamo Savonarola – presented as a negative model of an innovator who tried to introduce his reforms without the use of force.²⁷ At this point, Machiavelli uses a famous phrase: 'all

24 Cf., among others: N. Rubinstein, 'A New Epoch. Machiavelli,' in: *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, Cambridge 1991, 48 ff.; H. Freyer, *Machiavelli. Mit einem Nachwort von E. Üner*, Weinheim 1986, 70.

25 *Ibid.*, 19–21. See also the extensive analysis of the meanings and semantic contexts by the editors (Q. Skinner, R. Price) of the English edition of *The Prince*.

26 *The Prince*, 20–22; cf. the critical edition collating the earliest Italian manuscripts: Niccolò Machiavelli, *De Principatibus*, ed. G. Inglese, Roma 1994 [hereinafter *De Principatibus*], 205.

27 Machiavelli's criticism of Savonarola is discussed in *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), Appendix I, 373–378.

armed prophets succeed, whereas the unarmed ones fail.' To realize his ambitious plans, force and efforts to 'make' people accept these solutions are necessary, because 'the people are fickle; it is easy to persuade them about something, but difficult to keep them persuaded.'²⁸ This pessimistic concept of human nature is one of the fundamental features of Machiavelli's doctrine, which is presented in a more systematic manner in *Discorsi*.

Another type of prince is one who owes his rule to 'the arms and fortune of others.' Chapter VII is dedicated to them. The general introductory remarks contained in it boil down to the articulation of a basic thesis; namely, that it is easier to gain such power, and more difficult to maintain, because it depends on: 'the goodwill and prosperity of those who gave them their positions and these are two things that are exceedingly variable and uncertain.'²⁹ New principalities acquired by means of the forces or fortunes of another are ephemeral: they arise quickly and fall just as quickly. After all, a man who in the past was merely a private individual and who lacks great intelligence and ability will be unable to lead upon becoming a 'new prince' unless he possesses the essence of a ruler's genius: courage, energy, ability, drive, moral virtue; in a word – *virtù*.

This statement seems to contradict the title of Chapter VII: 'New Principalities Acquired with the Arms and Fortune of Others' to the untrained eye of a twentieth-century reader. The first part can be interpreted as so: with the help of someone else's armed forces, which definitely changes its meaning in favour of those who are able to use these forces skilfully. In turn, 'Fortune' (*Fortuna*) in Machiavelli's understanding of the word differs from '*occasione*,' which appears often in Chapter VI and is more accurately translated as 'coincidence' or 'chance.' Machiavelli thus states that those who gain their power by means of their own weapons and bravery – i.e. the primary protagonists of Chapter VI – owe their success not to *fortuna* but to *occasione*.³⁰ Here, however, fortune has a broader meaning than chance.

The Renaissance understanding of this word harkens back to ancient traditions – to Roman images of Fortuna as a goddess (*bona dea*), depicted in the form of a woman holding a horn of plenty and looking favourably on *vir* – a man possessing the merits characteristic of his gender, i.e. possessing

28 *The Prince*, 21.

29 *The Prince*, 22.

30 See the detailed linguistic analysis of this passage by the English translator in *The Prince* (Q. Skinner, R. Price), Appendix B: 'Notes on the Vocabulary of *The Prince*,' 107.

virtus.³¹ Christianity breaks with this image. In the Middle Ages, Fortuna was mainly presented as ‘blind power’ and its symbol was inevitably a rotating circle. Endowed by God with the power to influence earthly things, it was meant to instruct people about the vicissitudes related to wealth, royal power and the dignity, respect, and reverence shown to the authorities.³² It was only in the era of early humanism, in the works of Dante and Petrarch, that the ancient understanding of Fortuna was revived. Likewise, the distinction between Fortuna and fate (*fatum*) was emphasized, although her symbolic portrayal as a blind woman with a wheel remained. The theme of the human (in this case, male) struggle with Fortuna has become one of the most important literary themes of the Renaissance, with an emphasis on the necessity to fight against her whims – because ‘valour consists in action’ (*Virtus in actione consistit*).³³

This humanist understanding of Fortuna/fortune is also typical of Machiavelli.³⁴ In *The Prince*, he mentions that Fortuna is a woman and ‘close friend’ of a braver one. She is aroused and attracted by the virtue (*virtus-virtù*) of a true man (*vir*), who is not afraid to confront a mortal threat. Moreover, in Chapter XXV, Machiavelli gives these classic arguments – according to Quentin Skinner – an even sadistic-erotic interpretation, suggesting that Fortuna as a woman feels a perverse satisfaction when she feels male strength acting on her own body, or even when she experiences rape:³⁵

I think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because fortune is a woman, and if you want to control her, it is necessary to treat her roughly. And it is clear that she is more inclined to yield to men who are impetuous than to those who are calculating.

31 See the extensive discussion of this issue by Q. Skinner in *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, 47 ff.

32 For medieval and renaissance imagery concerning Fortune, see also C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image. An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Cambridge 2012 [1964], 81–82.

33 These words come from Poggio Bracciolini’s *De varietate fortunae*; qtd. after F. Gilbert, *Guicciardini, Machiavelli und die Geschichtsschreibung der italienischen Renaissance*, Berlin 1991, 19; *ibid.*, 18 ff., discussion of the concept of fortune in sixteenth-century historiography.

34 Under the influence of gender research, some historians have highlighted Machiavelli’s misogynistic understanding of Fortuna. See H.F. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman. Gender and Politics of Niccolò Machiavelli*, Berkeley 1984, especially Chapters V and VI; and S. de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*, 132 ff.; F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence*, New York–London 1984, 194 ff.

35 Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, 33.

Since fortune is a woman, she is always well disposed towards young men, because they are less cautious and more aggressive, and treat her more boldly.³⁶

Only in this way a man can make Fortuna to act on his own behalf and achieve fame – and thus the most highly prized value in the world of the Renaissance demonstrating his own valour – *virtù*.³⁷ No wonder that, unlike in the other chapters, in Chapter VII the sole examples invoked by Machiavelli are those of contemporary famous *condottieri*: Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. The first of these men is only briefly mentioned.³⁸

That was sufficient for Italian readers. They did not need a longer lecture on the princely dynasty that conquered Milan in the mid-fifteenth century following the end of the Visconti male line thanks to two assets: Francesco's condescending superiority in the military service of the Viscontis as a *condottiere* and his marriage to the last member of their family line. Although the rule of the Sforza family lasted (until the exile of Ludovico il Moro) for almost half a century, it was enough for the authority acquired and maintained by Francesco Sforza in the early sixteenth century to be considered relatively permanent.³⁹

The second example, discussed in more detail here, is Cesare Borgia (1476–1507). The son of Pope Alexander VI, who owed his power in Romagna to both the support of his father and the skilful use of French military intervention. His rule lasted for a short time and ended shortly after Alexander VI's death. This also brought an end to the Principality of Romagna (1499–1503), which he had created, and which had a chance at consolidating central Italy, then split into a number of small states.⁴⁰

36 *The Prince*, 85. The text of the Italian original speaks quite bluntly about of the blows that should be meted out to the woman Fortuna: '*perchè la Fortuna è donna; ed è necessario, volendola tener sotto, batterla, ed urtarla*', *De Principatibus*, 306.

37 On the various oppositions: *virtù – fortuna, occasione, necessita* in *The Prince* and that between the collective *virtù* of society and its *corruzione*, manifested mainly by civic idleness (*ozio*) in *Discourses on Livy*, see H. Münkler, *Machiavelli. Die Begründung...*, 316 ff.

38 Machiavelli's appreciation of Francesco Sforza's character is underlined by A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 62 ff. He points out that in Chapter VII itself Sforza is described as a ruler who gained and maintained power solely thanks to '*una grande sua virtù*,' that is, unlike Cesare Borgia, who was favoured by Fortuna.

39 See the extensive commentary in *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 177–178.

40 Having resigned from the rank of Bishop of Valencia in 1492, Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI, was given the title of Duke of Valentinois in 1498 by King Louis XII of France. As a French ally, from 1499 onwards he tried to create the Duchy of Romagna by eliminating the minor powers in central Italy. The title of Duke of Romagna was

The initial stage of the young Borgia's far-reaching plans was to eliminate the aristocratic Orsini and Colonna families that dominated Romagna, as well as the minor barons and *condottieri's* dominions within the Papal States.⁴¹ Machiavelli characterizes them as being 'more disposed to despoil their subjects than to rule them properly, thus being a source of disorder rather than of order; consequently, that region [i.e., Romagna – I.K.] was full of thefts, quarrels and outrages of every kind.'⁴² Even to a relatively unengaged contemporary Italian reader this description must have brought to mind the model features of a tyrant (robbing subjects, sowing discord among them, an inability to ensure peace). In general, the entire extensive passage characterizing Cesare Borgia's politics signals author's reluctance to the nobility: it speaks about the destruction of the power of the Orsinis and Colonnas. As the main political measure of Borgia, the author mentions with a note of praise a plan 'to wipe out the families of the rulers,' confiscating their property and regaining – by giving away money, honours and offices – their previous clientele, i.e. the Romagnian nobility.⁴³

It should be added that Machiavelli was an eyewitness to a significant number of the events described. Almost ten years before writing *The Prince*, he had sketched them out in his diplomatic reports with even greater accuracy. In both

ultimately bestowed on him in 1500 by Alexander VI, after whose death his duchy broke up and his political position weakened to such an extent that after the election of Cardinal Della Rovere, who was hostile to him. He became Pope as Julius II in the autumn of 1503, and then ordered Borgia's arrest. After escaping to Naples, Borgia found himself in Spanish hands. He was imprisoned by order of Ferdinand Aragon in 1504 and sent as a prisoner to Spain, where he spent two years. In 1506, he escaped to the court of his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, in whose service he died during the siege of Lerin in 1507. In addition to the murders described in *The Prince*, he was also suspected of killing his brother Giovanni, Duke of Gandia (1497) and the Duke of Bisceglia, the third husband of his sister, Lucrezia Borgia. Thus, Machiavelli, in stating in one breath that Cesare's rule was brought to an end by his father's death and himself being 'critically ill,' makes a mental shortcut that may mislead the reader; *The Prince*, 27.

41 A full list of Cesare Borgia's opponents in Romagna and in Urbino (Guidobaldo Montefeltri), Perugia (Gian Paolo Baglioni) and Siena (Pandolfo Petrucci), which he between 1501 and 1503, is given in *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 218–219.

42 *The Prince*, 25–26.

43 *Ibid.*, 27, Machiavelli twice mentions the extermination and disinheritation of noble families by Cesare Borgia: 'For he had killed as many of the old dispossessed rulers as disinherited noble rulers as he was able, and very few escaped from him. He had won over the Roman nobles, and most of the cardinals.'

cases, there is a similar aversion to Romagnian tyrannical magnates and an undisguised admiration for the young Borgia.⁴⁴

In some passages in *The Prince*, he is even attributed with the features that an ideal ruler should possess, according to the common wisdom of the time. Cesare Borgia could win the favour of his subjects and ensure their obedience to authority by providing for peace and prosperity, as well as by running an 'efficient government'.⁴⁵ He was thus able to achieve the main goals that every Christian prince described in medieval and renaissance 'mirrors for princes' (*specula principis*) should pursue. Soon, however, there is a dissonance between the ideal world of politics presented in *specula* and Machiavelli's realistic narrative. The vehicle by which order and peace were introduced was Remiro de Orco. Originally from Lorraine, and thus a non-Italian Other, he was famous for ruling with an 'iron hand,' and was appointed by Borgia to be the governor of Romagna (1501–1502). His severity and cruelty quickly aroused the discontent of his subjects, so he was soon executed by order of Borgia (December 1502), and his chopped-up corpse put on public display next to an executioner's chopping block and a blood-stained sword.⁴⁶ In this way, says the author of *Il Principe* apologetically, the Duke of Romagna tried to 'dispel this ill-feeling and win everyone

44 The text of this report and several letters are found in the supplementary chapter 'Machiavelli the Working Diplomat' in: Machiavelli, *The Prince (Norton Critical Editions)*, 2nd. ed., trans. R. M. Adams, Norton 1992. [hereinafter 'Machiavelli the Working Diplomat']. Particularly important for analysis of the Machiavelli's assessment of Cesare Borgia and his political opponents are letters from 1502–1503, written by Machiavelli as accounts for the Signoria of his diplomatic journeys and official meetings with Duke Valentino. In the letter of 7 October 1502 in: *ibid.*, 79–83, the Romagnian Orsini and Vitelli families are depicted as looting the cities surrounding Florence and Pistoia. Their activities are stopped by Borgia. In his letter of 1 January 1503, *ibid.*, 86–88, Machiavelli reports on the imprisonment of the Orsinis and their ally Oliverotto da Fermo in Senigallia by Cesare, expressing a noticeable fondness for the latter. However, in the work 'Description of the Methods Adopted by the Duke Valentino when Murdering Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, the Signor Pagolo, and the Duke di Gravina Orsini' in: his, *The Prince – Special Edition with Machiavelli's Description of the Methods of Murder Adopted by Duke Valentino & the Life of Castruccio Castracani*. Trans. W.K. Marriott, Arc Manor, 2007, 81–86, written in early 1503, the word 'tyrant' is used (rather neutral) in relation to some other allies of the Orsinis: Giovanni Bentivoglio, the tyrant of Bologna, and Gian Paolo Baglioni, the tyrant of Perugia.

45 *The Prince*, 25–26.

46 On the 'tyrannical' conduct and abuses of Remiro d'Orco, see the commentary in *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 222.

over to him, he wanted to show that if any cruel deeds had been committed they were attributable to the harshness of the governor.⁴⁷ The subject of praise is thus a coldly calculated political murder, a premeditated action aimed at achieving a specific goal.

After strengthening his position in Romagna, Cesare Borgia assumed power in the Duchy of Urbino, and then began the next stage in his expansion: the military conquest of Lucca and Siena. His further plans, which included annexing Florence and establishing his domination throughout central Italy, were thwarted by the death of his father, Pope Alexander VI (1503), his own ill health, and the presence of rival Spanish and French armies.⁴⁸ It seems that this time Fortuna herself had turned against him – and his genius (*virtù*).

On the pages of *The Prince*, Machiavelli shows the reader several times the actions of Cesare Borgia as an example for every brave and wise (*virtuoso*) man and politician to follow. 'Having reviewed all the actions of the duke, then, I would not wish to criticise him; rather, he seems to me worthy to be held up as a model, as I have done, for all those who have risen to power through favor or luck, or through the arms of others.'⁴⁹ We find similar expressions of praise in his earlier writings. In the previously-mentioned reports from the autumn of 1502 and early the following year, in which Machiavelli reported to the Signoria on his diplomatic missions to Borgia,⁵⁰ the latter was praised with words full of admiration. In his letter of October 1502, Machiavelli issued an impassioned apology for Cesare as a defender of the 'people' against the plundering of the Orsini.⁵¹ In another letter, from January 1503, he confessed that during a conversation with Cesare, 'I was almost enchanted by him.'⁵² Of particularly importance here is a description passage in 'A Description of the Methods Adopted by the Duke Valentino when Murdering Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, the Signor Pagolo, and the Duke di Gravina Orsini.'⁵³ This text was probably written

47 *The Prince*, 26.

48 *Ibid.*, 27–28.

49 *Ibid.*, 28. Machiavelli's only charge against Cesare Borgia is the help he provided to Cardinal della Rovere, who was hostile towards the Borgias, in his election as Pope.

50 On Machiavelli's personal contacts with Cesare Borgia during diplomatic missions and his opinions on him, see Extensively in the following paragraphs: 47–56.

51 'Machiavelli the Working Diplomat', 79–83, here too, strongly encourages the Signoria to sign a military alliance with Cesare Borgia.

52 *Ibid.*, 86–88.

53 Machiavelli, 'A Description of the Methods Adopted by the Duke Valentino when Murdering Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, the Signor Pagolo, and the Duke di Gravina Orsini' in: his, *The Prince – Special Edition with Machiavelli's Description of*

in January 1503 in Florence, just after Machiavelli's return from Cesare Borgia's military camp. It is a kind of treatise on the art of governing, in which the figure of the Romagnian ruler has clearly been idealized, and can be seen as presaging *Il Principe*. Some details have been altered here in comparison with Machiavelli's earlier written correspondence, but there is a clear parallel in the laudatory tone used in his assessment of the young Borgia:

[...] the duke resolved at once to see if he could not close the trouble with offers of reconciliation, and being a most perfect dissembler he did not fail in any practices to make the insurgents understand that he wished every man who had acquired anything to keep it, as it was enough for him to have the title of prince, whilst others might have the principality.⁵⁴

These words are vividly reminiscent of the famous passage from Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*, in which Machiavelli praises the art of deception in politics.⁵⁵ The search for a hidden – or even opposite – meaning in the above-mentioned correspondence seems unfounded.⁵⁶

Considering Machiavelli's oeuvre as a whole, only one section of his rhymed chronicle *Decennale Primo* (1504), describing developments since the French invasion of Italy in 1494,⁵⁷ offers such a critical view. In *Decennale*, Machiavelli portrays Cesare Borgia as a basilisk who 'gently whistles' in order to lure his victims into his cave. However, this allegory should be viewed within the context of the literary method adopted in this work. For it hinges upon a kind of animal rebus: the roosters are the French, the calf is Vitelli, the bear is Orsini, and the snake is Milan.⁵⁸ This is the only passage in the Florentine's work that contains

the Methods of Murder Adopted by Duke Valentino & the Life of Castruccio Castracani, trans. W.K. Marriott, Arc Manor, 2007, 81–86.

54 Ibid. In the context of the successful negotiations, Cesare Borgia undertook with his enemies in order to prevent a complete disaster, after the defeat of his troops at the hands of Vitelli and Orsini.

55 See below for more details.

56 This is the direction taken by D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmie*, 83–101; he tries to interpret the praise for Cesare Borgia expressed in Machiavelli's official diplomatic correspondence as a kind of camouflage, due to the Florentine diplomat's fear of his letters being intercepted and even of his being poisoned by Borgia.

57 For more on the characteristics of this work, which formally imitates Dante's *Divine Comedy*, see: A. Buck *Machiavelli*, 114 ff.

58 D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 204 ff.; Sternberger recalls that Pasquale Villari, in the classic biography of Machiavelli (English translation: *The Life and Times of Machiavelli*, London 1899), treated this as a voice of criticism against Cesare Borgia. The Basilisk is a symbol of a tyrant that often appeared in the literature of the time (for

critical commentary about Cesare Borgia, whose career in 1504 had just recently come to an end. In turn, when *Il Principe* was written almost ten years later, an apologetic tone clearly dominated. None of the contemporary figures mentioned here appear on the pages of *The Prince* as often as Cesare Borgia. Furthermore, none of the heroes of the ancient world are cited here as often,⁵⁹ even though some possessed qualities that were highly praised by Machiavelli.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, there is a historiographical debate among historians about whether Cesare Borgia was truly the 'real' protagonist of Niccolò Machiavelli's most famous work – i.e. the embodiment of the genius and virtues of *il principe nuovo*. Could it be true that, despite Borgia's failure to carry out his plans, Machiavelli (himself a supporter of the idea of creating a national army) paid tribute to him as one who recognized that mercenary troops were generally 'dangerously disloyal'⁶¹ and who began the work of uniting Italy, albeit by means of underhanded politics, atrocities and the murder of his opponents? In the dispute among historians, national traditions and even ideology are both at times visible elements of the debate.

This debate on the 'authenticity of the depicted figure or the degree of Machiavelli's 'idealization' of Cesare Borgia has been ongoing since the nineteenth

more see Part One, Chapter II). Sternberger, in turn, points to the ambiguities and rebuses contained in the work. See also his, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 114–118.

59 Including the ten Roman emperors mentioned in *The Prince*; cf. D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 198.

60 See M. Weickert's excellent literary analysis of *Il Principe* in *Die Literarische Form von Machiavellis 'Principe.' Eine Morphologische Untersuchung*, Würzburg 1936, 101 ff. In it, he analyses Machiavelli's list of Roman emperors in *The Prince*, especially Chapter XIX, who could have been used by him as a prototype of the 'new prince.' Among the emperors mentioned (from Marcus Aurelius to Maximinus Thrax), predominant are emperor-warriors, who (including Pertinax, Caracalla and Heliogabal) were elevated to the throne by their soldiers, and in this sense resemble the Italian *condottiere* – the 'new prince.' As characterized by Machiavelli, such rulers can be divided into two groups: 1) those who have distinguished themselves in their lives by their moderation, graciousness and justice, such as Marcus Aurelius and Pertinax; 2) those who ruled in a 'cruel and rapacious' manner (*crudellissimi e rapacissimi*), such as Commodus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Maximinus. The latter group most closely resembles the 'new prince.' However, their reigns all ended in collapse. The exception was Severus, who, according to Machiavelli, could perfectly take the form of a fox or a lion, just like the ideal *il principe nuovo* described in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*. Weickert thus states: 'Severus war Il Principe unter den Römischen Kaisern.'

61 Q. Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*, 38.

century.⁶² In twentieth-century historiography, eminent Italian experts in the history of Florentine thought (Federico Chabod, Gennaro Sasso) expressed the opinion that Borgia's character traits provided the model for those of the *principe nuovo*.⁶³ In turn, in the biography of Niccolò Machiavelli published by the Swiss sociologist Rene König and banned by Nazi censors at the beginning of the Second World War,⁶⁴ the 'literary' character of the silhouette of Borgia as a 'romantic dreamer' was emphasized, while the idea of unifying Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century was called '*eine rhetorische Phantasie*,'⁶⁵ or even a utopia.⁶⁶

This thesis stands in contradiction not only with the generally accepted opinion since the nineteenth century about Machiavelli's political realism, but also with discourse, particularly in nineteenth-century German political philosophy, on *The Prince* as the archetype for the concept of *Machtstaat*. The works of Friedrich Meinecke are representative of such a view.⁶⁷ In an essay written in 1923, he put

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- 62 The nineteenth-century discussion on this subject is summarized in an extensive editorial commentary in *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 214–217, which concludes: 'The true, historical Cesare Borgia is also the real 'hero' of *The Prince*'; *ibid.*, 216.
- 63 F. Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*. Chabod further states that events in Italy in the years following 1512 caused Machiavelli to be disappointed with his vision of *il principe nuovo* as the unifier, saviour and liberator of Italy from the yoke of the 'barbarians of the north'; *ibid.* 106–108; cf. also G. Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Geschichte seines politischen Lebens*, Stuttgart 1965, 152–155.
- 64 R. König, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Zur Krisenanalyse einer Zeitenwende*, München–Wien, 1979 (1941). This work was written between March and June 1940. For its author, the similarity between contemporary events and the Sack of Rome in 1527 was striking (the book was completed on May 6, the anniversary of the event). Immediately after its publication, the book was banned in Nazi Germany.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 331 ff.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 164 ff., 330; König draws attention to Machiavelli's fascination with Cesare Borgia and to the rhetorical means (including deliberate exaggeration) he uses to create a laudable portrait of Borgia. Although Borgia's reign lasted only about five years, and the fact that he was of Spanish origin, Machiavelli chose him as a model for the future saviour prince and unifier of Italy. To contemporary readers, the dream of and call for the unification of Italy expressed in the last sentences of *The Prince* smelled of romantic day-dreaming and a lack of political realism. According to König, at times when Machiavelli was more realistic, and did not take the idea of a united Italy very seriously. Hence another paradox: '*In der Geschichte seines Ruhmes ist Machiavelli zwar mehr und mehr der politische Realist schlechthin geworden; die Analyse seines Werkens erweist ihn dagegen als einen romantischer Träumer*'; *ibid.*, 328.
- 67 F. Meinecke, *Der Fürst und kleinere Schriften*, first published in 1923. I made use of the following volume: his, *Niccolò Machiavelli in: Brandenburg. Preußen, Deutschland*.

forward the thesis that the conduct of Cesare Borgia offer a practical model of the 'necessary methods of power politics in his time' (*Machtpolitik*); however, the true, ideal type of 'new prince' is embodied in Chapter VI: in the figures of Moses, Theseus, Romulus and Cyrus, which are by no means to be treated only as 'rhetorical tokens' but as the 'true and proper heroes' of *Il Principe*. Meinecke referred to them as 'the great founders of states, national heroes, and liberators of the people' ('*je großen Staatengründer, Nationalhelden und Volksbefreier*'),⁶⁸ which bears witness to the political phraseology that was fashionable in his era.

The debate over whether Cesare Borgia is the protagonist of *Il Principe* and the embodiment of the Machiavellian *principe nuovo*⁶⁹ indicates two possibilities of interpretation, not only of Borgia's character but also of the book itself. On the one hand, *The Prince* can be seen as an example of political writing, a treatise whose author makes a realistic assessment of the contemporary political situation of the Italian states;⁷⁰ on the other, it can also be read as a literary work permeated with rhetorical phrases, which should perhaps be interpreted as the author's escape from a reality plagued by Italy's political crisis into a literary and political landscape clearly marked as an aesthetic utopia.⁷¹ Marianne Weickert, the author of one of the most detailed morphological literary analyses of *The Prince*, suggested that this work – initially planned and begun as a political treatise written according to the rules of rhetoric – begins in Chapter VII, devoted to the young Borgia, to slowly take on the shape of a literary work.⁷² What gives

Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte und Politik, ed. E. Kessel, Stuttgart 1979, 7–37 and his, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, Part One, Chapter 1.

- 68 All quotations cited here are from: his, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 131 ff. In an essay written during the interwar period another eminent German scholar, Hans Freyer, agreed with the view that Cesare Borgia is a positive hero in certain situations; see H. Freyer, *Machiavelli...*, 55 ff., 79 ff.
- 69 A concise summary of the discussion on this subject up until the 1980s is found in A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 66 ff.; Buck is personally inclined to support the views of F. Chabod.
- 70 F. Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, 12 ff., 24, 77, argued for seeing *The Prince* as a political treatise rather than a literary work. In his opinion, *Il Principe* formally resembles a memorandum on state governance that Machiavelli wrote for the Medici a short time later entitled *Discorso sul riformare lo stato do Firenze*.
- 71 R. König, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 20 ff.; see also Part One, Chapter II.
- 72 M. Weickert, *Die Literarische Form von Machiavellis 'Principe'. Eine Morphologische Untersuchung*, Würzburg 1936, 27 ff., 94 ff., 100, 108 ff., upon which König based his own thesis. While noting that Machiavelli himself called his work a treatise twice (*trattato dei principati, trattato del principe*), Weickert asks whether *the Prince* should be seen as a political treaty or a literary work. By analysing the construction and form

the treatise its literary character is the motif of the struggle with Fortuna of an individual endowed with extraordinary courage (*virtù*).⁷³ It should also be noted that the word *virtù* is most often used in Chapters VI, VII and VIII.⁷⁴

Perhaps, we are thus dealing with a literary work in which – as the German historian Dirk Hoeges described the problem – the real *principe nuovo* does not exist, and Cesare Borgia has simply turned out to have been miscast in this role, which really belongs to Moses – a cult figure in the art and culture of the Italian and European Renaissance.⁷⁵ Regardless of which side contemporary historians take, the debate itself shows how important the construction of the work and narrative form are for properly reading Machiavelli's work – regardless of whether it is viewed as more practical and political or more literary in nature.

of the work, Weickert concludes that in Chapter VII we find the first signs of a change in the literary genre of the work, though the form of the work is that of a political treaty up through Chapter XIV. In Chapter XV, the dominant form is that of a literary work.

73 On the various oppositions: *virtu – fortune, occasione, necessita* in the *Prince* and the collective *virtu* of society – *corruzione*, manifested mainly by the human *ozio* – civic idleness in *Discourses on Livy*, see H. Münkler, *Machiavelli. Die Begründung...*, 316 ff.

74 J.H. Hexter, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation. More, Machiavelli, and Seyssel*, New York 1973, Chapter IV: 'The Predatory and the Utopian Vision: Machiavelli and More. The Loom of Language and the Fabric of Imperatives: The Case of *Il Principe* and *Utopia*,' 188. Hexter points out that out of 70 cases of this word, 45 occur in less than 1/4 of the chapters; it most often appears in Chapters IV and VI–VIII (as many as 2/5 of all cases of the use of the word), that is, in 1/6 of the overall part devoted to the new principalities (in order to maintain his new power, a ruler needs sufficient military strength and *virtù*, or additionally the favour of Fortune), then in XII and XIII, and finally in Chapter XVI, although in the latter half it refers not to the ruler himself, but to the bravery of the soldiers who were to liberate Italy. In Chapters XII and XIII, which deal with the conduct of war, *virtù* mainly concerns military and commanding virtues.

75 Dirk Hoeges' interpretation is, in a sense, a reconciliation of two interpretations: König's and Meinecke's. This author places a clear emphasis on the *Prince's* aesthetic, literary and rhetorical qualities, while at the same time interpreting Borgias as a purely rhetorical figure. Hoeges concludes that 'Der Fürst existiert nicht,' 171 ff. In his opinion, the true hero and antithesis of Savonarola, who is despised by Machiavelli, is Moses, a cult figure of the Renaissance, known both as the theme of works by the greatest artists (Michelangelo, Botticelli) and writers (Pico della Mirandola, Ficino) of the time and as a figure appearing in Florentine carnival processions surrounded by a group of Israelite princes; see D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmeichelei*, 158–166.

***Il Principe Nuovo* and Negative Models: The Rhetoric and Dialectics of Machiavelli's Arguments**

Let us move on to the characteristics of the last type of 'new princes,' to whom Machiavelli dedicates all of Chapter VIII: 'Those Who Become Rulers through Crime.' This chapter is one of the keys to a proper reading of Machiavelli's articulation of the concept of 'new' princely power. There are only two, somewhat antithetical examples provided here. The first, from the ancient world, is Agathocles (the Sicilian), a military commander who became the tyrant of Syracuse (317–289 BCE) and later self-styled king of Sicily (since 304 BCE).⁷⁶ The second, contemporary, is Oliverotto da Fermo, one of the minor *condottiere* tyrants who temporarily gained power over his native Fermo in the Papal States until, as an ally of the Orsini family, he was killed by Cesare Borgia himself. The twin protagonists of Chapter VIII achieved power through their crimes, but while Agathokles succeeded in retaining power – and therefore fulfilled one of Machiavelli most important requirement of the 'new prince' – Oliverotto da Fermo quickly lost his.

Agathocles was a man of plebeian origin, though as the son of a goldsmith, he hailed from a relatively wealthy family. He is described by Machiavelli, however, as a potter's son, a man 'of the lowest and most abject origins' and one who led 'a dissolute life.' While leading his troop on Syracuse, on his orders 'his soldiers killed all the senators and the richest men of the city.'⁷⁷ The elimination of the opposition made it possible for him to secure a lease on power and victory in his defensive war against Carthage. The second protagonist, Oliverotto da Fermo, a contemporary of Borgia and Machiavelli, was an orphan sent by his uncle to fight under a *condottiere* to gain experience outside his country's borders. He eventually returned to his home town at the head of a military force and used subterfuge to murder – during a specially arranged lavish feast – his uncle, Giovanni Fogliani, who then ruled the town, along with Fermo's most prominent citizens. He imprisoned members of the magistrate and forced them to recognize his rule in Fermo. Having murdered all potential opposition, he confidently maintained his rule for the next year, strengthening it with 'new civil and military institutions.' He was on as good a path to strengthening his power, but his rule soon began to threaten his neighbours. He was eventually

76 The example of Agathocles of Syracuse also appears frequently in other writings by Machiavelli; see commentary on the ancient authors from whom he drew his knowledge of Agathocles in: *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 231–233.

77 *The Prince*, 29–30.

lured by Cesare Borgia into an ambush and killed, along with Orsini and the *condottiere* Vitellozzo Vitelli, under whom he had served and who is described as ‘his former mentor in prowess and villainy,’⁷⁸ Machiavelli had reported on these events in more detail ten years earlier in his diplomatic correspondence, where he expressed his sympathy for Borgia.⁷⁹

What was Machiavelli’s attitude towards both of these criminal rulers described in *The Prince*? Did he believe that they were completely lacking in political virtues? In order to decipher fully the paradoxes of Machiavelli’s doctrine, we should attempt to trace the narrative line in this part of his book. Chapter VIII provides a good illustration here. The author begins it with a description of Agathocles’ actions, stating that ‘his evil deeds were combined with such energy of mind and body’⁸⁰ that he rose from a simple soldier to commander of the Syracusean forces. He adds that Agathocles managed to keep his place on the throne thanks to ‘many courageous and dangerous courses of action.’⁸¹ He similarly characterized Oliverotto da Fermo during his service to the *condottieri* as a man who was ‘clever, and strong in body and spirit.’⁸² Thus, *il principe nuovo* who gains power through crime may also have certain characteristics representing *virtù*. But shortly after this, in a description of Agathocles, Machiavelli states that, while ‘it cannot be called virtue to kill one’s fellow-citizens, to betray one’s friends, to be treacherous, merciless and irreligious; power may be gained by acting in such ways, but not glory,’ and concludes that, ‘his appallingly cruel and inhumane conduct, and countless wicked deeds, preclude his being numbered among the finest men,’ and his achievements cannot be attributed to virtue (*virtù*).⁸³ This second statement stands *in contradiction* to the first, representing its *antithesis*.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, a dialectical synthesis of the first two statements is offered in response to a doubt posed as a rhetorical question: ‘It

78 *Ibid.*, 32.

79 ‘Machiavelli the Working Diplomat,’ 79–83, reporting on the imprisonment of Oliverotto da Fermo and the Orsini in Sinigalla by Cesare Borgia, expressing apparent sympathy for the latter, who ‘had Vitellozzo and Oliverotto da Fermo put to death,’ *ibid.*, 87. Cf. also the description of the method used by Duke Valentino to murder Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, Signor Pagolo, and Orsini, the Duke di Gravina; Machiavelli, ‘A Description,’ 81–86.

80 *The Prince*, 30.

81 *Ibid.*, 30.

82 *Ibid.*, 31.

83 *Ibid.*, 30–31.

may well be wondered how it could happen that Agathocles, and others like him, after committing countless treacherous and cruel deeds, could live securely in their own countries for a long time’ and reign without fear of his subjects conspiring against him, while others quickly lost power because of the atrocities they committed.⁸⁴ The response to this question is a *two-part synthetic conclusion* comprised of: 1) a *morally relativizing statement*, and 2) a *practical recommendation* (amoral, in the spirit of so-called ‘political realism’):

I believe that this depends upon whether *cruel deeds are committed well or badly*.⁸⁵ *They may be called well committed (if one may use the word ‘well’ of that which is evil) when they are all committed at once, because they are necessary for establishing one’s power, and are not afterwards persisted in, but changed for measures as beneficial as possible to one’s subjects. Badly committed are those that at first are few in number, but increase with time rather than diminish.* Those who follow the first method can in some measure remedy their standing both with God and with men, as Agathocles did. Those who follow the second cannot possibly maintain their power.

Hence, it should be noted that *a conqueror, after seizing power, must decide about all the injuries he needs to commit, and do all of them at once, so as not to have to inflict punishments every day [...]. For injuries should be done all together so that, because they are tasted less, they will cause less resentment; benefits should be given out one by one, so that they will be savoured more.* [emphasis mine – I.K.]⁸⁶

This *classic triadically structured argument, comprised of a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (conclusion or maxim)*, explains well the sense behind many theses contained in *Il Principe* that are seemingly mutually exclusive. And it is in this rhetorical-dialectic construction that we should look for a solution to the puzzle of Machiavelli’s paradoxical doctrine – or rather, to but one of the many paradoxes surrounding his teachings on the arcana of governing.

In one of the most detailed analyses of this work, Sydney Anglo challenged the prevailing opinion that Machiavelli’s writing style was among the greatest in Italian prose literature. Anglo explicitly accused him of preferring extravagant phrases that the reader should treat *cum grano salis*, an opinion expressed earlier by Francesco Guicciardini, an eminent sixteenth-century historian of the

84 *Ibid.*, 32.

85 Burd notes that the translation as ‘cruelty’ of the original word *crudelita* is ‘perhaps somewhat too strong for modern nerves: if we substitute for ‘cruelty’ some such word as ‘severity’ we shall be nearer the modern equivalent of Machiavelli thought’; *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 235–236.

86 *The Prince*, 33.

Italian Renaissance and a personal friend of Machiavelli.⁸⁷ The technique used by Machiavelli based on disjunctive statements to posit a strong antithesis, Anglo suggests, is not associated with classical logic, rhetoric or syllogisms. In fact, it introduces ‘a stylistic mannerism which degenerates into a grave weakness; for it is used as the basis of merely assertive, not logically structured, arguments.’⁸⁸ Federico Chabod is equally critical of Machiavelli’s narrative technique, which he describes as ‘dilemmatic,’ i.e. his

invariably putting forward the two extreme and antithetical solutions, disregarding half-measures and compromise solutions and employing a disjunctive style: for example, the people of Florence think they can no longer hope for anything ‘either because of the malignancy of their fate *or* because they have so many enemies,’ while the French only respect ‘either those who are strongly armed *or* those who are ready to give.’ This method constantly recurs in Machiavelli’s prose.⁸⁹

Machiavelli likewise makes numerous assertions aimed at grabbing the reader’s attention by means of their emotional and dramatic effect, means seemingly better suited to a literary work intended to arouse aesthetic feelings than to a work of serious political analysis.⁹⁰

Sydney Anglo’s assessment itself, however, seems somewhat overly assertive. As a whole, it falls within the accepted canon of interpretation of *The Prince*’s narrative method as ‘rhetorical-dialectic.’ The disconnect between the claims, the antithetical style of argumentation, and the resulting ‘dialectic tensions’ are mentioned by many historians as features typical of this work – whether they treat it more as a literary text or political work.⁹¹ In recent years, historians have expressed a strong tendency to interpret *Il Principe* in terms of its relation to the rhetorical traditions of the Renaissance.⁹²

87 S. Anglo, *Machiavelli. A Dissection*, London 1969, Chapter VIII: ‘Method,’ 238–269. A friend of Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini, warned that the reader should not treat as an absolute fact all of Machiavelli’s statements, as the author was said to have been inclined to extreme opinions and actions; *ibid.*, 242.

88 *Ibid.*, 244.

89 F. Chabod, ‘Machiavelli’s Method and Style,’ in: *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, 127. This ‘dilemmatic’ method, based on antitheses, returns frequently in other prose works by Machiavelli.

90 S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 246 ff., 253.

91 Among the views expressed by previously cited experts on Machiavelli, let us note in particular: F. Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, 133; G. Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 169; cf. also. R. König, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 268, 279, 281.

92 D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmie*, 25 ff.; S. de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*, 295–306.

Summing up the discussion on this topic, Wolfgang Kersting has noted that Machiavelli's narrative technique is deeply rooted in the humanist tradition.⁹³ It makes use of the inductive method and rhetoric of scientist discourse, but applies it towards practical goals, referencing historical examples as support.⁹⁴ In what is probably one of the most in-depth study ever devoted to Machiavelli's rhetorical and narrative techniques, Marianne Weickert performed a detailed dissection of his '*dialektisch-rhetorikal Methode*.' It is based on a three-stage schema: 1) *an introduction* – often containing two opposing possible courses of action, frequently antithetical in nature, along with a third one that functions as a kind of compromise solution, a middle road; 2) *a taking of evidence* – by presenting, as a rule, three examples, historical or contemporary, illustrating the effects of each of the possible actions. At the same time, Machiavelli tends to use two methods of reasoning: inductive (more modern, characteristic of the Renaissance⁹⁵) – i.e., moving from an example to a general conclusion – and deductive (more medieval and scholastic) – moving from a thesis to a confirmatory example; 3) *a concluding section*, in which a conclusion is drawn, often in the form of a maxim encouraging a specific action.⁹⁶

Such a triadic argumentative construction was in line with the recommendations of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and his dialectics, though it also included Machiavelli's own innovations – a kind of perversity expressed in the form of a maxim.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, according to classical criteria, *The Prince* can be described as a

93 In his commentary to *Il Principe*, 282 ff., Burd stresses the inductivity of Machiavelli's method and that of his contemporary Francesco Guicciardini in opposition to the scholastic method of deduction that dominated in medieval treatises on state governance, especially St Thomas Aquinas' *De regimine principum* or Dante's *Monarchia*.

94 W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, München 1988, 50 ff.

95 On the novelty of Machiavelli's inductive narrative technique, cf. also J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 485 ff.

96 M. Weickert, *Die Literarische Form...*, 30 ff.; also W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 50, where the author labels the antinomic structure of Machiavelli's argument '*Entweder-oder-Struktur*' (p. 51). The fact that both of Machiavelli's main political treatises, *Il Principe* and *Discorsi*, are constructed according to a similar inductive narrative scheme – a hypothesis (historical facts 'for' and historical facts 'against') and a thesis (resulting from the comparison of the arguments 'for' and 'against') – is also strongly emphasized by J. Szacki, 'Użytki historii w doktrynie politycznej Machiavellego' in: *Niccolò Machiavelli. Paradoxy losów doktryny*, Warszawa 1973, 145.

97 M. Weickert, *Die Literarische Form...*, 33 ff., draws attention to the practical application by Machiavelli of Aristotle's rhetorical and dialectical methods, in which he stressed that the way in which conclusions are drawn and proven is a dialectical process. In terms of dialectic, Aristotle distinguished two means of argumentation: 1)

‘counselling speech’,⁹⁸ containing maxims and aphorisms which help the ruler make decisions and equip him with historical examples that possess an essential didactic function. These historical and contemporary examples – both positive and negative – were intended to instruct the reader, acting in the role of a ‘teacher of *virtù*.’

Little is known about Niccolò Machiavelli’s education. He clearly had a good understanding of rhetoric as part of an education in the *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric),⁹⁹ most likely supplemented by the readings from his library of his father, Messer Bernardo Machiavelli, a lawyer of limited means, who had a passion for humanist writings.¹⁰⁰ From this perspective, *Il Principe* would fit into the Italian tradition of humanistic rhetoric applied in political tracts but also in and a genre of political treatises¹⁰¹ known as ‘mirrors for princes’ (*specula*

a dialectical method based on induction (proving an argument by giving multiple examples that show something behaves one way and not another) and syllogism (showing that when certain conditions are met, something else always or almost always follows); 2) a rhetorical method based on examples (in the case of induction) and enthymemes (in the case of syllogism). Thus, the method used to prove points in Machiavelli would be, Weickert claims, rhetorical induction, while the method used in weighing matters and drawing inferences would be the rhetorical syllogism, or enthymeme. However, Machiavelli himself seems to focus more on inductive examples. He also does not make use of the classical enthymeme (unlike Aristotle, in whom there are only so-called refutational enthymemes and demonstrative enthymemes). Machiavelli also uses juxtaposition in the historical examples he presents to the reader. Weickert characterizes this procedure as a ‘reversal technique,’ which is not limited to the form of argumentation, but also to the content of the proof itself, in which Machiavelli recommends an appropriate course of action and anticipates the effects of its use: ‘*Hierin vor allem: in dem umgekehrten Verhältnis zwischen Mittel und Ergebnis, in der Umkehrung des Positiven zum Negativen und der Erreichung des Positiven durch das negative, sehen wir Eigentümlichkeit Machiavellis*’; *ibid.*, 62.

98 *Ibid.*, 34.

99 The primary education provided within the framework of the *trivium* is comprehensively reconstructed by D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schmie*, 125–129.

100 C. Atkinson, *Debts, Dowries, Donkeys. The Diary of Niccolò Machiavelli’s Father, Messer Bernardo, in Quattrocento Florence*, Frankfurt/M.–Berlin 2002, based on Niccolò Machiavelli’s father’s diaries, covering the years 1474–1487, Atkinson reconstructs the history of the Machiavelli family and the contents of the family library; see *ibid.*, section titled ‘Machiavelli’s Books,’ 137–141 and the appendix ‘Table of Machiavelli’s Books,’ 167 ff.

101 See L. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 56 f, 62 ff. Strauss argues that *The Prince* only apparently belongs exclusively to the genre of *specula principis* and classifies

principis).¹⁰² These attempts to rhetorically and dialectically decipher *The Prince* seem to both provide an emotional sketch of its author, including his tendency towards negativity and his 'topsy-turvy' interpretation of the world around him, as well as his apparent 'mistakes' and 'bending the facts to suit his views.'¹⁰³

A Reverse Mirror: Construction and Literary Genre of *Il Principe*

Historians have pointed out that *The Prince* was possibly written in two stages, as indicated by a structural division in the work beginning with Chapter XV. According to Friedrich Meinecke, Chapters I–XIV comprise a treatise titled 'On Principalities' (*De principatibus*), mentioned by Machiavelli in a letter dated 10 December 1513, written to his friend Francesco Vettori. The second part, discussing the qualities of an abstract, 'ideal' ruler – and for which the work as a whole was renamed *Il Principe* – would have been written later.¹⁰⁴ Those who disagree with Meinecke have argued in support of the work's structural

Machiavelli's book as 'both a treatise and a tract for the times and has both a traditional exterior and revolutionary interior [...] as a treatise the book sets forth the timeless teaching, i.e. the teaching which is meant to be true for the all times; as a tract for the times, it sets forth what ought to be done.' As a result the new revolutionary teachings are 'carefully protected by a traditional exterior.' As a tract the revolutionary ideas are mostly related to Machiavelli's plans of liberation from the French invasion and unification of Italy.

102 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...*, 27 ff., 33 ff.; Skinner points to the importance and development of rhetoric as a field of teaching at Italian universities since the twelfth century and the formation in the thirteenth century of two literary genres dealing with virtues and republican *libertas*: the chronicle and textbooks for the highest judicial and military magistrate (*podestàs*) in Italian cities. The latter genre also includes Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, although it is a highly sophisticated example. One of the basic problems posed by textbooks for *podestàs* was the question whether a *podestà* should always work justly, when to be more forgiving, when to be more severe. Handbooks for the *podestà* in Italy gave rise to the *specula principis* genre.

103 S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 246 ff., 253.

104 On *The Prince's* literary construction and the author's working method, see: F. Meinecke, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 132 ff., 138; his, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 15, 18, 46 ff.; H. Freyer, *Machiavelli...*, 74 ff., 86; and M. Weickert, *Die Literarische Form...*, 16 ff., in which the author suggests that each of the two parts, i.e. I–XIV and XV–XVI, would consist of five main chapters (for the first part these would be Chapters III–VII, for the second – XV–XIX) as well as supplementary and summary chapters (Chapters XIV and XXVI).

cohesion and internal logic, moving from an analysis of the forms of power in principalities (Chapters I–XIV) to a presentation of an ideal type of ruler (Chapters XV–XXVI).¹⁰⁵ Regardless of the dispute between the supporters of Meinecke and Chabod, there has been a shared consensus on one issue: In terms of its form, the prince is reminiscent of the *specula principis*,¹⁰⁶ a literary genre dating back to Greek Antique and the Middle Ages, which has been known throughout Europe under various titles: *Fürstenspiegel*, *Tractatus de officio regis*, *De regimine principum*, *The Regiment of Princes*. It was likewise popular in Renaissance Italy, especially during the crisis of the urban republican city-states and the establishment of princely rule.¹⁰⁷ However, it should be clearly stressed, the contents of *The Prince* is often completely contradictory to the *specula principis* genre.¹⁰⁸

Machiavelli applies the same rhetorical-dialectic method in the latter part of *The Prince* as he does in Chapters I–XIV, especially in Chapters XV–XIX, where he discusses the positive and negative features of a ruler, referring at least twice to Stoic paraenesis, which he probably knew from Seneca's *De clementia* and Cicero's *De officiis*,¹⁰⁹ as well as the medieval tradition of the *specula principis*. Already in Chapter XIV, he briefly recalls the biography of Cyrus written by Xenophon, regarded as the first 'mirror for princes' in history, and from which were taken a wealth of references and quotations found in medieval and early modern 'mirrors.' He then attributes to Scipio Africanus – who, in his opinion, followed Cyrus – a number of clearly Stoic features: sexual restraint (*castigatas*),

105 R. König, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 264 ff.

106 Cf. F. Gilbert, 'The Humanist Concept of the Prince and the *Prince* of Machiavelli' in: his, *History. Choice and Commitment*, Cambridge (Mass.)–London 1977, 96 ff. Cf. also W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1938, 128, which places Machiavelli's *The Prince* in the Renaissance and humanist, 'individualistic-naturalist' trend of *specula principum*, initiated by the writings of Petrarca and Raúl des Presles. According to Berges, the '*Fürstenspiegel-individualismus*' was characterized by an abandonment of the premise, typical of medieval 'mirrors,' that by educating the prince properly, one can also educate his subjects, focusing exclusively on the ruler himself.

107 Cf. Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...* 113 ff. On the subject of Machiavelli's contemporary treatises supporting the transition to a monarchical form of government in Florence, see also his, *Visions...*, 142 ff.

108 S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 189 ff.

109 For a more detailed analysis of references to stoic values in more recent English publications see: *The Prince*, 'Introduction,' xvi–xxi.

affability (*affabilitas*), humanity (*humanitas*), and generosity (*liberalitas*).¹¹⁰ These appear in every medieval and sixteenth-century *specula principis*. In Christian ethics, these features overlap with and complement the so-called four cardinal virtues (prudence, fortitude, temperance, justice), to which piety (*pietas*) has been added, in a passage that Machiavelli passes over in silence. This positive model of a ruler’s Stoic virtues is contrasted as an antithesis to the equally brief description in Chapter XIX of the negative features of a ruler, i.e. those usually attributed to a tyrant: ‘What will make him despised is being considered inconstant, frivolous, effeminate, pusillanimous and irresolute: a ruler must avoid contempt as if it were a reef.’¹¹¹

In turn, in Chapters XV–XVIII, i.e. between the brief description of the Stoic model for the ideal ruler and his antithesis, Machiavelli’s text is full of ethically relativizing statements and contrasting juxtapositions of monarchical virtues and vices – a procedure typical for the *specula principis*, as well as for contemporary treatises on the state.¹¹² The method of lecturing again clearly takes on an antithetic and dialectic form. One ruler among his subjects is famous for the qualities listed in column A, the other for those in column B:

A	B
free giver	rapacious
merciful	cruel
loyal	treacherous
courageous	cowardly
indomitable, spirited	effeminate, weak
affable	haughty
moderate	lascivious
upright	cunning
easy-going	inflexible
serious	frivolous
devout	unbelieving ¹¹³

110 *The Prince*, 52.

111 *Ibid.*, 62.

112 For more, see, Part One, Chapter II, on Erasmus, and Part Two, Chapter III.

113 *The Prince*, 53–54.

Finally, there is a statement that synthesizes and ethically relativizes Columns A and B: it would be good if rulers possessed only virtues, but human nature, about which Machiavelli was sceptical, made this impossible. Therefore, a ruler – guided by reason – should seek to avoid the infamy that accompanies these vices, though they are sometimes necessary and even essential for maintaining power. At the very end, Machiavelli concludes (realistically and amorally) that ‘some things that seem virtuous may result in one’s ruin, whereas doing other things that seem vicious may strengthen one’s position and cause one to flourish.’¹¹⁴ We should note that this is precisely why reason becomes the most important value for Machiavelli in the world of politics. Like a conductor, he evokes from the orchestra a number of contrasting tones, which then complement one another, forming a symphonic whole. Common sense supplants the virtue of humanity (*humanitas*), which features prominently in most in typical ‘mirrors,’ in line with the motto that a good ruler should also be a good man.¹¹⁵

Chapters XV–XIX can probably be best described as a small ‘anti-mirror’ for princes. The large anti mirror is naturally the treatise as a whole.¹¹⁶ *Il Principe* was most likely perceived by many of Machiavelli’s contemporaries not so much as a treatise filled with political realism and pragmatism, dealing with different instruments of political manipulation, but as a ‘warped’ mirror for princes, in which the souls and thoughts of princes often take on monstrous forms. Particularly in Chapter XVIII, in which the contrasts and antitheses become particularly sharp, the reflection of this ‘realistically warped’ mirror shows an antinomy hidden inside the ruler – being both human and animal. This is where two of the most famous Machiavellian aphorisms are formulated: Therefore, ‘a ruler must know well how to imitate beasts as well as employing properly human

114 Ibid., 54.

115 W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 88 ff.; cf. also Part One, Chapter II.

116 W. Kersting has summed up discussion on this subject in a similar manner (*Niccolò Machiavelli*, 92 ff.), challenging the opinions of Allan Gilbert, who tried to interpret *The Prince* as a work typical of the *De regimina principis* genre. In Kersting’s opinion, although formally the tone of the work shows a species-related relationship with the *specula principum*, in reality the opposite is true: *Il Principe* is anything but a typical ‘mirror for princes.’ It is rather ‘ein Fürstenzerr-spiegel, der im altvertrauten Genrerahmen das edle Herrscheranlitz zur machtpolitischen Fratze eines Tiermenschen verzieht’; *ibid.*, 93. This view is shared by D. Sternberger, ‘Drei Wurzeln der Politik’, 163, who claimed, referring to the opinion of Felix Gilbert, that Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* with the conscious aim of discrediting the typical catalogue of princely virtues promoted in *specula principum*; see also *ibid.*, vol. II, 2, 135.

means,¹¹⁷ and also: ‘Since a ruler, then, must know how to act like a beast, he should imitate both the fox and the lion, for the lion is liable to be trapped, whereas the fox cannot ward off wolves.’¹¹⁸ The image of the ruler as a man-beast should not come as a surprise, as Machiavelli reminds us, since the educator of Achilles and many Greek princes was the centaur Chiron – who was half man, half beast.

Metaphors, by means of which both Ancient and Renaissance authors inscribed animals with human qualities, was a common technique – in writing and in general – for interpreting the world pictorially. In this fragment, however, Niccolò Machiavelli performs a peculiar ‘reversal’ of the traits attributed thus far to animals and the vices ascribed to rulers. In contrast to Cicero’s recommendation that a politician, as a true man (*vir*), should always respect manly virtues (*virtus*) and avoid ‘bestial’ means, whether these be the naked force of a lion or the cunning of a fox, Machiavelli develops a different line of reasoning: he reverses Cicero’s words, and even ‘turns them on their head.’¹¹⁹ It is possible that the author of *The Prince* is making use of a similar maxim – ‘For where the lion’s skin will not reach, it must patch it out with the fox’s.’¹²⁰ – taken from a saying by Lysander, a Spartan admiral from the fifth century BCE, and mentioned by Plutarch in his *Lives*.¹²¹ But Machiavelli invokes the principles of military tactics with a different context in mind, namely – he describes them as the principles

117 *The Prince*, 60.

118 *Ibid.*

119 In the Introduction to the English edition of *The Prince*, Q. Skinner uses the visual term ‘turning Cicero on his head,’ (xxi). Similarly, in Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...*, 144 ff.: Machiavelli ‘ridicules Cicero’s earnest imaginery by adding that those who fare best will be those who learn “to imitate both the fox and the lion.”’ More precisely, the sources and inspirations for the application of the lion and fox metaphor by Machiavelli are discussed by A.L. Burd in his commentary to *Il Principe*, 302 ff., pointing to Cicero, *De officiis* and ‘Lysander’ by Plutarch.

120 Plutarch, ‘Lysander,’ in: *Plutarch’s Lives, Volume I*, trans. J. Dryden, New York, 2001, 588.

121 Cf. M. Stolleis, *Löwe und Fuchs. Eine politische Maxime im Früh-absolutismus in: Staat und Staatsräson in der Frühen Neuzeit. Studien zur Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts*, Frankfurt/M. 1990, 25 ff., which does not preclude Machiavelli from having taken the maxim directly from Plutarch and emphasizes similar features between Lysander and Cesare Borgia, *ibid.*, 27 ff.; on the criticism and popularization of Lysander’s saying about the lion and fox in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see also H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates. Die Begründung der Staatsraison in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 175 ff.

for effectively conducting politics in general. And it is in this sense that Dolf Sternberger treats the Machiavellian metaphor of a politician as half-man, half-beast as an emblem or even the coat of arms of *il principe nuovo*, attaching a motto to it, the content of which radically contradicts earlier theories of public policy and law. As an example of such behaviour, Machiavelli recalls, in Chapter XIX of *The Prince*, the figure of Emperor Septimius Severus, who possessed *virtù* and was thereby able to imitate both the lion and fox.¹²²

However, let us return to the fragments that are more like a *specula principis*. The ideal model of a Christian prince is once again briefly mentioned in Chapter XVIII, but this time it is already reflected in a warped mirror. The issue here is that the 'new' ruler should only feign to be merciful, loyal, humane, devout, and righteous in order to achieve his political goals all the more effectively. In reality, *il principe nuovo* cannot act in accordance with these five cardinal virtues, like honest people do, because 'in order to maintain his power, he is often forced to act treacherously, ruthlessly or inhumanely, and disregard the precepts of religion.' Below Machiavelli notes that he should 'not deviate from what is good if he can manage to do so,' but if such a necessity arises, he should also 'know how to enter upon evil.' It is a ruler's duty then to remain careful so that no words are ever uttered from his mouth that are not 'replete with the five above-named virtues.'¹²³ Further on, he adds: 'And it is most necessary of all to seem devout. In these matters, most men judge more by their eyes than by their hands.'¹²⁴ It seems that here too we find behind this maxim the protagonist of *The Prince*, Cesare Borgia, about whom Machiavelli wrote in one of the previously cited diplomatic accounts from 1503 as 'a most perfect dissembler.' He used a similar phrasing in Chapter XVIII of *Il Principe*, recommending that a ruler in necessary situations 'must be a great feigner and dissembler'¹²⁵ (*gran simulator e dissimulator*)¹²⁶. As

122 *The Prince*, 66–67. Cf. also Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...*, 144 ff. A. Strnad, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Politik als Leidenschaft*, Göttingen–Zürich 1984, 102, points out that also in Machiavelli's poem 'L'Asino d'oro' from 1517, which is a satire on Florentine society, there is a comparison between man and animal, taken from the literature of Antiquity, which had been used earlier by the *quattrocento* humanists in the debate on *dignitas homini*. In this poem, Machiavelli dresses his criticism of human nature in the robe of a man transformed into a pig, who rejects the possibility of returning to human form.

123 *The Prince*, 60–61.

124 *Ibid.*

125 *The Prince*, 60.

126 *De Principatibus*, 265.

an example of a master of political hypocrisy, he mentions here Pope Alexander VI, the father of Cesare Borgia.

Of course, this sort of praise of the art of pretence and creating appearances would have been unacceptable in a medieval *specula principis*. Commenting on Aristotle, St Thomas of Aquinas described such behaviour as being close to tyranny.¹²⁷ Such praise, however, was deeply rooted in the social climate of the Renaissance, in which playing and imitation (*imitatio*) became one of the main cultural patterns of that era. This subject will be explored more extensively in Chapter II.¹²⁸

Let us note, however, that, for Machiavelli, the only justification for the ruler’s descent from a straight path to a ‘crooked’ one is a state of absolute necessity (*necessita*) – a key term in his philosophy.¹²⁹ Here, he seems to be reaching for the medieval principle, supported by the authority of Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas, of *necessitas legem non habet*, which sanctioned, in exceptional situations, departures from or even violations of the law in order to achieve positive goals.¹³⁰ Except that, as Sydney Anglo has pointed out, for the author of *The Prince*, ‘emergency is permanent; choice must always be between evils [...]’. Machiavelli did something else to the old dictum, that “necessity has no law.” For him, necessity had many laws, but they were different from all other rules of conduct.¹³¹

In a similar, morally relativistic spirit, are his reflections in Chapter XVII: ‘Cruelty and Mercifulness; and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved than Feared, or the Contrary.’ Here again, the protagonist and model to follow is Cesare Borgia. Machiavelli admits that people considered him cruel, but then notes that it was his cruelty that helped him restore order in Romagna, ‘unifying it and rendering it peaceful and loyal.’¹³² He also adds the more general remark

127 *Il Principe* (A. L. Burd), 304 ff.

128 See further, Part One, Chapter II.

129 See the extensive analysis of the meaning and contexts of the use of the Italian word *necessità* by the English translator, *The Prince* (Q. Skinner, R. Price), Appendix B, 107–108, which draws attention to two essential meanings of the term: 1) an ‘absolute’ necessity (e.g. a defeat at the hands of a stronger army) and 2) a ‘hypothetical’ or ‘conditional’ necessity (e.g. the fall of a ruler is inevitable if he always wants to act honourably). In *The Prince*, the concept of the latter kind of necessity prevails.

130 Cf. here overlapping interpretations of the medieval roots of the concept of *necessitas* by Machiavelli: see S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 192 ff., 212 ff.

131 S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 205.

132 *The Prince*, 56.

that harshness, especially in *il principe nuovo*, is necessary to keep the people united and obedient. Finally, he asks one of the key questions in the treatise: 'A controversy has arisen about this: whether it is better to be loved than feared, or vice versa. My view is that it is desirable to be both loved and feared; but it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared than loved.'¹³³ The explanation for this lies in human nature itself, as Machiavelli believed 'men in general' to be 'ungrateful, fickle, feigners and dissemblers, avoiders of danger, eager for gain.' People are thus more willing to submit to power out of fear than out of love: 'For love is sustained by a bond of gratitude, which because men are excessively self-interested, is broken whenever they see a chance to benefit themselves. But fear is sustained by a dread of punishment that is always effective.'¹³⁴ In short, cruelty seems a necessary princely attribute, while mercy, in turn, harbours the seeds of one's downfall.¹³⁵ Such formulations were in contradiction to the dominant overtones of the Renaissance *specula principis* – an ideal picture of the Christian ruler and presenting his characteristics *à rebours*.

Il Principe Nuovo: An Unnamed Tyrant

Although the word 'tyrant' does not actually appear in *Il Principe* itself, the apologetic description qualities of *il principe nuovo* leads one to wonder whether the positive hero of Machiavelli's treatise is not a sublimated or modified reflection of a tyrant – based on the image of a tyrant found in works from Antiquity and defined in medieval political treatises. Particularly important here seem be the works of two medieval Italian authors of treatises on tyranny: Edigio Colonna's *De regimine principum* (1285) and Bartolus de Saxoferrato's *De tyranno* (1355).

Although the treatise by Colonna, also known as Giles of Rome and Aegidius Romanus, was written in the thirteenth century, it became exceptionally popular only in the fifteenth century. In terms of its literary form, it belonged to the *specula principis* genre, and was one of its most outstanding medieval examples – a model to which many authors later referred in the Renaissance period.¹³⁶ This

133 Ibid., 57.

134 Ibid., 58.

135 A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 71, points out that apart from the young Borgia, another positive example for Machiavelli is Hannibal, with his 'cruelty' being necessary to maintain military discipline. In turn, the gentleness of the African Scipio was to become the cause of the mutiny of his troops in Spain.

136 Cf. the extensive discussion of its contents in: W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen...*, 211–228; F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter. Studien*

work was part of what was then a fashionable trend in political writing in Italy that could be described as ‘promonarchical.’ Indeed, this trend in literature has come to supersede the previously dominant spirit of the republican ‘civic humanism’ of the Italian city state. Unlike Bartolus de Saxoferrato or Marsilius of Padua, who supported the theory of the ‘popular sovereignty,’ Colonna was a proponent of monarchy.¹³⁷ His work was deeply rooted in the intellectual culture of the Middle Ages: it depicted the ruler as an intermediary between God and man, who was to be rewarded for his good governance only in his future life. This portrayal differed from that found in the treatises of Renaissance humanists, according to which, the highest laurels a ruler could receive was fame in his lifetime. There were also differences in the means of argumentation employed: the authors of humanist ‘mirrors’ and treatises on the art of governing in general referred to historical examples taken from Antiquity rather than base their arguments on theoretical or purely abstract deductions.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, Colonna’s work, which was written in the period following the ‘rediscovery’ of Aristotle’s *Politics* following a new Latin translation of the work produced in the mid-thirteenth century, remained popular in large part due to the author’s extensive treatment of Aristotle’s political thought. Machiavelli most likely knew Aristotle through Colonna¹³⁹ – even if not directly from *De regimine principum*, then probably from the references to his treatise in Bartolus de Saxoferrato’s *De tyranno*.

We can assume that Machiavelli had most likely read the works of Bartolus de Saxoferrato, whose doctrines on the sovereignty of Italian cities (*civitas sibi princeps*, i.e. ‘the city is its own ruler’), derived from Roman law, made him one of the most important representatives of fourteenth-century Italian republicanism. In turn, his thesis about the need to adapt positive law (*ius positum*) to the changing social conditions had a major impact on Italian legal thought towards the end of the Middle Ages.¹⁴⁰ His ideas were particularly eagerly adopted in late-fifteenth century Florence to strengthen the position of the Medici family. Niccolò’s father,

zur Geschichte des Tyrannenbegriffs und der Tyrannenmordtheorie insbesondere in Frankreich, Berlin 1938, 72–76; From the mid-fifteenth to the seventeenth century *De regimine principum* appeared in print several times – for the first time in Augsburg in 1473, and later, in 1493 in Venice (3rd edition); *ibid.*, 73.

137 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...*, 62, 65.

138 See the characteristics of the content and writing method of Egidio Colonna’s *De regimine principum* in: F. Gilbert, *The Humanist Concept...*, 96 ff., 101 ff.

139 D. Sternberger, ‘Drei Wurzeln der Politik,’ 102.

140 See the discussion of the importance of the legal concepts of Bartolus de Saxoferrato in: F. Gilbert, *The Humanist Concept...*, 94; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...*, 9 ff.

Messer Bernardo Machiavelli, who was also a lawyer by profession, expressed his opposition to making changes in Florentine law for this purpose.¹⁴¹ Since Bernardo – known for his passion for borrowing and collecting books – had read Bartolus, it cannot be ruled out that his son also became acquainted with this author’s writings through his father, though there is no direct evidence that Machiavelli knew Saxoferrato’s treatise.

The works of Egidio Colonna and Bartolus de Saxoferrato can be counted among the canons of knowledge about the politics of the late middle ages and the Renaissance. In particular, Saxoferrato’s works, although criticized by fifteenth-century humanists for their alleged barbarization of ancient Roman law, enjoyed great popularity until at least the seventeenth century. They can also be found in Renaissance libraries outside Italy, and a popular motto at the time was the maxim: ‘*Nemo jurista nisi siti Bartolista*.’¹⁴²

Some definitions and characteristics of tyrannical power in these two works correspond to the image of *Il principe nuovo* created by Niccolò Machiavelli. A good point of comparison here is provided by passages from Saxoferrato’s *De tyranno*, in which the author summarizes the ten most important characteristics of tyrannical rule listed by Colonna, based in large part on his analysis of Book V of Aristotle’s *Politics*. Each point in this catalogue of a tyrant’s vices includes commentary by Bartolus, with references to Justinian’s *Digesta* and Gratian’s *Decretum*.

Colonna’s definition of a tyrant itself – i.e., a ruler who oppresses, plunders, and causes his subjects suffering – hinges upon Aristotle’s classic definition. At first glance, it stands in stark contrast to the fundamental goal of politics as pursued by Machiavelli’s *il principe nuovo*. This goal is to win the hearts of one’s subjects by ensuring order, peace and their welfare.¹⁴³ In certain situations, however, it is difficult to resist the impression that the politics of the ‘new prince’ evokes associations with the behaviour of a model tyrant (see below points 1 and 7).

Let us take a closer look at the ten features of tyrannical power listed by Colonna, juxtaposing them with the comments of Saxoferrato and the image of Machiavelli’s *il principe nuovo*.¹⁴⁴

141 Cf. C. Atkinson, *Debts, Dowries, Donkeys...*, chapter ‘Machiavelli as Bartolomeo Scala’s dialogue partner.’

142 Cf. the publisher’s introduction to the translation I use here: Bartolus of Sassoferrato, ‘On the Tyrant’ in: *The Renaissance*, ed. E. Cochrane, J. Kirshner, Chicago 1986 (*Readings in Western Civilization*, 5), 7.

143 *The Prince*, 29 ff.: about Cesare Borgia after his subordination to Romany and Urbino.

144 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, ‘On the Tyrant,’ 22 ff.

1. *The tyrant maintains power by exterminating the most capable and powerful citizens (including his own relatives) so that they cannot plot against him.*

For a proper reading of *Il Principe*, it is important to distinguish between Machiavelli's general statements and his specific observations, made in reference to concrete examples taken from history or from among his contemporaries. In the first case, the author's theses on the necessity of destroying the most powerful people in the state is difficult to find in the text itself, especially in the second part of the book – which represents a short anti-*speculum principis* (Chapters XV–XIX), and it is even recommended in passing that a ruler should 'respect the nobles.'¹⁴⁵ Nonetheless, if we recall Machiavelli's remarks in Chapter VII about Cesare Borgia's struggle with the Colonna and Orsini families, together with his actions to 'undermine,' 'dispossess,' and 'destroy' the mighty Romanesque families, it is rather difficult not to attribute to Borgia the first characteristic of a model tyrant. Machiavelli, however, in a quite twisted manner defends his hero from such accusations, characterizing his political opponents as 'violent lords, who were more disposed to despoil their subjects than to rule them properly.'¹⁴⁶ All in all, therefore, the answer to the question of whether *il principe nuovo* possesses the first mark of tyrannical power is ambiguous. Based on Machiavelli's statements of a general and declarative nature, the answer is negative. But given the actions of the real-life model for *The Prince*, one would have to give an affirmative answer. This position probably reflects Machiavelli's own ambivalent attitude towards the Florentine aristocrats and Medici allies in his day: something between servitude and repressed aversion.¹⁴⁷ All the more striking is the rather unambiguous commentary made by Bartolus, who, in referring to the history of Romulus and Remus, explicitly states that for a 'just cause,' i.e., to prevent violence and chaos, such an act of terror is permissible and cannot be labelled tyrannical.¹⁴⁸

2. *A tyrant eliminates the wise men so that they cannot reveal his iniquity.*
3. *A tyrant does not allow his subjects to study or acquire an education because he fears harsh assessments of his rule by those who are aware of his abuse of power.*

145 *The Prince*, Chapter XIX, 64.

146 *Ibid.* 25

147 On Machiavelli's unsuccessful requests for protection from the Medici in 1512, addressed to an aristocrat and personal friend, Francesco Vettori, as well as the accusations made by aristocrats hostile to him), see F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini...*, 173.

148 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 22.

It seems that, according to Machiavelli's general recommendations (Chapters XII and XXIII), a ruler should take precisely the opposite path and 'choose shrewd men for his service, permitting them alone to speak frankly' and to 'conduct himself with his advisers that they will all realize that the more candidly they speak the more acceptable they will be.'¹⁴⁹ Thus, the actions of *il principe nuovo* are here in contradiction to those of a tyrant. Again, Bartolus is more radical in this regard: the tyrant a ruler can exterminate the wise men 'for a just cause' and prohibit education if it is 'not appropriate for the city'.¹⁵⁰

4. *The tyrant forbids private associations and public gatherings for fear that they could foster rebellion against his rule.*

As in the previous case, Machiavelli's recommendations seem to stand in contradiction to this point, at least if we understand 'private associations' to not include conspiracies and plots. The surest safeguard against them, after all, is obvious: ensuring the satisfaction of the subjects through good governance (Chapter XIX).¹⁵¹ In turn, where official associations are concerned, a ruler should honour guilds and 'family groups,' meeting with them sometimes, and 'performing acts that display his own affability and munificance' (Chapter XXI).¹⁵² Bartolus, in turn, takes a step in the opposite direction, claiming that even when public (including religious) gatherings are held legally, they may become a catalyst for rebellion and anarchy, and thus a prohibition on them is not a tyrannical action.¹⁵³

5. *A tyrant has many spies to control the lives of his subjects.*

There is no discussion of spies in *The Prince*. Machiavelli only mentions in passing (Chapter XIX) that if a conspirator seeks aid from a person dissatisfied with the ruler in power, there is a danger that this person may betray the plot in order to attain benefits for himself.¹⁵⁴ This is where the discussion on denouncing ends. Saxoferrato, in turn, categorically states that enlisting informers to more effectively deter crimes against the state, as long as they serve a legitimate purpose, and not just the interests of the ruler, is acceptable.¹⁵⁵

149 *The Prince*, Chapter XXII, 77–78, Chapter XXIII, 79.

150 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 22–23.

151 *The Prince*, 80.

152 *Ibid.*, 77.

153 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 22.

154 *The Prince*, 63 ff.

155 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 22.

6. *The tyrant strives to divide his subjects and sever the bonds of friendship between them so that they fear one another and are thus unable to resist him.*

The ruler's honouring of formal associations has already been mentioned above. However, Machiavelli makes no direct recommendation that a 'new ruler' should – like the tyrant described by Aristotle – sow discord (tyrannical *discordia*) and destroy friendships between his subjects as something dangerous to his rule. He briefly recalls (Chapter XX) that some rulers cunningly create political enemies for themselves with the aim of strengthening their hold on power after defeating them.¹⁵⁶ However, several sentences earlier, in line with his rhetorical-dialectic method, he recalls the opinions of past Florentines considered to be 'the wisest' and who wanted to maintain Florence's dominion over the conquered city of Pistoia by sowing internal discord there; further on, he explicitly criticizes a ruler's inciting feuds as a sign of the weakness of his rule; lastly, he adds that 'such divisions are never permitted in a strong principality, for they are useful only in peacetime, when they can be used to control one's subjects more easily. But when war comes, the folly of such methods becomes apparent.'¹⁵⁷ We seem here to be once again dealing with a dialectic narrative that blurs the focus of the final conclusion, i.e. that initiating *discordia* in specific situations (peacetime) is acceptable. Bartolus de Saxoferrato, in contrast, makes a strong claim on this point: creating divisions among the people is a clear act of tyranny.¹⁵⁸

7. *The tyrant seeks to keep his subjects in poverty so that they will have to focus their efforts on ensuring their own survival and will thus have no time to plot against him.*

At first glance, Machiavelli's declaratory statements of a general nature – stressing that ensuring the well-being of the subjects is one of the cardinal objectives of the policies of *il principe nuovo* – are incompatibility with Egidio Colonna's definition of a tyrant. A particularly important issue here is that the ruler should protect the right to property of his subjects. His remarks about the inviolability of private property as a basis for the maintenance of rule are very blunt here: 'But, above all, he must not touch the property of others, because men forget sooner the killing of a father than the loss of their patrimony;'¹⁵⁹ A rapacious ruler who seizes the women and property of his subjects incurs their hatred.¹⁶⁰ Machiavelli makes an

156 *The Prince*, Chapter XX, 70.

157 *Ibid.*, 72.

158 Bartolus of Saxoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 22.

159 *The Prince*, Chapter XVII, 58.

160 *Ibid.*, Chapter XIX, 62.

exception only for colonies, i.e. conquered territories. Here, the confiscation of property and the forced displacement of the population and transfer of its property to new, loyal residents are acceptable, and even recommended, as ‘those whom he injures can never harm him, because they are poor and scattered.’¹⁶¹ This concludes our analysis of Machiavelli’s statements of a general nature.

In turn, the detailed discussions concerning the deeds of Cesare Borgia, who Machiavelli uses as a model worthy of imitation, often seem to contradict the general statements noted above (Chapter VII). We can sense in them the author’s clear aversion towards the aristocracy, already mentioned repeatedly. Nevertheless, let us recall them briefly once again: one of the main political measures taken by the Borgia was to dispossess and exterminate the Romagna noble families,¹⁶² who, the author insists, were unable to ensure peace and internal order for their subjects. Thus, the gap between the Machiavelli’s general recommendations and the behaviour of his positive hero seems particularly pronounced on this point. Bartolus de Saxoferrato, in turn, takes an unequivocal stance: keeping one’s subjects in poverty is clearly a tyrannical abuse of power.¹⁶³

8. *A tyrant often causes wars to keep the army engaged and prevent plots from being hatched against his rule.*

There is actually no direct consideration of such a problem in *The Prince*. Machiavelli, however, repeatedly stresses the importance of the military and matters of war. Maintaining a well-disciplined and well-organized army should be the main task and primary ‘occupation’ of a ruler (Chapter XIV). At the same time, those commanding armies possess the means to take and hold power. We can recall the example of Francesco Sforza, a *condottiere* and later ruler of Milan.¹⁶⁴ Machiavelli likewise praises the conquests and military policy of the hereditary monarch, King Ferdinand of Aragon,¹⁶⁵ and mentions that those Roman emperors who ‘came to the throne as new men’ were more concerned with satisfying their soldiers than the people.¹⁶⁶ According to the author of *Il Principe*, the army is a basic pillar and symbol of a ruler’s power. Bartolus, in

161 *Ibid.*, Chapter III, 9.

162 *Ibid.*, Chapter VII, 26–27.

163 Bartolus of Saxoferrato, ‘On the Tyrant,’ 22.

164 *The Prince*, Chapter XIV, 50–51.

165 *Ibid.*, Chapter XXI, 74–75.

166 *Ibid.*, Chapter XIX, 65–66.

turn, strongly condemns those who foment civil wars as tyrannical, though he allows 'just' wars to be waged outside the country.¹⁶⁷

9. *The tyrant's personal guards (cohortes praetoriae) are noncitizens because he lives in constant fear of his own subjects.*

This sign of tyrannical power seems to be in complete contradiction with one of Machiavelli's main postulates, namely, the creation of a national Italian militia and the fight for the unification of Italy. It also runs afoul of the positive image of Cesare Borgia as the one who recognized the potential dangers of a mercenary army due to questions about its dependability and loyalty. Meanwhile, Saxoferrato justifies the recruitment of foreign troops in situations where a righteous ruler cannot rely on his own subjects, who are ill-disposed towards him. In particular, he recommends that this be done 'in newly recovered cities' or, in certain cases, places where the ruler has banished the former inhabitants and brought in settlers to take their place (here he seems to agree at least in part with Machiavelli's recommendations in Book III with regard to newly conquered colonies). It is important to highlight, however, that his consent to such conduct in the case of a 'just lord' refers only to 'special circumstances,' while tyrants act in this way regardless of circumstances.¹⁶⁸

10. *If there is fighting between factions, the tyrant supports one and not the other (bias).*

In this respect, Machiavelli seems to indicate the need to take such action in certain cases. If the prince finds himself among conflicting elements of the people, the army or the nobles, then in order to maintain power it is necessary to join one of the parties to avoid the hatred of both:¹⁶⁹ 'if a group (whether it is the people or the soldiers or the nobles) whose support you consider necessary for maintaining your position is corrupt, you are forced to indulge its proclivities in order to satisfy it. In such circumstances, good deeds are inimical to you.'¹⁷⁰ Political necessity (*necessitas*) justifies the ruler's actions. Saxoferrato, in turn, considers the tyrant's bias for one party to be an unequivocally tyrannical act.¹⁷¹

167 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 23.

168 Ibid.

169 *The Prince*, 65–66.

170 Ibid.

171 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' 23.

Therefore, as we can see, out of the ten model vices of the tyrant given by Egidio Colonna, if we consider only Machiavelli's recommendations of a general nature, the behaviour of *il principe nuovo* meets the criteria of just two points (6 and 10). And where the example of Cesare Borgia himself is concerned – two as well (1 and 7), although both are very important for the model definition of a tyrant. Bartolus de Saxoferrato, in turn, by referring to the need for 'special circumstances' or a 'just cause' – in other words, a matter of necessity – seems to accept as many as seven actions traditionally regarded as tyrannical.

Still, the figure of *il principe nuovo* created by Machiavelli corresponds more clearly to certain types of tyrants and tyrannical power formulated by Bartolus de Saxoferrato based on the medieval tradition, including the 'Latin Aristotle' and, above all, St Thomas Aquinas. In particular, the first two types and expressions of tyrannical power (inspired by the Aquinas' typology¹⁷²) entered into the dictionary of not only the academic elite but also became part of political language and more popular knowledge about politics in the early modern era.

In his treatise, Bartolus de Saxoferrato singled out four types of tyrannical power:

1. *Tyrannus ex defectu tituli* – i.e. the usurper, i.e. the one who gains power illegally, e.g. by fraud or armed force. An example of this is the *condottieri* or those who have gained power as a result of internal riots and rebellion. Even if the usurper's rule is legitimized through an election by a majority of those ruled, it will still remain tyrannical – unless the ruler agrees to the return of his previously exiled political enemies and their participation in the election.¹⁷³
2. *Tyrannus ex parte exercitii* – a 'tyrant in the way he exercises power', that is, one who, having become a ruler on the basis of legal succession, exercises his rule only for the selfish motive of staying in power, violating his people's fundamental natural rights: threatening their private property and personal security, and contributing to divisions and discord among his subjects. The characteristics of this tyrant are contained in the above-mentioned Chapter VIII of *De tyranno* and the catalogue of 10 tyrannical vices cited therein.

172 See on this subject F. Schoenstedt, *Der Tyrannenmord im Spätmittelalter...*, 38, 46, 51, and also an analyse of Bartolus' typology in his two treatises *Treatise on City Government* (c. 1330) and *On tyranny* in the classic work by C.N.S. Woolf, *Bartolus of Sassoferrato: His Position in the History of Medieval Political Thought*, 1913, 165–174.

173 Bartolus of Sassoferrato, 'On the Tyrant,' Chapter VI, 15 ff.

3. *Tyrannus manifestus* – a ‘manifest’ tyrant, who can become both a usurper and a tyrant *ex parte exercitii* when he openly flaunts the law, without even attempting to appear to uphold the rule of law.¹⁷⁴
4. *Tyrannus vellatus et tacitus* – a ‘concealed’ and ‘tacit’ tyrant, who hides behind the appearances of the law. This type of tyrant includes both tyrannical rulers *ex parte exercitii*, who, for example, obtained a mandate to rule for a strictly limited period of time and then illegally extended it, as well as those who do not have a legal title to rule. They are, in Bartolus’ opinion, the most complete antithesis of royal power. These include, in particular, three groups that hold *de facto* power (albeit with formally limited jurisdiction) without changing the system of the Italian city republics. These are the Gonfaloniere of Justice, the commanders of the citizens’ militias, and the *condottiere* standing at the head of mercenary units.¹⁷⁵

The figure of *il principe nuovo*, especially the type described in Chapter VII of *Il Principe*, may be identified with the first of the types of tyrant mentioned here, because of the way he came to power. His power is clearly ‘new’ and therefore usurpatory. His methods of governance, in turn, can in some cases be qualified as resembling the actions of a *tyrannus ex parte exercitii* (points 1, 7 and 6, 10 above), even though it is difficult to attribute to the ‘new prince’ only the selfish aim of maintaining power, which is the main attribute of the classic tyrant ‘in the manner in which he exercises power.’ Moreover, his actions are intended to produce effects *pro publico bono*. Nevertheless, Machiavelli’s narrative and argumentation blurs the sharpness of some of his statements. However, there is no doubt that the fourth type of tyrannical rule according to the Saxoferrato typology, i.e. those hiding behind the appearances of the law (*tyrannus vellatus et tacitus*), corresponds to the figure of the *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* outlined in Chapter XVIII of *Il Principe*.¹⁷⁶

Therefore, for readers of the time, not to mention later authors of works in the ‘Anti-Machiavellism’¹⁷⁷ trend, who were educated in ancient and medieval classical writing about tyranny, the protagonist of *The Prince* may have been

174 Ibid., Chapter V, 15.

175 Ibid., Chapter XII, 27–30.

176 It could also be associated with the power of a ruler elected by the people (from Chapter IX of *The Prince*), while contemporary Florentines with a fifteenth-century experience with the Medicis, who become the *de facto* rulers of Florence without formally changing its republican system.

177 For more on this, see Part Two, Chapter I.

probably associated with a tyrant, and apparently with a ‘concealed and tacit tyrant,’ but not only. For Machiavelli’s contemporaries, even before the beginning of his infamy and widespread criticism of his work, this association was obvious. This is reflected in the strategy adopted by the Florentine publisher of *Il Principe* in 1532, Bernardo di Giunti. In a dedication attached to this edition written for an eminent monsignor of the Holy See, he compared Machiavelli to a physician who not only prescribes a cure for an illness but also warns against the ‘poison’ (i.e. tyranny) that causes it.¹⁷⁸ Augustino Nifo, a sixteenth-century commentator of Aristotle, probably understood this in a similar way; he committed plagiarism (not excluding the possibility that he had the author’s personal consent) by incorporating *The Prince* into a treatise dedicated to Charles V, eloquently titled *De regnandi perita* (1523).¹⁷⁹ This line of defence – *The Prince* as a veiled warning and not an invitation to tyranny – was also adopted by some of Machiavelli’s apologists up until at least the eighteenth century.

The same is true of Machiavelli’s treatment of the traditional image of a tyrant, which comes from Aristotle. In his treatise *Dell’ uffitio del Cardinale* (1599), Giovanni Botero stated that the ruler in *Il Principe* fits the image of a tyrant described by Aristotle.¹⁸⁰ Modern researchers of Machiavelli’s doctrine also emphasize his tendency to perform a ‘reversal’ of established traditional values. In his introduction to the 1891 Oxford edition of *The Prince*, Arthur L. Burd drew attention to the originality of Machiavelli’s concept of reversing the traditional, classic image of the tyrant by revaluing it in the person of *il principe nuovo*.¹⁸¹ In his analysis of *Il Principe*’s content, Sydney Anglo convincingly demonstrated how the Machiavelli’s portrait of the ‘new prince’ was a reversal of the image of the tyrant, based on Aristotle’s description, in the treatise on the government of Florence (c. 1498) by Girolamo Savonarola, the scorned ‘unarmed prophet’ in Book VII.¹⁸²

Despite Machiavelli’s clear ‘reversal’ of the classic image of a tyrant presented in Aristotle’s *Politics*, let alone differences in the means of narration and the purpose of the two thinkers’ works, their similarities are also significant, especially

178 See *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), editorial introduction, 35 ff., and other examples of reading *The Prince* as a treatise warning against tyranny.

179 See *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), editorial introduction, 43 ff. Cf. also F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson*..., 53.

180 Burd cites an extensive quote from Botero’s work in his commentary to *Il Principe*, 290, cf. also D. Sternberger, ‘Drei Wurzeln der Politik,’ 104.

181 *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd) commentary, 289 ff.

182 S. Anglo, *Machiavelli*..., 199 ff.; N. Rubinstein, ‘A New Epoch. Machiavelli,’ 40.

the passage in which Aristotle encourages tyrants to engage in pretence, to create the impression of being righteous rulers. Such behaviour can help mitigate the negative effects of tyranny, unite the subjects, and make it seem more like monarchical rule. As Dolf Sternberger, author of a detailed interpretation of *The Prince* through a Aristotelian prism, states that this passage can even be described as a 'mirror for tyrants.'¹⁸³ It carries the following meaning: if a tyrant wants to win over his subjects, he should in part behave like a real king, and in part play the role of a king, making it seem as if he really were one.¹⁸⁴ Similarities to the recommendations given to the 'new prince' in the now-famous Chapter XVIII of *Il Principe* had already been noted in the sixteenth century. In 1568, Louis Le Roy, the French translator of *Politics*, even made the accusation that this passage might have inspired Machiavelli.¹⁸⁵

The main difference is that Aristotle advised the tyrant to imitate and model himself after the king, while *il principe nuovo* was deprived of such a model. He was, according to Sternberger, an 'emancipated tyrant,' a 'transmoral' tyrant, using good or bad methods depending on the need of the moment.¹⁸⁶ Hela Mandt comments on the relevant passage from Aristotle as a 'therapy of tyranny,' resulting from the desire to minimize the negative effects of tyrannical power and transform it into a government as close as possible to a royal one.¹⁸⁷ According to such a line of interpretation, the 'emancipation' of *il principe nuovo* created by Machiavelli would consist in releasing the ruler from the basic norms of natural law. This was in negation of the concept of natural law, in which one of the best experts in sixteenth-century political philosophy, John William Allen, saw the originality of Machiavelli's doctrine in *Il principe* as a negation of the concept of natural law, referring to a comment expressed in *Discorsi* that thinking in terms of absolute good and evil occurs only when human society is able to create the state.¹⁸⁸ For Dolf Sternberger, it is precisely the transmortality of the main character, who is in a sense the alter ego of the author of *Il Principe*, that makes him see Nicollò Machiavelli as the creator of the 'demonic root' in the tradition of European political thought, from which twentieth-century totalitarianisms

183 D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 178 ff.; S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 197 ff.

184 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V, Chapter IX.

185 D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 187, 184; vol. II, 2, 105.

186 *Ibid.*, 188–193.

187 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht. Studien zur deutschen politischen Theorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt–Neuwied 1974, 34–40. Also *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), 304 ff.

188 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 452 ff., 485 ff.

emerged. This may be the case when we read *The Prince* from the broader perspective of the ‘canonical source,’ i.e. taking into account the interpretations that developed over the following centuries around the polemics surrounding Machiavelli’s ideas.

Authors of works devoted to *The Prince* often talk about Machiavelli’s relativization of the problem of tyranny.¹⁸⁹ Perhaps another term we could use here would be ‘neutralizing the concept of tyranny.’ When reading the work from this perspective, the originality and revolutionary nature of Machiavelli’s concept seems less marked. We find an even greater degree of relativization in Bartolus de Saxoferrato’s assessment of actions he considers worthy of recommendation to righteous rulers, but which are traditionally considered tyrannical. This can be seen not only in his relativization of the ten-point catalogue of tyrannical vices, even more so than in Machiavelli’s, but also in other comments in his *De tyranno*. For example, Bartolus invokes two legitimate reasons why a Pope or Emperor may refrain from deposing vassals under them who have become tyrants ‘in the manner in which they exercise power.’ First, it involves ‘extraordinary and essential need,’ i.e., the Thomists’ appeal to the sanction of ‘necessity’ (*necessitas*) – an argument that was often invoked by *The Prince*, too. Second, it is related to reflection in the spirit of choosing the lesser evil: sometimes one has to act like a doctor who allows a disease to progress in order to prevent an even more dangerous pathology.¹⁹⁰ The latter (for Machiavelli as well) is rebellion and the chaos and anarchy it causes. Finally, at the end of his treatise, in a passage on ‘hidden and silent tyranny,’ Bartolus concludes in a similar sense: ‘just as one is seldom found who is completely healthy, indeed free from all bodily defect, so it is a rare thing to find a government that is completely devoted to the public good without some of the qualities of a tyranny.’¹⁹¹

A somewhat similar relativizing tone, although not as consistently used in the course of the argument, can also be found in *Tractatus de tyranno* (ca. 1392–1400) written by the Florentine lawyer and Chancellor of the Republic of Florence, Coluccio Salutati, who is often referred to by historians tracking the intellectual roots of Niccolò Machiavelli’s ideas.¹⁹² Considering who was right

189 T. Schölderle, *Das Prinzip der Macht. Neuzeitliches Politik- und Staatsdenken bei Thomas Hobbes und Nicolo Machiavelli*, Berlin–Cambridge (Mass.) 2002, 175, in reference to Machiavelli Thomas Hobbes’ concepts.

190 Bartolus de Saxoferrato, in: F. Gilbert, *The Humanist Concept...*, Chapter X, 25.

191 *Ibid.*, Chapter XII, 30.

192 A subversion of the medieval view of Julius Caesar as a tyrant was carried out by Dante, who placed his murderers Brutus and Cassius in the deepest abyss of the ninth circle of hell. Coluccio Salutati’s *De tyranno* is considered one of the most

among those who voiced their views in this debate on a topic fashionable in the Renaissance era: the tyrant Caesar or his killer Brutus, or whether Dante was right to place Brutus and his co-conspirator Cassius in the lowest circle of hell, Salutati strongly condemned both of them for their tyrannicide. By the way, he pointed out, first of all, that when a tyrant-usurper reigns for a long time and with the tacit consent of his subjects, his reign acquires the trappings of legality.¹⁹³ Further on, he stated that in a situation when the state is torn by internal struggles, the majority of citizens can give their consent to the rule of the an ruler-usurper, even without prior public deliberation or formal election.¹⁹⁴ However, in the course of his main argument, he pointed to the groundlessness of treating Caesar as a tyrant and proved the legitimacy of his dictatorial rule,¹⁹⁵ to which, in turn, Machiavelli had a negative attitude, accusing him of having been responsible for unrest and moral collapse in republican Rome.¹⁹⁶

As we can see, therefore, the relativistic tone in Niccolò Machiavelli's assessment of the phenomenon of tyranny in Renaissance Italy had its roots in the period preceding his writing of *Il Principe*. Of course, this relativism was the result of the pragmatism expressed in the earlier critical and realistic assessments of certain authors, their reaction to ongoing disintegration of republican rule in the Italian city-states and the introduction of the *de facto* monarchical power of the 'new prince'/tyrants. It was in this context that Bartolus de Saxoferrato's morally neutral, legal definition and typology of tyranny was born.¹⁹⁷ However, none of Machiavelli's predecessors applied his technique of 'reversing' the traditional image of a tyrant in such a consistent way, using the method of induction and sophisticated conclusions full of paradoxical statements and maxims. – in the rhetorical-dialectical argumentation. It is precisely in Machiavelli's writing

prominent voices in this debate, discussed, among others, in a wider context by H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates...*, chapter titled 'Cesar aut Brutus,' 158–164, Cf. also E. Werner, 'Von Tyrannen und Fürsten. Coluccio Salutati und Niccolò Machiavelli als Protagonisten der Diskussion in der Italienischen Renaissance,' in: *Basileus und Tyrann. Herrscherbilder und Bilder von Herrschaft in der Englischen Renaissance*, Frankfurt/M. 1999, 59 ff. The author here discusses the influence of Bartolus de Saxoferrato's concept on Salutati's work, which took its typology of tyranny from *De tyranno...*

193 Salutati Coluccio, 'De tyranno' in: E. Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny. Studies in the Italian Trecento*, Cambridge 1925, 70–116, here Chapter II, 86.

194 Salutati Coluccio, 'De tyranno,' 88.

195 *Ibid.*, Chapters III, IV, V.

196 H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 158 ff.; see also below.

197 See above, 'Introduction.'

method, rather than merely in the content of his book itself, that the originality and innovativeness of his concepts should be seen.¹⁹⁸

For the Renaissance reader, educated in the ancient and medieval classics, the figure of *il principe nuovo* must have been irrefutably associated with a tyrant, even though Machiavelli gave him the most neutral name possible – *principe*, which, in the language of his era, simply meant ‘ruler.’ Unlike Salutati, he did not try to prove that the ruler whom he was describing did not really deserve to be called a tyrant. Therefore, *The Ruler* – and not *The Prince* – should be the contemporary translation of *Il Principe*.¹⁹⁹

Machiavelli – A Republican by Conviction or a Monarchist by Necessity?

Finally, a question arises that is essential for understanding Niccolò Machiavelli’s intentions and views, namely: was he really an undisputable supporter of the ‘new monarchies’ he described?

The textbook answer to this question is generally as follows:²⁰⁰ Machiavelli’s statements should be placed alongside the concepts he explores in his other works, especially in *Discourses on Livy*.²⁰¹ Although this work covers the period from the founding of Rome up until 293 BCE, it is also full of references and allusions to later events, including Machiavelli’s contemporaries. According to some historians, one part of *Discorsi* was written as early as 1513 and could therefore have been written in parallel with *Il Principe*, although this hypothesis is controversial and open to question.²⁰² It is presumed that Machiavelli stopped working on Book One of *Discorsi* in order to begin writing *Il Principe*. This hypothesis is said to be confirmed by similarities between the first 18 chapters of *Discorsi* and *Il Principe*.²⁰³ Hence the remark made in Chapter II of *The Prince*

198 Also J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 485 ff.

199 Cf. E. Werner, ‘Von Tyrannen und Fürsten...’, 69 ff.; see also the analysis of the meanings and contexts of the use of the word *principe* in *The Prince* (Q. Skinner, R. Price), Appendix B, 100 ff.

200 Cf. N. Rubinstein, ‘A New Epoch. Machiavelli’, 44 ff.

201 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. H.C. Mansfield & N. Tarcov, Chicago 1996. [hereinafter *Discourses*]

202 See the discussion on the dating of *Discourses* in: N. Rubinstein, ‘A New Epoch. Machiavelli’, 44.

203 F. Gilbert, ‘The Composition and Structure of Machiavelli’s “Discorsi”’ in: his, *History...*, 115–132, Gilbert also draws attention to passages from both works that are closely related to each other, such as Chapter XIX of *The Prince* and *Discourses* I,

that the author would end his treatment of republics,²⁰⁴ since he had already been discussed them in another work, would only stray from the truth in that *Discourses on Livy* had not yet been completed. Allusions to political events in Italy between 1515 and 1517 make it possible to establish the latter date as the *terminus ante quem* for the final version of the book.²⁰⁵

However, another paradox emerges from a comparison of the content of both works. In *Discorsi*, despite the similarities in some sections to issues discussed in *The Prince*, Machiavelli appears here as an advocate of the superiority of republican rule over monarchy,²⁰⁶ and sees the embodiment of this system in ancient republican Rome. *Discorsi*’s message here is clear: the republican system, which relies upon the rule of the people, is more stable, treaties and agreements are adhered to better principles, and the public good is more consistently ensured. Moreover, republics last longer than monarchies because, thanks to the diversity that exists among the citizens, such systems are more capable to adapt to changing conditions that arise over time. Of course, this concerns popular governments that are strictly committed to norms and respect the law: ‘For a prince who can do what he wishes is crazy; a people that can do what is wished is not wise. If, thus, one is reasoning about a prince obligated to the laws and about a people fettered by them, more virtue will always be seen in the people than in the prince.’²⁰⁷

Comparing briefly Machiavelli’s two apologies – to the ‘new monarchy’ in *The Prince* and to the republic in *Discourses on Livy* – brings to the fore two doubts. First of all, did the author suffer from a kind of splitting of the political self, advocating two different political models at almost the same time? Or perhaps these two works with their very different messages merely testify to his political

10, both of which refer to examples of Roman emperors, and ‘seem like two parts of a rather comprehensive reflection on the same subject’; F. Gilbert, *The Composition...*, 126 ff.

204 *The Prince*, 6.

205 F. Gilbert, *The Composition...*, 118 ff., 128. See also H. Baron, ‘Machiavelli. The Republican Citizen and the Author of the Prince,’ *The English Historical Review* 76, 1961, 217–253, here 236 ff., in which the author advocates ca. 1516 as the beginning of work on *Discourses*.

206 This issue has been extensively discussed recently by N. Rubinstein, ‘A New Epoch. Machiavelli,’ 46 ff. See also the discussion and interpretation of the most important content and republican views of Machiavelli in the book: Q. Skinner, *The Foundations...*, 180–187; his, *Visions...*, 149–157, 160–163, 199–205.

207 *Discourses*, Book I, Chapter 58: ‘The Multitude is Wiser and More Constant Than a Prince,’ 118. Cf. also the analysis in: N. Rubinstein, ‘A New Epoch. Machiavelli,’ 53 ff.

opportunism? In short, as Felix Gilbert put it, ‘how was it possible for the author of *The Prince* “a handbook for tyrants” to write also the *Discourses*, the theme of which is the idealization of free cities.’²⁰⁸

The question which of the works reflects the ‘true’ convictions of their author, although in some sense naive, perfectly illustrates the problem mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: to what extent do historians’ interpretations reflect the political traditions that dominate their times and national culture, and to what extent do these traditions have a decisive influence on the reading of a so-called canonical source? As the number of republics grew in the twentieth century, the focus of research began to shift from *Il Principe* to *Discorsi*. It is no coincidence that Anglo-Saxon historians tend to view *Discourses on Livy* as Niccolò Machiavelli’s main work. An eminent researcher of Renaissance republicanism, Hans Baron, who introduced the concept of ‘civic humanism’ in the 1920s, has noted that ‘Machiavelli’s two major works are in basic aspects different.’²⁰⁹ While there has been a tendency since the interwar period to interpret these two works in a complementary fashion,²¹⁰ John Greville Agarde Pocock’s book *The Machiavellian Moment*, which accentuates the republican side of Machiavelli’s doctrine, also received wide acclaim in the latter half of the twentieth century. In the similar ‘republican’ line of research and interpretation are some works by Quentin Skinner, who has been quoted here numerous times.

The question of which of Machiavelli’s books shows his true face appears to be of greater interest to scholars today than 500 years ago, i.e. in the era when such works were commonly commissioned by patrons.²¹¹ A comparison of the Florentine author’s two main works also fails to take into account any possible evolution in his views during the years between their completion. It is also important to realize that *Il Principe* was written in the wake of what was probably the greatest political and personal crisis in Machiavelli’s life, namely the fall of the Florentine Republic in 1512 and his imprisonment during the first months of the restoration of Medici rule. At the time, the openly declared republican may have put his hopes in an ‘extraordinary’ individual who seemed to possess the ability to save Italy from its political crisis, even if this required the use of

208 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*..., 188.

209 H. Baron, ‘Machiavelli. The Republican Citizen ...,’ see also the discussion of the current state of research on this subject in: A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 78 ff.

210 This is in line with the interpretations of F. Meinecke and F. Chabod, though it differs in terms of specifics. Cf. summary of the discussion on this subject in: A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 79 ff.; and H. Baron, ‘Machiavelli. The Republican Citizen ...,’ 5 ff., 13 ff.

211 See examples in: F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*..., 88, 90, fn. 56.

extraordinary, or even at times, morally reprehensible methods.²¹² In fact, this very theme appears in *Discorsi*.

It is important to ask, first and foremost, whether the views expressed in Machiavelli's two most famous books are indeed mutually exclusive. According to the opinion expressed during the interwar period by Friedrich Meinecke and shared by other experts on the Florentine's thought in the twentieth century, there are readily apparent differences between *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy*.²¹³ Another Machiavellian paradox is therefore precisely this complementarity between the two texts: one 'monarchic,' the other 'republican.' In *Discorsi*, Machiavelli advocated a very pragmatic approach to politics. He argued, following Aristotle, that various systems fit into different stages in the development of states and societies. This meant that republics would be created by societies more attached to the idea of equality, and monarchies where social inequality is more deeply rooted. An example of a well-functioning monarchy for Machiavelli was France, where the ruler managed to rein in the aristocracy, and committed himself to respect a broad array of rights.²¹⁴

The key to unravelling another of the paradoxes of Machiavelli's doctrine can be found in his fascination with Polybius,²¹⁵ especially his concept of the cyclical development of political systems (*politeion anakyklosis*).²¹⁶ Like Polybius, the Florentine ascribed to all political systems a tendency to degenerate over time. This had three causes: the inactivity of society, excessive social inequality, and the government's efforts to secure absolute power. These tendencies led to a degeneration of social 'matter,' and contributed to the loss of *virtù* in collective societies, ultimately leading to their 'corruption' and decay.²¹⁷ Ultimately, all nine phases of the historical cycle can be distinguished in *Discourses on Livy*.²¹⁸

212 S. de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*, 237–240; A. Kłoskowska, *Machiavelli jako humanista na tle włoskiego Odrodzenia*, Łódź 1954., 121, explains the strong republican traditions in the Machiavelli family.

213 See a summary of the views on the complementarity of Machiavelli's two main works in: A. Buck, *Machiavelli*, 79 ff. The literature on this subject is recalled by E. Werner, 'Von Tyrannen und Fürsten...', 68, fn. 42.

214 See discussion in: N. Rubinstein, 'A New Epoch. Machiavelli,' 53 ff.

215 On Machiavelli's access to Polybius' *The Histories*, especially the Latin translation of Book VI, see the study by J.H. Hexter, 'Seyssel, Machiavelli, and Polybius VI. The Mystery of The Missing Translation,' *Studies in the Renaissance* 3, 1956, 75–96.

216 *Discourses*, I, 2, 10–14.

217 N. Rubinstein, 'A New Epoch. Machiavelli,' 51 ff. Cf. See also on this subject H. Münkler, *Machiavelli...*, 344–350 and W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 62 ff., 68 ff.

218 With some changes in: W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 65, who lists only 8 phases of the cycle. Cf. also *ibid.*, 67 ff., the author remarks that Machiavelli's political cycle is

1. Overcoming an initial state of anarchy – a state in which people lived like animals, not distinguishing between good and evil – by establishing an autocracy, under the strongest and bravest of men.
2. A strengthening of the ruler's power through the emergence of an awareness of good and evil, and from this, the concept of justice, and consequently, the establishment of the rights and institutions necessary for maintaining political and social order.
3. Consolidation of the political order and transition from choosing the strongest ruler to choosing the wisest and fairest 'sage.'
4. Introduction of the principle of hereditary rule, and its gradual transformation into absolute rule, the moral and ethical decline of monarchs, leading to the degeneration of the monarchy into tyranny.
5. The overthrow of tyranny by a rebellion initiated by 'optimates' – people who surpass others in their moral qualities and wealth – followed by the formation of an aristocratic-republican form of government in which the rights and social interests of the ruled are respected; the spread of civic thinking in terms of the superiority of the common good over the interests of the ruling individual as the antithesis to the tyrant's selfish actions.
6. The political breakdown of the republic of 'optimates' with the emergence of the principle of hereditary offices; its transformation into an oligarchy in which the selfish interests of those in power, as in tyranny, take priority over the interests of the community as a whole.
7. A 'people's revolution' and the establishment of a democratic-republican system.
8. A tendency towards anarchy and the breakdown of the institutional and public order intensifies over time, with 'each living in his own mode, a thousand injuries were done every day.'²¹⁹
9. A flight from anarchy to autocracy – to a ruler who must create the state as if from scratch; the paradox is that 'absolute power, which is called tyranny'²²⁰ is needed to make such radical changes.

dominated by a constant struggle between *virtù* and *fortune*, which pushes mankind towards the fall. It also dominates in the lowest phase of the cycle, at the moment of the deepest crisis, when no rational planning and anticipation is possible.

219 All quotations from *Discourses* I, 2, 10–14.

220 *Discourses* I, 25, 61. See also D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' vol. II. 1, 167; N. Rubinstein, 'A New Epoch. Machiavelli,' 54.

We can see in this cycle at least two types of autocracy resembling tyrannical governments. In the first, what was initially a monarchy descends into tyranny when the principle of electivity gives way to hereditary rule. These hereditary rulers soon forget the example of their predecessors' virtuous actions and lapse into excess, debauchery and a life of luxury. As a result, their rule becomes tyrannical and they find themselves hated by the people, giving rise to conspiracies and rebellions, eventually leading to the overthrow of the tyrant and the establishment of republican rule.²²¹ In this case, we would therefore be dealing with the traditional type of *tyranny ex parte exercitii*, i.e. tyranny 'in the manner of exercising power.'

The second type of autocracy, which occurs at the end of an old cycle and the beginning of a new one, is more closely associated with the protagonist of *Il Principe*. According to Machiavelli, the degeneration of political forms is a process that is inevitable and unstoppable, unless there exists an exceptionally strong individual capable of imposing laws that will renew the state. Therefore, only a ruler like *il principe nuovo* can revive the Republic from collapse. In *Discorsi*, such a ruler is perversely defined as a good citizen who goes 'to the extraordinary, such as violence and arms' to take power in a failing republic, but then afterwards pursues noble goals. As Machiavelli admits in practice, in such situations: the pursuit by good rulers of good ends by bad means, or vice versa, bad rulers seeking to achieve good aims by good means, occurs very rarely.²²² A charismatic leader of this type was Romulus, whose appearance puts an end to anarchy and chaos. As in Chapter VI of *The Prince*, he is portrayed, along with Moses, as a father-figure, the founder of a state, and although he is sometimes forced to resort to violence and destruction, he does so for the sake of his homeland. He does not establish hereditary rule, which makes possible the introduction of republican rule in the future.²²³

Machiavelli thus relativizes his thesis about the superiority of republics over monarchies in *Discourses on Livy*, claiming that in a degenerate state where laws cease to function for the citizenry, the only salvation is the strong 'extraordinary power' of an autocratic ruler capable of carrying out the necessary reforms. Here once again we can hear a note of reluctance and hostility towards aristocratic

221 W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 70.

222 *Discourses* I, 18, 51, and also *ibid.*, I, 17, 48–51; see also N. Rubinstein, 'A New Epoch. Machiavelli,' 52.

223 *Discourses* I, 19, 48–51, and also W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 74 ff; See also the analysis of the problem of tyranny in *Discourses* in: D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 16 ff.

oligarchs, something also typical of *The Prince*, as a class of layabouts prone to impose tyranny on their subjects.²²⁴ Thus, in addition to the traditional negative image of tyrant, Machiavelli sketched out a type of *tirano virtuoso*, as Dolf D. Sternberger puts it, corresponding to the portrait of the ‘new prince.’²²⁵

Therefore, from the perspective of *Discorsi*, the ‘new prince’ described in *Il Principe* could be interpreted as a ‘transitional tyrant.’ His ‘tyranny’ would be a dictatorship during a state of emergency – a kind of a ‘transitional dictatorship’²²⁶ that could lead to the liberation and reunification of Italy, as called for by Machiavelli.²²⁷ We can also assume that according to the cyclical rhythm of history proposed by Polybius, following the stabilization of the regime, what was initially a tyranny/dictatorship would evolve towards an electoral monarchy based on the rule of law, or to the republican forms of government presented in *Discorsi* as the preferred constitutional solution. We can see a gradation in this work, from republic, to electoral monarchy, then hereditary monarchy based on strict observance of the law (France being an example of this), and finally to a ‘transitional dictatorship’ as an extraordinary measure, dictated by the historical necessity of the cycle of collapse and rebirth of states. The superiority of elective monarchy over hereditary monarchy is explicitly expressed by Machiavelli: ‘for all the emperors who succeeded to the empire by inheritance, except Titus, were bad. Those who succeeded by adoption were all good [...] and as the empire fell to heirs, it returned to its ruin.’²²⁸

In short, as noted by Friedrich Meinecke, a proponent of a complementary treatment of Niccolò Machiavelli’s two main works – the Florentine’s republicanism was strongly marked by monarchism,²²⁹ and over time, he himself became ‘a monarchist out of reason and resignation.’²³⁰ A tone of resignation can clearly be heard in Chapter IX of *The Prince* – ‘The Civil Principality’ – devoted to the elective form of monarchical rule, and the clash between ‘two different dispositions’ (i.e., the propensity of the nobles to exploit the people and the people’s resistance to this),²³¹ that results from one of the three following

224 *Discourses* I, 55, 109–113.

225 D. Sternberger, ‘Drei Wurzeln der Politik,’ 169.

226 See his praise for what he saw as a justified immediate need for a state of emergency and a legally regulated dictatorship in the Republic of Rome, *Discourses* I, 34, 73ff.; as well as his conclusion that ‘republics should have a like mode among their orders.’

227 G. Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 159 ff.

228 *Discourses* I, 10, 32.

229 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 38.

230 F. Meinecke, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 125.

231 *The Prince*, 34.

outcomes: monarchy, freedom, or anarchy – 'since in the midst of such confusion a tyrant can arise [...] [and] his wicked life can make freedom emerge.'²³² This *horror anarchiae*, as we will soon see, was a prominent *topos* in the political philosophy of the era, regardless of the pro- or anti-republican sympathies of the philosophers utilizing it. In terms closer to today's discourse, we can say that Machiavelli is prepared, in specific situations of state crisis, to speak out in favour of greater security for the citizens at the expense of their freedom.

Of course, the vision of republicanism in *Discorsi* should be measured according to the model of a Renaissance-era urban republic, i.e. the Italian city-state.²³³ Praise for the rule of law, whether in the hereditary French monarchy or in the aristocratic republics, was used as an instrument for criticizing traditionally understood tyranny, i.e. usurpatory and law-breaking governments. As twentieth-century commentators have noted, Machiavelli's ideas are in line with medieval Italian urban-republican ideology, which saw tyranny as a degenerate form of monarchy, but above all as a denial of republican freedom.²³⁴

This is why in *Discourses on Livy* tyranny is understood mainly as an attack on republican freedoms. It finds an eloquent expression in the stigmatization of Julius Caesar, who, by assuming power under the guise of dictatorial dignity became a tyrant and violator of the freedoms of the Roman Republic.²³⁵ His figure is mentioned four times in *The Prince* (Chapters XIV and XVI), and only once in a critical manner, when he is accused of profligacy.²³⁶ Meanwhile, in *Discourses* Caesar ranks as one of the most loathsome tyrants. He comes to power by force at the time of the greatest demoralization in Rome's history. His government is marked by events typical of tyrannical rule: civil wars, riots, arson, debauchery.²³⁷ In his negative assessment of Julius Caesar, Machiavelli joins a list of prominent critics of this figure in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, who placed him alongside Tiberius, Caligula, Nero and Vitellius.²³⁸ At the same time, unlike in Coluccio Salutati's *De tyranno*, in Machiavelli's eyes, Caesar's murderer – Brutus and Cassius – become positive heroes, whom he liberates them

232 *Discourses* I, 58, 119.

233 F. Meinecke, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, 140.

234 Cf. N. Rubinstein, 'A New Epoch. Machiavelli,' 54; D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 170.

235 Cf. *Discourses* I, 10, 31–33, I, 17, pp 47–48, I, 34, 73–74.

236 *The Prince*, 52, 55–56.

237 Cf. the detailed analysis of Julius Caesar's description in *Discourses* in: E. Werner, 'Von Tyrannen und Fürsten...', 75 ff.

238 *Discourses* I, 10, 31–33.

from the lowest circle of hell, where Dante had placed them earlier.²³⁹ These two tyrant-killers made use of the only effective antidote to tyrannical government – conspiracy and political murder. Machiavelli reveals here, however, another paradox, noting that if the usurper-tyrant who follows does not kill Brutus – the primary defender of the republican order – he will be able to maintain power for only a short time.²⁴⁰ The image of Julius Caesar sketched out on the pages of *Discourses on Livy* is a kind of antithesis of his future namesake, Cesare Borgia, the positive hero – and unnamed tyrant – of *The Prince*.

239 E. Werner, 'Von Tyrannen und Fürsten...', 55 ff.

240 Cf. *Discourses* III, 3, 215: '[...] after a change of state, either from a republic to tyranny or from tyranny to republic, a memorable execution against the enemies of present conditions is necessary. Whoever takes up a tyranny and does not kill Brutus, and whoever makes a free state and does not kill the sons of Brutus, maintains himself for little time.'

Chapter II. The Machiavellian Moment and the Political Correctness of Erasmus: The Times of Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Vettori

Having reflected on the originality found in Niccolò Machiavelli's political thought, it is worth exploring how it is characteristic and typical for the historical moment in which it was born. Although not all the ideas Machiavelli expressed were of his own making, the spirit of political realism, pragmatism, and relativism, which marks his writing on the *arcana* of governance, is undoubtedly his own. Some ideas, which inspired him, were already known in Antiquity and the Middle Ages – including the notion that certain situations require the use of force; the need to make use of lies and deception in politics; and the precedence given in political activity to realizing goals over the means by which they are achieved. Among the ancient authors who discussed these issues were Thucydides and Tacitus. In certain passages of their works, they clearly allow for moral principles to be violated in situations where the welfare of the state or the common good of the citizens is at stake.¹ Herfried Münkler, in his search for the roots of the concept of *raison d'état* in Western political thought, contrasted Thucydides' relativistic approach to ethics and politics, according to which the human individual was to be the measure of all things within Plato's ontology: political life should be regulated by certain fixed norms, including basic concepts of good and evil, with the role of politics being to ensure justice for the people and to 'educate' (*paideia*) them to be good citizens of the state. Münkler viewed these differences between the ontological and relativistic approaches as a paradigm for debate on the essence of politics in the early modern era.²

However, in premodern political philosophy the Platonic paradigm prevailed over the Thucydian paradigm, which was treated rather as an exception to the

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- 1 Cf. e.g. F. Gilbert, 'Machiavelism,' in: his, *History. Choice and Commitment*, Cambridge, Mass.–London 1977, 155 ff.; H.-J. Diesner, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Mensch, Macht, Politik und Staat im 16. Jahrhundert*, Bochum 1988, 9 ff.
 - 2 H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates. Die Begründung der Staatsraison in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 23–33; on the subject of early modern Tacitism see *ibid.*, 142 ff.

rule included, in the concepts of *necessitas legem non habet* and *ratio publicae utilitatis*. Traditional Christian political thought stressed the need to apply the principle of ‘necessity knows no law’ only in exceptional circumstances, such as in defence of the order established by God, while in ordinary situations this principle was irrelevant. In short, Machiavelli’s ideas existed long before Niccolò Machiavelli himself as an unnamed pre-Machiavellism, though such analogous concepts were often posited as emergency measures. In Machiavelli’s political thought, however, the exception to the rule became the norm (Sydney Anglo). Still, it must also be remembered that in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, some intellectuals began to present the world of politics in clearly relativistic tone.³ What, then, made the ideas Machiavelli expressed in *The Prince* so shocking both in Italy and abroad in the first half of the sixteenth century?

As mentioned earlier, one of the two basic canons of interpretation of Machiavelli’s thought is deciphering the historical context of his work in the light of the political, economic, and social changes taking place in Italy during that time.⁴ The birth of Machiavelli’s concept has often been interpreted from the perspective of the ‘crisis of the Renaissance.’ This period saw not only bloody wars on the Apennine Peninsula, culminating in the Sack of Rome in 1527, but, above all, was the time when the medieval vision of the unity of the Christian world under the papal rule finally collapsed. This process was accompanied in Italy by a transition from a type of urban-republican rule to monarchical territorial states. While motivated in part by the need to more effectively suppress unrest and social tensions in the Italian cities, this change came about largely in response to the economic and military expansion of urban republics, which were using force to bring surrounding towns and territories under their rule. This led to the emergence of new governing elites, led by members of the most prominent patrician families or by *condottiere* usurpers. In the early fourteenth century, Dante in his *Divine Comedy* described Italian cities as being ruled by tyrants, referring to the

3 H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 180.

4 Cf. two examples of such an interpretation and a summary of detailed studies by a number of historians of the Renaissance, in: H. Münkler, *Machiavelli. Die Begründung des politischen Denkens der Neuzeit aus der Krise der Republik Florenz*, Frankfurt/M. 1982, with part two providing a historical depiction of the economic and political crisis in Florence in the Late Middle Ages; A. Kłoskowska, *Machiavelli jako humanista na tle włoskiego Odrodzenia*, Łódź 1954, Chapter II – an overview of the economic, social and cultural background in Italian towns in the Renaissance era. See also a classic work about the ‘crisis of the Renaissance’ A. Chastel, *Die Krise der Renaissance 1520–1600*, Genève, 1968.

condottieri who seized power in crisis-ridden urban republics on the Apennine Peninsula.⁵ This statement remained in line with the political reality some two centuries later – during the times of Niccolò Machiavelli.

The crisis that shook Italy during that period led some intellectual circles to adopt escapist attitudes, leading to a rediscovery of ancient values, which Renaissance humanists elevated to the rank of myth. Rene König has even called Petrarch and Machiavelli ‘romantics of the early phase of urban capitalism.’ According to König, disappointed with the reality surrounding them, they eagerly sought refuge in the ancient world and its values, which in their works assumed a utopian form. In the previous chapter, I mentioned the possibility of interpreting *The Prince* as an expression of Machiavelli’s inner escape from a gloomy reality plagued by political crisis, into a literary landscape, where utopia was an aestheticized vision of the world.⁶ This resulted in a specific form of political utopia – one situated both in the historic past and the realities of the present day, and therefore lacking the qualities of perfection and immutability traditionally associated with utopian visions.⁷

Despite the utopian features which can be found in Machiavelli’s political thought, a key term in the canon of ‘historicizing’ interpretations of his work is the word ‘crisis.’ It seems that the notion of ‘crisis’ is particularly well-suited to explaining various historical processes – it provides an excellent foundation for constructing a historical narrative, providing it with a narrative tension. It also provides a good means for explaining the birth of phenomena commonly perceived as new or previously non-existent, regardless of whether a consciousness of such a crisis actually existed in a given era. Such an interpretation is often more a reflection of a feeling of crisis during the times when contemporary

5 ‘O Hidden soul/ your sad Romagna is not and never was/ without war in her tyrants’ raging blood’: D. Alighieri, *The Inferno*, trans. J. Ciardi, New York 2009, Canto 27:35–37, 228. Cf. J. Baszkiewicz, *Mysł polityczna wieków średnich*, Poznań 1998, 101.

6 R. König, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 20 ff.: ‘Die mit ästhetischen Fernbildern der aufgerührten Menschheit die Verheißung neuer Ordnung vorgaukeln. [...] Es war das Schicksal der Renaissance, nur im Kunstwerk etwas sagen zu können, was sie bedrängte [...]. Machiavelli ist nicht der Realist des Staates, sondern der Künstler einer in der Wirklichkeit unüberholbar verlorenen Ordnung, die er als fernes Bild seiner Gegenwart vorhält.’

7 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence*, New York–London 1984, 192, Gilbert here discusses the tendentious and idealized description of ancient Rome presented by Machiavelli in *Discorsi* and his proposal to return to the civic virtues of the Roman Republic; he also refers to Machiavelli’s inclination to utopian visions.

historians themselves live.⁸ In short, it is difficult to forgo the use of ‘crisis’ as a construct in the analysis of historical narrative, especially when we are seeking to identify in the past the genesis of ‘new’ phenomena and trends. Such a quality of novelty can certainly be seen in both Machiavelli’s concepts and in the intellectual culture of the period in which he lived.

The notion of crisis appears also in studies on changes in political thinking in Florence during the times of Medici dominance.⁹ A reflection of people’s awareness of political crisis and the degeneration of Florence’s republican system were frequent accusations of tyranny levelled against Lorenzo the Magnificent and the Medici family. After the death of Lorenzo de’ Medici in 1492, this criticism was bolstered by the arrogance of his son Piero. This proved to be the proverbial ‘last straw,’ leading to the exile of the Medicis in 1494 and an attempt to restore the city’s republican order. The image of a tyrant sketched out in a sermon by Savonarola, and based on the classical image of tyrannical rule known from Aristotle’s writings, must have been associated by Florentines of the day with the conduct of Lorenzo himself.¹⁰

The political mood changed only after the restoration of the Medicis in 1512, when a tendency to idealize and glorify the late Lorenzo the Magnificent began to take hold. This trend probably originated among the humanists who met in the gardens of Bernardo Rucellai for intellectual discussions, a circle to which Niccolò Machiavelli also belonged. The views of his friend, the Florentine

8 This is well illustrated by Ephraim Emerton’s interpretation from the early 1920s, found in the introduction to an edition of fourteenth-century writings on tyranny, including Coluccio Salutati’s *De tyranno*. Emerton suggests that what inspired Salutati to discuss the phenomenon of tyrannical rule and opinions that relativize tyranny was the political reality of sixteenth-century Italy: the crisis of the political system in city-republics, social upheaval, escalating political conflicts in urban communes and the signs of anarchy, the only remedy to which seemed to be the introduction of quasi-monarchist rule. Emerton makes an eloquent comparison to the situation in Italy in the 1920s (the threat of communism, revolution, etc.), with Mussolini as a benevolent ‘tyrant.’ In his view, this helps us to better understand Salutati’s *apologia* of Julius Caesar. See E. Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny. Studies in the Italian Trecento*, Cambridge 1925, 59–63.

9 See F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini...*, discussion on political and systemic transformations and social conflicts in Florence, esp. Chapter Three: ‘The Crisis in the Assumptions about Political Thinking,’ 105–152.

10 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini...*, 111; N. Rubinstein, ‘Italian Political Thought,’ in: *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, M. Goldie, Cambridge 1991, chapter ‘Florence and Venice: Guicciardini,’ 60.

diplomat and historian Francesco Guicciardini, who was the first to promote Machiavelli's works, though he also expressed his criticism with regard to *Discourses on Livy*, especially Machiavelli's idealization of ancient Rome, are of particular significance here.¹¹ In his *The History of Florence* (1509), Guicciardini both praises the greatness of Lorenzo as a ruler distinguished by his wisdom, generosity and grandeur, and expresses an appreciation of the fact that he preserved Florence's republican freedoms. At the same time, however, in his characterization of the Medicis we find references to classic tyrannical vices such as arrogance, cruelty and distrust. Moreover, Lorenzo is literally described as a tyrant, although Guicciardini says it would be difficult to find a better and more pleasant tyrant.¹² In another of his works, *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*, written in the 1520s, we can notice a tendency towards glorification of Lorenzo and his policies, although here, too, Guicciardini uses the term 'tyrannical' in relation to Medici's rule. However, he immediately relativizes this assessment, adding that it does not matter whether the governments in question are tyrannical or not: the most important thing is whether they contribute to the welfare of their subjects. Ultimately, the portrait of Lorenzo presented by Guicciardini assumes the qualities of almost superhuman perfection, with his policies being contrasted with the arrogant and prideful conduct of his sons.¹³

The differences and similarities in the views expressed by two Florentines – Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini – are well established. As a rule, what is emphasized in the latter is his characteristic realism and pragmatism, visible in both his scepticism about the idea of Italian unification and in his moderate criticism of the extreme ideas of the former.¹⁴ Both men, in turn, were united in their shared criticism of the abuses of the Church. Guicciardini, whose administrative career included his appointment as viceregent of Romagna by Pope Clement VII in 1523, wrote openly about the 'wicked tyranny of the priests' and, while remaining a deeply religious man, admitted that he had always hoped

11 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli und Guicciardini*..., 178 ff.

12 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli und Guicciardini*..., 116. On the content of *Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze*, its dating and the praise for Lorenzo the Magnificent, see also N. Rubinstein, 'Italian Political Thought,' 58 ff.

13 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli und Guicciardini*..., 121. See also the complimentary depiction of Lorenzo the Magnificent in: Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. L. Banfield, H. Mansfield, Princeton, NJ 1988, 361–363.

14 F. Gilbert, *Guicciardini, Machiavelli und die Geschichtsschreibung*..., 59 and 74, a juxtaposition of differences in the opinions and historical writing skills of Guicciardini and Machiavelli.

to see the fall of the Papal State.¹⁵ Both he and Machiavelli were supporters of the republican system, but as an aristocrat, Guicciardini favoured a more ‘mixed’ governance, modelled not on the republican system of ancient Rome, but on that of modern-day Venice.¹⁶ He saw a strong aristocracy as the surest means of protecting against tyranny.

He also often gave vent to his aristocratic contempt for the people, as seen in a collection of maxims written between 1512 and 1530, and published under the title *Ricordi*.¹⁷ Maxim 140, for example, reads: ‘To speak of the people is really to speak of a mad animal gorged with a thousand and one errors and confusions. Devoid of taste, of pleasure, of stability.’¹⁸ A democratic form of government of the people – of ‘mad animals’ – is no different from the rule of a ‘bestial and cruel tyrant,’ from whom flight offered the surest defence: ‘Run as far and fast as you can.’¹⁹ Unlike Machiavelli in *The Prince*, Guicciardini calls absolute rulers tyrants outright. He makes a distinction, though, between two types of tyrants: those who are ‘bestial and cruel,’ whom he condemned, and those who are ‘wise.’²⁰ Therefore, he gives another piece of advice: ‘Whenever a country falls into the hands of a tyrant, I think it is the duty of good citizens to try to cooperate with him and to use their influence to do good and avoid evil.’²¹

Thus, like Machiavelli’s writings, Guicciardini’s works also illustrate a phenomenon that can be described as relativizing the problem of tyranny. There are most likely two reasons for this. First, in the Italian language at that time the word ‘tyrant’ had also ethically neutral connotations and generally meant a ruler who had assumed power not by means of dynastic succession but through usurpation. Second, Guicciardini takes a different approach to the problem of power and violence than many other intellectuals of his time. In the aforementioned *Dialogue on the Government of Florence*, he argued that every government is nothing but violence over subjects, sometimes moderated by a form of honesty.²² Thus, all states, as he wrote in *Ricordi*, with the exception of republics,

15 F. Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman (Ricordi)*, trans. M. Domandi, New York 1965, 125–126.

16 N. Rubinstein, ‘Italian Political Thought,’ 59 ff.

17 Cf. on the dating and content of *Ricordi* cf. N. Rubinstein, ‘Italian Political Thought,’ 62 ff.

18 F. Guicciardini, *Maxims and Reflections*, 76 [series C, maxim 140].

19 *Ibid.*, 66 [series C, maxim 101].

20 N. Rubinstein, ‘Italian Political Thought,’ 63.

21 *Ibid.*, 98 [series C, maxim 220]. Cf. also the commentary in: H. Münkler, In Namen des Staates..., 154.

22 Qtd. after F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*..., 137.

were created by means of force and violence, and therefore there is no ruler who could be called fully legitimate. The same is true of imperial and papal power, with the violence perpetrated by the latter institution being doubled. Moreover, Guicciardini pessimistically noted that most people value gaining power over others more than they enjoy their own natural freedoms. However, he also stipulated that coercion and violence can be used only in situations of extreme necessity and do not constitute good means for state governance, the aim of which should be to ensure the safety of people and to defend their interests.²³ One could summarize Guicciardini's arguments as in the following way: nearly every form of rule is by nature usurpatory and, in a sense, tyrannical, and the world of politics could not function without the use of force.

This conclusion – that the essence of politics is force, or even violence – was clearly evident in the Florentine humanist circles during the Medici restoration period in the 1520s.²⁴ Such thoughts were also openly expressed by Francesco Vettori, a diplomat and envoy of Florence to the papal court, and one of Niccolò Machiavelli's closest friends, to whom he wrote in a letter dated December 1513 about having completed the first version of *The Prince*.²⁵ In *Sommario della Storia d'Italia dal 1511 al 1527*, Vettori makes assessments that are even more extreme than Machiavelli's maxims:

[...] in speaking of the affairs of this world without respect and in accordance with the truth, I claim that if it were possible to organize the state invented and described by Plato, or that about which the Englishman Thomas More writes, supposedly found in Utopia, perhaps those could be said not to be tyrannical governments; but all the republics and principalities which I have encountered in history, or which I have seen in reality, seem to me to be tyrannies [...]; *take the kingdom of France, where although there is a most perfect king; yet the state itself is nothing more than a great tyranny*, where the nobility is armed and others have no right to carry arms; [the nobility] pay no taxes, and so the full burden of funding the state rests on the poor peasants. There are parliaments there in which they quarrel endlessly [...]. One can also take the republics as an example and examine at the system in Venice [...]. *I would like someone to show me the difference between a king and a tyrant [...]. If we were to examine the principles on which these*

23 N. Rubinstein, 'Italian Political Thought,' 62; J. Malarczyk, *U źródeł włoskiego realizmu politycznego. Machiavelli i Guicciardini*, Lublin 1963, 189.

24 F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*..., 129.

25 Indications of Vettori's favourable opinion of *The Prince* or parts of this work available to him can be found in his correspondence with Machiavelli dated 15 January 1514, see Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ed. A.L. Burd, Oxford 1891, publisher's introduction, 33.

principalities are based, we would find that they were all created by violence or deceit
[emphasis mine – I.K.].²⁶

Vettori's argument is intriguing not only because of its kinship with the maxims Machiavelli wrote in a more veiled, rhetorical-dialectic convention, and due to its extreme note of 'realism,' or even political cynicism, by explicitly equating all existing governments with tyranny.²⁷ Also interesting are his non-Italian references to another 'bestseller' of the time – Thomas More's *Utopia*. This provokes the question of where Machiavelli's thinking in terms of political realism, pragmatism, and relativism found its counterparts in other European countries in the early sixteenth century.

Machiavelli versus Erasmus and the Principles of Renaissance-era Political Correctness

In scholars' efforts to analyze the cultural context of the early sixteenth century, comparisons have been made between three Renaissance humanists, each of whom authored a work that had a huge impact spanning many generations: Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas More, and Erasmus Desiderius Roterodamus.²⁸ These names became synonymous with the phase of Renaissance humanism that covered the period just before and during the early years of the Reformation. Compared to Machiavelli and More, Erasmus is regarded as the least 'progressive' and 'revolutionary' of the three – at least according to

26 *Sommario della storia d'Italia dal 1511 al 1527, composto da Francesco Vettori per cura di Alfredo Reumont Pietro Franceschini*, Firenze, 1848. On this statement by Vettori, cf. comments e.g. in S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 191, 201 and D. Sternberger, *Drei Wurzeln der Politik*, in: his, *Schriften*, Frankfurt/M. 1978, vol. II. 2, 95 f.

27 H. Münkler, *In Namen des Staates...*, 156 ff., points to similarities between the views of Francesco Vettori and the concepts of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes.

28 The most important for me were the works by J.H. Hexter quoted in Chapter I, in which he compared selected aspects of thoughts and the political language of Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas More and Claude Seyssel; see esp. J.H. Hexter, *Seyssel, Machiavelli, and Polybius VI. The Mystery of The Missing Translation*, 'Studies in the Renaissance' 3, 1956; his, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation. More, Machiavelli, and Seyssel*, New York 1973; and an article partially inspired by Hexter: J.R. Major, *The Renaissance Monarchy as seen by Erasmus, More and Machiavelli*, in: *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Memory of E.H. Harbison*, ed. T.K. Raab, J.E. Seigel, Princeton 1969, 17–31. Cf. also S. Świeżawski, *U źródeł nowożytnej etyki. Filozofia moralna w Europie XV wieku*, Kraków 1987, 213–216.

the words of the German publisher of a critical edition of *Institutio Principis Christiani* in 1968.²⁹ Erasmus' works, which were widely commented on in his time, also left a strong mark on the perception of humanist and Renaissance culture in modern historiography scholarship. However, most of his writings did not remain in active circulation among intellectuals beyond the century in which they were written. Therefore, Erasmus' *Institutio* not became a 'canonical source,' although it undoubtedly belonged to the canon of works read by humanists and people involved in the world of politics in its day, and became a model for other works written in the 'mirrors for princes' (*specula principis*) genre. Comparative analyses of various works by Erasmus made in the twentieth century contributed to a rediscovery of the value that his political concepts had for the times in which he lived.³⁰ Today, his political thought may once again become popular mainly due to its clearly pacifistic overtones, as well as his treatment of the topics of tolerance and irenicism.

The political concepts of Machiavelli belong to the relativizing paradigm, while Erasmus was a proponent of the ontological approach.³¹ For this reason, it

29 I used mainly: Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Fürstenerziehung. Institutio Principis Christiani. Die Erziehung eines christlichen Fürsten*, ed. A.J. Gail, Paderborn 1968 [later cited as *Institutio*]. It is a bilingual edition with the Latin original and its German translation. Cf. *ibid.*, publisher's introduction, subsection *Die Entfaltung der politischen Ideen des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 9 ff. Despite the fact that Gail uses the terms 'progressive' and 'revolutionary' *cum grano salis*, arguing with earlier opinions on political conservatism or even opportunism of Erasmus expressed by historians, this choice of words accurately reflects the 'revolutionary' and progressive nature of the end of the 1960s, which was evident in more than just phraseology. For the English translation of the present book I also found the following English edition helpful: Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. L. Jardine, trans. N.M. Cheshire, M.J. Heath, Cambridge 1997 [hereinafter *The Education*].

30 A.J. Gail, *Institutio*, publisher's introduction, 22 ff., claims that the political concepts of Erasmus of Rotterdam were never treated in a dogmatic way by the author himself. Despite an evolution of his views, the political doctrine of Erasmus can in fact be referred to as uniform. Since the publication of the 11-volume edition of *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roteordami denuo recognitum et actum per P.S. Allen*, Oxford 1906–1947, there was a change in the view on the opportunism and political conservatism of Erasmus, which had been dominant in the past. At that time, his political views started to be regarded as topical in the context of Renaissance problems. It was especially political events and cultural changes that started in the 1930s, as well as the comparative interpretation of his entire literary output, that led to a rejection of his established position between opportunism and moralizing.

31 H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 47–60.

seems worth comparing both approaches, bearing in mind that not only *omne simile est etiam dissimile* but also *omne dissimile est etiam simile*.

***Institutio Principis Christiani* as a Masterpiece of Renaissance Humanism**

From Italy, plagued by constant wars and political crises, let us move to the north-western edge of the Holy Roman Empire. Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus (1469–1536) – generally known in English simply as Erasmus and often referred to during the Renaissance as the ‘Prince of the Humanists’ – was born in the same year as Machiavelli. His homeland was the Netherlands. The similarities during this era between the fates of Italy and the Duchy of Burgundy, of which the Netherlands was officially then a part, are striking. Late medieval and Renaissance Burgundy – like Renaissance Italy – became a cradle of culture, whose influence spread far beyond its borders. Both Italian and Flemish and Dutch cities, then entering the early stages of capitalism, were among the most economically developed in Europe, and the art and culture flourishing there provided models that were eagerly replicated in other European countries. The Burgundian court life, with its pomp and ceremony, first under Philip the Good and later his son Charles the Bold, became a fashionable model for courts throughout Europe. Efforts to centralize power under the proto-absolutist rule of Philip and Charles, who particularly during the Wars of Liège (1465–1468) sought to limit local freedoms and autonomy, to some extent recalled the period of domination by usurpers and ‘tyrants’ in the Italian territories. Following the death of Charles the Bold, who was killed at Nancy in 1477, Burgundy experienced a period of anarchy and turmoil. A limited restoration of local and municipal privileges by subsequent Habsburg rulers failed to achieve lasting peace in Burgundy, despite periods of relative calm. In the 1520s, the nobles’ discontent continued to smoulder in parts of the Netherlands, following more widespread outbursts of violence (e.g. the uprising led by Grutte Pier in 1515), which led to fighting between individual provinces that ravaged the whole country.³²

32 Cf. an excellent overview of the culture of fifteenth century Burgundy in the landmark work by J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: a Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIV th and XVth Centuries*, London 1924. A fine introduction to the political background in Burgundy and the Netherlands at that time is provided by F. Geldner in *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Berlin 1930 [reprint 1965], 20–40, and briefly also by W. Blockmans, ‘Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit’

These events must have influenced the political views of Erasmus – an eminent theologian, as well as an advisor to rulers on matters concerning education and politics. Contrary to his nickname ‘Roterodamus,’ he – not without reason – called himself a ‘citizen of the world’ (*civis totius mundi*). He spent many years travelling and living outside the Netherlands – in France, England, Italy, Germany, and particularly in his beloved city of Basel, where he published numerous works and ended his busy life.³³ It was in this city in 1516 that *Institutio Principis Christiani* (*The Education of the Christian Prince*), a work Erasmus wrote during his frequent travels between England, the Netherlands and Basel, first appeared in print.³⁴

The book was written shortly after *Il Principe* – just before the ‘outbreak’ of the Reformation. The last few years before the appearance of Martin Luther’s *Ninety-five Theses* were ground-breaking in many respects, and were also seen as such by people of the time who had at least a passing knowledge of recent political events. In the early sixteenth century, a new, younger generation of rulers took the helm of government in various countries: Henry VIII Tudor in England (1509); Francis I in France (1515); Charles Habsburg in Burgundy (1506) and Spain (1516) and soon afterwards in in the Holy Roman Empire (1519); Christian II in Denmark and Sweden (1513, 1520); Louis II of the Jagiellonian dynasty in Hungary and Bohemia (1516); and a bit earlier Sigismund I Jagiellon in Poland and Lithuania (1506). The ascension to the throne of a new generation of rulers instilled high hopes in humanist scholars.³⁵ These were manifested at the time in the writing of *specula principis*, or so-called ‘mirrors for princes,’ such as Erasmus’

in: *Erasmus von Rotterdam. Die Aktualität seines Denkens*, ed. J. Sperna Weiland, W. Blockmans, W. Frijhoff, Hamburg 1988, 67 ff.

33 Examples of works devoted to the life and literary output of Erasmus include: J. Huizinga, *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation*, Princeton–New Jersey 1984 (ed. 1, 1924); G. Faludy, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, London 1970 (a work without footnotes but with a list of sources); G. Jensma, *Erasmus von Rotterdam (1469–1536)*, in: *Erasmus von Rotterdam. Die Aktualität seines Denkens*, 9–56; L.-E. Halkin, *Erasmus von Rotterdam. Eine Biographie*, Zürich 1989; R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe. The Prince of Humanists 1501–1536*, Edinburgh 1993.

34 Erasmus had started writing *Institutio* in July 1515 in Basel and submitted it for printing in March of the following year; see F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Berlin 1930 [reprint 1965], 72. This work, dedicated to young prince Charles of Habsburg, came into being at the request of J. Le Sauvage, Chancellor of Barbantia; cf. W. Blockmans, ‘Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,’ 65; J. Huizinga, *Erasmus...*, 92; R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe...*, 165 ff.

35 Cf. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 70.

exquisite Latin *Institutio*, or *Apophthegmes des Rois et Generaux*, written in French between 1516 and 1522 by Guiliam Budé, a friend of Erasmus.³⁶

However, the hopes were soon followed by disappointments. After making several visits to the court in England, Erasmus found himself disillusioned by Henry VIII's lavish lifestyle and the machinations of his foreign policy. This led him to dedicate his *The Education of a Christian Prince* to then fifteen-year-old Charles, grandson of Emperor Maximilian I, who came of age in January 1515.³⁷ *Institutio* was conceived and written as *speculum principum* – a treatise on the education and preparation for rule of a young heir to the throne. It thus belongs to the same literary genre, one very popular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,³⁸ as Machiavelli's *The Prince* – an atypical and 'warped' mirror of princes.³⁹ Moreover, *Institutio Principis Christiani* can be considered a masterpiece of Renaissance humanism, not only because Erasmus' contemporaries viewed him as an authority and the book was reprinted in numerous editions,⁴⁰

36 O this subject see F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 157 ff., who draws attention to a hint of political realism and themes similar to Machiavelli's *The Prince* visible in the work by Budé, for example a reference to the life of Lysander and the statement that a king should sometimes wear the fox's skin if he cannot have his way in the lion's skin...; cf. also W. Blockmans, 'Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,' 70.

37 The revised second edition of *Institutio* was published in Basel in 1518. The aim of the publication was to dedicate it to Ferdinand, the younger brother of Charles Habsburg. Ferdinand supposedly knew the work by heart and always carried it with him. Cf. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 72, 144; J.R. Major, *The Renaissance Monarchy...*, 18.

38 A detailed and long study on medieval *specula principis* was provided by W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen...* On the subject of Erasmus being potentially inspired by former mirrors for princes, see F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 138 ff. An excellent overview of mirrors for princes written in Germany can be found in: B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland im Zeitalter des Humanismus und der Reformation*, pt. 2: *Bibliographische Grundlagen und ausgewählte Interpretationen: Jacob Wimpfeling, Wolfgang Seidel, Johann Sturm, Urban Rieger*, München 1981. Cf. also H.-O. Mühleisen, T. Stammen, 'Politische Ethik und politische Erziehung. Fürstenspiegel der Frühen Neuzeit,' in: *Fürstenspiegel der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. H.-O. Mühleisen, T. Stammen, M. Philipp, Frankfurt/M.–Leipzig 1997, 9–21.

39 See more on this subject above, Part One, Chapter I.

40 Including the publication of excerpts and translations, this work had 43 editions, 21 during the author's lifetime, 9 more until 1554, and only 11 until 1721. See a comparison between the number of editions of *Institutio* and other political writings by Erasmus in: F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 163 ff.

but mainly because of its profoundly erudite content.⁴¹ It can also be considered to be a model of political correctness in that day.

A reading of *Institutio* provides insight into the significance of the *specula principis* both as a literary genre and, indeed, as a political tool. Having been appointed in 1516 as a councillor to the Duke of Burgundy – the future emperor Charles V – with an annual salary of 300 florins,⁴² Erasmus, like other authors of works in this genre, sought not only to provide the heir to the throne with specific knowledge about the arcana of governance but also, and perhaps above all, to help shape his personality, character, and behaviour. In the hereditary monarchies that dominated in Europe at the time, the formation of appropriate character and personality traits in potential successors to the throne was one of the important means of ensuring a government that could meet the expectations of its subjects. In a sense, this gave a chance for some authors of ‘mirrors’ to influence the course of politics by ensuring an appropriate upbringing for a future king.⁴³ Therefore, writing a *speculum principum* was actually a political act and the authors of ‘mirrors for princes’ can thus be treated as active participants in political life, and their works as an instrument of great power politics.⁴⁴

Erasmus Desiderius certainly felt this way about his own role during his time at the court in Brussels or while accompanying the young Charles on his diplomatic journeys. In *Institutio*, he presents himself as a supporter of monarchy, which he generally views as a reflection of divine power, and therefore the best political system.⁴⁵ At the same time, however, he uses the traditional metaphor of the state-body to articulate his support for the notion of the primacy of the political community and the state over the ruling monarch. According to Erasmus,

41 Sixteenth-century authors of *Fürstespiegel* saw *Institutio* by Erasmus as a model and excellent example of the whole literary genre of mirrors for princes. Cf. B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 21. Moreover, *Institutio* became a must-read recommended by many authors; see *ibid.*, 84 ff., 89 ff., 96 ff., 102–105, 106–111, 118 ff., 141 ff.

42 Cf. an overview of this period in Erasmus’ life in: J. Huizinga, *Erasmus...*, 91 ff. R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe...*, 165 ff.

43 Erasmus’ idea that in hereditary monarchies the lack of the privilege to elect the ruler may be compensated by an appropriate education (*a recta institutione*) of the heir to the throne, was seen as an explanation for the development of the literary genre of mirrors for princes by H.-O. Mühleisen, T. Stammen, ‘Politische Ethik und politische Erziehung,’ 10.

44 On the role of a Renaissance scholar in matters related to politics and the state, cf. W. Blockmans, ‘Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,’ 57 ff.

45 E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Berlin 1967, 43 ff.

the state remains the state, even in the absence of a ruler, e.g. following the death of an heirless king. The monarch also cannot exist without the political community that forms the body of the state, even though the prince is its most important part – its head.⁴⁶ According to some researchers (Eberhard von Koerber), this thought represents the rudiment of a depersonalized, institutional concept of the state, at least a century ahead of similar concepts in Western political thought, manifested in the phrase: *Princeps mortalis, respublica aeterna*.⁴⁷ However, such a claim may be somewhat overstated, especially when one considers e.g. the late-medieval notion of the ‘Crown of the Kingdom of Poland’ (*Corona Regni Poloniae*, also referred to as the ‘Polish Crown’)⁴⁸ or the English concept of ‘the king’s two bodies’ from the latter half of the sixteenth century.⁴⁹

At the same time, in accordance with the rules of rhetoric, Erasmus, expresses his reservations about absolute monarchy in an indirect, albeit decisive manner: if there existed a prince who possessed every virtue, one could indeed wish for a ‘pure’ monarchy (*pura et simplex Monarchy*). However, in reality no such rulers exist and therefore the safest political system and best means of preventing tyranny is a moderate ‘mixed monarchy’, one containing elements of both aristocratic and democratic systems (*Monarchiam Aristokratiae et Demokratiae admixtam*).⁵⁰ Still, if we read between the lines, we get the impression that the author’s sympathy lies with elective monarchy.⁵¹ In fact, measured criticism of hereditary monarchies is

46 *Institutio*, 182 ff.

47 This sentence comes from a work by Albericus Gentilis, *De jure Belli Libri Tres* (1612); see E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 28.

48 The term had been used in reference to the territory of the Kingdom of Poland since the late Middle Ages. The Polish Crown was a component part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569 to 1795).

49 See also, Part Three, Chapters I and II, esp. fragments on the English doctrine of ‘king’s two bodies’ from the latter half of the sixteenth century.

50 *Institutio*, 96.

51 It may be suggested by the first sentences of Chapter One, devoted to the qualities of an elective monarch, which include a warning against electing a monarch who could have the characteristics of a tyrant; *Institutio* 42 ff. Apart from ancestry, Erasmus lists the following qualities: first of all, looks, i.e. pleasant appearance and height of stature (at the same time stating that these qualities were usually important to barbarians); second, gifts of the mind, most importantly patience and a placid spirit, so that the future monarch does not get angry easily and is not too irritable, which could lead to tyranny; the monarch cannot be too slow in making decisions nor easily influenced by other people or his own emotions. A candidate to the throne should also be healthy and of an appropriate age, preferably middle-aged so that he has the mental powers useful in the difficult art of ruling; and so that he is not himself governed by emotions.

discernable throughout his writings.⁵² The vision of the state outlined in *Institutio* and other works by Erasmus, labelled 'Renaissance monarchy' by the American historian John Russel Major,⁵³ fit within the definition of an estate monarchy, i.e. a system that functioned on the basis of consensual relations between the ruler and his subjects, with limits on monarchical rule.⁵⁴

Hence the strong emphasis Erasmus places on the thesis that the governing of Christians requires not so much dominion (*dominium*) as governance (*administratio*).⁵⁵ The *Institutio*, however, is essentially devoted to the upbringing of a hereditary prince. This explains the author's insistence on the proper selection of a good preceptor (Seneca is presented as an ideal)⁵⁶ and the quality of the education received by the heir to the throne. In hereditary monarchies, the future fate of the entire state and the welfare of its subjects depended on this.⁵⁷ These leads the author to an extremely important question: Who can an adult ruler become if he has been playing the role of a tyrant since childhood?⁵⁸ Thus, the proper education of the heir to the throne needs to be understood as a task that is essentially political in nature – one that will affect the fate of an entire community. In the era of monarchism, such a way of thinking has been characterized by the thesis that it is the prince himself who, through his life and

Moreover, Erasmus' harsh criticism of arranged marriages also seems to suggest that he was critical of hereditary rule (cf. J.R. Major, *The Renaissance Monarchy...*, 19 ff.) and indirectly condemned the marriage policy of the Habsburgs. Cf. also publishers' commentaries in: A.J. Gail, publisher's introduction to *Institutio*, 26.

52 F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 86 ff.; cf. also E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 56.

53 J.R. Major, *The Renaissance Monarchy...*, 31: 'it was the monarchy of the Renaissance, a monarchy whose power rested neither on its army nor on its bureaucracy but on the degree of support it received from the people.' For a more detailed definition, see *ibid.*, 17, and remarks on the 'contractual' political system of the estate monarchy preferred by Erasmus, *ibid.*, 19.

54 Cf. E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 26 ff. To denote the state, Erasmus uses vocabulary of medieval origin: *respublica*, *civitas* and *patria*. Moreover, in his writings Erasmus developed a vision of universal *monarchia christiana*; *ibid.*, 23 ff.

55 Cf. an analysis of this motif, strongly accentuated in *Institutio*, in the context of views expressed in other works by Erasmus in: F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 83.

56 *Institutio*, 48 ff.

57 *Ibid.*, 44 ff.

58 *Ibid.*, 50 ff.

conduct, sets an example and shapes the behaviour of his subjects.⁵⁹ There is nothing worse in the world than an unjust monarch, Erasmus says emphatically, no pestilence has a faster and stronger impact on the lives of the people than an unjust ruler or a cruel tyrant, as *'vita Principis rapit ac transfor mores et animos civium'*.⁶⁰ This statement makes it clear to the reader that it is the monarch – through his education, personality, character and lifestyle – who 'educates' the ruled, and not the other way round.

The rhetorical 'reversal' used by Machiavelli in *The Prince* was fashionable among humanist writers in general. We can find it in the works of other contemporary writers, including Erasmus in *The Praise of Folly* (*Moriae encomium*, 1509, 1st ed. 1511),⁶¹ in which he expresses, among other things, his lack of trust of those in power by means of satirical arguments and presents a caricatured, twisted image of the human world.⁶² However, the structural composition of *Institutio* (somewhat lacking in proportion), construction of its arguments (rather unsystematic), and form and content of its narrative (strongly coloured by Erasmus' characteristic individual style) are all quite orthodox and typical of the *specula principis* genre. One of the most important sources from which he drew advice for *The Education of a Christian Prince* were aphorisms on the art of governing collected in his book *Adagia*, published in Basel in 1515, which was later reissued in numerous editions and became one of the greatest publishing successes of the sixteenth century.⁶³

1. The quoting of aphorisms, long paraenetic catalogues based on the antinomy of Christian ruler *versus* tyrant, and frequent repetition of the main theses were

59 Cf. a detailed analysis of this thesis posed by Erasmus in: G. Schoch, *Die Bedeutung der Erziehung und Bildung aus der Sicht des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, Zürich 1988, 162–176, esp. 166 ff.

60 *Institutio*, 70 ff. In this context, Erasmus also brings up another metaphor: the prince is like a doctor for the state: 'Princeps quid aliud est quam Medicus Reipublicae,' *ibid.*, 188 ff.

61 M. Weickert, *Die Literarische Form...*, 62, fn. 88a.

62 Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, ed. A. Grafton, trans. H.H. Hudson, Princeton 2015.

63 See a characterization of the form and literary structure of *Institutio* in: F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 72; *Institutio*, publisher's introduction (A.J. Gail), 24 ff. Erasmus' commentary on *Adagium* (I iii 1); cf. the incomplete English edition: Desiderius Erasmus, *Adages*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, in: *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 31–34, Toronto 1982: hereinafter: *Adages*, esp. *Adages* I iii 1, vol. 31, 227–236. Cf. also the publisher's introduction to the English language selection of adages: *Erasmus on His Times. A Shortened Version of the 'Adages' of Erasmus*, ed. M. Mann Phillips, Cambridge 1980, viii ff.

all supposed to make it easier for a young prince to digest the content of the work. An extremely important role here was played by the examples, especially negative ones, which were supposed to instil feelings of disgust in the reader towards the stigmatized behaviours.⁶⁴ There is a large number of such examples (see Table One), while there are far fewer examples of positive rulers.⁶⁵ Erasmus provides an entire gallery of tyrants on the pages of *The Education of a Christian Prince*. The group contains both historical figures – ancient rulers, mainly from the Greek world (including Alexander the Great, but also the Persian monarchs Xerxes and Darius) and Roman emperors and statesmen (including Julius Caesar). Furthermore, Erasmus counts mythical heroes (including Achilles and figures from Arthurian legends⁶⁶) among the tyrannical figures. This collection of portraits of tyrants is supplemented by biblical references to the abuse of royal power. Some 15 years later Erasmus gathered together many of these examples and republished them in *Apophthegmata* – a work similarly didactic in character, in this case addressed to the young Prince Jülich-Kleve William (1516–1596).⁶⁷ It seems that the main aim of Erasmus' teaching method here (i.e., the use of exemplification) was to arouse in the young prince primarily negative feelings – loathing and disgust. He would thereby be all the more successfully deterred from imitating patterns deemed negative.

Besides, Erasmus adds to the treatise his own translation of the ancient Greek treatise dedicated to the education in the matters of government of a ruler, namely Isocrates' *De regno administrando ad Nicodem*.⁶⁸ This treatise, written ca. 374 BCE and dedicated to Nicocles, the young Cypriot ruler of Salamis and son of the 'tyrant' Evagoras, provided nothing close to a negative image of tyranny, invoking instead the neutral understanding of the term in

64 The tutor should pay particular attention to ensuring that the heir apparent is disgusted with the very expression 'tyrant and master' (*tyrannidis ac domini*) by constantly reminding him of hateful names of tyrants, e.g. Dionysius of Syracuse, Nero, Caligula and Domitian; see *Institutio*, 78 ff.

65 *Ibid.*, 140 ff. Cf. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 104.

66 *Institutio*, 134 ff.

67 In 1531 in *Apophthegmata*, Erasmus gathered examples of famous people's lives, including almost all exempla which he had earlier presented in *Institutio* and *Adagia*. For a longer discussion on this subject, see Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Apophthegmata. Spruchweisheiten*, ed. H. Philips, Würzburg 2001, publisher's introduction, 13 ff.; cf. also *Institutio*, publisher's introduction (A.J. Gail), 22.

68 *Ibid.*, 40 ff. The treatise by Isocrates is not included by today's publishers of *Institutio*, but it used to be added to early modern editions and translations of *Institutio*, cf. examples in the catalogue of Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel.

Table One: Examples of Tyrants in *Institutio*, Listed in Order of Number of References^a

Roman Emperors and Julius Caesar	Nero (pp. 70, 78, 88, 112, 140, 180); Julius Caesar (pp. 64, 134, 138, 140); Caligula (pp. 70, 78, 80); Claudius (p. 80); Domitian (p. 78); Heliogabal (p. 70); Titus Vespasian (p. 138)
Other ancient rulers	Alexander the Great (p. 40, 64, 126, 130, 132, 134, 138, 146, 200); Phalaris (approx. 580–555 BCE, tyrant of Akragas in Sicily – pp. 76, 78, 122, 138); Dionysius I (tyrant of Syracuse 405–367 BCE – pp. 76, 78, 122, 166); Xerxes (pp. 134, 138, 140); Darius (pp. 130, 138); Polycrates (the tyrant of Samos from VI BCE – p. 122)
Mythical rulers	Achilles (pp. 90, 135, 138); Busiris (ruler of Egypt – p. 80); Midas (king of Phrygia – p. 80, 114); Mezentius (ruler of the Etruscans – p. 78); Pentheus (ruler of Thebes and grandson of Cadmus – p. 80); bad rulers from the legends about Arthur and Lancelot (p. 134)
Key biblical references to tyranny	Samuel 8, 11

^aAccording to the frequency of references in *Institutio* as compiled by A.J. Gail.

ancient Greece.⁶⁹ The recommendations of Isocrates concerning such topics as treating subjects with mildness and love, preventing violence, and winning the support of the simple people were cherished by Erasmus himself, as well as by other authors of ‘mirrors’ from his era.⁷⁰

The Education of a Christian Prince contains themes typical of Erasmus’ overall oeuvre, such as his criticism of bloodshed and war,⁷¹ or his support for the humanistic concept of nobility as being based not on birth but on the qualities of one’s spirit and education.⁷² The characteristic elements of his way of thinking, which distinguish him from contemporary Florentine intellectuals of his generation, such as Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Vettori, included his didactic and anthropological optimism. It stemmed from his hopeful belief that people can

69 See the Introduction to this book.

70 On the content of Isocrates’ *De regno*, see W. Münch, *Erziehung aus alter und neuer Zeit*, München 1909, 13–18. Other examples of authors of Renaissance mirrors inspired by this treatise are listed by B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 79.

71 *Institutio*, esp. 206 ff., the condemnation of war as a political tool and a permission to participate solely in defensive war. The criticism of wars, especially those justified by religious premises and seen as a tool to limit freedom and introduce tyranny, is also visible in other works by Erasmus, e.g. *Adagia*, cf. the commentary to adage *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, in: *Erasmus on His Times...*, 136. The evolution of Erasmus’ views on war is shown by A.J. Gail, *Institutio*, publisher’s introduction, 13 ff.

72 *Institutio*, 61 ff.

be shaped by the process of their education, and that the good side of human nature can prevail among those in power⁷³. He also praised a governance without bloodshed and violence, and condemned the use of force (*potentia*) as a method in the realm of politics.⁷⁴

At the same time, Erasmus, who was aware of the specificity of the *specula principis* as a literary genre, confessed that in *Institutio* he drew an ideal picture of a monarch – he calls him a true Christian prince or, in short, a true prince – worthy of imitation by other rulers. The main theme running through the whole work is the proper upbringing and preparation of the ruler in the arcana of governing. The construction of the narrative and the construction of the argument are based on an antinomy: the true Christian prince *versus* the unjust ruler, or tyrant. Into this juxtaposition Erasmus weaves four main and secondary themes. The criterion for judging them as main and secondary themes is the frequency of their use and the amount of space devoted to them.

First Major Theme: The Rule of a True Prince as a Reflection of Divine Power Versus Tyrannical Rule as a Reflection of the Devil's Power

The theme of the truly Christian prince as an earthly reflection and vicar of God (*Dei simulacrum, Dei vicarium*), who should therefore imitate the 'Eternal Prince,'⁷⁵ appears numerous times in the long, first part of the book. In the introductory dedication to the young prince Charles of Habsburg, the Duke of Burgundy and future emperor Charles V, Erasmus references to such authorities as the ancient historians Xenophon and Plutarch.⁷⁶ He claims that princes have 'something beyond human nature, something wholly divine' (*hominem majus, planeque divinum*) in them, namely the right to 'absolute rule over free and willing subjects,' adding that the unjust prince in turn 'presents the image of the devil' (*Daemonis imaginem repraesentant*).⁷⁷ He begins and ends this discussion

73 Ibid., 50; Erasmus, claims that it would be bold to assume that all people are good, but it is not difficult to find among thousands one person who stands out due to his wisdom and respectability (*probitate sapientiaque*) and is fit to rule others. For more information on Erasmus' didactic optimism, see G. Schoch, *Die Bedeutung der Erziehung und Bildung aus der Sicht des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, e.g. 173.

74 *Institutio*, 40 ff., 100 ff.

75 *Institutio*, 72 ff.: see also *ibid.*, 122 ff; *The Education*, 23.

76 *Institutio*, 38 ff; *The Education*, 1–2.

77 *Institutio*, 70 ff; *The Education*, 1, 22.

with a prince-God metaphor, rooted in Aristotle's concept of authority in its different forms: 'man over animals, master over slaves, father over children, husband over wife,' as well as its highest form, the king's authority, which is seen as 'particularly godlike.' In contrast, the fate of the tyrant is to 'play the part of him who is the opposite of God' (*Deo dissilimus*).⁷⁸

Erasmus makes use of a powerful cosmogonic metaphor while discussing this theme. Just as the image of God in the sky is created by the sun, so God created rulers as a living image of Himself. Princes are therefore, like other heavenly bodies, a reflection of the light of God's wisdom. Just as the sun ranks highest among the signs of the Zodiac and remains motionless (stillness being a sign of absolute perfection),⁷⁹ he who fortune has placed above others should carry out their actions with due patience and without conceit. Likewise, just as God fills the universe with goodness, a prince has a duty to bring prosperity to the lives of his subjects. A tyrant, in turn, brings to his subjects widespread poverty.⁸⁰

The metaphor of the God-monarch as the sun corresponded to that era's notions about the universe. Similar metaphors are also often found in early modern iconography – i.e. in the genre of allegorical imagery referred to as *emblems*, which was born in the same period in which Erasmus' works were written.⁸¹ However, descriptions of the power of the prince as a reflection of divine power (*rex imago dei*) was already typical for the medieval *specula principis*.⁸² In Renaissance 'mirrors of princes,' this metaphor was expressed more emphatically by means of references to authors from pagan Antiquity.⁸³ Here the aim of Erasmus, like other Christian authors, was not the deification of the ruler himself, but rather to emphasize the divine origins of his monarchical power.⁸⁴ This was also the aim of his use of the metaphorical figure of the God-monarch, which he used the

78 *Institutio*, 98 ff; *The Education*, 37.

79 Cf. C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Cambridge 2012 [1964], 201–203.

80 *Institutio*, 74 ff.

81 M. Appel, A. Krieger, "Non sine causa." Zur Darstellung von Herrschaft in Emblemen der Renaissance,' in: *Basileus und Tyrann. Herrscherbilder und Bilder von Herrschaft in der Englischen Renaissance*, ed. U. Baumann, Frankfurt/M. 1999, 87 ff.

82 Cf. W. Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen...*, 24–34.

83 Apart from the above-mentioned examples, cf. also *Institutio*, 78 ff., esp. Erasmus' statement that a prince resembles a divine being rather than a mortal: 'Numini quam homini similis.'

84 See the overview of all works by Erasmus with focus on his deeply Christian interpretation of the power of kings as subordinate to the only truly sovereign power of God and Christ; F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 85; W. Blockmans,

authority of Scripture to validate – citing Psalm 82 from the Book of Psalms: ‘I said, “You are ‘gods.’”⁸⁵ Over one hundred years later, the God-monarch metaphor became one of a key formulas underpinning the classical absolutism, though it was deeply rooted, too, in the medieval concepts of princely power.⁸⁶

Minor Theme: If the Prince is Not a Philosopher, He is a Tyrant

Through his claim that ‘*Ni Philosophus fueris, Princeps esse non potes*,’⁸⁷ Erasmus expressed his conviction, supported by authoritative voices from Antiquity (Plato, Cicero), that the most important distinctive feature of a prince was wisdom (*sapientia*), traditionally labelled by authors of *specula principis* as *prudencia*, and considered as the first of the four cardinal virtues for rulers, alongside *iustitia*, *fortitudo*, and *temperamentia*.⁸⁸

The statement ‘Unless you are a Philosopher, you cannot be a Prince’ opens Erasmus’ *The Education*. In his opinion, rulers should be like philosophers, but in the sense of their knowledge of the art of governing people, rather than of the rules governing the universe.⁸⁹ He also refers to this theme in other writings, though he simultaneously seems to value absolute freedom for the thinker, who should not be constrained by the ruler.⁹⁰ His is not trying here to put philosophers on the throne, but rather, in his idealistic assumptions about monarchs, make them philosophers and thus give them more freedom of action, and keep those they rule safe from the threat of tyranny. While the philosopher-king was a recurrent

‘Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,’ 62. E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 75 ff., on the one hand agrees that in Erasmus’ works the vision of the power of kings as *imago dei* has a medieval origin, but on the other hand notes that his concept of state power has the characteristics of an early modern understanding of official authorities; *ibid.*, 67 ff., 70.

85 There was of course an ideological intention behind the reference to this verse. It perverted the meaning of the whole psalm, which criticized ‘unjust judges.’ The key excerpt is as follows (82:6–7): ‘I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.’ Using the *topos* of the ruler-god in literature related to mirrors for princes; cf. also, Part Three, Chapter I.

86 M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson, Quebec 1973, 192–209.

87 *Institutio*, 58 ff.

88 B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 182 ff.

89 *Institutio*, 38 ff., with references to Plato and Aristotle.

90 See an overview of this motif in Polish source literature in: J. Domański, *Erazm i filozofia. Studium o koncepcji filozofii Erazma z Rotterdamu*, Wrocław 1973, 82–87.

theme in political literature throughout the sixteenth century,⁹¹ it reemerged as a key concept in the eighteenth century during the era of enlightened absolutism.⁹² However, unlike the Enlightenment-era concepts of absolutism, which were coloured with criticisms of and indifference towards religion, Erasmus states: ‘Being a philosopher is in practice the same thing as being a Christian.’⁹³

Second Major Theme: Contrasting Catalogues of a True Prince and a Tyrant

One of the narrative culminations of the first, main part of *Institutio principis Christiani* is an extensive juxtaposition of two catalogues. The first is a catalogue that contrasts the actions and objectives of a true Christian prince and a tyrant; the second, a detailed list of their virtues and vices. As far as the catalogue of contrasting methods of political action is concerned, Erasmus follows the canon of tyrannical abuses laid out by Aristotle and summarized by Egidio Colonna. In *Institutio*, Erasmus draws a particularly sharp contrast between a tyrannical policy of terror (a tyrant is ruler with selfish motives who wants to be feared, while a king wants to be loved) and the altruism of a Christian prince.⁹⁴

91 See e.g. *Stanisława Orzechowskiego polskie dialogi polityczne (Rozmowa około egzekucyjnej polskiej korony i Quincunx) 1563–1564*, ed. J. Łoś, Kraków 1919, 3 ff.

92 Cf. *Institutio*, publisher’s introduction (A.J. Gail), 12 ff. A similar motif, i.e. a ruler should be a philosopher, appears in *Adagia*,; cf. *Adages*, 1, vol. 31, 227 ff.

93 *Institutio*, 58; *The Education*, 15.

94 Erasmus ascribes the following qualities, actions and goals to a tyrant: 1) he follows his caprices; 2) he strives for wealth; 3) his rule is marked by fear, deceit and intrigues; 4) he rules to satisfy his own needs; 5) he guarantees safety in the country by means of foreign attendants and hired brigands; 6) he distrusts and hates any citizen who is distinguished for virtue, wisdom and prestige; 7) he surrounds himself with flatterers who satisfy his vanity, dolts whom he can easily deceive and wicked men who help him maintain his rule based on violence; 8) he wants to accumulate the wealth of his subjects in the hands of a few, who are the wickedest creatures; 9) he deprives his subjects of their wealth to fortify his power; 10) he strives to have everyone answerable to him either by law or informers; 11) he wants to be feared (this motif will be repeated once more very clearly, *ibid.*, 120 ff.); 12) he stirs up conflicts and disputes between his subjects and uses animosities resulting from wealth inequalities between them to fortify his tyrannical rule; 13) when he sees that the state is flourishing, he looks for a pretext to start a war, or even provokes the enemy to attack, to diminish the wealth of his subjects; 14) a tyrant lays down laws, constitutions and treaties to protect himself. See *Institutio*, 80 ff., 82 ff., reference to Aristotle’s description of tyrannical machinations in *Politics*. Cf. also E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 59.

Even more suggestive are his catalogues of moral and ethical qualities. These consist of extensive lists of personality and character traits of rulers. On the royal side there are 55 virtues; on the tyrannical side there are 42 vices (see Table Two). Erasmus' catalogue of princely virtues and vices is based on models developed as early as in Antiquity and propagated in subsequent epochs.⁹⁵ As a rule, however, since the times of Edigio Colonna and the medieval Aristotelians, lists of virtues for those who rule were drawn up according to an established pattern that included four cardinal virtues and eight *virtutes non principalis*.⁹⁶ Erasmus' paraenetic catalogue is much longer.

When comparing these lists of model features found in monarchs and tyrants, one should take into account not only the notions and their meanings but also the order of their occurrence. This indicates the rank assigned by the author to particular features in the hierarchy of values connected with the realm of power.

In the case of the 'good ruler,' it can be seen that military virtues, i.e. those qualities connected with the conduct of war, occupy quite a distant place. In turn, features traditionally regarded as monarchical (justice, magnanimity, piety) are placed relatively high, including those praised in Stoic philosophy related to a good temperament. The most important label associated with a good prince, according to Erasmus, is 'father' – *pater*. Meanwhile, the majority of terms that follow reflect features attributed in the traditional patriarchal world with the male head of the family.

Among the monarchical virtues found in the catalogue, those that concern either 'pro-social' emotionality (e.g., calm, mild, stable), or those that are shaped by upbringing (e.g., lenient, humane, constant) dominate. In other words, these are traits related to two virtues considered by the Aristotelians to be cardinal: *temperament* and *prudence*. What is important is that the emphasis is also placed on Stoic traits: restraint and control of one's emotions (balanced, stable, self-controlled, not at the mercy of his emotions). In general, the catalogue listed above is dominated by values related to the rational thinking and mental ability (perceptive, fair-minded, rational, of keen judgement, giving sound advice).

A completely different picture is found in the catalogue of the tyrant's vices, which is dominated by emotional traits commonly regarded as negative and 'anti-social.' Emphasis here is also placed on a lack of control over one's emotions (e.g. violent, savage, unrestrained, ruled by his feelings, intolerant of criticism). In this context, the label 'humane' (*humanus*) is applied to the true prince, while 'inhumane' (*inhumanus*) – tyrant.

⁹⁵ *Institutio*, 92 ff.

⁹⁶ Matthew (5:3–12). Cf. B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 182 ff.

Table Two: Catalogue of Qualities Typical of a Christian Monarch and a Tyrant in Erasmus' *The Education of a Christian Prince*^a

Virtues typical of a monarch	Vices typical of a tyrant
1. <i>pater</i> – father	1. <i>tyrannicus</i> – despotic
2. <i>mitis</i> – mild	2. <i>crudelis</i> – cruel
3. <i>placidus</i> – calm	3. <i>efferus</i> – savage
4. <i>lenis</i> – lenient	4. <i>violentus</i> – violent
5. <i>providus</i> – far-sighted	5. <i>occupator alieni</i> – grasping of what is not his
6. <i>aequus</i> – fair-minded	6. <i>avidus pecuniarum</i> – money-grubber
7. <i>humanus</i> – humane	7. <i>pecuniarum cupiens</i> – greedy for wealth
8. <i>magnanimus</i> – magnanimous	8. <i>rapax</i> – rapacious (as Homer said)
9. <i>liber</i> – generous	9. <i>populi dekorator</i> – consuming his subjects
10. <i>pecuniae contemptor</i> – disdainful of wealth	10. <i>superbus</i> – haughty
11. <i>haud obnoxius affectibus</i> – not at the mercy of his emotions	11. <i>elatus</i> – proud
12. <i>sibi ipsi imperans</i> – self-controlled	12. <i>difficilis aditu</i> – unapproachable
13. <i>dominans voluptatibus</i> – in command of his pleasures	13. <i>incommodus ad conveniendum</i> – bad-tempered
14. <i>ratione utens</i> – rational	14. <i>durus ad congressum</i> – unpleasant to meet
15. <i>acri iudicio</i> – of keen judgment	15. <i>incomis ad colloquium</i> – unbending in company
16. <i>perspicax</i> – perceptive	16. <i>male iracundus</i> – uncongenial to talk to
17. <i>circumspectus</i> – cautious	17. <i>irratibilis</i> – irritable
18. <i>valens consilio</i> – giving sound advice	18. <i>terribilis</i> – frightening
19. <i>iustus</i> – just	19. <i>turbulence</i> – stormy
20. <i>sobrius</i> – restrained	20. <i>voluptatum servens</i> – a slave to his desires
21. <i>numinum curam agens</i> – attentive to religious affairs	21. <i>intemperance</i> – intemperate
22. <i>hominum negotia curans</i> – attentive to human affairs	22. <i>immoderatus</i> – unrestrained
23. <i>stabilis</i> – stable	23. <i>inconsideratus</i> – tactless
24. <i>firmus</i> – resolute	24. <i>inhumanus</i> – unkind
25. <i>infallibilis</i> – reliable	25. <i>iniustus</i> – unjust
26. <i>magna cogitans</i> – thinks on a grand scale	26. <i>inconsultus</i> – thoughtless
27. <i>auctoritate praeditus</i> – of independent mind	27. <i>iniquis</i> – unfair
28. <i>industrius</i> – hard-working	28. <i>impius</i> – immoral
29. <i>confector negotiorum</i> – a man of achievement	29. <i>mente carens</i> – stupid
30. <i>sollicitus pro his quibus imperat</i> – concerned for the people he governs	30. <i>levis</i> – shallow
31. <i>servator</i> – protective	31. <i>inconstance</i> – fickle

Table Two: Continued

Virtues typical of a monarch	Vices typical of a tyrant
32. <i>promptus ad beneficentiam</i> – ready to beneficence	32. <i>qui facile decipiantur</i> – easily taken in
33. <i>lentus ad vindicatam</i> – slow to take revenge	33. <i>a little facilis</i> – disagreeable
34. <i>certus</i> – decisive	34. <i>immitis</i> – callous
35. <i>constans</i> – constant	35. <i>affectibus deditus</i> – ruled by his feelings
36. <i>inflexibilis</i> – immovable	36. <i>incorrigibilis</i> – incorrigible or intolerant of criticism
37. <i>propensior ad iustitiam</i> – favouring justice	37. <i>contumeliosus</i> – abusive
38. <i>semperque attentus ad id quod de Principe dictum est</i> – attentive to what is said about the Prince	38. <i>bellorum auctor</i> – warmonger
	39. <i>gravis</i> – oppressive
39. <i>facillius aditu</i> – accessible	40. <i>molestus</i> – troublesome
40. <i>comis in congressu</i> – congenial in company with others	41. <i>incoercibilis</i> – intractable
41. <i>commodus alloqui volentibus</i> – amiable with those who want to speak to him	42. <i>intolerabilis</i> – unbearable or intolerable
42. <i>blandus</i> – pleasant	
43. <i>curam agens suo parentium imperio</i> – concerned for those subject to his rule	
44. <i>amans militum suorum</i> – fond of his soldiers	
45. <i>qui strenue quidem bellum gerat</i> – vigorous in waging war	
46. <i>sed qui bellum non affecet</i> – does not look for a war	
47. <i>pacis amans</i> – peace-loving	
48. <i>pacis conciliator</i> – a peace-maker	
49. <i>pacis tenax</i> – a peace-keeper	
50. <i>appositus ad emendandos populi mores</i> – fit to improve public morality	
51. <i>qui ducem agere norit</i> – a leader who knows how to act	
52. <i>qui leges salutare sciat condere</i> – capable of establishing beneficial laws	
53. <i>natus ad bene merendum</i> – born to serve good will	
54. <i>divina specie</i> – has a god-like presence	

^a*Institutio*, 92 ff; *The Education*, 35–36.

Third Major Theme: The True Prince as the Father of the Family Versus the Tyrant as a Beast

Many of Erasmus' views, which had their origins in Greek Antiquity, were widely disseminated during the early modern era, up to the end of the eighteenth century. These ideas were expressed in *Institutio*, on the pages of which we find a metaphor popular at that time: the state as a great family ('What is a kingdom but a large family?')⁹⁷ and the ruler as a father who seeks to ensure the happiness of his subjects – members of a family in the broadest sense – that of the state. However, it is insufficient merely for a prince himself to rule as a *bonus pater familias in suos domesticos*. For if a ruler proves too indulgent towards the members of his family-state, then his closest relatives and kin, i.e. the courtiers and officials, can tyrannize the people with impunity.⁹⁸ And 'to satisfy such an entourage of tyrants is a heavy burden.'⁹⁹ The degeneration of the state understood as a 'large family' is, therefore, for Erasmus, the collective, multi-headed tyranny of a privileged ruling clan.¹⁰⁰

Nonetheless, Erasmus places his focus on the traditional antinomy of prince *versus* tyrant, with the actions of the latter being primarily driven by selfish motives and self-interest. The difference between their attitude towards their subjects is like that between that of a biological father to his own children and a master to his slaves.¹⁰¹ However, Erasmus is generally reluctant to use the term *dominus* to describe a Christian prince due to its strong connotations with tyrannical governance: a tyrant treats his subjects like the owner of livestock treats his animals, considering only their material value.¹⁰² Moreover, Erasmus' criticism of the word *dominus* as a non-Christian term associated with tyranny, is accompanied by an extensive 'anthropological' argument: because people are inherently free as a result of Christ's salvation, and the law does not allow a Christian to be the master of another Christian, the power of a Christian monarch is, by its very

97 *Institutio*, 92 ff.: On the origin and use of the metaphor of the state as a large family in sixteenth-century 'mirrors,' cf. I. Kąkolewski, 'Dyscyplina społeczna. Etos urzędniczy, nadużycia i korupcja w świetle niemieckich XVI-wiecznych zwierciadeł monarszych,' *Przegląd Historyczny* 83, 1992, no. 2, 207–226.

98 *Institutio*, 150 ff.; *The Education*, 71.

99 *Ibid.*, 152 ff.; *The Education*, 71.

100 *Ibid.*, 158 ff; *The Education*, 73–77; in this context, he criticizes the sumptuous court, excessive tax burdens, wealth inequality and the concentration of assets in the hands of a few, which may lead to tyranny.

101 *Ibid.*, 76 ff.; *The Education*, 25.

102 *Ibid.*, 78 ff; *The Education*, 26.

nature, unlike that of the owner of livestock over his swine or cattle.¹⁰³ Contrary to the classical Aristotelian tradition, an equal sign is placed here between the tyrannical rule and despotic rule.¹⁰⁴

Erasmus emphasizes the thoroughly 'human' dimension of monarchical rule not only by drawing a sharp contrast *per negationem* between it and the tyrannical ruler's treatment of his subjects like animals, but also by attributing to the tyrant himself an animal-beast nature.¹⁰⁵ Such an animal metaphor is applied to the Christian prince only in one instance – namely the of the stingless queen bee. The true prince, like her, is supposed to be averse to the use of violence.¹⁰⁶ However, Erasmus gives the reader numerous examples of predators as symbols of tyrannical power: most often a lion, but also a bear, wolf, snake, eagle, tiger, and terrible dragon – the latter figure not treated at that time as purely fabulous.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, the tyrant, who exploits the financial resources of his subjects through burdensome taxes to finance wars or his own personal whims, is compared to a 'cunning fox' and described as the opposition to the *pater familias*.¹⁰⁸ No part of *Institutio* better shows in a symbolic way the difference to Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Chapter XVIII) as Erasmus' emphasis on the animal nature of the tyrant and his use of the metaphor of the wicked ruler as a lion-fox.

Compared to Niccolò Machiavelli and his unusual technique of 'reversing' traditional images and *topoi*, Erasmus of Rotterdam is much less original. He makes use of a wide array of symbols and animal allegories, which refer to the ancient Greek-Roman tradition (Plato, Diogenes, Seneca) and the Bible.¹⁰⁹ Like other 'mirrors for princes' from that period we find here numerous comparisons

103 Ibid., 102 ff; *The Education*, 28–29.

104 See an exhaustive overview of this motif in Part Two, Chapter III.

105 *Institutio*, 124 ff., Erasmus quotes a sentence attributed to Diogenes, who claimed that the most dangerous of all wild beasts was a tyrant, and of tame ones a flatterer. For similar statements cf. *ibid.*, 78 ff.

106 Ibid., 84.

107 Ibid., 78–80, 84–86, 88 ff., 92 ff., 124 ff.; Cf. also F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 74 ff.; L.-E. Halkin, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 119. The eagle was eagerly used as a symbol of legitimate power of kings, especially because in Antiquity it was the symbol of Jupiter. In the Renaissance, the vulture was often depicted as an attribute of tyrannical rule; see M. Appel, A. Krieger, "Non sine causa." Zur Darstellung von Herrschaft in Emblemen der Renaissance', 92 ff.

108 *Institutio*, 92 ff.

109 See esp. *ibid.*, 86–89, where Erasmus often provides biblical (Ezekiel 22:27, Proverbs 28:15, Letters of Paul, Second Timothy 4:17) and ancient (Plato) comparisons between tyrants and predatory beasts.

between the world of politics and the world of animals.¹¹⁰ A quick overview of Renaissance-era *emblemata* reveals the popularity of this kind of animal-derived stylizations of a tyrant, which undoubtedly belonged to the canon of pictorial representation in that era. This kind of metaphor was used not only because it represented a ‘strong’ means of expression in the iconography and political literature of the time.¹¹¹ Alongside the previously-mentioned gallery of examples of historical and mythical tyrants, it was meant to strengthen the didactic and persuasive power of the *specula principum* by arousing in the reader a sense of repulsion towards negative models of behaviour. Therefore, Erasmus recommended that preceptors to young royalty place before the eyes of their pupils images of a terrible beast as the embodiment of evil and tyranny: ‘formed of a dragon, wolf, lion, viper, bear, and similar monsters with hundreds of eyes,’ with terrible teeth and sharp claws, bloodthirsty man-eaters that would instil a loathing in ‘everyone who has the interests of the state at heart.’¹¹²

Fourth Major Theme: The Ruler as an Actor on Stage, i.e. Criticism of Feigning Appearances

Erasmus begins his exploration of this theme with a question about the meaning of the monarch’s insignia (chain, sceptre) and attributes of royal power (gold, gems, royal purple robes), as well as the pomp and ceremony surrounding the king from the moment of his enthronement. Hence the rhetorical questions: what does anointing the monarch signify if not his duty to show mildness and restraint? What does the sceptre symbolize if not the spirit of justice? In concluding, Erasmus poses a final question: if a royal chain, sceptre and train of courtiers make one a king, what is it that distinguishes him from an actor on stage dressed in royal robes? According to him, all these attributes of monarchical power should be understood as being merely symbols of the virtues possessed by

110 Another interesting example is a Latin mirror for princes by a Bohemian writer Jan Dubrawski vel Dubravius, entitled *Theribulia* (1520) and dedicated to Louis II, King of Bohemia and Hungary, in which the author provides a metaphor of a council of animals, chaired by a lion king. The eagle is also presented as an animal with a high rank in the hierarchy of the council, higher than the leopard and the tiger; see B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 80 ff.

111 M. Appel, A. Krieger, ‘“Non sine causa.” Zur Darstellung von Herrschaft in Emblemen der Renaissance,’ 89 ff.

112 *Institutio*, 78 ff; *The Education*, 27.

a good ruler, and as signs of dishonour for a bad one. The king is neither a priest nor a bishop – he ought to be something more: a good Christian.¹¹³

One can sense in these words a criticism of the excess of form in the life of the Church – which appears increasingly often in the period preceding the Reformation. True faith is neither a game of appearances nor something to treat lightly, Erasmus says in *Institutio*.¹¹⁴ This is linked to his condemnation of the rulers' general attachment to appearances, reminding the reader that it is much worse to actually be a thief than to be called one, and more monstrous to sexually assault a woman than to be called a rapist.¹¹⁵ A clear critical tone can once again be heard here, which remains in opposition to the recommendations in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*. Erasmus continues on about the difference between a monarch and an actor, posing rhetorical questions and supplying answers, stripping the prince of his royal vestments and presenting him in various roles on the stage of everyday life. He concludes that if you stripped bad rulers bare, 'divesting them of the goods they have acquired, you will find nothing left except an expert dice-player, a champion tippler, a ruthless destroyer of decency, a most cunning deceiver, an insatiable plunderer, a man covered with perjury, sacrilege, treachery and all kinds of crime.'¹¹⁶

This criticism of feigning appearances as a method of political action, was deeply rooted in the canon of the Renaissance *specula principis*. Erasmus' comments in *Adagia* were equally critical in all these attacks, using a metaphor that became very popular in the sixteenth century – the ruler as an actor on stage.

Comparisons of the world or universe to theatre did not begin or end in the Renaissance era. Later, in the Baroque era, the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* as well as the word 'theatre' itself became key terms in literary language and in the spiritual culture of that period. The roots of these theatrical allusions go back to Greek and Roman Antiquity.¹¹⁷ Lynda G. Christian, author of a comprehensive study devoted to the metaphor of 'the theatre of life', has drawn attention to four different traditions of the use of this trope, which originated in Antiquity.¹¹⁸

113 Ibid., 62 ff; *The Education*, 16–17.

114 Ibid., 64 ff; *The Education*, 18.

115 Ibid., 120 ff; *The Education*, 52.

116 Ibid., 62 ff; *The Education*, 17.

117 A comparison of the world or the whole cosmos to a theatre where man is an actor, mime or puppet in the hands of God or gods, most probably has its roots in the views of Plato and cynics. In Latin literature, it appears in the writings of Cicero, Horace, Seneca, and Plautus, and is later taken up by Saint Augustine and Boethius. See a synthesizing overview of this issue in: E.R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, Bern–München 1969, subsection *Schauspielmetaphern*, 148 ff.

118 L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, New York–London 1987.

- Stoic tradition – incorporating, on the one hand, a pessimistic view on the transitoriness and changeability of the world, and as the demand that man to play the role in life for which Fortune or Nature has deemed him best suited; on the other hand, optimistically placing man at the centre stage in the universe, with the divine creator looking upon his work with pride.
- Satirical tradition – adhering to the motto: ‘life is a comedy, a play directed by the capricious goddess Fortuna.’ The best thing a man can do in this situation is to flee the stage and join the audience; the best role to play in the comedy of life is that of a laughing philosopher.
- Patristic tradition – a Christian tradition that emphasizes the temporality of earthly matters, which are merely a prelude to our mortality. God is the author and director of this spectacle, though death plays a key role in this tragic drama. Death tears the mask from the actor’s face, showing his true spiritual countenance. This is why it is so important to perform one’s role in this theatre of the temporal world well and thereby earn a privileged place offstage, attaining eternal life.
- Neo-Platonic tradition – life is a spectacle that is either optimistic (a wondrous event) or pessimistic (a collection of transient things); it was created by the Logos-God-Divine Being for people, who have immortal souls. For the attentive observer, this spectacle reveals the nature of the Creator himself. At the same time, Logos assigns to each human being an appropriate role, which he or she should play to the best of his or her ability (as in the Stoic tradition).¹¹⁹

In all of these traditions, we find comparisons between rulers and actors. It appeared in the works of Seneca, Marcus Aurelius, Plautus, Lucian and John Chrysostom. In the Middle Ages, the metaphor of life as theatre nearly fell out of use entirely. It only reappeared in the twelfth century in John of Salisbury’s ‘mirror for princes’ *Policraticus* (1159), in which the term *theatrum mundi* first appeared in medieval European literature. Here, the author combined the satirical tradition (Lucian)– with the Stoic and patristic traditions (St Augustine), and with a blind Fortuna as both servant to the Divine Creator and creator of the drama that is placed in the temporal world. *Policraticus* also features a satirical ruler-actor comparison: Fortuna dresses a *parvenu* in royal robes and elevates him to great heights, while knocking down to earth those born to wear a crown.¹²⁰

119 Ibid., 10–62.

120 Ibid., 63 ff.

However, such an extensive use of the metaphor of life as theatre in the Middle Ages was exceptional. Given that the only manifestations of theatrical life were religious mystery plays and jester's performances at royal courts or town fairs, and public processions during feast-day and carnival celebrations, the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* was simply too detached from life.¹²¹ The use of the metaphor was revived only in the latter half of the fifteenth century, in the humanist treatises of the Florentine Neoplatonists Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who were inspired by ancient (including Patristic) writings. In the case of Ficino, in particular, it was used to emphasize that all things visible, like the division into kings and servants on stage, are merely a play of appearances.¹²²

Erasmus would be one of the first great humanists from outside Italy to return to this metaphor in relation to the rulers. This occurred for the first time in 1509, just after his return from Italy, in *The Praise of Folly*, where he offers the following thought:

If a person were to try stripping the disguises from actors while they play a scene upon the stage, showing to the audience their real looks and the faces they were born with, would not such a one spoil the whole play? And would not the spectators think he deserved to be driven out of the theatre with brickbats, as a drunken disturber? For at once a new order of things would be apparent. The actor who played a woman would now be seen a man; [...] *he who but now was a king, is suddenly an hostler; he who played the god is a sorry little scrub.*

Erasmus follows this with a concluding thought:

Destroy the illusion and any play is ruined. It is the paint and trappings that take the eyes of spectators. *Now what else is the whole life of mortals but a sort of comedy, in which the various actors, disguised by various costumes and masks, walk on and play each one his part, until the manager waves them off the stage. Moreover, this manager frequently bids the same actor go back in a different costume, so that he who has but lately played the king in scarlet now acts the flunkey in patched clothes* [emphasis mine – I.K.].¹²³

The satirical overtones of the theatre-life metaphor here are clear. The inspiration for Erasmus was probably Lucian's dialogues, which he often translated. They became very popular at that time and only in the latter half of the

121 Ibid., 70 ff.

122 Ibid., 73–81, esp. 74 ff. In the next chapter, I will go back to the use of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor by Florentine Neoplatonists and other European humanists to discuss it in more detail.

123 *The Praise of Folly*, 37; in the same excerpt in comparison with the Latin text in: L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, pp. 147, 256 (fn. 33).

sixteenth century were included in the Church index.¹²⁴ Like Ficino, however, Erasmus gives the theatre-life metaphor Christian overtones, in the spirit of the Fathers of the Church, criticizing an attachment to the world and its vanity and appearances.

Erasmus returned to the metaphor of *theatrum mundi* a few years later on the pages of *Institutio*, this time in a purely political context, to distinguish a true prince from an unjust ruler, viewing a tyrant as an actor on stage. This theme was discussed in early sixteenth-century scholarly, humanistic debate on the role of pretence and appearances in both life and the art of governing. It would also explain, in a sense, Machiavelli's concept of the 'new prince' as *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* in Chapter XVIII of *Il Principe*. A different view on the same issue was presented in Erasmus' reference to the image of the monarch stripped of his traditional charisma and the ceremonial and religious trappings of power as 'the naked prince.' The goal of this humanistic debate was to find an answer to the question: what is the essence of power – the art of feigning appearances and pretence or true virtue?

Minor Theme: It is Better to Abdicate than to Stain One's Rule with Bloodshed

Erasmus concludes his reflections on the true princely virtues with a recommendation: if power can be maintained only by means of bloodshed, persecution or violation of the law, it is better to avoid this kind of situation by voluntary abdication, for it is better to be an honest man (*vir iustus*) than an unrighteous prince or tyrant.¹²⁵ He returns to this theme twice in *Institutio principis Christiani*: if you are unable to cope with the responsibilities of governing, it is better to give up your rule and hand it over to someone who possesses the qualities you lack.¹²⁶ For no man can be a good ruler if he is not a good man.¹²⁷

This last thought – a good king is a good man – seems particularly close to the Christian tradition and particularly distant from the political tradition of Machiavellism. Likewise, the statement that it is better to abdicate voluntarily

124 Lucian's dialogues were rediscovered for the first time in 1470. Until 1550, there were about 267 editions of their Latin translations and over 60 editions of original works by Lucian in Greek; L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 145.

125 *Institutio*, 66 ff.

126 *Ibid.*, 110 ff.

127 *Ibid.*, 120 ff.

than to be violent is equally distant from Niccolò Machiavelli's way of thinking.¹²⁸ It is characteristic of Erasmus not to support these points with any historical references. The subject was indeed a highly sensitive one, especially in a work dedicated to a young heir to the throne, i.e. to a person in whom a lot of hope had been placed and who was expected to be capable of meeting the challenges of governing. It is a paradox that this recommendation for voluntary abdication was made in *Institutio*, a work written for Charles V, who did in fact give up the throne almost 40 years later, leaving behind the tumult of political life for the tranquillity of a monastery.¹²⁹

Minor Theme: Tyranny is Better than Long-Lasting Anarchy

The suggestion is explicit here that there is no alternative to recommending the abdication of an unjust ruler. A ruler's deposition or forced removal by the subjects would be unacceptable. The only passage in which Erasmus mentions that tyranny never survives long refers to a rule quoted by him that once applied to tyrants but now applies to wolves and bears: whoever eliminated a threat to the public would be rewarded by the state.¹³⁰ He probably had in mind here the case of the assassination of the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus by Harmodius and Aristogeiton.¹³¹ This reference to the right of resistance, however, was expressed rather half-heartedly and might be easily overlooked amongst his other points.¹³²

In terms of Erasmus' political views as a whole, it may come as a surprise that in his works written before the changes brought on by Luther's reformation,

128 W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, München 1988, 89, quotes this excerpt from *Institutio* by Erasmus to emphasize the gap separating *The Prince* by Machiavelli from the traditional genre of mirrors for princes.

129 E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 103 ff., is inclined to see some characteristics of Erasmus' *respublica christiana* in the state as understood by Charles V, but he does agree that the emperor rarely followed political advice given by Erasmus. L.-E. Halkin, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 121, supposes that Charles V never read *Institutio*. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 146, warns against giving *Institutio* too much credit for shaping the attitude and politics of Charles V and draws attention to the instructions given by the emperor to his son Philip, in which he did not recommend reading Erasmus.

130 *Institutio*, 96 ff.

131 See *ibid.*, 223.

132 When F. Geldner discusses in detail Erasmus' attitude towards the subjects' right of resistance, and warns against treating Erasmus as a predecessor of Monarchomachs; see his, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 89.

he argued on behalf of the right of resistance, albeit only in cases of extreme violations of the law by a ruler. The recommendations he made even included a call for the election of a new ruler by his subjects in a kind of a referendum.¹³³ Erasmus feared of all sorts of solutions involving force – such as revolts and rebellions – arguing that they were simply too dangerous for the community as a whole. After 1517, when he spoke out against the upheavals caused by Luther's doctrine, he was more strongly in favour of limiting *ius resisti*.¹³⁴ Erasmus' discreet reminder in *Institutio* about the Athenians' right of resistance can also be explained by his political correctness, which stemmed from his awareness that the book was addressed to a young heir to the throne on whom the fate of the whole of Latin Christianity would rest. In his earlier writings, Erasmus in a similar tone reminded his readers of the Christian duty to silent submission, though, as mentioned before, he made an exception for situations when people's rights were violated beyond endurance.¹³⁵

The political correctness of Erasmus as the author of a *speculum principum*, his Christian renunciation of violence, and his fear of forceful solutions all contributed to his formulating another minor thesis on the margins of his main argument. In his criticism of excessive tax burdens, he warned that a prince should not overly exploit his subjects, referring to the chaos in Burgundy following the death of Charles the Bold. The confusion that arose at that time showed clearly that long-lasting anarchy is worse than any form of tyranny – '*diutina Anarchia*

133 A.J. Gail, *Institutio*, publisher's introduction, 15, draws attention to the fact that in *Querela pacis* (1517) in which Erasmus takes the most 'democratic' stance in all his writings, emphasizing the subjects' right of resistance. He also repeats the motif which is clearly visible in *Institutio*: nobody rules better than a person who is capable of giving up his power when the interest of the state so requires.

134 When Erasmus stood against Luther, he also became increasingly convinced that the subjects' right of resistance should be limited, mainly to avoid a revolt and a breakdown in the Church. On this subject, cf. also F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 90 ff., 151 ff.; E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 91 ff.; W. Blockmans, 'Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,' 64.

135 A.J. Gail, *ibid.*, 11–17, emphasizes the motif of sovereignty of people, which recurs in Erasmus' political views. When Erasmus stood against Luther, he also became increasingly convinced that the subjects' right of resistance should be limited, mainly to avoid a revolt and a breakdown in the Church. On this subject, cf. also F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 90 ff., 151 ff.; E. Koerber, *Die Staatstheorie des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 91 ff.; W. Blockmans, 'Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,' 64.

*quavis tyrannide perniciosior ditionem tuam affligeret.*¹³⁶ These words resemble those used by Erasmus in his correspondence, where he adopts an even more drastic tone. In a passage that evokes association with the words of Francesco Vettori, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Erasmus seems to agree with the view that kings are in essence tyrants, most princes are little less than true monsters, and many rulers are simply madmen.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, even in such a case, they must be patiently endured, because any rebellion would threaten the value that he holds most dear – peace.¹³⁸

The phrase ‘*diutina Anarchia quavis tyrannide perniciosior*’ not only expressed the intellectual’s general fear of chaos but also reflected of the fate that Burgundy had witnessed during the struggle of the Burgundian cities against the policies of Philip the Good and his son Charles the Bold, and then because of the turmoil that followed the death of the latter at the Battle of Nancy.¹³⁹ In addition, it mirrored the unrest that was caused by the rebellion that plagued the Netherlands in 1516. Repeated half a century later, in the situation of still bloody religious wars, the phrase could have become a motto under which many would have signed.

Conclusion: Dialogue Between the ‘True Prince’ and the ‘New Prince’

At first glance, the gap between the works of Erasmus Desiderius Roterodamus – a theologian, pacifist, cosmopolitan and intellectual with little political experience on the whole, and Niccolò Machiavelli – a politician diplomat and practitioner, fluent not only in writing – seems immeasurable.¹⁴⁰ Contrary to popular opinions

136 *Institutio*, 160 ff.

137 On this excerpt from Erasmus’ correspondence and other similar references in his literary output, see F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 90 ff.

138 *Ibid.*, 91.

139 F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 142 ff.

140 The differences between the life experiences of Erasmus and Machiavelli, which doubtlessly had an influence on their political views, are emphasized by J.R. Major, *The Renaissance Monarchy...*, 20 ff; W. Blockmans, ‘Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit’ 58, draws attention to Erasmus’ regular visits to the court of Charles V in 1521 and to his participation as the advisor to the prince in peace talks between Francis I and Henry VIII in Calais in 1520. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 55, adds that Erasmus was not comfortable in the thick of court intrigues and conflicts and rejected the offer to become an educator of the future emperor Ferdinand I. See also *ibid.*, 161, a short attempt at comparing the political concepts of Machiavelli and Erasmus.

about the Florentine's political realism, historiography has often emphasized the idealism of Roterodamus, or even his detachment from reality.¹⁴¹ It is supposed that Erasmus, while writing *The Education of a Christian Prince*, may have known from his own reading a handwritten copy of *Il Principe*.¹⁴² Even assuming that the intellectual and political atmosphere of Italy at the time was known to him directly from his travels there between 1506 and 1509, the conclusions he could draw from it were far removed from the visions of Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Vettori.¹⁴³

The ideal character of the 'true prince' in *Institutio* seems in every way a denial of the 'new prince,' the model character of *Il Principe*. Erasmus' wrote not a scandalous treatise, but a treatise including a canon of what was politically correct at that time. It is more a continuation of traditional political thinking than a break from it. Nonetheless, it also contains motifs that were relatively new in the times in which it was written. First of all, the author uses the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* to present the image of the monarch stripped of his external attributes (crown, sceptre, purple) and his dynastic charisma (birth, anointing). Moreover, the 'princely essence' is primarily determined by the spiritual merits of the ruler and not by his birth. Here Erasmus strikes a tone especially close to that of Renaissance humanism, with its critique of nobility by birth and its refined didacticism. He adds to it an idea which will be taken seriously by the future emperor Charles V, that it is better to abdicate than to stain one's rule with blood.

Criticism of the concept of monarchical power solely derived from 'God's grace' can be seen in *The Praise of Folly*, which was intended by the author as a humanistic joke. Although this work was completed in England at the home of Sir Thomas More, it is pervaded by Erasmus' bitter experiences during his stay in Italy between 1506 and 1509. It is above all a virulent satire on the abuses in the life of the Church and on the habits of that era.¹⁴⁴ It became essentially a caricatured mirror of the times of Erasmus, More and Machiavelli. Contrary to

141 The opinions of historians, from J. Huizinga to E. Koerber, on this subject are presented by G. Schoch, *Die Bedeutung der Erziehung und Bildung aus der Sicht des Erasmus von Rotterdam*, 163 ff., *ibid.*, 165 ff., a comparison of Erasmus' political thought with the concepts of More and Machiavelli; cf. also W. Blockmans, 'Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,' 70, who agrees that Erasmus' political thought is full of moralizing, but also emphasizes his grasp of the surrounding reality.

142 See e.g. W. Blockmans, 'Die politische Theorie des Erasmus und die Praxis seiner Zeit,' 71.

143 C. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 71 f.

144 Cf.: G. Jansma, *Erasmus von Rotterdam (1469–1536)*, 23 ff.

the author's intentions, it was read in a scandalous light by his contemporaries and was included in the Tridentine Index (1564) alongside Machiavelli's writings.¹⁴⁵ The similarities between the fate of these authors' writings is another ironic paradox.

What strikes the reader in *The Praise of Folly* is the irony and criticism towards the stark realism and pragmatic approach used by Machiavelli and Vettori to justify their belief that politics require violence, murder or perjury. Such views, according to Erasmus, are a sign of the Foolishness that pervaded this era, displacing Philosophy.¹⁴⁶ The figure of Foolishness, like Machiavelli's Fortuna assumes a feminine form. Erasmus' vision of Folly is ambiguous: the wisdom of the world is in fact folly, whereas supposed folly is the true wisdom.¹⁴⁷ A similar tone is expressed in the title of an adage from 1515: 'One Ought to Be Born a King or a Fool,'¹⁴⁸ which in itself is a *speculum principum* in miniature and a model for *The Education of a Christian Prince*. In this commentary, written in a tone that at times resembles the realism of Vettori, the author shows the destructive actions of the rulers of his day.¹⁴⁹ Those rulers who pursue only their own benefit are compared here literally to robbers and pirates.¹⁵⁰ Every monarch who rules with such an attitude is only seemingly a king; in reality he is a tyrant.¹⁵¹

On the pages of *Institutio* Erasmus repeats his critique that political power is a form of violence, though he refrains here from using the 'reversal' literary technique characteristic of the narrative of *The Praise of Folly*. However, in spite of its conservative form, *Institutio* is an eloquent sign of the times in which it was written – just like *Il Principe*. It seems that taken together the two treatises offer a dialogical voice in the humanist debate on the role of violence in politics that took

145 See the introduction to *The Praise of Folly*, ed. B. Radice, in: *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 27, 78 ff.

146 G. Jensma, *Erasmus von Rotterdam (1469–1536)*, 27.

147 Erasmus was inspired by Saint Paul's Third Epistle to the Corinthians, 18:20, believing that a true Christian should reject worldly wisdom and become God's 'fool' in the eyes of the world. Cf. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 69; L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 144 ff.

148 This proverb is also quoted in *Institutio*, 110 ff., following reflections stating that a ruler who cannot carry the burden of ruling should abdicate.

149 'Do we not see fine cities, created by the people, overthrown by the princes? Or a state enriched by the toil of its citizens, and looted by the prince's greed? Plebeian lawyers make good laws, princes violate them; the people seek for peace, the princes stir up war'; see *Aut fatuum aut regem nasci oportere*, *Adages*, I iii 1, vol. 31, 235.

150 *Ibid.*, 233.

151 Cf. F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 108.

place in the early sixteenth century – a discourse involving two extremely contradictory views.¹⁵² If the ‘true prince’ and philosopher in one person described by Erasmus had spoken with the voice of *Encomium* and *Adagia* in one person, he would have called the Machiavellian ‘new prince’ simply a Fool.

152 F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 161 ff., refers to Erasmus’ *Institutio* as the greatest rebuttal of *The Prince*.

Chapter III. Thomas More and Niccolò Machiavelli: Tyrannical Readings of the Renaissance? In the Realm of Utopia

‘Only two writers of the Age of the Renaissance produced books directly concerned with politics that are nowadays widely read,’ noted the American historian Jack H. Hexter in a collection of essays published in the early 1970s.¹ Hexter was writing at a time when a fascination with communism had begun to resound in intellectual circles in the West, though more mundane slogans reflecting a spirit of political realism continued to reverberate. The two authors to which he is referring were Thomas More and Niccolò Machiavelli. More’s *Utopia* (1515–1516) was written at almost exactly the same time as Erasmus’ *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), and just a short time after Machiavelli had begun writing *The Prince* (1513). However, unlike the *Institutio*, the ‘great little books’² of More and Machiavelli – both of which are considered major works of European literature and political culture – can undoubtedly be regarded as ‘canonical sources’ whose content has had and continues to have a great influence on people’s views on politics. At the same time, it is clear from historical analyses and comparisons of *Utopia* and *The Prince*, that these works reflect the political tensions and traditions in the authors’ countries at the time.³

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- 1 J.H. Hexter, *The Predatory, the Utopian and the Constitutional Vision. Machiavelli, More and Claude de Seyssel. ‘La Monarchie de France’ and Normal Politics on the Eve of the Reformation*, his, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation. More, Machiavelli, and Seyssel*, New York 1973, 205.
 - 2 J.H. Hexter, ‘The Predatory and the Utopian Visions. Machiavelli and More. The Loom of Language and the Fabric of Imperatives. The Case of *Il Principe* and *Utopia*’ in: *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of Reformation...*, 183.
 - 3 A good example here (despite the strongly accentuated Nazi phraseology) would be the comparison between the political concepts of Machiavelli and More, with numerous references to the views of Erasmus of Rotterdam in: G. Ritter, *Machtstaat und Utopie. Vom Streit um die Dämonie der Macht seit Machiavelli und Morus*, München–Berlin 1940. In Ritter’s opinion, *The Prince* supposedly praises irrational modern heroism and political demonism (‘leidenschaftlicher Macht- und Kampfwille, der aus irrationalen Tiefen hervorbricht’; *ibid.*, 24), as well as war (‘als Höhepunkt glanzvoller Machtentfaltung und Bewährung’), embodied by the new prince-warrior (*ibid.*, 43), and at the same time contradicts the ancient idea of politics based on *ratio* and

New readings of both works in the first half of the nineteenth century inspired slogans calling for a new order in politics, ethics and society. *The Prince* provided inspiration for the principles of *Machtpolitik* and *Realpolitik*, which were openly promoted in the foreign policy of European countries in the latter half of the century. *Utopia*, in turn, inspired the name for the utopian current in socialist ideology, which sought a path for bringing about a new order by non-revolutionary means. Soon, however, people began to seek a means for introducing change not in the education or the *virtù* of their rulers, but in revolution and the use of violence by the masses – an idea completely alien to More.

At first glance, more common features can be found in the works of Erasmus and More, than between them and Niccolò Machiavelli. This is not surprising given the frequent contacts and friendship that linked Erasmus and More – *The Praise of Folly* was not only written in Sir Thomas More's house, but was also dedicated to him. In twentieth-century research on More's legacy, attention was frequently drawn to the close affinities between *The Praise of Folly* and *Utopia*, with a 'reversal technique' being used in both works as an intellectual exercise by their authors.²⁴ The Latin title of Erasmus' work – *Moriae encomium* – was itself an erudite joke. The word *moria* meant 'foolishness', but it also echoed More's surname. In this sense, the fanciful title signalled Erasmus' praise for 'foolishness' as true Christian 'wisdom,' inspired by words found in the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (3:18-19): 'let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.'²⁵

The two Northern European humanists were, moreover, undoubtedly united by common views and an unquestionable sense of belonging to Europe's cosmopolitan intellectual elite. Erasmus and More received a thorough university education, and both were fluent in Greek and Latin. They were also both Renaissance pacifists, harsh critics of war and power politics, advocates of a humanitarian system of law, believers in the power of education, and critics of abusive excesses in the social and political life. Both were supporters of the system of limited monarchy. More's critique of the half-heartedness of Christianity and the abuses of the clergy, was close to the views of Erasmus and also typical of many others among his contemporaries in the years leading up to the Reformation.

moderation. On the other hand, Ritter claims that the ideas of More and Erasmus were deeply rooted in the tradition of political philosophy represented by Plato, Aristotle and the stoics.

4 G. Ritter, *Machtstaat und Utopie*, 56. See also R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus of Europe...*, 96.

5 L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, New York-London 1987, 144 ff.

Thomas More (1478–1535), while belonging to almost the same generation as Erasmus and Machiavelli, possessed a quality that placed him between these two men. In addition to his authentic Christian religiosity and commitment to a strict religious life (including a four-year stay at a Carthusian monastery), he obtained a thorough education (study at Oxford, legal training at Lincoln's Inn of Court in London), and had a rich professional career in the law, politics and diplomacy. He served as a Member of Parliament (1504–1510) and an under-sheriff of the city of London (1510–1518), was appointed a Privy Counsellor in 1514, and accompanied Chancellor Wolsey on a number of important diplomatic missions. In 1518, he entered into royal service;⁶ in 1521, he was knighted and became under-treasurer of the Exchequer at the court of Henry VIII; after Wolsey's fall, he assumed the position of Lord Chancellor in 1529, but resigned in 1532 following a religious conflict with Henry VIII, including More's refusal to appeal to the Pope to grant the king a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. His loyalty to the papacy ultimately led to his imprisonment and, finally, execution by decapitation.⁷ His biography is thus characterized by a combination of the most exceptional spiritual and intellectual qualities but also practical accomplishments in the world of politics.

It is his extensive political and diplomatic experience that brings him closer to Niccolò Machiavelli, and distinguishes him from Erasmus, who was more of a theorist than a practitioner in this regard. Book Two of *Utopia*, written during More's diplomatic mission to Flanders in 1515, was inspired by, among other things, his meetings with Peter Aegis, a friend of Erasmus. He began writing Book One after his return to England in 1516. It was precisely at this time – when the first edition of *Utopia* was published in Leuven – that More received an offer to take a position in Henry VIII's court, an offer to which he agreed only

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- 6 The feeling of reluctance and doubt caused by his royal service and court life were captured quite well in two of the earliest biographies of More. The first one is a biographical overview in a letter from Erasmus of Rotterdam to Ulrich von Hutten dated 23 July 1519. See *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami*, ed. S. Allen, vol. 4: 1519–1521, Oxonii 1923 [hereinafter: Allen 4], no. 999, esp. 15 ff., and the English translation by the same: *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, ed. G. Bieteholz, in: *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 7, Toronto 1987 [hereinafter: *Collected Works*], no. 999 esp. 18. The next biography, which glorified More, was written in the 1550s by his son-in-law William Roper; see W. Roper, *Das Leben des Thomas Morus. The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Morus, Knighte*, Heidelberg 1987, esp. 19 ff.
- 7 Cf. also: P. Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London 1998; R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, New York 1985.

after two years of hesitation. The arguments made to Raphael Hythloday, the fictional narrator of *Utopia*, in favour of his taking a position as an advisor to the king, and his refusal to agree seems to reflect the author's own scepticism about devoting himself to a life in the world of politics (*negotium*) rather than a more contemplative and intellectual lifestyle (*otium*), praised by many humanists of that time.⁸

Despite their differences, all three of these authors writing major works between 1513 and 1516 reflect on a similar theme, one that cast a shadow over their times: the dominant position of violence in politics and social life, and the desire to find their own answers and solutions to this critical state of affairs.⁹ One could say that each of them created a kind of utopia: Machiavelli's was based on the concept of transmorality in the matters of politics, while Erasmus' vision referred to political idealism and Christian moralizing. More also created a kind of a 'moralising' utopia, though as a rational construct, which offered systemic solutions for the social and political life and did not just focus on the problems of governance. Their visions have something of an ideal model that reflected real problems in the world of politics at that time. However, there are differences in terms of literary genre. Erasmus' *Institutio* takes the form of traditional *speculum principum*. Machiavelli reverses this formula, creating in *Il Principe* a kind of *anti-speculum*. In *Utopia*, More, in turn, refers to the genre of treatises *de optimo reipublicae statu* popular in the modern era. The basic difference between Machiavelli's and More's works is that – again referring to Hexter's comparisons: if *The Prince* was a 'wild mutant' of the genre *de regimine principum*, then *Utopia* is such a 'wild mutant' of the genre *de optimo reipublicae statu*.¹⁰

As in both *The Prince* and *Utopia*, and even more eloquently in *The Praise of Folly*, a rhetorical reversal technique is used.¹¹ This can be seen not only in the Greek names themselves (Utopia – No-place, King Ademus – King 'without a people', Anyder – Waterless River, Raphael Hythloday – Raphael 'versed in babble') but also in the vision of the relations prevailing in Utopia, which were an *à rebours* image of England at the time. However, the rhetorical and literary technique of reversal in the works of More and Machiavelli led them to go further than Erasmus. Some historians have pointed out that fragments of *Utopia*

8 Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2: *Renaissance Virtues*, Cambridge 2002, essay 8: *Thomas More's Utopia and true nobility*, 223.

9 J.H. Hexter, *The Predatory, the Utopian and the Constitutional Vision...*, 213.

10 Ibid., 222.

11 G. Ritter, *Machtstaat und Utopie*, 56.

read like an extensive commentary on *The Prince*, though the specific proposals for solutions in the two works differ considerably.¹² However, both authors performed specific operations on language, and helped usher in changes in their day in the realm of ethics. Both felt alienated from the reality around them. They believed that the contemporary language of moral imperatives was hypocritical, and thus created new, alternative visions of the moral order: Niccolò Machiavelli did so only in relation to the behaviour of the ruler, while Thomas More did so for the whole of society. Over the next three hundred years, their concepts understood literally would come to represent a radical rejection of the political values of the early modern Western civilization. That is, until they were appropriated by ideologues and ‘prophets of progress’ in the mid-nineteenth century.¹³

The very subtitle of *Utopia*: ‘A little, true book, not less beneficial than enjoyable’ suggests a humanist joke. However, if it were really a joke, it was serious enough to become a tool for conducting a rigorous assessment of English reality, as outlined particularly in Book One of the work. Thus, More ought to be regarded as the inventor of utopian fiction, which he deliberately built into his narrative in order to carry out an in-depth analysis of reality.¹⁴ In a sense, his invention is comparable to the discovery of *trompe d’œil* illusions in Renaissance painting: a ‘real’ object in the foreground is accompanied by features that evoke an illusion of depth, inspiring the viewer to reflect more deeply on the surrounding reality.

The book’s intentional bifurcated construction – with a realistic description of England in Book One followed by a utopian vision of ‘No-place’ in Book Two – is bound together by a final dialogue between More and Hythloday in which the latter utters the oft-cited words: ‘So when I survey and assess all the different political systems flourishing today, nothing else presents itself – God help me – but a conspiracy of the rich, who look after their own interests under the name and title of the commonwealth.’¹⁵ It may be difficult for today’s reader to disassociate this radical depiction of the state as essentially a tool of exploitation, from similar definitions formulated by nineteenth-century socialist thinkers. However, the critical perspective included in these words was by no means ahead of the time in which it was expressed. On the contrary, it fits perfectly into the practical manner the generation of Machiavelli, More and Erasmus viewed the

12 J.M. Levine, *Thomas More and the English Renaissance. History and Fiction in Utopia*, in: *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain. History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500–1800*, ed. D.R. Kelley, D.H. Sacks, Cambridge 1997, 73, fn. 15.

13 J.H. Hexter, *The Predatory and the Utopian Visions. Machiavelli and More...*, 199 ff.

14 J.M. Levine, *Thomas More and the English Renaissance...*, 84 ff.

15 T. More, *Utopia*, ed. & trans. D. Baker-Smith, London–New York 2012, 120.

world. The statement that the rich ‘look after their own interests’ would have been associated by readers of the time with a defining feature of a tyrannical government. It is no wonder that Francesco Vettori in *Sommario della Storia d’Italia* stated that virtually all contemporary rulers can be described as tyrants, except for the aform of government ‘supposedly found in Utopia’ and described in More’s work.¹⁶

Criticism of the sovereigns of that time is likewise expressed in a letter written by More to Erasmus in December 1516. In it, he shares his excitement (‘how thrilled I am’) about the impending publication of *Utopia*: ‘I feel so expanded, and I hold my head high. For in my daydreams I have been marked out by my Utopians to be their King forever; I can see myself now marching along, crowned with a diadem of wheat, very striking in my Franciscan frock, carrying a handful of wheat as my sacred scepter,’ which he contrasts with the sovereigns of other nations: ‘wretched creatures they are, in comparison with us, as they stupidly pride themselves on appearing in childish garb and feminine finery, laced with that despicable gold, and ludicrous in their purple and jewels and other empty baubles.’¹⁷ This passage brings to mind a similar image in Erasmus’ *Institutio*, when he poses a rhetorical question: if it is external attributes, i.e. a sceptre, jewels and purple robes, that make a monarch, what is the difference between a king and an actor on stage?

The way that Erasmus and More perceived the realm of politics shared many similarities. Both were opponents of centralized power and, at least in their works, supporters of an elective system of government. While in *Discorsi* Machiavelli sometimes expressed his preference for an elective monarchy over a hereditary one, More in *Utopia* supported an even more democratic notion of self-government.¹⁸ While More’s description of the workings of the council that acts as the island of Utopia’s supreme deliberative body is vague and very general, the role of the Prince who heads each provincial council is well defined. He is elected by the members of the council from among four candidates proposed by the people, for life, ‘unless he is deprived on suspicion of favouring tyranny.’¹⁹ More thereby indirectly suggests the possibility of deposing a Prince. Meetings between him and senior officials outside the Senate are also forbidden

16 See Part One, Chapter II of the present book.

17 T. More, *Selected Letters*. ed. & trans. E. Rogers, New Haven 1961, 85.

18 Cf. J.R. Major, *Representative Government in Early Modern France*, New Haven 1980, 22 ff.; Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 223 ff.

19 *Utopia*, 62.

and subject to the death penalty in order to rule out the possibility of them conspiring to establish a tyrannical regime.

In Book One, More leaves no doubt that the monarch's role is to serve the people: 'the people choose a king for their own sake, not for his,'²⁰ says Raphael Hythloday, in an imaginary discourse of the 'real-life' advisors of 'real-life' monarchs. The recommendations made by the royal councillors in this passage are tyrannical *par excellence*: levying a tax to fund a fictitious war, bending the law to suit the king's purposes, declaring that not only the property of the people, but they themselves, are the king's property – the resulting poverty and privation among the ruled will cow them in submission.²¹ This passage in *Utopia* is one of the most 'Machiavellian' in the common sense of the word (even though Machiavelli himself would not have subscribed to any of the recommendations made here). More here is openly levelling a charge of tyrannical excess by rulers in the real world. Hythloday then launches into an *apologia*, stating that it is in the best interests of those in power to care more about the wealth of their subjects than about their own. This view corresponds fully with the Aristotelian political tradition and the opinions held by Erasmus on the qualities of a true Christian prince.

Also close to the spirit of *Istitutio* are More's criticisms of the excessive wealth of contemporary dynasties,²² their excessive engagement in warfare,²³ and, above all, his declaration, following Plato, that people should be ruled by philosophers – otherwise it is easy to find oneself on the path to tyranny.²⁴ More generally presents the fictional island of Utopia as an oasis of 'anti-tyranny,' whose people had saved many others from tyranny²⁵ by sending officials, at the request of the parties concerned, to maintain order, serving one-year or five-year terms – preventing the need for revolution or bloodshed.²⁶

Utopia's is structured by means of clear contrasts and oppositions. This fictional Land of Nowhere – the Land of Anti-tyranny – is contrasted with realistic

20 Ibid., 47.

21 Ibid., 45–46.

22 Ibid., 47–48.

23 Ibid., 45–46.

24 Ibid., 43: 'But it's evident that Plato was right to suppose that unless kings became philosophers themselves they would never accept the counsels of philosophers, seeing that they are warped and corrupted by false values from childhood. This is what he experienced for himself in the case of Dionysius.'

25 Ibid., 98–99.

26 Ibid., 96–97.

descriptions of the Kingdoms of the Here-and-Now, which are plagued by various maladies. One of these, a hereditary disease found in existing countries, is the exploitation of the inhabitants by a ‘multi-headed tyrant’ – a conspiracy of the rich. As Hythloday’s interlocutor, More seems sceptical about the effectiveness of the latter’s proposed cure for this disease – a society without private property or money as a means of exchange.²⁷ However, despite distancing himself from the possibility of realizing such a utopian order, he does not hold back from imagining a better society.²⁸ As the author of *Utopia*, More is following in the footsteps of Plato and using a reversal technique – a literary device fashionable in his time – to create a fictional ‘Island of Anti-tyranny’ as a warped mirror of his own times and country – England during the early reign of Henry VIII.²⁹ This literary technique allows him to more clearly show and criticize the reality around him. Here he joins the ranks of the Italian humanists whose works defined Renaissance political realism – Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and Vettori.

The Opposition of King – Tyrant: The Examples of Edward IV and Richard III

The use of a fictive Utopia as an instrument for criticizing reality was an early modern invention of Thomas More. He also used historical fiction in a similarly masterful and no less innovative manner in another other work – *The History of King Richard III*.³⁰ This historical study, which at times reads like a historical novel, was the first work of its kind in English. It was written in parallel with a Latin version, intended for members of the humanist ‘Republic of Letters’ across Europe.³¹ The simultaneous writing of two slightly different versions in different languages was a challenging undertaking.

27 *Utopia*, 120–121.

28 *Ibid.*, 122: ‘Meanwhile, although I can hardly agree with all that was said, even by a man who is without question both erudite and experienced in human affairs, yet I freely admit that there are many features in that Utopian commonwealth which I might more truly wish for than expect to see in our own cities.’

29 G. Ritter, *Machtstaat und Utopie*, 71 ff.

30 *The History of King Richard III*, in: *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 2, ed. R. Sylvester, New Haven–London 1974 [hereinafter: *The History of King Richard III*]. This edition contains two original versions of the work written simultaneously: in English and in Latin (*Historia Regis Richardi Angliae Eius Nominis Tertii*).

31 Cf. the publishers’ introductions to the English edition: R. Sylvester, ‘Introduction,’ in: *The History of King Richard III*, XVII ff., LVI ff. and to the German critical edition: H.P. Heinrich, ‘Einleitung,’ in: *Die Geschichte König Richards III*, ed. H.P. Heinrich,

The History of King Richard III is considered one of Thomas More two outstanding literary achievements.³² He began writing the book in 1514,³³ i.e. not much later than when Machiavelli began writing the first version of *The Prince*.³⁴ He stopped working on it around 1518 at the latest, i.e. when he entered royal service, and never managed to finish the work. We can guess the reasons for this. One of these was undoubtedly the sensitive nature of the subject matter – the bloody rivalry between the houses of York and Lancaster, which culminated in the Wars of the Roses (1455–1485), a period during which the crown changed hands frequently, kings were deposed and royal family members murdered. In this respect, fifteenth-century England was not much different from Renaissance Italy, whose cities, according to Dante’s previously mentioned reflections, were full of tyrants. The primary difference was that in England, the rival Houses of York and Lancaster, which both accused each other of usurping the throne, were mainly fighting over control of a single city – London.

The brief reign of Richard III (1483–1485) was still a recent memory. Thomas More would have had a vague recollection of these times from his own memories of early childhood, but also learned about them from the stories told by his family and friends.³⁵ The subject matter of the book was all the more delicate because the niece of Richard III, Elizabeth of York, became the wife of Henry

München 1984, 26 ff., who present the complex history of the publication of this work and doubts related to its dating and even authorship. The first English edition was published twice in 1543, but without the author’s name. The edition that is closest to the original was published in 1557. See the photo-offset edition of *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge. 1557*, vol. 1, introduction by J.J. Wilson, London 1978, 35–71.

- 32 On the simultaneous creation of both works and their complementary subjects, cf. A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, Oxford 1982, 75 ff.; R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 98, describes *The History of King Richard III* as ‘perhaps the finest thing he ever wrote.’
- 33 R. Sylvester, ‘Introduction,’ LXIII ff., and H.P. Heinrich, ‘Einleitung,’ 29, assume on the basis of extra-textual analysis that the work was written in the years 1514–1518, even though William Rastell’s edition published in 1557 states that More wrote it in 1513: ‘The history of King Richard the thirde (unfinished) written by Walter Thomas More than one of the undersheriffs of London about the yeare of our Lorde 1513;’ *The Workes of Sir Thomas More...*, 35.
- 34 On the simultaneous creation of *The Prince* and *The History of King Richard III*, cf. general remarks in: J.H. Hexter, *The Predatory and the Utopian Visions. Machiavelli and More...*, 185 ff.
- 35 P. Ackroyd *The Life of Thomas More*, 155 ff.; R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 98 ff.

VII, the first king of the Tudor dynasty, who was a member of the House of Lancaster. This marriage created a union between the Yorks and Lancasters, and helped legitimize the assumption of the crown by Henry VII. Nevertheless, by the time More began writing *The History of King Richard III*, the dark reputation of Richard III – as a man with a crooked back, and a usurper responsible for many acts of murder, including infanticide – was already widespread. This was due to one-sided historical texts circulated in manuscript form by chroniclers, many of whom were connected with the court of Henry VII, including Pietro Carmeliano, Bernard André, and John Rous, who provided strongly contrasting images of two representatives of the York family: an idealized image of King Edward IV (1461–1470, 1471–1483) and a tyrannical face of his brother Richard III.³⁶ Events associated with the reigns of the two brothers were presented in *Anglicae historia libri XXVI*, written between 1506 and 1513 by Polydore Vergil, a clergyman, humanist, and Moore's friend.³⁷

Although the works of these authors, written at roughly the same time, mark the beginning of modern English historiography, publishers of modern editions of *The History of King Richard III* have shared the opinion³⁸ that these works had limited influence on one another.³⁹ More's *History* devotes five times more space to Richard III than does *Anglicae historia libri*. They differ in their construction and interpretation of events as well. Vergil's narrative is much less emotional and more distanced, while More's description is more dramatic and literary. Both More's dramatization of events and his work's construction and style were inspired by his knowledge of the writings of Thucydides, Plutarch, Sallustius, Suetonius, and, above all, Tacitus.⁴⁰ In turn, the concept of human history as a

36 On these and other written sources that More could have used to gain knowledge about Richard III, cf. P.M. Kendall, *Richard the Third*, New York–London 1985 [1955], Appendix II: 'Richard's Reputation,' 465–514.; R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LXX ff.; H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 37 ff.; A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 85 ff.

37 M. Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 463 ff.

38 On the possibility that More was familiar with *Angliae historia* by Polydore Vergil and on textual and structural differences between the two works, cf. R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LXXV ff.; H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 40 ff.; A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 78 ff.

39 A contrary opinion was expressed by P. Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, 156.

40 Cf. R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LXXXII ff.; H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 43 ff. This image of a tyrant was later repeated in More's Latin epigrams, cf. the publisher's introduction to the German edition: Thomas Morus, *Epigramme*, ed. U. Baumann, München 1983 [hereinafter: *Epigramme*], 68 ff., 35.

combination of divine providence and free will and fate was presumably inspired by St Augustine.⁴¹

Although earlier historical works had been written on the last years of the Yorks' rule, it was still a delicate matter to raise this subject during the times of Vergil and More because of the potential to anger Henry VII (1485–1509), Richard III's greatest enemy and the man who defeated him at Bosworth Field. This was especially true in More's case, as he had earlier been openly critical of Henry's policies.⁴² When the Tudors assumed the throne in 1485, it was seen as an act of usurpation in the eyes of many people, despite the partial legitimization of this move through Henry's relationship with the Lancasters and marriage to a member of the York family. As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, Lord Francis Bacon, who was writing a biography of Henry VII, had to put significant effort into proving to the reader that the first Tudor king had managed to legitimise his usurpation.⁴³ The dark reputation of Richard III, as recorded in Tudor historiography, to which More himself made a significant contribution, did not begin to be challenged until the 1740s.⁴⁴

Two figures clash in *The History of King Richard III*: the tyrannical Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and the ambiguous hero, his brother, King Edward IV. Richard is described from the very beginning of the work as a base man who broke the bonds 'that binden manne and manne together, without anye respecte of Godde or the worldē' when he chose to murder his nephews: the heir to the throne, Edward V, and his younger brother.⁴⁵ More's description of Richard as

41 On the influence of the concept of human history by Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, on More's understanding of history in *The History of King Richard III*, see an extensive discussion in: A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 95 ff.

42 Expressed in his Latin epigram, in which he commemorated the coronation of young Henry VIII Tudor in 1509. His characterization of the politics of the late Henry VII includes elements of a conventional depiction of the result of tyrannical rule (e.g. uncertainty among the king's subjects as to their private property and a fear of secret informers); see *Epigramme*, 68 ff. Moreover, the author added to this work a concise and seemingly innocent tale about emperor Tiberius taken from Suetonius, and which in fact made allusions to the coronation of Henry VIII; *ibid.*, 66 ff. He drew a parallel between Henry VIII and Tiberius once again near the end of his career, in 1533, see R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LXV ff., LXXXIX.

43 F. Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII and Selected Works*, ed. B. Vickers, Cambridge 1998, 5–9, 15.

44 R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LIX ff.; H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 32.

45 *The History of King Richard III*, 5–6.

physically deformed and flawed in character was important for his casting the monarch as a tyrant.

Richard's character and behaviour as portrayed here are almost identical to those of a stereotypical tyrant: malicious, wrathful, envious and mean, but also giving gifts to win himself 'unfaste' friendships; prone to borrow, pillage and extort, and for this reason hated by his subjects; closed, secretive, and deceitful ('a deepe dissimuler'), 'not letting to kisse whome hee thoughte to kyll' – which, in turn, may have brought to mind in the reader Judas himself.⁴⁶ He was likewise 'lowlye of counteynaunce, arrogant of heart, outwardly coumpinable where he inwardely hated [...] dispitious and cruel' – not out of ill will, but usually out of ambition and to serve his own interests ('for the suretie or encrease of his estate'). Friend and foe meant the same to him where self-interest was involved, and he would not hesitate to sacrifice a life to achieve his aims. The only seemingly positive feature provided is an emphasis on Richard's skills as a military commander, although More adds that this was because of Richard's inclination to war.⁴⁷ This description leaves no doubt – it contains all the main stereotypical vices of a tyrant. Perhaps, the model for More's portrait of the dark corners of Richard's soul were the description of the tyrannical qualities of Emperor Tiberius (including his sharing a predilection for *dissimulatio*) made by the Roman authors Suetonius and Tacitus, whose works the English humanist was well acquainted with.⁴⁸ Certainly, he could here have drawn inspiration from ancient catalogues of tyrannical vices.⁴⁹

This picture is complemented by a description of the physical characteristics of the Duke of Gloucester, which is preceded by a meaningful remark that he was beneath his brothers only in 'bodye and prowesse,' while he was 'in witte and courage egall with the either of them.'⁵⁰ It was as if More wanted to let the reader know that at least Richard's mind distinguished him from his subjects. Nevertheless, he describes in detail the Duke's physical imperfections and

46 *The History of King Richard III*, 8. This is how A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 82, interprets this sentence.

47 *The History of King Richard III*, 7–8.

48 Experts emphasize similarities between the figure of Richard III created by More and the image of Tiberius by Suetonius, *De vita caesarum* (see R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' lxxxvii ff.), or a more psychological portrait of this emperor presented by Tacitus in *Annales*; cf. *ibid.*, xcv; H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 44; A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 82.

49 See above, Part One, Chapter II.

50 *The History of King Richard III*, 6–7.

handicaps: he was ‘little of stature,’ with misshapen limbs, a crooked back, a ‘left shoulder much higher than his right,’ and an unpleasant countenance.⁵¹ This list of Richard’s corporeal deficiencies, which were meant to disgust the reader and establish him from the outset as a negative character, were magnified by the oddities of his birth – he was born legs first (breech birth), requiring his mother to be cut,⁵² and was toothed at birth. However, More notes here that this information came from the king’s enemies. This description of Richard III’s physical deformities was not Thomas More’s invention. He probably took it from earlier authors connected with the Tudor court.⁵³ Nevertheless, such a picture was conducive to the supposition, one shared by More, that the ‘unnatural’ birth of the future Duke of Gloucester foreshadowed his many future crimes against nature.⁵⁴

More contrasts Richard as a negative hero with his elder brothers, King Edward IV (‘a goodly parsonage, and very Princely to behold’)⁵⁵ and George, Duke of Clarence (‘a goodly and noble Prince’).⁵⁶ However, Edward IV was also not free from sin.⁵⁷ First, he ordered the execution of his brother George – who had been found guilty by Parliament of treason after attempting to seize the throne – though Edward regretted his order and mourned his brother’s death. Second, Edward avenged the death of his father, Richard, Duke of York, at the Battle of Wakefield (1460), by defeating the Lancastrians a few months later, removing Henry VI from power, and placing himself as a usurper on the throne of England.⁵⁸ Soon after being locked up in the Tower of London, Henry VI was murdered, allegedly without the new king’s knowledge, by his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester (1471). Here, More makes a rather ambiguous moral argument: this murder, he says, was committed without the consent of Edward IV, who, if he had known about it, would have appointed someone else to carry out this bloody act (‘that boocherly office’) rather than his own brother.⁵⁹

51 Ibid. Interestingly, Thomas More himself possessed a similar physical feature, i.e. his right shoulder was higher than his left.; see Allen 4, 14; *Collected Works* 7, 17.

52 R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 102, draws attention to the fact that a reader from that era could associate it with the birth of Nero.

53 Cf. R. Sylvester, ‘Introduction;’ H.P. Heinrich, ‘Einleitung,’ 38.

54 *The History of King Richard III*, 7.

55 Ibid., 4 ff.

56 Ibid., 7.

57 Ambiguities in More’s depiction of Edward IV as a seemingly exemplary ruler are emphasized e.g. by A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 79 ff.

58 *The History of King Richard III*, 6.

59 Ibid., 8.

In general, the figure of Edward IV is presented by More in a rather realistic way, with morally ambiguous features that he justifies to the reader unapologetically: 'A Kinge of such gouernaunce and behaiouere in time of peace (for in war eche parte muste needes bee others enemye) that there was neuer anye Prince of this lande attaynyng the Crowne by battayle, so heartetly beloued with the substaunce of the people.'⁶⁰ In this passage, More presents a double moral standard in judging the ruler's conduct: one for peacetime and another for times of war. At this point in time, he fully agrees with the opinion expressed by Machiavelli at more or less the same period on the pages of *Discourses on Livy*: 'Although the use of fraud in every action is detestable, nonetheless in managing war it is a praiseworthy and glorious thing, and who overcomes the enemy with fraud is praised as much as the one who overcomes it with force.'⁶¹

This double standard in the assessment of the ruler's behaviour in war and peacetime would not have appealed to Erasmus, but it nevertheless corresponded to the convictions of some humanists who justified it by referring to examples of ancient campaigns and wars.⁶² This is why More was able to use this argument more boldly in his *apologia* to Edward IV. Moreover, there is an additional argument in *The History of King Richard III* that justifies the usurpation of the throne by Edward. During the 22 years of his reign, he managed to convince and gain the recognition of even those who were opposed to the deposition of Henry VI. Through good governance and over time – 'in more than twentie yeares of his raign, a great parte of a longe lyfe'⁶³ – Edward's usurpatory rule was even recognized by his surviving enemies. The idea of legalizing the power of a tyrant-usurper through usucaption, or recognition of its *de facto* rule, was not More's invention. However, he knew that he was walking on slippery ground here. When he began writing *The History of King Richard III*, only 28 years had passed from the moment when the Tudor family ascended to the throne.

Another interesting aspect of More's work is his characterization of Edward IV's personality, sketched out in the apologetic tone of an obituary. One is struck

60 *Ibid.*, 3.

61 N. Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. H.C. Mansfield & N. Tarcov, Chicago 1996 [hereinafter *Discourses*], III, 40: 'That to Use Fraud in Managing War Is a Glorious Thing,' 299. A similar message is found in *Discourses* III, 41: 'That the Fatherland Ought to Be Defended, Whether with Ignominy or with Glory; and It Is Well Defended in Any Mode Whatever,' 300.

62 *Discourses on Livy* III, 40, 299–300, in which Machiavelli refers e.g. to Hannibal's feigned retreat at Lake Trasimeno.

63 *The History of King Richard III*, 6.

by the ambiguities and relativism in More's assessment of the king's physical features and character: Edward was 'of visage louely, of bodye myghtie, stronge, and cleane,' though he was rather corpulent due to his 'ouer liberall dyet.' In his youth, he was overly fond of carnal delights, which his young, healthy body found hard to resist. His passion for pleasures of the flesh, however, did not cause any great harm to the people: both because how 'could any one mans pleasure stretch and extende to the dyspleasure of verry manye' and because he acted wythoute violence.' Towards the end of his life, he put aside these idle distractions and led a serious life, dedicated to maintaining peace in the realm. His subjects never had to live in fear of their king, and instead, showered him with expressions of their affection and freely obeyed him. In the final days of his reign, Edward ended the 'gatherynge of [tax] money (which is the onelye thyng that withdraweth the heartes of Englyshmenne fro the Pryce)' and on his deathbed managed to bring together the conflicted lords. Throughout his reign, in relation to his subjects he was 'benygne, courteyse, and so familyer.'⁶⁴ It is hard to resist the impression that More, in painting before the reader's eyes such an ideal picture of Edward IV's rule, is also suggesting the illusory nature of such a definitive assessment.⁶⁵

Despite noting some imperfections in Edward's generally positive character, More makes sure the reader does not associate the flaws in his character and actions with the stereotypical characteristics of a tyrant. Hence, for example, his distinguishing the young Edward's libidinous behaviour from acts of sexual violence. In the section that follows, More humorously describes the features of other high-ranking lords.⁶⁶ However, in a speech by Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, in which he defends the assumption of the crown by Richard III, the accusation is repeated that Edward IV's treatment women was most distressing to his subjects, as were his frequent wars and excessive taxation.⁶⁷

Despite Edward's being described by means of idealizing conventions commonly used in the *specula principis*, More's portrait of the king was not

64 *The History of King Richard III*, 7–8.

65 A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 81.

66 *The History of King Richard III*, 54: 'The king [Edward IV – I.K.] would say that he had concubines, which in three diuers properties diuersely exceled. One the meriest, an other the wiliest, the thirde the holiest harlot in his realme.' The two last mistresses came from noble families, so More intentionally omits their names. The first one was famous Jane Shore, the wife of a London merchant. After the king's death, she became the mistress of other lords, e.g. Dorset, which gave Richard a convenient pretext to accuse him of adultery; see R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' 220.

67 *The History of King Richard III*, 69 ff.

schematic in its praise – rather, he employed realistic and ironic literary conventions in its construction. This was a brave move on More's part, especially given that he was describing the father of Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII, and grandfather of the current King Henry VIII. In *The History of King Richard III* other figures from the ruling elite are treated with a similar mix of realism and irony.⁶⁸

The image of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who became Lord Protector of the Realm after the death of Edward IV, corresponds to the traditional model of the tyrant. In addition to the previously mentioned murders, he is said to have been responsible for the arrests, trial, and summary execution of a group of lords,⁶⁹ and the taking of two young princes from their mother Elizabeth Gray, the spouse of King Edward IV. More undermines the legitimacy of her marriage to the deceased king through a complicated legal argument (that the king's marriage to the widow Gray was essentially bigamy), in an effort to question the legitimacy of her children's future claims to the throne as well. Richard's right to the crown was also bolstered by accusations that both of his deceased brothers were illegitimate.⁷⁰ The description of these incidents is capped by a long speech by a figure who was then an ally of Richard – Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. The speech contains a list of abuses of power committed by Edward, including allegations of his illegitimate origins, and a petition by the nobility for the Duke of Gloucester to take the throne of England.⁷¹ After a moment of feigned hesitation, Richard agrees to accept the crown before the assembled Parliament, listing his two titles to the crown: the right of blood (proper origins, i.e. born into the Plantagenet family) and, the 'most effectual' one – his election by the English nobility.⁷² The applause he receives from the people gathered at Westminster Hall is the final scene of the action, which – apart from a short conclusion – closes both this episode and the Latin version of the work.

The English version is slightly longer, containing a few more episodes: the first provides details of the murder of Edward IV's sons ordered by Richard III, and a description of the sad end of their killers. A moralizing tone here is combined

68 Deserving of particular attention here is the image of the power-hungry and two-faced Henry (mistakenly referred to as Edward by More) Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who was initially a supporter of Richard III, but who later became one of the leaders of a plot against him; cf. R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 105.

69 *The History of King Richard III*, 57 ff.

70 *Ibid.*, 59 ff., 66 ff.

71 *Ibid.*, 69 ff.

72 *Ibid.*, 80.

with a psychological analysis of Richard: the passage describes the king's remorse weighing on his tyrannical soul and his well-deserved death at Bosworth Field.⁷³ It is possible that the inspiration for this elaborate moral and psychological analysis of a negative character may have come from More's familiarity with the work of Tacitus.⁷⁴ He concludes with a report on a conspiracy against Richard by his former allies, the Duke of Buckingham, the Bishop of Ely, John Morton (*nota bene* somewhat later, guardian of the young More). Morton's recounts a fairy tale with distinctly anti-tyrannical overtones, in which the main roles are played by a lion and a fox,⁷⁵ bringing to mind the tyrannical Latin epigrams written by More, in which these animals also appear.⁷⁶ After a few lines of conversation between the conspirators, in which Bishop Ely persuades Buckingham to betray Richard, the English version of *History* is suddenly interrupted.

The Latin version – intended for a foreign reader with humanist interests, although shorter and devoid of certain chronological and geographical details – had more literary and universal in character. It is a study devoted to the formation and consequences of tyrannical rule.⁷⁷ In this context, it is puzzling to see the completion of work on the Latin text ending at the moment of the tyrant's greatest triumph – his obtaining the crown.⁷⁸

Richard III as a Tyrant and Actor on the Stage-as-Scaffold

Why did More stop working on *The History of King Richard III*? He did so at the moment when the Tudor dynasty was about to enter the scene. As mentioned earlier, the work's subject matter was particularly sensitive for the author in 1518,

73 The description of these events had the following annotation on the margin: 'The out & inward troubles of tyuntes'; *ibid.*, 87 ff.

74 H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 46.

75 Cf. commentaries in: *ibid.*, 207, fn. 175; G. Ritter, *Machtstaat und Utopie*, 269.

76 *Epigramme*, 138 ff., in two epigrams entitled: *Fable of the Sick Fox and the Lion* and *On a Lion and Lysimachus*. In both cases, the lion is the straightforward embodiment of a tyrant, whereas the fox is a symbol of cunning which allows it to save its life and avoid the lion's teeth.

77 H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 31.

78 Cf. A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 104 ff. On different interpretations of why he abandoned the Latin version, including the hypothesis that it was deliberately shortened to avoid inconvenient associations with Henry VIII's politics, see R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 100, 119. Cf. P. Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, 157 ff.

when he finally decided to enter royal service.⁷⁹ Therefore he had good reasons to avoid potential associations of Richard III's actions with those of Henry VIII,⁸⁰ and recalling the names of families that had once supported the house of York.⁸¹ The allusions to the reign of Henry VIII that he smuggled into the work, as well as its universal, anti-tyrannical overtones were also cause for concern.⁸² The current ruler, let alone those in his court, may have felt offended by such allusions, even if the offense was unintended. Meanwhile, More's decision to take a royal salary did not prevent him from devoting as many as 12 Latin epigrams written in 1518 to a general criticism of tyranny.⁸³

The subject matter of *The History of King Richard III* was 'slippery' not only because of the family relations connecting the Tudors with Edward IV. Similarities to the situation of Richard III, who had justified his usurpation with legal claims similar to the *mutatis mutandis* used to legalize the rule of his opponent Henry VII after 1485, were also of meaningful in this context.⁸⁴ While Richard III is depicted here as the embodiment of tyrannical power, in accordance with the propaganda of the time, he was not only portrayed as a tyrannical usurper but also as a *tyrannus ex parte exerciti*. More was the only author of that era to reconstruct or confabulate the scene of the murder of the princes in such an

79 A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 100, who assumes that More worked on the concept of his book and on the text itself in the years 1513–1522, but wrote its main part in 1518, emphasizes that while in *Utopia* More ordered his arguments in favour of becoming involved in the political life of the court, in *The History* he 'explored "civil philosophy" in action in circumstances he would probably to confront.'

80 R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' CI, LXIX, points to the possibility that one of the reasons why More decided to write *The History of King Richard III* was the impression made on More by the execution of Edmund Pole, ordered by Henry VIII in 1514. Pole was a relative of Edward IV York and posed a threat to the Tudors' succession rights to the throne of England.

81 R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 118 ff.

82 Very interesting in this context is a remark by Erasmus of Rotterdam. In his letter to Ulrich von Hutten dated 23 July 1519, Erasmus stressed the fact that More had always been distinguished by his disgust with tyranny and admiration for equality). He also added his own comment in the spirit of Vettori: it would be difficult to find a royal court without rampant luxury and ambition that was free from 'any kind of tyranny'; see Allen 4, 15 verse 90–91; *Collected Works* 7, 18.

83 Latin epigrams by More, the exact dates for which are sometimes difficult to pinpoint, are full of references to tyrannical rule; see *Epigramme*, 109–139. See also the extended discussion in: U. Baumann, *Einführung*, in: *Epigramme*, 35; R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' XCIX.

84 F. Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry...*, 15.

unequivocal fashion, providing in the English version of the work, dates, places, and names related to these events and citing direct accounts by 'well-informed' individuals.⁸⁵ Other contemporary sources mentioned only rumours about the alleged crimes perpetrated by the Duke of Gloucester.⁸⁶ However, as the work's positive character, Edward IV displays ambiguous features which, even for an inattentive reader, most likely brought to mind the conventional vices of a tyrant (debauchery, engaging in wars that exhausted the country, exploiting his subjects with a heavy tax burden). As we can see, More was walking on thin ice here.

The History of King Richard III is told in a narratively engaging manner. The plot, focused on Richard's beastly machinations, is full of tensions. Its narrative structure includes fictional dialogues and is intertwined with humorous interjections. The series of crimes leading the Protector to the crown is preceded by a superbly constructed literary description of the House of Lords' deliberations, the participants in which Richard ordered be treated to strawberries.⁸⁷ Their red colour and juiciness are harbingers of the upcoming murders and bloodshed, to which some of their lords would fall victim. This is but just one example confirming the high literary quality of this work. Another is the psychological profile it provides of its protagonist. As a rule, the figure of the villain is best suited to this, and this is what the silhouette of Richard III created here embodies. Thanks to More's superb literary technique, the character of Richard III, masterfully depicted several dozen years later by Shakespeare, became synonymous with tyrannical power in the literature and historiography of the Tudor period in England.⁸⁸

More's *The History of King Richard III* is generally classified as the first work of modern English historiography (next to Polydore Vergil), which broke from the narrative mode used by medieval chroniclers. It contains a number of modern elements, including the means by which More constructs a cause and effect story. The course taken by individuals is a consequence mainly of the decisions they take, which are driven by their character and psychological characteristics. Nonetheless, fictional elements also play an important role in the story's structure, including the use of dialogues and speeches, with many techniques

85 On this subject, cf. R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LXVI.

86 The matter of the actual role played by Richard III in the murder of both princes remains a mystery, see M. Kendall, *Richard the Third*, Appendix I: 'Who Murdered the Princes?,' 465–495. On the other hand, the credibility of More's account is defended e.g. in: R. Marius, *Thomas More. A Biography*, 111 ff.

87 *The History of King Richard III*, 47.

88 See below, Part Three, Chapter II.

borrowed from ancient historians. Moreover, there are moralizing elements which, in turn, come from late medieval and early Renaissance didactic stories about the vicissitudes of famous individuals.⁸⁹

In terms of form, *The History of King Richard III*, especially its Latin version, in some sections bears the hallmarks of a literary work rather than a historical book. Experts on More's writing are in agreement on this point.⁹⁰ Of course, this concerns how the book is viewed from our contemporary perspective. During the Renaissance, similarly as in the Antique and Middle Ages, the telling of history involved not only 'objective' historical elements but also fictional and literary ones, closely connected to each other. Hence, it possesses a hint of the historical novel, which draws in readers with a fascinating drama of power and its acquisition through criminal acts. It seems that it was precisely this early modern accessible 'novelistic' form that allowed More's *History* to present various aspects of that part of the political nature of man that was generally considered morally reprehensible. This included its greatest political abuse and evil – tyranny. The new narrative formula thus made it possible to present traditional content in a much deeper manner, hitherto difficult to express, making it more attractive to the reader. At the same time, it not only met the needs and tastes of readers but also helped shape them. The work's 'novelistic' form could have been one of the reasons why the author stopped working on the book. Worth examining in this regard is the opinion of More's close friend, Erasmus, expressed on the pages of *Institutio*. He warned young people against reading the stories of the lives of Achilles, Alexander the Great, Xerxes, and Caesar without providing them with an appropriate alternative. He claimed that such readings could encourage tyrannical behaviour, as the written word has an almost magical power to shape behaviour. Roterodamus also complained that more and more people were reading for entertainment stories from the Arthurian cycle, as well as other 'fairy tales of this kind,' including comedies and poetic works. In his opinion these works were not only 'tyrannical,' but also vulgar, stupid and childish.⁹¹

89 C. H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' p 52 ff.; A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 84.

90 See e.g. M. Kendall, *Richard the Third*, 499. Cf. also R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' LXXX, and a summary discussion on English historians' opinions about this matter in: H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 48 ff., with a detailed analysis of the literary structure of More's work, which could even be associated with a dramatic play in five acts, with all the classical elements: exposure, development, culmination, turn of events, fall and disaster of the protagonists.

91 Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Fürstenerziehung. Institutio Principis Christiani. Die Erziehung eines christlichen Fürsten*, ed. A.J. Gail, Paderborn 1968 [hereinafter: *Institutio*], 134 ff.

Experts on Erasmus have pointed out that in this passage he directed his sharp criticism primarily against the knightly and courtly culture of Burgundy, where stories from the Arthurian cycle remained fashionable until the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁹² They were equally popular at that time in England. Printed editions of them contributed greatly to this, as did the continuing popularity of the history of England penned by the twelfth-century monk Geoffrey of Monmouth, who either invented the figure of King Arthur or borrowed from legends. The authenticity of these stories was fiercely questioned by Polydore Vergil, who was well-acquainted with More.⁹³ This criticism was probably shared by More as well, especially since he presented himself on the pages of *Utopia* as an opponent of 'idle' knightly culture.

Of course, the literary sophistication of *The History of King Richard III* remains unquestionable, nor was it intended by the author to be a 'tyrannical' reading, to use the words of Erasmus. Certainly, however, the conservative Rotterdamer was not critical merely about sensational knightly stories, full of violence, bloodshed, and murder. For he must have had in mind also popular forms of poetry, comedy, and romance that popularized this sensational content. His words also reflected his humanist aversion to antiquarian medieval knightly culture. There is also a note of dissatisfaction expressed by Erasmus with disseminating such content by means of new, popular literary forms, which after the invention of printing were finding a wider circle of readers.

Despite its novel form and some fictional themes, *History* is an in-depth study of power and its degeneration. However, it left the reader in doubt as to whether this degeneration – in a word 'tyranny' – did not simply reflect the very essence of power. This pessimistic reflection was expressed by More in the last lines of the Latin version of the work, where he used an elaborate metaphor, comparing the world of politics to a theatrical stage and those in power to actors. This scene was placed in a slightly different section in the English version.⁹⁴ Its content was

92 See F. Geldner, *Die Staatsauffassung und Fürstenlehre...*, 104, fn. 15.

93 J.M. Levine, *Thomas More and the English Renaissance...*, 83.

94 *The History of King Richard III*, 80 ff. 'And in a stage play all the people know right wel, that he that playeth the sowdayne is percase a sowter. Yet if one should can so little good, to him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one of his tormentors might hap to breake his head, and worthy for the marring of the play. And so they said that these matters bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaid upon scaffoldes. In which pore men be but ye lookers on And thei yt wise be, wil medle no farther. For they that sometyme step up and play with them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play & do themself no good.' The word *sowdayne* used here could also refer to the figure of a pharaoh, who was played by representatives of

as follows: if someone from among the audience were to call by the name of a familiar actor, who was in fact a cobbler, but was performing the role of a sultan on stage, then at this point another actor, playing the role of a torturer, could deprive the unfortunate spectator of his head for spoiling the performance. More states that the games of kings are like performances on stage, although in real life a large part of them are played out on 'scaffolds,' which at that time meant both the scaffolding of the stage and the executioner's platform. In these performances, ordinary people are merely part of the audience. Therefore, the wiser among them will not force their way onto the stage and interfere with the action of the play, because this could disrupt its course and prove dangerous for an incautious member of the audience.⁹⁵

Unlike his friend Erasmus, who used the metaphor of theatre in relation to the world of politics in a slightly more euphemistic way, More admits outright that politics is like theatre. But political dramas usually take place not on stage, but on the scaffold. Therefore, the best solution for an intellectual is not to do anything that might change the course of the drama. This conclusion was something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. In line with this advice, More halted his writing of *The History of King Richard III*. The sensitive subject matter of the work may have simply been too dangerous for him. However, four years later he changed his mind and, accepting a court salary, immersed himself in a whirlwind of great-power politics. This decision in 1535 ultimately led him to the scaffold.

the shoemakers' guild in medieval mystery plays in England; cf. publishers' commentaries in: H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 189, fn. 143–145; R. Sylvester, 'Introduction,' 259. A different interpretation is suggested by A. Fox, *Thomas More. History and Providence*, 93, who sees the sultan as a metaphor of the Great Turk, i.e. the Antichrist.

95 The metaphor of the theatre was one of More's favourite similes, which he also used in other works: *Four Last Things*, *Utopia* and *Dialogue of Comfort*. What is particularly interesting is the use of the metaphor of king-as-actor in *Four Last Things*, when the author makes a reference to Lucian and the patristic tradition of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor: death awaits every man, even the king cannot escape it; 'If thou shouldest perceue that, one wer earnestly proud of the wering of a gay golden gown, while the lorel plath the foly, considering that thou aert very sure, that when the play is done, he shall walke a knave in his old cote?'; as cited in L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 112, *ibid.*, 111 ff., with an analysis of this motif which does not take into account the metaphor of the stage as the execution scaffold in *The History of King Richard III*. The importance of the life-as-theatre metaphor for More's self-fashioning is emphasized by S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning. From More to Shakespeare*, Chicago–London 1980, 11–73, here esp. 14.

Tyrannical Readings: Castruccio Castracani – A Psychological Portrait of the ‘New Prince’

From England, we will return now to Italy and Niccolò Machiavelli. In addition to his two famous treatises analysing the mechanisms of power, *Il Principe* and *Discorsi*, he was also the author of the lesser-known *The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca*.⁹⁶ The work was written quickly during a trip to Lucca in July and August of 1520, at a somewhat more favourable moment for Machiavelli, when he was no longer bound by his exile in the countryside. His primary source of information for the book was a work by Niccolò Tegrini, *Castrucci Antelminelli Castracani lucensis ducis vita*, published for the first time in Modena in 1496. It is also possible that another inspiration for *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* was the Latin translation of Xenophon’s *Cyropedia*, a semi-fictional biography of the Persian king Cyrus the Great, first published in Rome in 1474.⁹⁷ Machiavelli’s short biographical work was a kind of warm-up for the writing of *Florentine Histories*, which he began at roughly the same time, and in which he recounted in a less fictionalized, more concise and emotionally neutral manner the life of Castruccio Castracani (1281–1328), a known historical figure who ruled the Tuscan city of Lucca from 1316 to 1328.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, historical inaccuracies, deliberate confabulations, and the stylized depiction of the main character have led *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* to be described in historiography as a historical novel or romance.⁹⁹

96 Niccolò Machiavelli, ‘The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca,’ in: *The Prince and Other Writings*, trans. W.K. Marriott, New York 2008, 145–184 [hereinafter: *Life*].

97 D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli. Die Macht und der Schein*, München 2000, 194 ff.

98 See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. L. Banfield, H. Mansfield, Princeton, NJ 1988. Cf. also D. Hoeges, *Essay zur Ästhetik der Macht Niccolò Machiavelli*, in: Niccolò Machiavelli, *Das Leben Castruccio Castracanis aus Lucca*, ed. D. Hoeges, München 1998, 72.

99 D. Hoeges, *Essay zur Ästhetik der Macht...*, 52 ff. On the significance of this work in Machiavelli’s literary output, cf. also remarks on the literary and novel-like character of *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* in: F. Meinecke, *Der Fürst und kleinere Schriften, Niccolò Machiavelli*, in: *Brandenburg. Preußen. Deutschland. Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte und Politik*, ed. E. Kessel, Stuttgart 1979, 122. In contrast, F. Gilbert, *Guicciardini, Machiavelli und die Geschichtsschreibung der italienischen Renaissance*, Berlin 1991, 36, sees *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* as a manifestation of practicing history in a rhetorical manner typical of the Renaissance, when form was more important than content.

Machiavelli's mythologization of Castruccio Castracani's character is clearly visible from the books first pages. The author begins with general remarks on the career paths and fame achieved by individuals with unexceptional origins. The opening paragraph reads as follows:

[...] all men, or the larger number of them, who have performed great deeds in the world, and excelled others in their day, have had their birth and beginning in baseness and obscurity; or have been aggrieved by Fortune in some outrageous way [...]. I believe that these lowly beginnings of great men occur because Fortune is desirous of showing to the world that such men owe much to her and little to wisdom, because she begins to show her hand when wisdom can really take no part in their career: thus all success must be attributed to her. Castruccio Castracani of Lucca was one of those men who did great deeds [...].¹⁰⁰

Although Machiavelli does not mention any other examples apart from Castracani, for the attentive reader, his allusions to Moses and Romulus, the main figures in Chapter VI of *The Prince*, are easy to read. Like them, despite having unknown origins, Castracani did great things. This provides excellent confirmation of a thesis particularly close to Machiavelli – that with the support of Fortuna and due to his *virtù*, an outstanding individual can achieve the highest position in politics regardless of his origins.

With his contempt for the highly born and hostility to old aristocratic families, Machiavelli was closely allied to the Renaissance concept of nobility being based on virtue, a notion openly professed by both Erasmus and More. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether the latter authors would have been willing to go so far as to make a *parvenu* a ruler in one of their works. It was one thing to seek in a king by God's grace a spiritual *parvenu*, and even to write about this with irony; but it was another thing to make a *parvenu* into a prince, even if only on the pages of a novel. This was much easier to do for an Italian who grew up in the midst of the cities that were swarming with usurpers.

According to Machiavelli, Castruccio was found in a vineyard by a widow living with her brother, and was adopted by the Castracani family, one of the noble families in Lucca. He was then taken in by Messer Francesco Guinigi, a *condottiero* and Ghibelline, and the real ruler of Lucca. Guinigi's only titles to rule mentioned by Machiavelli were his position as 'the valued leader of the [Ghibelline] party in Lucca,' his wealth and physical strength, and the bravery he showed in his primary occupation – the art of war.¹⁰¹

100 *Life*, 147.

101 *Ibid.*, 148–151.

When he died, Francesco Guinigi made Castruccio the guardian and tutor of his 13-year-old son Pagolo, 'which increased enormously his power and position, and created a certain amount of envy against him in Lucca in place of the former universal goodwill, *for many men suspected him of harbouring tyrannical intentions* [emphasis mine – I.K.].¹⁰² This was particularly true of the leaders of the Guelph party, who even imprisoned him briefly. After being released by his followers, Castracani forced the Guelph leaders from power and became in the 1320s, as Machiavelli puts it, 'almost a prince of Lucca.'¹⁰³ Formally, he only held the distinguished position of commander of Lucca's troops.

In the years that followed, Castruccio conquered many cities in Tuscany and won the favours of Louis IV the Bavarian, who travelled to Rome for his coronation as Holy Roman Emperor in 1328. Having been previously appointed governor of Tuscany and imperial vicar of Pisa, Castracani also gained considerable influence in Lombardy. Moreover, he suppressed a rebellion against the Emperor, for which he 'received many honours, and was made a Roman senator.' Castracani received this dignity, writes Machiavelli, amidst 'the greatest pomp, Castruccio being clothed in a brocaded toga, which had the following words embroidered on its front: "I am what God wills." Whilst on the back was: "What God desires shall be."¹⁰⁴ Thus, he, a foundling, *parvenu*, and 'almost prince' of Lucca, received God's sanction for his rule. Such an interpretation of this scene is confirmed by a medieval drawing held in Lucca, depicting the imperial coronation of Louis IV in Rome. In it, he is being crowned in the name of the 'Roman people' by Castruccio (standing to the emperor's right, in the foreground and unnaturally large in size compared to the emperor, who appears shrunken on the throne) and the Roman aristocrat Sciarra Colonna (portrayed as a smaller figure, standing to the emperor's left),¹⁰⁵ who are opening the gates of the Eternal City to the new King of Rome. Having reached the apogee of his political accomplishments, his career was suddenly interrupted by his unexpected death, behind which one could easily see the hand of Fortuna or fate. Castracani died from a most trivial cause – a cold he caught following a victorious battle, after which he stood 'fatigued and over-heated' to 'welcome his men on their return from victory and personally thank them.'¹⁰⁶

102 Ibid., 152.

103 Ibid., 158.

104 Ibid., 165.

105 This drawing was included and commented on by D. Hoeges in *Essay zur Ästhetik der Macht...*, 47, 50.

106 *Life*, 175.

The similarities between the figure of Castruccio Castracani outlined by Niccolò Machiavelli and Cesare Borgia are striking.¹⁰⁷ The author admits outright, even in a laudable tone, that Castruccio did not shy away from bribery to win over supporters, from confiscating the assets of his enemies or even murdering them, including those forced into exile to Florence and Pisa, nor was he afraid to use both force and cunning when necessary.¹⁰⁸ The most complete picture of his character is presented by Machiavelli in his posthumous description of Castracani: 'He was *delightful* among friends, but *terrible* to his enemies; *just* to his subjects; ready to play *false* with the unfaithful, and *willing to overcome by fraud those whom he desired to subdue*, because he was wont to say that *it was the victory that brought the glory, not the methods of achieving it*' [emphasis mine – I.K.].¹⁰⁹ In this description, praise for the late ruler is presented in the form of opposing terms (delightful–terrible, just–false, etc.), typical of Machiavelli's writing technique, that bear a striking resemblance to the ideal qualities of *il principe nuovo*. This is probably most eloquently expressed in the last passage, which one can easily associate with the Florentine's famous maxim about the necessity of acting like a lion or a fox from Chapter XVIII of *Il Principe*.

Apart from that, in *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* we encounter a number of themes analogous to those in *The Prince*, including a similar concept of *virtù*, and vision of the role of Fortuna-fate. This is presented as being a primary driving force in life, one impervious to human reason, indifferent to origin or wealth, and able to raise plebeians to the heights of power or bring about a powerful ruler's sudden fall. In Machiavelli's case, it seems that his political concept of fortune conceals an anti-aristocratic foil. As in the case of Erasmus, and in a sense More, the concept of true *virtus* goes against the traditional notions of virtue as an inherited quality associated with high birth. The example of Castruccio is very telling here.¹¹⁰

107 Another author with a similar opinion is J. Malarczyk, *U źródeł włoskiego realizmu politycznego. Machiavelli i Guicciardini*, Lublin 1963, 150, whereas D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 177 ff. denies any similarity between these two figures.

108 *Life*, 162; in Lucca, Castruccio 'wiped out all those who by their ambition might aspire to the principality; [...] depriving them of country and property, and those whom he had in his hands of life also.' He did a similar thing with exiles from Florence in Pisa, as well as with some Pisans and Pistoia, because 'both Pisa and Pistoia were thoroughly disaffected; he employed much thought and energy upon securing his position there'; *ibid.*, 170.

109 *Ibid.*, 179.

110 *Ibid.*, 147–148: 'I believe that these lowly beginnings of great men occur because Fortune is desirous of showing to the world that such men owe much to her and little

One new element found in *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* but absent from *The Prince* is the emotional tones and psychological depth contained in the portrait of the ruler. They are most fully revealed in Castruccio's fictional speech on his deathbed, addressed to his ward. One is first of all struck by the warm, almost affectionate attitude expressed towards Castracani's former protector and guardian, Francesco Guinigi, and the emphasis on the secondary role of blood ties: 'how I was brought up by him, and loved as though I had been born of his blood.'¹¹¹ The psychological dimension is likewise important, in particular, Castruccio's self-awareness as a ruler. Unlike More's dramatic narrative in *The History of King Richard III*, this is by no means a portrait of the dark face of a tyrant. At the end of his farewell speech, Castracani draws attention to the relativity underlying a fundamental quandary faced in politics – whether a prince should wage wars or pursue a politics of peace: 'It is of the most importance in this world that a man know himself, and the measure of his own strength and means; and he know that he has not a genius for fighting must learn how to govern by the arts of peace.'¹¹² Castracani's statement perfectly reflects what – according to standard definitions in historiography since the mid-nineteenth century – has been described as Renaissance anthropocentrism and secularism, contrasted with the traditional views of the Middle Ages. A man of the Renaissance, in this case a ruler, should be guided in his choices by his own measure, and not merely by orders imposed from without. Such is the view from a historiographic perspective.

The figure of Castruccio Castracani as a ruler, created by Machiavelli, is fully human: not only in terms of his heroic and tragic qualities but also his tragicomic death just off the battlefield due to a case of the common cold. He is full of virtues and vices, stripped of the monarchical aura *ex Dei gratia*. As Dirk Hoeges has put it, Castruccio is an example of the Renaissance self-made man, the mythic *creatio ex nihilo*.¹¹³ According to this historian, the miscasting of Cesare Borgia in the role of *il principe nuovo* in *The Prince* was remedied a few years later by the literacy construction of Castruccio Castracani. This conclusion, however, seems somewhat exaggerated. Castruccio has both features of the ideal 'new prince' from Chapter XVIII and of Cesare Borgia from Chapter VII of *The Prince*. He

to wisdom, because she begins to show her hand when wisdom can really take no part in their career: thus all success must be attributed to her. Castruccio Castracani of Lucca was one of those men who did great deeds.'

111 Ibid., 176.

112 Ibid., 178–179.

113 D. Hoeges, *Essay zur Ästhetik der Macht...*, 49.

likewise uses cunning, artfulness, and treachery. Just like the ‘new prince,’ he is a master of the art of feigning appearances, political games, and pretence, thanks to which he can mislead his opponents and gains supporters in his urban milieu. He differs from Borgia mainly in his unknown origin. Thus, to a reader of *The Prince*, he may appear to be a hybrid of Moses and Cesare Borgia.¹¹⁴

A Renaissance Metaphor in the Works of More, Erasmus, and Machiavelli: The Prince as an Actor on Stage

One of the most important features of Machiavelli’s ‘new prince’ – *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* – is his ability to feign appearances, to pretend and play games. Underlying this hybrid nature is the need to place oneself when needed in the skin of a lion and a fox. The art of pretending – *dissimulatio* – became one of the fashionable *topoi* in sixteenth-century culture. It is also the Machiavellian essence of politics – skilfully feigning appearances and thereby manipulating the ruled. Does it therefore not make sense to look for some sort of kinship between the image of the ruler as a *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* and the metaphor of *theatrum mundi*?

Although Machiavelli also displayed his talent in the art of writing comedies,¹¹⁵ unlike Erasmus and More, he never literally used the metaphor of the prince as an actor on stage. The fact that the development of theatre in Italy was rather modest compared to England does not seem offer a convincing explanation here.¹¹⁶ After all, in the times of More presenting the meanderings of politics on the stage was still considered taboo. Still, it is hard to resist the impression

114 D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 174 ff., 182; his, *Essay zur Ästhetik der Macht...*, 67, warns against making hasty comparisons between Castruccio and Cesare Borgia. He calls the latter a ‘loser’ (*Versager*), whereas to Castruccio he ascribes the characteristics of a tragic hero, emphasizing in particular his farewell speech, in which he does not refer to God, the Church or the afterlife, and instead shows himself in a very humane light. Hoeges concludes that if *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* had been more popular, it would definitely have changed the perception of Machiavelli and made him seem less diabolic.

115 Cf. J. Malarczyk, *U źródeł włoskiego realizmu politycznego...*, 76.

116 Cf. W. Kerrigan and G., ‘The Prince and the Playhouse. A Fable,’ in: his, *The Idea of Renaissance*, Baltimore–London 1989, 57 ff. Their interpretation goes in a slightly different direction than mine. Both authors emphasize the Promethean dimension of the ‘new prince’-as-actor metaphor. I believe that a more sarcastic and realistic reading of this metaphor, in the spirit of More’s conclusion from *The History of King Richard III*, is more accurate.

that the metaphor used by More of the ruler as an actor on stage, not to mention the character of Richard III as ‘a deepe dissimuler’ was spiritually very close to the character of the ‘new prince’ as a *gran simulatore e dissimulatore*. This seems to be a reflection of Machiavelli’s characteristic perception of the world of politics – a realistic perception, strengthened by the reflection on politics as ‘the theatre of life.’ In direct opposition to the traditional image of monarchical power inherited from the Middle Ages, which primarily emphasized its moral and charismatic dimensions.

The metaphor of life-as-theatre, as mentioned earlier, was very popular in the literature of Antiquity and in the writings of the fathers of the Church, but nearly disappeared in the Middle Ages, with the exception of a brief reappearance in the twelfth-century humanist John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*.¹¹⁷ It is possible that Erasmus, More, and Machiavelli were influenced by the comparisons of life to a stage play in Cicero’s *De officiis*, which they all no doubt had read.¹¹⁸ They may also have been familiar with similar statements by Emperor Augustus on his deathbed, reported by the Roman historian Suetonius.¹¹⁹ More and Erasmus could likewise have been inspired by comparisons they knew from Lucian, and perhaps from reading John’s of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*.¹²⁰

The reappearance of the metaphor of *theatrum mundi* and the ruler as an actor on stage seems to be symptomatic in the sixteenth century.¹²¹ Interestingly enough, the rebirth of these *topoi* occurred long before theatrical stages in Europe began to flourish and the phenomenon of the public theatre in England

117 Cf. above, Part One, Chapter II, and the outline in: A. Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, London 1962, 64–68.

118 Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 220.

119 W. Kerrigan, G. Braden, ‘The Prince and the Playhouse. A Fable,’ in: *The Idea of Renaissance*, Baltimore–London 1989, 230, fn. 4; A. Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, 65.

120 John of Salisbury included in his *Policraticus* (1159) an elaborate metaphor of life as theatre, which stretches over two chapters of his work, which was also read in the sixteenth and seventeenth century thanks to the numerous copies in print; see E.R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter...*, 151.

121 Apart from the works by E.R. Curtius and A. Righter, the above-cited monograph by Lynda G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, proved to be of invaluable help to me in discussing the motif of life as theatre. However, this work is a study on literary history, and the reader will not find in it any reflections on the political and broader cultural context of the epochs in which this metaphor was created and then reborn.

and Spain appeared in the latter half of the sixteenth century.¹²² It originated as a literary device outside the realm of drama before it was picked up by playwrights in the Shakespearean era and found its place on the stage in the lines spoken by actors. The notion of the 'self-awareness of the theatre,' which grew out of the metaphor of life-as-theatre, clearly preceded the spiritual and material phenomenon of the modern theatre: the theatre with a clear division between the stage and the audience, with a permanent home, with professional actors, with authors writing plays for a particular theatrical stage, and attended by a mass audience made up of members of different social strata.

In England a vibrant theatrical culture developed around performances by itinerant actors as early as the fifteenth century. On stages set up in urban courtyards, they played folk morality plays featuring characters such as the King of Life (*Rex vivus*) and Herod. The standing audience participated in the performance, passively playing the role of Mankind.¹²³ In the early sixteenth century, i.e. in the times of More, theatrical performances moved to aristocratic and monarchical courts, becoming an element of the culture of the upper echelons of society. The dividing line between the stage and the audience had not yet developed. During court productions, the actors often moved among the audience, speaking out as if from the point of view of the audience members.¹²⁴ The existence of such a dramatic technique for 'dragging' the audience into the action of the performance explains well why the metaphor used by More of the ruler as actor on the stage-as-scaffold could reliably reflect people's theatrical experience and be well suited to the tastes of his contemporaries. It also explains why he imagined that an incautious spectator-unmasker could suddenly find himself on stage and lose his head at the hands of an on-stage executioner.

Similarly, the secular theatre in Italy, which was just forming during Niccolò Machiavelli's lifetime, was an elite phenomenon.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, it was in

122 On the development of public theatres in Spain and England in the latter half of the sixteenth century, see W. Cohen, *Drama of a Nation. Public Theater in Renaissance England and Spain*, Ithaca–London 1985.

123 A. Richter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, 23 ff.

124 *Ibid.*, 31 ff., when she describes the attitude of the audience towards the leading actors in a play, in reference to the first stage of development of the theatre in the sixteenth century, she uses the expression 'the tyranny of the audience.' She also draws attention to the fact that in theatre plays from this period, villains became more attractive and deeper, whereas virtuous figures become objects of ridicule; *ibid.*, 32. One of the first secular plays in England was staged at the court of Cardinal Morton, More's patron, in 1497; *ibid.*, 36.

125 W. Cohen, *Drama of a Nation...*, 99 ff.

Italy, and moreover, in Florence itself, as mentioned earlier, that the *topos* of the *theatrum mundi* was reborn, first among a small circle of Renaissance intellectuals (Neoplatonists) inspired by the traditions of Antiquity.¹²⁶ Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), the creator of the Renaissance concept of man as *copula mundi*, was the first to return to this metaphor. In his emphasizing of the differences established in life by God – the roles played by the illusory stage of temporality as opposed to real life, separated from the stage by death – he shows that wealth and poverty, or the division between kings and servants, are a fiction.¹²⁷ In his famous speech, *De hominis dignitate* (1486), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), another well-known representative of the Florentine neoplatonic school, compared the world to the stage, where the greatest of God's miraculous creations is man,¹²⁸ who is capable of all kinds of metamorphoses of his own accord: 'thou shalt be able, by thy soul's judgment, to rise again to the superior orders, which are divine. [...] Who would not admire this, *our chameleon*? Or who look with greater admiration on any other being? [emphasis mine – I.K.]'¹²⁹ At the same time, this thoroughly Renaissance and anthropological and optimistic construction of man-as-chameleon is permeated by the concept of *coincidentia oppositorum*. Thus, according to Ficino, in man as the pinnacle of God's creation there is a convergence of opposing natures: body and matter *versus* spirit and soul. This theory of the coexistence of duality and opposition (everything–nothing, strength–weakness, sacred–profane) was soon carried over to reflections beyond the strictly theological sphere. In neoplatonic philosophical thinking, this became an 'ideal and lifestyle.'¹³⁰

It is unclear whether Machiavelli knew the life-as-theatre metaphor from the Florentine Neoplatonists or their writings. According to Ficino's above-mentioned thoughts, he was rather among those who attached more value to the play of appearances than to the essence of the reality beyond it. While he did not share the anthropological optimism of the Neoplatonists, the notions of fictional roles and a staged play of appearances were surely close to his antinomic way of thinking. In turn, Pico della Mirandola's formulation of the man-as-chameleon, who is able to assume the shape of both divine and animal beings at will – a

126 See above, Part One, Chapter II.

127 Cf. L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 73 ff.

128 *Ibid.*, 79 ff.

129 Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, ed. S. Michael, trans. C.G. Wallis, 2018, 20–21.

130 L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 220 ff.

treasure-trove of 'synchronous opposites' – corresponded perfectly to the nature of the *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* described in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*.

Meanwhile, More – who was the English translator of Pico della Mirandola's biography – uses the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* in the spirit of Lucian's satirical tradition, though he invests it with Christian overtones. 'The Machiavellian moment' that arose in the intellectual atmosphere of the 1520s – the period when the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* was first revived – began to spread. It is interesting to note that the first editions of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* appeared in print in 1476, and somewhat later in 1513, when it was published twice (in Paris and Lyon)¹³¹ – and, thus, at almost exactly the same time when Machiavelli was writing *The Prince* and More *The History of King Richard III*, and just shortly before Erasmus began writing *The Education of a Christian Prince*.

During that same decade, in 1518, a friend of Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540) wrote *Fabula de homine*. This Spanish humanist, a professor in Louvain, later known as the author of one of the first psychological treatises (*De anima et vita*, 1538), was appointed to the court of Henry VIII in the 1520s as the tutor of Princess Mary Tudor. His *Fable on Man* is considered to be the most well-known Renaissance treatise in which the metaphor of *theatrum mundi* was fully applied in the spirit of the Stoic tradition and the neoplatonic philosophy of Pico della Mirandola, emphasizing the power of the human being and his close affinity to God.¹³² What strikes us here are the similarities between the figure of the mime in the mask, capable of playing any role, including that of the lion and the fox, and even Jupiter himself, to the *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* from Chapter XVIII of *Il Principe*. The two figures of the 'man-as-mime' and the 'new prince' – the great simulator – are in a way related to each other, since they grew from the same Florentine root – the revival of the *theatrum mundi* metaphor. But the differences are also important. In the vision of the model ruler outlined in *The Prince*, the tone is neither heroic nor promethean, unlike Vives' *Fable on Man*, but realistic and tinged with cynicism. Machiavelli also lacks the anthropological optimism characteristic of both the Neoplatonists and Vives – humanism's optimistic interpretation of the idea of man as the pinnacle of creation.

This situation is different with More. The negative character he created – the arch-tyrant Richard III – possessed a talent for pretence, simulation, and feigning appearances (*a deepe dissimuler*). However, his metaphor of the stage-as-scaffold

131 E.R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, 151.

132 Cf. L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 82 ff.; W. Kerrigan, G. Braden, 'The Prince and the Playhouse. A Fable,' 58.

is more in keeping with the ancient, satirical tradition of the metaphorical life-as-theatre. Similar to Erasmus, he uses it to strip rulers of the charisma derived from the traditional notion *ex Dei gratia*. At the same time, however, it takes on tragic overtones. Such a turn of events – the transformation of the comedy of life into a tragedy – was also predicted by Marsilio Ficino, as well as by Juan Luis Vives in his later work *Satellitium* (1524), written for his pupil Mary Tudor: human life is a comedy, but the actor must restrain his emotions during the play, otherwise it will end in disaster as in tragedy.¹³³

In *The History of King Richard III*, the consequences for the incautious spectator of revealing the true face of the ruler-as-actor – literally a sultan, but probably meant to represent the biblical pharaoh, the embodiment of tyranny – are terrible: death at the hands of the executioner.¹³⁴ In this scene, Thomas More, like Niccolò Machiavelli in *The Prince*, strips the ruler of the mask of appearances behind which he hides his true face. The intellectual consequence of this literary game similar to the conclusion drawn by Francesco Vettori: if you look closely, all rulers, except those on the island of Utopia, are tyrants. The personal consequences of this conclusion for More, like for the incautious spectator, were incomparably more serious: death on the scaffold.

The use of the life-as-theatre and ruler-as-actor metaphors highlights precisely what we can call the ‘Machiavellian moment,’ understood here as a set of images and reflections attractive to and fashionable in those circles that ‘set the tone’ for intellectual culture in the early sixteenth century. Both Niccolò Machiavelli’s ‘reversal technique’ of the literary genre *specula principis*, as well as Erasmus and More’s use of the recently revived metaphor of the ruler-as-actor, were in a sense a *novelty* of those times – a period of literary innovations and experiments. For the political imagination, this was as important as the discovery of perspective in Renaissance painting. Like the artistic innovation of perspective, these changes offered the possibility of creating a realistic political image.

Realistic here, however, does not mean ‘real’ in either an ontological or cognitive sense, as some nineteenth- and twentieth-century admirers of Machiavelli were convinced, seeing him as the father of *Realpolitik*. Ultimately, a literal treatment of the rules recommended by Machiavelli leads to the same result as a viewer trying to enter a painting made in the spirit of realism. For this reason, we need to remember that the image of the ruler sketched out by Machiavelli as a model was a literary convention that could be used, depending on the

133 L.G. Christian, *Theatrum mundi. The History of an Idea*, 86.

134 See above, fn. 95.

need, to create a positive or negative protagonist.¹³⁵ This was a new or rather a rediscovered convention.

Historians trying to analyse *The Prince* and *Utopia* to grasp the ‘Machiavellian moment,’ must be aware of how their ‘own moment’ affects the views they express. Dirk Hoeges – the author of a biography of Niccolò Machiavelli’s – goes to extremes in stating that the ideal *gran simulatore e dissimulatore* is a prototype of our own contemporary attitude: you really do not have to be anything, you just have to create the impression that you are everything (*Nichts-sein, alles Scheinen*).¹³⁶ This interpretation seems to capture the atmosphere of the most recent *fin de siècle* – the postmodern end of the twentieth century.

135 Such a negative hero, presented in *Florentine Histories* in accordance with the classic concept of tyrannical rule (fiscal exploitation, holding on to power with the help of the army and bad advisers, pride, cruelty, murder, rape), is Walter VI, Count of Brienne, a French condottiere and the ‘Duke of Athens,’ who unsuccessfully tried to take over the hereditary rule in Florence in the years 1342–1343. Machiavelli not only directly refers to his rule as ‘tyrannical’ but also attributes to him actions such as pretending and feigning an appearance of religiousness and piety, which he praises in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*. Walter’s condemned tyrannical deeds and personality are reflected by his physical features, described in a ‘diabolical’ manner similar to that used by More in *The History* to describe Richard III. And thus, Walter was ‘avaricious and cruel, difficult in audiences, arrogant in replies; he wanted the slavery and not the goodwill of men; and for this he desired to be feared rather than loved. Nor was his person less hateful than his habits, for he was small, black, and he had a long and sparse beard, so that in every way he deserved to be hated.’ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 99.

136 D. Hoeges, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 177 ff.

Chapter IV. Callimachus' Advice: Machiavellian or Anti-Machiavellian Propaganda?

Motto:

Oh, Macchiavel from the deepest abyss,
What your dynasties boast, Florentine!
Master of tyranny; and with yours, Poland in fear,
Goes with the Etruscan Phantom Kallimach.¹

The 'Tuscoscita' and his Advice

In our search for the 'Machiavellian moment' among humanist scholars in Europe, let us move to Poland in the late fifteenth century. At that time the Kingdom of Poland had begun to take on a political shape that developed fully during the sixteenth century. Consequently, a 'limited monarchy,' with the broad participation of the noble estate (*szlachta*) that dominated in the two-chamber parliament, i.e. the Sejm composed of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, was created after 1505. This process was completed in the Union of Lublin in 1569 between the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as a result of which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was established. In turn, the extinction of the Jagiellonian dynasty male line in 1572 finally led to a constitutional transformation from electing monarchs from within the ruling hereditary dynasty, mostly by a small group of Senators and members of the Royal Council, to so-called 'free elections,' giving a chance to elect a new king from among different candidates, based on the principle of *electio viritim*, according to which all male members of the *szlachta* had a right to participate in an election Sejm and cast a vote for their preferred candidate. The nobility's repeated calls since at least the 1530s to elect the king by means of *electio viritim* found supporters in the Executionist Movement,² popular mainly among the representatives of the

1 W. Kochowski, *Kamień świadectwa wielkiego w Koronie polskiej, senatora, niewinności przez jednego słachcica polskiego wydany*, 1668, qtd. after: Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, Warszawa 2005

2 The political movement in the Kingdom of Poland in the sixteenth century supported mostly by the middle nobility, known as the Executionist Movement (*ruch egzekucyjny*), demanded the reform of the law system (*egzekucja praw* – 'execution [enforcement] of laws'), including some basic constitutional legal regulations concerning e.g. election of the king, and the revindication of lands from the royal domain illegally held by the magnates (*egzekucja dóbr* – 'execution [revindication] of king's property').

middle nobility in the Chamber of Deputies, who expressed their criticism of the higher and more affluent nobility (referred as 'magnates'), represented in the Senate and the Royal Council and originally backed by the last two Kings of the Jagiellonian dynasty: Sigismund I the Old (1506–1548) and his son Sigismund August (1548–1572).³ The concept of elective monarchy, like the concept of 'mixed monarchy' (*monarchia mixta*), i.e. ones in which the influence of the king and the nobility were balanced, remained in line with the political values of the nobility in sixteenth-century Poland-Lithuania, but also later on.

One of the most intriguing Polish sources from this era, one whose authorship and exact dating continue to raise doubts, was a pamphlet titled *Callimachus' Advice*, consisting of 35 short, single- or multi-line, numbered articles containing political advice addressed to the Jagiellonian king of Poland, Jan Olbracht (1492–1501). *Callimachus' Advice* has been preserved in manuscript form in two language versions: Polish and Latin. The earliest manuscripts date back to the mid-sixteenth century.⁴ Thematically, the advice content can be divided into six groups including various proposals for the king's policies. These concern: 1. The higher nobility (magnates) represented in the Senate; 2. the middle and lesser nobility represented in the Chamber of Deputies; 3. institutional matters (the king's chancery, jurisdiction and treasury, as well as royal domain lands, and the administrative apparatus); 4. matters relating to the plebeian estate; 5. church policies; 6. dynastic and foreign policy.

The content of *Callimachus' Advice* is shocking at first glance, because it encourages the king to use political methods associated by contemporaries with tyranny. The most extreme ideas expressed in these points is the call to limit the role of the Senate, representing the interests of the magnates, but also of the political influence of the lesser and middle nobility represented in the Chamber of Deputies. In order to introduce more effective 'absolute governance' (*dominium absolutum*), Callimachus recommends basing the king's rule on a 'secret Council' composed of two to three trusted counsellors (Article I); limiting senators' access to the king and state secrets (Article II);⁵ dispensing king's favours in order to

3 See my remarks with detailed literature on the subject, I. Kąkolewski, 'Kampf um die politische Macht: Königtum, Magnaten und *szlachta*,' in: *Polen in der europäischen Geschichte*, vol. 2: *Der ständische Unionsstaat der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. H.-J. Bömelburg, Stuttgart 2017, 91–121.

4 Cf. descriptions of the 16 manuscript copies of *Callimachus' Advice* (14 in Polish and two in Latin) preserved until the 1880s and the best critical edition to date of their oldest editions by R. Wśetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' in: *Pamiętnik słuchaczy Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, Kraków 1887, 111–169, here 114–120.

5 R. Wśetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 121.

gain influence and establish a pro-royalist faction in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies (Article VII); sowing discord between ecclesiastical (Catholic bishops) and secular (magnates) senators (VIII).⁶ Callimachus also writes about keeping senators in check not only by threatening to inflict severe penalties (Article V)⁷ but also by granting members of the most influential senators' families offices with no real income (Article IX), as well as by promoting people from the plebeian class to the highest offices in the state (Article X);⁸ introducing the sale of offices and acting according to the principle 'whoever gives more, will be treated with greater dignity' (Article XII).⁹ Some of the advice concerns the art of manipulation and is truly Machiavellian in tone: the ruler should provide ambiguous responses to criticism voiced in the Sejm, in order to mislead the deputies and senators (Article VII), and – for the same purpose – acting falsely, i.e. literally 'joking' or 'speaking cordially and familiarly' (in the Latin version: *benigne et familiariter alloquitor*) with influential and powerful people who could be useful for furthering the king's interests (Article IX).¹⁰ Machiavellian and anti-Senate tones are also evident in a proposal to 'conspire' with the king's brothers (King Vladislav II of Bohemia and Hungary, and the Grand Duke of Lithuania Alexander Jagiellon) against the 'noble and mighty families' (Article XXXIII)¹¹ who posed a potential threat to the king's authority.

These articles, aimed primarily at the magnates in the Senate, are accompanied by recommendations directed against the nobility in general: abolishing the most important privileges granted by the king to the nobility at the end of the fourteenth century (Article XXIX),¹² restricting noble estate provincial assemblies under the pretence of the threat of conspiracy (Article IV), maintaining the nobility in a state of constant readiness for war, with threats to call for a *levée en masse*, or mass conscription of the nobility, and enacting a permanent tax to maintain a mercenary troops (Article VI).¹³ These pieces of advice were accompanied by others that sounded far more sinister and even tyrannical: 'Eliminate noble representatives in the Chamber of Deputies [...]. Now they are *omnia sibi arrogans*, as if nothing can happen [in the state] without them [i.e. without their

6 Ibid., 123.

7 Ibid., 122.

8 Ibid., 123 ff.

9 Ibid., 124.

10 Ibid., 123.

11 Ibid., 131.

12 Ibid., 130.

13 Ibid., 122.

consent at the Sejm]' (XXVIII).¹⁴ Further on the author calls for a *levée en masse* and military expedition against the Moldavian Hospodar so that powerful Polish magnates and nobles would be lost in battle: 'bring them all together, so that they will be wounded and killed' (Article XXXIV). In conclusion, he offers some horrific advice: 'And if there is one who refuses to respond to the call for a *levée en masse*, have him poisoned. This is what great monarchs do' (Article XXXV).¹⁵

In addition to the extreme antipathy to the whole nobility expressed in the advice, it is worth noting the sober advice given to strengthen the king's power by properly maintaining the state's most important institutions: the chancery, royal courts and treasury. Among these 'institutional' recommendations, only the article concerning the royal treasury (XIII and XIV) calls for manipulating the opinions of deputies at the Sejm in order to maintain a well-paid armed force (Article XIV).¹⁶

The anti-nobility tenor of *Callimachus' Advice* is strengthened by pro-plebeian articles. These concern, among others, the freedom of trade, especially for merchants in big cities (Article XVIII),¹⁷ and, finally, the abolition of *de abrogandis plebejis* privileges, which prohibited non-nobles from attaining higher ecclesiastical positions (Article XXIII).¹⁸ The latter proposal was among a number of articles concerning relations between the state and the Church, reflecting the anti-Papal approach of the author. They include a prohibition against making appeals to Rome (Article XXIV), and the postulate that the king should appoint as heads of abbeys and bishoprics 'learned men' and plebeians, rather than members of nobility, in order to have prelates more dedicated to king's policies (Articles XXI–XXIII).¹⁹

The last group of advice contains guidelines on dynastic and foreign policy matters (XXX–XXXII) and the incorporation of two Polish fiefdoms: the Duchy of Mazovia and the state of the Teutonic Order in Prussia (Article XXXI) into the Kingdom of Poland to strengthen the king's position in domestic policy: 'as if you were *unus rex, una lex*.' (Article XXXII).²⁰

The tradition, probably born in the first half of the sixteenth century, attributes *Callimachus' Advice* to Filippo Buonaccorsi, known as Callimachus

14 *Ibid.*, 129.

15 *Ibid.*, 131 ff.

16 *Ibid.*, 156.

17 *Ibid.*, 126.

18 *Ibid.*, 128 ff.

19 *Ibid.*, 127 ff.

20 *Ibid.*, 130 ff.

(1437–1496). He came from a merchant family from San Gimignano in Tuscany,²¹ probably related to families of the same name living in Florence and Venice.²² The young Buonaccorsi studied in both of these cities. After arriving in Rome in 1461 he took the name *Callimachus Venetus*, following a family tradition that the Buonaccorsi line had Venetian roots. He joined the circle of humanists in Rome associated with the Pomponius Laetus Academy and began working as secretary for a Vatican cardinal. After being accused of taking part in a conspiracy to take the life of Pope Pius II in February 1468,²³ which people suspected had been organized by, among others, the King of Naples Ferdinand I and the Hussite King of Bohemia George of Poděbrady, Callimachus managed to escape and take refuge in Naples. He continued his flight to Crete, Cyprus, Chios and Constantinople, and perhaps as early as winter 1469, he left the Ottoman empire and travelled to Poland. There he received a warm reception at the court of the Archbishop of Lwów, Grzegorz of Sanok. He offered Callimachus protection when an assembly of nobles in the autumn of 1470, under the influence of the papal legate, who accused Callimachus of being in the service of the Ottomans, demanded that he be expelled to the Vatican. It was only in 1471, when Sixtus IV was elected Pope and announced an amnesty for participants in the conspiracy, that Buonaccorsi could freely carry on his activities in Poland.²⁴

Shortly after his arrival in 1472 in Kraków, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland, and his entry into the Kraków Academy as *Phillipus Callimachus de Thedalis de poeta de Florentia*, he was appointed preceptor of the sons of King Casimir IV Jagiellon (1447–1492), and around 1474, royal secretary. Since then, he began to work intensively in the king's diplomatic missions, among others

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- 21 I took biographical data mainly from J. Garbacik, 'Kallimach Filip Buonaccorsi, zwany Experiens,' in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* [hereinafter: *PSB*], vol. 11, 493–499 and J. Skoczek, *Legenda Kallimacha w Polsce*, Lwów 1939, 3–44. One of the first extensive, source-based sketches of Callimachus' biographies is given by H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1873, 349–371. Cf. also W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, Warszawa 2005, 196 ff; J. Domański, *Początki humanizmu*, Wrocław 1982, 117 ff., as well as a popular biography by J. Olkiewicz, *Kallimach Doświadczony*, Warsaw 1981, esp. Chapter 13.
- 22 The genealogical and heraldic relations of Tuscan Buonaccorsi families in Polish literature on the subject have been thoroughly presented by M. Janicki, 'Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,' *Studia Źródłoznawcze* XLI, 39.
- 23 For details on Callimachus' participation in the plot against Paul II, see J. Zathej, 'W sprawie badań nad Kallimachem,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 3, 1958.
- 24 J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 495, J. Skoczek, *Legenda*, 3–13.

towards the signing (1478), and then an extension, of a truce between Poland and the Ottoman empire, which provoked voices of criticism from the Polish nobility. He was also sent several times to Italy, visiting Rome and Venice in the 1470s and 1480s, in part to help Venice in its plans to enlist the Tatars in their fight against the Ottomans. During this time, he also established contacts with Florence, where he maintained relations with the city's leading humanists, including Marsilio Ficino, Picco della Mirandola and other scholars from the Plato Academy, as well as with Lorenzo il Magnifico himself. He decided, however, to decline Lorenzo's offer of the position of Chancellor of Florence.²⁵

After the death of King Matthias I of Hungary in 1490, Callimachus lobbied as a diplomat in favour of the candidacy of his former pupil, Jan Olbracht Jagiellon, for the Hungarian crown, albeit without success. Afterwards, he supported Olbracht in his efforts in 1492 to be granted the Polish throne after the death of his father, King Casimir Jagiellon. However, he had to protect himself from the wrath of powerful Polish magnates who supported the candidacy of two other sons of Casimir Jagiellon, by escaping to Vienna. He returned to Poland at the turn of 1493/94, where he spent the last years of his life working as a trusted advisor at the court of Jan Olbracht. At that time, worried about the expansion of France and Spain in Italy, Callimachus devised plans to install the youngest son of Casimir, Prince Sigismund, as a *condottiero* in the Venetian army.²⁶ He died in 1496, having earned the respect of the Kraków university community and the royal family, as can be seen from his tombstone in the Dominican Church in Kraków.²⁷

By choosing to serve at the Jagiellonians' court, he gained recognition and friendship of powerful protectors in Poland,²⁸ as well as the respect of Polish and foreign humanists visiting Poland, such as Conrad Celtis.²⁹ This was undoubtedly facilitated by his poetic and writing activity, based on classical Latin models, and his authorship of historical works. In one work, entitled *Attila*, from the 1480s, which became popular among Italian and Hungarian humanists, he helped establish the cult of King Matthias I of Hungary as a 'second Attila. Though a

25 J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 496, J. Skoczek, *Legenda*, 18–36 and 44 ff. and H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 378 and 403.

26 J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 497, J. Skoczek, *Legenda*, 37–44.

27 Cf. M. Janicki, 'Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,' esp. 26 and 28–35. For more on Callimachus' death and funeral, see H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 377 and 379 ff.

28 J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 495, J. Skoczek, *Legenda*, 13–16, 49 ff.

29 M. Janicki, 'Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,' 22.

historian, Callimachus did not avoid chronological errors and in his judgments, made frequent use the categories of good and evil, though his historical writing techniques seem to reflect a more critical attitude.³⁰ In his literary work, imbued with epicurianism and a sense of realism, he was a critic of neo-Platonic philosophy and the theology of Ficino and Mirandola, writing in reference to the latter's commentary on the Book of Genesis: 'It is difficult to know what Moses thought about that which he probably should not have thought about.'³¹

Callimachus' Advice: A Political Testament or Propaganda Pamphlet?

The literary output of the 'Tuscoscita,' how Callimachus was sometimes called in Poland, with its sublime ethical content and refined style, is one of the reasons for questioning his alleged authorship of *Callimachus' Advice*, which in form has been described by historians as 'careless, unsystematic, unfinished,' and whose language in preserved Latin versions diverges from the finesse and elegance seen in his other works.³² An analysis of the content, especially in the group of articles referring to institutional matters, provides even more serious arguments for questioning the authenticity of this document. Among these are the court offices listed in these articles, which were established far beyond the date of Callimachus' death. Similarly, most of the advice concerning the king's policies towards the magnates and the nobility seems to correspond more closely to the disputes over the role of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies during the reign of Olbracht's successor and younger brother, Alexander Jagiellon (1501–1506), or in the mid-1530s, during the reign of Sigismund I the Old (Art. III–VII). In particular, Article IV's famed call to 'Defend the assemblies (in Latin: *conventicula nobilium*) and follow *propter conspirationem*'³³ reeks of the atmosphere during the so-called 'Chicken War' of 1537 – an attempted antiroyalist rebellion by the

30 See also H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 380–392; J. Domański, 'Ze studiów nad Kallimachem. Przyczynek do zagadnienia źródeł literackich "Vita Gregorii Sanocei,"' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* VI, 1961, 5–15 and the same, *Początki humanizmu*, 150 ff. and 231 ff. On the subject of Callimachus' occasional poetic works and their political validity see also J. Nowak Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Średniowiecze*, Warsaw 1963, 108–112.

31 I quote from J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 498. Cf. also J. Skoczek, *Legenda*, 55–82.

32 S. Estreicher, 175 and J. Garbacik, 'Kallimach jako dyplomata i polityk,' *Rozprawy Wydziału Historyczno-Filozoficznego PAU*, vol. 71, no. 4, Kraków 1948, 146 ff.

33 R. Wśetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 122.

middle nobility that was also directed against the senators. Finally, some of the articles on the filling of church offices by educated people or members of the plebeian state (XXII and XXIII) were formulated in a spirit contrary to legislation passed by the Sejm in 1505 and 1538, so it is likely that they also contain amplifications added in the mid-sixteenth century – a period when there was an intensification of anti-Catholic and anti-church demands, made by Protestant circles from the Polish nobility (Article XXII). Only the very pragmatically formulated recommendations concerning dynastic policy bear traces of authenticity, so it is possible that their writing may have actually been connected with the beginning of Jan Olbracht's reign at the end of the fifteenth century.

In total, three positions can be identified in the dispute among historians over the dating of *Callimachus' Advice*.³⁴ First are supporters of the authenticity of this work, who acknowledge the existence of obvious additions from a later period, but attribute authorship of most of the work to Callimachus and stress that its content corresponds to the political spirit not only of the reign of Jan Olbracht but also that of Casimir Jagiellon.³⁵ Second are those who support the thesis concerning the work's apocryphal nature. They note its 'propaganda pamphlet' form and content meant to compromise the king's policies but also the Senate, particularly in the eyes of the middle nobility. According to Stanisław Estreicher the anti-magnate tenor of *Callimachus' Advice* that would be a reflection of the Senate's aspirations to supremacy in political life, as expressed in the 1501 Privilege of Mielnick, which in turn was a reaction to Olbracht's policy of fighting the magnates and seeking an alliance with the middle and lesser nobility.³⁶ In the Royal Privilege of Mielnick, which, however, was never been put into force, for the first time in the history of Poland, the right of resistance against the policy

34 Cf. summary discussion of the state of historical research and the debate on the authenticity of *Callimachus' Advice* from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s by S. Estreicher, 174 ff.; Cf. Hajdukiewicz, 'Sesja Kallimachowska,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*. 1, 1956, 251–258; W. Sobociński, 'Problematyka polityczno-lawna w twórczości Kallimacha,' *Studia i materiały z Dziejów Nauki Polskiej* 2, 1954. See also the synthesizing discussion by T. Wyrwa, *La pensée politique polonaise a l'époque de l'humanisme et de la renaissance*, Paris 1978, 203–217, here esp. 212 ff.

35 Cf. e.g. H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 377; F. Papee, *Polska i Litwa na przelomie wieków średnich*. Kraków 1903, 375 ff and his, *Jan Olbracht*, Kraków 1936, 128–131, which, following T. Sinko, emphasizes the primacy of the Latin version of the *Consilia* over the Polish translation.

36 S. Estreicher, 175 ff.

of a king who infringes on the rights and privileges of the subjects – literally referred to in the document as ‘tyrant’ – was clearly and precisely formulated.³⁷ Finally, historians representing the third position, like Romuald Wšetečka, publisher of the most complete source edition of *Callimachus' Advice*, are inclined to date its writing no earlier than the mid-1530s, i.e. the period in which the Executionist Movement and the unrest caused by the so-called ‘Chicken War’ arose.³⁸

Supporters of the authenticity of *Callimachus' Advice* sometimes take the line of proving that this work could originally have been instructions sketched out during Callimachus' exile in Vienna (1492–93), as part of some more extensive treatise for the new king Jan Olbracht, which was meant to shorten Callimachus' exile in Vienna.³⁹ It is also possible, as Józef Garbacik, one of Poland's best experts on the ‘Tuscoscita,’ assumes that Buonaccorsi's recommendations had been recited orally to Jan Olbracht and later written down in a concise form by vice-Chancellor of the Polish Crown Maciej Drzewicki, who did so with a less sophisticated knowledge of Latin than Callimachus.⁴⁰ In short, *Callimachus' Advice* could be a ‘bullet point’ outline for a larger work, which I believe would fit⁴¹ the formula of the so-called ‘political testament’ – a literary genre that took shape in the sixteenth century.

It is important here to draw attention to the difference between the private wills of rulers, which contained detailed instructions of a notarial and political nature, and the political testament as a kind of literary genre. The name itself came later, derived from the *Testament politique*, authored by Cardinal Richelieu and disseminated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the form of both authentic editions and apocrypha. Sixteenth-century examples of this kind of work in Germany, often entitled ‘Fatherly admonition.’ (*Väterliche Ermahnung*),

37 The Privilege of Mielnik stipulated that if the king is considered a tyrant, then the wronged subjects are allowed to flee to other countries, from where they can claim their rights without the threat of loss of honour: ‘[...] Nosque aut Nostros Successores *non ut dominum, sed ut tirannum et hostem* [emphasis mine – I.K.] reputent et personae singulae, quae laese fuerint, licite and honestae possint ad alium dominium confugere, et contra Nosque aut Nos Successoresne Nostros quibuscunque modis iniurias suas repetere, sine honoris suis detrimento,’ see *Volumina Constitutionum*, vol. 1 1493–1549, vol. 1 1493–1526, eds. S. Grodziski, H. Dwernicka and W. Uruszczak, Warsaw 1996, 110.

38 R. Wšetečka, ‘Rady Kallimachowe,’ 156–169.

39 J. Garbacik, *Kallimach jako dyplomata*, 146 ff.

40 Ibid., 148 ff.

41 I. Kąkolewski, ‘Testament jako instrument polityczny władzy monarszej w Prusach Książęcych oraz Rzeczypospolitej w XVI wieku,’ *PH*, 90, 1999, 423 ff.

or 'lecturing' (*Unterrichtung*), were only christened a 'political testament' by nineteenth and twentieth century publishers. Generally speaking, two features of this early-modern literary genre are important to emphasize. The first is its didactic character. This brings it closer to another literary genre, namely the *specula principis*. The second feature of political testaments was their secret character. By their very nature, unlike the 'mirrors of princes,' they were not intended for publication or distribution.⁴²

Such genres of didactic and political literature had never fully developed in Poland-Lithuania, neither in the form of 'mirrors' nor (even more so) in the form of political testaments. After the implementation of the principle of 'free elections' (1573), issues related to succession to the throne and detailed regulations concerning royal obligations and ad hoc political goals were expressed in the form of *pacta conventa*, i.e. a contractual agreement, entered into between the nobility and a newly elected king. According to the nobility, a political testament, especially written by a member of the royal family could be treated as an absolutist attack on the privileges of their estate and a means for preparing the ground for the reintroduction of hereditary and absolutist rule – a slogan to which the Polish nobility reacted allergically.

Works similar to *specula principis* in Poland were written down mainly in a spirit of hostility to absolutism and by the politically engaged noblemen.⁴³ An exceptional, and at the same time, one of the first examples of a *speculum principis* created on Polish soil, was *De institutione regii pueri*, written around 1502, allegedly by Elisabeth von Habsburg, widow of King Casimir IV Jagiellon, and dedicated to the expected male descendant of King Vladislav II of Bohemia

42 Cf. the characteristics of political testaments as a literary genre in publishers' introductions to newer critical editions: *Die politischen Testamente der Hohenzollern*, ed. by R. Dietrich, Köln-Wien 1986; *Politische Testamente und andere Quellen zum Fürstenthos der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. v. H. Duchhardt, Darmstadt 1986 and the now classic article by F. Hartung, 'Der deutsche Territorialstaat des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts nach den fürstlichen Testamenten,' *Deutsche Geschichtsblätter* XIII, 1912, 265–284.

43 Cf. Polish examples: S. Orzechowski, 'Fidelis subditus or O stanie królewski,' trans. J. Januszowski, Archidiakon Sądecki, 1606, in: *Sześć broszur politycznych z XVI i początku XVII stulecia*, ed. B. Ulanowski, Kraków 1921, 1–38. This work was written in Latin by one of the most famous Polish publicists of the sixteenth century, Stanisław Orzechowski, around 1543–5, and circulated in manuscript form until its publication in 1584; J. Januszowski, *Zwierciadło królewskie*, 1606, 213–281. As Stanisław Kutrzeba assumed in the introduction to the aforementioned edition, the last work was probably written at the end of the sixteenth century, *Ibid.*, XV.

and Hungary.⁴⁴ The real author of this work was probably one of the Italian humanists at the Kraków court involved in the prince's upbringing and diplomacy. It is possible that the writer was Bernardino Gallus, to whom the dedication on Filippo Buonaccorsi's above-mentioned tombstone in the Dominican Church in Kraków was also attributed. Callimachus himself is mentioned several times on the pages of *De institutione regii pueri*, but rather in politically neutral contexts not associated with the contents of *Callimachus' Advice*.⁴⁵

Even assuming the authenticity of the core of *Callimachus' Advice*, it is difficult not to notice the pamphlet form and propagandistic intentions of the final version, which was intended to slander the king's policies as tyrannical in the eyes of the nobility. Therefore, we can assume that the original version could have been significantly amplified after Callimachus' death and transformed into a sort of political testament *a rebours* by an anonymous noble propagandist, basing on a 'reversal technique' used in more sophisticated political and philosophical literature during this period. In this sense, *Callimachus' Advice* can be treated as a caricatured mockery or a sarcastic travesty of Callimachus' original political testament for pure propagandistic purposes. Of course, this is only if such an original testament truly existed. If not, the work would simply have to be treated as a propagandistic 'reversal' of Callimachus' positive image, born in humanist and court circles in Poland at the end of the 'Tuscocita's' life,⁴⁶ and

44 Polish translation from Latin 'O wychowaniu królewicza,' in: *Wybór pism pedagogicznych Polski doby Odrodzenia*, ed. J. Skoczek, Wrocław 1956, 3 ff. and critical analyse by A. Danysz, 'O wychowanie królewicza traktat humanistyczno-pedagogiczny,' in: *Studia z dziejów wychowania*. Kraków 1921. cf also J. Skoczek, *Wychowanie Jagiellonow*, Lwów 1932, esp. Chapter 3 'De institutione pueri.' The features of the monarch's mirror, but in a still scholastic spirit, are also contained in Stanisław Dąbrówka's *Treatise on Newly Created Rulers* (1501), which provided an academic introduction to Aristotle's *Politics*, see J. Domański, *Początki człowiekaizmu*, 173 ff.

45 'O wychowaniu królewicza,' 25, 32, 56, 60. See also. H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 409 ff. and J. Skoczek, *Legenda*, 17 and 87 ff., who opts for a joint consideration of *Callimachus' Advice* and the treatise *On the Upbringing of the Prince*] as works that convey the traditions of the teachings of Callimachus as educators and advisors to young Jagiellonian princes, 88 ff.

46 See J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 497 about the flattering opinion Callimachus enjoyed at the Kraków court, but also in the broader context of the Italian impact on sixteenth-century Polish culture, W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 473. The fact that the positive assessment of Callimachus continued in Polish intellectual circles even after his death was demonstrated by the fact that the works remaining after him were collected by M. Drzewicki and Stanisław Górski, as

its replacement with a 'dark legend' popular among members of the nobility, expressed in the ribald tone of satire and disseminated the form of a vulgar political 'anti-testament.' But when could this have happened?

The first tangible traces of Filippo Buonaccorsi's infamous reputation do not come from Poland, but from the neighbouring Teutonic Knights' Prussia. In the *Little Chronicle of the Grand Masters*, written at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we encounter a very critical assessment of the treacherous actions of the Italian towards his homeland. This criticism may have reflected earlier accusations of his participation in a plot against the life of pope Paul II, as well as plans attributed to him to lead the Order on a military expedition to Moldova and to incorporate all of Prussia into the Kingdom of Poland.⁴⁷ In turn, the genesis of the 'dark legend' of the 'Tuscoscita' in Polish public opinion may date back to the early 1520s. The second edition of the Chronicle of Maciej of Miechów from 1521 mentions that Callimachus was guilty of advising Olbracht to undertake a retaliatory expedition to Moldova, which then took place in 1497, ending in a shameful defeat for the Polish knighthood and accompanying Teutonic Order's forces.⁴⁸ Despite individual voices hostile to Callimachus among the opinions of Maciej of Miechów's contemporaries,⁴⁹ there is no tangible tradition concerning Callimachus' authorship of *Advice*, the contents of which we know from the earliest known manuscript dating back to the mid-sixteenth century. Also dating back to this period is a mention of Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski in his treatise 'O poprawie Rzeczpospolitej' [*Improvement of the Republic of Poland*] (1551). This eminent Polish humanist, who was well known in scholarly circles in Europe, betrays his knowledge of fragments of *Callimachus' Advice* (on sowing dissension among the nobility, on the alleged levelling of the estates and destruction of the nobility), likewise criticizes their tyrannical overtones ('harmful advice leaning towards tyranny'). Frycz's use of the formula: 'Similar to or even more severe than what they say about a certain Callimachus,' indicates

well as the publication of his writings on the Ottoman question by Andrzej Krzycki and their praise by Stanisław Hozjusz, cf. R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 145.

47 H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 373 and R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 133. See also F. Papee, *Polska i Litwa*, 287 ff.

48 R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 134 ff. and H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 373 ff. See also Z. Wojciechowski, *Zygmunt Stary (1506–1548)*, Warsaw 1979, 138 and 141 and M. Janicki, 'Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,' 21 and 41.

49 S. Estreicher, 175 ff.; R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 135.

that in the mid-sixteenth century his bad reputation had already been formed and spread.⁵⁰

In the 1550s, the legend of Callimachus as an ungodly and tyrannical supporter of tyranny – a legend that strayed from the truth and followed a flawed chronology – describes his banishment from the royal court in Kraków following the fiasco with the Moldavian military expedition. It is repeated by Marcin Bielski in his *Chronicle of the World*, and is described with additional restraint in Marcin Kromer's *On the Origin and Deeds of Poles*.⁵¹ Even after nearly 40 years, it was still being published in the *Polish Chronicle* (1596) by Joachim Bielski. The latter supplemented *Callimachus' Advice* with additional recommendations (about the nobility abandoning their rural estates and resettling in cities, in order to increase the country's defence and for better economic development) and confirmed the existence of a popular saying of the time: 'For King Olbracht, the nobility is extinct.'⁵²

As we can see, the legend of Callimachus as an evil spirit trying to lead the ruler astray and move him closer to tyranny can be shown to have begun circulating no later than the 1550s. Perhaps, as Romuald Wšetečka has expressed, the pamphlet version of *Advice* took shape somewhat little earlier, around 1537, during the so-called Chicken War, in which the nobility expressed their particular hostility to Bona Sforza (1494–1557), the Italian wife of Sigismund I the Old.⁵³ Xenophobic threads are perceptible in the work's content, while an open anti-Italianism can be seen in the title of one of the oldest Polish manuscripts of this work, dating from the mid-sixteenth century: 'The Infamous Italian Callimachus' Advice to King Olbracht.'⁵⁴

50 R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 136 ff. Cf. also M. Markowski, 'Der Polnische königliche Hof und der Absolutismus in *De republika emendanda* von Andreas Modrzewski,' in: *Hof, Staat und Gesellschaft in der Literatur des 17. Jar.* vol. 11, no. 1–2, 1982, 156.

51 H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 374 f and R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 137 ff. See also M. Janicki, 'Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,' 26.

52 R. Wšetečka, 'Rady Kallimachowe,' 139–142.

53 See also: Z. Wojciechowski, *Zygmunt Stary (1506–1548)*, 364 ff.

54 In 1548 Stanisław Orzechowski, in his funeral speech in honour of the late Sigismund the Old, fervently criticized the Italian influence at the Jagiellonian court, *ibid.* and H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 411. W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 424 ff. expresses the opinion that subsequent versions of *Callimachus' Advice* were more a symptom of xenophobia than of anti-Italianism among the Polish nobility.

Callimachus' Advice and Machiavelli's Il Principe – Common Roots?

The similarities between some fragments of *Callimachus' Advice* and Machiavelli's *The Prince* have already drawn the attention of some historians.⁵⁵ The tone of certain articles in *Callimachus' Advice* may indeed lead one to suppose that perhaps the original work was written by Filippo Buonaccorsi, or his notes that were compiled in the form of a 'political testament' soon after his death. They could be later stylized, after the publication of *Il Principe* (1532), in the spirit of Machiavelli's work by opponents of the pro-royalist camp in Poland in order to ridicule their plans to strengthen king's power. Callimachus' political testament would thus prove to be an anti-royalist lampoon, amplified by an unknown author from the noble estate, with a final draft being produced during the 'Chicken War' in 1537. The text would not only be a reflection of the nobility's anti-Italianism, directed mostly against the king's wife Bona Sforza and her Italian entourage, but also one of the first manifestations of anti-Callimachism Poland, comparable to a certain extent with the anti-Machiavellism that later developed in many European countries.⁵⁶

However, the assumption that the author (or authors) of *Callimachus' Advice* knew Machiavelli's works or the first critical opinions about *Il Principe* as early as the 1530s seems to be an exaggeration. The first known traces of an acquaintance with *The Prince* in Poland date to the 1560s. We will return later to this question of the reception of Niccolò Machiavelli's thoughts on Polish soil.⁵⁷ Therefore, although Józef Garbacik's hypothesis about the influence of *Il Principe* on subsequent amplifications and editing of *Callimachus' Advice* cannot be ruled out, there is also no evidence to confirm it.

The situation is similar with the opposite argument, put forward by Jan Ptaśnik, an advocate of the authenticity of *Advice*, who dates the work to the turn of 1492/93.⁵⁸ We know that in his will, Filippo Buonaccorsi requested that

55 H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 376. Cf. also Z. Wojciechowski, *Zygmunt Stary (1506–1548)*, 266; J. Domański, *Początki humanizmu*, 170 ff. W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 426.

56 See Part Two, Chapter I of the present book, on the development of the idea of anti-Machiavellism in Europe.

57 See Part Two, Chapter One, subsection 4 of the present book.

58 J. Ptaśnik, *Kultura wieków średnich w Polsce*, Warsaw 1922, 241.

all of his as-yet unpublished works be returned to his family in Italy.⁵⁹ However, was there a draft of *Advice* among these writings? And if so,⁶⁰ there is no direct evidence⁶¹ of whether it reached the hands of the Florentine branch of the Buonaccorsi family. We do know that one of its members, Biagio, a close friend of Niccolò Machiavelli,⁶² was among the first readers and reviewers of *The Prince*. Still, regardless of the potential inspiration Machiavelli might have drawn from the supposed political testament of the ‘Tuscoscita,’ another fascinating problem confronts us here, namely: what might have inspired both authors? As Tadeusz Wyrwa has rightly noted: in Poland Buonaccorsi was a typical representative of Italian Renaissance political thought and used it to solve the political problems of his adoptive homeland.⁶³ Even if the work attributed to Callimachus is only a propagandistic apocryphal from the 1530s, what common patterns and inspirations can we find in the way of thinking of its anonymous author (or authors) and the author of *Il Principe*?

To answer this question, we need to return to the Italian period in Filippo Buonaccorsi's biography, and more specifically, to what was probably the most dramatic moment of his life: late February 1468. At that time, the 30-year-old Callimachus, referred to here as ‘Venetian,’ was described in the testimony of one of the participants in the conspiracy to take the life of Pope Paul II as ‘the astrologer and secretary of a certain prelate,’ i.e. Cardinal Ravenna Roverelli, and leader of the conspiracy.⁶⁴ If this was not just an attempt to find a scapegoat,

59 J. Garbacik, *PSB*, 497. On other legates in Callimachus' will see also H. Zeissberg, *Die polnische Geschichtsschreibung des Mittelalters*, 378 ff. and M. Janicki, ‘Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,’ 28.

60 M. Janicki, ‘Datowanie płyty nagrobnej Filipa Kallimacha,’ 39, points out that the coat of arms of Callimachus on his tombstone in Kraków bears a resemblance to the coat of arms of the Florentine Buonaccorsi family and does not exclude the possibility that Callimachus could have adopted it with modifications from this very branch of the family already during his early stay in Florence.

61 Biagio Buonaccorsi, who for a long time worked with Machiavelli in the Florentine Second Chancellery during the republican period, included his flattering opinion of *The Prince* as a in a letter preceding the manuscript copy of *Il Principe*; L. A. Burd dates the creation of Biagio's letter just after 1513, cf. L. A. Burd, Introduction, 33 ff.

62 J. Ptaśnik, *Kultura wieków średnich w Polsce*, 244, who suggests the influence of *Callimachus' Advice* on the concepts of Machiavelli, sees in Biagio Buonaccorsi the heir and nephew of Callimachus. The wife of Biagio was also supposed to be a heartfelt friend of Marietta, the wife of Niccolò Machiavelli.

63 T. Wyrwa, *La pensée politique polonaise...*, 215.

64 J. Zathej, ‘W sprawie badań nad Kallimachem,’ 56–60.

then, according to Jerzy Zathy's hypothesis, Callimachus' leadership could have consisted in preparing plans for the conspiracy and agitation on its behalf. It is also possible that Filippo Buonaccorsi was the author of a certain astrological prognosis which predicted the Pope's illness and imminent death. On 20 February, Pope Paul II did indeed fall ill, but soon recovered. The prognosis was probably distributed in the form of a leaflet, and it is likely to have found its way to the Campo del Fiore market in Rome, where papal bulls were traditionally displayed in public. As can be inferred from Paul II's nervous reaction, printed leaflets containing malicious rumours about the Pope had been posted there. Did they contain the aforementioned prognosis? Ephemera of this kind served as a vehicle for spreading political satire and sometimes, by means of biting illustrations, a kind of political propaganda caricatures. We can presume that after 1501, various types of leaflets were posted in Rome next to the Pasquin statue,⁶⁵ so in the time of Paul II likewise, biting epigrams and dire predictions concerning the authorities were hung in the Campo del Fiore. According to Zathy, the publications of February 1468 circulating in Campo del Fiore would have been among the first pamphlets in Italy, and even all of Europe, to appear in the form of printed ephemera.⁶⁶ We are therefore approaching the origins of the pamphlet, a new genre that was to attain an important place in the political culture and propaganda of the sixteenth century, and which began to flourish especially during the Reformation era.⁶⁷

Various prophetic messages began to circulate in Italy in the form of ephemeral prints since the 1460s and 1470s. Among the earliest examples is a prognosis printed in Venice on a series of copper and woodcuts containing an illustration of the fortune-telling of the so-called Tiburtine Sibyl. Its contents speak about the influence of a comet that was visible in the heavens on the course of the pontificate of Paul II. The probable time of this document's creation falls somewhere before the end of March 1468, and therefore matches almost exactly the timing

65 Anonymously written satirical-critical works were attached to a statue called Pasquino, which was exhibited near the Roman Palazzo Braschi. This place gave the name to pasquinade or *pasquil* – a form of satire, usually in an anonymous brief lampoon; see J. Pirożyński, *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI wieku. Nowiny z Polski* in the collection of Jan Jakub Wick in Zurich from 1567–1587, Kraków 1995, 78.

66 J. Zathy, 'W sprawie badań nad Kallimachem,' 63 ff.

67 J. Pirożyński, *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI wieku. Nowiny z Polski*, 79 ff., recalls that in sixteenth-century ephemeral prints, besides information about current political events, information about various prophecies or 'miraculous' events also appeared.

of the anti-Pope conspiracy. Was the author of the allegory depicted in the illustration Callimachus himself, then referred to as the 'Venetian,' and who was said to have involved some Venetians living in Rome in the plot against Paul II?⁶⁸ It is highly probable that similarly illustrated prophecies passed through his hands, providing inspiration for his own astrological interests and predictions. These were almost certainly satirically visualized representations of the world of power and propagandistic assessments of political life as it affected both him and his contemporaries.

Let us take a closer look at the content of the illustration from the Venetian prognosis mentioned above, which depicts a satirical allegory relating to current political events. It was meant to be a copy of a stone from a prophecy made by the Tiburtine Sibyl, supposedly found in Altino near Venice. The viewer's attention is drawn to the naked, struggling figures of the Pope and the Emperor standing in the ship's crow's nest. The Pope, probably Paul II, is holding in his right hand the shield of King Charles XI of France, and with his left hand is holding Emperor Frederick II, who, in turn, is leaning forward and breaking a spindle depicting the Hussite King of Bohemia, George of Poděbrady, suspected of having a hidden role in the plot to take the life of Paul II. One can imagine that an imperial lion, hidden from the viewer's eyes, is lurking on a sack of gold hanging at the level of the Pope's weakness.⁶⁹ The copperplate, which is a harbinger of future political caricatures (Jerzy Zatycki), is a critically acclaimed illustration of the political situation at the time. Thanks to its caricatural accent, it provides a realistic picture, though one tinged with cynicism and comicality, of the struggles of the highest authorities in the Christian world. It leaves them naked and condemns the mundane nature of imperial and papal aspirations, the essence and purpose of which is serving Mammon. This fits in perfectly with the sarcasm-laden passages found half a century later in Chapter XI of *The Prince*, devoted to the papacy.⁷⁰

Whether or not the author of the allegory depicted on the Venetian copperplate was Callimachus himself seems to be of secondary importance. Of course, the critical anti-Papal overtones it contained probably corresponded to the views of the Roman humanist milieu in which Filippo Buonaccorsi found himself at the time. This included the Pomponius Laetus Academy in Rome, in which Republican traditions, criticism of the papacy and the philological concepts of

68 J. Zatycki, 'W sprawie badań nad Kallimachem,' 65 ff.

69 Cf. the detailed description in J. Zatycki, 'W sprawie badań nad Kallimachem,' 66.

70 *The Prince*, 48–51.

Lorenzo Valla – known for exposing the forgery of the so-called ‘Donation of Constantine’– dominated. What is much more important, is the satirical but also highly veritistic image of power distributed by means of the aforementioned prognostic pamphlet. With the spread of the new medium of the printed word, in this case ephemeral propaganda print, satirical representations such as political caricatures that stripped rulers of their aura and charisma of power, would win an ever-wider audience. Caricatured images of the world of politics, an image both comical and critical at the same time, had to exert an ever more lasting mark on the perception of those in power. Whether in the Roman Campo del Fiore or in humanist circles, whether at the Pomponius Laetus Academy in Rome or half a century later in the Florentine gardens of the Orti Oricellari, where Niccolò Machiavelli spent time and talked to friends. It possible that Machiavelli found inspiration in such a realistic, ‘veritistic’ presentation of the world of power. Its roots reach down to a concept known in manuscript literature and the mystery plays of the Middle Ages: images of the comic tyrant.⁷¹ With the spread of the print medium and graphic printing techniques, these media began to have a stronger impact on various social strata, in terms of both high and low culture. Potential readers of Machiavelli seem to have been well prepared to read his works, which broke taboos at the level of political philosophy. The notions of power, which fill the pages of *Il Principe*, would therefore, at least in part, have already been articulated by anonymous authors of propaganda literature and political satire before being coloured with a more serious tone, and raised to the level of political and philosophical reflection by Niccolò Machiavelli.

Callimachus' Advice can be seen as an example of propaganda literature maintained in the ribald tone of Machiavellism, or more precisely, given the intentions of successive editors, in the spirit close to anti-Machiavellism. The text may or may not have been a travesty of some previous piece(s) of writing by Callimachus. Similarly, it may have been (but need not have been) inspired by knowledge of Machiavelli's most famous work. It is not out of the question that the first manuscript versions were not created until the late 1530s – during the birth of printed polemical and propaganda literature in Poland – as a manifestation of a spontaneous tendency to satirical and critical presentations of monarchical power and criticism of the danger of the tyranny.

71 E. Walser, ‘The figure of the tragic and comic tyrant in the Middle Ages and Renaissance,’ in: *Cultural and universal history: Walter Goetz on his 60th birthday*, Leipzig 1927, 133 ff.

As a propagandistic text *Callimachus' Advice* remained popular among the nobility in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth also in the next centuries. Its career was impressive. From the sixteenth to at least the end of the seventeenth century, successive copies circulated, perversely enriched with new articles expressing extreme pro-absolutist overtones. Its popularity grew in the times of internal tensions and conflicts, such as at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when they served as an instrument of propaganda against royal policies, accused of tendencies towards *absolutum dominium*. It is paradoxical that *Callimachus' Advice* – a work which took the form of a political testament and chronologically preceded 'serious' examples of this genre known to us from other countries – was in its essence a kind of political anti-testament used for purely propagandistic purposes. Even after acquainting the Polish reader with Machiavelli's writings in the latter half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the figures of the two Tuscan neighbours remained closely linked to each other in the political culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁷²

72 W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 435 ff.

**Part Two: The Anti-Machiavellian Moment:
The Tyrant Restored. The Tyrant as
Other During the Era of Rebellion
and Religious Wars in Europe**

Chapter I. The Reformation: from Obedience to the Right of Resistance – Tyranny as Religious Alienation

The Latter Half of the Sixteenth Century: The Era of Abdications, Depositions, and Tyrannicides?

The notion of a ‘historical moment,’ understood as a set of ideas and patterns of thought fashionable in the culture of a given period, is a relative concept. In the sixteenth century there were many ‘moments’ and intellectual breakthroughs that influenced people’s perception of the abuse of power, including its most pernicious embodiment – tyranny. The century experienced three phenomena with far-reaching impacts, and out of which new and important concepts crystallized. The first was the Reformation and its concepts of secular state and Church power, including the limitations of potential abuses related to it, described by the ‘fathers of the Reformation’ (Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli and Calvin). The second was the religious wars fought during the first and second generations of the Reformation, out of which the concept of the legal right to resist tyrannical power was born, and later adopted by some authors in the counter-reformation camp. Last was the birth of the concept of early modern absolutism, which largely grew out of the trauma of the sixteenth century’s bloody religious conflicts.

The choice whether to rebel against a ruler in the name of defending the ‘pure’ or ‘true’ religion or to strengthen a ruler’s power to avoid the ravages of anarchy, became more relevant during the Reformation era. This alternative was most clearly articulated in the latter half of the sixteenth century during the Wars of Religion in France and the Netherlands, and religious tensions in other countries, particularly in the Holy Roman Empire, England, and Scotland. A visible symptom of these religious divisions was the destabilization of dynastic power. The latter half of the sixteenth century was a period of relatively frequent abdications, depositions and assassinations of monarchs. The frequency of these events was certainly no greater than in the late Middle Ages but their causes were largely rooted in phenomena that arose after 1517 as a result of the Reformation and religious divisions in Europe.

The voluntary abdication of the severely ill Emperor Charles V in 1556 was an unprecedented event in the Christian world.¹ However, its significance was

1 In fact, this concerns a whole series of acts of abdication by Charles V initiated on October 25, 1555 with his first relinquishing sovereignty over the Netherlands, and

not always noted by contemporaries.² The abdication act of Charles V following the Peace of Augsburg (1555) changed the political constellation in the countries under Habsburg's rules and marked the end of religious warfare in the Holy Roman Empire. Another widely discussed event at that time, one which sealed the victory of Protestant religious reform in Scotland, was the deposition of Mary Stuart, the Catholic Queen of Scots in 1567, followed by her flight and years-long imprisonment in England.³ The deposition of King Eric XIV of Sweden in 1568 was motivated less by religion than by a conflict that arose within the Vasa dynasty itself and political tensions within Lutheran Sweden. The deposition of the next Swedish monarch (who was also King of Poland) Sigismund Vasa in 1599 was primarily a product of Lutheran nobles' resistance to the Catholic ruler's support for the counter-reformation.⁴ Religious conflicts also contributed to the dethroning of Philip Habsburg as ruler of the Netherlands (1581)⁵

then on January 16, 1556 turning over the crowns of Castile, Aragon, Sicily, and New India to his son Philip, which resulted in the official appointment of Philip II as the ruler of these regions. On September 12, 1556, Charles handed over the reins to the empire to his brother, Ferdinand I, who was officially elected King of Rome in 1531. However, the abdication was formally recognized by the prince-electors only in February 1558, six months before the death of Charles V. It was then that Ferdinand I had his official coronation as Holy Roman Emperor. Cf. the discussion of these events in the classic biography: K. Brandi, *Kaiser Karl V. Werden und Schicksal einer Persönlichkeit und eines Weltreiches*, München 1937, 542 ff.; A. Kohler, *Karl V.: 1500–1558. Eine Biographie*, München 2000, 349–355; his, *Ferdinand I. Fürst, König und Kaiser*, München 2003, 264–271.

- 2 Cf. Widely read among the Protestant community was Johannes Sleidanus' restrained account of these events: *Chronica Wahrhaftighe Beschreibinghe Joanni Sleydani wie sich in Geyslych und Weltlicher sachen veler und mannicherley hadt zugetragen und sehen lassen im tzijden des grossmechtichgsten Romischen Imperator Carolus de V. [...] Nurrenberg. Anno MDLXXXIII*, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, call no. T 742.2 Helmst, 789. Sleidanus states that Charles, while traveling to the Netherlands, sent a letter naming his brother Ferdinand King of Rome and *Statthalter* of the Empire. He then retired to a Jesuit monastery in Spain, in the company of 40 personal servants. Interestingly, the word abdication is never used in the description provided by Sleidanus.
- 3 For more on this subject, see Part 2, Chapter IV.
- 4 Before becoming a major European power in the seventeenth century, Sweden in the previous century had experienced contested successions and depositions associated with numerous revolts (1522, 1568, 1599). For the reasons for the deposition of Eric XIV, see also Part 3, Chapter I.
- 5 See the German translation of the document deposing Philip Habsburg by the States General of the Netherlands dated July 26, 1584, 'Placcaet van Verlathinghe,'

and the political assassinations committed in the 1580s against the leader of the Dutch rebellion, William of Orange (1584), and the last King of France from the Valois dynasty, Henry III (1589). The sixteenth century also witnessed another unprecedented event – the beheading of Mary, Queen of Scots, who after being imprisoned in England for almost 19 years, was sentenced to death (1587) for her alleged participation in a conspiracy to take the life of Elizabeth I. This ‘extra-legal regicide’ can be seen as a precedent that paved the way for the future trial and execution of Charles I (1649).⁶

Political turmoil in the early seventeenth century, including the assassination of King Henry IV of France (1610) and the forced abdications and depositions of other monarchs, had its roots in the religious conflicts that engulfed Western Christianity in the sixteenth century.⁷ The best known examples include the abdications of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II as King of Hungary (1608) and Bohemia (1611),⁸ followed by the depositions of two succeeding Kings of Bohemia – Ferdinand II Habsburg (1618) and the ‘winter king’ Frederick of the Palatinate (1620).⁹ The depositions of two kings of England from the Stuart dynasty – Charles I (1649) and James II (1688) – can be considered the last major political upheavals resulting from the era’s sharp religious divisions. Nevertheless, the voluntary abdication of Christina, Queen of Sweden (1654), who leaned towards Catholicism, was, at least in part, motivated by religion. This was also true of the King of Poland John II Casimir Vasa, a pious Catholic, who after his abdication (1658) joined the Jesuit Order and became an abbot of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris, though his ultimate decision to

in: *Konferenzen und Verträge. Vertrags-Ploetz ein Handbuch geschichtlich bedeutsamer Zusammenkünfte und Vereinbarungen*, part 2, vol. 3: *Neuere Zeit 1492–1914*, ed. H.K.G. Rönnefarth, Würzburg 1953, 36; and the discussion by M. van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555–1590*, Cambridge 1992, 149 ff.

6 For more on this subject see Part 3, Chapter III.

7 I omit here a similar process of political destabilization in Russia during the first 20 years of the seventeenth century after the death of Boris Godunov, during the so-called Time of Troubles, interspersed with the deposition of two false Dimitrys and Vasili IV.

8 As a result of an armed conflict with his brother Matthias, Rudolf II was officially forced to ‘voluntarily’ relinquish his lands in Upper and Lower Austria, as well as the Crown of Hungary, to Matthias in 1608. In 1611, after seizing Prague by force, Matthias was proclaimed King of Bohemia, and after a formal coronation on May 23, he officially received the title of Emperor, which he held until his death in 1612; cf. K. Vocelka, *Die politische Propaganda Kaiser Rudolfs II (1576–1612)*, Wien 1981, 315 ff., 323 ff.

9 See the outline in: J. Burkhardt, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg*, Frankfurt/M. 1992.

abdicate was caused by the death of his wife, and in large part by the internal strife and political crisis of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the wake of the wars against the Cossacks, Russia, and Sweden.

Nonetheless, to see the half-century from 1550 to 1600 – or even more broadly, the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century – as an era of abdication, deposition, and tyrannicides would be both a generalization and a superficial amalgamation of dominant themes from the political history of early modern Europe. Moreover, it distracts attention from other important features of this period in European history, including the complex web of competing interests and conflicts that defined politics at that time. Regardless of the specific reasons behind each of the above-mentioned abdications, depositions and tyrannicides they were conditioned by wider, more long-term forces that went beyond the local players and situations that spawned them.

Besides, it is important to understand not only the factors behind the destabilization of the European order in the sixteenth century but also those underlying the stability of the state structures, which became more consolidated territorially than in the late Middle Ages. A good explanation for many of political transformations at that time might be found in the model of the ‘Renaissance monarchy’,¹⁰ which was defined by two elements. The first was the expansion, centralization, and gradual bureaucratization of the monarchical power in the sixteenth century. The second was its structure as a ‘limited monarchy’, based on the late medieval principle that a monarch should not rule or make key decisions concerning the state without the consent of his subjects and their representative bodies. This, in turn, led to an expansion of the political prerogatives of assemblies of estates at the provincial and national level already in the late Middle Ages. Meanwhile, periodic waves of financial and budgetary crisis¹¹ in the sixteenth century often coincided with ‘waves’ of political crisis that could also increase the power of the estates at the expense of the monarch. The Renaissance monarchy was thus not yet comparable to that of the ‘age of absolutism’ (1648–1789), when a system of absolute rule became firmly established in many European countries.

However, it seems important to note not only the factors and structural processes involved in the abdications and forced depositions of the monarchs but also to perceive them as events that drew the attention of people at that time and

10 J.R Major, *Representative Government in Early Modern France*, New Haven 1980, esp. the chapter ‘The nature of Renaissance State and Society’, 160–204, here 160, 177 ff.

11 I. Kąkolewski, *Nadużycia władzy i korupcja w Prusach Książęcych w połowie XVI w. Narodziny państwa wczesnonowoczesnego*, Warsaw 2000, esp. 137–172.

led to debates on such crucial issues as the right of resistance. From this perspective, the century following the abdication of Charles V can be seen as a period of relatively frequent depositions of rulers – events most often conditioned by religious divisions and conflicts. The point here is to present how people's ways of thinking and ideological premises motivated those involved in political life during this era.

A broad, comparative analysis of the psychological, religious and political attitudes and motivations of the abdicating or deposed monarchs and of those who dethroned them during the era of religious divisions in Europe has yet to be written. I will focus here on just two decades of the sixteenth century, the period from the late 1560s to the late 1580s. These decades are linked by the ongoing paroxysm of religious wars in France and the Netherlands, and an escalation of the confrontation between Spain and England. Behind the depositions and political murders that took place during this period were new theories of secular power and the legal use of resistance by subjects in response to the abuses committed by their rulers. These theories grew out of a breakdown of Christian unity in Europe initiated by the Reformation. They undoubtedly had medieval intellectual origins (political Thomism), and drew more or less directly on the concepts espoused by late medieval theoreticians concerning the right of resistance, often reinterpreting their arguments. Another source of inspiration was provided by the Renaissance-humanist debate on the subject of tyrannicide carried on between supporters of the murder of Caesar and legalists defending the inviolability of legal political power. Echoes of this debate continued to be heard among the generation of political philosophers to which Machiavelli belonged and were repeated throughout the sixteenth century. However, during the Reformation, a new question arose: is a 'heretical' ruler, i.e. one whose faith differs from those of his subjects, a tyrant *per se* and, if so, do his subjects have a right of active resistance?¹²

The Reformation: from Obedience to Resistance – the Lutherans

Before we consider the most important aspects of the political philosophy of the 'father of the Reformation,' Martin Luther (1483–1546), it is necessary to draw attention to the nature of his statements on general political issues and their reception. Luther's political thought does not form a systemic doctrine;

12 H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft...*, 139.

rather, his writings dealing with political matters were intended to provide answers to pressing questions of the day.¹³ The conclusions drawn by Luther were largely pragmatic, often dealing with issues that were peripheral to his theological interests. It is worth remembering, however, that theology and politics in Luther's times remained closely connected, and many of his theological works – at least in their genesis – were likewise *livres de circonstances*, including important deliberations on current political issues.

The role of printing as a new mass medium in spreading the Lutheran Reformation is a key issue worthy of closer consideration in this context. Contemporary editions of Marcin Luther's writings, then the most popular author in Germany, accounted for about one-third of the publishing output in the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁴ His *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation* (1520), initially published in an edition of 4,000 copies, was quickly sold out, so work on a new edition began just five days later.¹⁵ In the same year, as many as 15 editions of this 'most popular publication in the history of the Reformation' were published.¹⁶ In total, by 1520 some 300,000 copies of Luther's writings had been printed.¹⁷ During the first decades of the Reformation, the mass production of the printed word developed on an unprecedented scale. But this was not so much due to book publications as to the rapid spread of printed ephemera. It is estimated that in the first three decades of the sixteenth century some 10,000 pamphlets (*Flugschriften*) were printed in German countries, totalling around 10 million copies in all.¹⁸ Thus, on average, more than one pamphlet was printed for every person living in the Holy Roman Empire, or, more to the point, 10 copies for every literate inhabitant – and to these estimates we should still add a smaller number of leaflets in Latin. In total, the readership of Luther's works

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- 13 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 'Chapter II – Luther and Melanchthon,' 15–34. It should be noted that Allen's work, especially in regard to Martin Luther's political theory, is an outdated study. The author presents the political philosophy of Luther and Melanchthon as a doctrine that emphasizes almost exclusively unlimited obedience to secular authority and allows only passive resistance from subjects.
- 14 J. Pirożyński, *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI w. Nowiny z Polski w kolekcji Jana Jakuba Wicka w Zurychu z lat 1560–1587*, 39.
- 15 A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Rola drukarstwa polskiego w dobie odrodzenia*, Warszawa 1954, 8.
- 16 J. Burkhardt, *Das Reformationsjahrhundert. Deutsche Geschichte zwischen Medienrevolution und Institutionenbildung 1517–1617*, Stuttgart 2002, 44.
- 17 P. Chaunu, *Le Temps des Réformes*, Paris 1975.
- 18 J. Burkhardt, *Das Reformationsjahrhundert...*, 28.

is estimated to have reached one million people, or roughly 10% of the Empire's population.¹⁹

Other great reformers, such as Philip Melanchthon and Huldrych Zwingli, wrote only half of what the 'father of the Reformation' published. Nevertheless, they too belonged to the generation of those who created the Reformation-era 'media revolution,' as Johannes Burkhardt called the intensification of social communication and informational exchange after 1517. Thus, the development of the Lutheran Reformation and the expansion of print culture in the late 1520s and early 1530s had a huge impact on the formation of modern public opinion in the early sixteenth century.²⁰ It is therefore difficult to treat the writings of the first generation of Protestant reformers in a similar way as the treatises of Machiavelli, Erasmus, and More, addressed primarily to an elite readership. The publications of the 'fathers of the Reformation' had to more closely match the expectations and interpretive facilities of a wide circle of readers during the era of revolutionary social and intellectual ferment that spawned the Lutheran 'media revolution.'

Martin Luther's political thought, outlined in his early works from the sixteenth century,²¹ partly broke with the political traditions of the Middle Ages and challenged many of the humanist concepts that had arisen during the Renaissance era. The key to understanding the political views of the 'father of the Reformation' is the concept of two kingdoms, taken from St Augustine: the first is *regnum Dei* (God's kingdom), in which true Christians belong, with the second, *regnum Satanae* (Satan's kingdom), vying for people's souls.²² The reformer from

19 J. Pirożyński, *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI wieku. Nowiny z Polski*, 39.

20 J. Burkhardt, *Das Reformationsjahrhundert...*, 50; Burkhardt contests J. Habermas' thesis that the phenomenon of public opinion in Europe was not born until the eighteenth century.

21 The following of Luther's writings are fundamental here: from 1520, M. Luther, *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung*, in: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 6, Weimar 1888, 381–469; from 1523, his, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei*, in: *Ibid.*, vol. 11, Weimar 1900, 229–281; from 1525, his, *Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern*, in: *Ibid.*, vol. 18, Weimar 1908, 344–361; from 1526, his, *Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligen Stande sein können*, in: *Ibid.*, vol. 19, Weimar 1897, 616–662.

22 Cf. a discussion of Luther's political concepts in: F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' in: *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, M. Goldie, Cambridge 1991, 159–194, here esp. 164 ff., 168 ff.; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2: *The Age of Reformation*, Cambridge 1979, 14 ff.; o H.K. Scherzer, 'Luther,' in: *Klassiker des politischen Denkens*, vol. 1: *Von Plato bis Hobbes*, ed. H. Maier, H. Rausch, H. Denzer, München 1986, 199–215, here

Wittenberg likewise distinguished between two kinds of power (*zweyerley regiment*). The first was spiritual (*geistlich*), and thus included humankind's attitude to God, which in essence was supposed to be based on proclaiming the Word of God and therefore not require coercion. The second was secular power (*ein weltlich regiment*), referring to a social sphere of human life in which coercion is necessary.²³ According to Lutheran doctrine, secular states exist in order to protect human souls from the inclinations of those who are guided by Satan's power. True Christians subject themselves to secular power to set a good example to those who require discipline at the hands of state authority.²⁴ One of the consequences of such reasoning was the conclusion that subjects should obey state authority both because of their fear of it and because of their concern for their own souls.²⁵ As with all of Luther's theology, his interpretation of free will was of fundamental importance here.²⁶

Luther's political theology broke with medieval tradition in several respects.²⁷ First, it departed from the traditional scholastic theories, and instead referred mainly to the political visions of early Christianity, primarily the New Testament and St Paul's letters. A key place here was occupied by an excerpt from Paul's Letter to the Romans (13:1–7), where he orders Christians to obey all governing authorities established by God.²⁸ Thanks to Luther's interpretation, this passage became one of the most frequently cited texts in the political thought of the Reformation era.²⁹ Second, by rejecting the concept of holy orders (ordained ministries), canon law, and cloistered life, the Wittenberg reformer argued that the 'Church visible,' understood by him not as a hierarchical institution but as a

202 ff.; G.C. von Unruh, 'Obrigkeit und Amt bei Luther und das von ihm beeinflusste Staatsverständnis,' in: *Staatsräson. Studien zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs*, ed. R. Schnurr, Berlin 1975, 339–361, here 339 ff.

23 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, esp. 629; his, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 249, 254, 258, 260 ff., 265. Cf. also B. Lohse, *Luthers Theologie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang*, Göttingen 1995, 167 ff.

24 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 629.

25 Cf. F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 165, 169.

26 Cf. F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 165.

27 I base this here mainly on the characteristics of Luther's concept of political power presented in: F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 170 ff. and Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 12 ff., 19.

28 Cf. e.g. M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 247, references to St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 13:1.2 and 1 Peter, 2:13–14; similarly his, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 625; *Wider die räuberischen...*, 357, 359 ff.

29 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 15 ff.

community of believers, should be deprived of its jurisdictional power. For this reason, he granted secular authorities both exclusivity in the legal use of coercion in earthly life and jurisdiction over the Church. In their actions, the clerical authorities would use only the Word of God contained in Scripture. Luther condemned all attempts to mix the methods and spheres of action – whether it be the secular power of the papacy³⁰ or attempts to cause an armed rebellion in the name of the ‘Kingdom of God’ by extreme Protestant factions (the Anabaptists) – as works of the devil.³¹ He thereby departed from the medieval idea of the ‘two swords’ – papal and imperial power – by granting the sword only to secular rulers.

The Augustinian concept of the two kingdoms that Luther incorporated into his thought was part of the ‘eschatological root’ of European political thought.³² It stood in contradiction to the traditions of political Aristotelianism, which were held in high regard by both Medieval Thomists and many Renaissance humanists.³³ The primary goal of the Augustinian thought was not a plan for the best possible arrangement of social life according to the universal principles of natural law and the common good (Aristotle, Thomism), but, a plan for personal salvation. It was only in his later writings, after the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire had escalated in the 1530s, that Luther began to refer to the political category of Aristotelianism, following in the footsteps of Philip Melancthon, who at that time had published his readable commentaries to selected books of Aristotle’s *Politics*.³⁴ Based on these, he made a distinction between three types of kingdoms: tyrannical kingdoms, where the rights of the subjects are violated by the ruler; despotic kingdoms, such as the Ottoman empire, where the ruler holds power over his subjects without any restrictions like the master of the house over his slaves; and political kingdoms

30 Cf. the particularly eloquent and extensive critique of the papacy and the Church’s conduct in regards to this matter in: M. Luther, *An den christlichen Adel...*, 406 ff., 463 ff.; his, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 265.

31 F. Oakley, ‘Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,’ 173. An example of simultaneous criticism of the papists and Müntzer Protestants for using force as a solution in: M. Luther, ‘Warnung an seine lieben Deutschen,’ in: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 30, Weimar 1910, 279 ff.

32 See also, Part One, Chapter I; cf. H.K. Scherzer, ‘Luther,’ 203.

33 Cf. Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 16.

34 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck, vol. 6, Klett-Cotta 1990, 651–706, here 668.

(*regnum politicum* or *magistratus civilis*).³⁵ Among these, he clearly favoured the idea of a limited monarchy embodied in the latter.

This extended contrast: *regnum despoticum et herile*, *regnum tyrannicum* and *regnum civile* only appeared in Martin Luther's Latin writings. In his German-language works, we do not encounter terms such as 'despot' or 'despotic.' Here, Luther uses the term *Tyrann* or its German equivalent *Wütrich*, or (less frequently) a more general and systemic term – *Tyrannei*. Before 1530, accusations of tyranny were most often levelled at the Pope and Catholic bishops (*der geystlichen tyrannen regiment*) as well as secular princes loyal to the papacy.³⁶ Moreover, the 'father of the Reformation' and his supporters perceived as 'global tyrants' (*tyrannus ununiversalis*) both the Bishop of Rome, for usurping the right to act as head of the Christian Church, and the Ottoman Sultan, as head of the Islamic world.³⁷ Therefore, the Pope as *tyrannus ununiversalis*, hostile to every follower of the pure Gospel and negating God's law, Luther argued, deprived himself of any legal status. Thus, as the religious conflict in the Holy Roman Empire became more acute, and the Ottoman expansion more dangerous, the

35 A similar division is also found in Melancthon's commentary on Aristotle's *Politics* (1530), where the *imperium herile* is associated with barbarian states and the Ottoman Turks. The above Latin quotations are from H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft...*, 146 ff. Moreover, among the so-called political kingdoms Luther counted a number of European monarchies: France, England, Portugal, Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, while the Holy Roman Empire he described as a type of aristocratic system, and the Swiss cantons – as a democracy; see H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 667 ff. Cf. also W. Günter, *Martin Luthers Vorstellung von der Reichsverfassung*, Münster 1976, 131.

36 For example, M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 265. See also an analysis of the meaning of these terms in: H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 665 ff. On the evolution of Luther's judgment and criticism of the papacy, see also H. Kirchner, 'Luther und das Papstum,' in: *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546. Festgabe zu seinem 500. Geburtstag*, vol. 1, Berlin 1983, 441–456.

37 H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft...*, 139. In fact, Luther distinguished two types of tyrants: 1. *tyrannus quoad executionem*, or *Kleintyrannen*, among whom he also included usurpers; 2. *tyrannus ununiversalis*, or *Welttyrannen*; see H.K. Scherzer, 'Luther,' 214. He also described the Ottoman sultan more neutrally, as the *Türkische keyser*, and called Tatar and Persian rulers 'emperors'; W. Günter, *Martin Luthers Vorstellung von der Reichsverfassung*, 35 ff., 55. However, in the first years of the Reformation, Luther used to say that papal tyranny is worse than Ottoman's tyranny. In the course of progressive Ottoman expansion in the 1530s, he increasingly shifted his views, perceiving the Ottoman Empire as an 'eschatological enemy'; see R. Mau, 'Luthers Stellung zu den Türken,' in: *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers...*, 647–662.

confessional ‘otherness’ of the ruler began to be seen on the Protestant side as the most serious abuse of government, combined with allegations of tyranny or despotism. This is how the paradigm of *tyranny as confessional alienation* began to crystallize during the era of religious division.

What is important for understanding Luther’s views in the context of the times in which he lived is his general assessments of rulers, which were often coloured by violent emotions and full of sharp epithets. In his writings, he repeatedly denounced the Catholic rulers of his day, stating that ‘most princes and lords are godless tyrants and enemies of God who persecute the Gospel.’³⁸ In another place, he states: the wise prince is a true rarity (literally, a ‘rare bird’ – ‘*gar ein seltsam vogel*’), while the pious ruler is even rarer. The majority of princes are ‘the greatest fools or scoundrels on earth.’ (*die groesten narren odder buben auff der erden*).³⁹ Elsewhere he describes as *bluthunde* – ‘bloody ogres’ – rulers who break the God’s natural laws.⁴⁰ The emotional tone he used in his statements must have increased their appeal to readers. The directness, and at times, even vulgarity, with which he referred to contemporary princes, were probably also in line with common opinions about the world of politics of that time. This vulgarity of speech was very media-savvy in character. In the era before the invention of the printing press, such words would have been at most ‘whispered’ behind a ruler’s back, while in printed form, supported by Luther’s authority, they acquired greater significance. Thanks to the medium of printing, such descriptions became part of the popular critical image of secular princely government during the time of the Lutheran ‘media revolution.’ Applied mainly to Catholic princes of the Roman Holy Empire, it also increased the influence on public opinion of the paradigm of tyranny as religious alienation.⁴¹

However, Luther came to the conclusion that, because of the predominance of evil Christians over good ones, it was in fact impossible to rule without the need for secular power to use means of coercion, and even harmful to use only

38 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 643: ‘das der mehrer teyl Fuersten und herrn gottlosen Tyrannen und Gottsfeinde sind, das Evangelion verfolgen.’

39 M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 267. See also other examples of Luther’s criticism of the princes in: Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 16.

40 See the entry ‘Bluthund,’ in: *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, vol. 2, Leipzig 1860, 185.

41 It should also be remembered that in his interpretation of Psalm 82 of 1530, Luther stated that the very legitimacy of secular authority as an office established by God is not undermined by the fact that this office may sometimes be held by a tyrant or a pagan ruler; see W. Günter, *Martin Luthers Vorstellung von der Reichsverfassung*, 24 ff.

methods typical of Church authority. This would be reminiscent, he wrote, of a situation in which a shepherd gathered together under the roof of a stable of wolves, lions, eagles and sheep.⁴² These words clearly resonated not only with their reference to animal symbols, which were the favoured symbols in the political literature of that era, but also with the note of political realism. The same is true of one of Luther's favourite metaphors: history is God's great masquerade. Kings, queens, princes, and other people, as well as destructive forces, are only 'masks' (*larvae*) behind which the power of God himself hides.⁴³ This vision reveals a similarity to the then fashionable metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*. Only when the ruler pulls off the 'mask' given to him by God, trying to persuade his subjects to do evil, does he cease to be God's governor, and can thus be denied obedience.⁴⁴

Martin Luther's most complete analysis of the abuse of tyrannical power and the acceptable forms for challenging it – typical of his views before the Augsburg Parliament in 1530 – are laid out in *Von weltlicher Oberkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei* (1523). Later on, under the impression of the bloody Peasants' War in Germany (1524–1525), he extended these in his treatises *Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligen Stande sein können* (1526). Both writings, like the earlier *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation* – the previously mentioned 'most popular publication in the history of the Reformation' – were undoubtedly also kind of *livres de circonstances*.

Secular power, whose purpose is to ensure peace and earthly justice and to prevent anarchy, is interpreted here in the spirit of the concepts of St Paul and St Augustine as God's 'remedy for sin'.⁴⁵ Luther claimed that tyrants were also instruments in God's hands and a manifestation of his wrath.⁴⁶ As the paradox of how God can permit the evil of tyranny has been resolved in an Augustinian way: the power of a tyrant is seen as the punishment for human sins.⁴⁷ The divine origin of any power entails responsibilities for both rulers and those governed. On the one hand, rulers should not induce their subjects to sin⁴⁸, while on the other hand, subjects must not actively oppose secular power, even if they are to

42 M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 252.

43 F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550', 171.

44 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 17.

45 *Ibid.*, 19; F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550', 171.

46 *Cf.*, M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 640.

47 *Ibid.*, 637.

48 *Cf. esp.* M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 267.

suffer under the yoke of a tyrant.⁴⁹ For any rebellion against a tyrant carries three dangers. First, princes who are not tyrants may be wrongly accused of tyranny and thereby deprived of their lives. Second, revolts against a tyrannical ruler can lead to the domination of the mob (*Poebel*). Thus, the tyranny of a prince can then easily turn into the tyranny of the mob. Luther has no doubt that it is better to endure single-headed tyranny than multi-headed tyranny.⁵⁰ Third, and finally, the consequences of tyranny – the loss of property, life, and honour by the subjects, their wives and children – are compared to the consequences of wars with a conclusion that relativizes tyrannical rule: ‘it is better to suffer an evil tyrant than a bad war.’⁵¹

It is only when a tyrant commands people to do things contrary to conscience and faith that subjects are obliged to show their obedience to God and disobedience the ruler. In this case, Martin Luther also had in mind specific abuses of princely power: when a ruler attempts to persuade his subjects to remain faithful to the Papacy or to abandon their faith based on the Holy Bible.⁵² Refusing obedience in matters of religion and conscience was closely connected with the demand to bear witness by proclaiming the true faith regardless of the circumstances.⁵³ At the same time, Luther stressed the need to endure in suffering the consequences of disobedience, adding with a hint of scepticism: ‘For such tyrants act as secular princes should. They are worldly princes; But the world is God’s enemy, therefore they must also do what is contrary to God, but according to the world is so that they do not become dishonoured and remain worldly princes. Therefore, do not wonder when they rage against the Gospel and play fools; they need their title and Name suffice.’⁵⁴

49 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 635: ‘Und besser, das die Tyrannen hundert mal yhn unrecht thun, das sie [ie. subjects – I.K.] den Tyrannen ein mal unrecht thun.’ Cf. also M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 259, 268.

50 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 635: ‘Nu ist besser von einem Tyrannem, das ist von der oberkeit, unrecht leyden, denn von unzehlichen Tyrannen, das ist vom Poebel, unrecht leyden’; similarly *ibid*, 639 ff.

51 *Ibid.*, 637: ‘ein boeser Tyrann ist leydlicher, den ein boeser krieg’

52 M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 267.

53 See extensive discussion of the concepts of Luther and other leading Wittenberg theologians from the 1520s in: E. Wolgast, ‘Obrigkeit und Widerstand in der Frühzeit der Reformation’, in: *Wegscheiden der Reformation. Alternatives Denken vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert*, Weimar 1994, 235–258, here 239.

54 ‘Denn solch Tyrannen handeln, wie weltlich fursten sollen. Es sind weltliche fursten. Die welt ist Gottis feyndt, darumb muessen sie auch thun was Gott widder, der welt eben ist’; M. Luther, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 267.

The Lutheran concept of disobedience in matters of conscience initially excluded the possibility of active and organized resistance. This grew out of the assumption that what was important was a Christian's spiritual freedom, based on his inner qualities, and not on his external freedom, which was conditioned by various circumstances of his earthly life.⁵⁵ In essence, it was a theory on one's duty of absolute obedience to secular power in earthly matters,⁵⁶ and allowed only passive resistance in matters of conscience and faith. Wreaking vengeance on a tyrant should be left to God by those suffering under his yoke.⁵⁷ In order to punish a tyrant, God can even arrange an invasion and occupation by a foreign prince.⁵⁸ However, tyrannicide or the deposition of a ruler were judged worthy methods by pagans, but not by Christians, and more recent events, such as the dethroning of Christian II in Denmark (1523), were unequivocally condemned.⁵⁹

Luther's criticism of all forms of rebellion and civil war was expressed in his strong condemnation of the Peasants' War of 1524–1526.⁶⁰ In fact, his criticism was directed not only against the peasant insurgents and their supporters but

55 F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 173.

56 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 632 ff., references St Paul's Epistle to the Romans 13, 1 ff. and a detailed analysis of how to deal with the tyrant's threat to the property, the honour and life of his subjects, their wives and children; *ibid.*, 636 ff.

57 *Ibid.* 641, 643; his, *Von weltlicher Oberkeit...*, 248 ff.

58 M. Luther, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 638.

59 *Ibid.*, 633 ff. Here, Luther refers to examples of Greek tyrannicides, murders committed against Roman emperors and kings of Judah; cf. *ibid.*, 635 ff. He supplements ancient examples with more recent ones: the Swiss cantons, which refused to recognize imperial authority, and the Danes, who deprived Christian II Oldenburg of the throne. For their acts of rebellion and removal of their rightful rulers, these peoples were to receive a well-deserved punishment from God. Similarly, *ibid.* 641 ff., extensive criticism of the deposition of Christian II, in which Luther admits that even if the Danish subjects were in the right, they should not have taken revenge on their ruler and left his punishment to God. For, by raising a rebellion against their monarch, they were guilty of offences not only against the majesty of the king but also against God himself (*Lese majestatis divine*).

60 Particularly dramatic and contemptuous is the comparison of the uprising to a fire that ravages the country, and the insurgents to rabid dogs which must be killed not to fall victim to them: 'denn eyn auffrurischer mensch gleich als wenn man eynen tollnen hund todschlagen mus, schlegstu nicht, so schlegt er dich und eyn gantz land mit dyr'; his, *Wider die räuberischen...*, 358.

also against the princes, counts, and nobles.⁶¹ Stigmatizing the rulers for their ‘stubborn perversity,’ Luther simultaneously states that unjust rule was not a sufficient reason for rebellion. His formula of obedience to secular power, including tyrannical power, and the acceptance of at most passive resistance in a situation when a ruler violates religion and conscience of his subjects, could give a feeling of safety for those in power.

The concept of obedience to secular power developed by Martin Luther, provided an opportunity to more easily legalize and institutionalize the mainstream of the Lutheran Reformation. It also threw to the wolves more radical factions seeking to forcefully implement the idea of the Kingdom of God on earth. These were primarily the Anabaptists, first from the ranks of Thomas Müntzer during the Peasants’ War⁶² and later the supporters of the Münster Commune (1534–1535).⁶³ Luther’s ‘rebellious legalism’ seems to reflect his overall cautious political stance of the 1520s. Moreover, his denial of the idea of active resistance was in line with the then-still-valid programme of the so-called ‘Imperial Reform’ (*Reichsreform*), initiated at the end of the fifteenth century, aimed, among other things, at putting into practice the principle of *Landesfrieden* and other measures aimed at limiting destructive internal conflicts and divisions.⁶⁴

The political doctrines of the Lutheran Reformation camp regarding the right of resistance underwent major changes after the religious conflict in the Holy Roman Empire escalated, and attempts to resolve the dispute between the Emperor and his Catholic allies and the Protestant party in the Augsburg

61 Cf. his, *Ob Kriegsleute...*, 643 ff., an eloquent criticism of all the groups mentioned here and a reminder that princes and nobles should not forget that they are subject to imperial authority.

62 See the discussion of the concept of resistance in Müntzer and in the programs of the insurgents during the German Peasants’ War of 1524–1526 in: E. Wolgast, ‘Obrigkeit und Widerstand in der Frühzeit der Reformation,’ 244–258.

63 In turn, under the influence of the experiences of the Anabaptist revolt in the so-called Münster Commune (1534–1535), Luther revised his views on the scope of secular authority, allowing it to apply some degree of coercion in the matter of religion and granting princes greater powers in the administration of the Church. Thus, he leaned toward the views of Melancthon, who believed that a secular ruler has the right and duty to defend ‘true religion,’ by force if necessary; F. Oakley, ‘Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,’ 173 ff. Cf. also J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 32 ff.

64 W. Günter, *Martin Luthers Vorstellung von der Reichsverfassung*, 77.

Reichstag in 1530 proved unsuccessful.⁶⁵ The representatives of the Protestant camp, Philip I, Landgrave of Hesse, and Johann, Elector of Saxony, each developed their own theories on the right of resist imperial power.⁶⁶

The essence of the Hessian model was to emphasize the elective character of imperial power, which was interpreted as being not absolute, but conditional, and thus obliged to respect e.g. the conditions of so-called 'electoral capitulations.'⁶⁷ The prince-electors as hereditary rulers possessed rights that the Emperor, who was himself elected, was bound to observe. It was thereby argued that the Emperor, in inducing the Protestant princes of the Holy Roman Empire to change their religion, had exceeded his powers. Hence, the princes, who were responsible for the affairs of the Church in their territories, had the right to respond with armed resistance. The Saxon model, in turn, drew on the argument from Roman civil law that any injustice committed by an officeholder was committed by him as a private citizen. It also justified the use of force if the Emperor were to attack the Protestants for the sake of their religion, as he would be guilty of 'notorious injustice' (*notoria iniuria*).⁶⁸ This argument could lead to the radical assumption that a ruler, including the Emperor himself, who exceeds the prerogatives of his office, should be treated in the same fashion as an ordinary subject.⁶⁹

Following the bloody experience of the German Peasants' War, the threat of uncontrolled popular revolt was addressed in both doctrines,⁷⁰ by guaranteeing the right of resistance only to the princes of the Holy Roman Empire. A theory of armed resistance was thus articulated, but one that was institutionalized in character. Luther, hesitant to accept the Hessian model, began to move closer to the Saxon model, along with other prominent Lutheran theologians, during a

65 See the analytical overview of the evolution of Luther's views from 1530, *ibid.*, 117–125. Cf. also A. Laube, "Daß die Untertanen den Obrigkeiten zu widerstehen schuldig sind". Widerstandspflicht um 1530, in: *Wegscheidens der Reformation...*, 259–276, discussion of medieval inspirations for the Lutheran doctrine of resistance developed from around 1530.

66 Cf. the characteristics of both theories in: R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580', in: *The Cambridge History of Political Thought...*, 200 ff.; for more, Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 194 ff.

67 *Wahlkapitulationen*, i.e. written agreements, introduced in 1516, in which a candidate to the imperial crown swore to respect the conditions made by the prince-electors.

68 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580', 201; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 194–199.

69 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 200.

70 On the development of the Saxon interpretation, see *ibid.* 202–206.

meeting at the electoral castle in Torgau in October 1530.⁷¹ However, as a ‘rebellious legalist’ he remained cautious and only conceded that positive law permits resistance in certain situations, and declared that he would not oppose it on scriptural grounds. He expressed more precisely his position soon afterwards in a writing titled *Warnunge D. Martini Luther, An seine lieben Deutschen* (1531). In it, he made a distinction between a rebellion, using the example of Müntzer’s uprising, aimed at seizing power, which he criticized, and legitimate resistance in the defence of one’s threatened rights.⁷²

In his expanded definition of legitimate resistance to secular authorities, Luther insisted that Protestants must renounce their obedience to the Emperor in situations such as that of the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. He argued that by combating teachings based on the pure Gospel, Charles V was acting not only against the laws of God but also the laws of the Empire, and his sworn oath, obligations and privileges as Holy Roman Emperor.⁷³ While Luther believed that armed resistance was justified only in the defence of religion, in his eyes this was certainly relevant in a situation in which the authorities, including the Emperor himself, refused to obey the precepts of the Gospel⁷⁴ and supported the false teachings of the papacy.⁷⁵ It is therefore no coincidence that, in the 1530s, Luther began to turn increasingly often to political categories derived from the Aristotelian tradition. He recalled that the Emperor did not possess ‘despotic’ power (like the Ottoman Sultan), but ‘political’ power, which rests on the fulfilment by those in power of their obligations towards those under their rule.⁷⁶ In the

71 R.M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580,’ 201; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 199. Cf. also W. Günter, *Martin Luthers Vorstellung von der Reichsverfassung*, 121–125.

72 M. Luther, *Warnung...*, 283: ‘[...] der heisst ein auffruerischer, der die Oberkeit und Recht nicht leiden wil, sondern greiffit sie an und streit widder sie und will sie unterdrucken und selbs Herr sein und Recht stellen, wie der Muentzer [...]. Das also die gegen were widder die bluthunde [this is what he describes here as rulers who break the law and commit crimes – I.K.] nicht auffruerisch sein kann.’

73 This fragment of the interpretation reflects more the Hessian model of interpretation, see *ibid.*, 291: ‘Denn der Keiser handelt als denn nicht allein widder Gott und Goettlich recht, sondern auch widder seine eigen Keiserliche recht, eyde, pflicht, siegel und brieve.’ However, contrary to the quite strongly formulated theses in favour of resistance, in Luther’s writing, there is also a tone of conciliation towards Emperor Charles V and the relegation of political responsibility to imperial advisors, especially the Catholic princes (*Neidefuersten*), *ibid.*, 292 ff.

74 *Ibid.*, 299 ff.

75 *Ibid.*, 301 ff., 317; Cf. also similar in the final conclusions, *Ibid.*, 320.

76 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 668.

spirit of the Saxon interpretation, this logically led to the conclusion that an emperor who neglects his duties ceases to be a public person and becomes a private individual who can be resisted when he commits injustice against other people.⁷⁷ However, as the religious conflict intensified at the end of the 1530s, Luther, who was at heart a 'rebellious legalist,' moved from the Saxonian to the 'constitutional' Hessian theory of resistance, stressing the conditional and elective character of the Emperor's powers and allowing resistance to imperial authority by the princes of the Empire, who, as he argued, had a duty to uphold the true religion. This 'constitutional' theory of resistance was soon expanded by Martin Bucer, Andreas Osiander, and other Lutheran authors.

The issue became particularly pressing shortly before Luther's death, following the outbreak of the Schmalkaldic War (1546–1547), which ended in a defeat for the Protestant side. Following his victory, Charles V sought to impose the compromise provisions of the Augsburg Interim of 1548, which had been accepted by Philip Melancthon and the majority of Protestants. However, the Interim triggered fierce protests by the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans, who demanded adherence to a 'pure' form of Luther's religious teachings. The fierce resistance of their stronghold, Magdeburg, to a siege by forces of Maurice, Elector of Saxony in 1550 and to the imperial demand for acceptance of the Interim, was closely followed in the Protestant world. This event quickly became a widely discussed 'media fact,' and soon after, a 'historical fact' immortalized in Johannes Sleidanus' highly readable *De statu religionis et reipublicae Carolo Quinto Caesare* (1555).⁷⁸ In the city's official reply to the imperial mandate in 1550, and then in the *Magdeburg Confession*, issued in April of that year by nine Lutheran pastors, the Hessian and Saxon theories concerning the right of resistance were combined.⁷⁹ The *Confessio* stipulated that any 'higher' authority infringing on natural law or intending to destroy evangelical religion could be legitimately and actively opposed by armed resistance of the 'lower magistrates.'⁸⁰

77 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 202, refers here to Luther's opinion, often returning to his *Tischreden* from the 1530s, such as that the emperor is a private man to whom political power was given to defend the state.

78 I use the German edition here: Johannes Sleidanus, *Chronica...*, from 1584.

79 Cf. a more detailed discussion in: R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580,' 201 ff.; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 207 ff., esp. 219.

80 In response to the imperial mandate, the city's representatives justified their right of resistance as follows: 'Nun ist aber durch die Keiserliche Recht versehen das die underste Oberkeit das ziel ihres ampts ubertretenen unnd etwas so wider Gott ist gebieten würde man ihr nicht allein nicht gehorsam sein sonder wo sie auch gewalt

The religious peace concluded in Augsburg in 1555 and the principle of *cuius regio eius religio*, resolved – at least in theory – the problem of *ius resisti* in the Holy Roman Empire for the next half century. The heroic resistance of Magdeburg nevertheless became an iconic moment in the Protestant political tradition and influenced the generations of Evangelicals who followed, both within and beyond the borders of the Holy Roman Empire, thanks to, among other things, Sleidanus' historical account of these events.⁸¹ The book served as an overt tool for propaganda, heroizing people and mythologizing events. Soon, the theory of the right of resistance developed by Lutheran legal minds and theologians was soon adopted and modified by another Protestant group – the Calvinists.

The Reformation: from Obedience to the Right of Resistance – the Calvinists

The second great 'father of the Reformation,' Jean Calvin (1509–1564), despite the fact that he was more inclined towards elective forms of government, rather than hereditary monarchies, also emphasized the divine origin of power, and demanded obedience from the subjects to their secular rulers as God's governors on earth. In the same spirit as Luther, he made a distinction between true Christian spiritual freedom and the pursuit of purely external freedom, which he attributed to the actions of 'mad and barbaric people,' most likely a reference to the Anabaptist uprising in Münster in 1534.⁸² Criticizing the majority of princes as villains and looters, he categorically denied Christian subjects the right of resistance, even against tyrants. Calvin's arguments, like those of Luther, had Augustinian overtones: a tyrant can be an instrument – a whip – in the

anlegen würde das man ihr widerstand thun möge. [...] Hernach liessen die Prediger in dem April ein büchlein außgehen in welchem sie die bekentnuß ihrer lehr erzelten und beweisten *das ein undere Oberkeit wider die höher macht hab sich zubeschirmen wo sie jemand will zwingen von der warheit zuweichen* [emphasis mine – I.K.]; Johannes Sleidanus, *Chronica...*, 624 ff.

81 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580,' 203; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 209 ff.

82 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 50 ff.; F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 187; S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien. Historische Fallstudien zur Präsenz monarchomachischer Denkstrukturen im Mitteleuropa der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/M. 2001, 25–39.

hand of God and His punishment for human sins.⁸³ Subjects should therefore obey even tyrannical authorities, while in the case of a tyrant's violation of God's law, the only thing that can be done is to refuse to obey and humbly bear the consequences. Thus, Calvin categorically denied private individuals any right to active resistance, leaving the fate of tyrants in the hands of Providence. He encouraged his fellow believers to follow a path filled with suffering and self-denial, rather than the dangerous path of rebellion, which could lead to chaos and anarchy. This cautious attitude placed him, like Luther, in the position of a 'rebellious legalist.' Initially, this was part of the Calvinist strategy to gain the support of secular rulers, in particular, the Kings of France, for the religious reforms.⁸⁴

However, Calvin's works contain references that may support for more radical interpretations. The references were included in his biblical commentaries from the 1550s and successive versions of his famous *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (1536–1559). Calvin stressed here similarities between the task of the collegium of Spartan ephors, who were to control royal power in the state and that of the assemblies of estates, including their role in opposing a cruel king's rule.⁸⁵ This so-called *ephoral argument* started to develop in the 1530s and was aimed at minimizing the dangers arising from uncontrolled rebellion. By granting the right of resistance only to estate representatives, it institutionalized possible active resistance by subjects to authority recognized by them as tyrannical. Thus, Calvin ruled out the legality of tyrannicide or spontaneous rebellion, whether initiated by individuals or particular social groups. Overall, Calvinist systematic doctrine of resistance, which was fully developed by Calvin's followers only in the latter half of the sixteenth century, seems to have drawn more from later

83 See the comparison of the concept of tyrannical rule and the attitudes of subjects towards it in: G. Lewy, 'Zu theologischen Lehren über Tyrannei,' *Der Staat* 2, 1963, 200 ff.

84 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 55; F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 186 ff.; S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 29 ff. 33, 36 ff.; C. Strohm, 'Das Verhältnis von theologischen, politischphilosophischen und juristischen Argumentationen in Calvinistischen Abhandlungen zum Widerstandsrecht,' in: *Wissen, Gewissen und Wissenschaft im Widerstandsrecht (16.–18 Jh.)*. *Sapere, cocienza e scienza nel diritto di resistenza (XVI–XVIII sec.)*, ed. A. De Benedictis, K. H. Lingens, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 141–174, here 147.

85 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 58; F. Oakley, 'Christian Obedience and Authority, 1520–1550,' 186.

Lutheran theories and the Magdeburg tradition of resistance than only from the concepts of the ‘father of the Geneva Reform’ himself.⁸⁶

The spark was ignited by the bloody events in France in the night of 23–24 August 1572, known as the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, in which some 10,000–13,000 Huguenots were killed throughout the country.⁸⁷ These events gave rise both in France and abroad to a flood of popular propaganda literature, both hostile and apologetic, towards the forces behind the massacre: Catholics, the royal family and the House of Guise. This wave of propaganda should be regarded as another chapter of the early ‘media revolution.’⁸⁸ The St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre also gave impetus to the development in the 1570s of the Huguenot’s systematic theory of the right of active resistance. It originated in Geneva, which had welcomed Calvinist exiles, including refugees from France. The two most important early treaties justifying the necessity of the right of resistance were drafted here. More historical than political was the first, *Francogallia*, written by François Hotman in part before the events of August 1572 (1st ed. 1573).⁸⁹ The

86 On the political concepts and references related to Calvin’s right of active resistance, see esp. S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 35 ff. Cf. also R.M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580,’ 204 ff.; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 212–216, 219 ff., 232 ff., who indicates the evolution in Calvin’s thought towards support for the right of resistance in the late 1550s.

87 On the St Bartholomew’s Day massacre as a turning point in the development of political theories, see D.R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology. Consciousness and Society in the French Reformations*, Cambridge 1981, 307; R.M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580,’ 207; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 242 ff., 303 ff.; S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 38; as well as in earlier literature on the subject, see J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 302–309. Allen, Kingdon and Skinner point to the fact that the postulates of the leaders and the majority within the Huguenot party were pro-royal in the early 1560s and accused of abuse mainly the ‘bad’ advisors in the Valois court. This cautious political line only sharpened after 1567, as a result of Catherine de’ Medici’s hostile attitude towards the Huguenots.

88 R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacres 1572–1576*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1988, esp. the chapter titled ‘The Role of the Printing Press,’ 7–27.

89 A detailed analysis of the content of this work in: Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 310 ff.; see also *Ibid.* about the influence of Calvin’s so-called ‘ephoral argument’ on Hotman’s concept. See also R.M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism ...,’ 208 ff.; S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 41–45; C. Strohm, ‘Das Verhältnis,’ 148 ff.

second was a political treatise entitled *Du droits des magistrats* (1st ed. 1574), written by Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva.⁹⁰

Hotman's *Francogallia* spread historical myths taken from French political literature from the 1560s. This included the allegedly elective character of the ancient 'Galician kingdoms' before the Roman conquest, their limited and socially controlled monarchical power, and the equally ancient institution of the 'council,' whose prerogatives were purportedly valid in whole Gaul. Even after the conquest of the Franks, kings were said to have been elected and, if necessary, dethroned by the council. Other Calvinist authors, such as Beza, carefully incorporated such a mythologized vision of the 'ancient' Gallic and Frankish system in their writings. This myth of an elective monarchy led them to a logical conclusion: the permissibility in exceptional situations of deposing the ruler. This notion quickly became popular in various circles of French society. It also found application outside the Huguenot circle when, in the early 1590s, the leaders of the Catholic League wanted to implement plans to 'return' to a system of elective monarchy in France.⁹¹

Hotman's and Beza's treatises, rooted in the radical current of the tradition of limited monarchy, were not merely theoretical or academic writings that were narrow in scope. They played a particularly important role in the atmosphere of trauma after the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, which hardened opposition feelings among the Huguenots, who were convinced of the necessity of waging war with the House of Valois and the Catholic party. Along with the Hotman's newly published *Francogallia*, the manuscript of Beza's work was circulating as early as 1573 at assemblies of estates in the southern and western provinces of France. Moreover, *Du droits des magistrats*, whose author was forced to conceal his real name, was published in many English and Latin editions. The book had universal overtones, and in the era of religious wars it could also be used by supporters of other confessions.⁹²

90 See R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 209 ff.; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 304 ff.; C. Strohm, 'Das Verhältnis,' 150 ff.; as well as in older literature on the subject synthesizing the discussion in: J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 308 ff.

91 Cf. J.R. Major, *Representative Government in Early Modern France*, 182–186, which in this context also resembles references in medieval concepts of an elective monarchy to the content of the Old Testament.

92 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism ...,' 209, 211. Cf. also the discussion of Beza's views and the indication of inspirations from the Lutheran Magdeburg tradition and medieval concepts of sovereignty in S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 47–53..

Produced in the same vein as the works of Hotman and Beza, the popular treatise *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* was written and published under the pseudonym Stephanus Junius Brutus (1st edition 1579),⁹³ alluding to the famous defender of the Roman Republic and assassin of Caesar. It is possible that two authors were hiding behind this name: Hubert Languet, who for many years worked as a diplomat in the service of the Electorate of Saxony, and Philippe Duplessis Mornay, one of the leaders of the Huguenot party.⁹⁴ The work itself was probably planned in 1575, but the first Latin edition appeared in Basel in 1579, and the French translation was published two years later. *Vindiciae* was thus produced amidst a changing political situation in France, during the birth of the Catholic League and the early years of the reign of Henry III de Valois. At the same time, an agreement was negotiated, with the help of the king's brother, Francis Duke of Anjou, between the Huguenot Party and the moderate Catholic fraction, known as the *Politiques*. Despite these attempts, the civil war was resumed in the next years. The Huguenots also began to collaborate with the Calvinists in the Netherlands, who had revolted against Spanish rule, and with their own fellow believers in other countries. Overall, *Vindiciae* gained popularity outside France thanks to 11 successive Latin editions. A partial English edition was published in 1588.⁹⁵ Due to the international resonance of *Vindiciae* and the writings of Beza, it is worth comparing the concepts of the right of resistance contained therein.

The authors of both works based their concepts on a traditional distinction, taken from the fourteenth-century writings of Bartolus de Saxoferrato, between

93 *Stephanus Junius Brutus, the Celt, Vindiciae contra tyrannos: or, concerning the legitimate power of a prince over the people, and of the people over a prince*, ed. G. Garnett, Cambridge 1994 [hereinafter referred to as *Vindiciae*].

94 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 212; S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 55; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 315 ff., accept the authorship of Mornay. Cf. also a detailed analysis of the problem of this works' authorship in: *Vindiciae*, 'Editor's Introduction,' LXXVII ff.

95 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 212. J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 331 ff., emphasizes the greater influence of *Vindiciae* on political thought in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth century, and more on England than France, Cf. also *ibid.*, 313 about the famous *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire* by Etienne La Boétie, most probably written before 1550, which had a great influence on Montaigne. La Boétie stated that tyranny was a very common phenomenon, in Europe at that time. Cf. also a different interpretation of La Boétie work, Cf. M. Schmockel, 'Gewissenfreiheit und Widerstandsrecht bei Charon und Montaigne,' in: *Gewissenfreiheit und Widerstandsrecht bei Charon und Montaigne*, in: *Wissen, Gewissen und Wissenschaft im Widerstandsrecht...*, 128.

two basic forms of tyranny: *tyrannia ex defectu tituli*, caused by usurpation, and *tyrannia ex parte exercitii*, i.e. tyranny in the way a ruler severely abuses his political power.⁹⁶ In the case of the first type of tyrannical power, active resistance by subjects was permitted by all available means, including the murder of the tyrant,⁹⁷ in accordance with Thomist concepts: each individual subject is entitled to actively oppose the usurper. In turn, more complicated was the right of resistance of subjects under the rule of *tyrannus ex parte exercitii*.

Beza attempted to solve this problem by basing the right of resistance on the social group one represented, dividing people into three categories. The first included individual subjects, while the second and the third were two types of 'lower authorities.' One of these was made up of dukes, marquis, counts, deputy counts, barons and castellans, and elected officials in cities, while the other represented advisory authorities, i.e. assemblies of estates. According to Beza's system, when the laws established by a lawful ruler were in conflict with God's orders, ordinary subjects were to pray and do penance, and, only in extreme matters of conscience, resist passively by refusing to obey the tyrant, risking martyrdom if necessary. This way of thinking did not go beyond the principle of passive resistance expressed by Luther and Calvin. Granting 'lower authorities' the right of active resistance, however, was a revolutionary proposition. According to Beza, when taking an oath of allegiance to the king, officials also entered into a form of contract with him. The monarch's violation of this contract justified the denial of obedience to him in the name of loyalty to the Crown, and thus legitimized active resistance. It also imposed on officials the obligation to convene representatives of the estates. For the second category of 'lower authorities,' i.e. assemblies of estates, Beza reserved the right to actively resist, and even depose, a ruler who severely violated the law. He supported his arguments with numerous examples taken from the Old Testament and the history of ancient Greece, as well as more recent ones from England, France, Poland, Spain, the Holy Roman Empire and other countries. In line with the logic of Calvin's 'ephoral argument,' Beza argued that in most cases 'lower authorities' that had an advisory nature, i.e.

96 On the typology of tyranny in Bartolus de Saxoferrato see above, Part I, Chapter I. See also numerous references to Bartolus' concept in *Vindiciae*, incl. 38 ff., 47 ff., 59 ff., 81 ff., passim. Cf. also in relation to the work of Beza in: S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 51.

97 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 210, 213.

assemblies of estates, played an important role in supporting rulers' rights to the throne and therefore they also the right to resist or depose them.⁹⁸

The core argument in *Vindiciae* was based on the concept of political power as an agreement based on reciprocity. Here two types of contracts were distinguished: those between God and men and those between a ruler and his subjects. If the ruler violates God's law, he loses God's protection, and if he breaks the promises made to his subjects, he risks disobeying them. After all, the power of the monarch, as the fictitious Brutus stated, is based on a universal and conditional consensus among the subjects, which can be withdrawn by them.⁹⁹

As in the case of Beza, in *Vindiciae* private individuals cannot actively resist *tyrannus ex parte exercitii*. Unlike in *Du droit des magistrats*, however, little attention is paid here to the role of assemblies of estates. The anonymous author mainly emphasizes the duty to resist in two types of officials: provincial and local officials (governors, mayors); and Crown officials (peers, constables, marshals). He compared their rights to the duties of the guardians of minors under Roman civil law. Like guardians in ancient Rome, the officials of that time could legally remove a highest guardian, i.e. the king, if he violated the basic rights (e.g. property rights) of his subjects and of the kingdom. Thus, the right of resistance was granted in *Vindiciae* not only in cases when a ruler violates God's laws but also when a tyrant oppresses his subjects. The right to intervene on their behalf – in accordance with the traditions of political Thomism – is also granted to foreign princes.¹⁰⁰

A new element visible in *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* is the separation of some considerations from purely religious issues, and the more frequent exploration of the theoretical legal concept of active resistance. Hence, *Vindiciae*, deeply rooted in a radical tradition of limited monarchy, acquired a more universal

98 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 210 ff.; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 324, 330, 333; D.R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology...*, 311 ff.

99 *Vindiciae, The Third Question*, esp. 111, 138, 152, 158. See also R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 213; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 325; S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 55 ff.; C. Strohm, 'Das Verhältnis', 1152 ff.; J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 318 ff.

100 *Vindiciae*, esp. *The Third Question*. See also R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 214; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 331, 333, 335. On the differentiation of the right of resistance against the tyrant *ex defectu tituli* and the tyrant *ex parte exercitii* in St Thomas Aquinas, see H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht. Studien zur deutschen politischen Theorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt–Neuwied 1974, 67 ff.

significance, moving beyond the paradigm of tyranny as religious alienation. It thus provided arguments for legal resisting, whether in the form of revolt or foreign intervention, political abuses defined as tyranny. Like the work of Theodore Beza, the treatise gained popularity outside France as well, exerting influence, for example, on the revolts in the provinces of the Netherlands and contributing to their Act of Abjuration, i.e. declaration of independence from allegiance to Philip II in 1581.¹⁰¹ *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* took a place alongside Hotman's *Francogallia* and Beza's *Du droit des magistrats* in the canon of early modern political literature, leading William Barcklay, a Scottish royalist and Catholic living in France, to label the authors presenting similar views on the right of resistance in 1600 as 'Monarchomachs,' i.e., 'those who fight against monarchs.'¹⁰² As the political situation in France changed in the late 1580s and early 1590s, many of the Monarchomachs' arguments found their way into the anti-Huguenot propaganda of the Catholic League. In this way, the Monarchomachs' ideas not only moved beyond the borders of France but also crossed the lines of confessional division.¹⁰³

As a whole, the doctrine of resistance espoused by the French Calvinists was not very original compared to theories advanced during the Middle Ages (e.g. Mangold von Lautenbach, the Thomists, Marsilius of Padua, fifteenth-century arguments on the legality of tyrannicide).¹⁰⁴ However, because the printing press made possible the wide dissemination of these ideas, their influence was immeasurably greater than that of ideas that arose before the spread of printed books. The concepts of the Monarchomachs acquired greater relevance in France during the turbulent 1570s and in the years that followed. Their writings included both treatises on political theory and works that belonged to the period's vast body of propaganda literature, shaping the views of the public, both in France and abroad. The literature of the Monarchomachs therefore operated on two levels,

101 Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 337 ff. Cf. also the discussion of the influence of *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* on Dutch political literature in the late 1570s and early 1580s in: M. van Gelderen, *The Political Thought...*, 146–164, esp. 154, 159 ff.

102 R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 235.

103 D.R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology...*, 329, 313 ff., indicates the adoption of 'revolutionary' Huguenot ideology, first by radical French Catholics in the 1580s, then in the seventeenth century by English 'revolutionaries,' and lastly in the eighteenth century by the American 'revolutionaries.' See R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 219 ff.

104 S. Bildheim, *Calvinistische Staatstheorien...*, 38 ff.; J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 302 ff.

i.e. as a body of systematic political and philosophical reflections and as individual works of 'mass' (in its sixteenth-century sense) propaganda literature, produced both in print and manuscript form. This marked the birth of a phenomenon that was much broader than the armchair theoretical reflections of a group of scholars. *In fact, it can be regarded as the first modern ideology of revolution and active resistance in Western Europe.*¹⁰⁵

However, despite their radical views, the Monarchomachs' writings also give expression to fears of uncontrolled rebellion, which could lead to a bloody civil war and, consequently, to anarchy. In line with the spirit of the Lutheran interpretation of the right of resistance and Calvin's so-called 'ephoral argument,' the authors of *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* and *Du droit* display a tendency to institutionalize active resistance against state authority.¹⁰⁶ The concepts contained in both of these Huguenot texts grew out of the Lutheran paradigm of tyranny as religious alienation. However, as in the case of *Vindiciae*, they could also distance themselves from it, referring as well to political excesses in secular affairs. Nevertheless, they were still a long way from the idea of sanctioning rebellion against state authority as a manifestation of the people's sovereignty. The latter idea would become widespread and more relevant only two centuries later.

105 D.R. Kelley, *The Beginning of Ideology...*, 307 ff., 337 ff. See also remarks by R.E. Giesey on the Monarchomachs' intellectual roots and the inspiration for doctrines born in France before 1789; his, 'From Monarchomachs to Dynastic Officialdom,' in: *State and Society in Europe from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. J. Pelenski, Warsaw 1985, 185–200, here esp. 185–191.

106 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 323 ff.

Chapter II. The Birth of Anti-Machiavellism: Innocent Gentillet – Tyranny as Ethnic Alienation

*Machiavelli survived, then, because he was turned into a
Machiavellian.¹*

The Phantom of Anti-Machiavellism

Anti-Machiavellism, one of the most important currents in early modern European political literature, was born around the mid-sixteenth century in opposition to the ideas professed by Niccolò Machiavelli. Anti-Machiavellism also inspired various themes in early modern literary fiction. In both cases, a wide range of polemical and critical motifs related to attitudes commonly described as ‘Machiavellian’ arose during the latter half of the sixteenth century. This clearly pejorative descriptor derived from the Florentine author’s surname – from which the term ‘Machiavellism’ as a synonym for political amorality was coined – entered the language of propaganda. Throughout Western Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, especially in France and England, it became one of the most popular catchphrases for denouncing the abuses of power commonly associated with tyranny.²

The opposition ‘Machiavellism v. anti-Machiavellism’ poses a similar problem as the antinomy ‘Semitism v. anti-Semitism,’ commonly voiced in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In both cases, only the antonyms express clear, concrete and measurable phenomena. To put it somewhat paradoxically: anti-Machiavellism, like anti-Semitism, existed in reality, while Machiavellism and Semitism were more ephemeral concepts, primarily products of the restless imagination of anti-Machiavellians and anti-Semites who were looking for a scapegoat to unload their frustrations. This was the case with Machiavellism up until the mid-nineteenth century, an era of apology of the Florentine’s thinker’s ideas, helping to free his works of the odium that had burdened them for three centuries. Machiavelli’s apologists showed the differences between the content

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- 1 E.M. Beame, ‘The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli. The Sixteenth-century French Adaptation,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43, 1982, no. 1, 33.
 - 2 F. Gilbert, ‘Machiavellism,’ in: *History. Choice and Commitment*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1977, 155–176, 158.

of his own writings and the anti-Machiavellian propaganda that gave rise to the term ‘Machiavellism.’

Of course, there were also attempts in previous centuries to defend Machiavelli’s political philosophy. The last chapters of his biographies written by modern historians tend to include one dedicated to the reception of his doctrine; this would be followed by a long list of both apologists who offered their own interpretations of Machiavelli’s writings – some casual and superficial, others more well thought out and profound – and anti-Machiavellians, who were more numerous than his supporters. Still, focusing on the statements made by his apologists and critics – very often cited out of context – has led to distortions and misrepresentations of the intentions of both Machiavelli’s sympathizers and opponents. Attention has been drawn in many cross-disciplinary studies to the presence of Machiavellian themes in works of political philosophy and literary fiction produced by authors who wrote during the epochs preceding *The Prince* or decades and centuries after its publication. Hence, there is sometimes talk of ‘courtly Machiavellism’ (e.g. Castiglione, Montaigne, La Rochefoucauld)³ and the literary motif of the ‘Machiavellian man.’⁴ The case is further complicated by the fact that one of the potential, and at the same time, earliest lines of defence of the author of *Il Principe* was an argument put forward by one of the first publishers of this work, whose aims seem to have been not so much to produce an *apologia* as simply to expose the evils of tyranny.⁵ Along these lines of argument, Machiavelli appears as the first anti-Machiavellian.⁶

However, the problem here is not only that anti-Machiavellians outnumber the thinker’s apologists but also that some anti-Machiavellian authors attacked other critics of Machiavelli for their allegedly hidden ‘Machiavellism’ and often

3 H. Münkler, ‘Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre,’ in: *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, ed. I. Fetscher, H. Münkler, vol. 3, München–Zürich 1985, 23–72, here 43 ff.

4 F. Gilbert, ‘Machiavellism,’ 161 ff., uses this expression to describe protagonists from certain plays by Shakespeare (Richard III) and G.E. Lessing (Marinelli), the drama *Emilia Galotti* and H. Fielding’s novel *Tom Jones* (Master Blifil).

5 Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ed. A.L. Burd, Oxford 1891 [hereinafter *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd)], publisher’s introduction, 35 ff., 43 ff. Cf. also above, Part One, Chapter I.

6 On this subject, cf. F. Gilbert ‘Machiavellism,’ 166; W. Kersting, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, München 1988, 161, H. Münkler, ‘Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre,’ 58; M. Stolleis, ‘Löwe und Fuchs. Eine politische Maxime im Frühabsolutismus,’ in: *Staat und Staatsräson in der Frühen Neuzeit. Studien zur Geschichte des öffentlichen Rechts*, Frankfurt/M. 1990, 32 ff.

accused them of being part of some broader ‘conspiracy.’ Thus, in the propaganda of the early modern period, attacks against Jesuits were sometimes combined with charges of Machiavellism.⁷ The fact that contemporary historians of ideas have also had difficulty definitively labelling certain early modern authors as ‘anti-Machiavellians’ (i.e. those whose views were less radical or less overt) makes this problem all the more pointed. It is therefore hard to disagree with Friedrich Meinecke, who distinguished two basic methods for attacking Niccolò Machiavelli’s concepts: expressing open hostility to his ideas and seemingly opposing them, while simultaneously using them for one’s own purposes.⁸

In the sixteenth century, we can distinguish five basic currents of anti-Machiavellism, i.e. polemical and critical views relating either directly to the original concepts of the author of *Il Principe* and *Discorsi* or to discourses concerning his ideas that were in circulation in Europe, many of which were based on simplified, if not distorted, interpretations of Machiavelli’s writings.⁹

1. *Anti-Machiavellism of the early counter-Reformation* (the 1530s to 1550s). Among its main representatives, there were three authors who were high-ranking figures in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church just prior to and during the reforms initiated by the Council of Trent: the English Cardinal Reginald Pole, the Portuguese Bishop Jeromin Osario and the Italian humanist and clergyman Ambrogio Caterino Politi. Both Pole and Osario deepened their knowledge of Machiavelli’s views during longer stays in Italy. The main thrust of their criticism, besides their attacks on *The Prince*’s maxim about the necessity of pretence and falsehood in politics, was the assumption of the need to subordinate religion to the interests of the state and the thesis expressed in *Discourses on Livy* about the superiority of the pagan religion of the Romans over Christianity, and the influence of the latter on the fall of the Roman Empire. This led the authors of the first anti-Machiavellian treatises to

7 F. Gilbert, ‘Machiavellism,’ 164, provides an example of Presbyterians accused of a ‘Jesuitical and Machiavellian policies’ by their religious opponents in England in the first half of the seventeenth century.

8 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, München 1960, 58.

9 Cf. an analysis in: R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince. Antimachiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, Chapel Hill–London 1990, 14 ff.; H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates. Die Begründung der Staatsraison in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 118–122.

accuse him of atheism and to stigmatize his writings as the work of Satan.¹⁰ It was no coincidence that publication of anti-Machiavellian treatises by Osario and Politi¹¹ was preceded by the Florentine thinker's works being placed on the initial version of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* issued by Pope Paul IV in 1559, and a short time later on the revised Tridentine Index (1564). Continuers of this early line of anti-Machiavellian attack, mainly due to his views on the role of religion as an instrument of power and the need for religious affairs to be subordinate to the overriding interests of the state, can also be found later during the rise of the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century, as well as in following centuries, among both Catholic and Protestant writers. It should be noted, however, that Machiavelli's early generally positive reception among Protestant authors in the mid-sixteenth century was largely due to his sharp criticism of the papacy.¹²

2. *Systematic anti-Machiavellism.* This concerns criticism of Machiavelli's views less from a religious perspective and more from that of political Aristotelianism – charges that the Florentine's most famous work not only glorified tyranny but also served as a textbook for tyrants. This trend primarily involved writings with references in their titles to an ominous image of Machiavelli himself. Such works sought to systematically discredit Machiavelli's doctrine and promote a notion of power and the political order based on the traditional values of Aristotelianism and the traditional antinomy 'monarchy–tyranny.' Systematic anti-Machiavellism was born in French Protestant circles in the mid-1570s with the publication of Innocent Gentillet's *Discours contre Machiavel* (1576), in which the author expressed his criticism of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the confrontational anti-Huguenot policies of the Valois dynasty and the Catholic League, headed by the Henry Duke of Guise. In France, this trend generally included early-modern philosophical and political propaganda literature written from the 1570s to the 1590s by authors on both the Protestant and Catholic sides, who – sometimes as digressions from their main topic of interest – polemicized with

10 D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' in: his, *Schriften*, Frankfurt/M. 1978, here vol. II. 1, 231 ff., vol. II. 2, 135 ff., and extensive excerpts from Pole's *Apologia*, *ibid.*, Anhang II, 333–348.

11 R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 15 ff.

12 D.R. Kelley, 'Murdr'ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' *Political Science Quarterly* 85, 1970, no. 4, 545–559, here 547 ff., draws attention to the fact that Machiavelli, mainly thanks to *Florentine Histories* and his critical opinions on the papacy, was received favourably by Protestant historians.

Machiavelli's 'tyrannical' concepts. Significantly, among these authors we find both supporters of Monarchomachism, limited monarchy, and the right of resistance, as well as those accused by them of being intellectually affiliated with 'Machiavel,' such as Jean Bodin.¹³

3. *Relative anti-Machiavellism.* The authors from this trend focused on the notion of *raison d'état*.¹⁴ The concept of *ragioni di stato* was not fully articulated in political philosophy in Italy until the late sixteenth century in Giovanni Botero's treatise *Della Ragioni di Stato* (1589).¹⁵ The concept spread rapidly throughout Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries with the emergence in foreign policy of the notion of 'European equilibrium.' The latter found expression in a pragmatic approach to diplomacy, court and religious life as strategies for governing in accordance with specific 'professional' norms (not always in line with generally accepted ethical norms, as well as the pursuit of military expansion as a major policy objective of a centralized absolutist state).¹⁶ Such a concept of *raison d'état* appeared both in the writings of authors accused of adhering to Machiavellian principles and among those who openly declared their hostility towards them.¹⁷ The term *raison d'état*,

13 Cf. below Chapter 2.3.

14 Cf. a summarizing overview of views expressed by authors from this movement in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in: H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 50–59. Münkler also points to the links between some of these authors and early modern neo-Tacitism, emphasizing two facts: 1) heated discussion on the works of Tacitus in the latter half of the sixteenth century); 2) the fact that Tacitus was seen by some as a critic of tyranny, and by others as a supporter, *ibid.*, 59, ff. Cf. also more elaborate reflections in his, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 142 ff., 280–289.

15 Cf. a description of Botero's views in: H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 50 ff.; his, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 125 ff.; R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 45–71; and a classic approach in: F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 54 ff.

16 H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 209–216.

17 H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 52, claims that in the early seventeenth century, the concept of *raison d'état* dominated in Italian political literature. He lists the following characteristics of such literature: condemnation of impiety or atheism of the author of *The Prince* (and representatives of the Counter-Reformation); a demand for the religious unity of the state; rejection of defining *raison d'état* as a situation in which the law is broken because it is necessary, and the assumption that such a situation occurs solely in states with a bad (according to Aristotle's typology) political system (tyranny, oligarchy, ochlocracy).

coined by political theorists, became popular even in the vernacular language at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁸ However, the perception of Machiavelli as the forefather of the 'raison d'état' concept seems inaccurate.¹⁹ Apologetic treatises written by writers in this current tended to combine

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- 18 In the foreword to his work *Dissertatio de ratione status* (1625), Ludovico Zuccoli claimed that even barbers and craftsmen in taverns eagerly used the term; H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 50.
- 19 This is because nowhere in *The Prince* does Machiavelli formulate any maxims with a meaning that would be similar to the concept of *raison d'état*. Only in *Discourses on Livy* (I, 9), when he describes how Romulus killed Remus, does he justify it as necessary for the common good (see N. Rubinstein, 'Italian Political Thought,' in: *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, ed. J.H. Burns, M. Goldie, Cambridge 1991, 56). In this passage, he formulates a thought that could be associated with a definition of *raison d'état*. The fact that Machiavelli reasoned mainly in terms of *l'interet d'état* was observed by some commentators back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when this term came into more common use. Cf. a discussion on this line of interpretation in: *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), publisher's introduction, 64 ff.; and M. Stolleis, 'Arcana Imperii und Ratio Status. Bemerkungen zur politischen Theorie des frühen 17. Jahrhunderts,' in: *Staat und Staatsräson in der Frühen Neuzeit...*, 37 ff. In contemporary historiography, the idea that Machiavelli created the concept of *raison d'état* was inspired by Friedrich Meinecke after the First World War. He then developed this idea during the interwar period; cf. F. Meinecke, 'Der Fürst und kleinere Schriften, Niccolò Machiavelli,' in: *Brandenburg. Preußen. Deutschland. Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte und Politik*, ed. E. Kessel, Stuttgart 1979, 118; his, *Idee der Staatsräson...*, 34 ff., esp. 48 ff. He claims that when *The Prince* is interpreted from the perspective of *Discourses on Livy*, the former no longer gives the impression that the 'new prince' is acting for purely selfish reasons, just to stay in power. When we take into account that the concept of a 'dictator' (*Zwingsherr*) who saves the nation suffering from stagnation and resurrects the fallen state, as Machiavelli presents in *Discourses on Livy*, we see that the overriding goal of the 'new prince' is the interest of the state, and that to achieve this goal, it is 'necessary' to use methods which are generally considered immoral. This is why Meinecke calls Machiavelli 'the first person to discover the real nature of *raison d'état*' ('*dieser erste Entdecker des Wesens der Staatsräson*'), at the same time emphasizing that his vision was moderate because it did not advocate the primacy of *raison d'état* over positive laws, which was characteristic of theories of seventeenth-century absolutism; see his, *Idee der Staatsräson...*, 49, 51. Meinecke's vision of Machiavelli as the precursor of the idea of *raison d'état* became a standard feature of the interpretation of his political thought in the historiography of the last century. On this subject, cf. M. Stolleis, 'Die Idee der Staatsräson und die neuere Forschung,' in: *Staat und Staatsräson in der Frühen Neuzeit...*, 134–166. In the German historiography, Meinecke's thesis was later modified by H. Münkler, *Machiavelli. Die Begründung des politischen Denkens der Neuzeit aus der Krise der Republik Florenz*, Frankfurt/M. 1982,

a balanced critique of Machiavelli's ideas with an emphasis on the importance of ethical norms in politics. These authors made certain 'Machiavellian' assumptions, such the use of falsehood in politics being justifiable or the need

281 ff.; his, *Im Namen des Staates...*, 14 ff. Münkler put forward the thesis that the *Statsräson* theory emerged in a specific historical context, during the structural transformation of 'Personenverbandstaat zum institutionellen Flächenstaat,' as an indispensable ideological element of these transformations. Some of Meinecke's critics claim that the discourse on *raison d'état* had its beginnings in the Middle Ages. F. Gilbert, 'Machiavellism,' 156 ff., 169 ff., highlights the similarity between the idea of *ragione di stato* and the medieval terms *ratio status* and *publicae utilitatis*, which arose from the *necessitas legem non habet* principle. Nevertheless, he admits that the modern concept of *raison d'état* more strongly accentuates the identification of the ruler's own interests with his subjects' interests. Cf. also S. Anglo, *Machiavelli...*, 192 ff., 206 ff., 212 ff. One of the most ardent opponents of Meinecke's concept was the British historian J.H. Hexter, cf. his, 'Il Principe' and 'lo stato,'" *Studies in the Renaissance* 4, 1957, esp. 117 ff.; his, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation. More, Machiavelli, and Seyssel*, New York 1973, 186 ff. In the late 1950s, based on a detailed analysis of connotations with the word 'state' (*lo stato*) and the contexts in which this word appears in *The Prince*, Hexter has shown that Machiavelli – even though he used this term in a sense unknown during the Middle Ages (*status* as a specific place in the social hierarchy) – in most cases understood *stato* not as an independent political being, but rather as a tool in the prince's hands, which should be used primarily to hold power, rather than for some purpose higher than the selfish interests of the ruler (such as the interests of the state or its citizens). It is impossible to resolve the dispute between Meinecke and Hexter, two outstanding historians of ideas, on this aspect of Machiavelli's concept. They both seem correct as far as they interpret *The Prince* from the perspective of their own times. Hexter's interpretation seems to be less ahistorical than that of Meinecke because it does not present Machiavelli as the author of a term which he never mentioned in his works. Nevertheless, when it comes to the final conclusion (the state as a tool for exploitation), Hexter notes that there are some similarities between how Machiavelli and Karl Marx perceived the state, with the stipulation that it was not a social class, but the ruler himself, who played the role of the exploiter; see J.H. Hexter, 'Il Principe' and 'lo stato', 134 ff. This reference smacks of Marxism, which was fashionable in some Western intellectual circles after the Second World War. At the same time, however, the reflections of Meinecke, who analysed Machiavelli's concepts in the 1920s, are strongly rooted in the nationalism that was developing at that time. When he made this conclusion, he tried to show the similarity between the words of the author of *Discourses on Livy* (III, 41) and a 'great German statesman' (Hindenburg?) from the First World War: 'Wo es sich handelt um das Heil des Vaterlandes überhaupt, darf kein Erwägen sein, ob etwas gerecht oder ungerecht, mild oder grausam, löblich oder schimpflich ist [...]'; F. Meinecke, *Idee der Staats-räson...*, 52.

to break one's promises in situations of necessity. Similar concepts can be found in the writings of Justus Lipsius, a theorist of classical European absolutism, author of the monumental *Six Books of Politics* (1589), and founder of the early-modern school of Neostoicism – and one of the most popular political philosophers among elite circles in the seventeenth century.²⁰ Some of Lipsius' writings, which relativize the problem of falsehood and deception as a method of political action,²¹ are referred to by historians of ideas (Friedrich Meinecke) – independently of accusations made by Lipsius' contemporaries of his supporting Machiavellian views²² – as representing a 'moderate' or 'moralized' Machiavellism.²³ Similarly, despite Botero's sharp criticism of Machiavelli, his contemporaries likewise accused him of having tendencies towards Machiavellism.²⁴ In contemporary historiography, his views are sometimes characterized as 'anti-Machiavellian Machiavellism'²⁵ or a 'Christianization and blunting of the sharp edge of Machiavelli's teachings.'²⁶

20 On J. Lipsius as the founder of the Neostoic school and its impact on the views of philosophers and rulers in the seventeenth century, see classic works: G. Oestreich, 'Justus Lipsius als Theoretiker des neuzeitlichen Machtstaates,' in: *Geist und Gestalt des frühmodernen Staates*, Berlin 1969, 35–79; his, 'Justus Lipsius in sua re,' in: *ibid.*, 180–200.

21 When it comes to the similarity between some views of Machiavelli and Lipsius, especially important are fragments from Book IV of his *Six Books on Politics*, in which the author presents the concept of *prudentia mixta*, assuming that, in the case of necessity (*ultima necessitate*), it is permissible for a ruler to resort to fraud. At the same time, Lipsius distinguishes between three types of fraud: *fraus levis*, *media* and *magna*, with only the last one being unacceptable. He claims that fraud combined with political wisdom in the right proportions is like water added to wine. Moreover, it seems that Lipsius shares Machiavelli's view that a ruler must behave like both a fox and a lion, but he also complains that Machiavelli did not try to convince the prince to follow the path of virtue. According to Lipsius, pure social engineering and strength are not enough to effectively conduct politics and maintain power. Another thing that is required is moral virtue, whereas political stability accompanies *prudentia civilis*. In his works, Lipsius does not use the term *ratio status*. I used in particular here: H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 64 ff.; his, *In Namen des Staates...*, 174–187; R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 85 ff.; M. Stolleis, *Löwe und Fuchs...*, 31 ff.

22 R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 88.

23 H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 65.

24 R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 46.

25 H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 50 ff....

26 M. Stolleis, *Löwe und Fuchs...*, 30. Cf. also R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 46.

Other historians who treat Giovanni Botero and Justus Lipsius as the founding fathers of the anti-Machiavellian tradition,²⁷ point out similarities in the views of the authors from the ‘moralized’ Machiavellism current and the maxims of the author of *The Prince* himself. They indicate shared pro-absolutist sympathies, antipacifism, and treatment of the art of appearances – as well as, in specific situations, the defence of falsehood, treachery and bribery as acceptable methods of political action. However, important here are also the differences between Machiavelli’s views and Botero’s and Lipsius’ conclusions on the importance of the Christian religion as a factor in consolidating the state and the decisive role of Divine Providence in history.²⁸

4. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, we also observe the birth of a trend that can be termed *literary anti-Machiavellism*. Its representatives, often authors of prominent works of literary fiction, used Niccolò Machiavelli’s name to symbolize amorality and evil in politics. They constructed literary characters who embodied qualities – features commonly attributed to Machiavelli – reflecting often exaggerated, pejorative interpretations of his ideas. Literary anti-Machiavellism was born in Elizabethan England (Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare), though it was certainly influenced by hostile assessments and attacks made by French anti-Machiavellian authors.²⁹ One could argue that literary anti-Machiavellism made the image of a tyrant more familiar and human (and not exclusively political) in the eyes of the wider public.
5. *Casual or colloquial anti-Machiavellism* – accusations of Machiavellism that circulated in popular propaganda literature (often in the form of digressions or interjections in writings dealing with other topics) or used in off-hand attacks and efforts to discredit opponents by labelling them ‘Machiavellians.’ This term was so well-established in the language of propaganda that, by the 1580s, it appeared in scholarly treatises³⁰ and gave rise to a verb form – ‘to

27 Cf. esp. R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 26 ff., 31–37, 41 f, who analyses views six selected authors: Giovanni Botero, Justus Lipsius, Pedro Ribandeira, Adam Contzen, Carlo Scribani and Diego Saavedra Fajardo; and on the accusation of these authors of Machiavellism, cf. also *ibid.*, 240.

28 *Ibid.*, 220–234.

29 On this subject see below, Part Three, Chapter II.

30 F. Gilbert, ‘Machiavellism’, 158, points out that this word appears in France in Nicolas Fromunteau’s *Finances* from 1581, whereas in England it is used by Thomas Nash in a treatise from 1589.

Machiavellize.³¹ Accusations of professing Machiavellian views or being a Machiavellian, which spread throughout France in the 1570s and 1580s, soon began to be heard in England as well, and by the 1580s could also be encountered in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.³² In the late sixteenth century, the term 'politician' likewise began to acquire pejorative connotations in various Western European languages.³³ This was inspired by the name of a French moderate Catholic faction that formed in the 1570s, the *Politiques*, which sought a compromise solution to the religious strife plaguing France, and which was accused in following decades, especially by the radical Catholic side, of having Machiavellian predispositions.³⁴

Characteristic of different variants of anti-Machiavellism was the fact that most of the authors did not read Machiavelli's writings first-hand, but knew them from second- and third-hand contact – through critical references in other writings. Hence their views were products of an anti-Machiavellian phobia rather than a thorough knowledge of the Florentine writer's works.

However, there was also a considerable interest in original Niccolò Machiavelli's writings in ruling circles during the sixteenth century. Francesco Sansovino, one of the 'Machiavellian anti-Machiavellians' in the latter half of the sixteenth century, mentions at one point that Emperor Charles V was said to have enjoyed the works of only three authors: Polybius' *Histories*, Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* and Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* and *The Prince*.³⁵ The latter work had been known in ruling circles in England since the reign of Henry VIII.³⁶ Copies of *Il Principe* can also be found in the mid-sixteenth century in the libraries of King Eric XIV of Sweden³⁷ and King Sigismund II Augustus of Poland.³⁸ We can also

31 Back in the 1560s in France, accusations were made that a new generation of politicians, such as Admiral Coligny, had appeared on the political scene and that they were more *politique* than *devotee*. In the period when anti-Machiavellism intensified, in the 1590s, the *Politiques* were also labelled 'Machiavellians', which must have strengthened this pejorative connotation. It was then that the neologism 'to machiavellize' (*a machiavellizer*) appeared in the French language. Cf. E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...', 33–54, esp. 46 ff., 51 ff.; R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism...', 551.

32 See below, Part Two, Chapter IV.

33 Cf. also examples in: R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 28 ff.

34 F. Gilbert 'Machiavellism', 164.

35 H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre...*, 46; his, *In Namen des Staates...*, 67.

36 See below, Part Three, Chapter II.

37 I. Andersson, *Erik XIV och Machiavelli*, 'Scandia' 4, 1931, 1–29.

38 See below, Part Two, Chapter IV.

see interest in Machiavelli's writings from German princes, though they were not always able to obtain a copy of this forbidden fruit.³⁹ A serious barrier to dissemination of the contents of *The Prince* and other works by Machiavelli was their inclusion in the Index of Forbidden Books (1559 and 1564).⁴⁰ From that moment on, *The Prince*, with very few exceptions, could not be published in Italy, Spain or the Catholic countries of the Holy Roman Empire. Latin translations, the first of which appeared in Swiss Basel in 1560, were published up until the mid-seventeenth century, mainly in the Protestant countries of the Holy Roman Empire. Moreover, Machiavelli's most famous treatise was only published in English in 1640,⁴¹ while a German translation was not produced until the end of the seventeenth century.⁴² *The Prince* did appear, however, in a number of volumes containing collections of texts by multiple authors, e.g., the Latin translation was published alongside refutations of the text and other works written in an Anti-Machiavellian spirit.⁴³ 'Machiavellian' maxims were also more broadly known from second-hand contact, mainly through hostile polemical writings,

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- 39 C. Lippelt, *Hoheitsträger und Wirtschaftsbetrieb. Die herzogliche Amtsverwaltung zur Zeit der Herzöge Heinrich der Jüngere, Julius und Heinrich Julius von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1547–1613)*, part 1 (typescript of the Ph.D thesis written at Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg – Fakultät IV. in 2004). In 1577, Duke Julius of Brunswick-Lüneburg ordered the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli from Johann, Count of Nassau. However, the only works that Count John managed to find for Duke Julius were 'tractlein de Principe' and a polemic against it (most likely Innocent Gentillet's anti-Machiavellian treatise from 1576).
- 40 A more detailed discussion on this issue in: *Il Principe* (A.L. Burd), publisher's introduction, 49 ff.
- 41 On early modern editions of *The Prince*, see the remarks in: R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 24.
- 42 *Nicolai Machiavelli Lebens- und Regierungsmaximen eines Fürsten, benebst dem Leben Castrucii Castracani und Historischer Nachricht von dem Verfahren Caesaris Borgiae oder des Hertzogs Valentino. Aus dem Italiaenischen ins Hochteutsche versetzt, Nebst einer Vorrede und Anmerkungen Herrn Amelot de la Houssaie [...] Wie auch einer Vorrede des Übersetzers. Cölln bey Marteau, 1714, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, call mark M: 507.*
- 43 *Nicolai Machiavelli Florentini Princeps ex Silvestri Telli Fulginatis traductione dilligenter emendatus; Adjecta sunt ejusdem argumenti aliorum quorundam contra Machiavellum scripta, de potestate & officio Principum contra Tyrannos [...]. Lugduni Batavorum, Oficina Hieronimum de Vogel, 1643, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, call mark M: 521.* This volume also contains A. Possevino 'Judicium de Nicolai Machiavelli et Joannis Bodini [...] scriptis,' T. Beza, 'De jure magi-stratuum in subditos et officio subditorum erga magistratus and Vindiciae contra tyrannos.'

which contributed to a deepening of the anti-Machiavellian phobia. Despite – or rather as a result of – the anti-Machiavellian hysteria that broke out after the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, the greatest number of translations of *The Prince* appeared in France – between 1559 and the mid-1660s, French-language versions of the treatise were published as many as 15 times.⁴⁴ It is no coincidence that it was France during the era of religious strife which became the cradle of systematic anti-Machiavellism.

France in the 1570s: Innocent Gentillet – The Paradigm of Tyranny as Foreignness

Before the mid-sixteenth century, there was no significant interest in Niccolò Machiavelli's works in France. The first French translation of *Discourses on Livy* was published in 1544, followed by two independent translations of *The Prince* in 1553. The author of the first translation, Gaspard d'Auvergne, presented in his dedication⁴⁵ an interpretation of the book as a realistic work – 'somewhat immoderate in its language,' that exposes the complicated, hidden norms governing the world of politics and the vices of those in power – and thereby deviating from the idealized portrayals in canonical *specula principis*.⁴⁶ Almost 20 years later, the second translator, Parisian physician Guillaume Cappel, adopted a similarly apologetic line of defence, referring to the 'new prince' as a 'good doctor' who does not hesitate to prescribe a 'strong cure' to the patient.⁴⁷ Early on in France, especially in Protestant circles, a friendly reception of Machiavelli's work generally prevailed, including a positive interpretation of his most famous work.⁴⁸ In his

44 R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 24. A detailed list of manuscripts and print publications of *The Prince* can be found in: A. Gerber, *Die Handschriften, Ausgaben und Übersetzungen seiner Werke im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Torino 1962, sixteenth-century French publications, *ibid.*, 20–42.

45 Gaspard d'Auvergne dedicated his translation to the Duke of Châtellerauld, the guardian of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, who was living in France at that time; see A. Gerber, *Die Handschriften...*, 30 ff.

46 *Ibid.*, 32; D.R. Kelley, 'Murdr'ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' 549; E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...', 36 ff., especially the overview of various examples of the positive reception of Machiavelli's works in France before 1572.

47 A. Gerber, *Die Handschriften...*, 33 ff.; D.R. Kelley, 'Murdr'ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' 549.

48 D.R. Kelley, 'Murdr'ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' 547 ff., reminds readers that in the 1550s, French Protestants were willing to back their ideas with critical views on the Roman Curia expressed by Machiavelli.

early treatise *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionum* (1566), Jean Bodin, who would soon become part of the anti-Machiavellian phobia, cited the name of the Florentine writer as many as twenty times, describing him as ‘the first [...] for about 1200 years after barbarism’ who was able to produce an in-depth work on politics. This assessment, although typical of the early stage of Machiavelli’s reception in France, differed from *The Prince’s* critical interpretation as a ‘text-book for tyrants,’ an opinion expressed at about the same time by certain eminent French intellectuals (e.g. Pierre de Ronsard).⁴⁹

A new era in Machiavellian reception arrived following the slaughter of Huguenots during the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 23–24 August 1572. The traumatic events of the ‘bloody Parisian dawn’ resulted in a flood of propaganda publications, mainly written by Protestants, attacking the policies of the Catholic faction allied with the Valois court. Harshly critical accusations were also directed against those who inspired this event – this included, in addition to Henry I, Duke of Guise, the leader of the Catholic League, Catherine de’ Medici and her two sons: King Charles IX and the Duke of Angoulême and future King of Poland and France known later as Henry III. Alongside the Queen Mother, who as an Italian and a Medici, was blamed for the ‘bloody Parisian dawn.’ Another main target of attacks was Italian courtiers and royal advisors, including their late countryman Machiavelli, who was portrayed as the main theorist of tyranny. In this way, the anti-Machiavellism born in the wake of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre became a dominant element in public discourse in France in the 1570s, creating a toxic political atmosphere of anti-Italianism.

The first treatise dealing systematically with the doctrines expressed by Machiavelli was written in the heated atmosphere of this debate. This was Innocent Gentillet’s, *Discours contre Machiavel*, published anonymously in French in Geneva in 1576, and again (also anonymously) in Latin the following year.⁵⁰ The author (born c. 1535), a French Huguenot with almost thirty years of service at the royal court, was also involved in local and ecclesiastical affairs in his native province, the Dauphiné, in the 1560s as an *avocat au bailliage*. After

49 E.M. Beame, ‘The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...’, 39 ff. A similar evolution in views on Machiavelli could be observed in the 1560s and 1570s in the works of Le Roy, a French political philosopher and translator of Aristotle; cf. D.R. Kelley, ‘Murdr’ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,’ 550, 556.

50 Innocent Gentillet, *Discours contre Machiavel. A New Edition of the Original French Text with Selected Variant Readings, Introduction and Notes*, ed. A. D’Andrea, P.D. Stewart, Firenze 1976 [hereinafter: cited as *Discours contre Machiavel*]; bibliographical description and details on these and other editions *ibid.*, XIX ff., XVI ff.

the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, he fled to Calvinist Geneva with a group of co-religionists.⁵¹ Some historians have pointed out that the tone of *Discours* was similar to that of *Du droit* by Theodor Beza, who was personally involved in publishing its Latin edition under the title *Commentatorium... adversus Nicolaum Machiavellum* (1577), for which he most probably wrote the dedicatory epistle.⁵² Despite these clear links with Geneva and the Huguenot exile community there, Gentillet's treatise differed in content from many of the concepts commonly espoused by most Monarchomachs.

Discours contre Machiavel was formally constructed as a polemic treatise. Gentillet selected 50 maxims from *Discorsi* and *Il Principe*, to which he added his own in three books, covering the topics of 'advice' (3 maxims), religion (10 maxims) and, in the longest but also structurally weakest third part – political issues (37 maxims). The fact that Gentillet's chose to discuss Machiavelli's ideas out of context and failed to address his doctrine as a whole was caused by his rather superficial intellectual approach.⁵³ Some historians have even accused Gentillet of oversimplification and a rather weak knowledge of the Florentine writer's works.⁵⁴

Despite its polemical form, *Discours contre Machiavel* follows in its content the model found in *specula principis*.⁵⁵ One of the author's main aims was to write an *apologia* on the ideal image of the ruler who follows universally acknowledged moral imperatives and respects both divine and human laws. Hence, the main accusation made here against Machiavelli – that he transformed a set of tyrannical vices into the virtues of the 'new prince.' By piecing together 37 of Machiavelli's political theses, Gentillet focuses particularly closely on four associated with qualities traditionally regarded as tyrannical: cruelty, deceit, greed, and instability, subjecting them to criticism typical of the *specula principis*. In doing so, he interprets hostilely and distorts the meaning of Machiavelli's teachings. He claims that the author of *The Prince* advises those in power to break property laws and sow discord among his subjects, and thus, according to popular belief, unambiguously sets them on to the path of tyranny.⁵⁶ Following Bartolus

51 Cf. C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet and the First Antimachiavel*, 'Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance' 27, 1965, 186–225, here 188–191.

52 *Ibid.*, LVI ff.

53 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 63.

54 E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...', 43.

55 Cf. the detailed analysis in: C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 214, 224.

56 *Ibid.*, 209–213; A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 23, 1970, no. 4, 397–411, here 409.

de Saxoferrato's typology, still popular and widely-read in early modern political theories, Gentillet distinguishes two types of tyranny: *l'une en tiltre* and *l'autre en exercise*, focusing on the latter type, which he identifies with the 'new prince,' the positive hero of *Il Principe*.⁵⁷

All in all, Innocent Gentillet presents himself on the pages of *Discours* as a supporter of strong royal power, recognizing not only the sovereignty of God (*puissance absolue*) but also the power of the General Estates and Parliaments. However, he sees the true essence of the French monarchy in the nobility. In his work, he approached more or less directly *Francogallia* by François Hotman, whose historical views and myth of the originally elective French kingship he promoted. Also close to him was the concept of Theodor Beza that rulers were created for the people and not the other way around. However, the views of the author of *Discours contre Machiavel* did not coincide with the doctrine of the Monarchomachs.⁵⁸ Although Gentillet seemed to have been rather reluctant to the idea of the right of resistance, he nevertheless accepted rebellion against a tyrant-usurper, as did most of his contemporaries. Also, in some exceptional situations, under the influence of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, he allowed for the possibility of resistance against a ruler breaking the law.⁵⁹

Unlike most propaganda literature of Huguenot provenance circulating in France following the wave of the events of 1572, *Discours* refers relatively rarely to the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre.⁶⁰ Gentillet's work did not include anti-Catholic overtones, since one of his main demands was a call for religious compromise and tolerance.⁶¹ Gentillet here clearly comes close to the position held by the *Politiques* and the youngest of the royal brothers, Prince Francis d'Alençon, to whom he dedicated his treatise.⁶² For the bloody events of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, he blames not Catholics but the godless practices of Machiavelli's followers and his Italian countrymen. One of the main accusations made in this work concerns the alleged atheism of the Florentine

57 C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 208 ff.

58 Cf. esp. F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 62, 64; C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 220; E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...', 43; A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 405–410, who interprets Gentillet's views in the spirit of absolutism.

59 For details on this subject see: C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 217 ff.

60 *Ibid.*, 214 ff.

61 A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 399.

62 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 60 ff.

thinker and of Italians in general.⁶³ This opinion is a reflection of the overall strongly anti-Italian tone of Huguenot propaganda during this time.⁶⁴ Similar are Gentillet's views denouncing Machiavelli as the master and 'great doctor' (*grand docteur, maistre Docteur*) of French Machiavellians, as well as of Italian courtiers and 'Italianized' French people (*Courtisans Italiens et Italienisez*), for whom his *Il Principe* became a holy book like the Koran for the Turks.⁶⁵

Replacing the Tyrant as Religious Other with the Tyrant as Foreigner in France During the Wars of Religion

In accusations about the pernicious influence of Italian tyranny, but also atheism, prostitution, sodomy, perfidy, usury, and other sins, on the French people, Gentillet drew parallels between the tyranny of Machiavellians (*Machiavelistes*), Italians and Italianized Frenchmen.⁶⁶ His arguments reflect the atmosphere of anti-Italian xenophobia that prevailed in France at the time. This phenomenon of French anti-Italianism grew more pronounced in anti-court propaganda of the early 1560s.⁶⁷ However, it was not until after the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre that Italians living in France, in particular, Catherine de' Medici and her Italian courtiers found themselves being barraged with criticism. As a minority with a privileged status, they were perfectly suited to serve as scapegoats. In the dedication to the Latin translation of *Discourses on Livy* from 1577 (most likely penned by Beza), Catherine was accused of being an instrument of the devil and of spreading Machiavelli's 'poison.'⁶⁸ The ominous 'Machiavel' as an author of a textbook for tyrants and his Italian countrymen (as followers of his philosophy)

63 *Discours contre Machiavel*, 16, 18. Cf. also A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 401; D.R. Kelley, 'Murdr'ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' 554, on Machiavelli being accused of atheism by Gentillet and other authors from this period.

64 Cf. for more detail on this subject: E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...', 41 ff.; C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 215.

65 *Discours contre Machiavel*, 11, 14. Cf. also A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 399, 402.

66 *Discours contre Machiavel*, 14, 16. Cf. also C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 215; A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 401.

67 Cf. a multi-faceted overview of this topic: S. Grzybowski, 'Z dziejów ksenofobii francuskiej w czasach wojen religijnych,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 10, 1965, 103–175.

68 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 60.

became in the eyes of many French people the main figures responsible for the Wars of Religion that plagued France. This led to associations in the 1570s between governance *a l'Italienne ou a la Florentine* and tyranny, as in Gentillet's *Discours contre Machiavel*,⁶⁹ or a 'bloody and barbaric tyranny' with Italy and Catherine de' Medici, as in a widely-read Huguenot lampoon – the anonymous *Reveillematin des Francois et leurs voisins* (1574).⁷⁰

As in most outbreaks of xenophobia, there was a predominance of irrationality in these claims. The initial hostility towards foreigners turned against the royal authority, and resounded with misogyny and populism – among the culprits listed in the *Reveillematin* were, alongside Machiavelli himself, tyrants, women, Italians, and tax collectors.⁷¹ At the same time, Huguenot propaganda created an image of the female Italian-tyrant, the Queen Mother, the irresistible daughter of the Medicis, seen by Protestants as the main inspiration for the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and her machinations as leading to the conflicts and civil war. A crowning example of the propaganda against her was a biography entitled *Discours merueilleux de la vie, actions et deportemens de Catherine de Mediciis, Roynne mere*, published in 10 separate editions in French, German and English between 1575 and 1576. The anonymous author attributed to her all the stereotypical features taken from the traditional portrait of a tyrant. He used anti-feminist argumentation typical of that era⁷² – i.e. that women's rule in France had always led to misery – combining misogyny and xenophobia, by labelling Catherine 'a woman, a foreigner, an enemy hated by all.'⁷³

69 *Discours contre Machiavel*, 14.

70 As cited in A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 404, 406. On anti-Machavellian motifs in this text and the correspondence of F. Hotman, see also D.R. Kelley, 'Murdr'ous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' 552. For a detailed overview of the editions and propaganda significance of *Reveille-matin* in: R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572–1576*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1988, 70 ff. French- and German-language editions of this text contained a letter addressed to the Polish nobility with congratulations on electing Henri Valois as the Polish king and, at the same time, warning Poles against him.

71 As cited in A. D'Andrea, 'The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's Anti-Machiavel,' 405. What is also telling is the traditional aversion to female rule and the fear of breaching one of the basic rules of Salic law, which excluded the possibility of female succession to the French throne; this aversion was emphasized by Gentillet in *Discourses on Liv* and by Hotman in *Francogallia*; *ibid*.

72 Cf. in detail on this subject, Part Three, Chapter III.

73 See the analysis of this propaganda text and a passage from it cited in R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572–1576*, 200–214, here 201, 210.

Characteristic of this wave of anti-Italian xenophobia in France during the Wars of Religion was a stereotypical opposition – in Gentillet’s case, a majority of the French and a small group of outsiders (i.e. the Italians), who were initially poor, but who quickly grew rich through their service at the royal court, exploiting the resources of a hospitable French nation and gaining political influence due to the protection of ‘a few French bastards and degenerates’ (*quelques Francois bastards et degenerateux*). The characteristics ascribed to the Italian advisors and courtiers were almost identical to those listed among the tyrannical vices (perfidy, tyranny, cruelty, impiety).⁷⁴ They were also part of a popular literary convention at the time which criticized the excesses of court life in general.⁷⁵

When we read the decidedly anti-court Huguenot pamphlets written in the late 1560s, we find a similar tone of criticism of Italian newcomers and accusations they had invented new ways to squeeze money out of the poor French countryside. This was supposed to lead to an exchange of roles between the French countrymen and the foreigners: The French would become like foreigners in their own homeland.⁷⁶ These accusations were accompanied by anti-Machiavellian rhetoric that grew stronger in the traumatic atmosphere of the Wars of Religion.

Innocent Gentillet was by no means the inventor of anti-Machiavellism, although his treatise is an excellent reflection of the mood prevailing in France during the culmination of the Wars of Religion. This included anti-Italian phobia and widespread accusations of tyranny and Machiavellism directed at Catherine de’ Medici and her sons: Kings Charles IX and later Henry III. According to Edmond M. Beame’s periodization the first wave of French anti-Machiavellism broke out in the 1570s in the wake of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. It was a product of mainly Protestant propaganda and found expression in works written in response to the Monarchomachs’ writings, e.g. *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*.⁷⁷ In the pamphlets produced during this wave of anti-Machiavellism in the 1570s, Italians in the royal court were associated with various abuses of power, ranging from tyrannical aspirations to exploitive taxation policies. In the

74 *Discours contre Machiavel*, 16. Cf. also C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 203.

75 I. Kąkolewski, *Nadużycia władzy i korupcja w Prusach Książęcych w połowie XVI w. Narodziny państwa wczesnonowożytnego*, Warszawa 2000, 185.

76 E.M. Beame, ‘The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...’, 41, fn. 25.

77 Cf. references to: ‘false and pestiferous doctrines of Niccolo Machiavelli,’ the ‘Tuscan’ and ‘certain Machiavellians, or slaves of tyrants, etc.; *Stephanus Junius Brutus, the Celt, Vindiciae contra tyrannos: or, concerning the legitimate power of a prince over the people, and of the people over a prince*, ed. G. Garnett, Cambridge 1994, 8–13.

period following the Peace of Bergerac (1577), anti-Machiavellian references in French propaganda become less frequent, and in the early 1580s disappeared altogether.⁷⁸

A subsequent wave of anti-Machiavellism spread across France in the latter half of the 1580s, culminating in Henry III's flight from Paris in 1588, forced by Henry of Guise, whose murder the king ordered shortly afterwards, followed by the assassination of the king himself in 1589. This time the anti-Machiavellian propaganda was primarily an instrument of the Catholic League, with the main target of these attacks being the *Politiques* but also the Huguenots who were portrayed as Machiavellians by the League's propagandists. Typical of this second anti-Machiavellian wave was combining accusations of Machiavellism with charges of being guided in politics by the principle of *raison d'état* – and thus, of putting the state before religion. Meanwhile, for radical Catholic propaganda, Machiavellism became synonymous with tolerance towards heretics. The anti-Machiavellian statements of the Catholic League saw the main exponent of Machiavelli's doctrine mainly in Henry Bourbon, King of Navarre and the leader of the Huguenot party. The epithets addressed to him included 'atheist politician,' 'evangelist politician,' 'blacksmith of tyranny,' agent of 'Machiavellian tyranny,' and disciple of 'the venerable Dr. Machiavelli.' Henry III was similarly accused – earlier by the Huguenots and later by the Catholic League – because of his use of religion to further the interests of the state, and his application of the principle that in politics one must be 'a great hypocrite and simulator.' The image of the last Valois king appears here as that of a dedicated supporter of Machiavelli.⁷⁹ Such a portrait of the deceased king was also sketched by his sister Margot in her *Memoirs*.⁸⁰ In light of this hostile anti-royalist propaganda,

78 E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...', 44 ff.

79 Cf. the periodization of two main waves of anti-Machiavellism in France in: *ibid.*, 45–51. In the propaganda of the late 1580s and early 1590s, the king Henry III was reminded of his Italian roots, which linked him to the Medici family, of the role of his mother ('the Circe from Florence') in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the fact that he continued the policy of Chancellor de L'Hopital ('the arch atheist of our times') from the 1560s, in search of a religious compromise.

80 Marguerite de Valois, *The Entire Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, Whitefish 2004. She started writing her diary about 1590, describing her recently deceased brother Henry III of France as a devoted disciple of *Du Gast*, his closest advisor and an evil spirit; see *ibid.*, 20: '[...] my brother Anjou had taken *Le Guast* to be near his person, who had ingratiated himself so far into his favour and confidence that he saw only with his eyes, and spoke but as he dictated. This evil-disposed man, whose whole life was one

it is clear that the political death of Henry III took place before his actual murder.⁸¹

It is interesting that in editions of Gentillet's treatise from the 1580s, the anti-Italian overtones are less pronounced,⁸² though not due to voices of indignation from Italian religious exiles in Geneva.⁸³ New anti-Italian themes, with the main target of Huguenot propaganda being no longer the King and the Italians, but the House of Guise and the Catholic League, became less and less relevant during this period. Anti-Machiavellism thus began to free itself slowly from the specifically French anti-Italianism of the sixteenth century. Thanks to new French editions and translations into Latin and other languages,⁸⁴ *Discours contre Machiavel* made a dizzying career, contributing to the spread of anti-Machiavellism abroad.⁸⁵ In Germany, where the works of Machiavelli himself were poorly known, thanks to a quickly printed German translation (1580), it was being read eagerly as an example of the *speculum principum* (*Fürstenspiegel*).

continued scene of wickedness, had perverted his mind and filled it with *maxims of the most atrocious nature* [emphasis mine – I.K.]. He advised him to have no regard but for his own interest; neither to love nor put trust in any one; and not to promote the views or advantage of either brother or sister. These and other maxims of the like nature, *drawn from the school of Machiavelli* [emphasis mine – I.K.], he was continually suggesting to him. He had so frequently inculcated them that they were strongly impressed on his mind.'

- 81 Cf. an elaborate analysis of the image of Henry III in French propaganda of the 1570s and 1580s in: D. Potter, 'Kingship in the Wars of Religion. The Reputation of Henri III of France,' *European History* 25, 1995, no. 4, 485–528.
- 82 An expanded edition of *Discours contre Machiavel* was published in 1585, a year after the death of Francis, Duke of Anjou and Alençon, the youngest member of the House of Valois. The next successor to the French throne was Henry Bourbon, leader of the Huguenot party. This edition lacked new anti-Italian content, cf. remarks of the publishers of *Discours contre Machiavel*, LIX ff.
- 83 Cf. remarks on this subject by the publishers of *Discours contre Machiavel*, LIV ff.; C.E. Rathé *Innocent Gentillet...*, 192.
- 84 A. D'Andrea and P.D. Stewart, the publishers of the critical edition of *Discours contre Machiavel*, list French-language editions of Gentillet's treatise from 1576, 1577, 1578 and 1579, and then an extended edition from 1585, which was the first to bear Gentillet's name and which served as the basis for publications from 1609 and 1620. Translations into Latin were published in 1577, 1578, 1590, 1599, 1611, 1630, 1647 and 1655, into German in 1580, 1624 and 1646, into English in 1602 and 1608, and into Dutch in 1637; see *Discours contre Machiavel*, LI–LXIX.
- 85 On the spread of French anti-Machiavellism, especially to England, cf. E.M. Beame, 'The Use and Abuse of Machiavelli...' 43; C.E. Rathé, *Innocent Gentillet...*, 195 ff.

It also indirectly contributed to a broader, albeit random and biased, knowledge of the Florentine's maxims, while at the same time spreading even more widely the anti-Machiavellian phobia.⁸⁶ The title of the second German edition – *Anti-Machiavellus* (1624) – provided the name to the entire anti-Machiavellian literature.⁸⁷

86 Cf. a German translation from 1580 by Georg Schwarz vel Nigrinus, a pastor from Giessen, *Regentenkunst oder Fürstenspiegel, Gründliche Erklärung welcher massen ein Königreich und jedes Fürstenthumb rechtmässig und rühsam könne und solle bestellet und verwaltet werden. Abgetheilt in III Bücher nach den dreyen fuernensten und nöthigsten Stücken welche bey jedem ordentlichen Regiment sollen wargenommen unnd fortgesetzt werden. Geschrieben wider den beschreiten Italienischen Scribenten Nicolaum Machiavellum, Historicum und Secretarium der Statt Florenz. Nun erstmals dem Vatterland zu gutem durch G.N verteutschet. Gedruckt in Frankfurt am Mayn. MDLXXX, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, call mark A: 90. Pol. 2. In the foreword dedicated to John Louis, Count of Nassau, folio III, the translator, Georgius Nigrinus, claims that in Germany there was a great demand for a translation of this French treatise, which reflected 'die bedrengnten und ubelgeplagten Frantzosen zu lehr unnd trotz geschriben worden auff welcher Regierung es auch mehrtheils gericht, weil jetzundt die Machiavellische Satzung [i.e. Machiavelli's doctrine – I.K.] den ihnen den platz eynbekommen welche so grosse zerrüttung etliche jar her darinn verursacht hat haben.' Machiavelli's doctrine is described as 'die Gotlosse Lehrpunten und Satzungen Machiavelli des Florentinners und Lehrmeisters aller tyrannischen Bubenstück,' f II r.; whereas Machiavelli is called 'der alte Lehrmeister aller Tyranny unnd unrechtes Gewalts aller Lügen unnd Mordts hat nit allein diesen Welschen Schreiber erweckt der unter dem Schein der Regentenkunst die größte Tyranny unnd Bubenstück seine Nachfolger gelehrt hat,' f. III v. Nigrinus concludes that Machiavelli's works are not well-known in Germany, but the practices he recommends are familiar to many Germans: 'Dann ob wol Machiavelli Schriften in Teutschlanden nicht vil bekannt solcen doch leider seine Gebott und Practicken nicht so gar frembd und unbekannt und setzen wol bey etlichen in besserer übung, dann sie Machiavellus je auff die Ban bracht hat.' Nigrinus sees Gentillet's work as a *speculum principis*, but emphasizes that it is still relevant and topical. Unlike earlier *Fürstenspiegel*, it contained the best (in his view) examples and maxims on the art of ruling; *ibid.*, f. III v., III r. Moreover, Nigrinus concludes that he was even more willing to translate *Discours* because this work made it possible to better understand and uncover the tyranny of the papacy (*die Bapstliche Tyranny*): 'unnd sonderlich die Papisten etwa höflich anzöpft unnd auch von Bapsten Exempel fürbracht auß Machiavello eyngeführt darauß jtze Tyranny Kriegssucht untrew unnd Antichristlich wesen'; *ibid.*, f. IV.*

87 *Antimachiavellus. Das ist Regentenkunst und Fürstenspiegel oder Gründliche Erklärung welcher massen ein Königreich und jedes Fürstenthumb rechtmässig und rühsam könne und solle bestellet und verwaltet werden [...] Geschrieben wider den beschreiten Italienischen Scribenten Nicolaum Machiavellum, Historicum und Secretarium der Statt*

Moreover, *Discours contre Machiavel*, especially in Catholic countries where Machiavelli's works were on the Index of Forbidden Books, was sometimes the only source of knowledge about his ideas, including authors who were part of the trend labelled as 'systematic anti-Machiavellism.' A good example of this was the Gentillet-inspired criticism contained in the Jesuit scholar Antonio Possevin's *Judicium de Nicolai Machiavelli et Joannis Bodini scriptis* (1592).⁸⁸ It is significant, however, that much less space was devoted in his work to criticism of Machiavelli than to attacks on another French contemporary of Gentillet – Jean Bodin. In general, we can assume that without the invention of anti-Machiavellism, and Innocent Gentillet's significant contribution to it, there would certainly have been no phobic vision of Machiavellism. This is how Machiavelli's surname – transformed into the ominous Machiavel – became a synonym for political evil.⁸⁹

Anti-Machiavellism grew out of the unrest and conflicts of the second phase of the Reformation and the experience of the Wars of Religion in France. It became an important component of that era's 'mentality of resistance' against the power of the Valois dynasty, commonly accused after 1572 of tyrannical practices. The tendency to relativize the problem of tyranny was alien to the authors who contributed to both systematic and colloquial anti-Machiavellism. Both currents assumed a return to the traditional vision of the tyrant, though in a new guise, one in which tyranny began to be spontaneously and emotionally identified with the name of Machiavelli and his Italian countrymen.

Anti-Machiavellism – both in its systematic and colloquial variants – was associated with the Huguenot authors of the doctrine of radical resistance. But it also grew out of the xenophobic wave of anti-Italianism in France that reached its peak after the bloody events of August 1572. Though he was himself a

*Florenz. Dem Vaterland zu gutem verteutscht durch G.N. Jetzt auff's new übersehen und mit einem nothwendigen Register geziert. Gedruckt in Straßburg bey Johan Carolo im Jahr 1624, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, call mark A: 78. 16. Pol. In the foreword dedicated to Otto zu Solms, fol. III r., the publisher calls Machiavelli 'das Haupt solcher unartigen Politicorum' and complains that his ideas are spreading so quickly 'daß sie Machiavellische griff Ränk und Practicken ins gemeint genennt werden.' The publisher does not mention Gentillet's name, simply calling him *Antimachiavellus*. He concludes that even though Machiavelli's views were subjected to crushing criticism, there were also some who tried to defend him, arguing that Machiavelli intended to use his writing to reveal tyrannical practices and warn people against tyranny. The German publisher warns readers against this tactic, concluding that it is impossible to derive both 'good and bad' (daß Giff als der Honig) from the same thing; *ibid.*, fol. IV.*

88 Cf. the analysis in: R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 25 ff.

89 D.R. Kelley, 'Murderous Machiavel in France. A Post Mortem,' 555.

proponent of tolerance and dialogue, Gentillet in his work delivered a coherent, xenophobic and – most importantly – concrete picture of a foreign enemy (the Italian Machiavelli, his teachings and Italian followers and pupils in the Paris court of the Queen Mother). The anti-Italianism contained in the *Discours contre Machiavel* had a clearly integrative function here – it was supposed to encourage Huguenots to accept the religious compromise being sought by moderate Catholics. In this way, Gentillet tried to supplant religious hostility with xenophobia, *relating to a paradigm of tyranny as ethnic alienation and thus being a counterpart to Luther's paradigm of tyranny as religious alienation, constructed during the first phase of the Reformation.*

Chapter III. Jean Bodin – Despotism as Cultural Alienation

Jean Bodin and His Doctrine of Absolute Power

Jean Bodin (1530–1596) is considered the sixteenth century's preeminent theorist in the field of political philosophy, the man who laid the foundations for a systemic model of absolute monarchy.¹ He was a lawyer by education and practice, an expert fluent in royal domain matters, and an intellectual with unfulfilled academic ambitions. Bodin sought a world organized according to the principles of *ratio*, which amidst the chaos of the Wars of Religion in France (1562–1598) was almost impossible outside the privacy of his personal study. A former Carmelite, he was suspected of being a Calvinist (and was also accused of being a heretic, an atheist, and even a Jew) and barely avoided being executed at the hands of Catholics during the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572). He was a proponent of religious tolerance, with views close to those of the *Politiques*, although for purely tactical reasons, he became a member of the Catholic League in the late 1580s. Aside from his intellectual pursuits, he was also politically involved, serving as a deputy of the Third Estate during the Estates-General of 1576. In that same year, he published his most famous work *Six Books of the Commonwealth* (*Les Six livres de la République*).² Bodin's *Les six livres* can

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- 1 An outline of Bodin's biography and an overview of the current state of research on his doctrine can be found in: P.C. Mayer-Tasch, *Jean Bodin. Eine Einführung. In sein Leben, sein Werk und seine Wirkung. Mit einer Bibliographie zum geistes- und sozialwissenschaftliches Schrifttum über Jean Bodin zwischen dem Jahr 1800 und dem Jahr 2000*, Düsseldorf 2000, esp. 9–22, and in a thorough study by H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, vol. 1: *Die Grundlagen*, Frankfurt/M. 1970, 40, fn. 92–98.
 - 2 In this chapter, I used for the quotation in the main text the abridged English translation: J. Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, trans. M. J. Tooley, Oxford n.d. http://www.yorku.ca/comminel/courses/3020pdf/six_books.pdf> accessed 18.09.2020. For cases where this was not possible, I referred to a French reprint based on the original 1583 edition: J. Bodin, *Les Six Livres de la République*, Paris 1993 [1583]. http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/bodin_jean/six_livres_republique/six_livres_republique.html, accessed 18.09.2020.

be considered his own personal engagement with a genre known as *de optimo reipublicae statu* ('of a republic's best state').³ *Six Books of the Commonwealth* was published numerous times in French and Latin, also appeared in Italian, Spanish English and German translations.⁴ Despite the great publicity this work gained among intellectuals and lawyers both in France and abroad, its influence on the public was originally smaller than that of the writings of the Monarchomachs or Gentillet's *Discours contre Machiavell*.

Jean Bodin's most important work was written in an atmosphere of anti-Machiavellian phobia, which at the time was gaining in strength. In *Six Books* Machiavelli's doctrine was treated with words of criticism, while Machiavelli himself was accused of atheism, ignorance and supporting tyranny as well as being popular among those who support tyrants.⁵ What is significant here is the reversal in Bodin's evaluation of Machiavelli's ideas over the span of a decade – from words of praise in *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionum* (1566) to open hostility in *Six livres*. This undoubtedly coincided with the changing political sentiment in France following the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the subsequent wave of anti-Italianism and anti-Machiavellism that swept the country.⁶ Interestingly, despite his openly anti-Machiavellian declarations in 1576, Bodin's views were sometimes perceived as forming a kind of continuum, and some historians of political thought seriously question whether his anti-Machiavellism, in the light of his doctrine as a whole, should not be considered as merely a kind of erudite camouflage.⁷

3 Cf. W. Münch, *Erziehung aus alter und neuer Zeit...*, 75 ff. On the tradition of didactic literature for monarchs, see also E. Hinrichs, *Fürstenlehre und politisches Handeln im Frankreich Heinrichs IV*, Göttingen 1969, esp. 33 ff.

4 In total, in the years 1576–1753, there were 17 French editions, whereas in the years 1586–1650 there were 10 Latin editions, except for full or partial translations into Italian, German and English, see Z. Izdebski, *Quelques observations sur les idées politiques de Jean Bodin*, Łódź 1965, 13; P.C. Mayer-Tasch, *Jean Bodin...*, 16.

5 *Les six livres de la République*, here 32f; all in all Bodin critically refers to Machiavelli as the author of *The Prince*, but also *Discourses* and *Florentine Histories* seven times – see also: 104, 233, 290. The main point of Bodin's criticism is that Machiavelli, as the author of *Discourses*, sees the most preferable political system in the 'popular state' and not like Bodin in the monarchy.

6 On reasons why Bodin changed his attitude towards Machiavelli, see e.g. J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory*, Cambridge 1973, 49.

7 Cf. a summary of the discussion on the relation of Bodin to Machiavelli's works in: H. Quaritsch, 'Staatsräson in Bodin's 'République'', in: *Staatsräson. Studien zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs*, ed. R. Schnurr, Berlin 1975, 43–63, here 43 ff. Quaritsch points out that Bodin can be counted among the best experts on Machiavelli of that time and

In the mid-1570s, Jean Bodin seemed to share the Huguenot interpretation of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre as a conspiracy of Machiavellianists, although he does not mention this event directly in any of the *Six Books*.⁸ In fact, as noted above, his confessional denomination was the subject of malicious speculation by his contemporaries.⁹ His support of religious tolerance¹⁰ and his compromising attitude towards the belligerent parties, both Catholic and Protestant, placed him among the supporters of the moderate Catholics known as the *Politiques*.¹¹ Bodin dedicated his *Six Books* to 'His Excellency, the Lord du Faur, Lord of Pibrac, advisor to the King in his Secret Council,'¹² and thus to one of the closest associates of King Henry III de Valois. Pibrac participated in diplomatic missions to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in connection with Henry's election to the Polish throne and was employed by the king in negotiations with the *Politiques* since the mid-1570s. There is no doubt, however, that *Six livres* reflected then-current complaints (*cahiers*), including some related to the abuses at the court of the most recent Valois kings.¹³

The doctrine of a strong royal government proclaimed by Jean Bodin in *Six Books of the Commonwealth* was innovative in many respects. During the sixteenth century, French political thought was still dominated by the concept of limited monarchy. Bodin himself had expressed his support for it in his treatise *Methodus*, written a decade earlier, claiming that it was the best political system – the most civilized and most common in European countries.¹⁴ Already

Machiavelli's thought was for the very first time presented in *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* to French readers in a scholarly manner.

- 8 J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory*, 41 ff., 47, 49.
- 9 J. De Salas, 'The Problem of Atheism in Bodin's "Colloquium Heptaplomeres,"' in: *Atheismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. F. Niewöhner, O. Pluta, Wiesbaden 1999, 355–366, esp. 360. The author emphasizes the fact that Bodin never denied the existence of God, whereas in *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*, his late work from 1593, in which he was clearly in favour of religious tolerance and expressed the idea of a natural religion based on *ratio*.
- 10 For a more detailed overview of Bodin's religious ideas, see: H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 289–300; J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory*, 47 ff.
- 11 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*, München 1960, 66; H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 289 ff.
- 12 *Les six livres*, 31.
- 13 It concerns mostly the practice of selling offices, using mercenaries and giving too expensive gifts to favourites at the royal court; cf. J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory*, 47.
- 14 Cf. a thorough overview of Bodin's views in 'Methodus,' in: *ibid.*, 23, 38 ff.; and J.H. Franklin, 'Sovereignty and the Mixed Constitution. Bodin and His Critics,' in: *The*

in the first half of the sixteenth century, the doctrinaires of monarchism in France developed an ‘absolutist phraseology’,¹⁵ describing the nature of royal power as literally absolute (*pouvoir absolu*), though this did not exclude the possibility of these same authors emphasizing the necessity for royal policy to be consulted with the estates. Among representatives of the so-called ‘new school of comparative law’ in the 1560s, recognition of the principle of limited monarchy prevailed, with explicit emphasis placed on the need to obtain consent from the estates to issue royal acts.¹⁶

In the 1570s, criticism of the House of Valois grew following charges levelled at the king for his persecution of his Protestant subjects. Still, most royalists, including the *Politiques*, continued to support the idea of a limited or ‘mixed monarchy’, stressing the need for the king to co-govern along with the estates, including having to obtain their consent to impose new taxes.¹⁷ Against this background, the doctrine Jean Bodin formulated in his *Six Books of the Commonwealth* in 1576 appears only to some extent radical. A key role in his philosophy is played by a thoroughly original concept of *sovereignty*, as supreme, absolute, ‘perpetual,’ and indivisible power.¹⁸ The notion of sovereignty, taken from the language of medieval fief law, was expanded, re-ordered and re-interpreted by

Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700, ed. J.H. Burns, M. Goldie, Cambridge 299 ff.

- 15 The starting point was the late 13th century principle of ‘absolute’ sovereignty of the king of France and his independence of imperial and papal power – *Rex Francie in suo regno est imperator sui regni*. In this sense, the idea of royal absolute power was generally accepted in the French law and political language. At the same time, French authors of political treatises from the first half of the sixteenth century eagerly used theological phraseology, which had some of its roots in the Middle Ages and some in the Renaissance, which referred to Antiquity. These authors called the ruler ‘Christ’s vicar,’ ‘the king of kings,’ ‘the second sun,’ ‘the servant and vicar of God’ or ‘the embodiment of God.’ They also emphasized the uniqueness of the kings of France as the only ones who were anointed with oil miraculously sent to earth and who had the power to treat scrofula. Cf. J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 6 ff.; H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 264; J.R. Major, *Representative Government in Early Modern France*, New Haven 1980, 178 ff.
- 16 See J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 14–19, 21; his, ‘Sovereignty and the Mixed Constitution...’, 306 ff.
- 17 J.R. Major, *Representative Government in Early Modern France*, 181 ff.; J.W. Allen (*A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 373–376) claims that until 1585, *Politiques* were dominated by supporters of a limited monarchy rather than of absolutism.
- 18 Les six livres, Book I, Chapter VIII, 67ff and Chapter X, 88ff.

Bodin. Among the 'attributes' of sovereignty, the most important was the prerogative to establish and abolish the laws for the subjects, and furthermore, the right to declare war and make peace, to appoint and dismiss officials, to act as a court of last resort, to grant clemency, to accept feudal homage, to have a monopoly on the minting of coins, and also – though here the author, in the context of his argument, expresses into a certain inconsistency – the right to levy taxes.¹⁹

The most important features of Jean Bodin's concept of sovereignty are its indivisibility and unconditionality. Therefore, he argues, the power of the state cannot be delegated or assigned under any conditions or reservations.²⁰ The criterion for who has sovereignty becomes the basis for distinguishing the three main forms of state systems:²¹ monarchy, aristocracy and the popular state: 'If sovereignty is vested in a single prince we call the state a monarchy. If all the people share in it, it is a popular state. If only a minority, it is an aristocracy.'²² However, the use of classical Aristotelian typology here does not imply the complete adoption of Aristotle's criterion of political division. Moreover, the assumption of the indivisibility of sovereign power leads Bodin to reject the possibility of both the Aristotelian *politeia* and the 'mixed system' of government described by Polybius.²³

Bodin appears here to be a fierce critic of the concept of *monarchia mixta*. Its existence as a proper form of government seems to exclude his definition of sovereignty as unlimited and indivisible power. Therefore, with a certain sense of superiority and criticism, he uses it to refer to contemporary European states in which the constitutional system was based on the election of a ruler, whether it be the Republic of Venice, Denmark, Poland, or the Holy Roman Empire.²⁴ Of course, Bodin's notion of the indivisibility of supreme state power must be read in the context of developments in France at the time, namely as an attempt to create a theoretical basis for strengthening central power in a state torn apart by political conflicts and religious wars.²⁵

19 Cf. an in-depth discussion on this issue in: H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 39 ff.

20 Les six livres, Book II, Chapter I, 103ff.

21 See a detailed analysis of Bodin's typology, in: H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 305–311, 316 ff.

22 Six books..., 26.

23 Les six livres, Book II, Chapter I, 110ff.

24 See also my comments in: "Comparatio" dwóch monstrów – Rzeczpospolita polskolitewska a Rzesza Niemiecka w XVI–XVIII wieku, in: *Rzeczpospolita–Europa XVI–XVIII wiek. Próba konfrontacji*, ed. M. Koczyński, W. Tygielski, Warszawa 1999, 143–162, here 148.

25 J.H. Franklin, *Sovereignty and the Mixed Constitution...*, 298, 302 ff.

Bodin allows various state systems to function side by side, and for the possibility of exercising sovereign power either through a popular assembly or aristocratic council, or through a monarch. However, in his arguments, the reader can immediately sense the conviction that the system of monarchy is superior to the other two, if only when defining the state as a reflection of the family, and the monarch's power as the head of the family.²⁶ This definition refers to classical Greek concepts that were later taken over by Christianity – the state as a great family, and the monarch's power as the head of the family, corresponding to four forms of paternal authority: a husband over his wife, a father over his children, a master of the house over servants, and an owner over slaves.²⁷ Moreover, the unlimited nature of paternal and royal power as an 'image' of the power of God is clearly emphasized.²⁸

Based on the principle of the indivisibility of sovereignty Bodin proposed a precise tripartite typology of monarchical systems divided into: royal, despotic (or *seigneurial*, i.e. 'lordly') and tyrannical monarchies²⁹. Moreover, the author of *Six books* asserts that the rulers in each type of monarchy are sovereign if their power has all the attributes of sovereignty, and at least 'lasts for the lifetime of him who exercises it.' Particularly important here is his understanding of sovereignty as 'a perpetual authority' one can reach both in legal and illegal ways:

A perpetual authority therefore must be understood to mean one that lasts for the lifetime of him who exercises it. If a sovereign magistrate is given office for one year, or for any other predetermined period, and continues to exercise the authority bestowed on him after the conclusion of his term, he does so either by consent or by force and violence. If he does so by force, it is manifest tyranny. The tyrant is a true sovereign for all that. The robber's possession by violence is true and natural possession although contrary to the law, for those who were formerly in possession have been disseized [emphasis mine – I.K.].³⁰

However, contrary to the theoretical assumption of absolute sovereignty, an important feature of Bodin's concept of sovereign power in the most 'legitimate'

26 *Les six livres*, Book I, Chapter II, 43: "The family, therefore, is the true image of the Republic, and domestic power seems to be the sovereign power, and so is the right government of the house, the true model of the government of the Republic."

27 *Ibid.*, 47 ff. On the origin and prevalence of the classic concept of *oikos* in the early modern period, especially in German *Hausvaterliteratur*, cf.: O. Brunner, 'Das 'ganze Haus' und die alteuropäische Ökonomik,' in: *Neue Wege der der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte*, Göttingen 1968, 111 ff.

28 On a 'Prince' as 'the image of God' see *Les six livres*, 80, 90, 209.

29 *Les six livres*, 116.

30 *Six books...*, 26.

type of monarchy, i.e. a royal monarchy, are certain restrictions to which even the rule of an absolute 'legitimate' monarch should be subjected. The first and basic limits on royal authority constitute God's and natural laws,³¹ including the inviolability of the subjects' right of ownership and their personal liberty. Moreover, he also sees as a violation of the right to property a situation in which the sovereign imposes taxes on the people as he sees fit, without the consent and advice of his subjects. Therefore, Bodin is convinced that the monarch should consult his subjects about new taxes, the imposition of which he saw as an exceptional situation. This discrepancy between the abstract model of unlimited absolute sovereignty and the concept of an absolute sovereign power in royal monarchy, especially the interpretation of tax matters, is quite understandable. It must be remembered that Bodin's main point of reference was the contemporary monarchy in France, and in a sense, England, considered by him as appropriate types of royal monarchies.³²

References to the current political situation in France become obvious to the reader also when considering other restrictions on royal power. These include the prohibition to change the laws of succession³³ and to alienate the king's domains.³⁴ The royal monarchy described by Bodin was, of course, supposed to be a hereditary power, and the throne's electivity – as in Poland-Lithuania or the Roman Holy Empire at the time – was treated by him as a violation of the principle of sovereignty.³⁵ In the French context, the debate on the issue of succession rights to the hereditary throne was connected with a debates on Salic law, which according to the principle of agnatic succession allowed exclusively male descendants of the dynasty to inherit the throne. This became particularly topical in the late 1580s, in view of the extinguishing of the Valois male line and plans to transfer the crown to Margot de Valois and her husband King of Navarra Henry de Burbon. Similarly, at a time when the royal treasury was exhausted by war expenses, the issue of banning the alienation of the royal domain lands also appeared quite relevant. Bodin – like most of his contemporaries – was of the

31 *Les six livres*, Book I, Chapter VIII, 72.

32 H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 39 ff and J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 86 ff.

33 *Les six livres*, Book VI, Chapter V, 307.

34 *Ibid.*, Book VI, Chapter II, 276 ff.

35 *Ibid.*, esp. 68, 119 ff. Cf. also J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 68.

opinion that income from the monarchical domain should be the main source of financing for the state.³⁶

The Problem of Tyranny and the Right of Resistance in *Six Books of the Commonwealth*

Jean Bodin, in creating a model of 'royal' monarchy, later modified by other theoreticians of European absolutism, assigns the monarch certain sovereign prerogatives, for which he is theoretically responsible only to God, though at the same time requires him to abide by limitations imposed on the king by natural laws. Indeed, it is the observance to these legal limitations that distinguishes a royal monarchy from its degenerate form – tyranny. In his deliberations, Bodin seems to distinguish between two types of tyrannical rulers.³⁷ The first one is a ruler who violates the basic laws of nature and thus treats his subjects as slaves, pursuing only his own interests rather than the common interest of the subjects.³⁸ The other type is a usurper, i.e. a ruler with no legal title to govern.³⁹

In Book II, Chapter IV, 'Concerning Tyrannical Monarchy,' the author of the *Six Books of the Commonwealth* provides a long catalogue of the virtues of legitimate monarchs and contrasts these with tyrannical vices. This essentially represents the traditional opposition between the king and tyrant rooted in political Aristotelianism.

His deliberations on tyranny bring Bodin in Book II, Chapter V to consider the right of resistance, which became a very topical subject in his day. Here, too, we see the influence of the fierce debates being carried on during this period. He appears to exclude as a rule the possibility of any form of resistance, declaring that subjects cannot rebel against their sovereign, just as a son cannot kill his father, even if he is – as Bodin puts it bluntly – 'a murderer, a thief, the betrayer

36 Cf. an overview of opinions expressed in the 16th century on the royal domain and the income from it as the main source of financing the state in: I. Kąkolewski, *Nadużycia władzy i korupcja w Prusach Księżęcych w połowie XVI w. Narodziny państwa wczesnonowożytnego*, Warszawa 2000, 140 ff.

37 Cf. a detailed analysis of Bodin's vision of tyranny in: H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 319–326.

38 *Les six livres*, Book II, Chapter IV, 121 ff.

39 *Ibid.*, Book II, Chapter V, 126: [...] who, by his own authority, makes himself a sovereign prince, without election, nor right of succession, nor casting lots, nor just war, nor special calling from God'; and 127: '[...] it is necessary to distinguish the absolutely sovereign Prince from the one who is not.'

Table 3. Catalogue of Virtues and Vices in Bodin's *Six Books of the Commonwealth*^a

King	Tyrant
Conforms to the laws of nature	Violates the laws of nature
Guided by piety, justice and faith	Denies God
Furthers the welfare of his subjects	Acts only to his own profit, to achieve vengeance, pleasure
Avenges injuries done to his subjects but pardons those committed against himself	Impoverishes and ruins his subjects
Avenges public injustice, and forgives his own	Takes cruel revenge for injuries done to himself but pardons those done to others
Respects the moral virtue of women	Dishonours woman
Encourages free speech in his subjects 'to the point of wise rebuke'	Dislikes serious, free-spirited, and virtuous citizens
Keeps his subjects in peace and unity	Sows dissension so that his subjects will ruin one another, and he himself profit thereof.
Takes pleasure from being seen and heard by his subjects	Shuts himself away from his subjects as from his enemies
King	Tyrant
Bases his rule on the love of his people	Bases his rule on the fear of his people
Moderate as possible in his demands on his subjects	A bloodsucker – exploits his subjects
Seeks out upright men to fill public offices	Sells offices to the highest bidder, employs robbers and sets them on his citizens
Conforms his conduct to the laws	Makes the laws subserve his convenience
Loved and revered by his subjects	Hated by his subjects
Resorts to war only in defence of his subjects	Makes war on his subjects
Keeps no garrison unless his subjects man it	Surrounds himself with foreign guards
Lives in peace and security	Lives in perpetual terror
Expects salvation in his future life	No hope of escaping eternal punishment
Honoured in life and regretted after death	Defamed while alive and cursed after death

^a*Les six livres*, 121 f and *Six books*, 62 f.

of his country, incestuous, a parricide, a blasphemer or an atheist' or 'the cruellest and most ruthless' tyrant. To raise one's hand against the ruler, whose power is sanctioned by God, would be tantamount to a violation of divine and natural laws by the subjects.⁴⁰

However, in certain situations, even Jean Bodin, a theoretician of absolutism, seems to allow for the possibility of resistance against a tyrannical government. First, in line with the traditions of political Thomism and medieval *ius resisti* theorists, he grants each subject the right to resist a tyrant-usurper. Anyone can resort to the most radical means, including the murder of the usurper, or, depending on the circumstances, his submission to the court. But things are different with resistance to a 'sovereign' ruler whom, according to Bartolus Saxoferrato's typology, we might describe as 'in the manner of exercising power.' In this case, Bodin argues, the right to deprive the ruler of his life is granted only to foreign 'virtuous' sovereign rulers: 'In such a case there is no doubt that a virtuous prince can proceed against a tyrant either by force of arms, diplomatic intervention, or lawsuit. If he takes the tyrant captive, it is more to his honour to punish him as a murderer, a parricide, or a robber than to allow him the benefit of the law of nations.'⁴¹ This same thought was expressed by Huguenot thinkers, and supporters of it are found in numerous European countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁴² Other fragments of *Six livres* should be interpreted as a sometimes ambiguous criticism of all forms of active resistance.⁴³

Like many of his contemporaries, Bodin was mostly in favour of the right of passive resistance, which in his opinion, stemmed from the principle of freedom of conscience and the norms of natural law, and was therefore somewhat axiomatic for the Christian tradition, including that of the Reformation era. Here, however, he tries to limit forms of passive resistance to a minimum. He emphasizes that it is justified only when basic natural laws are violated, and not merely when

40 *Six Books...*, 68.

41 *Six Books...*, 66.

42 J.H. Franklin draws attention to some ambiguities in expressions used by Bodin in Book II, Chapter V, which could suggest that he also permitted the murder of a tyrant *ex parte exercitii* by a private individual chosen by God; however, Bodin does not ponder on this possibility in all seriousness, he just wants to confirm some Biblical examples. Moreover, Bodin was probably willing to grant the right of resistance to a private individual in case of a need for self-defense, even though it remains a controversial interpretation; see his, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 96. Cf. also on Bodin's concept of the right of resistance in: H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 328–333.

43 Cf. J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 95

a royal command is judged to be just or wrong. Even if the resistance is justified, he advises officials to avoid it if their conscience allows. Such resistance, he argues, can only enrage the tyrant and cause his subjects more harm than good. Therefore in such cases it is even better to resign from office than to risk any kind of open confrontation with the tyrannical ruler.⁴⁴

However, Bodin's partial acquiescence to the right of resistance seems to be a serious inconsistency when paired with his concept of the indivisibility of sovereignty especially in royal monarchies.⁴⁵ Things were different in those political systems in which the estates, he argued, were entitled to depose their elective rulers, such as the Holy Roman Empire or Denmark, since in these 'aristocratic' states elected rulers were not fully sovereign monarchs: 'But when it comes to the question of the conduct befitting a subject, one must distinguish between the sovereign prince and one who is not so. If he is not sovereign, sovereignty must lie with the people or with the magnates. In such cases one is justified in taking legal proceedings against him, if this is practicable, or in resorting to force and violence if there is no other way of bringing him to reason.'⁴⁶ Contrary to this statement, Bodin overall remained much more restrictive on the issue of the right of resistance than e.g. the medieval Thomists (not to mention the Monarchomachs of his day), and rather sought to discourage the possibility of invoking the right of resistance by the subjects.

In many comments in *Six books* on the issue of tyranny we find clear tones of relativism in the evaluation of this phenomenon. As we have seen before, Bodin provides a black-and-white catalogue of the prince's virtues and tyrannical vices, and remains faithful to the classical definition that a prince and a tyrant are distinguished primarily by their intentions of serving the public interest, not their own. At the same time, however, he seems to suggest that the ruler should be judged not by his intentions, but rather by the effects of his conduct.⁴⁷ After the above mentioned catalogue he adds the following comment:

44 Similarly to a conflict between courts and the monarch, in Bodin's view it is the courts that should give in. At the same time, Bodin admits that courts are entitled to comment on and object to the king's legislation. Even though judges do not have a direct veto power, they cannot be removed from office, so they can oppose the king's decisions. In case royal officials notice that the king's decisions are illegal, they are entitled to inform the ruler about legal consequences of such a situation or to submit remonstrances, even several times. See J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 98 ff.; H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 391 ff.

45 P.C. Mayer-Tasch, *Jean Bodin...*, 39.

46 *Six Books...*, 56, 67.

47 H. Quaritsch, *Staatsräson in Bodins 'Republique'*, 50.

It is not proper, either, to call Cosimo de' Medici a tyrant for building a citadel, surrounding himself with foreign guards, and taxing his subjects heavily for their upkeep, after the assassination [1537 – I. K.] of Alessandro, Duke of Florence. *Such medicine was necessary to a commonwealth* [emphasis mine – I. K.] ravaged by so many seditions and insurrections, and for a licentious and unruly populace, everlastingly plotting against the new duke, though he was accounted one of the wisest and most virtuous princes of his age⁴⁸.

From such a perspective, the previous catalogue of virtues and vices of the prince appears to the reader as a purely literary and rhetorical effort aimed at creating a dialectic tension from which the author draws relativistic conclusions.

A similar pragmatism and relativistic tone can be found in *Six Books of the Commonwealth* in the consideration of the conditions that can lead the rulers to take a path that some could judge to be – so the author claims – tyrannical, but others would view as commendable. He refers here to states in the period of transition – for example the transformation of the popular state or aristocracy into a monarchy⁴⁹ – when rulers need to oppose an angry mob or resort to the confiscation of property, expulsion or even execution of the wealthiest in order to protect the poorest.⁵⁰ The situations described here, unacceptable in normal circumstances, can be associated with a similar course of thinking in the scholastic category of 'higher necessity,' as well as in Nicollò Machiavelli's arguments in *Discorsi* and his concept of dictatorship-tyranny during a state of emergency.

These considerations are accompanied by another relativistic motif. Bodin strongly protests against the identification of severity – a necessary feature of any ruler in his opinion – with tyranny. During the reign of an overly lenient ruler, the state may fall into anarchy and ruin, and only rise under the rule of a severe prince: 'it often happens that mildness in a prince would ruin a commonwealth, whereas severity saves it.'⁵¹ Excessive benevolence and indulgence can lead to abuses by the most influential people that harm the majority of society – 'Instead of one tyrant they suffer ten thousand.'⁵² Here this kind of multi-headed tyranny is contrasted with the 'severe' conduct of the prince saving the state, according to the principle: 'a bad man makes a good king.'⁵³ For most of Bodin's contemporaries, the severity of ruler was unavertibly associated with the tyranny

48 *Six Books...*, 63.

49 *Les six livres*, 123.

50 Cf. H. Quaritsch, *Staatsräson in Bodins 'République'*, 51 ff.

51 *Six Books...*, 63.

52 *Six Books...*, 64.

53 *Ibid.*, 63.

of a cruel ruler. However, for Bodin, who was deeply affected by the chaos caused by religious warfare in his homeland, the ruler's severity was to be one of the guarantors of peace.

Finally, there is one more important relativistic motif in Bodin's analysis of various aspects of tyranny. It comes to the fore when he considers behaviour traditionally perceived as typical of a tyrant, i.e. the ruler supporting one faction during an internal conflict within the state.⁵⁴ In these reflections, one can feel tensions associated with the religious wars taking place in France at that time. On the one hand, we encounter here a general criticism of revolt, civil war and factional infighting, compared by Bodin to mental illness, as states characteristic of tyranny and leading to the imminent collapse of the political and social order. Hence his postulate that the prince should prevent conflicts between combating factions, and should preferably stand above such conflicts, even when the divisions are of a religious nature, such as 'in the wars of religion which have ravaged Europe for the past fifty years.'⁵⁵ On the other hand, in a spirit close to the tolerant attitude of the *Politiques*' views, Bodin calls for neither questioning a religion adopted voluntarily, nor forcing subjects to adopt a new religion. Otherwise, civil war, chaos and anarchy may engulf the state. 'And just as the cruellest tyranny does not make for so much wretchedness as anarchy, when neither prince nor magistrate is recognized, so the most fantastic superstition in the world is not nearly so detestable as atheism.'⁵⁶

The relativistic maxim – better tyranny than anarchy – was by no means Bodin's invention. Similar statements can be found both in Antiquity and in the early and late sixteenth century.⁵⁷ It can be seen in Erasmus' *Institutio*, or in a slightly different formulation in Luther, and later in the works of Justus Lipsius, an early theorist of absolutism and opponent of the theory of resistance, as well as a representative of 'moralistic Machiavellism.'⁵⁸ François Le Jay, a prominent representative of the *Politiques*, stated this clearly: 'Better a hundred years of tyranny than a single day of sedition.'⁵⁹ The choice 'better tyranny than anarchy

54 *Les six livres...*, Book IV, Chapter VII, 217 ff.

55 *Ibid.*, 140.

56 *Ibid.*, 142. Cf. also remarks on this subject in: H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 327; J. De Salas, 'The Problem of Atheism,' 362, *passim*; F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 70.

57 H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 289 ff.

58 H. Münkler, *Staatsräson und politische Klugheitslehre*, in: *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, ed. I. Fetscher, H. Münkler, vol. 3, München–Zürich 1985, 64.

59 As cited in P.C. Mayer-Tasch, *Jean Bodin...*, 14.

or civil war’ also reflects the fear of an intellectual, used to perceiving reality in terms of rationality and continuity, who found before him a state of chaos. Another opponent of the right of active resistance, Montaigne, had a similar approach and expressed his fear in these words: ‘Nothing burdens a state more than innovation; change itself gives rise to injustice and tyranny.’⁶⁰ Fear of sudden political change seemed to be a defining feature of the centuries before the outbreak of the French Revolution and the emergence of the modern revolutionary paradigm.⁶¹

In the case of Jean Bodin the trauma of the Wars of Religion in France was surely behind this bitter commentary. It also led Bodin, whether willing or not, to accept another relativism and claim that superstition – i.e. heresy – is better than atheism. This relativism, in turn, inspired to a thoroughly Machiavellian conclusion: ‘the prudent magistrate, faced with an excited people, at first gives way to their temper in order to be able to bring them to reason by gradual means’ since resisting a mass movement by means of force is like trying to stop ‘a torrent dashing down from some great height.’⁶²

Passages in *Six Books of the Commonwealth* in which the author discusses various aspects of the traditional image of the tyrannical power can be interpreted as a manifestation of thinking according to the principle of ‘raison d’état,’⁶³ although this notion does not appear even once in the pages of this work. It seems that Bodin adopted the scholastic concept of *necessitas* and, like Machiavelli, allows the ruler to use emergency measures that resemble tyrannical methods in the event of a state of emergency. On the other hand, in the main part of his reflections on the concept of harmonious justice, which is crucial for his vision of a well-organized state, Bodin – when considering a situation where there is a conflict between the interests of the state and the law – explicitly advocates the supremacy of the law. As an expert on the subject, Helmut Quaritsch, put

60 As cited in H. Münkler, *Im Namen des Staates. Die Begründung der Staatsraison in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt/M. 1987, 226 ff. Cf. also an overview of Montaigne’s views on tyranny and the right of resistance in: M. Schmockel, ‘Gewissensfreiheit und Widerstandsrecht bei Charon und Montaigne,’ in: *Wissen, Gewissen und Wissenschaft im Widerstandsrecht (16.–18 Jh.)*. *Sapere, cocienza e scienza nel diritto di resistenza (XVI–XVIII sec.)*, ed. A. De Benedictis, K.-H. Lingens, Frankfurt/M. 2003, 129 ff.

61 See J. Baszkiewicz, *Nowy człowiek, nowy naród, nowy świat: mitologia i rzeczywistość rewolucji francuskiej*, Warszawa 1993.

62 *Six Books...*, 142–143.

63 F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 67 ff.

it, Bodin as a jurist seems to reject the ‘cure’ of tyranny even in exceptional situations, although as a historian he sometimes seems to allow it.⁶⁴

Between Royal and Tyrannical Authority: Despotic Monarchy as an Intermediate Category

The relativistic commentary built into the rhetorical-dialectical construction of *Les Six livres de la République*, in fact, complemented only the main argument, while somewhat neutralizing its generally negative assessment of tyranny as a phenomenon. The breakthrough of Bodin’s doctrine did not consist in his relativizing of the problem of tyranny. Rather, it was his creation of a systemic concept of indivisible sovereignty, while at the same time dividing monarchy into three political types: royal, despotic, and tyrannical. In Book II, Chapter II ‘Concerning Despotic Monarchy’ he provides a short definition for each type:

Royal, or legitimate, monarchy is one in which the subject obeys the laws of the prince, the prince in his turn obeys the laws of God, and natural liberty and the natural right to property is secured to all. *Despotic monarchy is one in which the prince is lord and master of both the possessions and the persons of his subjects by right of conquest in a just war; he governs his subjects as absolutely as the head of a household governs his slaves* [emphasis mine – I.K.]. Tyrannical monarchy is one in which the laws of nature are set at naught, free subjects oppressed as if they were slaves, and their property treated as if it belonged to the tyrant.⁶⁵

This triple division, following Aristotelian tradition, introduced to the classic juxtaposition of proper and degenerate systems and the antinomy of king–tyrant an intermediate category according to the principle of *reipublicae recte, aberrantes et parvae*.⁶⁶ In the latter category, Bodin placed despotic monarchy – *seigneurial* in the French language of the original *Six livres*⁶⁷ and *herilis* (‘lordly’) in the Latin translation. It also corresponded to the tradition of translating the Aristotelian term ‘*despotia*,’ born in the Renaissance, and thus departed from the more literal

64 H. Quaritsch, *Staatsräson in Bodins ‘République’*, 59 ff. The dominance of this legal way of thinking in Bodin’s work encouraged Meinecke to see his concept of sovereignty as a premise of the modern idea of the ‘state of law’ (*Rechtsstaat*) and to juxtapose it with the ‘state of force’ (*Machtstaat*), created by Machiavelli; F. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson...*, 75.

65 *Six books...*, 56 f.

66 H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft...*, 146 ff.

67 *Six livres...*, 114.

Latin translation of the latter and its derivatives (*monarchia despótica*), adopted in the Middle Ages.⁶⁸

Jean Bodin used the triple division of the monarchy into royal, despotic and tyrannical as a systemic concept, although a similar division of monarchical political forms can already be found in Aristotle, as well as in the later classical and medieval Aristotelian tradition.⁶⁹ Bodin also follows Aristotle in considering despotic states, as a separate monarchical type of political system prevailing in the non-Greek, i.e. ‘barbaric,’ mainly oriental, world. They are sanctioned by the consent of the subjects to assume such a form of governance, he argues, and possess the character of a hereditary monarchy. An example of the use of the similar tripartite division: *regimen despoticum (herile) – civile (or regnum politicum) – tyrannicum*, based on Aristotle’s typology, can be found e.g. in the Latin writings of both Martin Luther and Philip Melancthon.⁷⁰ Their works provide a slightly earlier example than Bodin’s. However, it was the latter who *fully developed and systematized the tripartite typology, making it part of his doctrine of sovereignty.*

So what, in Bodin’s view, are the basic differences between despotic and tyrannical monarchy? According to a classic definition, a tyrant violates fundamental natural laws in pursuit of his own interests, without concern for the welfare of his subjects. However, in despotic monarchies, according to Jean Bodin, certain natural laws either never applied or, by some unfortunate coincidence, e.g. through conquest ‘in a just war,’ cease to apply. Tyrannical rulers treat their subjects like slaves, disposing of them and their property as they please.⁷¹ Thus, they violate one of the basic natural laws in force in royal monarchies. But unlike tyranny, the despotic ruler who through conquest makes ‘free people slaves’ and seizes their property is sanctioned – though this sounds for us today paradoxical – by the consent of people, i.e. the conquered party, since according to the laws of war: ‘[t]here is nothing unfitting in a prince who has defeated his enemies in a

68 Cf. a discussion on the evolution of the meaning of the term ‘despotia,’ in: R. Koebner, ‘Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* 13, 1950, 275–302, here 282 ff.

69 Cf. H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis,’ Despotie, in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck, vol. 6, Klett–Cotta 1990, 652, 654, 663–668; H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft...*, 146; R. Koebner, ‘Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,’ 285; J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 84 ff.; H. Quaritsch, *Staat und Souveränität*, 317–319.

70 See above, Part Two, Chapter I.

71 *Six Books...*, 57.

good and just war, assuming an absolute right to their possessions and their persons.⁷² Unlike the power of the tyrant-usurper, which is inherently short-lived and vulnerable to rebellion, hereditary despotic kingdoms are more durable than other types of monarchy. The despot's subjects, like slaves who do not know freedom, are not eager to resist.

At the same time, despotic monarchy, created by the sanctioned use of force, is treated by Bodin as the oldest type of political system and the prototype for monarchy in general. According to his concept, the genesis of the state and state authority lies in conquest, i.e. the imposition of the will of a ruler by force, but legalized by the consent of the ruled, i.e. the conquered. Despotic power has a primordial and somewhat natural patriarchal character. Hence the biblical reference to Jacob: 'A monarchy so established is not a tyranny. We read in Holy Writ that Jacob left property to his children by will, which he claimed as his own because he had won it by force of arms.'⁷³ However, he does not exclude a possibility of transformation of tyrannies at the early stage into despotic, or even royal form of government: 'I have already said that the original rulers and founders of commonwealths were violent tyrants, but their successors were in some cases despots, in others kings ruling by hereditary right.'⁷⁴ Referring to the classical Greek tradition (to Plato and Aristotle, in particular), he gives Assyria, Egypt, and Persia as further examples of ancient despotic, 'barbaric' empires created by conquest. Among modern despotic states, he mostly mentions the Ottoman empire, the Tartar Khanates, and Muscovy, where 'the subjects are called *chlopes* which means slaves.'⁷⁵

These examples of despotic monarchies would correspond to the Aristotelian concept of oriental despotism – 'barbaric' and foreign to the civilized political traditions of the Greek world. By the same token, in Bodin's view, despotic states are generally outside the traditions of monarchy in Europe, where rulers do not claim direct ownership of their subjects' property. Some elements of 'primitive' despotic rule in Europe could have been found only in the Germanic kingdoms established after the fall of the Roman empire. 'They then gradually established rights of overlordship of land, and claims to faith and homage, and other rights known as feudal rights, thereby perpetuating the shadow, though in a very attenuated form, of the primitive despotic monarchies.'⁷⁶ This way

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid., 58.

74 *Six Books...*, 115.

75 Ibid., 58.

76 Ibid.

of thinking undoubtedly reflects a sense of superiority and pride in European political traditions in comparison to those of the non-European world. Unlike the peoples of Asia and Africa, Europeans of the day did not accept the yoke of 'primitive' despotism. To put it briefly: despotic monarchy was clearly associated by Jean Bodin and many of his contemporaries⁷⁷ with non-European or peripheral European (Muscovy) nations, whose political cultures were considered 'barbaric,' 'primitive' and disconnected from Europe's political traditions.

Let us try to summarize what was novel in Bodin's concept, based on the Aristotelian tradition of a tripartite division of monarchical systems. First of all, he created a precise definition of despotic monarchy, which he related to his systemic concept of sovereignty as a fundamental and organizing principle for each kind of state. Second, he pointed to the 'primacy' of a despotic monarchy as the oldest type of political system, established through the forceful imposition of the will of the ruler or by conquest. Third, he attempted not only to prove the legitimacy of despotic or *seigneurial* monarchy but also applied a new terminology to describe it. The use of the latter term led the French reader to the medieval etymology of the fief legal term *seigneur*. From the legal Anglo-French medieval terminology Bodin also derived the notion of sovereignty. However, in line with the classic Greek tradition he clearly stressed that despotism remained an alien phenomenon to the European political culture.

According to Horst Dreitzel, Bodin's typology of monarchical systems and definition of despotic monarchy should be treated as an expression of the 'relativistic doctrine of Aristotelianism' (*die relativistische Doktrin des Aristotelismus*).⁷⁸ It is obvious that this tripartite division was not accepted by supporters of *monarchia mixta*, who tended to identify absolute monarchy with despotism and tyranny.⁷⁹ This was also the reason for the accusations made by the Geneva Calvinist Commune against the *Six Books of the Commonwealth* and its author for propagating the idea of despotism,⁸⁰ as well as for the equating the names of

77 R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' 284, reminds that in the French translation of Aristotle's *Politics* by Louis Le Roy, which was an inspiration to Bodin, there is a translator's note in which Le Roy claims that barbarians and Asians are by nature more inclined to servility than Greeks and Europeans. He also refers to examples of hereditary and legitimate rule in the Ottoman Empire, the Grand Duchy of Muscovy and Prester John's legendary kingdom in Ethiopia.

78 H. Dreitzel, *Monarchiebegriffe in der Fürstengesellschaft...*, 148.

79 Ibid., 149 ff.

80 Shortly after the publication of *République*, Geneva voiced its concern that the work was written in the spirit of despotism. In a dedication letter to the 1578 edition, Bodin

Bodin and Machiavelli in Catholic Anti-Machiavellian literature at the end of the sixteenth century.⁸¹ In France of the 1570s, in a situation of constant civil war, religious frictions and the decline of the authority of the royal power, Bodin's concept of absolutism seemed to be still less convincing than the doctrine of the limited monarchy. It was not until the seventeenth century that it could find more practical implementation.⁸²

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Bodin's characterization of despotic monarchy was, in a sense, in line with his earlier understanding of the terms 'despotic' and 'tyrannical.' A similar tripartite typology of monarchical systems was also used ten years earlier in his treatise *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionum*.⁸³ However, Bodin's concept of the tripartite nature of monarchical systems, as well as the content of his two political treatises, was of purely theoretical significance. It was created in the privacy of the scholar's personal office, from behind the walls of which the dramatic sounds of religious fighting could be heard. For more or less educated people of that time, the words 'despotic' and

refuted these accusations, emphasizing the fact that in his work he described limitations related to taxes and the alienation of the domain, as well as those stemming from natural laws, which he then imposed on monarchs; see J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 102.

81 R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 25 ff.

82 J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 103 ff. Franklin emphasizes that the lasting significance of Bodin's concept lies in the methodological sphere rather than in the content of his work. In *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, he laid the foundation for a comprehensive legal system, which indicated various roots of contemporary legal norms and institutions in order to liberate the lawyers of that time from complete dependence on the sources of Roman law. Therefore, his work belongs to comparative law, together with *Francogallia* by F. Hotman and other works by Huguenot authors. J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 404, draws attention to the unclear arrangement of arguments, repetitions and the convoluted style used by Bodin, on the one hand, and his extraordinary erudition and knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew on the other. Allen also emphasizes the impact of Italian Neoplatonism and the Old Testament on Bodin's philosophical views. Cf. also a presentation of the influence of Ramism on Bodin's method of presenting arguments in: Z. Izdebski, *Quelques observations sur les idées politiques...*, 16, and on Bodin's late work *Universae Naturae Theatrum* (1596) in: A. Blair, *The Theater of Nature. Jean Bodin and Renaissance Science*, Princeton 1997, 83 ff.

83 Therefore, according to Bodin's opinion expressed in *Methodus*, European rulers are obliged to observe legal limitations deeply rooted in European political traditions, and to observe coronation oaths. J.H. Franklin, *Jean Bodin and the Rise...*, 36 ff.

‘tyrannical’ were synonymous, and the Ottoman empire or the Grand Duchy of Muscovy were often interchangeably described as despoties and tyrannies.⁸⁴ These associations, as we will see in the next chapter, were also present in the common language of propaganda of that time.

84 R. Koebner, ‘Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,’ 285 ff.

Chapter IV. Tyrants, Our Own and Foreign, in Propaganda Literature of the First Interregnum (1572–1574) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

*Hypocrisy has flourished all across Poland
and adopted these treacherous practices [...]
Though never in Italy, they have mastered them [...]
Better a foreign tyrant, for under him all soon calms
Under him all shall soon be righted.
But also one of ours is the Muscovite.*

*Dobrzeć się hipokryzyza w Polsce zamnożyła
Te to zdradne praktyki ku sobie przyjęła [...]
I umięją to czyście, choć w Włoszech nie byli [...]
Lepszy obcy tyran, by się to za niego rychlej skromiło
Gdyżby się to za niego rychlej naprawiło.
Moskiewski też swój.¹*

The Ideal of *Monarchia Mixta* and Vestiges of Machiavelli in Poland-Lithuania

Established in 1569 by the Union of Lublin, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth could be regarded as the embodiment of the ideals of *monarchia mixta* and limited monarchy.² In the late medieval period and early sixteenth century, three important paradigms finally emerged in Polish political thought: the sovereignty of the law over the king, the contractual nature of the authority, and the right of

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- 1 [Piotr Mycielski], 'Przestroga, to jest pokazanie upadków inszych ziem, także i Korony polskiej z obierania pana z pojsrządka siebie,' in: *Pisma polityczne pierwszego bezkrólewia*, ed. J. Czubek, Kraków 1906, [hereinafter *Pisma polityczne*], 713 ff.
 - 2 See the comparative presentation of the royal prerogatives in Poland and Western European countries in the sixteenth century in: A. Sucheni-Grabowska, 'Obowiązki i prawa królów polskich w opiniach pisarzy epoki Odrodzenia,' in: *Między monarchją a demokracją*, ed. A. Sucheni-Grabowska, M. Żaryn, Warszawa 1994, 87 ff., and the overview by C. Backvis, 'Główne tematy polskiej myśli politycznej w XVI wieku,' in: his, *Szkice o kulturze staropolskiej*, Warszawa 1975, 467–511, and the classic work: K. Grzybowski, *Teoria reprezentacji w Polsce epoki Odrodzenia*, Warszawa 1959.

resistance against abuses of royal power.³ Most authors of that time also embraced the concepts of the political philosophy based on Aristotelianism.⁴ When after the death of king Sigismund II Augustus (1548–1572) the Jagiellonian dynasty came to an end, and the principle of royal election by the nobility was established (1573), the Commonwealth – viewed from the perspective of some of the most eminent Renaissance humanists of the previous generation (Erasmus, More, and Machiavelli as a Republican in *Discourses on Livy*) and later of the ‘Monarchomach’ generation (Hotman) – appeared to embody the concept and myth of an elected monarchy.

In Poland the myth of an elected monarchy had strong roots in the Middle Ages,⁵ and was eagerly reiterated in Renaissance-era historical writings. Polish authors sometimes suitably fashioned and tailored these tales for propaganda purposes. Evoking images of ‘pagan slavery’ and the absolute rule of native rulers in the pre-Christian period, they drew parallels to the contemporary Grand Duchy of Muscovy and contrasted this picture with the election of kings in a Christianized and ‘free’ Poland.⁶ Stanislaw Orzechowski, an eminent Polish political writer of the sixteenth century, known for his hyperbole and megalomania, stated in *Conversation Or Dialogue About the Government of the Polish Crown [Rozmowa albo Dyjalog około egzekucyjnej polskiej korony]* (1563) that because of the elective nature of monarchical power and the sovereignty of law over the ruler and his subjects in Poland, no other power could measure up to the Commonwealth in terms of ‘freedom.’ Therefore, compared to the Commonwealth, most of other countries appeared to him as tyrannies: ‘our ancestors [...] built such a Commonwealth in Poland that

3 C. Backvis, ‘Główne tematy...’, 473, 478, 490.

4 W. Goleman, ‘The Jagiellos and the Model of the King in Polish Political Thought during the Reign of Sigismund II Augustus (1548–1572);’ in: *Die Jagiellonen. Kunst und Kultur einer europäischen Dynastie an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, ed. D. Popp, R. Suckale, Nürnberg 2002, 27–34.

5 R. Sobotka, *Powolywanie władcy w ‘Rocznikach’ Jana Długosza*, Warszawa 2005, 42–56, and 138–165.

6 [Anonymous Senator], ‘Deliberacje o królu, panach radzie i urzędnikach, sejmie i bezkrólewiu, z r. 1569;’ in: *Sześć broszur politycznych z XVI i początku XVII stulecia*, ed. B. Ulanowski, Kraków 1921, 107–195, here 111–118. Even though the anonymous author makes a marginal reference to the election of ‘Leszczyk’ [ibid. 118], when he considers the beginning of the legendary history of Poland and pre-Christian times, he does not see in them any forms of elective power, but rather the absolute rule of dukes unlimited by the law, which is a different approach to the one adopted by medieval chroniclers. At the same time, he notes that this rule was similar to the power of the tsars in Muscovy, ibid. 112.

other states and kingdoms look like *tyrannides* and practice outright slavery when compared to our Republic.⁷

Furthermore, we can treat the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth *cum granis salis*, as an example of a 'Renaissance monarchy',⁸ despite its having been dominated just by one estate, i.e. the nobility (*szlachta*). However, two developmental trends typical of Renaissance monarchies flourished in sixteenth-century Poland. The first was the consolidation of the political, legal, judicial, territorial, fiscal, financial, and administrative powers of the state, a process carried out with the broad participation of the nobility, aimed at implementing the demands of the so-called Executionist Movement. This process was accompanied by an expansion of the powers of central (*Sejm*) and provincial (*sejmiki*) representative estate bodies dominated by the nobility.

Up until the 1570s in the Commonwealth, there was a weak reception and knowledge of both Niccolò Machiavelli's writings themselves and clear anti-Machiavellian messages drawn from west European political culture.⁹ While Sigismund II Augustus' library did indeed hold a copy of *Il Principe*,¹⁰ the first, isolated reference to the book, albeit one made in a commendable tone, is found in an anonymous work produced ca. 1564 or 1565 titled *Conversation Between a Pole and a Lithuanian* [*Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem*]. The work was in polemic with Stanisław Orzechowski's views (published slightly earlier) about how the ruling powers of the Grand Duchies of Lithuania and Muscovy – in contrast with those of the Kingdom of Poland (called commonly: Polish Crown), which embodied the ideal of a Christian mixed monarchy – were tyrannical and relied on the enslavement of their subjects, as their hereditary dynasties held possession of both the State and those under their rule.¹¹ In *Conversation*,

7 Stanisława Orzechowskiego *polskie dialogi polityczne (Rozmowa około egzekucyj polskiej korony i Quincunx)* 1563–1564, ed. J. Łoś, Kraków 1919, 25.

8 On the model of Renaissance monarchy in reference to sixteenth-century Poland, see above, Part One, Chapter IV.

9 H. Barycz, 'Myśl i legenda Machiavellego w Polsce w wieku XVI i XVII,' in: his, *Spojrzenia na przeszłość polsko-włoską*, Wrocław 1965, 267–299, esp. 268, fn. 1, discussion on earlier source literature. Cf. also an overview of the legend and image of Machiavelli in Old-Polish culture: W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 427–436.

10 A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Biblioteka ostatniego Jagiellona. Pomnik kultury renesansowej*, Wrocław 1988, 56.

11 According to J. Korzeniowski, *Rozmowa* was supposed to be a retort to one of the best-known works by Stanisław Orzechowski, i.e. *Quincunx* from 1564; see *Rozmowa*

the anonymous author makes a reference to Chapter II of *The Prince*, misconstruing Machiavelli's argument as he tries to prove the superiority of hereditary monarchies.¹² This rather off-hand reference was made in a propaganda context relating to the debate raging during that era over the meaning and purpose of the Polish-Lithuanian union.

This Polish reception of Machiavelli's works was especially quite weak when compared to that in France. In sixteenth-century Poland, Machiavelli's concepts seem to have been known only to the elite.¹³ Surveys of the history of Polish political thought in the Renaissance explicitly emphasize the fact that the Florentine thinker's views were only vaguely reflected in Polish philosophy.¹⁴ The sole exception was *De optimo statu libertatis* (1598), written by Krzysztof Warszewicki, a champion of strong royal authority labelled by historians the 'Polish Machiavelli'.¹⁵ His views were probably closest to those of 'relative anti-Machiavellism' (he was prone to relativizing) or 'moralized Machiavellism.' But a more distinct trace of Machiavelli's Polish reception is found beyond the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in Basel, a city of dissenters – which in contrast to Geneva, imbued with the spirit of Calvinist orthodoxy – was a hotbed of radical currents of Protestant thought. The Italian exiles in Basel dedicated their Latin translation of Machiavelli's writings to Abraham Zbąski, a dissenter and

Polaka z Litwinem, 1564, ed. J. Korzeniowski, Kraków 1890, VI and e.g. 7 ff. Cf. also W. Goleman, 'The Jagiellos and the Model of the King...', 28.

- 12 *Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem...*, 62. This argumentation distorts the meaning of Machiavelli's reflections because in Chapter II of *The Prince*, he merely stated that it is easier to keep power in hereditary monarchies than in new countries. It is suspected that *Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem* was written by Augustinus Rotundus, who could have come across a copy of *The Prince* in the library of Sigismund II Augustus. Cf. A. Kawecka-Gryczowa, *Biblioteka ostatniego Jagiellona. Pomnik kultury renesansowej*, 56; M. Baryczowa, 'Augustyn Rotundus Mielecki, wójt wileński pierwszy historyk i apologeta Litwy,' in: *Z dziejów polskiej kultury umysłowej w XVI i XVII wieku*, Wrocław 1976, 77–153, here esp. 119–132.
- 13 W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 428 ff. Cf. also an article by Z. Spieralski, 'Niccolo Machiavelli a Stanisław Łaski. Przyczynek do 'nieobecności' Machiavellego w Polsce,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, 18, 1973, 153–165.
- 14 Cf. T. Wyrwa, *La pensée politique polonaise...*, 326 ff.
- 15 B. Leśnodorski, 'Polski Makiawel,' in: *Studia z dziejów kultury polskiej*, Warszawa 1949, 257–279. Cf. also doubts on whether or not this expression is exaggerated in: H. Barycz, 'Myśl i legenda Machiavellego...', 271.

magnate from Greater Poland, who was living in the city at that time.¹⁶ Europe's first published Latin edition of *The Prince* (*De principe libellus*, Basel 1560) was thus dedicated to a Pole.¹⁷ It is possible, albeit unconfirmed, that Machiavelli's writings in the Latin version might have reached the Commonwealth through this same channel.¹⁸

In turn, echoes of the French anti-Machiavellism of the 1570s could be heard in the Commonwealth a decade later. It is plausible that the invective 'Machiavellian' was first used in 1584, when it was hurled at Chancellor Jan Zamoyski by his fierce enemy Krzysztof Zborowski,¹⁹ a member of a magnate family well acquainted with the House of Valois and France itself. He most likely encountered the word in an anonymous anti-Papist pamphlet entitled *A Warm and Urgent Request to H.R.M. at Councils and Other Crown Estates, Written About Defending Against the Enemies of the Spirit and the Flesh* [*Gorąca i usilna prośba do K.J.M. przy radach i innych staniach koronnych napisana o obronę od nieprzyjaciół desynch i clench*] (1582), which accused Polish King Stefan Batory's (1576–1586) Catholic advisers of acting 'in accordance with the Evangelist Machiavelli the Florentine.'²⁰ More salient anti-Machiavellian motifs did not manifest themselves in Poland until the late sixteenth century, when they were placed alongside critical sentiments towards Philipppus Callimachus, the

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- 16 S. Kot, 'U źródeł polskiej myśli...', 431 ff.; H. Barycz, 'Myśl i legenda Machiavellego...', 273 ff.
- 17 Latin translations of the two most famous works by Machiavelli, i.e. *Il Principe* and *Discorsi*, were translated by J.N. Stupanus, professor of the University of Basel, and dedicated to Jan Osmólski, who temporarily settled in Basel in 1575. Cf. S. Kot, 'Polska złotego wieku wobec kultury zachodniej,' in: his, 'Bazyleja i Polska (XV-XVII w.);' in his: *Polska złotego wieku a Europa. Studia i szkice*, ed. H. Barycz, Warszawa 1987; his, 'U źródeł polskiej myśli krytycznej XVI w. Polacy w Bazylei za czasów Zygmunta Augusta,' in: his, 144 ff., 404 ff.; H. Barycz, 'Myśl i legenda Machiavellego...', 275 ff.
- 18 Such an assumption on the echoes of Machiavelli's doctrine, brought by a group of young Protestants from Poland staying in Basel was put forward by S. Kot, 'U źródeł polskiej myśli...', 451.
- 19 W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 430; H. Barycz, 'Myśl i legenda Machiavellego...', 283. H. Barycz, *ibid.*, 276, assumes that Zamoyski could have come across Machiavelli's works during his studies in Padua. Jan Zamoyski was also said to have authored a work on an ideal senator, written in Italy in 1563, which has not survived to the present times. It was supposedly based on the concept of *specula principis*, similar to *The Prince* by Machiavelli or *The Book of the Courtier* by Castiglione; see S. Grzybowski, *Jan Zamoyski*, Warszawa 1994, 26.
- 20 As cited in H. Barycz, 'Myśl i legenda Machiavellego...', 284.

Florentine-born author of the *Rady Kallimachowe* (Callimachus' Advice), and reached a culmination point during the antiroyalist Zebrzydowski Rebellion (1606–1607).²¹ In this way, in late sixteenth-century Poland, the dark legend of Callimachus was superimposed onto the dark legend of Machiavelli, whose ideas at that time were fiercely discussed by anti-Machiavellian authors in some west European countries.

Strong displays of anti-Italian sentiment are found since the first half of the sixteenth century in culture and political propaganda in reference to both Polish Queen Bona Sforza (1517–1557) and the sinister Callimachus.²² A satirical writing *A Conversation Between New Prophets, Two Rams with One Head* [*Rozmowa nowych proroków, dwu baranów o jednej głowie*] (ca. 1566) by Marcin Bielski was here especially relevant,²³ since it was accompanied by other contemporary Italophobic complaints, such as Italian merchants 'destroying' local trade in the capital city of Kraków or the 'Italianization' of customs, including culinary traditions.²⁴

In Renaissance-era Polish culture, Italophobia existed alongside a strong Italophilia, which manifested itself in, among other things, a fascination with the Venetian political system; these two phenomena complemented one another.²⁵ The question arises, however, whether the anti-Machiavellian phobia which broke out in France in the 1570s could have had an impact on the anti-Italian views in circulation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth? Accusations made during the first interregnum regarding the 'Italian Arts,' purportedly imported by Polish Queen Bona Sforza one generation earlier,²⁶ offer evidence of a local hostility towards Italian newcomers. They were also a distant echo of the French accusations being made against Catherine de' Medici about her poisonous practices, perverse behaviour, falsehood, and cunning. Given these facts, should we be puzzled by the Polish stereotype of Italians practicing as physicians in the Commonwealth?²⁷ Or can we perhaps see hidden here not only the medical

21 Cf. *ibid.*, 269, 285 ff.; W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 431–436.

22 Cf. above, Part One, Chapter IV.

23 S. Kot, 'Właściwości narodów,' in: his, *Polska złotego wieku a Europa...*, 810.

24 W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 523 ff.

25 *Ibid.*, 518 ff. On the co-existence of Italophilia and Italophobia in Poland (with the former prevailing), cf. also C. Backvis, 'Jak w XVI wieku Polacy widzieli Włochy i Włochów,' in: his, *Szkice o kulturze...*, 687–769, here esp. 707, 715, 717 ff., 720, 723 ff., 760 ff.

26 W. Tygielski, *Włosi w Polsce XVI-XVII w. Utracona szansa na modernizację*, 519, 560.

27 S. Kot, 'Właściwości narodów,' 809 ff.

craftsmanship attributed to these Italians but also the French shadow of ‘doctor Machiavelli,’ the Italian maestro of tyranny?

For research on anti-Machiavellism, the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its political culture is all the more interesting due to the events of 1572 in France, a few months before Henry de Valois was elected to the Polish throne. The influence of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre and Huguenot propaganda on public opinion in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the first interregnum has been thoroughly studied, as has the counter-response of the Catholic Bishop of Valence Jean de Monluc, the French envoy to the Commonwealth representing the interests of Henry de Valois.²⁸ Thanks to Monluc’s massive propaganda campaign, and the Poles who supported him in just the few short months between autumn of 1572 and the Election Sejm in May 1573, Monluc was able to sufficiently remove the odium of villainy from Henry de Valois – who was seen as the principal instigator of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (alongside Catherine de’ Medici). Thus, even some Protestant nobles in Poland chose to support Henry’s candidacy. The institutional safeguards adopted at the so-called Convocation Sejm in January 1573, undoubtedly influenced by the events in Paris, played a major role here. This included the Warsaw Confederation or acts granting religious freedoms to the nobility.²⁹ Another safeguard was the Henrician Articles, the final draft of which was drawn up during the Election Sejm in May 1573, including Article 21, the so-called *articulus de non praestanda oboedientia* (article on the withdrawal of obedience), which legalized the right of subjects to resist against a monarch when their privileges or fundamental political rights were violated.³⁰

28 J. Tazbir, ‘Henryk Walezy w opinii jego polskich poddanych,’ *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 33, 1989, 1–15; his, ‘Francuskie wojny religijne w oczach Polaków,’ *Sobótka* 3–4, 1982, 177–183; his, ‘Polskie echa Nocy św. Bartłomieja,’ *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 20 1975, 20–43. On this topic, cf. also E. Dubas-Urwanowicz, ‘Polskie opinie o Henryku Walezym. Oczekiwania a rzeczywistość,’ *Przegląd Historyczny* 81, 1990, 61–68; and a pioneering work: W. Sobieski, *Polska a hugonoci po Nocy św. Bartłomieja*, Kraków 1910, 8–15; and an elaborate discussion on this subject in J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Pierwsi królowie elekcyjni*, Warszawa 1969, 29; M. Serwański, *Henryk III Walezy w Polsce. Stosunki polsko-francuskie w latach 1566–1576*, Kraków 1976, 49–97, esp. 71 ff.; R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacres 1572–1576*, 89–106.

29 Cf. W. Sobieski, *Polska a hugonoci po Nocy św. Bartłomieja*, 15 ff.; J. Tazbir, ‘Francuskie wojny religijne...,’ 179.

30 Cf. S. Płaza, *Próby reform ustrojowych w czasie pierwszego bezkrólewia (1572–1574)*, Kraków 1969, Annex, 185: ‘And if we (heaven forbid) breached or failed to exercise or

However, more extensive research is needed on the possible influence of the ideas of Protestant theorists of the right of resistance on the views of the Polish nobility,³¹ and their drafting of the *articulus de non praestanda oboedientia*, to which the King-elect understandably expressed his aversion.³² An awareness of the dangers associated with Henry de Valois – as the co-initiator of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre – certainly played a role in the drafting of this article. As Robert M. Kingdon has noted, no other foreign country was mentioned in French propaganda literature following the 'bloody Parisian dawn' in 1572 more often than Poland.³³ But to what extent did the Protestant tradition of the right of active resistance have an impact on the actors involved in the

fulfil any rights, freedoms, articles or conditions, then the citizens of the Commonwealth [...] shall be released from the obligation to be obedient and faithful.'

- 31 On this topic, cf. pioneering research by W. Sobieski, 'Król czy tyran. Idee rokoszowe a różnowiercy za czasów Zygmunta Augusta,' *Reformacja w Polsce* 4, 1925, 1–14. Cf. also C. Chowaniec, 'Poglądy polityczne rokoszu 1606–1607 wobec doktryny monarchomachów francuskich,' *Reformacja w Polsce* 3, 1924, 256–268. This author concludes that the doctrine of the Monarchomachs had no direct influence on Polish political thought before 1606, and like S. Kot (*Rzeczpospolita Polska w literaturze politycznej Zachodu*, Kraków 1919) emphasizes that it was rather the political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that could have inspired the French Huguenots, *ibid.*, 259. A more general overview is provided by C. Backvis, 'Główne tematy...', 497. Cf. also H. Gmiterek, 'Die Rezeption reformatorischer Ideen und religiöser Widerstandstheorien innerhalb der polnischen Eliten,' in: *Ständefreiheit und Staatsgestaltung in Ostmitteleuropa. Übernationale Gemeinsamkeiten in der politischen Kultur vom 16.–18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Bahlcke, H.-J. Bömelburg, N. Kersken, Leipzig 1996, 217–227.
- 32 During negotiations with Henry de Valois, undertaken by the Polish legation in Paris 3–9 September 1573, the Polish envoys discussed the article referred to as *articulus de non praestanda oboedientia*, to which the French candidate did not want to agree. Henry was afraid that in Poland he would not be a king, 'but rather a slave of marginal importance.' However, when there was news about the upheaval caused by pro-Habsburg agitation in Poland, it was agreed that a special declaration would be added to the controversial article. It stated that one could disobey the king only when the king deliberately abused his sworn rights. During the Coronation Sejm held in Kraków in February 1574, Henry kept refusing to confirm the *articulus de non praestanda oboedientia*. Cf. M. Serwański, *Henryk III Walezy w Polsce. Stosunki polsko-francuskie w latach 1566–1576*, 146, 180; W. Sobociński, 'O ustawie konstytucyjnej państwa polskiego z roku 1573,' *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne* 1, 1948, 84; S. Płaza, *Próby reform ustrojowych...*, 114.
- 33 R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572–1576*, 88.

political life of the Commonwealth at that time, and in particular, those among the religiously diverse Polish-Lithuanian nobility?

The influence of the Lutheran concept of *ius resisti* on dissidents in Poland was already noticeable around 1548, during the Schmalkaldic War. In turn, it seems that Calvinist ideas of the right of resistance failed to gain much ground in the Commonwealth during the late reign of Sigismund II Augustus. Moreover, at that time, Calvinists in the Commonwealth were espousing pro-royalist views, probably in hope that the King would join the Reformation.³⁴ More resonant tones of criticism directed at Sigismund August came from within the Catholic nobility.³⁵ There is no doubt about the Polish political origins of the *articulus de non praestanda obedientia*. It arose as a result of the contractual nature of authority in the limited monarchy formed in Poland during the late Middle Ages. The main inspiration for the presumed authors of the Henrician Articles (Jan Zamoyski and the Calvinist Jan Tomicki) was provided by a fragment of the never enforced Crown Privilege of Mielnik of 1501, whose wording was to some extent more radical than that of Article 21.³⁶ The originality of the Polish tradition of the right of resistance was likewise emphasized in election propaganda during the first interregnum.³⁷

However, it is worth noting the vagueness of the wording used in the Henrician *articulus de non praestanda obedientia* and the lack of detailed legal regulations on how the right of active resistance might be enforced. It was not until laws were passed by the Sejm in the early seventeenth century, in a spirit of resistance by 'lower authorities,' that the institutional procedure for enforcing this Article

34 W. Sobieski, 'Król czy tyran...', 3 ff.

35 Ibid., 6, 11. Cf. also the critique of the last years of Sigismund II Augustus' rule in Poland in political poems written just after his death; J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Pierwsi królowie elekcijni*, 7–13.

36 W. Sobociński, 'O ustawie konstytucyjnej państwa polskiego z roku 1573', 83 ff. Cf. also the detailed description of debates on the adoption of articles at the Election Sejm, S. Płaza, *Próby reform ustrojowych...*, 94–112, and on the right of resistance, *ibid.*, 105, 111 ff. Cf. also W. Sobieski, 'Król czy tyran...', 2.

37 At the Election Sejm on 11 May 1573, Piotr Zborowski, voivode of Sandomierz, who was a proponent of the French candidate, postulated that Henry's Articles be signed before Henry de Valois is nominated the king-elect. Zborowski claimed that there were numerous examples when elected Polish kings had to abdicate because they had violated rights or broken their oath; Ś. Orzelski, *Bezkrólowia ksiąg ósmioro, czyli dzieje Polski od zgonu Zygmunta Augusta r. 1572 aż do r. 1576*, ed. W. Spasowicz, Petersburg–Mohylew 1856, vol. 1, 141 and the description in: S. Płaza, *Próby reform ustrojowych...*, 111 ff.

was detailed.³⁸ Despite its vagueness, the very idea of resistance expressed in the Henrician Articles, perceived by contemporaries as a curb upon monarchical power, was in line with the rebellious spirit prevalent in Geneva and among the French Huguenots or, as we will see later, the Anglo-Scottish Calvinists in the latter half of the sixteenth century.³⁹ At the same time, the concept of the sovereignty of the law over the monarch promoted by the Polish nobility at the time⁴⁰ was in keeping with, and at times even transcended, the Protestant ideologists' visions of *ius resisti* in terms of radicalism.

The Vicissitudes of the Muscovite Candidacy During the First Interregnum

It is indisputable that the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre influenced Polish public opinion and that the resulting blemish on Henry de Valois' image diminished his chances to the Polish throne and strengthened those of the most serious counter-candidates: Archduke Ernest Habsburg and Fyodor, son of Ivan IV the Terrible (1547–1584) from the Rurik dynasty. Pro-Habsburg propagandists promptly launched lampoons against the Duke of Anjou, lambasting his participation in the 'bloody Parisian dawn.'⁴¹ In turn, pro-Muscovy authors also took advantage of this opportunity, though their efforts were more effectively

38 The laws passed by the Sejm (the so called constitutions in the Old-Polish language) were adopted as a result of the Zbrzydowski Rebellion. They determined who could disobey the king and under what circumstances. The constitution of 1607 stated that when the monarch violated his obligations set forth in *pacta conventa*, every noble had the right to inform a local senator about this. The senator should then approach the primate, who should reprimand the king. If this proved futile, the Senate had the right to reprimand the king again, and if this had no effect, the Sejm was authorized to disobey the king. However, pursuant to the constitution of 1609, the institution authorized to reprimand the king for the second time was no longer the Senate, but the county sejmik of the place of residence of the noble who made the initial complaint. Cf. a discussion G. Górski, 'Uwagi o federalnym charakterze państwa polsko-litewskiego w XVI–XVIII w. Artykuł dyskusyjny,' *Czasz Nowożytny* 16, 2004, 70, fn. 27.

39 Cf. a more extensive discussion on this subject below, Part Three, Chapter III.

40 Cf. S. Płaza, *Próby reform ustrojowych...*, 97.

41 J. Tazbir, 'Polskie echa Nocy...' 33; J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Pierwsi królowie elekcyjni*, 30 ff.; cf. also the discussion on the pro-Habsburg election campaign in: A. Bues, 'Stosunki Habsburgów z Polską i ich starania o polski tron w latach 1572–1573,' *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 102, 1995, 2, 3–14.

stymied. In the case of the Habsburg candidate, the Germanophobia that dominated among the nobility played a crucial role here.

However, the Muscovite candidacy also aroused strong feelings among the Polish public. This was undoubtedly influenced by the negative opinion expressed both in Poland and abroad towards the Grand Duke of Muscovy and the Muscovite state itself. It is worthwhile bearing in mind that even before Ivan's ascension to the throne, in the first west European descriptions of Muscovy, this country was identified with unrestricted ruler's power, and a level of servility of its inhabitants incomparable to that of other European countries. The Holy Roman Emperor's envoy and keen observer Sigismund Herberstein, author of the widely-read *Rerum Moscovitarum Commentarii* (1549), which for decades shaped the image of Russia in the West, succinctly summarized this 'Russian problem': 'it is unclear whether these people must have such a harsh rule over them, or whether such cruel rule is what makes them so passive.'⁴²

These negative feelings were bolstered when reports of atrocities committed by the Muscovite army during the Livonian War (1558–1583) reached the Western Europe through the accounts of travellers and historians, who also described Tsar's domestic policy, such as the *oprichnina* – oppression, public executions and confiscation of the Russian high nobility's land and property. The acts of cruelty committed by Ivan's troops in cities like Tver, Pskov and Novgorod following an alleged plot against the Tsar, led the figure of Ivan to become synonymous with 'tyrant' in Western culture.⁴³ From the late sixteenth century, there had been a tendency to combine his name with the nickname 'the Terrible,' and in the seventeenth century, 'the Tyrant.'⁴⁴ Thus, alongside Roman emperors like Tiberius, Caligula, Nero and King Louis XI of France, he entered the traditional

42 'Es ist ain zweyfel ob ain solch volckh ein solche schwäre Herrschaft haben muess/ oder ob die grausame Herrschaft ain solch ungeschickht volckh macht'; as cited in A. Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des westlichen Russenbildes*, Bern–Frankfurt/M. 1972, 181.

43 Cf. in particular the extensive study by A. Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyj...*, 29 ff., 110 ff., on the sources of the unfavourable Western (mostly German) press' response to atrocities committed by the Muscovite army during the Livonian War in the 1560s and during the *oprichnina*, to a large extent based on Polish accounts of these events; *ibid.*, 38 ff., 118 ff. *Ibid.*, 45, 134 ff.,. Cf. also W. Leitsch, 'Westeuropäische Reiseberichte über den Moskauer Staat,' in: *Reiseberichte als Quellen europäischer Kulturgeschichte. Ausgaben und Möglichkeiten der Historischen Reiseforschung*, ed. A. Mączak, H.J. Teutenberg, Wolfenbüttel 1982, 153–176; K. Rasmusen, 'Das Hodoeporicon Ruthenicum' von Jacob Ulfeldt – eine Quelle zur russischen oder dänischen Geschichte,' in: *ibid.*, 177–192.

44 A. Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyj...*, 236–239.

canon of tyrants,⁴⁵ and would be described as such in the European political literature at least up until the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ Parallels between Ivan and tyrants from biblical (Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, the Pharaohs) and ancient times (Ajax, Dionysius of Sicily, Caligula, Nero, Julian the Apostate) or early modern (Eric XIV of Sweden, the Duke of Alba, the perpetrators of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre) had been pointed out by contemporary publicists and historians. In the view of many sixteenth-century commentators, the dark image of the Tsar was eclipsed only by the stereotypical image of the 'pagan' and 'tyrannical' Ottoman Sultan.⁴⁷ A major factor in Ivan's negative image was the religious otherness of Orthodox Russia and its inhabitants, which were portrayed as dangerous enemies of the west European world and identified with 'paganism.' In writings castigating Ivan's conduct, he was often contrasted with the traditional image of the *princeps christiani* who was endowed with the classical virtues of justice and kindliness.⁴⁸

Ivan's poor reputation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth most certainly arose largely as a result of his part in the Livonian War. Moreover, official Polish propaganda against Muscovy also played an important role in establishing the tyrannical image of Ivan IV in Western Europe.⁴⁹ Some Polish contemporary commentators sometimes attached the Latin nickname *terribilis* or the Polish 'Groźny' to Ivan's name.⁵⁰ It should be borne in mind, however, that at the end of Sigismund II Augustus' life, the idea was entertained of the childless Polish king adopting 'the Muscovite' (as Ivan IV was widely known in Poland).⁵¹ Alongside the prevailing tones of condemnation and contempt for Ivan the Terrible as a tyrant, madman and sadist,⁵² one could also read in the most important Polish

45 J. Tazbir, *Okrucieństwo w nowożytnej Europie*, Warszawa 1993, 157–160.

46 Cf. reflections on how Polish stereotypes of Ivan the Terrible and Russia were shaped in the early modern period in: J. Tazbir, 'Pomiędzy stereotypem a doświadczeniem,' *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 40, 1996, 5.

47 A. Kappeler, *Ivan Groźny...*, 239.

48 *Ibid.*, 237.

49 On the origin of a negative stereotype of Muscovites in 16th century Poland see H. Grała, 'O genezie polskiej rusofobii,' *Przegląd Historyczny* 83, 1992, 141 ff. Cf. also A. Kępiński, *Lach i Moskal. Z dziejów stereotypu*, Warszawa–Kraków 1990, 36, 41; J. Tazbir, 'Moskwicini i Lach: wzajemne postrzeganie,' in: his, *W pogoni za Europą*, Warszawa 1988.

50 A. Kappeler, *Ivan Groźny...*, 150 ff.

51 *Pisma polityczne pierwszego bezkrólewia*, XVIII.

52 Cf. characteristics of political poems from the early 1580s, inspired by pro-Batory propaganda and written by Albert Sarnicki, 'Bartłomiej Paprocki and Walentyn Neothelbel'

historical works of that period, words of unbridled admiration for his abilities as a military strategist and commander, and for his proud bearing and valour.⁵³ Many may have considered these qualities sufficient reason to support the Muscovite candidacy for the Polish throne after 1572.⁵⁴

Who, then, supported his candidacy in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth? In the Duchy of Lithuania, a pro-Muscovite faction began to form in the fall of 1572 after a Lithuanian diplomatic mission was sent to Moscow in September with a proposal to extend the existing truce with the Commonwealth, to which Ivan the Terrible consented, offering his own candidacy for the Polish throne.⁵⁵ Initially, the plan was backed by a minority of Lithuanian senators who entertained the separatist notion of electing his son, Fyodor Ivanovich, first to throne of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, and then convincing Polish nobles to elect Fyodor to the Polish royal throne as well. By the end of the year, however, the idea of a separate election⁵⁶ had been abandoned, though the goals and demands of the Lithuanian magnates had been made clear. The overriding issue for them was to ensure peace on the eastern border of the Duchy and hope that Polotsk and Smolensk, which had been occupied by Muscovy, would be returned to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was emphasized that Fyodor's election would require his converting to Catholicism and agreeing to personally rule the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁵⁷ However, differences of opinion between the Lithuanian magnates compelled the supporters of Fyodor's election to take a more cautious stance in the first months of 1573. The pro-Muscovite faction

in: J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Pierwsi królowie elekcijni*, 122–128; *ibid.*, 22 ff., the discussion on the critique of Ivan's tyranny in propaganda texts from the first interregnum.

53 For example, [Anonymous Senator], 'Deliberacje o królu...' in: *Sześć broszur politycznych* 112, which generally mentions the military fame of Ivan IV. Cf. also A. Lubieniecki, *Poloneutychia*, ed. A. Linda, M. Maciejewska, J. Tazbir, Z. Zawadzki, Warszawa–Łódź MCMLXXXII, 71. Lubieniecki also claimed that during the reign of Ivan IV, Muscovy had achieved the peak of its power only to start collapsing soon afterwards.

54 A rather elaborate discussion on the history of the Muscovite party and candidacy during the first interregnum is provided by S. Gruszecki, *Walka o władzę w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej po wygaśnięciu dynastii Jagiellonów (1572–1573)*, Warszawa 1969, 169–180.

55 B. Floria, 'Wschodnia polityka magnatów litewskich w okresie pierwszego bezkrólewia,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 20, 1975, 50 ff.

56 *Ibid.*, 54 ff.

57 *Ibid.*, 58 ff, 60.

in Lithuania assured the senators from the Polish Crown that their support for Fyodor's candidacy was only meant to foil the Tsar Ivan's own chances of election. It was not until Ivan gave an unequivocally negative response during negotiations with a group of Lithuanian envoys at the end of February 1573, rejecting any territorial concessions and demanding the Commonwealth transfer hereditary rights to the Rurik dynasty⁵⁸ that the remnants of pro-Muscovite sentiment among the Lithuanian magnates were finally extinguished. They also failed to inform Ivan IV about the date of the royal election, which precluded him from sending his own envoys to the Election Sejm.⁵⁹ The report of the Lithuanian envoys submitted to the Sejm dispelled any doubts entertained by the remaining supporters of the Muscovy candidacy,⁶⁰ who ultimately cast their votes for Henry de Valois.⁶¹

Apart from Lithuania, the Muscovite candidacy also enjoyed considerable support in the Polish Crown. Under the influence of the anti-Habsburg feelings prevailing among the nobility, Bishop Stanislaw Karnkowski presented a plan for the election of one of the Tsar's son as early as September 1572, and established contacts for this purpose with the Lithuanians, also trying to convince the Papal Legate Commendone of the benefits of a young Tsarevich's conversion to Catholicism.⁶² At the same time, as Reinhold Heidenstein wrote in his *History of Poland*, the Muscovite candidacy found broad support among the nobility: 'Most of the nobles were inclined towards the Tsar, either because of the enormity of his country, or because of the advantages of a durable peace. The memory had not yet faded of [Grand Duke of Lithuania] Jagiello, who went from being a heathen to a Christian, and from a foe to the King of Poland [IK – 1386], who united Lithuania and Poland, and secured a lasting peace.'⁶³ Apparently, the proposal to elect 'the Muscovite' was the most popular in the Polish Kingdom, and was

58 See 'Poselstwo moskiewskiego przez Haraburdę sprawowane,' in: *Zbiór pamiętników do dziejów polskich*, ed. W.S. de Broel-Plater, vol. 3, Warszawa 1858, 58–65.

59 B. Floria, 'Wschodnia polityka magnatów...', 64 ff.

60 R. Hejdenstejn, *Dzieje Polski od śmierci Zygmunta Augusta do roku 1594*, Petersburg 1857, vol. 1, 66 ff.

61 *Ibid.*, 73. Cf. also P. Rybak, *Zjazd szlachty w Stężycy (maj–czerwiec 1575 r.) na tle drugiego bezkrólewia*, Toruń 2002, 151.

62 B. Floria, 'Wschodnia polityka magnatów...', 52.

63 R. Hejdenstejn, *Dzieje Polski od śmierci Zygmunta Augusta do roku 1594*, 7. Graziani, secretary of the papal legate, also drew attention to the fact that the Muscovy candidate had the biggest chance of winning, but since the Tsar did not send legates to the Commonwealth, it was bound to fail; see S. Gruszecki, *Walka o władzę...*, 173.

supported by the less wealthy nobles of Greater Poland and Mazovia and also by those from Ruthenia and Lesser Poland. Among his supporters there were among others leaders of the Executionist Movement, such as the Chamberlain of Chełm Mikołaj Siennicki, or the Starost of Belsk Jan Zamoyski.⁶⁴ However, just as with the Lithuanian magnates, those with pro-Muscovite sentiments were undermined by Ivan's undiplomatic stance, as described by the Lithuanian envoys in their report from a mission to the Tsar, which was presented at the Election Sejm in May 1573.⁶⁵ Despite the initial debacle, the Muscovite candidacy was offered again during the next two interregnums, in the mid-1570s and the mid-1580s, either for purely tactical reasons, or because of mirages conjured up by the Catholic Episcopate of taking control of Russian Orthodoxy.⁶⁶ Among some nobles, however, the plans to elect the Muscovite candidate to the Polish throne remained popular and were treated seriously.⁶⁷

It is worthwhile at this point to explore the tenor of several propaganda texts agitating for the Muscovite candidate, produced in both the Crown and Lithuania during the first interregnum.⁶⁸ Most of these were manuscripts, while

64 P. Rybak, *Zjazd szlachty...*, 151 ff.; S. Gruszecki, *Walka o władzę...*, 171 ff.

65 Cf. also Ś. Orzelski, *Bezkrólewia ksiąg ośmioro...*, 92; R. Hejdenstejn, *Dzieje Polski...*, 66 ff. For a general overview of this subject cf. also E. Dubas-Urwanowicz, *Koronne zjazdy szlacheckie w dwóch pierwszych bezkrólewiach po śmierci Zygmunta Augusta*, Białystok 1998, 285.

66 Cf. a description of support for the Muscovite candidate during the third interregnum, after the death of Stefan Batory, in: *Jana Dymitra Solikowskiego arcybiskupa lwowskiego krótki pamiętnik rzeczy polskich. Od zgonu Zygmunta Augusta, zmarłego w Knyszynie 1572 r., w miesiącu lipcu, do r. 1590*, ed. W. Syrokomla, Petersburg–Mohylew 1855, 83. Solikowski emphasizes the popularity of the Muscovite candidate. For a long time, he was even supported by the Polish and Lithuanian primate Jakub Uchański, on condition that The Tsar convert to Catholicism..

67 Cf. a description of the Muscovy candidacy during the second interregnum (1574–1575). P. Rybak, *Zjazd szlachty...*, 153–158, emphasizes his popularity among less wealthy nobles.

68 'Zdanie o obieraniu nowego króla,' in: *Pisma polityczne*, 349–355. Ibid., 349, the author presents himself as a nobleman from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who 'as a child was raised among foreign nations.' Some historians (J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Pierwsi królowie elekcyjni*, 20) believe that the author of this work was Augustinus Rotundus, who had close ties to the magnates who set the tone of political life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. 'Sententia de eligendo novo rege ex duce Moschorum,' in: *Pisma polityczne*, 355–357. 'Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali, toby na nie przyjąć miało,' in: *ibid*, 358–362; J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Pierwsi*

only two were in the printed form, without any date or place of publication.⁶⁹ We can surmise that they were products of a hasty effort by the copyists and publishers who produced them. They were distributed on an ongoing basis during assemblies of nobles and addressed to a 'mass' readership – the multitudes of politically minded nobles who were able to read or listen to the documents being read aloud by another. All of the pro-Muscovite writings, as well as the lion's share of ephemeral propaganda from the first interregnum period, were published anonymously. Anonymity was generally an imperative in those times. In spite of the right to freedom of speech in the Commonwealth, the authors of election pamphlets found it preferable to remain nameless, so as not to be exposed to those who belonged to a camp supporting a different candidate to the Polish throne.⁷⁰ Consequently, we can merely conjecture about the authorship of some of these works. One of them, entitled *A Statement on the Election of a New King* [*Zdanie o obieraniu nowego króla*], is seen by some historians as the work of Augustus Rotundus Mielecki, who authored the previously mentioned *Conversation of a Pole with a Lithuanian* [*Rozmowa Polaka z Litwinem*], the first

królowie elekcyjni, 20 ff., doubts that the author of this text was Jan Dymitr Solikowski, as suggested by J. Czubek; 'Sentencya cuiusdam de electione regis polonorum cum commostratione commodi et incomodi inde emergentis', in: *ibid.*, 362–381; J. Czubek hypothesizes that the author of this text could have been Piotr Mycielski, a nobleman from Kalisz Province, a dissident, most probably a Calvinist, see *Pisma polityczne*, XIX–XXII. Cf. also an earlier edition of the latter work, worse in terms of editing: 'Pokazanie pożytków, któreby przyjąć mogły z wzięcia Moskiewskiego Rzeczypospolitej państwa korony polskiej', in: *Zbiór pamiętników...*, 41–48 and 'Niekorzyści, któreby na Polskę (uchowaj Boże) przyjąć mogły, z przyjęcia za króla którego z panów zachodnich', in: *ibid.*, 48–57. 'Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków z wzięcia pana z pośrzedku siebie', in: *Pisma polityczne*, 381–397, dating 'Datum e domo cuiusdam equitis districtus Calisiensis 10. Januarii. Anno Domini 1573'; J. Czubek ascribes this work to Piotr Mycielski. [Piotr Mycielski], 'Przestroga, to jest pokazanie upadków...', *ibid.* 705–724, the author's name is clearly legible in the first letters of the foreword written in verse. Apart from the above-mentioned works, it is also worth mentioning two Latin texts which express a great deal of support to the Muscovite candidate: 'Andrea Ciesielski, equitis Poloni, oratio', *ibid.* 97–140 and a text which officially supported the 'Piast', *De rege novo ex sua gente oratio*, *ibid.* 332–338, and which J. Czubek also ascribes to Andrzej Ciesielski; see *Pisma polityczne*, XVII ff.

69 These are 'Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków z wzięcia pana z pośrzedku siebie' and 'Sentencya cuiusdam de electione regis polonorum cum commostratione commodi et incomodi inde emergentis'; for more detailed bibliographic information, see *Pisma polityczne*, XII ff.

70 *ibid.*, XIV ff.

writing in the Commonwealth to contain a favourable reference to Machiavelli's *The Prince*.⁷¹

The type of literature in question, 'ephemera' (i.e. pamphlets or lampoons), is all the more interesting because the first interregnum ran concurrently with the rapid development of occasional propaganda literature, which had no precedent on such a scale in Poland. Compared to Germany, where it was triggered by the 'media revolution' initiated by Luther, this process in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was delayed by almost forty years.⁷² Apart from the proposal to elect the Tsar's younger son, 13-year-old Fyodor, who was expected to convert to Catholicism and reside permanently in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,⁷³ the candidacy of Ivan IV (then 42 years old) was also declared a viable option in pro-Muscovite writings. Nonetheless, most of these texts focused extensively on the virtues of the father, rather than the son. Although they were written anonymously, there is no doubt that they were addressed to large groups of electors from among the nobility. Election pamphlets produced to encourage them to support the Rurik's side used arguments and references accessible to the nobles of the time given their political awareness. They contained popular political notions and views, historical references and ethnical stereotypes. At the same time, their dialectical form and structure were typical of election propaganda literature in the interregnum period, providing concise comparisons of the advantages (*commodas*) and disadvantages (*incommoda*) that would follow the election of a particular candidate.

Let us start with the foreign policy advantages the Commonwealth would gain by elevating 'the Muscovite' to the throne, according to the anonymous authors of these pamphlets. The first, and perhaps strongest appeal to rank-and-file members of the 'knightly estate' was perpetual peace with Muscovy and the return of territories it had previously captured (Smolensk, Polotsk), as well as parts of occupied Livonia. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would likewise be strengthened on the international arena against the attempts to act against it by hostile forces – above all, against the Ottoman empire, which was intent on annexing Pokuttya, and against the demands being pursued by the

71 Cf. above, fn. 12.

72 J. Pirożyński, *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI w. Nowiny z Polski w kolekcji Jana Jakuba Wicka w Zurychu z lat 1560–1587*, 80 ff., 134; the author emphasizes the significance of the first interregnum, which was the turning point for the development of early 'ephemera' in Poland.

73 The proposal to choose Feodor rather than Ivan is clearly stated in the Lithuanian text 'Zdanie o obieraniu...' in: *Pisma polityczne* 349.

Teutonic Knights, supported by the Holy Roman Emperor⁷⁴ An aversion to the Habsburgs and to the Germans and Holy Roman Empire in general, to whom an overly servile attitude towards the Ottomans was imputed,⁷⁵ was growing into a rabid Germanophobia, sparked by anti-Habsburg propaganda.⁷⁶ We will inquire more deeply into this matter shortly.

The anti-Ottoman aspect of the Muscovite candidacy is also manifest. Since the beginning of the interregnum, the Ottoman Empire had strongly opposed the election of a member of the Rurik dynasty to the Polish throne, consistently supporting a French Valois candidate who would be willing to enter into alliances with Turkey.

The election of a Rurik was to have been used in the Commonwealth's foreign policy to improve its internal situation, and was designed to strengthen the Treasury and thus safeguard the union of Poland and Lithuania. An anonymous noble writer from Greater Poland depicted this situation with meticulous accuracy, in the spirit of Crown interests, emphasizing two *commodas*. First, the election of the Tsar to the Polish throne would strengthen the Union of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, deterring Lithuanian separatists who realized that an isolated Lithuania could be easily overwhelmed by Muscovy. Second, the election of 'the Muscovite' would put an end to the fragmentation of the landed property of the Polish nobles, who, according to merit, were empowered to receive estates in the lands previously seized by Muscovy. The election of the Muscovite candidate would accordingly expedite the colonization of the Ukrainian 'Podolia deserts,' seeing that Ivan, owing to his military advantages, was strong enough to ward off Tartar attacks and defend the Commonwealth against the Ottomans.⁷⁷ There was another author who, in

74 On benefits for foreign policy, cf. 'Sententia cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 372 ff., a Lithuanian source, and a similar and most probably also the Lithuanian text 'Sententia de eligendo...,' *ibid.* 356.

75 Cf. also 'Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 390 ff. The author puts forward several anti-German arguments, for example, that Germany and the Habsburgs contributed to the collapse of Hungary and Ottoman expansion due to their indolence and because they 'became vassals to Turkey,' and reminds readers about the Teutonic Order's claims to Prussia: This situation is similar in the case of 'Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali...', *ibid.* 360, with a remark that electing the Habsburgs would not protect the Commonwealth against wars with the Ottomans, Sweden, Denmark, Muscovy and the Tatars.

76 Cf. S. Gruszecki, *Walka o władzę...*, 172.

77 'Sententia cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 375 ff.

turn, would conjure up even bolder visions, approaching unbridled megalomania: After the election of the Muscovite candidate, there would be closer links between Poland, Lithuania, and Muscovy, which could also lead to the creation of a mighty monarchy modelled on the Persian, Assyrian and Roman Empires.⁷⁸

The *commoda* and *incommoda* are very interesting with respect to economic issues closely related to politics. In addition to the advantages to be gained from following the colonization of the eastern borderlands, other benefits were mentioned such as peaceful shipping and the Baltic trade, whilst the income thereof would be contributed to the Crown Treasury – the *nervus belli* of the Commonwealth.⁷⁹ After all, the bulk of attention was focused on the damage a possible election of one of the Western candidates: a Frenchman and a Habsburg would cause. Here, the pro-Muscovite propaganda literature was sketching an eerily dark scenario for the electorate of the nobles. On the election of the ‘gentleman from the West,’ ‘Western arrivals’ would infiltrate the Commonwealth and buy out the land from the native nobles. Hence, many Polish noble families would become impoverished (‘they would become peasants’), and their places would be taken by foreign nobles. This would be accompanied by a parallel influx of ‘Western vagabonds’ into the cities, who, using their merchant’s sleight of hand would lead to price hikes for food goods and difficulties for natives in buying them, as a result of which ‘Poland will then be as expensive as Germany or Italy.’⁸⁰ Thereafter, you may ask yourself a rhetorical question: ‘is it not better to remain the host in my own home? And is it not better to stop them from wrenching things from my grasp, not to let them be one step ahead of me?’⁸¹

That dark economic scenario of exploitation of ‘our own’ by ‘foreigners’ from the West was accompanied by xenophobic concerns regarding the political abuses one should expect from a Western candidate if elected, especially a Habsburg. There is no doubt that the Emperor would then be handing out the bishoprics and offices in the Commonwealth to Germans and the Italians – ‘who would be the first to have the right of election, so that they would favour him

78 ‘Sententia de eligendo...’ in: *Pisma polityczne* 356.

79 Ibid., 356, in which the author emphasizes how Baltic trade would benefit from a compromise on sailing on the Narew River.

80 ‘Sentencya cuiusdam...’ in: *Pisma polityczne* 369 ff. The content is similar in: ‘Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali...’ ibid. 360. The author emphasizes that if a member of the House of Habsburg was elected, foreigners would come to Poland and grab for themselves all that was best: ‘the best horse, ox, gear and household equipment would have to be theirs,’ whereas ‘poor Poles would have nothing to eat.’

81 ‘Sentencya cuiusdam...’ in: *Pisma polityczne* 370.

and vote for him after his death.' In addition, the Habsburg candidate would subdivide Poland into smaller principalities, transferring hereditary rule to his descendants, 'and he himself would reside at the Imperial Palace in Vienna. Because it is certain that he himself would not live in Poland, but in Vienna or the Holy Roman Empire.'⁸² Such admonitions were intended to lead the reader to the conclusion that the Commonwealth divided into provinces would soon dissolve in the Holy Roman Empire. The fate of Bohemia and parts of Hungary, which had gone under Habsburg rule, was cited as a classic example.⁸³ The conspicuous presence of xenophobia in this political and economic reasoning betokened anti-Western and overwhelmingly anti-German aspects.

Promotional Propaganda – Amidst Stereotypes

This anti-Occidentalism grew into an overt Germanophobia as a response to historical references and reflections about the differences between Poland, the West and the East. These are a precious mine of knowledge for the researcher of historical consciousness and the evolution of national stereotypes.⁸⁴ They are reflected in proverbs and the subjective remembrance of things past, such as: 'The Germans devour everything with their pride, *vorant enim, tanquam lupi* [i.e., wolves – I.K.].'⁸⁵ '*Lithuania semper abominatur Germanos*'⁸⁶ or 'It is better to let Vasily have his way than to have him make peace with Hans, our natural enemy.'⁸⁷ This last sentence brings to mind a proverb most likely coined in the mid-sixteenth century: 'As long as the world exists, the German will never be a brother to the Pole.' Many times, as was shown in propaganda writings concerning other Habsburg counter-candidates, people were reminded in a tone of sympathy that the Habsburgs had violated the freedoms, especially the religious

82 'Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 359 ff. A similar view is presented by Piotr Mycielski in: *Przestroga, to jest pokazanie upadków...*, in: *Pisma polityczne* 714.

83 'Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 359.

84 On Germanophobia among the nobility in the Commonwealth and the propaganda literature of the first interregnum, cf. K. Maliszewski, *Komunikacja społeczna w kulturze staropolskiej*, Toruń 2001, 97–119. See also the above-mentioned classic study by S. Kot, 'Właściwości narodów', 761–766.

85 'Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali...' in: *Pisma polityczne* 360.

86 Ibid.

87 'Sententia de eligendo...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 356.

freedoms, of Czechs, ‘our brothers.’⁸⁸ At the same time, emphasis was laid on the foreign aspect of the language used by Western candidates, and on the Slavic linguistic, or even more broadly, cultural community. This led to the identification of both the ‘people of Muscovy’ and the inhabitants of the Commonwealth as descendants of the ancient Sarmatians,⁸⁹ Sauromates or Scythians, and their opposition to the ancient Romans and the successors to the Roman Empire, the Germans, as well as other western countries. In this context, the soft, delicate and fearful nature of (*molissima et meticulossima natura*) of the ‘gentleman from the West’ and its people was contrasted with the Polish nobility (‘noble and strong with an indomitable Polish nature’), and with the courage of Ivan and his Muscovite subjects. Significantly, the coarseness of the customs of the inhabitants of the ‘northern countries’ was also emphasized.⁹⁰ Interestingly, similar identifiers (barbarism and savage customs, an absence of science, a small number of nobles, and the cruelty of those in power) were attributed by propaganda literature from outside the pro-Muscovite circle to another candidate from the north of Europe, i.e. the Swedish candidate.

Let us attempt to systematize the stereotypical notions of ‘ours’ (inhabitants of the Commonwealth), ‘our own’ (‘Muscovites’ and the Czechs) and ‘foreigners’ (‘gentlemen and peoples from the West’ and the Turks and Tatars), as well as self-stereotypical notions of the Poles themselves cited in pro-Muscovite publications.

The nine categories of foreignness and familiarity can generally be arranged into two groups of conventional identifiers:

‘External’ identifiers – i.e., those which you can see and hear – of individual nations, to which I have included the following: characteristic clothing, weapons, professions, and animal symbols; all associated with various nations and attributed to them in a way that is emblematic; in addition, there is also a definition of a ‘foreign language’ according to two basic categories: comprehensible, incomprehensible.

‘Internal’ identifiers – i.e. those which concern character traits or political or historical consciousness – to which I have included the following: characteristics of the candidate for the crown, which are usually extended to the entire nation he

88 See e.g. ‘Sententia de eligendo...’ in: *Pisma polityczne* 356; *Gdyby panowie Polacy cesarza albo Niemca obrali...*, *ibid.* 359.

89 *Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków...*, in: *Pisma polityczne* 396. There is a similarly reference to Ivan IV in: *De rege novo ex sua gente oratio*, in: *Pisma polityczne*, 336: ‘*tremendum ac formidabilem omnibus hostibus magnum totius Sarmatiae regem haberemus, terra et mari praepotentissimum.*’

90 ‘Sententia cuiusdam...’ in: *Pisma polityczne* 367 ff.

comes from, characteristics of the political system and the attitude of subjects to state power, religious identification, and references to historical figures or events taking on an exemplary meaning.

What is striking is the clear contrast between the clothing and weaponry of 'ours' and 'our own' and those of 'theirs,' 'foreigners' from Western Europe. Here, oriental 'spikes and *corrazina*' seem to be akin to 'ours' (although this passage is not sufficiently clear in terms of interpretation⁹¹) and Muscovite fur hats and kalpaks, similar to Polish-Lithuanian headgear, rather than Western clothing: *Pluderhosen*, spurs or puginals, not to speak of 'the Italian poison.' An affinity with Muscovy is also emphasized by the contrast between the local language (comprehensible) and Western (incomprehensible) languages. Alternatively, the assignment of animal emblems works a bit differently: Bear, or simply 'Beast' is assigned to Muscovy, and Wolf or Fox is assigned to the Western countries (as well as to the Ottomans). As we know, all of these animals were traditionally regarded as symbols of tyranny.

In the sphere of 'internal' identifiers, what is striking in the pro-Muscovite propaganda literature of the first interregnum is the complete lack of hostility towards multifarious denominations within Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox); denominational differences were completely ignored; however, it was clear that faith-related differences with the Muslim world ('God's scourge') must have been underscored. In the sphere of political awareness, the contrast between the Commonwealth and Muscovite tyrannical order and the Western countries torn asunder by civil wars (France, Germany) was clearly visible. In the opinion of the authors of election pamphlets, the Polish political system was based on the sovereignty of law (or more precisely, written laws) and the rejection of all forms of tyranny. The basic difference between Muscovy and the West was the overtness ('clarity') and even inevitability of Muscovite tyranny (due to the lack of written laws) and the 'secrecy' and 'iniquity' of Western European tyranny. The pro-Muscovite pamphlets, however, remain silent about Ottoman tyranny or despotism. Parenthetically, a reader familiar with political Aristotelianism would note the emphasis on the lack of written laws in the State of Muscovy and the resulting necessity for the monarch to rule at his own discretion as a mark of despotism and 'Asian' political traditions.⁹²

91 'Sentencya cuiusdam...,' in: *Pisma polityczne* 363.

92 Cf. the entry 'Despotia' in: *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku*, vol. 4. Cf. also about the association of tyranny with Asian countries C. Backvis, 'Główne tematy...', 498.

In the sphere of historical consciousness, there is a clear theme of associating foreign rulers with promoting foreigners to offices of authority. This was meant to confirm the legitimacy of concerns to the effect that Poland was likely to be exploited by foreign newcomers.

Opposition: 'Open' Muscovite Tyranny and the 'Hidden' Tyranny of the West – Relativizing the Problem of Tyranny in Pro-Muscovite Propaganda

One of the key historical references used to bolster the argument in favour of the election of the Muscovite candidate to the Polish throne was to recall the marriage between the Polish Queen Jadwiga and Grand Duke of Lithuania and future King of Poland, Vladislav II Jagiello (1386–1434) in 1386, as well as the acts of the Polish-Lithuanian personal unions at the end of the fourteenth and in the fifteenth century. This served as a parable for the proposed marriage between the Muscovite candidate and Anna Jagiellon, the sister of late Sigismund II August, and the plans of the future union of the Commonwealth with Muscovy.⁹³ On this occasion, the Polish author of a pro-Muscovite pamphlet explicitly stated that the Poles had no reason to be afraid of Ivan's ruthlessness, since Jagiello, the killer of his own uncle, Kiejstut, was an even greater tyrant. Therefore, there was no reason 'why the noble Polish people should fear anyone's cruelty, since they accepted Jagiello *plus quam tyrannum*, as a parricide, as their Lord and Master, of whom far worse things can now be said than of the Muscovite; otherwise one would have to argue thus: 'And because he exercised such tyranny over his uncle, he was more likely to murder his subjects.' But then he fell in love with the Polish people, and because he was successful, Polish chroniclers lauded him.⁹⁴ In this context, the comparison between Jagiello the Tyrant and the 'Muscovite' Tyrant fulfils a specific role: it is supposed to weaken the argument put forward by anti-Muscovite propaganda warning against the danger of Ivan IV's tyranny.

As we have seen, Pro-Muscovite pamphlets explicitly described the rule of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy as a tyranny, and Ivan himself as a tyrant. Apart from the historical comparison mentioned above (Jagiello – Muscovite candidate), the twofold argumentation was meant to assuage the nobles' public feelings against the threat of the introduction of Muscovy's political order to the Commonwealth.

93 'Sententia de eligendo...' in: *Pisma polityczne* 355, on the topic of marriage and 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', *ibid.* 377 ff., on the topic of the union.

94 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 378. It was similar to *De rege novo ex sua gente oratio*, *ibid.* 336.

First, an explanation of why Ivan the Terrible was forced to deal with his subjects as a tyrant at home. Second, an optimistic vision of what will happen to the Commonwealth after the election of the Muscovite candidate.

The tyrannical conduct of the Tsar in the State of Muscovy was a necessity resulting from the fact that his subjects had no written rights, so the ruler there was forced to resort to tyranny in order to keep the ruled in hand: 'And since he could not make them obey him otherwise, and in order to preserve the faith, he had to show them such a *tyranny* so that *poena unius* [penalty inflicted on one] shall be a *timor multorum* [fear paralyzing many]; he makes an example of them in one county, so that all in his State shall be wary, and since they have no written rights, then he himself exercises *per publication poenae et criminis* [through the publication of penalties and crimes].' Since the nature of the Tsar's subjects is brutish, whereas customs or laws fail to make them tender-hearted, the ruler must subdue his subjects like brutes: 'and since *fera natura* [animal nature] is the nature of his people, which is based neither on *arte* [art or regulations] nor *honestis moribus* [morality or proper behaviour] nor *legum praeceptis* [legal rules] (which they supposedly know not how to secure), nor is *exculpta* [neat or elegant]; therefore they cannot understand the nature of such a master, his will or his commandments, and therefore, *he must break his people like a bear, or other beasts* [emphasis mine – I.K.].⁹⁵ Besides, the reader needs to bear in mind, an anonymous author argues, that Ivan the Terrible is a tyrant only towards traitors and criminals, not towards virtuous subjects.

Therefore, if the Muscovite candidate was to be elected to the Polish throne: 'The *tyrannides* that he exercised over his people, might also harm us, free people who enjoy our well-privileged freedoms.'⁹⁶ As ruler of the Commonwealth, he would have to change the nature of his rule and adapt to Polish customs and the system in which the monarch can rule only with the consent of the estates, and in the event of a violation of their rights, the subjects shall have the right to remove him from power. For *Poles have never in their history tolerated tyrants but instead resisted them* – 'which this noble Polish nation did not acquire from other nations, but they were *as good as born with it* [emphasis mine – I.K.].'⁹⁷ Thus, the right of resistance against tyrants is treated here as a specifically Polish political identifier! Therefore 'the Muscovy' will soon soften his cruel, wild nature and will be disgusted by his own subjects' 'obscenity' and 'the most fierce nature

95 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 377.

96 *Ibid.*, point 9.

97 *Ibid.*, 378 ff.

of their ruler.⁹⁸ Moreover, being accustomed to severe punishment ('whipping or worse') for crimes in Muscovy will also strengthen law enforcement in the Commonwealth.⁹⁹ In this mode of argumentation, the principal opposition of the law *versus* tyranny is clearly undermined, whereas the relativistic, essentially perverse and demagogic corollary is that the tyrannical government may under altered circumstances be conducive to better observance of the law.

The main line of argumentation of pro-Muscovite propaganda (apart from listing the political *commodas* associated with Rurik and the economic *incommodas* associated with the threat of the election of a Western candidate) consists in recalling the bravery and cultural community (the Sarmatians, the Scythians) and the shared linguistic community of 'the Muscovy' and the peoples of the Commonwealth, and in emphasizing the inferiority of Muscovite civilization (tyranny, lack of written laws, of arts and sciences, severity of customs) towards Poland. The conclusion that both the authors of the pamphlets and their readers were to draw was clear: we will manage the obeisance of the Muscovite more adeptly than the superciliousness of foreigners from the West.¹⁰⁰ As a 'simple' people, we will be able to impose our customs on them rather than on the Germans who despise or disdain us, according to the above-mentioned saying: 'It is better to have Vasily have his way than to have him make peace with Hans, our natural foe.'¹⁰¹ The syndrome of resentment and distrust towards the West and a sense of superiority over the East (or rather, according to the prevalent orientation, over the North) of Europe are clearly manifest here. At the same time, the emphasis in pro-Muscovite pamphlets on the war threatening the Commonwealth by the Muslim Orient, the Ottomans and the Tatars ('The Fierce Scourge of God'¹⁰²), from whom the Tsar was supposed to save it, was designed to consolidate the image of the familiar Poles and Muscovites, as opposed to the religiously 'alien' Ottomans and their satellites.

The authors of pro-Muscovite's writings eagerly used the epithet of tyranny both to define the political order in the countries to the East and to the West of the Commonwealth, positing an interesting definitional distinction. The characteristic features of governments in Western countries (the Holy Roman Empire, France) include the violation of laws and promises (the example of the Habsburgs

98 Ibid., 377 and a similar message in *Zdanie o obieraniu...*, in: *Pisma polityczne* 354.

99 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 378

100 Ibid., 369.

101 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 356.

102 E.g. in: 'Przestroga, to jest pokazanie upadków...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 710.

in Bohemia and Hungary, and the slaughter of Huguenots on St Bartholomew's Night by the Valois), rule by force, corruption of political customs (including the argument that more money is spent on the theatre and comedians than on the army), constant civil wars, the swagger of monarchs, the imposition of unbearable taxes and duties on the subjects.¹⁰³

The motif of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in particular played an important role in exposing Western tyranny. Even though the numbers of victims as cited are different, the authors unanimously associate (the then) France (and thereby the entire West) with the worst kind of tyranny, i.e. a combination of fraud and cruelty. It can be presumed that their views were influenced by Huguenot libel literature. Although the literal stereotype of the sinister Machiavelli the Italian was absent,¹⁰⁴ the stereotype of the tyrannical practices of 'Valois the French' was his replacement. It is enough to quote the characteristics of Henry de Valois, presented in the pro-Muscovite pamphlets. It reveals the knowledge (not necessarily) of the model image of *principe nuovo* from Chapter XVIII of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, but rather than his paraphrases – the anti-Machiavellian stereotype of the 'new prince,' presumably borrowed from the then Huguenot propaganda disseminated in the spirit of anti-Machiavellism: 'We already know him well from the famous novel about him, because I hear that the gentleman is young, subtle, good on the outside [...] but a cunning fox incarnate on the inside [emphasis mine – I.K.]'.¹⁰⁵

That true Western and French *tyrannides* are associated with 'hidden iniquity'¹⁰⁶ or 'unostentatious tyrant'¹⁰⁷ and contrasted with the more manageable Muscovite *tyrant externa*¹⁰⁸ or 'bright [obvious] tyrant.' 'Because seeing such a Lord [i.e. Muscovite – I.K.], who is a *bright tyrant* [emphasis mine – I.K.], that he only lacks skills, that he will not break us when all the estates are united into one, the lords and the knights united together, where one would defend and fight for all, because what happens to one of us today could happen to another tomorrow [...] for while we are united, we must be vigilant that his tyranny may

103 Cf. 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 364, and 'Zdanie o obieraniu...', *ibid.* 354.

104 Of course, it is impossible to rule out the possibility that the authors of the discussed texts had some general knowledge of Machiavelli's works, especially in the case of the above cited 'Zdanie o obieraniu...'

105 *Niekorzyści...*, in: *Pisma polityczne* 49 or 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', *ibid.* 364.

106 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 371 ff.

107 'Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 383.

108 'Sentencya cuiusdam...', in: *Pisma polityczne* 364.

not be practiced against any of our estates in the slightest for as long as it shall first become law that be respected and prevail.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, what may thus be inferred is this: the 'bright' or 'manifest' tyranny (i.e. the Muscovite tyranny) is better than the 'hidden' or 'iniquitous' tyranny (i.e. Western tyranny).

Familiarity as an Intermediate Category in the Opposition 'Ours versus Others'

The example of pro-Muscovite propaganda literature from the first interregnum is interesting for several reasons. The fact that it was well received by the less affluent nobility in the Polish Crown reflected its use of catch-words and slogans that would appeal large groups of electors and mirror their political beliefs and prejudices. The authors of the pamphlets promoting a Muscovite candidacy therefore had to use populist arguments (e.g. the vision of stringent enforcement of the law in Muscovy) and embrace xenophobia, which was always useful when turned against the West of Europe. This anti-Occidentalism was fuelled by Germanophobia, which was widespread among the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, although anti-French and anti-Italian sentiments were also widely held. Interestingly, the anti-Occidentalism in pro-Muscovite writings was accompanied by an equating of ancient 'Sarmatians' (perceived as mythical ancestors of the Polish nobility) with 'Slavs' in Polish literature around the 1560s.¹¹⁰ The persistent sense of threat from the Muslim Orient must also have had an integrating effect in portrayals of both Poles and Muscovites being 'familiar' Slavic Sarmatians.¹¹¹

In the late 1560s, France saw a similar outbreak of xenophobia in the form of a demagogic anti-Italianism. The stereotypical image of Italians in France at the time portrayed them as wealthy usurpers, foreigners privileged at the royal court, and officeholders who exploited the local population mercilessly.¹¹² Such images had their counterparts in Polish Germanophobia or, as seen in the contents of the election pamphlets analysed above – in Sarmatian anti-Occidentalism. It was during the first interregnum that such a wave of intense xenophobic moods

109 'Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków...' in: *Pisma polityczne* 395. Cf. also *ibid.*, 385.

110 A. Lipski, 'Przestroga z pokazaniem niepożytków,' *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 5, 1989, 22.

111 Cf. a discussion on this topic: M. Bogucka, 'Szlachta polska wobec wschodu turecko-tatarskiego. Między fascynacją a przerażeniem (XVI–XVIII w.),' *Sobótka* 3–4, 1982, 185–189.

112 S. Grzybowski, 'Z dziejów ksenofobii francuskiej w czasach wojen religijnych,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 10, 1965, 112 ff.

made its way through the ranks of the Commonwealth's noble estate.¹¹³ Given the fact, that Polish society in the sixteenth century was generally seen as an 'open society' accepting of foreign immigrants,¹¹⁴ the emergence of a stronger wave of xenophobia in the Commonwealth in the 1570s was indeed surprising. In fact, this phenomenon could be explained by the anxieties and 'psychological (rather than political) destabilization' of society during the interregnum period. In Western Europe, the roots of this intense xenophobia lay in the destabilization caused by religious tensions and conflicts.

The upsurge in xenophobic attitudes in France and Poland in the latter half of the sixteenth century should also be associated with the rise of early-modern ethnical awareness in Europe. These developments ran in parallel with the establishment of new denominational identities in Europe, as well as with the Renaissance fashion for mythologization of the ethnogenesis of so-called 'political nations' (i.e., the Pole-Sarmatian-Nobleman-Fully-Fledged Citizen, or the myth of Franco-Gallic political continuity in France).¹¹⁵ Based on the political demands of the time, this fashion may have led to erudite fantasies aimed at establishing a 'close consanguinity' between the ancient ancestors of the French – the Gauls – and the forebearers of the Polish nobility – the Sarmatians.¹¹⁶ Equally important was a side effect of the birth of a new type of early-modern proto-national consciousness, i.e. the formation of a new conventional image of the 'foreigner-outsider' and its association with the abuse of power. I am referring here to the stereotype of a poor foreign careerist or freeloader that often appears in source materials from this epoch – the foreign courtier or official who enriched

113 J. Tazbir, 'Ze studiów nad ksenofobią w Polsce w dobie renesansu,' *Przegląd Historyczny* 48, 1957, 659 ff. Cf. also an article which is an updated version of the above-mentioned text, 'Początki polskiej ksenofobii,' in: his, *Sarmaci i świat (Prace wybrane Janusza Tazbira*, ed. S. Grzybowski, vol. 3), Kraków 2001, 371 ff.

114 A. Wyczański, 'Uwagi o ksenofobii w Polsce XVI wieku,' in: *Swojskość i cudzoziemszczyzna w dziejach kultury polskiej*, Warszawa 1973, 70.

115 Cf. also the summarizing approach in: N. Kersken, 'Geschichtsbild und Adelsrepublik. Zur Sarmatentheorie in der polnischen Geschichtsschreibung der frühen Neuzeit,' *Jahrbüher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 52, 2004, 235–260, and interesting reflections in: A. Borowski, 'Sarmatyzm – świadomość narodowa i świadomość europejska,' in: *Polska i Węgry w kulturze i cywilizacji europejskiej*, ed. J. Wyrozumski, Kraków 1997, 176.

116 E.g. in: *Polonia foelix Henrico Franco Valesio regnante tantopere exoptanto* (Lyon 1574), a work dedicated to Henry de Valois by Stephano Forcatulo, professor of Roman law at the University of Toulouse; see H. Barycz, *Szlakami dziejopisarstwa staropolskiego*, Wrocław 1981, 166–175.

himself at the expense of the native people – an image found in numerous countries at that time.¹¹⁷ In the collective consciousness, this image superseded that of the foreigner-merchant-guest, who was accorded a special, often privileged legal status in the Middle Ages. It seems that along with the closure of 'open' medieval urban communities in the early modern era, the territorial consolidation of states, and the expansion of their administrative structures (and royal courts), the image of cadres of well-educated officials (and courtiers) of foreign origin being eagerly absorbed into society was increasingly being supplanted by a new, more 'territorial' stereotype – one not just of an 'outsider,' but also of a 'foreigner.'¹¹⁸

It is interesting to note that just like Italians in sixteenth-century France, representatives of Western nations (German-speaking peoples, the French) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became the target of xenophobic attacks as they increasingly came to be perceived as morally corrupt and arrogant, treating 'us,' i.e. inhabitants of the Commonwealth, like inferior barbarians. And yet, those same nations were also treated by 'us' with a certain sense of societal otherness (or even inferiority).

Aside from that, the anti-Italian xenophobia in France that arose in the 1570s contained an element that had not yet appeared in the Commonwealth: anti-Machiavellism. In Poland, one aspect of its xenophobia, seen during the first free elections, was anti-Callimacheanism.¹¹⁹ With regard to both phobias – anti-Callimacheanism in Poland and anti-Machiavellism in France – the paradigm of tyranny appeared in the form of ethnic otherness.

The phenomenon of anti-Machiavellism became not just a 'side-element' of the ideology of the right of resistance promoted by the Monarchomachs, it also appeared in both the pro-absolutist camp (Bodin) and more generally in political thinking during the period of the Wars of Religion in France in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Bodin's efforts to relativize the problem of

117 Cf. I. Kąkolewski, *Nadużycia władzy i korupcja w Prusach Księżęcych w połowie XVI w. Narodziny państwa wczesnonowoczesnego*, Warszawa 2000, 71–91.

118 This can be traced by looking at how the meaning of the German word *Ausländer* evolved. It did not become popular until the early modern period, when it started to occur in parallel with the term *Fremde*, which had prevailed in the Middle Ages; apart from the text cited above, see: *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1854, column 901.

119 Cf. critical references to *Consilia Callimachi*, first in the context of the extensive xenophobic argument in: [Anonymous Senator], 'Deliberacje o królu...', in: *Sześć broszur politycznych* 169, and in 'Jakiego króla Polakom trzeba,' in: *Pisma polityczne* 278.

tyranny-despotism on the basis of political theory resulted from the traumatic experience of the chaos unleashed by protracted civil wars.

Polish and Lithuanian publicists also attempted during the first interregnum in the Commonwealth to relativize the problem of tyranny, yet the formula they offered was much more vulgar and demagogic. *Pro-Muscovite authors began to contrast 'bright' or 'manifest' tyranny, i.e. Muscovite with 'hidden' tyranny, associated with the West*, in order to discourage the election of a Valois king to the Polish throne. Although Polish-Lithuanian election pamphlets did not contain the French anti-Machiavellian stereotype of the sinister 'Machiavelli-Italian,' in its place was the xenophobic stereotype of the 'Valois-French.' The terms 'bright' and 'hidden tyranny' used by the authors of propaganda pamphlets were coined under the influence of their own needs, though in fact they closely coincided with the typology of *tyrannus manifestus* and *tyrannus vellatus et tacitus* created by Bartolus de Saxoferrato – a popular political thinker in the late medieval and early modern eras.¹²⁰ In this case, however, they were more of an upshot of demagoguery and populism than an example of profound philosophical and political reflection.

The campaign for the Muscovite's candidacy ended in failure. In spite of Sarmatian anti-Occidentalism and accusations of responsibility for the slaughter of the Huguenots during the 'bloody Parisian dawn,' Henry de Valois was elected king of Poland in May 1573. One of the most important assets of the Frenchman's candidacy was most certainly the extensive diplomatic activity of the Bishop of Valence Jean de Monluc, who successfully employed his own counter-propaganda in the defence of his Valois patron. The name of the 'false Frenchman Monluc,' as the Polish chronicler Andrzej Lubieniecki described him, became a synonym for a crypto-Protestant, a hypocrite and a political liar¹²¹ in Poland in the years to come, and thus played a role similar to that of Machiavelli the Italian in France.

Thanks to Monluc's power of persuasion, and above all, the legal and systemic safeguards created during the first interregnum, the French candidacy was

120 Cf. above, Part One, Chapter I.

121 Cf. A. Lubieniecki, *Poloneutychia*, 62 ff.; Ś. Orzelski, *Bezkrólewia ksiąg ośmioro...*, 19, about Monluc and a description of truly Machiavellian behaviour and games played by the 'deceitful' Monluc *ibid.* 23. On the pejorative connotations which the name Monluc had for the Polish and Lithuanian nobility, see J. Tazbir, 'Henryk Walezy w opinii...', 4; his, 'Polskie echa Nocy...', 23 ff., 40. Cf. also M. Serwański, *Henryk III Walezy w Polsce. Stosunki polsko-francuskie w latach 1566–1576*, 238 ff.; W. Sobieski, 'Polska a hugonoci...', 21–28, who also mentions negative Calvinist opinions about Monluc as the Antichrist, which were brought to Poland from Geneva, *ibid.*, 83 ff., 138.

considered by the majority of electors to be the safest option for the future of the Commonwealth and, despite their anti-Western prejudices, attracted votes from former supporters of the Muscovite during the Election Sejm. It was not until Henry's infamous, clandestine flight from Poland in June 1574 and the emergence of the syndrome of 'the King's escape'¹²² that the anti-French prejudices of the nobility,¹²³ as well as tyrannical features in the perception of the Valois king as a perjurer and an 'impostor,' were spread and perpetuated.¹²⁴

These negative experiences of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility, along with the dissemination in the Commonwealth of the epithet 'Machiavellian' and the propaganda image of a sinister Machiavelli, closely associated with absolutism, resulted in the rebirth of the anti-Machiavellian myth half a century later. Following the example of French Monarchomachism, it combined elements of native anti-Italianism, or more broadly, anti-Occidentalism, and the tradition of the right of resistance. The proponent of this myth was the leader of the 1606 rebellion, Mikołaj Zebrzydowski. Hurling the accusations at the Polish kings for their absolutist tendencies, he claimed that the Henrician Articles, including Article 21 *de non praestanda obedientia*, were created as a response to Sigismund II Augustus' alleged plans to implement the ideas expounded in Machiavelli's works.¹²⁵ This statement was probably based on the experiences of the previous generation of citizens of the Commonwealth: the traumatic syndrome of the 'escaping King-Frenchman,' Henry de Valois. The myth of the 'Italian' and Machiavellian Sigismund II Augustus, the last Jagiellonian became possible in the Commonwealth only after Henry's flight and the French invention of a systematized concept of anti-Machiavellism.

122 J. Tazbir, 'Henryk Walezy w opinii...', 10.

123 Cf. J. Tazbir, 'Francuskie wojny religijne...', 180; his, 'Polskie echa Nocy...', 35 ff.; and *ibid.*, on intensifying Gallophobia in Poland after the escape of Henry III, and also M. Serwański, *Henryk III Walezy w Polsce. Stosunki polsko-francuskie w latach 1566–1576*, 221 ff. On the intensification of negative stereotypes of Poles in France during the short reign of Henry de Valois in Poland and as a result of his escape, see also: H. Kutrzebianka, 'Opinie Francuzów o Polakach z czasów elekcji Henryka Walezego,' *Przegląd Współczesny* 15, 1936, 97–118 and a general overview in: *Polska–Francja. Dziesięć wieków związków politycznych, kulturalnych i gospodarczych*, ed. A. Tomczak, Warszawa 1983, 59–63.

124 Cf. a significant description of Henry de Valois in: Ś. Orzelski, *Bezkrólewia ksiąg ośmioro...*, 1. Cf. also the elaborate discussion on how the image of Henry de Valois evolved in Poland in: J. Tazbir, 'Henryk Walezy w opinii...', 5 ff.; E. Dubas-Urwanowicz, 'Polskie opinie...', 68–73.

125 W. Sobieski, 'Król czy tyran...', 2.

In a sense, the Polish-Lithuanian authors of pro-Muscovite pamphlets from the first interregnum *relativized the problem of tyranny by contrasting 'bright' or 'obvious' tyranny (associated with 'familiar' Muscovite) with 'hidden' tyranny (associated with the 'foreign' West)*. At the same time, however, the paradigm of 'ours' (compatriots) – outsiders (foreigners) introduced the intermediate category of the 'familiar kinsmen' (Sarmatians, Slavs = Muscovites). The latter category did not have to include neighbours who were in reality culturally closer to 'us' than other neighbours. In this case, the category of 'familiar kinsmen' (Ivan and Muscovy) was used instrumentally for political and propaganda purposes in order to highlight the hostility felt towards the culturally better known in Poland 'foreigners' (the Habsburgs and Germans, Italians, the House of Valois and the French). However, 'foreigners' from the West were perceived in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at that time as cultural aggressors, unlike the 'familiar kinsmen' (Muscovites), who began to be presented as a potential partner, but also a potential victim of Polish propagandistic phantasies about political and cultural expansion.

**Part Three: The Humanized Tyrant on the
Stage of Theatre and Life: Images
of Rulers in the Era of Abdication
and Deposition**

Chapter I. The Tyrant as Madman: Albrecht Frederick of Prussia and Eric XIV of Sweden¹

*Warnach wolln wir uns doch regirn
Wenn wir den lieben Gott verliren
Wo Gott der Herr nit bey uns helt
So kumpt der furst dieser Welt
Und treibt mit uns sein Afenspiel
Und macht aus uns was er will.*²

Albrecht Frederick of Prussia – A Healthy Upbringing for the Heir to the Throne

This chapter focuses on two key issues. First, how the mental illness of a ruler could have been seen by contemporaries as tyranny in the context of the political events and challenges in the sixteenth century. Second, how the problem of a ruler's incapacity to govern caused by a mental disorder was interpreted in terms of the cultural patterns of the Renaissance and the Reformation era. The material for consideration here will be two mad rulers from the Baltic area: Albrecht Frederick, Duke of Prussia (1568–1618) and King Eric XIV of Sweden (1560–1568).

Despite its peripheral location, the Duchy of Prussia played an important role in the history of the Reformation. It was the first Protestant state in Europe, with Lutheranism as its official religion even before the formulation of the Augsburg Confession. After losing a war with Poland (1519–1521), the last Grand Master

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- 1 This chapter is an extended version of my earlier articles on this subject: 'Das Problem der Regierungsunfähigkeit und der Entthronung von geisteskranken Fürsten: Albrecht Friedrich Herzog von Preußen, und Erik XIV. König von Schweden,' in: *Der frühmoderne Staat in Ostzentraleuropa II*, ed. W. Weber, Documenta Augustiana 3, Augsburg 2000, 90–106; 'Tyran czy melancholik? Szkic z dziejów panowania i choroby Albrechta Fryderyka pruskiego i Eryka XIV szwedzkiego,' in: *Z dziejów Europy wczesnonowożytnej*, ed. J. Wijaczka, Kielce 1997, 83–107. I would like to give my sincere thanks to Professor Michał Kopczyński for translating all the cited studies and sources in Swedish, as well as for our long conversations and his advice.
 - 2 Bujack, 'Die Widmungstafel zur Herstellung der Gesundheit des kranken Herzog Albrecht Friedrich von Preussen i. J. 1584, hergestellt von Eberhard Hauslaib, wahrscheinlich aus Nürnberg,' *Sitzungsberichte der Altertumsgesellschaft Prussia* 1886, issue 11.

of the Teutonic Order Albrecht Hohenzollern (1490–1568), influenced by the teachings of Luther and Melanchthon, decided to secularize the Teutonic Order's state in Prussia and transform it into a hereditary duchy. On the basis of the Treaty of Kraków of 1525, which officially ended the war with the Kingdom of Poland, the former Teutonic Order's territory in Prussia became a fiefdom of the Polish Crown, and its ruler, *dux in Prussia*, a vassal of the Polish king. According to the wording of the Treaty of Kraków, in the event of Albrecht's childlessness or the extinction of the male line of his family, the fiefdom of Prussia was to be claimed by the closest male relatives from the Franconian branch of the House of Hohenzollern, and in case of its extinction, these lands were to be incorporated into the Kingdom of Poland.³

It was not until the almost 60-year-old Duke Albrecht's second marriage in 1550 to the young Duchess Anna Maria of Brunswick (1532–1568) that an heir to the throne, Albrecht Frederick, was born.⁴ His childhood was a period of increasing conflict between the Prussian estates, which practiced orthodox Lutheranism, and the ducal court, where Osiandrian doctrine was favoured. What began as a purely confessional dispute grew into a political conflict, fuelled by the abuse of power, corruption, and cronyism of a clique of foreign ducal councillors, the so-called 'new councillors,' who had ruled on behalf of Duke Albrecht since 1563, due to the progressive paralysis from which he suffered. The intervention of a Polish royal commission sent to Königsberg, the capital of the Duchy of Prussia, in the autumn of 1566 put an end to the rule of the 'new councillors,' accused of corruption, and restored the 'old councillors,' a group mainly drawn from the Prussian nobility, among whom the von Kreytzen family held sway. Subsequent commissions sent to Prussia by Sigismund Augustus in the years 1567–1568 managed in cooperation with local estates to initiate reforms to improve the duchy's finances, and prepare the ground for the future rule of young Albrecht Frederick as Duke of Prussia. This moment came soon, on 20 March 1568, when both parents of the then-underage Albrecht Frederick died a dozen or so hours apart.⁵

3 'Traktat krakowski,' in: *Władztwo Polski w Prusiech Zakonnych i Książęcych (1454–1657)*, ed. A. Vetulani, Wrocław 1953, points 10–11, 82 ff.

4 Apart from Albrecht Frederick, Anna Maria gave birth to a blind daughter, Elisabeth (1551–1596); In total, Duke Albrecht had six children with his first wife, Dorothea of Denmark (1504–1547). However, the only surviving child from this marriage was Anna Sophia (1527–1591), married off to John Albert I, Duke of Mecklenburg.

5 Cf. an overview of the political and economic situation in the Duchy of Prussia in the 1560s in: E.K.B. Kleinertz, *Die Politik der Landstände im Herzogtum Preußen*

During the life of his parents the upbringing of the sole male heir to the Prussian throne was hampered by plagues that spread throughout Prussia in the 1560s. Frequent travels that distanced him from both of his parents – who sent Albrecht Frederick, probably for fear of his health, from one castle to another, all of which were located deep in the wooded Prussian countryside – must have left a lasting trace in his memory. He personally expressed this, complaining about the loneliness of his childhood, during which he felt like a ‘wolf; living alone in the wilderness.’⁶ The mental well-being of the young prince may also have been negatively affected by the sudden disappearance from his life of his personal tutor, Jakub von Schwerin, who was suspected of Calvinist sympathies. However, despite the political frictions within the ducal court and the aged Duke Albrecht’s severely strained health, much attention was paid to the education of the young prince. Due to the close political ties of the ducal court in Königsberg with the Polish royal court in Kraków, he was taught the Polish language since the mid-1560s by Lutherans who had come to the Duchy of Prussia from Poland.⁷

The future duke’s education focused, above all, on introducing him to the workings of government. Both his father, Albrecht Hohenzollern, and his mother, Duchess Anna Maria of Brunswick, wrote textbooks in the form of *specula principis* for his use in the early the 1560s,⁸ or at least actively participated in selecting the content of these works, written in part by them and in part on their behalf by the future duke’s tutors and councillors. In the case of Duke Albrecht, this concerned *Unterweisung und Lehre* (1561), which contained extensive religious content reflecting the duke’s Osiandiran beliefs, and *Christliche Unterrichtung* (c. 1565), a book that combined aspects of the *speculum principum*

1562–1568, Bonn 1972; I. Kąkolewski, *Nadużycia władzy i korupcja w Prusach Książęcych w połowie XVI w. Narodziny państwa wczesnonowożytnego*, Warszawa 2000.

- 6 According to the court doctor Titus, contributing factors to Albrecht Frederick’s illness were e.g.: ‘Vita solitaria in locis abditis [...]’; ganzer 17 Wochen einmal ausgewesen. Item, wie der Herer gen Lötzen gesollt, dixit: sei er doch kein Wolf, dass man ihn in die Wildniß jage’; ‘Aussage der Personen auf ubergebene schriftliche Spezifikation der Landschaft von der Ursache des Herzogs Melancholie befragt worden’: ‘Akten und Urkunden,’ in: *Kaspars von Nostitz Haushaltungsbuch des Fürstenthums Preußen 1578*, ed. K. Lohmeyer, Leipzig 1893, 300–319, here 309.
- 7 Cf. a biographical entry, unfortunately not free from factual errors: K. Lepszy, *Albrecht Fryderyk Hohenzollern*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 1, Warszawa–Kraków 1935, 52 ff.
- 8 *Fürstenspiegel verfaßt von Anna Maria, Markgräfin von Brandenburg und Herzogin von Preußen für ihren Sohn, den Herzog Albrecht Friedrich von Preußen*, ed. A. Nicolovius, Königsberg 1835.

and a political testament.⁹ This latter work was never completed due to the deteriorating health of the aged Duke and the involvement in its writing of individuals accused of collaborating with the ‘new councillors,’ who were removed from government in the autumn of 1566.

In terms of these two didactic writings attributed to Albrecht Hohenzollern, two issues are of particular interest: the definition of good rule *versus* tyranny, and the qualities of good rulers and of tyrants. In line with the traditions of the *specula principis* genre two themes are highlighted in particular here. First, wisdom is gift from God, and a distinguishing feature of a good ruler.¹⁰ Second, in reference to the Psalm 82, authority is granted by God, which is why He names the rulers ‘gods,’¹¹ but with a reservation: monarchs are like other people – conceived, born, and exposed to sorrows and troubles as they grow up, like everyone else.¹² The political and didactic writings of Duke Albrecht, permeated by the religiosity of the Reformation era, are full of references to the Bible.¹³ Great emphasis is placed on the need for the fear of God to act as a second – alongside wisdom – key attribute of a Christian prince.¹⁴ At the same time, attention is also drawn to the distinguishing features of good and bad rulers, recalling that it is God who gives and takes away power according to his own designs, and the merits of rulers and their subjects.¹⁵

Among examples worthy of imitation, *Christliche Unterrichtung* mentions, first of all, King David and the biblical patriarchs: Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. Among other ancient figures, it refers to the Persian King Cyrus and

9 A critical edition of both works was published recently: *Die Testamente Herzog Albrechts von Preußen aus den sechziger Jahren des 16. Jahrhunderts*, ed. A. Bues, I. Kąkolewski, Wiesbaden 1999 [hereinafter cited as: *Die Testamente*, with the title of the source I am referencing].

10 *Die Testamente, Unterweisung und Lehre*, 93 ff.

11 *Die Testamente, Christliche Unterrichtung*, 137 ff.

12 *Ibid.*, 141.

13 In terms of the Old Testament, the most frequent references are made to the Books of Moses (24), Book of Psalms (32), Book of Isaiah (10), Book of Proverbs (9), Book of Wisdom (7) and Book of Daniel (6); when it comes to the New Testament, they are mostly to the Gospel of John (10) and Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (9), in particular Chapter 13.

14 *Die Testamente, Unterweisung und Lehre*, 95 ff.

15 ‘Denn man aus solchen allen sehet und erkennet, das Got der ist, der die regiment ordnet, erhelt und verendert nach seinem willen und wohlgefallen and nach eines ieden volckes, landes oder herschafft verdienst’; *Die Testamente, Christliche Unterrichtung*, 127.

unnamed Roman emperors who, despite their low origins, managed to achieve imperial dignity.¹⁶ The tyrannical rulers mentioned here include unnamed ‘numerous kings of Israel’ from the Book of Kings, the legendary Sardanapalus, the Babylonian King Balthazar, the Persian King Darius, and the Roman general and statesman Pompey the Great. Apart from listing examples of tyrants themselves, tyrannical power is also carefully defined, as are the abuses that a young prince should be warned against committing. Interestingly, in the earlier *Unterweisung und Lehre* of 1561, tyranny is presented mainly as a deviation from God, understood as a departure from the Augsburg Confession and a violation of the subjects’ property rights.¹⁷ In contrast, *Christliche Unterrichtung*, written some four years later, contains a much more extensive argument on this subject.

The author begins by stating that those whose rule is short-lived and ends abruptly amidst ‘great fear’ are commonly called tyrants.¹⁸ Furthermore, tyrannical rule is characterized by the following features. First of all, a government without concern for the good of its subjects, which weakens a prince and leads to his fall. Therefore, princes who rule exclusively for their own benefit and exploit their subjects are commonly called ‘tyrants’ and ‘thieves and man-eaters’ (*schinder und menschenfleischfresser*).¹⁹ Another feature of the tyranny is squandering a country’s riches by the ruler’s lifestyle – gluttony, drunkenness, and indolence – in short, a life lacking any sort of restraint.²⁰ Next is the ruler spending his time exclusively on leisure activities such as hunting, shooting, and dancing.²¹ Finally, as tyrannical is considered a government based on violence and coercion.²² Therefore, the young heir to the Prussian throne should be prepared to avoid all those abuses typical for the tyrannical rule.

Relatively much space in the second, unfinished part of *Christliche Unterrichtung*, as seen in the so-called *Register*,²³ is devoted to Albrecht Frederick’s healthcare. This is interesting not only from the perspective of this ruler’s

16 *Ibid.*, 126.

17 *Die Testamente, Unterweisung und Lehre*, 89.

18 ‘Solche nennet man tirannen, welche regiment nicht lang bestehen kan, sondern müssen schnell und mit grossen schrecken zuboden gehen’; *Die Testamente, Christliche Unterrichtung*, 127 ff.

19 *Ibid.*, 128.

20 *Ibid.*, 128 ff.

21 *Ibid.*, 129.

22 *Ibid.*, 129 ff.

23 The so-called *Register*, outlined and presented in points was a full draft of *Christliche Unterrichtung*; see *Die Testamente, Register*, esp. 145–161.

health-related problems but also because of the way of thinking expressed in the recommendations for handling both his health and psychological and physical development. The organization of the future duke's court itself, in particular, the division of servants into two categories, was a product of these concerns. The first group should consist of those who were to provide 'care for the mind' (*pflege des gemuts*); and the second one comprises those responsible for 'care for the body' (*pflege des leibes*). For people accustomed to thinking in the modern-day dualistic categories of mental and physical health, this division may be misleading. The first category, 'care for the mind,' included Albrecht Frederick's religious and spiritual education. Hence the need to employ a scholarly and pious minister (*gelehrten und gotsfurchtigen predicanten*), responsible for the religious education of the young prince, including severe admonishment if necessary. The second person responsible for the *pflege des gemuts* sphere would be the chamberlain, or house-master (*hofmeister*). He would act as the future duke's primary educator (*zuchtmeister*), providing him with guidance and advice, serving as a model of virtuous behaviour, and working closely with the senior female servant, who supervised the duchess' court and with whom the young Albrecht Frederick necessarily had closer contact due to his frequent meetings with his mother.²⁴

Two doctors and a surgeon were primarily responsible for providing Albrecht Frederick with 'care for the body' (*pflege des leibes*), but four young valets were also employed, two of whom were to be proficient in Latin and generally well-educated. He could make use of their services in various private matters (*privatim*). If the valets were unavailable, a trusted secretary was to provide assistance. The person, or literally 'body,' of the young future duke was also to be surrounded by young pages from good homes who would participate in his education, which consisted of learning to read, language study and studying 'arts of all kinds' (*allerlei kunsten*), as well as activities such as horseback riding, fencing and calisthenics.²⁵ We also know from *Ordnung zur Erziehung des Thronfolgers*, written in 1565 – that is, at roughly the same time as *Christliche Unterweisung* – that the following individuals were under the authority of the Chamberlain: the Albrecht Frederick's personal tutor, his assistant and valets, all of whom shared responsibility for his upbringing, and preventing the young prince and his pages (*knaben*) from engaging in indecent behaviour, drunkenness, cursing, etc., as well organizing his daily schedule, which included prayer, lessons, meals, personal hygiene and entertainment activities. It was the responsibility of his

24 Ibid., 151.

25 Ibid., 152.

personal tutor, as his first and most important educator, and the court physician to arrange an hour-by-hour schedule for his daily activities that would not tax his health or include anything that posed a risk of physical harm.²⁶ All of the above-mentioned individuals, who, because of their offices, were responsible for the welfare of Albrecht Frederick, were also forbidden from granting strangers personal access to him without the old Duke's prior consent.²⁷

In addition to those who were responsible on a daily basis for 'care for the body' of the future duke, the *Register* also mentions a group 'outside the daily care of the prince's body' (*außerhalb der täglichen des herrn leibspflege*), i.e. courtiers of noble and non-noble origins, guardsmen (trabants) and manservants (lackeys). This group of 'occasional' servants, i.e. the general court staff, rather than just those in the immediate circle of the young prince, was under the authority of the Grand Marshal, who also acted as the master of ceremonies and was responsible for all matters concerning the functioning of the entire ducal court.²⁸

As shown above, great attention was paid to the religious instruction, education, health and psychological and physical development of the heir to the throne, which were considered matters of utmost importance to the state. At the same time, the division of the Albrecht Frederick's court into two spheres is important: the first concerned his 'spiritual' upbringing, or 'care for the mind,' which primarily concerned his religious education; the second represented a thematically wider range of issues related to 'care for the body.' This latter sphere included such issues as general education, intellectual endeavours, physical exercise, hygiene and health, as well as proper habits. The dualism visible in this way of thinking between matters related to the future duke's spirit and body influenced the organization of Albrecht Frederick's court. In this context, a lack of balance in either of the two spheres – the future duke's 'mind' or his broadly defined 'body' – would have serious consequences for the functioning of the state.

26 *Die Testamente, Ordnung zur Erziehung des Thronfolgers*, 163 ff.

27 *Ibid.*, 165.

28 *Die Testamente, Register*, 152.

Children of Nebuchadnezzar: Albrecht Frederick's Disease – Melancholy or Tyranny?

The early years (1569–1577) of the nominal reign of Albrecht Frederick is one of the least researched episodes in the history of the Duchy of Prussia, and can be divided into four periods.

1. The years 1568 to 1571 – i.e. from the death of his parents – Duke Albrecht and Duchess Anna Maria of Brunswick on 20 March 1568 – to Albrecht Frederick's coming of age.²⁹ During this period, the Duchy was ruled, as provided for in the *Regimentsnottel* of 1542, the primary legal guiding the workings of the government in the Duchy of Prussia, by an eleven-person College of Regents, consisting of the four highest officials in the duchy, i.e. the so-called *Oberregierungsräte*, assisted by the four chief administrators (*Hauptleute*) of the territorial units of local administration, and representatives of the city of Königsberg.³⁰
2. The years 1571 to 1573 – during this short period the Duchy of Prussia was nominally under Albrecht Frederick's personal rule, though power was *de facto* in the hands of a group of *Oberregierungsräte* associated with the Kreytzen family, described by their political enemies as an 'oligarchical clan' (*etliche wenige Oligarchia*).³¹ However, by November 1572, the symptoms of Albrecht Frederick's mental disorder had become more pronounced, though in the autumn of the following year (14 October 1573), he was able to marry the princess of Jülich-Cleves-Berg Marie Eleonore.³²

29 The political history of the late period of Albrecht's rule and the guardianship of Joachim Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach was presented in two more recent works: E.K.B. Kleinertz, *Die Politik der Landstände im Herzogtum Preußen 1562–1568*, passim; I. Kąkolewski, *Nadużycia władzy i korupcja...*, passim.

30 J. Mańtek, *Ustawa o rządzie (Regimentsnottel) Prus Książęcych z roku 1542*, Toruń 1967, 169.

31 M. Toeppen, 'Der lange Königsberger Landtag. Eine Mittheilung aus der älteren preussischen Geschichte,' *Historisches Taschenbuch* 10, 1849, 485, passim.

32 Cf. J. Voigt, 'Über die Erziehung und die Krankheit des Herzogs Albrecht Friedrich,' *Neue Preussische Provinzial Blätter* 8, 1861; C. Krollman, 'Die Krankheit des Herzogs Albrecht Friedrich und die hereditäre Belastung,' *Sitzungsberichte des Vereines für Geschichte von Ost- und West-preussen* 1912. On the marriage of Albrecht Frederick and the Duchess of Jülich-Cleves-Berg Marie Eleonore, see H. Goldschmidt, 'Die Heirat und Aussteuer der Herzogin Maria Leonore von Jülich-Kleve,' *Aachener Geschichtsverein* 33, 1911; B. Vollmer, 'Die Reise Herzog Wilhelms des Reichen von Jülich-Kleve-Berg mit seiner Tochter Maria Leonora zu ihrer Hochzeit nach Preussen,' *Düsseldorfer Jahrbuch* 42, 1940; E. Scholtis, 'Aus einer alten Chronik,' *Westpreussen Jahrbuch* 1959;

3. The years 1573 to 1577 – a period of searching for a new form of regency because of the poor mental health of Albrecht Frederick and the political domination of the Prussian assembly of estates (*Landtag*) in the years 1573–1575, when, under the guise of accusations of corruption and abuse of power, the estates temporarily managed to break the oligarchic circle's grip on power.³³
4. The period after 1577 – i.e. the years when the Duchy of Prussia was under the guardianship (*Kuratel*) of Albrecht Frederick's Franconian cousin George Frederick, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach, a position bestowed upon him by the King of Poland Stefan Batory in 1577. Up until 1585, George Frederick administered the Duchy of Prussia personally during his stay in Königsberg. In this period, in spite his reforms and putting the duchy's finances in order, sharp tensions arose between George Frederick and the Prussian estates, which were dissatisfied with his centralizing policies.

After his return to Franconia, George Frederick retained the right to guardianship of his sick Prussian cousin until his death (1603). Guardianship over the Duchy of Prussia was then assumed by the Electors of Brandenburg from the Hohenzollern Haus, first to Joachim Frederick (1605) and then to his son John Sigismund (1609). With the death of Albrecht Frederick (1618), and with him, the extinction of the male line of the Prussian Hohenzollern line, the Electors of Brandenburg assumed the right to succession in the Duchy of Prussia as vassals of the Polish Crown (1563, 1611).³⁴ The marriages of two daughters of Albrecht Frederick and Marie Eleonore of Jülich-Cleves-Berg to Electors of Brandenburg – the eldest, Anna, to John Sigismund, and the younger daughter, Eleonore, to his father, Joachim Frederick – proved to be very helpful. After the death of Johann Wilhelm, the last Duke of Jülich-Cleves-Berg (1609), who also suffered from mental illness for many years, these marriages allowed John Sigismund to claim the right of succession to Jülich-Cleves-Berg. The ensuing dispute over this claim sparked to War of the Jülich Succession (1609–1614), bringing Europe to the

and an excellent work by R. Scheller, *Die Frau am preussischen Herzogshof (1550–1625)*, Berlin–Köln 1966, 74 ff.

- 33 Apart from the above-cited works by M. Toeppen, see also J. Petersohn, *Fürstenmacht und Ständetum in Preussen während der Regierung Herzog Georg Friedrichs 1578–1603*, Würzburg 1963; A. Vetulani, *Polskie wpływy polityczne w Prusiech Książęcych*, Gdynia 1939, 48 ff.; K. Lepszy, *Prusy Książęce a Polska w latach 1576–78*, Cieszyn 1932.
- 34 J. Petersohn, *Fürstenmacht und Ständetum...*; B. Janiszewska-Mincer, F. Mincer, *Rzeczpospolita Polska a Prusy Książęce w latach 1598–1621. Sprawa sukcesji brandenburskiej*, Warszawa 1988.

brink of a major continental war. Because of these events, the seemingly peripheral matter of the Duke of Prussia Albrecht Frederick's mental illness had an indirect but key role in the dynastic politics of marriages, international conflicts and diplomacy that were part of a drama played out on the political stage of Europe.

The case of the 'gracious foolish Lord' (*der gnädige blöde Herr*), as Albrecht Frederick was commonly called by his Prussian subjects, or 'the poor suffering Duke in Prussia' (*armer elender Herzog in Preussen*), as he himself sometimes signed his correspondence, was the subject of several attempts at psychiatric analysis in the twentieth century.³⁵ The symptoms that were clearly visible in the duke since the turn of 1572 and 1573 – hypochondria, negativity, delusions of persecution, visual and auditory hallucinations, talking nonsense, ambivalence, passivity, a passion for destruction, demonstrative attempts at suicide, lead to a diagnosis of his condition – according to medical terms formulated in the twentieth century – as paranoid schizophrenia.³⁶

A closer look at the contemporary medical diagnoses of Albrecht Frederick³⁷ shows that among the various terms used to describe his illness at the time, the most common were 'melancholy', 'sadness', 'stupidity' and 'feeble-mindedness' (*Melancholie*, *Schwermütigkeit*, *Blödigkeit* and *Schwachsinn*).³⁸ A contentious issue for the duke's contemporaries was whether his condition was 'inborn' or 'natural' (*angeboren, wohl eine naturliche Blodigkeit [...] von Jugend an vorhanden*),³⁹ as

35 I. Bloch, 'Der rheinische Arzt Soleander und die Geisteskrankheit des Herzogs Albrecht Friedrich von Preussen,' *Klinisch-Therapeutische Wochenschrift* 29, 1922; H. Scholz, 'Die Geisteskrankheit des Herzogs Albrecht von Preussen,' *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften* 46, 1962; A. Skrobacki, 'Choroba Albrechta Fryderyka Pruskiego i jej "Dziennik,"' *Rocznik Olsztyński* 1963 (and an annex with one of the basic sources on the beginnings of Albrecht Frederick's disease: 'Dziennik choroby umysłowej Albrechta Fryderyka' [25 November 1572–14 October 1573], written by Łukasz David).

36 A. Skrobacki, 'Choroba Albrechta Fryderyka Pruskiego...', 30 ff.; similarly H. Scholz, 'Die Geisteskrankheit des Herzogs Albrecht von Preussen,' 228.

37 Cf. a comprehensive discussion on treatments for Albrecht Frederick in: H.C.E. Midelfort, *Mad Princes of Renaissance Germany*, Charlottesville–London 1994, 73–93.

38 Cf. e.g. *Medicamenten für Hertzog Albrecht Fridrich*, (MS) Geheimes Staatsarchiv-Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, in: *Herzogliches Briefarchiv*, K5 1064 [hereinafter cited as *Medicamenten*]. It is a list with different types of prescriptions and medical consultations. It also contains the account of doctor Gobel from ca. 1575 on the diagnosis and methods of treatment for Albrecht Frederick.

39 As cited in R. Scheller, *Die Frau...*, 198.

George Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach concluded in his statement to the Prussian estates on 5 December 1573, or, as a group of doctors, educators and courtiers claimed, acquired over time. In these contradictory opinions, one can probably see the play of certain political interests.⁴⁰ In the diagnosis contained in *Medicorum rationes cur dux Prussiae curavi non possit* (21 December 1576), produced less than a year before Albrecht Frederick was officially removed from power and his Franconian cousin Georg Frederick was given guardianship, the conclusion was made that the Albrecht Frederick's condition could be treated but never fully cured.⁴¹

At the same time, the content of *Medicorum rationes* illuminates how the causes of mental illness were perceived at that time. In this document, two groups of causes are distinguished according to their degree of importance. The first are 'supernatural or Christian causes' (*ubernaturliche oder christliche Ursachen*), in reference to which various religious offences are mentioned: first of all, the departure from Orthodox Lutheranism of Albrecht Frederick's parents by their support of Osiandrian doctrine, and their filling some court offices with Calvinists; in terms of the young prince himself, they mention blasphemy and profanation of the Host. In addition, the 'sins of other individuals' (*anderer leute sunde*) are also enigmatically mentioned. Albrecht Frederick's disease is thus seen primarily as punishment from God, from which both the ruler himself and the whole country must suffer (*der arme Herr und sein ganzes land*).⁴²

Among the so-called 'natural causes' (*naturliche ursachen*), emphasis was placed mainly on the occurrence of mental illness in the duke's family, with six cases being mentioned.⁴³ In addition, the hysterical attitude of his mother, Duchess Anna Maria of Brunswick (*im heupt gar verruckt*) and 'sluggishness' (*tardium ingenium*) of his father in his youth are also mentioned, as are the diseases that plagued the aged Duke (*ein schwach flussig heupt, stein und*

40 Cf. 'Bericht des brandenburgischen Bevollmächtigen Dr. Adrian an den Kurfürsten (26 XI 1573)': 'Akten und Urkunden,' in: *Kaspars von Nostitz Haushaltungsbuch des Fürstenthums Preussen 1578*, ed. K. Lohmeyer, Leipzig 1893, 299 ff.: '[...] dass der mehrere Theil der hiesigen Leute wol leiden könnte, dass sie ein Kind zum Herrn hätten, auch solche Kindheit und Unverstand propagiert würde; so thäte ein jeder was er wollte und fegte auf seiner Schanze und Beste.'

41 '[...] das solche schwecheit durch Gottes gnade und gute folge konne gelindert, aber nicht aufgehoben werden'; *Medicamenten*, fol. 4 v.

42 *Ibid.*, fol. 1 r.

43 '[...] etliche gantz, etliche zum teil wansinnig gewesen und noch sint, darff nicht berichts'; *ibid.*, fol. 3 r. Cf. also R. Scheller, *Die Frau ...*, 196.

podagra). Finally, Albrecht Frederick's physical ailments are listed, including oral rot, ulceration, and epileptic conditions.⁴⁴

Given the various conflicts of interests and political ambitions involved, the conflicting opinions of contemporaries on Albrecht Frederick's diagnosis are understandable. Is it then possible to determine at all to what extent Albrecht Frederick was actually incapable of exercising personal rule before 1577?

The fact that as late as the winter/spring of 1573 the young Duke of Prussia was seriously put forward as a candidate for the Polish crown by some protestant circles is an issue worthy of consideration. There were even plans for him to marry Anna Jagiellon, the sister of the last Polish king from the Jagiellonian dynasty. His Polish supporters at that time presented the advantages of Albrecht Frederick as the candidate for the Polish crown, describing him as being 'simply a Polish German,' and mentioning that malicious rumours were being spread by Catholics: 'They say that he is stupid because he is silent.'⁴⁵ Perhaps the positive impression Albrecht Frederick left during the homage he paid before Sigismund Augustus during the Lublin Sejm in 1569 was also of significance here.⁴⁶ Moreover, after his illness revealed itself in the autumn of 1572, and during subsequent years of his nominal rule in Prussia, the duke was able to perform certain routine official and ceremonial duties,⁴⁷ and such activities as signing correspondence and state documents in his own hand, and even to take

44 *Medicamenten*, fol. 3 r.

45 'Wizerunek,' in: *Pisma polityczne z czasów pierwszego bezkrólewia*, ed. J. Czubek, Kraków 1906, 404–408, here 407. Cf. also *De electione novi regis*, *ibid.*, 397–403, esp. 402: 'a young man of a reasonable age, pious and clear-headed.' On this subject, cf. also F. Mincer, 'Opinia polska wobec kandydatury i osoby księcia pruskiego Albrechta Fryderyka podczas pierwszego bezkrólewia,' *Zeszyty Naukowe WSP w Opolu. Historia* 5, 1966, 41–79; K. Lepszy, *Albrecht Fryderyk Hohenzollern*, 53.

46 The tribute paid to Sigismund II Augustus was commemorated in the poem 'Proporzec' by Jan Kochanowski, who was an eyewitness to this event, see in: *Władztwo Polski...*, 125–136.

47 'Trotz seiner Regierungsunfähigkeit hatte man immer noch in Albrecht Friedrich und seiner Gemahlin Marie Leonore den Mittelpunkt des preussischen Hofstaates gesehen,' concludes R. Scheller, *Die Entwicklung des Königsberger Hofes unter Herzog Albrechts Nachfolgern (1568–1654)*, 'Jahrbuch der Albertus-Universität zu Königsberg/Pr.' 20, 1970, 18. On the other hand, some accusations could be heard both before the marriage (isolation, bad diet, disrespect manifested by courtiers) and afterwards, especially in reference to court etiquette violations and insufficient financial support for the royal couple; *ibid.*

an independent stance, standing up to pressure from the estates, on the nomination of a new bishop to the Diocese of Samland.⁴⁸

Finally, and most importantly, contrary to malicious rumours, Albrecht Frederick proved capable of marrying and having children.⁴⁹ The five daughters born to Marie Eleonore found good partners, marrying the Electors of Brandenburg and Saxony, among others.⁵⁰ In this way, the 'gracious foolish Lord' became a relative of such prominent figures from the Brandenburg House of Hohenzollern as the Great Elector Frederick William, Frederick William I and Frederick the Great of Prussia, or from the Wettin dynasty, the Elector of Saxony and King of Poland Augustus II the Strong. Moreover, despite the duke's illness, his life with Marie Eleonore of Jülich-Cleves-Berg, a devout Lutheran, turned out to be quite happy, though her efforts to restore his health remained unsuccessful.⁵¹

The various political interests connected with Albrecht Frederick's disease, which after 1573 became the subject of debate in the Prussian estate assembly, is clearly shown by the contents of *Aussage der Personen auf ubergebene schriftliche Specifikation der Landschaft von der Ursache des Herzogs Melancholie befragt worden* of November 1573. This involved a secret interrogation of 43 people, ranging from the highest officials of the ducal state, through doctors and courtiers, to the lower court servants. This source provides excellent material for learning about the mentality of the epoch, mainly the widespread belief in the aetiology of mental illness. Of the many topics discussed here concerning the causes and course of the disease, diagnoses and methods of therapy, two are particularly interesting: the hereditary burdens of Albrecht Frederick and a description of his character traits.

48 A. Rogge, 'Tielemann Heshusius, der Streit-Theolog, und Albrecht Friedrich, der blöde Herr,' *Altpreussische Monatsschrift* Neue Folge, 11, 1874, 42 ff.

49 In his report from the autumn of 1573, doctor Adrian, a representative of Brandenburg, describes the following rumor: '[...] und hat er ein Weib müssen haben, die ihm kein Nutz sie sollte den die Puppe mit ihm spielen': 'Akten und Urkunden,' in: *Kaspars von Nostitz Haushaltungsbuch...*, 300.

50 When it comes to the above-mentioned daughters of Albrecht Frederick, Anna, the oldest one, married John Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, in 1594, whereas Eleonore married his father, Joachim Frederick, in 1604. Marie married Christian, Margrave of Brandenburg-Kulmbach, in 1604. Sophie married Wilhelm, Duke of Courland, in 1609. The youngest daughter, Magdalene Sibylle, married John George I, Elector of Saxony, in 1607.

51 On this subject, cf.: A. Skrobaccki, 'Choroba Albrechta Fryderyka Pruskiego...' 219 ff., 223 ff.

These topics are discussed in more detail by court physicians, in particular by a doctor named Valerius Fiedler, as well as by Melchior Kreytzen, a representative of the oligarchic group in the Regency Council. Fiedler states that Albrecht Frederick was born with a character of his mother who was 'lazy,' 'suspicious,' 'cruel' and 'bloody,' as she is said to have 'broken swans' necks,' and the young prince loved 'wars and conspiracies' (*Multis nota est mater, quod otium dilexit, non multas laudabilis actiones dilexit [...] mater fuit suspicax, crudelis sanguinaria; grävida hat den Schwanen die Halse abgerissen. Junior princeps amavit bella, coniurationes*). At the same time, his father, Albrecht, was 'unteachable' (*indocilis*)⁵² in his youth.

Melchior Kreytzen, in turn, denies any similarity between Albrecht Frederick and his father, placing full blame on his mother, Duchess Anna Maria of Brunswick. At the same time, Kreytzen enumerates Albrecht Frederick's negative character traits and inclinations: a lack of reason and judgment, haughtiness, stubbornness, impropriety, vengefulness, frequent attacks of anger, suspicion, a tendency to melancholy (*ist melancholicus natura gewesen*), conceit, debauchery, idleness and instability. Such a sharp and unequivocally negative assessment of Albrecht Frederick's disposition cannot be seen in other interrogators. In conclusion, Melchior Kreytzen quotes the alleged words of the late duke about the inability of his son to assume personal rule in the future (*der (junge) Herr wird nimehr tauglich zu Regiment*).⁵³

Surprisingly, the description of Albrecht Frederick's qualities presented by Kreytzen resembles the traditional catalogue of a tyrant's vices, well known in the sixteenth century, which included: cruel, haughty, bloodthirsty, closed, inaccessible, currish, prone to anger, easily irritated, evoking fear, unpredictable, violent, unrestrained, precipitate, reckless, fickle, idle, overly emotional, inappropriate behaviour, offensive, abusive, burdensome, unrestrained, unbearable.⁵⁴ A similar sense is seen in a quoted statement by Dr. Fiedler about the characteristics of Albrecht Frederick's mother, Anna Maria of Brunswick, especially the passage about her 'tyrannical customs,' which was more precisely laid out later in *Medicorum rationes* from 1576: 'She had quite tyrannical customs, as shown by the story with the swan, whose blood Her Majesty was playing in while she was

52 *Aussage...*, 308

53 *Ibid.*, 316.

54 Erasmus von Rotterdam, *Fürstenerziehung. Institutio Principis Christiani. Die Erziehung eines christlichen Fürsten*, ed. A.J. Gail, Paderborn 1968 [later cited as *Institutio*], 94. Cf. above, Part One, Chapter II, table 2.

pregnant with this same prince' ('[Sie – I.K.] hatt [...] gar tyrannischen sitten, wie die historia vom schwan zeuget, an das blut sich I. F. G. belustiget pragnans hoc Principe').⁵⁵

The question therefore arises as to whether such an image of Albrecht Frederick – tying his mental frailty to his alleged tyranny, which is particularly pronounced in the description of Melchior Kreytzen, a representative of the Prussian oligarchic group, was not intended to undermine the legitimacy of the duke's rule by suggesting the need for an official extension of the regency of the *Oberregierungsräte*? Perhaps the tyrannical stylization of his illness was supposed to provide justification for the actual usurpation of rule by the group of regents, who at that very time were being accused vehemently by the estates of oligarchic tendencies and abuse of power?⁵⁶ Although this indirect accusation of tyranny in the case of Albrecht Frederick would appear to have no basis in fact, it undoubtedly must have served a specific political purpose.

The tyrannical context of Albrecht Frederick's illness returned once again, this time in a very direct way, almost a decade later, in an iconographic source, a votive plaque for the restoration of the Duke Albrecht Frederick's health, preserved in the Königsberg Cathedral.⁵⁷ The design of this work, produced in 1584, is attributed to Eberhard Hauslaib, who as a teacher of Albrecht Frederick's daughters was closely connected to the duke's family, but also to the circles of the *Oberregierungsräte*.⁵⁸ The time when the plaque was produced falls at the height of the conflict between Joachim Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach, who held guardianship over Ducal Prussia for seven years, and the estates, which were dissatisfied with his policy of strong handed rule.

55 *Medicamenten*, fol. 3 r.

56 Kaspar Nostitz notes such ambitions among the Prussian nobles, quoting Achacy von Dohna, who said that in ca. 1570, a group of oligarchs from the Duchy of Prussia had already attempted to take control of the government like in the Polish voivodes: 'wir müssen warlich mit den jungen hern andern machen und woywaden machen, das der junge hern nicht tun muss was er wil sunder was die weiwoden wollen'; Kaspars von Nostitz Haushaltungsbuch..., 204 and an opinion from 1567 on similar plans, *ibid.*, 182.

57 [G.] Bujack, 'Die Widmungstafel zur Herstellung der *Gesundheit des kranken Herzog Albrecht Friedrich von Preussen...*', *Sitzungsberichte der Altertumsgesellschaft Prussia*, Vol. 11, Königsberg 1886. Cf. also J. Petersohn, *Fürstenmacht und Ständetum...*, 104. The plaque was destroyed near the end of the Second World War during the siege of Königsberg.

58 Cf. bibliographical data about Eberhard Hauslaib in: G. Meinhardt, *Die Münz- und Geldgeschichte des Herzogtums Preussen 1569–1701*, Heidelberg 1959, e.g. 35 ff.

In the central part of this monument, next to a small portrait of Albrecht Frederick, there is an iconographic representation of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is presented here in animal form – as an ox lying under a tree and eating grass. This representation of the biblical ruler refers to the prophet Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream – an announcement made by an angel on behalf of Yahweh of the exile of the king, his madness and his temporary transformation into a beast. A commentary is placed next to it: 'The fourth chapter of Daniel is an accurate example against the cruel tyrants that our rulers should bear in mind.'⁵⁹ The greater part of the table is taken up by extensive quotations from the Old Testament (Chapter 4 of Daniel), explaining the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream: God, as punishment for a his sins (an attempt to force idolatry and murder on three pious Jews), is to make the king mad, to have him assume an animal form, in which he will remain for 'seven times' – 'until you recognize that He has supreme power over men and kingdoms and gives it to whomever He wishes.'⁶⁰ The last sentence – that God has supreme authority over human kingdoms and exercises it as He pleases – sounds like a memento of a similar conclusion found in the 1565 political testament analysed earlier.

Nebuchadnezzar's madness therefore turns out to be merely a temporary punishment from God, after which the king returned to health and rule, becoming even more powerful than before.⁶¹ Hence the conclusion: people should refrain from rash judgments and '*endure such tyrants patiently* [emphasis mine – I.K.], [...] regardless of how bad these tyrants are, God has entrusted to them a wonderful and great office for the good and salvation of everyone.'⁶² Such an interpretation of Albrecht Frederick's madness, and the use of arguments from the Bible to show the transitory nature of his mental illness almost seven years after

59 'Das vierte Capitel Daniels ist ein trefflich Exampel wider der grausamen Witrichen und Tyrannen, auf welches unsre grosse Herre wol achtung geben solten und ein Beispiel darnach nehmen'; Bujack, 'Die Widmungstafel,' 39.

60 'Man wird dich von den Leuten verstossen und must bey den Thieren Grass essen lassen wie die Ochsen unnd wirst unter dem taw des Himmels ligen und nass werden bis yber dich sieben Zeit umb sindt [...]. Auff das erkennest das der [Gott – I.K.] hocheste gewalt hat yber Menschen Konigreiche unnd gibt sie wem er will'; *ibid.*, 39.

61 *Ibid.*, 40.

62 'Darumb sollen wir solche Tirannen nit gedultiglich leiden, saunder auch Ires zukunfftigen urteils uns erbarmen wie sie der frumme Daniel thut... so sollen wir auch nit achten wie bose die Tyrannen sein, sondern wie ein herrlich und kostlich Amt sie von Gott haben nur allen zu guth und heil eingesetzt [emphasis mine – I.K.]; *ibid.*, 40 ff.

Joachim Frederick assumed guardianship over the Duchy of Prussia (note the reference to the biblical 'seven times' here) shows that the tyrannical stylization of Albrecht Frederick's melancholy was revived and used once again for propaganda purposes. This time, however, the argument most likely came from the circles close to the court in Königsberg, possibly from Prussian *Oberregierungsräte* who wanted to liberate themselves from Joachim Frederick's guardianship. Therefore, unlike in 1573, the positive features of Albrecht Frederick's melancholy-tyranny were also emphasized. God's temporary punishment for his sins in the form of madness was supposed to presage his recovery and future reign.

It is worth returning to the beginnings of Albrecht Frederick's disease and the fierce fight between the oligarchic group and the Prussian estates over guardianship of the young duke in the early 1570s. The stylized image of the sick ruler in 1573, and the 'indirect' accusations of tyranny by representatives of oligarchic circles linked to the Kreytzen family leads to another issue: the need for an institutional solution to the complicated situation that arose when it was no longer possible to maintain the fiction of the personal rule of the mentally ill duke. Several possible scenarios were considered here.

The first was the official assumption of guardianship by the College of Regents, based on the articles of the *Regimentsnottel* (1542) and the testament of Duke Albrecht (1567).⁶³ Although these referred to only two situations – the duke's absence in the country and the heir to the throne being as yet underaged – according to German medieval legal traditions, a mentally ill person could be treated as a minor in matters of succession.⁶⁴ The second possible solution was for Albrecht Frederick's wife, Duchess Marie Eleonore, to become her husband's legal guardian and rule with the support of the Regency College. However, as far as we know, Marie Eleonore had no interest in such a solution. This differed diametrically from Joachim Frederick's ambitions to assume guardianship over his sick cousin, who, as a member of the Franconian line of the Hohenzollern House, in the light of the Kraków Treaty of 1525, had the right to succession in Prussia if the local Hohenzollern male line was extinguished.⁶⁵ Finally, another

63 Critical edition in: *Die Testamente*, 169–204.

64 On the succession of people with mental disorders in German feudal law cf. R. Schröder, *Lehrbuch der deutschen Rechtsgeschichte*, Leipzig 1907, 425 ff. Similarly in the sixteenth-century Commonwealth neither town law nor common law excluded the mentally ill from succession; see D. Mazek, 'Kuratela nad osobami chorymi psychicznie w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVIII w.,' *Przegląd Historyczny* 90, 1999, 132 ff.

65 Cf. similar statements in a political pamphlet from January 1575: *Ein Gespräch Prudentii und Simplicii. Gespräch zweier wolmeinenden vom Adel, im Herzogthum Preussen*

scenario was to create some form of estate self-governance that would protect Prussian estates from the development of oligarchic tendencies.⁶⁶

This last variant was drawn up by representatives of the assembly of estates (*Landtag*) and presented as a formal proposal on 5 October 1574. The estates intended to establish a special body, the so-called Estate Council (*Ständischer Rath*), which together with the College of Regents would assume the part of the ruler's prerogatives relating to the nomination of ducal officials, and the guaranteeing of all estate privileges. The term of both bodies was set at eight years, after which a Prussian *Landtag*, convened for this purpose, would possibly extend their term 'according to the needs of the fatherland' (*nach gelegenheit dieses Vaterlandes*).⁶⁷ I mention this case to draw attention to the proposed eight-year limit on the term of office of the Collegium of Regents and the officials under him. Could this also have been inspired by the biblical story of Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of madness? It is difficult to provide a clear answer to this question, though this cannot be ruled out.

The monarchical concept – i.e. the transfer of guardianship to Georg Frederick ultimately prevailed. In a decree signed in Marienburg on 22 September 1577, Stefan Batory, citing the mental state of Albrecht Frederick as the grounds, endowed guardianship over the Duchy of Prussia, along with its administration, to Joachim Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach, granting him the title of *Dux in Prussia*. It was stipulated, however, that in the event of Albrecht Frederick's return to health, or the birth of a male heir and his reaching maturity, Joachim Frederick was to give up his rule in Prussia, and be held accountable for his actions during the period of his guardianship and administration in the duchy.⁶⁸ As can be seen,

gesehen, von gegenwärtigen ihres lieben Vaterlandes Zustande, in Kaspars von Nostitz Haushaltungsbuch..., 335 ff.

66 An example of such a solution is Franconian rule in Ansbach-Bayreuth, where the sons of the mentally ill Margrave Frederick (the grandfather of Albrecht Frederick) deposed him in 1515; see J. Małłek, *Ustawa o rządzie...*, 170.

67 M. Toeppen, 'Der lange Königsberger Landtag...', 511 ff.

68 See *Die Staatsverträge des Herzogtums Preussen*, pt. 1: *Polen und Litauen. Verträge und Belehnungsurkunden 1525–1657/58*, ed. S. and H. Dolezel, 86, point 5: 'Si vero, quod maxime optamus, illustritas ipsius [d.h. Albrecht Friedrich] ad pristinam sanitatem per Dei gratiam redierit, liberosve masculos heredes susceperit, illi ipsi, vel illis, ubi ad aetatem legitimam pervenerint, et non alias, nec prius, ducati ipso cedere illustris dominus Georgius Fridericus, et curationis atque administrationis suae rationes reddere debebit.' Cf. also *Medicamenten*, file entitled 'Albrecht Friderchs Curatel betr.' Apart from royal certificates concerning the guardianship exercised by George Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach and Joachim Frederick, Elector of Brandenburg (1605), there

all of the scenarios presented here, including the above-mentioned estate project for an eight-year regency and the transfer of guardianship to Joachim Frederick, assumed the removal of Albrecht Frederick from direct rule only for a limited period of time, taking into account the possibility of the duke's recovery. This was certainly linked to the then-common view that *melancholische complexion* was curable or a kind of transitional state (as in the example of Nebuchadnezzar).

Another interesting issue is the frequent use of the term 'stupidity' (*Blödigkeit*) to describe Albrecht Frederick's health in official documents and correspondence, as it seems to have had no clear pejorative colour at the time.⁶⁹ The Duchess Marie Eleonore, for instance, often referred to her spouse's state of health literally as 'body stupidity' (*Leibesblödigkeit*), 'weakness of the head' (*Schwachheit des Kopfes*), or even 'protracted head stupidity' (*langwierige Hauptblödigkeit*). This reflects the common use of the term *Blödigkeit* at the time to describe all kinds of physical and mental weakness. For example, in a note from 1533 referring to the well-being of Emperor Charles V, we read that a delay in sending documents was caused by his Imperial Majesty being "burdened with a weakness [literally: stupidity – I.K.] of his head." (*etwas mit Blödigkeit ihres Hauptes beladen gewesen*).⁷⁰ Thus, in the case of Albrecht Frederick's *Blödigkeit des Hauptes*, as well, the use of this term was not necessarily a reference to some form of mental illness.

A more real political danger for the mentally ill ruler was the tyrannical context ascribed to his condition – a stylization that draws its roots from an ancient tradition. In the Middle Ages, this theme was commonly enriched with biblical examples. We can see here also a roughly sketched psychological portrait of a tyrant. In both *Commentary on Job (Moralium in Iob)* and *Book of Pastoral Rule (Regula Pastoralis)*, Pope Gregory I claimed that a tyrant is one who rules unlawfully, but that there are also other types of tyranny with a narrower sense, such as the tyrant in his own home or the tyrant 'in himself, in his own mind' (*apud se in cognitione sua*). Later on, from the latter half of the thirteenth century onwards, the legal definition of tyranny became more relevant.⁷¹ Its pathological and

are also copies and drafts of Stefan Batory's letters supporting Albrecht Frederick and defending him against the Prussian estates, which were dissatisfied with his policies.

69 Cf. e.g. a *regest* to the document, dated 12 March 1573: 'Quitanzen so der blöde Hertzog inn Preussen den vir Regements Rheten nach abtretung ihm rechnung gegeben, Anno 1573'; *Medicamenten*, 3.

70 All the above quotes and opinions are qtd. after J. Voigt, 'Über die Erziehung und die Krankheit des Herzogs Albrecht Friedrich,' 95–98.

71 I. Andersson, 'Tyrangreppet under Medeldit och Renässans. Fran Augustinus till Machiavelli; 'Lynchos' 1943, s.

psychological dimensions, known from the ancient tradition, became distinctly visible once again in the sixteenth century in, among other places, the aforementioned catalogue of tyrannical vices in Erasmus' *Institutio Principis Christiani*. Justus Lipsius, who developed his Neostoic philosophy in the late sixteenth century, and later, his followers and admirers of his concepts, saw states of extreme anxiety and sadness as a denial of the crowning qualities in the catalogue of monarchical virtues: constancy and political wisdom (*constantia* and *prudencia politica*). A ruler having natural inclination to fear, distrust and incalculability, was treated by Neostoic authors as either incapable of effective governance or a potential tyrant. Wolfgang Weber, in his multifaceted study of melancholy in the early modern era, suggested that Lipsius' critical reflection (with reference to Tacitus) on tyrants' states of mind 'torn in pieces with cruelty, lust, and evil cogitation' was influenced by the harsh experience of the Wars of Religion in France and the Netherlands in the latter half of the sixteenth century.⁷² Hence the radical conclusion of the Neostoic authors on the necessity for those in power to suppress all harmful emotions leading to 'evil cogitations.' This line of argumentation, emphasizing the psychopathological aspect of tyranny, held sway until the eighteenth century. In his *Anti-Machiavel* (1740), Frederick II (the great-great-grandson of Albrecht Frederick) stated in Chapter VIII: that the criminal tyrant 'could not impose silence on that powerful voice which is heard on the thrones of kings as well as in the tribunals of tyrants. He could not avoid being struck by a ghastly melancholy [...] The cruel man is of a misanthropic and arbitrary temperament. If he does not combat his miserable disposition from an early age he will not fail to become as ferocious as he is insane.'⁷³

72 Details on the views of Lipsius and his Neostoicism, as well as their impact on the issue of melancholy among rulers are taken from W. Weber, 'Im Kampf mit Saturn. Zur Bedeutung der Melancholie im antropologischen Modernisierungsprozeß des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts,' *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 2, 1990, esp. 184 ff.

73 Frederick of Prussia, *The Refutation of Machiavelli's 'Prince' or Anti-Machiavel*, ed. P. Sonnino, Columbus 1981, 68. Frederick lists the following examples of tyrants: Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse (405–368), Tiberius, Nero, Louis XI and Ivan the Terrible. I believe it is probable that when he wrote the above-mentioned words, he had his own father, Frederick William I, in mind. His psychopathological features of hypochondriac, misanthrope, and 'household tyrant' are clearly visible in the diaries kept by Wilhelmine of Prussia, sister of Frederick the Great; see Wilhelmina von Bayreuth, *Pamiętniki*, ed. Z. Libiszowska, Warszawa 1973, esp. 139–142, 149, 151 ff., 167.

Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Eric XIV, the Mad King of Sweden

Let us move from political theory to sixteenth-century propaganda and literature. The connection between political tyranny and 'tyranny of the mind' is seen clearly in the example of the anonymous *True Story of the Adventures of the Pathetic Prince of Finland John and the Polish Queen Catherine*, ascribed to the preeminent Polish historian of the sixteenth century, Marcin Kromer (1512–1589).⁷⁴

This book, written in Polish, enjoyed great popularity, having been published twice (1570 and 1571) in Kraków by the royal printer Mikołaj Szafrkenberger.⁷⁵ The title characters are John, Duke of Finland – the future Swedish king John III (1569–1592) from the Vasa dynasty – and his wife Catherine Jagiellon. As Duke of Finland, John opposed his half-brother King Eric XIV of Sweden (1560–1568), and together with his wife was imprisoned by him. After his release from prison, John led a revolt of the Swedish nobility, as a result of which Eric was deposed, incarcerated, and legally dethroned in January 1569 by the Riksdag. For the rest of his life he was held as prisoner in different castles in Sweden and Finland until 1577, when he was probably poisoned by order of John III.

In terms of its literary form, Kromer's work can be described as a pseudo-historical romance,⁷⁶ while in terms of its political function, it was written to convince the nobility in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth to support the Swedish candidate to the Polish throne in the event that Sigismund II August died without an heir.⁷⁷ It is possible that the candidacy of John III, promoted by Kromer in his book, was connected with plans for the re-Catholicization of Lutheran Sweden being crafted in counter-reformation circles.⁷⁸ However, the

74 M. Kromer, *Historyja prawdziwa o przygodzie żalösnej ksiązęcia finlandzkiego Jana i królewny polskiej Katarzyny*, ed. J. Małłek, Olsztyn 1983 [hereinafter cited as *Historyja prawdziwa*].

75 On the authorship, creation date (most probably July 1569–spring 1570), the first editions and the manner of distribution, see J. Małłek, 'Wstęp,' in: *ibid.*, VI–XV.

76 Cf. an attempt at a literary analysis in: I. Csapláros, 'Historia prawdziwa o przygodzie żalösnej ksiązęcia finlandzkiego Jana i królewny polskiej Katarzyny,' *Acta Philologica* 11, 1980; and J. Krzyżanowski, *Romans pseudohistoryczny w Polsce w wieku XVI*, Kraków 1926, 155–162.

77 C. Backvis, 'Histoire veridique de la pitieuse aventure du duc Jean de Finlande et de la princesse Catherine,' *Revue des Etudes Slaves* 29, 1952, 30.

78 I would like to thank Elisabeth Lundqvist for valuable comments on this subject contained in the typescript of her article, Elisabeth Lundqvist, *Eric XIV i motreformationens historieskrivning* (in the author's collection), written under the influence of my German-language publication *Das Problem der Regierungsunfähigkeit...*

direct propaganda aim of *True Story* was to justify the removal of Eric XIV from the throne by his half-brother, Duke John of Finland.⁷⁹

The central figure in this work is Eric XIV, who possesses the features of a tyrannical ruler – he is full of internal tensions and is Hamlet-like in his complexity.⁸⁰ Despite Kromer's propaganda interjections, literary stylization and chronological inaccuracies, he is quite faithful in his recounting of the most important events that took place during the reign of Eric XIV: the convening of a meeting of the Riksdag in Uppsala in May 1567, the murder of opposition nobles from the Sture family committed on the king's order, followed by the almost seven-month-long madness of Eric (late May 1567 – early January 1568), the reign of the regency council, and finally the King's return to personal rule in January 1568. The romance continues with the morganatic marriage between Eric XIV and the peasant farmer's daughter Karin Månsdotter, and her subsequent coronation (early July 1568),⁸¹ followed by a rebellion by the nobles

79 Eric was the oldest son of Gustav I of Sweden (d.1560) and Catherine of Saxe-Lauenburg. His step brothers, the sons of Gustav and Margaret Leijonhufvud, were John (1537–1592), the mentally ill Magnus (1542–1595) and the youngest, Charles (1550–1611), who later became King of Sweden as Charles IX. Apart from these brothers, Eric XIV had five sisters. According to the testament of Gustav I from June 1560, each younger brother was supposed to receive his own duchy, but Eric would have supreme authority over them as King of Sweden. John ruled the Grand Duchy of Finland since 1557. In 1562, he married Catherine, a Polish princess, daughter of the last Jagiellon, Sigismund II Augustus, who waged the Northern Seven Years' War in an alliance with Denmark against Moscow and Sweden. Both the marriage and John's ambitious political plans made him an enemy of Eric XIV. As a consequence, John and Catherine were imprisoned on the king's orders. They were freed in October 1567. When Eric was removed from power in the autumn of 1568, there was a change in alliances in the Northern Seven Years' War: Sweden became an ally of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, whereas Denmark became an ally of Russia. Cf. e.g. F.D. Scott, *Sweden. The Nation's History*, Carbondale–Edwardsville, 141 ff.

80 On the hypothesis that Eric XIV could have inspired Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, see C. Backvis, 'Histoire veridique...', 19. It is worth mentioning that the history of Eric XIV and the murders he committed according to Kromer were foreshadowed by the fate of Christian II, deposed almost half a century earlier. He was the last ruler of Sweden and Denmark under the Kalmar Union. Kromer called Christian II 'a cruel man and a tyrant' and the description of his abuse of power corresponds to typical offences of the *tyrannus ex parte exercitii*; see *Historyja prawdziwa*, 8 ff., 14 ff. In terms of the structure of this work, the two tyrants, Christian II and Eric XIV, are opposed by two good rulers, Gustav I and John III.

81 This marriage and the coronation of Karin Månsdotter on 5 July 1568 meant that her sons' rights to the Swedish throne were recognized. Henrik and Gustav had been

breaking out a few weeks later that ended in the surrender and arrest of Eric (September 1568).⁸²

Of the many literary propaganda motifs that Kromer weaves into his description of these events, a key role is played by a scene that closely resembles the previously analysed description of Nebuchadnezzar's transgressions, dreams, and madness:⁸³ 'After this nasty business [i.e. the murder of several members and supporters of the noble Sture family on 24 May 1567 – I.K.], he had a vision in the early hours of the morning that a man [i.e. an angel – I.K.] dressed in white came to him and told him: "Tyranny will make you kill your brother [i.e., John – I.K.] and send his wife [Catherine Jagiellon I.K.] to Muscovy [i.e., to Ivan the Terrible – I.K.]; God has commanded you, speaking to you through me, not to do this. You already angered God when you murdered innocent people and some of your lords [i.e. nobility]. If you [...] do not stop these atrocities, then the Lord God will strip you of your reason, and your will lose your kingdom, and you will run upon the rocks and among the woods, and eat grass like an ox, that he will make you a beast, and that you will tear off all of your clothes, so that you will have nothing with which to cover your body, and that the Lord God will give you to your enemies to live in eternal slavery."⁸⁴

In this context, it is worth noting another important moment in Kromer's novel, i.e. when Eric is finally removed from power in the fall of 1568 and imprisoned in Gripsholm Castle, 'so that he would understand that he was never mad, only at that time, he could have killed all his lords, but he did not kill them [...]; and he still thinks that after seven years as a prisoner, he will be king again.'⁸⁵ Here again the reference to the Biblical Nebuchadnezzar seems apparent (seven times = seven years).⁸⁶

conceived by Eric before the marriage. This was the direct cause of the rebellion led by brothers John and Charles; see *Historija prawdziwa*, 99, fn. 252.

82 Cf. e.g. I. Andersson, *Schwedische Geschichte*, München 1950, 183 ff.; his, 'Erik XIV och Machiavelli,' *Scandia* 3, 1930; M. Roberts, *The Early Vasas. A History of Sweden, 1523–1611*, Cambridge 1968, 238 ff.; F.D. Scott, *Sweden...*, 141 ff.

83 J. Krzyżanowski, *Romans pseudohistoryczny w Polsce w wieku XVI*, 159.

84 *Historija prawdziwa*, 39; cf. also the description of how Eric regained consciousness, *ibid.*, 45.

85 *Ibid.*, 66 ff.

86 Kromer wrote *Historia prawdziwa* between 1569 and 1570, while the recently deposed Eric was imprisoned in Gripsholm Castle. At that time, it was impossible to rule out the return of the former king to the throne as the result of some unexpected turn of events. This is most probably why the author puts the words into Eric's lips that he hopes to regain power when seven years pass.

The story of Eric's mental breakdown in 1567, recorded in numerous Swedish sources from that era, appears to be a historical fact.⁸⁷ The case was, in fact, diagnosed psychiatrically in the early twentieth century. The symptoms indicated a clinical case of *dementia praecox*.⁸⁸ Interesting here is Kromer's use of the motif of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in his work. The *topos* of this ruler's madness was a frequent motif in medieval literature. As Penelope Doob has noted: Nebuchadnezzar 'may be seen as the father of most literary madmen.'⁸⁹ She distinguishes three conventions in English medieval literature for depictions of madmen. The first is the negative *topos* of the *mad sinner*, who lacks the possibility of the restoration

87 Eric's depression, which lasted more than six months, had different stages. The worsening of the disease most probably overlaps with the gap in his diaries (21 May–12 August 1567). Kromer's account does not exactly correspond with the description of facts in contemporary Swedish sources. First of all, most Swedish accounts state that the king's bout with disease after the murders of 24 May lasted only one day, rather than three days, as claimed by Kromer. On this subject, cf. a more detailed description in E. Lundqvist, *Eric XIV i motreformationens historieskrivning*. Second, Kromer is the only contemporary author who included in his work 'Conditions sent to the Duke of Finland,' which are dated 14 October 1567 and full of inaccuracies, *Historyja prawdziwa*, 46–54. It is stated that Eric XIV would agree to abdicate in favour of his brother John under certain conditions, e.g. retaining the hereditary title of duke, a guarantee of personal security (including protection against criminal charges for the murders he committed) and material security, as well as the protection of his good name (by destroying embarrassing acts from the time of his reign and appropriately 'rewriting' the history of his rule). As the reason for his abdication, Eric gives 'the burden on the soul and the body, effected by both people and the devil' and his health, which had been deteriorating since May 1567, which made it impossible for him to rule the country: 'he is not capable of ruling the kingdom or fiddling with the affairs of the state'; *ibid.*, 47. On the authenticity of this document, cf. the remarks of the Polish editor in: *ibid.*, 225, fn. 225; E. Lundqvist, *Eric XIV i motreformationens historieskrivning*.

88 V. Wigert, *Eric XIV. Hans Sinnesjukdom. Historisk-psykiatrisk studie*, Stockholm 1920, Chapter VIII. The author notes that Eric's psychosis started in May 1567. His manic-depressive condition lasted for around 7–8 months. After a period of remission, the disease intensified about six years after his actual imprisonment and official deposition in January 1569, which was manifested in acute depression and paranoid episodes, emotional exultation and racing thoughts. Among the possible external causes, Wigert emphasizes mainly excessive alcohol consumption, which could have exacerbated the king's psychotic episodes, thus rejecting the possibility of a hereditary disease, which was unlikely. Eric's mother, Catherine of Saxe-Lauenburg, also had a melancholic disposition, but her condition was never pathological; *ibid.*, 172.

89 P.B.R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children. Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature*, New Haven–London 1974, 55.

of either his health or God's grace (e.g. the pagan kings or Herod). Then there is the so-called *unholy wild man*, who has the potential to restore his health (e.g. Nebuchadnezzar, St Mary Magdalene, Merlin). Finally, there is the positive *holy wild man*, who has the potential to recover from his illness and hope for eternal salvation, embodied in such figures as the blessed hermits (St Anthony, St Paul of Thebes).⁹⁰

The question arises as to whether the motif of the ruler's madness in Kromer's book, based on the model of Nebuchadnezzar, should not be interpreted as a reflection of the propaganda arguments put forward in Sweden during the rule of the regency council and the temporary removal of Eric from power in 1567. If so, the subtext underlying the *topos* of Nebuchadnezzar would be important: namely, hope for the return of Eric's full mental powers and a means of justifying the need for him to continue his rule (such a message is clear from the 1584 plaque dedicated to Albrecht Frederick).

The validity of such a hypothesis is confirmed by the official 'Declaration of the Estates on the Reasons for Sentencing Eric XIV to Life in Prison' of 25 January 1569,⁹¹ i.e. from the period when he had been permanently removed from power. The majority of the arguments put forward in this document are related to accusations of his being guilty of 'tyranny by his own free will and due to his poor choice of advisors' (Article 24) and can be defined, according to the typology of Bartolus de Saxoferrato, as *tyrannia ex parte exercitii*. At the same time, the Swedish estates rejected the likelihood of Eric's having a mental illness, treating it as an attempt at subterfuge aimed at justifying his crimes: 'he invented a new unheard of stratagem for concealing his evil deeds [...] and declared that he was sick and weak at the time' (Article 22). Ultimately, it was concluded 'that God had rightly removed him from his rule and punished him like Saul, which so hardened his heart that he could not admit his guilt' (Article 24). Such a clear-cut challenge to the fact of Eric's mental illness in early 1569 may have

90 *Ibid.*, 56 ff.

91 Cf. *Redogörelse för orsakerna, hvarföre Erik XIV och hans afkomma af konung Johan, hertig karl, rikets rad och förnämste ständer döms förlustiga Sveriges krona samt Erik sjelf till ett evigt fångelse*, Stockholm 1569 (25 januari), 317 ff. On this subject, cf. M. Roberts, *The Early Vasas...*, 240; E. Lundqvist, *Eric XIV i motreformationens historieskrivning*, also discusses grotesque motifs in the propaganda of that era directed against Eric, e.g. accusations that he planned to burn down Stockholm and the royal castle.

been motivated by a desire to exclude all mitigating circumstances, which in sixteenth-century legislation included people with mental illnesses.⁹²

As we can see, in the biblical style applied in the accusations against Eric in the late 1560s, there is a confrontation here of two *topoi*. Namely, that used by Kromer, but which is – perhaps – a trace of Swedish propaganda from the regency period, justifying the example of Nebuchadnezzar as a *unholy wild man* – a madman who has the possibility of recovering and obtaining God's grace. Meanwhile, the Swedish accusation incorporates the first biblical King of Israel, Saul (The Book of Samuel), who also struggled with attacks of 'melancholy,' and who lost power and his life during the invasion of the Philistines. His figure would therefore represent the negative *topos* of the *mad sinner*, i.e. a sinful madman who has no way of recovering his health or achieving eternal salvation. In both cases, i.e. Kromer's novel and the accusations of the Swedish estates aimed at legalizing the deposition of Eric XIV, the conflict between the monarch and his rebellious subjects would be played out on the propaganda level in the stylistic use of literary tensions created by references to biblical examples which made a strong impression on the minds of contemporary readers.

It is worth adding that the motivation for Kromer's use of the example of Nebuchadnezzar in relation to Eric XIV was above all its literary construction.⁹³ But he could also have inspired by propaganda and news from abroad about the madness of the Swedish king, and the establishment in Sweden of a regency council, which ruled for some seven-eight months (late May 1567 – early January

92 D. Mazek, 'Kuratela nad osobami chorymi psychicznie w Rzeczypospolitej w drugiej połowie XVIII w.,' 132 ff., reminds that pursuant to sixteenth-century law in the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Statutes of Lithuania of 1529 and Bartłomiej Groicki's draft entitled *Tytuły prawa majdeburskiego*), people with mental illnesses could not appear in court on their own. Moreover, they could not hold office. On the other hand, due to their limited legal independence, they could not be tortured or sentenced to death for homicide, unless it was committed after their recovery or in a new fit of madness. The author concludes: 'What is interesting here is the approach to an act committed by a sick and healthy person. A madman who had recovered was automatically treated like the rest of society. A crime committed by such a person was no longer seen as an excess of someone insane or a result of a disease. If such a person committed a new crime, it was done consciously and deserved punishment.'

93 The description of a dream, which plays a key role here, was placed by the author before the description of the temporary madness of Eric XIV, his recovery and regaining power in January 1568.

1568).⁹⁴ Because of his depression, Eric did not want to – and was unable to – govern at the time, suffering from symptoms of a persecution mania (the belief that he was being imprisoned and deposed). This condition lasted until 9 January 1568, when he was once again ready to assume command of the Swedish army, and wrote a letter to his subjects notifying them of his return to health in the coming weeks.⁹⁵ Given the seriousness with which the Bible was treated by people of the time, the question arises as to whether the 'Nebuchadnezzar' period of the king's illness could not also have influenced certain political decisions and institutional solutions in Sweden itself, such as the length of the regency.

To sum up the above considerations, the madness of the ruler itself can be seen in the latter half of the sixteenth century to be an insufficient argument for permanently removing him from power. It was a ruler's mental illness in combination with accusations of tyranny where the real potential danger lurked, though, as the example of the accusations made by the Swedish estates against Eric shows, mental illness could also be treated as a 'stragem' to justify acts of tyranny. In this context, one is led to wonder about the approach to the problem of mental illness by the 'father of the Reformation' himself – Martin Luther.⁹⁶ In his famous work *Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligem Stande sein können* (1526), written during the German Peasants' War, he recalled the need to make a clear

94 News on the progress of events in Sweden in 1567 reached the Kraków court e.g. in letters exchanged by members of the Jagiellonian dynasty. Some of these letters included rumours and propaganda motifs popular in Sweden; cf. *Jagiellonki polskie w XVI wieku*, ed. A. Przeździecki, vol. 3, Kraków 1868, no. XXIII–XXVII, 117–122. An example is a letter dated 11 November 1567, written by Dosieczka, a court dwarf in the service of Queen Catherine Jagiellon, addressed to Sophia Jagiellon. Dosieczka wrote about the madness of Eric XIV and the liberation of prince John and his family. Eric not only abused power multiple times, he was also supposed to have driven his younger brother Magnus mad: 'the prince made his third brother, Duke of Östergötland, lose his mind, and he has not recovered for four years.' In reality, the first symptoms of Magnus' disease appeared in 1561 and returned at the end of 1563 and beginning of 1564. Magnus' disease, diagnosed by Viktor Wigert as *dementia praecox*, lasted until his death in 1595, but there were periods of remittance. It is worth noting that Sophia, Magnus' sister, also had a mental disorder; see V. Wigert, *Erik XIV...*, 175 ff.

95 V. Wigert, *Erik XIV...*, 63, 92.

96 H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, Stanford 1999, 83, draws attention to the fact that Luther often spontaneously accused his opponents of being stupid, mad or possessed. Cf. also an overview of Luther's views on melancholy in: W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, Wiesbaden 1991, 67 ff.

distinction between a tyrant and a madman. The madman did not show any sense or discernment in his conduct. The tyrant, in turn, had a conscience and was able to distinguish between good and bad, so there was still a chance for him to improve, a possibility which is not available to a madman.⁹⁷ The German reformer formulated this thoughts even more clearly in a letter in 1539: true Christians should humbly endure all injustice at the hands of tyrants, but in the case of madness, the ruler should be removed from power and isolated from his surroundings – ‘for he cannot be considered a person if he has lost his mind.’ But if a tyrant has reached a state of beastly fury, he should by no means be stripped of power like an ordinary mad prince.⁹⁸

As we can see, Luther strongly emphasized the rationality of the tyrant, who had the opportunity for moral ‘self-therapy’ and thus, to correct his conduct. In this case, tyranny is seen as a potentially transient state, offering the promise of improvement that the mad ruler is deprived of – as a dehumanized and brutalized being, because he lacks *ratio*. Luther’s negative approach to mental illness was also a legacy of the medieval tradition, which understood madness as God’s punishment for sins and idolatry.⁹⁹ However, the ‘father of the Reformation’ made an exception here – he often used the medical term *melancholy* to explain the behaviour of Biblical characters (e.g., Lot, Jacob) and to justify actions by them which were generally considered morally reprehensible. With regard to secular rulers, he also argued that melancholic states can excuse certain errors in political judgement and affairs of the state, though not in matters of religion and moral conscience.¹⁰⁰ In his correspondence of 1534 to Joachim I, Duke of

97 Martin Luther, ‘Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligen Stande sein können,’ in: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 19, Weimar 1897, 634 ff.

98 H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History...*, 90 ff.

99 W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, 66, 74, 80, emphasizes that Luther’s mostly critical attitude on the issue of melancholy became ‘a fertile ground for the ‘antimelancholic’ trend,’ prevailing in the Lutheran tradition, directed against both the Anabaptists’ *Schwärmerei* as *jeder saturnischer latzkopf*, *ibid.*, 110, and Calvin’s concept of predestination, which supposedly led to melancholy. The other extreme in the Lutheran tradition was represented by Philip Melancthon, who positively assessed a melancholic temperament, but not a pathological, ‘unnatural’ form of melancholy. However, his interpretation did not have many supporters among Lutherans. An example of a negative Lutheran interpretation of melancholy is a ‘poster’ from 1562, kept in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel and entitled *Tabula inspienda contra melancholiam; et quam exitiabile malum*, no. 95.10 Quod. 2^o (70). See the analysis of this source in: W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, 74.

100 H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History...*, 85, 88.

Anhalt-Dessau, who suffered from depression, Luther advised him to take certain therapeutic measures, typical for the time, alongside his so-called 'pastoral therapy' (reading the Bible, listening to music and singing church hymns): this included horseback riding, hunting, and sharing the company of friends.¹⁰¹ As we shall see in a moment, Luther's therapeutic approach to 'melancholy' carried with it the spirit of the Renaissance.

In the case of Albrecht Frederick, the ruler's mental illness and his melancholy could be stylized on the propaganda level by means of biblical examples like Nebuchadnezzar, as 'madness' and 'momentary tyranny,' bringing to the fore a subtext that justified the abuses committed by the ruler and the chances for his recovery and good governance in the future. In turn, through references to other biblical models (Saul), like in the case of the accusations levelled against the Swedish King Eric XIV, attempts were made to emphasize the permanent, incurable, and psychopathological features of his tyranny.¹⁰² Let us note that Nebuchadnezzar's *topos* corresponded well with the paradigm of 'transitional' tyranny. Although both *topoi* – Nebuchadnezzar and Saul, respectively – had

101 Ibid., 105. When depression persisted, Luther visited Prince Joachim in person and tried to reassure him by encouraging him to be persistent, and claiming that his illness was a test from God. On treatments used at that time to fight sadness and melancholy, cf. also W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, 152 ff.

102 The *topos* of Saul, who embodies an ungodly ruler, deprived of power and life as punishment, often appeared in the political thought of the Middle Ages, for example, during the conflict between Gregory VII and Henry IV, or in the concepts of those who supported tyrannicide (John of Salisbury). On this subject, cf. J. Funkenstein, 'Samuel und Saul in der Staatslehre des Mittelalters,' *Archiv für Rechtsund Sozialphilosophie* 40, 1952/1953. These two negative figures (Saul and Nebuchadnezzar) were contrasted with David, presented as an ideal ruler, for example, in *Enchiridion, a speculum principis* written by Urban Rieger in 1535: 1) Nebuchadnezzar 'stolziert, als were er selbst der oberste Herr' – for which he was punished by God; 2) Saul 'wolt auch seinen kopff nach regieren' – for which he was deprived of power by God; David worshipped God, which is why 'sol auch die ehre haben, wir sind alle Gottes werckzeug'; as cited in B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 293. A similarly negative *speculum principis* of Saul's melancholy can be found in a work written by Simon Musaeus, Luther's former student, which is interesting due to its Prussian context, *Melancholischer Teufel Nützlicher bericht unnd heilsamer Rath Gegründet aus Gottes Wort wie man alle Melancholische Teufelische gedanken und sich troesten sol Insonderheit allen Schwermütigen herten zum sonderlichen Trotz gestellet Durch Simonem Musaeum der heiligen Schrifft Doctor. Gedruckt zum Lham in der Newenmarck durch Christoff Rungen. MDLXXII, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, no. A: 78. 16. Pol.*

biblical and medieval origins, but they took on new meanings in the latter half of the sixteenth century, in the era of the late Renaissance.

Under the Mask of Melancholy – Fashionable Pose or Disease?

A fundamental question is how do Albrecht Frederick and Eric XIV's health conditions look when compared to the standards of the Renaissance era? This raises two issues worthy of reflection. The first is the frequent occurrence of mental illness in ruling families during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There are many such examples, from Joanna of Castile to Emperor Rudolf II. The Prussian Hohenzollern and Swedish Vasa lines were no exception. Erik Midelfort mentions 33 certified cases of mental illness among sixteenth-century princely families in the Holy Roman Empire and, drawing on this fact, poses the question: Is this 'a world gone mad?'¹⁰³ The list of *dramatis personae* in Midelfort's book and the genealogical tables prepared by the same author reveal a mysteriously high frequency of such illnesses in the Hohenzollern dynasty and the associated House of Braunschweig.¹⁰⁴

Second is the intriguing accumulation of themes related to melancholy, madness, and stupidity in Renaissance literature and art.¹⁰⁵ In the early sixteenth

103 H.C.E. Midelfort, *Mad Princes...*, 23.

104 *Ibid.*, XI ff., 24, 160 ff. From the point of view of George Frederick of Brandenburg-Ansbach, it is worth noting that around the time when he became the guardian of Albrecht Frederick, and also became the legal care-giver for his ill sister Anna Maria, widow of Christoph, Duke of Württemberg. At that time, symptoms of a serious mental disease were also becoming visible in his father-in-law, Julius of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

105 Cf. reflections on this subject in: M. Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. J. Murphy, J. Khalfa, London–New York 2006, 16 ff. Even though this work became a classic of research literature in the latter half of the twentieth century, it was also strongly criticized by historians. The target of criticism was in particular Foucault's main thesis on the age of reason, and rationalism, which had its roots in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, as the period of the 'great confinement' and repression of mental illnesses, manifested in the social exclusion of mentally deranged people, who previously lived with their family members, and sending them to special hospitals and mental institutions. According to H.C.E. Midelfort, Foucault's theory works on such a level of abstraction that it is not bothered by any empirical evidence; cf. his, *A History...*, 7 ff. Midelfort's thorough research on the situation of the mentally ill in sixteenth-century Germany has led this author to conclude that in this period, it was generally believed that mentally ill people should be taken care of by their families and that they were sent to hospitals or prisons only when it was impossible to handle them. Moreover, treatments included pilgrimages to sacred sites, prayers, hymns, diet, music

century, these themes took the face of *Melancholy* from Dürer's woodcuts, the features of *Dulle Grete* from Bruegel's painting, the shape of Brant's *Narrenschiff*, or the figure of Foolishness from *Moriae encomium*. As a literary convention, the motifs of madness or melancholy, especially in the latter half of the sixteenth century, were often associated with the history of power and the crimes committed in its name, the most perfect examples of which can be found in the works of Shakespeare. The theme of melancholy is also present in many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century medical and therapeutic treatises, such as Robert Burton's extremely popular *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621),¹⁰⁶ which provides a tangible example of how illness can inspire culture, and how culture can transform illness into a fashionable pose or state of mind.

Let us first look at the prevalence of mental illness in countries for which we have statistical data. A study by Michael MacDonald on the medical practice of Richard Napier, an English physician specializing in the treatment of mental illness, between the years 1597 and 1646, shows that mentally ill patients constituted only 5% of his total clientele, though it is possible that for England as a whole time the percentage was slightly higher.¹⁰⁷ Burton makes a dramatic declaration in the preface to *The Anatomy of Melancholy*: 'Examine the rest in like sort, and you shall finde that Kingdoms and Provinces are melancholy, cities and families, all creatures, vegetal, sensible, and rational, that all sorts, sects, ages, conditions, are out of tune, as in *Cebes* table, *omnes errorem bibunt*, before they come into the world, they are intoxicated by errors cup, from the highest to the lowest [...] For indeed who is not a fool, melancholy, mad? – *Qui nil molitur*

and sexual intercourse, as well as chemical agents and herbal medicines: 'Madness was, therefore, a diverse experience in sixteenth-century Germany, one that ill comports with schemes that simplify and try to characterize the age with just a few bold strokes of the pen'; *ibid.*, 387.

- 106 R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: What It Is, With All the Kinds Causes, Symptomes Prognostickes & Severall Cures of It*, London 1652. Cf. also the overview of examples of therapeutic and 'uplifting' literature in reference to melancholy in continental Europe and England in: W. Weber, 'Im Kampf mit Saturn,' 170, 177; W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, 75 ff.
- 107 M. MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam. Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*, Cambridge 1983, 31 ff., 50, 53. The total number of Napier's patients with mental diseases was 2039, with 1286 women and 748 men; *ibid.*, 36. In the years 1597 to 1635, the social status of Napier's patients was compared in five-year periods and varied as follows: from 12.5% to 2.9% of patients belonged to broadly defined nobility (peers, knights, ladies and those who used the title of a master or mistress) and from 87.5% to 78.1% of patients did not have a title.

inepte, who is not brain-sick? Folly, melancholy, madnes[s], are but one disease, *Delirium* is a common name to all.¹⁰⁸ From a purely numerical point of view Burton's claims were greatly exaggerated. Nevertheless, they are fascinating for the historian. What – apart from purely personal factors – led to such a sensitivity and interest in Burton (and his contemporary readers) about mental illness and the mental states referred to as 'melancholy'? To what period can we date the beginnings of such an interest?

MacDonald provides a partial response: 'During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the English people became more concerned about the prevalence of madness, gloom and self-murder, than they had ever been before, and the reading public developed a strong fascination with classical medical psychology.'¹⁰⁹ Interestingly enough, public interest in madness clearly intensified since around 1580, as evidenced in the literature of Elizabethan England – in the frequently occurring motifs of lunatics, melancholiacs, and suicides.¹¹⁰

This picture is enhanced by Erik Midelfort's research on sixteenth-century Germany. The percentage of patients suffering from mental illness between 1550 and 1622 in the three hospitals established in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation in Hessen (Haina, Merxhausen, and Hofheim), famous for the high-quality care they provided to the sick and poor, ranged from 13 to 26%. At the same time, it is striking that the number of such patients then almost doubled between 1581 and 1600.¹¹¹ In turn, in a hospital established in 1574 during the counter-reformation by the Catholic Bishop of Würzburg Julius Echter von Mespelbrunn, the percentage of mentally-ill patients for the years 1580 to 1620 was 6.1% of the total. Here we see a similar leap in the number of mentally ill patients for the years 1595 to 1609, especially those diagnosed as 'melancholiacs,' as opposed to the rest, labelled as 'madmen.'¹¹² Once again, the broader cultural context of the era seems important here.

In the late sixteenth century, there was an increase in the frequency of diagnoses of melancholy and the attribution of mental illness to demonic possession.

108 R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 18.

109 *Ibid.*, 2.

110 *Ibid.*, 2 ff.

111 H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History...*, tab. 7.11, 7.12, 364. The percentage of mentally ill men and women applying for admission to hospitals in Haina and Merxhausen remained virtually the same. These hospitals were intended for poor, blind, paralyzed, deaf and deranged individuals, as well as 'possessed, deformed and leprous' patients; *ibid.*, 329.

112 *Ibid.*, tab. 7.13, 7.14; 376 ff.; similarly to Hesse, the percentage of mentally ill men and women remained virtually the same.

There were two reasons for this. The first was improvements in the education of physicians increased their proficiency in recognizing various types of melancholy. The second was the religious attitudes and anxieties of both Protestant and Catholic communities, including convictions about an impending apocalypse and widespread fear of magic that prompted them to see all sorts of 'evil,' including mental ailments, as being caused by demonic possession.¹¹³

It is possible that the spread of melancholic states among nobles families, a prevailing trend in the latter half of the sixteenth century, was a response to such factors as the increased pressures of court life and the requirement of self-control in official life,¹¹⁴ as well as a temporary weakening of the ruler-warrior ethos, which meant that weaknesses could be more freely revealed publicly.¹¹⁵ The changes that took place in attitudes towards mentally ill rulers in the late Renaissance period were likewise significant. In the late Middle Ages, and still at the beginning of the sixteenth century, mad princes in the Holy Roman Empire were simply forcibly removed from power by their own immediate relatives, or isolated from others, which in some cases, involved some form of imprisonment.¹¹⁶ They were also often denied access to doctors and medical care.

Under the influence of the rediscovery of the ancient legacy of Hippocrates and Galen, and the popularity of the teachings of the contemporary Swiss physician Theophrastus von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus (1493–1541), sometime

113 Ibid., 386.

114 This was related to the popularization of more extended court ceremonies in the sixteenth century, constrained by detailed rules and norms of behaviour, which led to repressing natural impulses and responses, which is analysed by Norbert Elias in his classic works. See especially his, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manners*, trans. E. Jephcott, Oxford 1994, esp. 257–448.

115 Both of these factors are pointed out by H.C.E. Midelfort, *Mad Princes...*, 151 ff.: 'It is also true that the prince of the late sixteenth century was more of a bureaucrat and a state symbol than a warrior. It was no longer so crucial that the prince be able to lead his troops in the field, and so, in one sense, the court could be better afford an inept ruler even as the morly state increasingly needed a pompous symbol of its authority and might'; cf. also summarizing reflections in: his, *A History...*, 386 ff., in reference to the popularity of fools and dwarfs in the court culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their very appearance, which did not conform to generally applicable norms, freely demonstrated 'humane' features and 'folly,' which made them serve as a relief in this epoch of an intensifying 'advance of civilization,' which valued rational thinking, attached increasing importance to etiquette, welcomed restraint and the suppression of urges and paid tribute to human reason.

116 Examples of other rulers in: his, *Mad Princes...*, 19 ff., passim.

around the 1530s, and even more clearly towards the end of this century, the treatment of melancholic rulers began to change towards a more humane posture.¹¹⁷ They were given diagnoses and prescribed therapies by physicians. According to Erik Midelfort, this evolution in the sixteenth century concerning the thinking and practices associated with mental illness would lead to a shift from the deposition of mentally ill rulers to their undergoing therapeutic treatment. As the best documented case confirming his thesis, the historian analysed the cases of Duke Albrecht Frederick of Prussia and his brother-in-law Johann Wilhelm, the last Duke of Jülich-Cleves-Berg. This evolution was also reflected in the rise of the authority of doctors (*Leib- und Hofärzte*) at princely courts in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Their frequent interventions testify to the fact that the ruling elites also began to think more and more in the medical terms of Galen and Hippocrates: ‘Melancholy became a fashionable disorder and even an affectation by the time of Shakespeare, but it appears that it was popular only among those effectively (even indirectly) exposed to Renaissance philosophy or medicine.’¹¹⁸ To put it briefly: melancholy became more and more ‘fashionable’ in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, both among doctors and their well-educated patients. It seems that it was not only increasingly diagnosed as a disease but also represented one of the dominant cultural patterns of that time.¹¹⁹

117 H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History...*, 151, a table with printed works by Galen (in the years 1473–1600) and Hippocrates (1473–1650); *Mad Princes...*, 11, 13 ff. The author draws attention to the fact that the concepts of Galen and Hippocrates became popular in the sixteenth century, which was visible in editions of their works and studies on them published between 1500 and 1600, with an important role played by Galen’s works translated by Andreas Vesalius (1538, 1541). However, the concepts of Paracelsus were characterized by a more holistic approach towards disease. He recommended both the use of chemical measures and alchemic, astrological and religious treatments. Even though he was forced out of the University of Basel and excluded from the academic community, Paracelsus had many supporters. They were more warmly welcomed at princely courts in northern Germany than at universities, dominated by the supporters of Galen. Midelfort emphasizes that both groups of doctors had no doubts that their patients were sick and needed treatment.

118 H.C.E. Midelfort, *Mad Princes...*, 15–18.

119 Cf. inspiring reflections on the cultural determinants of mental illness and their role as a cultural pattern in: W. Weber, ‘Im Kampf mit Saturn,’ esp. 157 ff. The author emphasizes the influence of the broadly defined cultural and social context of a given epoch on the popularization of depression and melancholy. From this perspective, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ‘sind mehr melancholieranfällig’ than the deeply rational eighteenth century. See also H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History...*, chapter ‘Madness

The theory that there was some kind of epidemic of mental illness in a non-cultural sense in the sixteenth century holds little water. With the Renaissance's 'discovery of the individual' – 'introspection and self-awareness inevitably lead to a sense of oddities, quirks and curiosities of human nature, and [...] to recognition moods of sadness, regret, and nostalgia.'¹²⁰ In the Middle Ages, the word *melancholy* was a collective term for a variety of mental illnesses, the causes of which were seen mainly in the actions of Satan and just punishment for one's sins (*melancholia diabolica*).¹²¹ It was not until the Renaissance discovery of ancient humoral medicine that a new look at the problem of mental illness came about. A variety of symptoms and forms of mental illness began to be noted. In addition to the term *melancholy* itself, a distinction was made between heavier or lighter states of 'stupidity,' insanity, congenital and acquired disabilities, sleepwalking, hallucinations, demonic possession, suicidal tendencies and various types of desperation and 'sorrow.' (e.g. in German *unordentliche Traurigkeit*, *Schwermutigkeit*, or in English *moodiness* or *mopishness*). However, the term *melancholy*, alongside phrases like 'troubled in mind,' was commonly used in diagnoses, and was applied especially often in the case of patients from the upper social strata. In England at the end of Elizabeth I's reign and during the time of James I, it even became, as MacDonald metaphorically concludes, a decoration for 'the crest of courtiers' arms.'¹²²

Of significance here was the distinguishing during this epoch of two types of madness, namely a 'mad madness' and a 'wise madness' (Michel Foucault).¹²³ The roots of this division are found in a well-known work by Marsilio Ficino *De vita triplici* (1489), in which melancholy is combined with the Platonic image of divine madness and the pseudo-Aristotelian idea of an intellectually outstanding

and Culture,' 13 ff., considerations on the topic of posing and pretending to have a fashionable disease or psychoses forced or conditioned by certain cultural patterns.

120 J.B. Bamborough, 'Introduction,' in: R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, XXIV, XXVII.

121 W. Weber, 'Im Kampf mit Saturn,' 161 ff., 169.

122 Cf. a list with the frequency of diagnoses and the variety of terms used to describe mental disorders in: M. MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam...*, table 4.1, 117 and 150 ff., on the subject of melancholy as a condition fashionable among aristocrats and gentlefolk in the times of James I, and the popularity of this subject in fiction and popular 'up-lifting' treatises, common especially in the last 25 years of the rule of Elizabeth I. On the subject of German diagnostic terminology, see A. Skrobacski, 'Choroba Albrechta Fryderyka Pruskiego...', 213.

123 On this subject, cf. M. Foucault, *History of Madness*, 35 ff.

individual – a manifestation of genius.¹²⁴ Melancholy came to be attributed to Saturn's influence, and in the world of Renaissance humanists, became a fashionable disease, a state of mind and a popular pose and motif – one often present in contemporary art and literature.¹²⁵ The distinction developed by humanist medicine between so-called *melancholy naturalis*, i.e. a state resulting from a melancholic temperament, and *melancholy non naturalis*, perceived as pathological, contributed greatly to this.¹²⁶ All in all, three faces of madness were 'discovered'

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- 124 On the subject of Marsilio Ficino's concept of melancholy and his renewal of the pseudo-Aristotelian tradition, and interest in *Problem XXX*, I, see the classic work: R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, London 1964, 254–255, esp. 259 ff. *Ibid.*, 16 ff., on the ancient text *Problem XXX*, I (*ibid.*, 18–29, Greek and English edition), ascribed to Aristotle, and the concept of melancholy presented in this work. In the 4th century BC, under the influence of two sources of inspiration: the motive of madness popular in great Greek tragedies and the positive connotations of Platonic madness as a gift from God, the latter was associated with the notion of melancholy in Aristotle's natural philosophy. In *Problem XXX*, I, he asked: 'Why is it that all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly melancholics [emphasis mine – I.K.]' (*ibid.*, 18) and ascribed melancholy to heroes such as Heracles or Ajax, as well as outstanding statesmen (Lysander), poets and philosophers (Empedocles, Plato and Socrates). At the same time, Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl draw attention to the fact that in Plato's works, there were no indications of a synthesis of positive divine madness and the notion of melancholy, which he associated with the worst type of soul, i.e. that of a tyrant; *ibid.*, 17.
- 125 *Ibid.*, esp. 273, on the subject of Saturn as a ruler who gave up his kingdom in Olympus in exchange for an existence between the highest sphere of heaven and the depths of the earth, as well as Saturn as a planet that causes melancholic moods and the patron of the famous Platonic Academy in Florence: 'It is Saturn who leads the mind to the contemplation of higher and more hidden matters, and he himself, as Ficino says, in more than one place, signifies *divine contemplation*'; *ibid.*, 260. Another interesting thing is the extent to which melancholic features ascribed to Lorenzo the Magnificent remained in relation to Ficino's theory: 'son of a well-known physician, and son by a spiritual affinity of the elder Cosimo de' Medici (which provided an occasion for constant puns on 'Medici' and 'medicus')'; *ibid.*, 262.
- 126 W. Weber, 'Im Kampf mit Saturn,' 170; R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy...*, 29 ff., esp. 32; W. Schleiner, *Melancholy, Genius, and Utopia in the Renaissance*, 57 ff., 66, who discusses the views of Philip Melanchthon on melancholy. Under the influence of the ancient tradition (Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problem XXX*, I), in the popular work *Comentarius de anima* (13 editions in print until 1584), Melanchthon distinguishes between *humores naturales* and pathological *praenaturales* or *viciosi*, mentioning also a positive form of melancholic temperament, i.e. heroic melancholy; *ibid.*, 57 ff., 66.

in the Renaissance era. The first was selfish ‘stupidity,’ discussed by Erasmus and other authors, who, following in the footsteps of St Paul, contrasted with Christian wisdom, sometimes also calling melancholy perversely ‘stupidity,’ in the positive sense of living according to the precepts of your faith. The second was in the sense of demonic possession, which became part of the mania of witch-hunts that was common at that time. The third was the concept of melancholy as a manifestation of genius, based on the conviction that a person is haunted by a caring spirit that gives him special intellectual power and supreme wisdom.¹²⁷

It is true that in Neostoic philosophy melancholy in a ruler was still perceived as a state of potential tyranny, although Justus Lipsius himself openly admitted to the ‘natural’ melancholy fashionable in his time.¹²⁸ At the same time, this was probably influenced by the appearance of a fashion for melancholy at the end of the sixteenth century, with supporters of a more ‘humorous’ approach to the issue of governance having not yet come to the fore. In their political treatises in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they admittedly promoted the need for a ruler with a sanguine temperament – bold, vital, and enjoying life – but they also wanted to give him a bit of a melancholic temperament, in order for him to be more reflective in his conduct. At the same time, they postulated a mixed composition of the ruler’s council, made up of both councillors (*acuti*), who were to be ready to make decisions and act quickly, and the more reflective (*tardi*) ones. The melancholiacs themselves were only to be given offices in the financial apparatus, where they could receive salutary relief for their natural inclinations to stinginess for the sake of the treasury.¹²⁹ Of course, this did not refer to the pathological form of ‘unnatural’ melancholy, but to the melancholic temperament of those in power, which could be considered a manifestation of their superiority. In the Renaissance era, such a melancholic stylization of the ruler could justify his natural superiority over the crowd of his subjects.

127 H.C.E. Midelfort, *A History...*, chapter ‘Madness and Metaphor: Folly, Possession, and Genius,’ 22 ff.

128 W. Weber, ‘Im Kampf mit Saturn,’ 183 ff.

129 I repeat the characteristics of the views of Johannes Caselius from Helmstedt and Bartholomeus Keckerman, who wrote at the turn of the seventeenth century, after *ibid.*, 186 ff.

Metaphors of Power: The Body and Head of the Ruler and the Health of the State

Despite this positive Renaissance stylization of melancholy as a manifestation of genius and extraordinary talents, states of 'extreme sorrow' stood in contradiction to the list of rulers' virtues promoted by Erasmus and the Neostoics: *serenitas, tranquillitas, animus sine perturbatione*.¹³⁰ Additionally, in systems based on individual monarchical power, melancholy, like any other disease afflicting a ruler, understandably did not fulfil the expectations of the subjects. A ruler being healthy in body and mind, foretold a long reign and, consequently, a desired stability. Since the most typical symptoms of melancholy in the sixteenth century were perceived as outbursts of fury and anger, it was relatively easy to attribute tyrannical qualities to these symptoms.¹³¹

The negative, pathological form of melancholy, its consequences and the methods for treating it were described in detail by the Bavarian Benedictine Wolfgang Seidel in his treatise *Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr, so Landt und Leut zu Regieren under jm hat vor schedlicher Phantasey verhuten unnd in allen noten trosten soll* (1547).¹³² This work was created at a time when the political situation was beginning to shift towards a more medical and humane treatment of melancholiacs among the royalty as a result of the revival in medicine of the traditions of Hippocrates and Galen, and the popularity of the Paracelsus'

130 To provide an example of how the image of a healthy ruler could be styled contrary to historical truth, it is worth quoting a conventional description of Gustav Vasa by Peter Brahe: 'Wenn er gerade nicht bekümmert und nicht erzürnt war, und es mochten noch so viel Menschen drinnen im Saal bei ihm sein, er wuáte sich doch jedem mit Rede und Antwort zu schicken. Er hatte ein übernatürlich gutes Gedächtnis; was er ein oder zweimal gehört hatte, konnte er nie mehr vergessen... In summa: Gott hatte ihn vor allen anderen begabt mit großen Geschick, hohem und weitem Verstand und vielen fürstlichen Tugenden [...]. Er hatte rundliches Haupt weiß blondes Haar, einen schönen großen und langen Bart, scharfe Augen, eine kleine gerade Nase, wohlgeformten Mund, rote Lippen, ein schönfarbiges Antlitz und rosige Wangen, eine rotbraune Körperfarbe und war so unversehrt am ganzen Körper, dass man nicht ein Fleckchen gefunden hätte, auf das man eine Nadelspitze setzen können'; as cited in I. Andersson, *Schwedische Geschichte*, 181.

131 H.C.E. Midelfort, *Mad Princes...*, 152.

132 I used the latest edition: Wolfgang Seidel, 'Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr, so Landt und Leut zu Regieren under jm hat vor schedlicher Phantasey verhuten unnd in allen noten trosten soll,' in: *Fürstenspiegel der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. H.-O. Mühleisen, T. Stammen, M. Philipp, Frankfurt/M.–Leipzig 1997, 95–114. B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, no. 26 and a detailed analysis of this work, *ibid.*, 250–270.

concepts. His book displayed a certain kinship with the popular religious genre known as ‘comfort booklets’ (*Trostbüchleins*). Above all, however, it was a type of *speculum principis* written during the reign of Wilhelm IV, Duke of Bavaria (1493–1550), shortly before his successor Albrecht V (1528–1579)¹³³ took the throne. It promoted the ideal of a Christian prince, who was contrasted against pagan and Muslim (Ottoman) rulers. Among biblical examples of good rulers, who admittedly sinned but then humbled themselves and confessed their trespasses, David is cited first, with Nebuchadnezzar¹³⁴ listed on the side of bad rulers. The Biblical Pharaoh, in turn, is used as an unambiguous example of a tyrant, or a ruler who only cares about his own interests and not about the welfare of his subjects.¹³⁵

The main content of the treatise is a reflection on princely melancholy, its symptoms and the means for treating it. Seidel distinguishes here two forms of melancholy: negative, pathological, or ‘disarranged’ melancholy (*unordentliche Melancholische traurigkeit*), and so-called ‘holy sadness’ (*heilige traurigkeit*), resulting from the conscientious fulfilment of God’s appointed duties.¹³⁶ The two most important reasons for falling ill with ‘disarranged melancholy’ are God’s just punishment for man’s sins and small-mindedness, when he does place sufficient trust in God, closes himself off, and isolates himself from his surroundings (*heült in seinem kaemerlein*).¹³⁷ ‘Holy sadness,’ in turn, results from tensions and worries typical of those who conscientiously and eagerly care for the welfare of their subjects and show concern for their fate.

According to Seidel, the reasons for such states of mind are many and varied. The prince, although he holds an office given to him by God, is in fact no different from others: ‘because the prince is like other people, so he is burdened with human diseases too,’ Seidel states in his *speculum principis*.¹³⁸ The author emphasizes here the isolation of the ruler within his immediate surroundings – the lack of trusted people to talk to and in which to confide his troubles. For this

133 On the author’s biography and the circumstances in which his treatise was written, as well as an overview of its most important themes, cf. B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 250; and N. von Websky in the introduction to the following edition: W. Seidel, ‘Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr...’, 86–94.

134 W. Seidel, ‘Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr...’, 109 ff.

135 *Ibid.*, 108.

136 *Ibid.*, 96 ff.

137 *Ibid.*, 95 ff.

138 ‘[...] dieweil ain Fürst ain mensch ist wie ander, mit menschlichen geprechen beladen’; *ibid.*, 99.

reason, apart from typical 'pastoral' therapy (confession, reading the Bible, listening to music and singing), Seidel also recommends physical activity (hunting, walking and exercise) and moderation in eating and drinking¹³⁹ as the most important antidote to the need for a trusted advisor in one's court. He would ideally be a combination of 'a psychiatrist, spiritual guide, and privy counsellor' (Bruno Singer)¹⁴⁰ whom the prince could trust and in whom he could confide his troubles.¹⁴¹

According to Seidel, in addition to these environmental factors associated with the specificity of court life, various political and financial problems in the state also bring about melancholy in rulers: debt and deficits in the royal treasury, or fraud and corruption among officials. He thus proposes remedies based on actions of a political nature: the proper selection of chamber servants and high officials of the court (chancellor, marshal, judge, counsellors) and a clear definition of their competences, thereby ending abuses and draining of the prince's treasury.¹⁴² What is striking in this reasoning is that it combines the health of the monarch and his mental condition with the condition of the state.¹⁴³ The way of thinking here is similar to the one we encountered in *Christliche Unterrichtung*, a political testament dedicated to the education of Albrecht Frederick of Prussia. The entire programme for the spiritual education (*pflge des gemuts*) and intellectual, and physical health (*pflge des leibes*) of the successor to the throne described there was linked to the proper organization and functioning of the prince's court as a central state institution. According to this means of argumentation, the sphere of the 'prince's spirit and body' is identified with the proper management of state institutions. In a word, the state of the ruler's spirit (*gemut*), i.e. mainly his religious posture, but also his intellectual, moral, physical and health condition (*leib*) depend on the condition of the state. Interestingly, the sphere of intellect is placed here within the sphere of the body. A similar

139 Due to the lack of moderation, man turns into a beast (*vihisch*); *ibid.*, 102.

140 B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 258.

141 W. Seidel, 'Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr...', 100.

142 *Ibid.*, 103 ff.

143 One of the reasons why Seidel wrote his treatise was his desire to remedy the disastrous financial situation of the duke and criticize sumptuous life at the Bavarian court. This state of affairs was described in a similar manner in the report of a special commission appointed in 1557 to investigate financial fraud and corruption in the duchy. On this subject, cf. B. Singer, *Die Fürstenspiegel in Deutschland...*, 261, and N. von Websky in the introduction to the following edition: W. Seidel, 'Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr...', 91.

understanding of the state in terms of the spirit and body of the ruler is evident in Seidl's work, especially in the metaphor of the prince's heart and blood – these are churches and monasteries, respectively. By taking particular care of these institutions, the prince provides himself with consolation and hope.¹⁴⁴

The identification of the body of the monarch with the body of the state, and his vitality with the prosperity of his subjects is an ancient tradition. The metaphor of the state as an organism was repeated in both Antiquity and the Middle Ages.¹⁴⁵ However, it was at the beginning of Elizabeth I Tudor's reign, as Ernst Kantorowicz pointed out in his classic book, that the concept of 'the King has in him two Bodies' was verbalized in legal language in England. In this metaphor, the 'Body natural' and the 'Body mortal' were contrasted with the 'Body politic,' a higher and more perfect being, one that is immortal and identified with the body of the state. Unlike the natural body of the ruler, the mystical 'Body politic' 'cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to.' At the same time, the concept of 'the king's two bodies' emphasizes the potential submissiveness of the king's natural body to all weaknesses resulting from nature or chance, childhood or old age.¹⁴⁶ The term *imbecility* used above may also refer to mental illness, including congenital impairments. The metaphor – one which goes back to the roots of the still medieval 'theology' of power, but was not fully verbalized until the late Tudor era – turned out of enormous importance in England, and its consequences for the political reality proved to be particularly significant in the period that followed: first during the English Civil War and the execution

144 W. Seidel, 'Wie sich ein Christlicher Herr...', 108 ff.

145 On this subject, cf. an extensive overview of the use of the 'body politic' metaphor from Antiquity to the nineteenth century: D. Peil, *Untersuchungen zur Staats- und Herrschaftsmetaphorik in Literarischen Zeugnissen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, München 1983, Chapter 'Der Staatskörper,' 302–488; for the metaphorical meaning of different body parts in non-political contexts see E.R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter...*, 147.

146 E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton 1957, 7 ff. For Kantorowicz, the point of departure were the opinions of the jurist Edmund Plowden, included in a collection of law cases (1571) written under Queen Elizabeth I. Plowden used John Fortescue's concept of 'body politic' defined in his work *The Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy* (a. 1462).

of Charles I in 1649, and later, in particular in 1660, when the monarchy was restored.¹⁴⁷

The metaphor of ‘two bodies of the king’ was an English invention. It resulted from the specific political situation of England and the concept of the ‘king in Parliament.’¹⁴⁸ However, this way of thinking about the ruler’s body in terms of the body of the state, although not expressed differently than in England, was present in other European countries,¹⁴⁹ at least in those countries where the estates had a strong position. In any case, at the level of political philosophy, claims about the superiority of the nature of the body of the state over the body of the king can be found in Erasmus’ *Institutio*; in the sphere of common thought in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a similar sense is hidden in the correspondence of the Voivode of Sandomierz Piotr Zborowski dated July 1572: ‘[...] Polish kings die and must die, but [our ancestors – I.K.] understood that the state was theirs and was immortal.’¹⁵⁰

In this phase of the monarchical epoch, before the machine became a common part of everyday life, it had to dominate the thoroughly personalistic and physiological way of visualizing the state. However, a new thing in the metaphor of the monarch’s ‘two bodies’ seems to have been the unveiling of a moment of weakness in terms of the human condition and the ruler’s illness, as not directly threatening the higher and more perfect being – the body politic. Since similar

147 Ibid., 21 ff.

148 Ibid., 20, draws attention to the fact that from the late Middle Ages, the English idea of sovereignty of state power was associated not only with the king himself but also with the concept of the ‘king in Parliament.’ In view of the above, he concludes: ‘At any rate, to the English “physiologic” concept of the King’s Two Bodies the Continent did not offer an exact parallel – neither terminologically nor conceptually.’

149 Erasmus uses a similar metaphor of the state as a body with multiple limbs, the most important of which is the monarch. Cf. *Institutio*, esp. 108 ff., 182 ff., 184 ff., in which the author claims that the prince and the state are a single whole by nature and that the ruler can be compared to the body of the republic. On the other hand, the state remains the state even when there is no prince. Moreover, even though the prince is the head of state, he cannot exist without a political community, which constitutes the body of the state. Therefore, even if the ruler dies, the state is still the state: ‘Quod si facienda est collatio inter ea quae natura coniuxit, ne componat se rex cum quolibet suorum, sed cum universo Reipublicae corpore. [...] Respublica, etiam si Princeps desit, tamen erit Respublica. [...] at Princeps esse nullo modo potest sine Respublica, denique Respublica Principem complectitur.’

150 C. Backvis, ‘Główne tematy polskiej myśli politycznej w XVI wieku,’ in: his, *Szkice o kulturze staropolskiej*, Warszawa 1975, 492.

categories were also thought of in the countries of continental Europe, at least where the role of the estates was significant, acceptance of this dualism as a natural thing could in turn influence a more humane and medical approach to the mental illness of the ruler.¹⁵¹

Equally important at that time in the political mentality was the metaphor of the sick 'body' of the state. The motif was also present in literature from Antiquity to the twentieth century, with the perception of one of its most serious 'diseases' being tyranny.¹⁵² The illnesses of various parts of the body were attributed to 'diseases' affecting the institutions of power. In this political dictionary, the monarch was metaphorically compared to the head or heart, while the highest officials – to the head and the senses, while, in turn, diseases of the head – mainly the neglect of duties and the selfishness of rulers – led to madness (*frenzy*).¹⁵³ Hence the popularity in political phraseology at the time of the metaphor of 'healing the state body.' The key role in this therapy was played by the state's head, i.e. the ruler. This in turn explains another metaphor useful in monarchical governments: the monarch as a physician – a doctor of state affairs.¹⁵⁴ This was eagerly used by Erasmus: no plague affects the lives of the

151 Cf. the suggestion presented by: H.C.E. Midelfort, *Mad Princes...*, 151: 'I have suggested, too, that certain princes, such as Wilhelm the Younger of Brunswick-Lüneburg or Albrecht Friedrich of Prussia came to be treated with so much respect that we can perhaps feel the effect of a doctrine like that of the "king's two bodies," in which an increasing reverence for the state led to an increased awe for the prince's person. If the body politic was incorruptible and immortal, there were jurists who held the prince, as head of body politic, must participate in that perfection.'

152 D. Peil, *Untersuchungen...*, 413–429, esp. 415. Cf. also *Institutio*, 70 ff

153 D. Peil, *Untersuchungen...*, 421, 423. The author discusses a work by Thomas Starkey, *Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, from ca. 1535, in which the ruler is compared to the heart, whereas the head and the main senses are associated with state officials, the hands with craftsmen and soldiers, and the legs with peasants. At the same time, Starkey diagnoses six different diseases crippling the body of the Kingdom of England. Diseases of the mind include insanity, i.e. failure to fulfil the duties and tasks of officials and rulers, and focusing solely on personal gain. Looking out for one's own interests by rulers and disregarding the welfare of their subjects has been one of the classical characteristics of tyranny ever since Antiquity.

154 Examples of the opinions of ancient writers (Xenophon, Cicero) on the therapeutic functions of the ruler as a doctor are listed by D. Peil, *Untersuchungen...*, 467, whereas W. Weber, 'Im Kampf mit Saturn,' 185, reminds readers that many authors of seventeenth-century treatises (e.g. Hermann Conring, Henning Arniseus) were also practicing doctors.

subjects faster and more strongly than an evil ruler or a cruel tyrant;¹⁵⁵ therefore, a true prince should be a ‘doctor of the Commonwealth’ (*Princeps quid aliud est quam Medicus Reipublicae?*).¹⁵⁶ In this traditional way of thinking, the illness of the ‘head’ of the monarch meant an illness of the most important member of the ‘body’ of the monarchy. In turn, attributing the function of a doctor to him required his health. A ruler who is ill, especially in the mind, not only would not be able to heal the body of the state, which is not well off, but in addition he himself would need therapy.

It seems that with the development of humoral medicine in the latter half of the sixteenth century, along with a new perception of the ruler’s mental illness, a certain part of the political reality also changed. Parallel to the concept of the ‘two bodies of the king,’ there remained the traditional way of thinking, which inseparably identified the ill body of the monarch with the sick body of the state. The melancholy of the ruler could thus still have been associated with tyranny and interpreted as necessary, following the example of Nebuchadnezzar or Saul. In reality, however, it began to be seen as a condition or disease requiring therapy for the ruler, and not just his removal from power. Seidel’s treatise with his initial thesis – ‘the prince is like other people, so he is also burdened with human illnesses’ – would be the first visible step in this direction of *specula principis* literature in Germany.

Regardless of the final conclusions drawn on the issue of melancholy in rulers in the aforementioned discourse between the Neostoics and humoralists, the very fact of its existence testifies to the growing popularity of the subject of humorous political psychology since the end of the sixteenth century, i.e. since the problem of the ruler’s mental illness was ‘medicalized.’ Another sign of growing interest in the problem of the monarch’s health and psyche in the sixteenth century is seen in the wide discussion of the topic of *roi fainéant* in French historical literature devoted to the history of medieval France.¹⁵⁷ *Roi fainéant*, or *rex nihil faciens*, i.e. a ‘lazy king,’ became a term used to refer to the last rulers of the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties, e.g. in relation to Charles the Simple – referred to in the historiography of the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as ‘the idiot prince.’ Focusing attention on slumbering or degenerate rulers was, of course,

155 *Institutio*, 70 ff.

156 *Ibid.*, 188 ff. Various moralizing contexts of this metaphor used by Erasmus are analysed in more detail by D. Peil, *Untersuchungen...*, 468 ff.

157 See a detailed overview of this problem in: E. Peters, *The Shadow King. ‘Rex inutilis’ in Medieval Law and Literature (751–1327)*, 5–29.

combined with criticism of their rule, and was maintained in French historical works in the seventeenth century in relation to more contemporary rulers, such as Henry III.¹⁵⁸

The term '*roi fainéant*' itself had a fifteenth-century provenance and referred to the concept of *rex inutilis* – a 'useless' king, whose weakness in the Middle Ages was associated with *acedia* – weakness of a mental nature.¹⁵⁹ In certain situations, this concept was used to justify a change of dynasty or to accuse a ruler of tyranny, which, like mental illness, was associated with the 'sinful' side of human nature. These changes in attitudes to the monarch's health that took place in the sixteenth century, of course, did not allow for an unambiguous interpretation of a ruler's sickness.

English legal theory developed in the latter half of the century concerning the 'king's two bodies,' in turn, was meant 'to encourage the official belief that the king could do no wrong because the supra-personal perfection of the body politic wiped away the human imperfections of the individual ruler.'¹⁶⁰ The concept of the 'king's two bodies' and of the dual dimension of power – political and mystical, human and mortal – calls on us to take a closer look at the British Isles. The revealing of the king's human weakness in a mortal body reflected one of the sceptical experiences of an era in which various links were sought between melancholy and politics. This experience was summarized by the aforementioned Robert Burton in his study *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, where he cites the opinion about the ancient tyrant of Syracuse Hiero I: 'Of all others they are most troubled with perpetuall fears, anxieties, insomuch, [...] if thou knewest with what cares and miseries this robe were stuffed, thou wouldst not stoop to take it up.'¹⁶¹

158 Ibid., 4 ff., 15.

159 Ibid., 20, 24 ff. In its medieval meaning, the term *acedia* (Latin *acidus* – 'acid') was used together with *tristitia* and *melancholia* to denote depressive mood, which was associated with deadly sins; cf. W. Weber, 'Im Kampf mit Saturn,' 161.

160 E. Peters, *The Shadow King. 'Rex inutilis' in Medieval Law and Literature (751–1327)*, 29.

161 R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 69.

Chapter II. The Tyrant as a Man: Anti-Machiavellism in England and Elizabethan Theatre

[...] and delight not to keepe ordinarily in your companie Comoedians or Balladines: for the Tyrans delighted most in them, glorying to bee both authors and actors of Commoedies and Tragedies themselues.¹

Where Montaigne withdrew to his study, Shakespeare became the presiding genius of a popular, urban art. Form with the capacity to foster psychic mobility in the service of Elizabethan power; he became the principal maker of what we may see as the prototype of the mass media [...].²

The Birth of Anti-Machiavellism in England

It is a fact that the first anti-Machiavellian work by a foreign author, i.e. a non-Italian, was written by an Englishman who spent many years in Italy, first studying, later travelling, and then, after 1531, living in exile. He returned to England in the 1550s, a period of Catholic reaction under the Tudor Queen Mary I. The man in question was Cardinal Reginald Pole, a close friend of Thomas More, and like the author of *Utopia*, a defender of the papacy, but also a critic of the religious politics of King Henry VIII. In his *Apologia Reginaldi Poli ad Carolum V* (1539),³ he accused the Lord Keeper of the Seal Thomas Cromwell of recommending the reading of Machiavelli. It is not certain whether Pole's claim was based on fact,⁴

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- 1 King James VI and I, 'Basilikon Doron,' in: his, *Political Writings*, ed. J.P. Sommerville, Cambridge 1994, 58.
 - 2 S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning. From More to Shakespeare*, 253.
 - 3 Extensive excerpts from this work, translated into German, were published by D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' in: his, *Schriften*, vol. II. 1, II. 2, Frankfurt/M. 1978, here vol. II. 2, Anhang II, 333–348. Cf. also my remarks above, Part 2, Chapter II.
 - 4 R. König, *Niccolò Machiavelli...*, 2. Pole could have mistaken *Il Principe* for *Il Cortegiano* by Castiglione, which was published in print at that time. Most likely, the cardinal did not read *The Prince* until 1538, when Machiavelli already had a bad reputation in Italy. Cf. also F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, London–Toronto 1964, 30 ff.; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation in Tudor England*, in: *Il Pensiero politico. Rivista di Storia delle Idee politiche e Sociali*, R. II, 1969, no. 3, 416–433, here 417 ff.

but regardless of the veracity of the charge, the matter itself shows that in the 1530s Machiavelli's name was already associated with morally reprehensible actions.⁵ Pole had come to see the pernicious influence of Machiavelli while living in Italy, and perhaps had a sound knowledge of the contents of *Il Principe* and *Discorsi*. In his writing, Pole aimed his criticism not so much at Machiavelli's political teachings, as his alleged godlessness and criticism of Christianity, seeing it as the handiwork of Satan.⁶ However, the influence of *Apologia Reginaldi Poli*, which never appeared in print, remained limited.⁷

We have proof that Niccolò Machiavelli's thoughts reached England itself quite early. Initial words of praise from English readers of *Il Principe* were expressed even earlier than the words of criticism. Among the first was Richard Morrison, English ambassador to the imperial court of Charles V and an apologist for Henry VIII, who in his treatise *A Remedy for Sedition* (1536), written to condemn the recent Pilgrimage of Grace, a popular uprising against the king's break with the Roman Catholic Church, refers to Machiavelli by name as an advocate of obedience on the part of subjects. In another letter written the following year, he praised the Florentine for his accurate description of the state of affairs in Italy. In the early 1550s, Morrison complimented an English politician for his realism in assessing the political situation by calling him a '*Machiavellian*.'⁸ A similarly positive approach to author of *The Prince* was taken by another expert in Italy at the time, William Thomas, author of the first English guide to that country. While his remark in *The History of Italy* (1549) that tyranny of the individual is better than tyranny of the mighty (oligarchy), which, in turn, is preferable to tyranny of the crowd (democracy) admittedly smacks of relativism, Thomas expressed strong religious feelings in his book that were generally alien to the Machiavellian ethos.⁹ At about the same time (c. 1551–1552), another fierce protestant and critic of Italy, Roger Ascham, attributed political

5 The earliest traces of anti-Machiavellism in England are visible in a treatise by Thomas Elyot, *Boke of the Governour* (1531), but he does not explicitly mention Machiavelli's name; see C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 419 ff.

6 Cf. D. Sternberger, 'Drei Wurzeln der Politik,' 231 ff.; A.L. Burd, publisher's introduction, Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ed. A.L. Burd, Oxford 1891, 36 ff.

7 R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince...*, 14 ff.

8 F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 34–40, notes that Morrison had a chance to read Machiavelli's works when he was a member of Reginald Pole's entourage during his stay in Padua.

9 *Ibid*, 41–48; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 417.

opportunism and paganism to Machiavelli's doctrine, traits supposedly characteristic of Italians. His voice was a harbinger of the coming popular association in England of Machiavelli's doctrine with the papacy and atheism.¹⁰

As a whole, neither these isolated references to Machiavelli, nor several other more neutral mentions of his name, change the fact that in pre-Elizabethan England the Florentine's secular perspective and political realism received neither significant commentary nor wide acceptance. Wider reception of Machiavelli's works began under the reign of Elizabeth I, though English translations of *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy* did not appear until well into the seventeenth century.¹¹ A significant impediment in spreading Machiavelli's teachings was the attitude of the Elizabethan censors, who refused permission to print copies of his most famous works,¹² thus their circulation was limited to manuscript copies.¹³ Machiavelli's writings began appearing in the mid-sixteenth century in the libraries of both educated members of the rural gentry as well as in court circles.¹⁴ In the 1580s, the demand began to grow for Italian literature in England, and near the end of Elizabeth I's reign Machiavelli's political concepts were drawing more attention, and there were even attempts by prominent figures on the political scene to apply them to their own analyses: both Sir Walter Raleigh (*Maxims of the State*) and Francis Bacon (*De Augmentis*) can be included here.¹⁵

The positive reception of Machiavelli in England, like everywhere in Europe, was limited to a narrow circle of intellectuals and political observers as well as

10 F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 32 ff.; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 420 ff.

11 *Discourses of Livy* was published in English in 1636 and *The Prince* in 1640. The reign of Elizabeth I saw the publication of *Arte of Warre* (published in 1563, 1573 and 1588), dedicated to the queen by the translator P. Whitehorne, and *Florentine Histories* (1595). Italian-language editions of *Discorsi* and *Il Principe* were published by the printing house of John Wolfe in 1584, but to avoid problems with censorship, Palermo was given on the title page as the place of publication. The situation was similar with the publication of *Istorie Fiorentini* (1587 Piacenza [sic]) by the same publisher. Cf. F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 52 ff.; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 416 ff.

12 J. Clare, 'Art. Made tongue-tied by authority.' *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*, Manchester–New York 1990, 24.

13 Cf. the analysis of a series of manuscripts from England in: T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 33, 1951, 137. Cf. also C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 416.

14 C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 418 ff.

15 F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 71–76.

those actively involved in political life, while a negative reception in the spirit of anti-Machiavellism tended to prevail. Despite the Geneva translation into Latin of *Discours contre Machiavel* (1577), dedicated to, among others, a supporter of Puritan doctrine Sir Edward Bacon and intended for an English audience, as well as Simon Patericke's early English translation, published in 1602,¹⁶ Gentillet's famous treatise had less influence on the development of anti-Machiavellism in the Tudor era than one might suppose. A much more important role in shaping the ominous image of Machiavelli was played here by other key events.¹⁷ They undoubtedly included the reverberations following the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris, widely condemned by Protestants on the continent,¹⁸ which roughly coincided with the papal bull of 1570, excommunicating and officially deposing Elizabeth I.¹⁹ Huguenot-inspired accusations like those of Catherine Medici and her Italian allies on the British Isles and the demand '[to] shut up from Italians al accesse or entrance into our Countrey' continued to be heard long afterwards.²⁰ Adding oil to the proverbial fire was the English Renaissance stereotype of Italians as the source of all evil,²¹ although a more positive image, or even fascination with Italy, was also developing in England at the same time.²² The theme of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre was also taken up by English playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, and the London theatre scene played an important role in spreading anti-Machiavellian sentiment. However, the portrait of the 'Machiavellian knave' goes back to the period before the development of the Elizabethan drama.

As early as the late 1560s, the term 'Machiavellian' appears in literary language in a Scottish context – soon after the forced abdication of Mary Stuart. As the time, William Maitland, secretary of the Queen of Scotland, was bestowed the title of 'this false Machivilian' in a poem that was part of a collection of popular ballads (*Sempill Ballads*), while in another poem from 1570, the epithet 'a scurvie Scholar of Machiavellus' lair' was directed at him. Similarly, in George Buchanan's *Admonitioun* (1570), the eminent Scottish intellectual criticises the

16 See above, Part Two, Chapter II. Cf. also. C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 419; F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 56.

17 Cf. a groundbreaking study by M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, London 1928.

18 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, Lanham 2001, 1, 8.

19 See a more extensive discussion on this subject below, Part Three, Chapter III.

20 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 3.

21 *Ibid.*, 11.

22 H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics. Shakespeare to Dryden*, Oxford 1996, 115 ff. On English anti-Italianism, see also C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 421 ff.

‘proud contempnars or machiavell mokkaris of all religioun vertew.’²³ This same Maitland in Scotland was popularly nicknamed *Mitchel Wylie*. The Scottish origins of the English anti-Machiavellian phobia are therefore important, and Scotland, because of its close contacts with France, can be regarded as the proper cradle of anti-Machiavellism on the Isles. In any case, it did not arise in Britain solely because of the St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre or Gentillet’s treatise.²⁴

Another important factor in the formation of the popular dark legend of Machiavelli were interesting phraseological relationships and word games associated in the English of the day with the name of the Florentine thinker. Maitland, for example, in part due to the sound of the name, could easily be associated with Machiavelli. But his nickname concealed a more malicious, if eloquent sub-text in English: *Mitchel Wylie* equated with ‘Michael (the) wily,’ while *Machivilian* sounded like ‘Michael villain,’ but also something akin to ‘making a villain,’ or ‘making villainy.’ In turn, the surname *Machevil* used on the London stage (Marlowe) or in propaganda (*Machivil*) to the ears of an Englishman sounded sinister, bearing an uncanny resemblance to the phrase: *make evil*.²⁵

The surname Machiavelli was also easy to associate in English with the devil himself, popularly referred to as *Old Nick*, which in turn was also associated with the Florentine’s given name – Nicholas.²⁶ The surname was also ideal for creating hybrid neologisms in anti-Italian themed poetry and pamphlets, such as *MachAretinus* (combining *make-* or *Mc* with Aretino, giving the name anti-Scottish overtones), or the bizarre propagandistic epithet *Ignatian Machivell*, stigmatizing the ‘atheism’ commonly identified in the latter half of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Protestants with both Machiavellism and the Jesuits and the founder of their order – St Ignatius Loyola.²⁷ Machivellism was also identified

23 G. Buchanan, ‘Ane Admonitioun to the Trew Lordis Mainenaris of Justice and Obedience to the Kings Grace,’ in: *Vernacular Writings of George Buchanan*, ed. P.H. Brown, Edinburgh & London 1892, 24. For a more extensive discussion on Buchanan and his works, see below, Part Three, Chapter III.

24 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 6 ff.

25 Ibid.

26 In some of the studies devoted to the reception of Niccolò Machiavelli’s works and the beginning of his bad reputation in England, the reader can find a suggestion that the name Old Nick, which denotes the devil, comes directly from Machiavelli’s first name, but in reality this term had been coined before the sixteenth century; see e.g. F. Gilbert, ‘Machiavellism,’ 158.

27 Cf. examples from the rule of Elizabeth and James I in: M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 36–45. On the other hand, C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 422, quotes an epithet from the work *Christ’s Teares over Jeruzalem* (1593) by T. Nashe on

geographically, depending on the prevailing political currents, either with France or with the ‘Machiavellian councillors’ of King Philip II of Spain, who wished to extend ‘an absolute power over poore England.’ It is understandable that as the Spanish threat grew, the figure of the main enemy was associated with everything that was bad, i.e. tyrannical. This is why Protestants on the British Isles criticized Jesuits as ‘the very schoole of Machiavelisme’ and their machinations allegedly aimed at turning religion into politics. In 1572, the English Puritans were already talking about similar practices of the Episcopalians in the Parliament (the ‘politique Machevils of Englande’), while publicists towing the official line applied a common denominator to Machiavellism and Puritanism.²⁸ As we can see, derivations of the name Machiavelli became in Elizabethan England a universal echo in literary and propaganda language. A supporting role played a connection with English word *policy* – which even before the mid-sixteenth century had acquired pejorative connotations (*sleight, trick*) with Machiavellism. In the Elizabethan era, the terms Machiavellian and Machiavellism became equivalents for *politics* and *politicalist*.²⁹ Thus, during Elizabeth I Tudor’s reign, English anti-Machiavellism had reached its apogee.

Anti-Machiavellism on the Stage – Man as an Actor and Tyrant

England is regarded as the cradle of literary anti-Machiavellism, which began to take shape in the Elizabethan era along with the development of the public theatre in London, that is, from the 1570s. In total over 400 direct references to Machiavelli appear in the literature of the Elizabethan era, the vast majority of which are found in dramatic works.³⁰ His ‘accursed spirit’ is embodied in the figure of a Jew, a Negro, an Italian, a Frenchman, a Spaniard, an atheist, a Catholic, a tyrant, a rebel, a poisoner, an usurer, a bastard, etc.³¹ Dramas in which the image of the ‘Machiavellian knave’ crystallized include Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587) – one of the most frequently performed plays of the Elizabethan era – and equally important for the development of the English

‘venerall Machiavellism.’ It is most probably a reflection of what Italians commonly associated with the overuse of love, including secret potions that supported this state, which corresponds to the plot of Machiavelli’s comedy *The Mandrake*.

28 F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 58.

29 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 11–17.

30 C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 423. A play entitled *Machiavel* was staged in 1591, but it has not survived to our times; *ibid*.

31 *Ibid.*, 427 ff.

theatre, Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1589). The stage image of the 'Machiavellian knave,' later borrowed and disseminated by other authors, was generally intended to contain two schematic elements. The first was 'atheism,' which in the language of the era meant not so much questioning the existence of God as simply acting in a way considered inconsistent with ethical norms or adherence to a foreign religious denomination – i.e. 'godlessness.' The second element of a Machiavellian stage play was a murder committed by insidious means, most often by means of poison.³²

Authors with a good knowledge of Machiavelli's teachings may have included Kyd, the alleged author of a manuscript English translation of *Il Principe*, from the late sixteenth century, and most probably Marlowe, who studied at Cambridge, where Machiavelli was read.³³ Marlowe, author of the censored *Doctor Faustus* (1592–1593), was himself accused of atheism due to his adventurous lifestyle. Still, he presents himself as an anti-Machiavellian, adopting the Protestant point of view in his critical portrayal of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre and the House of Guise, which orchestrated the massacre, in his play *The Massacre at Paris* (c. 1593). Machiavelli himself professes ominously in the prologue to *The Jew of Malta*:

Albeit the world think Machevill is dead,
 Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps;
 And, now the Guise is dead, is come from France,
 To view this land, and frolic with his friends. [...]
 And let them know that I am Machevill [...]
 Many will talk of title to a crown:
 What right had Caesar to the empery?
 Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure
 When, like the Draco's, they were writ in blood.³⁴

32 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 29–34.

33 An extensive analysis of rulers in Marlowe's works was presented by H. Antor, *Herrscherfiguren in den Dramen Chrostopher Marlowes*, in: *Basileus und Tyrann. Herrscherbilder und Bilder von Herrschaft in der Englischen Renaissance*, ed. U. Baumann, Frankfurt/M. 1999, 235–277, here 245 ff. On the topic of Kyde's and Marlowe's familiarity with these works, cf. also: M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 29; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 416, 419.

34 Christopher Marlowe, 'The Jew of Malta,' in: his, *The Complete Plays*, ed. J.B. Steane, Harmondsworth 1971, 347. Cf. also W. Kerrigan, G. Braden, 'The Prince and the Playhouse. A Fable...', 62 ff.; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 424 ff.

In the ears of Marlow's contemporaries, the distorted form of Machiavelli's surname (*Machevill*) used by Marlowe would have sounded sinister, being essentially a cluster of two words: *make evil*. For his more well-read, eloquent viewers, the references to Caesar – a usurper – and 'laws written in blood,' mentioned at the end as the most important title to the crown, would have been unequivocally associated with tyrannical power. Similar associations would also have been made with the preceding sentence, which was supposed to suggest the principle: 'first violence created kings, and then came laws.' Its meaning, however, should be understood in the context of the political works of the Scottish and, later, English king James VI and I Stuart, written in the late sixteenth century. In his treatise *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), as well as in other writings, James I consistently advanced the concept of the 'divine rights' of kings – of the sovereignty of the ruler and the supremacy of royal power over the law, according to the principle: first there were kings and then the laws they created; therefore, kings cannot be limited by laws.³⁵ In this context – with Elizabeth's reign drawing to an end, and James VI of Scotland often being mentioned as a strong candidate to succeed her on the throne – the line 'Might first made kings, and laws were then most sure' would certainly have reverberated as an absolutist maxim. The public visiting the theatres of southern London would have undoubtedly associated this with tyranny, just as the parliamentary opposition, more fluent in the workings of the law, later did during the reign of James I (1603–1625). Here we are touching upon a fundamental issue – political allusions in theatre plays. References to the ominous character of Machiavelli on the stage, read at the time in the context of then-fashionable anti-Machiavellism, were not aimed at Machiavelli himself, but were rather a reaction to different threats related to the current political situation.

Here, another problem arises. Were the characters on the stage, though often perceived as morally ambiguous, perhaps expressions of Marlowe's own personal fascinations, and with which he sought to infect the audience? A fascination with power, expressed through an admixture of aversion to unlimited power and concerns about princely moral indifference are clear in another well-known drama by Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (Part 1 – 1587, Part 2 – 1588). The late-medieval Tamburlaine – a 'tyrant' and 'God's whip,' as the author himself calls him³⁶ – is presented as the embodiment of the Renaissance self-made man: an

35 King James VI and I, 'The trew law of free monarchies,' in: his, *Political Writings*, 73 ff.

36 C. Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great, Parts I and II*, ed. J.D. Jump, Lincoln 1967. Jump notes that in the first edition of the play, Marlowe emphasized on the title page of Part I that Tamburlaine '(for his tyranny, and terrour in Warre) was tearmed, *The Scourge*

outstanding individual who rose from a poor Scythian shepherd to achieve usurpatory power over an empire. His negation is the figure of a monarch from another historical drama by this author, *Edward II* (1591–1593) whose human weaknesses seem to justify his deposition.³⁷ What distinguishes Tamburlaine from Machiavelli's 'new prince,' however, is the former's unlimited ambitions. The ruler of the 'Scythians,' not satisfied with merely maintaining power, strives constantly to increase it. Tamburlaine is thus both the embodiment of an imperial tyrant³⁸ and a reflection of the dark side of the author's soul – a Renaissance rebel trying to live outside or above the law.³⁹ The question of whether Marlowe knew *Il Principe* from his own reading of it or was inspired by Gentillet's distorted account appears to be a secondary matter. At the same time, critics usually cite four characters created by Marlowe as examples of Machiavelli's direct or indirect influence on Elizabethan drama: in addition to Tamburlaine and Faust, they also mention Guise from *The Massacre at Paris*, and Barabas, the title character of *The Jew of Malta*.⁴⁰

This drama, containing direct and unflattering references to Machiavelli, most fully reflects the complicated reception of the 'Machiavellian hero' in sixteenth-century England. Set amidst the contemporary struggle of the Knights of Malta

of God; Ibid., xxiv. The protagonist himself elaborates on this theme (Part II, Act IV, Scene I) when he justifies his tyranny as a stroke of Providence: 'Villains, these terrors, and these tyrannies/ (If tyrannies war's justice ye repute)/ I execute, enjoind me from above,/ To scourge the pride of such as Heaven abhors [...] But, since I exercise a greater name,/ The scourge of God and terror of the world,/ I must apply myself to fit those terms,/ In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty,/ And plague such peasants as resist in me/ The power of heaven's eternal majesty'; Ibid., 163. Marlowe's contempt for monarchs is revealed by humorous and sarcastic scenes in Part I, Act II, Scene IV and Act IV, Scene II. There are also fragments full of the author's Machiavellian contempt for Christianity and anti-Machiavellian critique of the behaviour of Christian monarchs (their failure to observe treaties with Muslims), e.g. in Part II, Act II, Scene I, *ibid.*, 35 ff.

37 Cf. an analysis of this opposition in: H. Antor, *Herrscherfiguren in den Dramen Chrostopher Marlowes*, 237–245

38 *Ibid.*

39 This interpretation of Tamburlaine as Marlowe's alter ego and a Renaissance dissenter who challenges the existing hierarchical and traditional world of power is presented by S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning. From More to Shakespeare*, 193–221, esp. 194, 203, 218 ff. Greenblatt draws attention to the fact that most protagonists of Marlowe's plays are *creatio ex nihilo* in terms of their social origin; *Ibid.*, 282.

40 H. Antor, *Herrscherfiguren in den Dramen Chrostopher Marlowes*, 250 ff.

to defend their rule over the island against Turkish influence, the play depicts Maltese Christians as quasi-Machiavellian characters, stigmatizing their instrumental use of religion for political purposes, similarly to Guise in *The Massacre at Paris*⁴¹ and the Scythians in *Tamburlaine the Great*. *The Jew of Malta* can thus be read as an allusive attempt to criticise or even satire the political scene in England at the time. Its target would be the English politicians – the word *policy* is often used by Marlowe with a pejorative meaning – who make use themselves of the techniques described by Machiavelli.⁴²

The stereotypical cliché of the Machiavellian knave-politician on the London theatre stage in the latter half of the sixteenth century could evoke various allusions to the contemporary political scene in England. The creation of this cliché was influenced not only by first-hand knowledge of Machiavelli's works, or even continental (and Scottish) anti-Machiavellian influences, but also by literary patterns from Antiquity. As Mario Praz showed in his study *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, in the works of Marlowe and other Elizabethan playwrights an important role played by the image – taken from Seneca – of tyrannical pride and the untamed lust for power.⁴³ Seneca thus became an intermediate link, facilitating the reception in English literature of anti-Machiavellism in the spirit of Gentillet. This was in addition to well-established purely English traditions, the continuation of which can be traced from More to Shakespeare.

The question of whether William Shakespeare knew the works of Niccolò Machiavelli from a first-hand reading of them remains unresolved.⁴⁴ References to the figure of Machiavelli, however, are found in his early historical dramas,

41 C. Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris*, in: *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe: Volume 1*, Cambridge 1971. This play, written at the beginning of the 1590s, was based not only on the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 (clearly referred to as 'An action bloody and tirannicall,' *ibid.*, 369) but also on the covert assassination of Henry, Duke of Guise (1588) and Henry III of France (1589). Marlowe gave both characters, the instigators of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, tyrannical features. In the case of Henry III, they were softened a bit due to the French monarch's purported friendship with Elizabeth I, the Protestant Queen of England. When it comes to the Duke of Guise, he was presented as a tyrant and a supporter of the papacy: 'For what he doth the Pope will ratifie: In murder, mischeefe, or in tyranny'; *ibid.*, 364.

42 H. Antor, *Herrscherfiguren in den Dramen Chrostopher Marlowes*, 251; M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 15 ff.; C. Morris, *Machiavelli Reputation...*, 427.

43 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 17–25.

44 Cf. e.g. the opinion of T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' 138, who assumes that since Shakespeare belonged to the social circle of Sir Walter Raleigh, he must have known some works by Machiavelli.

in so-called first tetralogy, devoted to the reign of Henry VI and Richard III.⁴⁵ It was the hunchbacked figure of Richard that Shakespeare made the most faithful pupil of the Florentine political ‘master of evil.’ Richard first appears as Prince Gloucester in the *King Henry the Sixth* trilogy (1590–1591). In a monologue full of tragic, psychological depth, he breaks the mystery of his cursed soul and deformed body. His body already disfigured in his mother’s womb, he is a stranger to love, twisted by this lack of intimacy, and unable to experience earthly pleasures. He turns to the only thing that is able to restore meaning to his life: power. Only through its acquisition, even if he must commit a bloody crime to attain it, can he find relief. It is at this very moment that Richard discovers the Machiavellian duality of his nature as a ‘new prince,’ i.e. a tyrant usurper:

Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry ‘Content’ to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.

I’ll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I’ll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murd’rous Machiavel to school.⁴⁶

As a master in the art of pretence and political crime, Richard, Duke of Gloucester surpasses his teacher – the ‘murd’rous Machiavel.’ Shakespeare gives him a main role in the last volume in his first tetralogy, *King Richard III* (1592), regarded as

45 W. Shakespeare, ‘First Part of King Henry the Sixth,’ in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W.J. Craig, London 1916, Act V, Scene 4, 609, in which the ‘Machiavel’ Prince d’Alençon gives advice to Charles VII, King of France. Theodor Schieder claims that this excerpt was visibly influenced by the work of Gentillet, dedicated to Francis d’Alençon one hundred years later; T. Schieder, ‘Shakespeare und Machiavelli,’ 138. Shakespeare’s d’Alençon is described by his English enemies as ‘that notorious Machiavel.’ In my opinion, the above-mentioned issue of d’Alençon, which did not lack positive intentions, can also be seen as a reflection of the pure Machiavellian doctrine: ‘To say the truth, it is your policy/ To save your subjects from such massacre /And ruthless slaughters [...] / And therefore take this compact of a truce,/ Although you break it when your pleasure serves.’; W. Shakespeare, ‘First Part of King Henry the Sixth,’ in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Act V, Scene 4, 609.

46 William Shakespeare, ‘Third Part of King Henry the Sixth,’ in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Act III, Scene 2, 668.

a masterpiece in comparison with the lengthy three-part *Henry VI*.⁴⁷ Experts see three inspirations for the Shakespearean character of Richard III: Machiavelli himself, the anti-Machiavellism of Marlowe, and More's *The History of King Richard III*.⁴⁸ This last inspiration seems to be of special significance. The resemblance to the image of Richard III created by More of the last of the York kings,⁴⁹ including his adopting the motif of treating his lordly masters to strawberries as an introduction to his bloody usurpation, is striking.⁵⁰ The story of a prince doomed to be wicked, suffering from a lack of love and a splitting of his self, is repeated here:

What! do I fear myself? there's none else by:
 Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I.
 Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:
 Then fly: what! from myself? Great reason why:
 Lest I revenge. What! myself upon myself?⁵¹

In their analysis of the two Shakespearean plays devoted to Richard III, William Kerrigan and Gordon Braden came to the conclusion that this character *mutatis mutandis* best expresses 'English moralism' contrasted against Italian Renaissance individualism and anthropological optimism.⁵² However, in the case of Shakespeare's Richard III, it seems more important to draw attention to the more profound – in comparison to More's *The History of King Richard III* – psychological portrait of the ruler, supported by a moralism that is not so much English as it is representative of Tudor-era anti-Machiavellism.

In *Richard III*, William Shakespeare often uses the word 'soul,' and the title character stands out from other Shakespearean tyrants on account of his profound self-awareness.⁵³ Thanks to the ingenious depth of his description, his

47 According to E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, London 1944, 199. Ibid., 200–211, an analysis of *Richard III* by Shakespeare and his other history plays from the first tetralogy.

48 T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' 142 ff.

49 Cf. e.g. M. Fleisher, *Radical Reform and Political Persuasion in the Life and Writings of Thomas More*, Geneva 1973, 163, who emphasizes that in Shakespeare's work the fate of Richard is dominated by Fortune and Providence, whereas in More's work it is the result of human will and action. Cf. H.P. Heinrich, 'Einleitung,' 42.

50 W. Shakespeare, 'King Richard the Third,' in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Act III, Scene 4, 710. See also P. Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London 1998, 159.

51 W. Shakespeare, *King Richard the Third*, Act V, Scene 3, 729.

52 W. Kerrigan, G. Braden, 'The Prince and the Playhouse. A Fable,' 63–67.

53 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 48 ff.

psyche attracted not only the attention of researchers of literature. Richard III's personality was psychoanalysed by Sigmund Freud himself, who interpreted his behaviour and deviation from moral norms as a form of revenge against Nature (God) for endowing him with a physical deformity, and thus, in his opinion, deviating from the norm and making him an exception to any kind of rule. Following (albeit not uncritically) this same path, literary historian Mary Ann McGrail draws attention to the Machiavellian transmorality of Richard III. Although he himself doubts the existence of the soul and conscience (perceiving them as products of the human imagination), he ultimately suffers from reproach because his own imagination is excessively aroused. His attitude, full of play and deception – *as a great dissembler* – is a reaction to the same 'fraudulent' behaviour of Nature towards him. Denied physical beauty by Nature, he is unable to love. He feels he has no other choice than to take his revenge on Nature by entering onto the path of tyranny.⁵⁴

Such a perception and interpretation of the figure of Richard III according to the Freudian concept leads us to a broader problem. The works of Shakespeare must undoubtedly be regarded as kind of a prototypical or canonical textual source for our modern culture. His plays provide material for ever-new interpretations, tailored to the needs of the day. However, the canons of interpretation of a canonical source may become, especially for literary historians, more important than the words of the original. Moreover, experts on Shakespeare's works often introduce too many ahistorical rational arguments to this theatrical drama in which the author's intentions were to influence not only different levels of the rational imagination but also – and above all – the emotional imagination. Operating by means of lively, if conventional, images on stage, Shakespeare activated in his spectators' heads their personal and collective imaginations. Let us try to look at Shakespeare from the perspective of the world closest to him – through the phenomenon of the theatrical life which he shaped along with other Elizabethan playwrights, theatrical entrepreneurs, actors, and spectators. This involves looking at Shakespeare not merely as a unique playwright, but as an author linked to his theatre troupe and his theatre's audience, who sensed the limits of his contemporaries' imagination and their emotional and intellectual needs.

The rapid development of the theatrical arts outside the walls of the city of London and the emergence of the phenomenon of the public theatre in the

54 Ibid., Chapter: 'Richard III: That Excellent Grand Tyrant of the Earth', 46–67, esp. 48, 54, 58, 60, 64 ff.

Elizabethan era, created a new medium situated between elite culture and lower popular culture. What took place on the stages of *The Rose* or *The Globe* leaned more towards popular culture.⁵⁵ This 'mixed' character of the new medium created new opportunities for playwrights with poetic talent and sensitivities, a keen sense of observation, a knowledge of life and human nature, and last but not least a sense of how to satisfy the expectations and tastes of a wide audience. The new genre created not only a new means of artistic expression but also a chance to draw attention to areas of human life that have not previously been the subject of deeper reflection, and to discover and describe the nooks and crannies of the human soul and psyche. Similar opportunities were provided by the historical novel, masterfully used by More in the early sixteenth century.

However, the accessibility of the spoken word on the theatrical stage, addressed to wide ranging audiences, varied in terms of social status and education. This required adapting the theatre arts to the expectations, interests, and perceptive abilities of the 'mass spectator.' Such a spectator, looking at the stage, expected to find elements of his own life, but presented in an artistic form, one that was more attractive and moving than everyday reality. What could be more suitable for this purpose than to reveal king's humanity and pedestrian side in a drama, all the while depicting his life as a theatrical play. Hence the motto of the *The Globe* theatre, which opened in 1599 was '*Totus mundus agit histrionem*' (roughly: all the world's a playhouse).⁵⁶ In Shakespeare's dramas performed on this stage, comparisons between life and art, and a ruler and an actor would become one of the most important motifs in his oeuvre.

The visual medium of the theatre aroused a much more intense sense of reality in the audience than other literary media and genres, including historiography. The audience was placed in the position of witnesses to the events taking place on stage. This explains why the public theatre was so fiercely fought against as a medium that was 'demoralising' the City of London and censored by the state for presenting religiously or politically dangerous content. The latter aspect is emphasized by Paola Pugliatti in her work *Shakespeare the Historian*. Elizabethan commentators had already emphasized that theatrical performances,

55 On the topic of the development of public theatres in England in the sixteenth century (with an extensive comparison with Europe, especially Spain) as a manifestation of the development of low or popular culture, cf. W. Cohen, *Drama of a Nation...*, 18 ff., 124 ff., esp. 136 ff.

56 This maxim could have been borrowed from the treatise *Policraticus* by John of Salisbury; cf. E.R. Curtius, *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter...*, 151. Cf. a different opinion of A. Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, 65.

because of their subject matter – the abuses of tyrannical rulers, rebellions, the depositions of kings – could have a negative influence on the audience. One such contemporary commentators, Steven Gosson, even said that the plays were not suitable for everyone to watch: ‘they [are not] fit for every mans dyet: neither ought they commonly to be shewen.’ Similar concerns were expressed by the authorities from the very beginning of Elizabeth’s reign. Legislation from 1559 allowed matters concerning religion and politics to be shown only to audiences consisting of ‘graue and discrete persons.’⁵⁷ The dynamic development of public theatres after 1570 thwarted any chance of effectively enforcing such regulations.

At the same time, the development of this new, fashionable medium had a major impact on the self-awareness of those in power, like James I Stuart, who also wove the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi* into his reflections on the workings of power. In his *Basilikon Doron* (1599), which combined the features of a political testament and the *speculum principum*, and in the early seventeenth century became a bestseller in England, he reflects on an ‘old proverb’: *That a King is one set on a stage*; however, criticizing the very essence of the Machiavellian way of seeing and judging rulers, i.e. primarily through their external behaviour and gestures, rather than on their intentions and actions guided by ethical principles.⁵⁸ Moreover, he warned his son and successor to the throne from becoming fascinated with the theatre and keeping at court ‘Comoedians or Balladines,’ claiming that only tyrants loved to compare themselves to authors and actors of comedy and tragedy: ‘[...] and delight not to keepe ordinarily in your companie, Comoedians or Balladines: for the Tyrans delighted most in them, glorying to bee both authors and actors of Commoedies and Tragedies themselues.’⁵⁹ In the opinion of King James, as well as some of his contemporaries even outside the British Isles,⁶⁰ the theatre was therefore considered to be decorum and a medium typical of tyrannical power. Of course, this opinion was as much biased, as the observation made by Erasmus almost eighty years earlier, that the Arthurian

57 P. Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian*, Basingstone-London 1996, Chapter: *The Contribution of the Theatrical Medium*, 60–68; for the above quotes, *ibid.*, 64 ff.

58 King James VI and I, ‘Basilikon Doron,’ 49; his, ‘Speech to Parliament of 21 March 1610,’ in: his, *Political Writings*, 184.

59 King James VI and I, ‘Basilikon Doron,’ 58.

60 Cf. accusations in pro-Moscow lampoons from the time of the first interregnum in the Commonwealth, directed against Western European ‘tyrannies,’ claiming that their rulers spend more on the theatre and comedians than on the army; see above, Part Two, Chapter IV.

cycle, and other 'fairy tales of this kind,' including comedies and poetic works had become the medium propagating tyrannical content.⁶¹

The viewpoint of a social historian is somewhat different. From his perspective, the public theatre of that era may be also interpreted as a 'safety valve' for venting social pressures.⁶² It functioned in a compensatory manner, with the figures of kings and tyrants on the stage being exposed to the judgment of playwrights and spectators. However, danger still lurked here, as the theatre became a vehicle for conveying popular didactic and ethical standards, these often critical appraisals – which at least in the verbal sphere shared close affinities with anti-Machiavellian views – were often in an allusive way directed at London or Crown authorities. Thus, the theatre stage in the latter half of the sixteenth century contributed to the popularization of the dark legend of *Make-evil* and the moral reprehension commonly associated with 'politicians' in theatrical productions.

Finally, in the Elizabethan era, theatre contributed immensely to the popularization of history, taken by artists like Shakespeare from different sources, and appropriately stylized and dramatized to meet the needs of his audiences. The history of medieval England was filled with the forced abdications of Plantagenet rulers accused of various abuses of power (Edward II, Richard II and Henry VI), most often ending with their deposition. Here, English playwrights could not complain about the lack of historical material, provided to them primarily in the chronicles of Edward Halle and Holinshned. They were also inspired by literary works that told stories about the changeability of the human condition, such as the famous *A Mirror for Magistraces* (1555), in which the word 'tyrant'⁶³ was used frequently. Popular before the birth of the public theatre, the dramatic genre of the medieval morality play had already presented rulers from the perspective of the average man, as individuals torn by various passions, and exposed to sin, but ultimately saved by Divine Providence.⁶⁴ Finally, another secular type of drama crystallized in the 1580s, *chronicle plays*, which were supposed to commemorate the deeds of great people, and provide a resource for anecdotes about them, but also to offer moral instruction. It was precisely from *chronicle plays* that Shakespeare often drew different elements for his historical plays.⁶⁵

61 See above, Part One, Chapter III.

62 P. Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian*, 64 ff.

63 On the sources and literary inspirations of Elizabethan dramatists, cf. most importantly in: E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, Part One, Chapters II–IV, esp. 72, 88.

64 *Ibid.*, 92 ff.

65 *Ibid.*, 98 ff.

William Shakespeare – The Human Face of Tyranny

Perhaps the brilliance of Shakespeare's works lies not so much in his constructing original plots, but in the brilliant poetic language of his stories, his ability to apply the instruments of the poetic arts to the new medium that was public theatre. In its medieval genesis, the medium was marginal, serving the liturgical interests of church moralists, on the one hand, and providing market-fair showmanship, on the other. Shakespeare's poetic artistry allowed audiences to discover places that were as yet unexplored, topics that had never been discussed or talked about in a univocal manner. Thus, often known from other sources, the personal histories of kings and tyrants became more understandable and attractive for the audience. The monologues and dialogues, uttered in Shakespeare's poetic language, made use of general references to the world of politics, and stripped away much of the taboos concerning topics which were usually reserved by the authorities for discussion by 'serious and prudent people.' Of course, this situation could easily have led, as in the case of Christopher Marlowe, to conflicts with the royal censors.

The themes mentioned here – the *qui pro quo* that existed on the stage of the public theatre, the exchanging of robes and souls by historical and fictional kings/tyrants and actors/ordinary people – are perfectly reflected in another Shakespeare's drama, namely *The Tragedy of King Richard II* (1595). As we know, during his reign, dynastic problems arose, which in the mid-fifteenth century found an outlet in the War of the Two Roses.⁶⁶ Thematically, this play opens a chapter which closes a hundred years later with the reign of Richard III, presented in the first tetralogy. The story of the tragic fate of Richard II's reign, his forced abdication in 1399 and his imminent death, were also remembered and commented on outside England in the sixteenth century.⁶⁷ *The Tragedy of*

66 In the dialogue preceding the famous scene of the abdication of Richard II, Bishop Carlisle criticises the idea of judging and deposing the monarch, evoking a vision of civil war that will follow Henry IV's usurpation: 'Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound;/ Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny/ Shall here inhabit, and this land be call'd / The field of Golgotha and dead mens's skulls.' W. Shakespeare, 'The Tragedy of King Richard the Second,' in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* [later cited as 'The Tragedy of King Richard the Second'], Act IV, Scene 1, 460.

67 In the treatise *De varietate fortunae*, which is devoted to the changeability of Fate and History and contains statements in the Machiavellian spirit ('All that is famous and memorable was caused by injustice and a violation of rights'), Poggio Bracciolini presents Richard II as an example of the most tragic ruler: 'whose fate exceeds every ancient tragedy'; a translation of quotes from F. Gilbert, *Guicciardini, Machiavelli und die Geschichtsschreibung der italienischen Renaissance*, Berlin 1991, 17 ff.

King Richard II opens the so-called second Shakespearean tetralogy, which also includes dramas devoted to the rule of the first two Lancasters: Henry IV and Henry V.⁶⁸

The Tragedy of King Richard II is an in-depth study of tyranny. Two traditional types of tyrants are confronted in this play. The first is the titular Richard II, presented according to the model of a *tyrannus ex parte exercitii* – the rightful king, by God's grace, by order of succession and anointing, but also guilty of condemning his subjects to exile and imprisonment, confiscating their goods, waging costly wars and burdening the country with excessive taxes. The second, *tyrannus ex defectu tituli*, or a tyrant-usurper, is his nephew, the Duke of Hereford, referred to as Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, who, while leading the anti-royal rebellion through usurpation, legalized only by the forced abdication of Richard II, wins the crown. According to some researchers of Shakespeare's works, the usurping figure of Henry IV fully corresponds to the Renaissance concept of the *self-made-prince*, and his cunning as a so-called 'politician,' his feigned hesitation to assume leadership of the rebellion, his skilful use of the people's dissatisfaction, his use of flattery when necessary, and his winning supporters in a conflict situation, contributed to his characterization by the author as *a well grac'd actor*.⁶⁹ It therefore closely resembles the silhouette of the Machiavellian *principe nuovo* from the famous chapter XVIII of *The Prince*.⁷⁰

However, Richard II is presented by Shakespeare also in the convention of the actor-king, but from a completely different perspective than the Machiavellian 'new prince.' What strikes one in this play is the emphasis on the human dimension of royalty and the suffering of Richard. It is difficult to resist the impression that the author is expressing sympathy for both the ruler-man and the actor playing him at the same time. Richard II himself admits this in his famous monologue in Act III, Scene 2:

For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
 And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
 How some have been depos'd, some slain in war,
 Some haunted by the ghosts they have depos'd,

68 Cf. the extensive analysis of the second tetralogy in: E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 234–314.

69 'The Tragedy of King Richard the Second,' Act V, Scene 2, 463.

70 Cf. such interpretations of the characters of Richard II and Henry IV in: T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' 139 ff., 146 ff.; M. Beyer, 'Never was monarch better fear'd and lov'd.' Zum Herrscherbild in Shakespeares Historien,' in: *Basileus und Tyrann...*, 303 ff., 306, 310 ff.

Some poison'd by their wives, some sleeping kill'd;
 All murder'd; for within the hollow crown
 That rounds the mortal temples of a king
 Keeps Death his court, and there the antick sits,
 Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp;
 Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
 To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks [...].⁷¹

Richard ends with a demand to reject the whole tradition of charismatic royal power and to see the king as a mere mortal:

Cover your heads, and mock not flesh and blood
 With solemn reverence: throw away respect,
 Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,
 For you have but mistook me all this while:
 I live with bread like you, feel, want,
 Take grief, need friends: subjected thus,
 How can you say to me I am a king?⁷²

Finally, an eyewitness to the abdication of Richard II before Bolingbroke describes the mood of the king at the moment and the reactions of those gathered (Act V, Scene 2):

As in a theatre, the eyes of men,
 After a well-grac'd actor leaves the stage,
 Are idly bent on him that enters next [...].⁷³

In this metaphor, of course, Bolingbroke is 'the actor's favourite,' while Richard seems to be only arousing indifference in the fictitious audience mentioned in these poems. However, the reactions of real theatre audiences and readers to Shakespeare's works were and are different. In spite of his suffering and tyranny, or perhaps precisely because of it, Richard II is a thoroughly human figure, though not devoid of psychotic features, which make him somewhat similar to Richard III. The famous abdication scene is expressed eloquently here (Act IV, Scene 1). To the purely rhetorical and official questions of Bolingbroke about whether he will renounce the crown voluntarily, the king answers:

You may my glories and my state depose,
 But not my griefs; still am I king of those.⁷⁴

71 'The Tragedy of King Richard the Second,' Act III, Scene 2, 454.

72 Ibid.

73 'The Tragedy of King Richard the Second,' Act V, Scene 2, 463.

74 Ibid., Act 4, Scene 1, 460.

Then, at the request of one of Bolingbroke's supporters to officially confess to the allegations made against him by the tyrannical government, he asks bitterly:

Must I do so? and must I ravel out
 My weaved-up follies? [...]
 Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
 I find myself a traitor with the rest;
 For I have given here my soul's consent
 To undeck the pompous body of a king;⁷⁵

Thus, the 'schizophrenic' figure of Richard II includes two people: a king by the Grace of God and a king-madman or melancholic:

Sorrow and grief of heart
 Makes him speak fondly, like a frantic man.⁷⁶

Niccolò Machiavelli began the sixteenth century praising the genius of the 'new prince' – a reverse image of the classical medieval tyrant, addressed to an elite reader. William Shakespeare, in turn, maintaining More's image of the ruler-as-actor on a scaffold, ends the same century with empathy and compassion towards the tyrannical nature of man as a mortal being, and at the same time, an actor, dressed in royal robes and standing on stage in the theatre of life. His work was intended for a mass audience. The popularization of print, the invention of new forms of artistic communication, and changes in the expectations of audiences between the early and late sixteenth century partly explain these differences. At the same time, Shakespeare makes extensive use of psychological motifs in presenting the phenomenon of power.⁷⁷ Even more profoundly than Thomas More, he emphasizes the duality of its nature: on the one hand, there is humanity, but also psychosis; on the other hand, there is charisma as well as demonization.

Ernest Kantorowicz interpreted this duality in the character of Richard II as a literary example of the concept of the indivisible 'two bodies of the king'

75 Ibid., Act 4, Scene 1, 461

76 'The Tragedy of King Richard the Second,' Act 3, Scene 3, 457. Cf. also a fascinating interpretation of this and two other fragments of Shakespeare's *Richard II* from the perspective of 'the king's two bodies' in: E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, 27, 33, 36–39.

77 T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' 169, emphasizes the difference between the approach towards the problem of power in works by Machiavelli and Shakespeare. The latter accentuates the psychological dimension of the ruler, while the other highlights the sacred nature of royal power.

articulated at the outset of Elizabeth I's reign: on one side, the charisma ascribed to the crown; on the other, human frailty and weakness; on one side, the body of a mystical, immortal Kingdom symbolically contained in the monarch's 'political body,' on the other, the mortal, natural body of the ruler-as-man, subject to temptation and disease. This construction, although it reflected the Renaissance-era 'anthropological' approach to monarchical power, was rooted in the medieval, 'theological' way of understanding the state and the monarch as a *corpus mysticum*.⁷⁸ It is possible that Shakespeare was familiar with this concept, popular in intellectual circles in Elizabethan England, and popularized it in *The Tragedy of King Richard II*, showing two dimensions of power, one in the title character: royal and divine; the other full of human weaknesses, balancing on the edge of madness. The 'tragedy' of Richard II thus consists in the fact that one part of his person – the 'natural body' of the king – fails or even betrays the other part – the 'political body'.⁷⁹

It has been pointed out that *The Tragedy of King Richard II*, one of Shakespeare's most outstanding dramas, contains many ceremonial elements, accentuating the sacred dimension of royal power, and that, as in no other work by this author, the metaphor of the Sun King on earth is here often repeated. It is these qualities that led Eustace Tillyard, in his classic monograph on Shakespearean *history plays*, to interpret both *The Tragedy of King Richard II* and the other plays in the historical tetralogies as expressions of Shakespeare's traditional worldview, and his desire to present the problems of power from a medieval perspective – as a conflict between universal Order and Nature, and Chaos. The weakness and madness of the king would be a symbol of the human discord and chaos. Still, according to Tillyard, Shakespeare was never found praising rebellion against the power of the last of the Plantagenets, whose succession to the throne was not in any doubt.⁸⁰

However, the issue of Shakespeare's assessment of the rightness or wrongness of resistance to power is highly ambiguous. In *The Tragedy of King Richard II*, the author's attention seems to be focused on more than just the problem of the ruler's legal or usurpatory origins, though many voices in the play speak critically of the right of resistance.⁸¹ Limiting our search in Shakespeare to a univocal

78 E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, 7 ff., 13 ff.

79 *Ibid.*, 24, 26 ff., 38.

80 E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays*, 244–261.

81 Esp. the quote above, fn. 70, the line of Archbishop Carlisle from Act IV, Scene 1.

supporter of the traditional concept of charismatic royal power as endowed by God's grace and representing an inalienable part of the cosmic order, seems too narrow. It is also possible to look at the playwright as a penetrating political 'commentator' of his day, who under the guise of historical allusions, does not shy away from criticism of tyrannical abuses of legal power or from raising controversial issues – including sneaking in allusions to the homosexuality of Richard II.⁸² The images of historical kings he created would therefore represent attempts to desacralize the traditional image of power. An attempt that creates room for the author's empathy towards the figure of the king-man. From this perspective, Shakespeare emerges more as a critical observer of his contemporaries, thinking in the anthropocentric categories of the Renaissance, rather than in line with medieval values, such as the intervention of Divine Providence, and the invariability of the cosmic and political harmony of Order and Nature.⁸³

Shakespeare the traditionalist and legalist was only one part of his creative personality. As a political commentator for his day, he willingly and masterfully made use in his plays of contemporary categories of thought, and analysed problems that were of wider concern at that time. Thus, in his dramas, he often *moralized* in an anti-Machiavellian spirit, referring to the traditional values of Stoicism, but also to medieval *specula principis*. Like the latter, his plays could and did serve a didactic function,⁸⁴ reflecting a belief in the potential conversion of the tyrant⁸⁵ and in the ability to deter kings from entering onto the path of tyranny through the instructions contained in these tragedies, which we also find in other of literary works by outstanding authors of this era, such as Philip Sidney.⁸⁶ At the same time, in his comedic works, Shakespeare *satirized*, creating silhouette portraits of comic tyrants.⁸⁷

82 This is the direction taken by more recent interpretations, summed up by R.F. Hardin, *Civil Idolatry. Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spencer, Shakespeare, and Milton*, London–Toronto 1992, 125–135.

83 *Ibid.*, 126, ironically criticises the interpretation of Shakespeare's *Richard II* as a manifestation of the concept of 'king's two bodies'; *ibid.*, 133, a polemic with Tillyard's interpretation.

84 T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli' 135, 165.

85 This is about Prospero from *The Tempest*, see M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 117 ff.

86 W.A. Armstrong, 'Elizabethan Conception of the Tyrant,' *The Review of English Studies* 22 July 1946, no. 87, 162 ff.

87 Cf. M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 28; T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli' 139, 163 ff.

Shakespearean *psychologization*, in turn, was not limited to the monumental figures of the rulers but it was also extended to their subjects. Hence, the profiles of so-called ‘petty’ tyrants,⁸⁸ i.e. figures, having tyrannical, and sometimes clearly Machiavellian features, embodying the intrigue and ruthlessness of the court, in such characters as Iago from *Othello*.⁸⁹ In presenting the psychological features of the ruler, Shakespeare used the then-fashionable theme of melancholy. And he did so especially in those places where the dramatic form, i.e. tragedy, created a need to refer to the problem of ‘political madness,’ as, for instance, in *Hamlet*, showing madness as a tool – one that can be simulated – to achieve a political goal.⁹⁰ Among Shakespeare’s characters, there is a host of tragic and comical tyrants, depending somewhat on the requirements of the dramatic form he is using at the time, and somewhat on the current political situation, to which he hoped to refer through historical allusions.

The Tragedy of King Richard II is not without reason the most political of Shakespeare’s dramas. This is, first, a product of its extensive political allusions, and second, a result of its instrumentalization for purely political purposes. The work, which was written in the mid-1590s, constructs a plot that seemed to fit the contemporary situation perfectly. Childless and struggling in vain with the weaknesses of his own ‘natural body,’ Richard II should undoubtedly be read in the context of the end of the reign of the aging, childless Queen Elizabeth, and uncertainties concerning her successor to the throne. The figure of Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV, in turn, could be associated with Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, once a favourite of Elisabeth I. Upon his return from an unsuccessful military campaign in Ireland in 1599, he was arrested, tried, and deprived of his office of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Although he was soon released, he never regained Elisabeth’s favour or his previous influence. His frustration sparked an unsuccessful rebellion of his supporters on 8 February 1601. According to official charges raised against Essex, which led to his execution, his aim was to depose the Queen and ‘usurp the royal dignity’ for himself. Soon after he was also presented in Sir Francis Bacon’s account of the Essex trial, as a Machiavellian schemer. The call to revolt was initiated by a group of Essex’s friends staging *The Tragedy of King Richard II* at the *The Globe* theatre in London on the eve of the

88 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 2, uses the term ‘petty tyranny.’

89 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, 30.

90 *Ibid.*, 16, and a hint on the potential influence of Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* on Hamlet’s political madness; *ibid.*, 32.

revolt. However, no charges were made against the actors, who soon performed the same play at Whitehall for the Queen on the eve of Essex's execution.⁹¹

The subject matter of the play – the reasons for the deposition of Richard II and the usurpation of Henry IV 200 years ago – was sensitive and a cause for concern for the censors. The exploration of this subject in John Hayward's *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII* (1599) ended not only with the intervention of the censorship office and a stir in court circles but also with the hysterical reaction of the Queen herself and the author's imprisonment for several years.⁹² Elizabeth's sensitivity to the allusions hidden in these distant events is attested to by her dissatisfaction with many stagings of *The Tragedy of King Richard II*⁹³ and her angry reaction: 'I Am Richard II, know ye not that?'⁹⁴ As we can see, the succession of Henry IV of Lancaster to the throne, just like that of Henry VII of Tudor, was a very delicate matter. It both offered the potential for political allusion, and raised the sensitive subject of *tyrannia ex parte exercitii* (Richard II) and *tyrannia ex defectu tituli* (Henry IV, Richard III, Henry VII). This traditional opposition seems to be very relevant to the political culture of the Tudor era,⁹⁵ but in relation to specific historical figures, especially the protoplast of the ruling dynasty, the problems of tyranny and usurpation required far-reaching caution. It took the masterful pen of Francis Bacon and the transition of the throne from one royal family to the next.⁹⁶

91 Cf. for a general overview of the background and course of this event see: P. Williams, *The Later Tudors England*, Oxford–New York 1998, 366–376, here esp. 374. See also: A. Zacharia, 'Circulating texts in the Renaissance: Simons Patericke's translation of Anti-Machiavel and fortunes of Gentillet in England,' *University of Bucharest Review*, IV/2014, no. 1 (new series), 53–61, here 59, who draws attention to the fact that: 'It may not have been mere coincidence that in his account of the Essex trial, *A Declaration of the Practices and Treasons Attempted and Committed by Robert Late Earl of Essex and His Complices against Her Majesty and Her Kingdoms*, published in 1602 (the same year as Patericke's translation [of Anti-Machiavel was published]) immediately after Essex's execution, Francis Bacon echoes Gentillet in his conclusion that ambition engenders treason and treason finally brings the complete ruin of the traitor.'

92 J. Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, ed. J.J. Manning, London 1991, esp. 'Introduction,' I ff. On the reaction of Elizabethan censorship to this work, cf. also J. Clare, 'Art. Made tongue-tied by authority,' *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*, 61 ff.

93 P. Pugliatti, *Shakespeare the Historian*, 65.

94 On this subject, cf. J. Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Henrie IIII*, 'Introduction,' I ff.

95 W.A. Armstrong, 'Elizabethan Conception of the Tyrant,' 166 ff.

96 F. Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII...*, esp. 5–9, 15.

Dramas of the Elizabethan era, like those of the later Jacobin era, constituted a rich reservoir of political allusions, and a subject commonly being addressed ‘between the lines’ spoken on stage, especially in the 1590s, was the then widely debated question of who would succeed Elizabeth on the throne. Neither of Shakespeare’s tetralogies were fully in line with the so-called myth of the Tudors, for whom the basis for continued rule was inheritance of the crown. In the first tetralogy, Shakespeare seemed to show the weaknesses of the hereditary right to succession. In the second, he looked at the claims to the Lancaster throne from a perspective that would correspond to the pragmatic viewpoint: the rule that a usurper’s successors becomes legal after a century has passed.⁹⁷ Such an approach was better suited to the official interpretation of the assumption of power by the Tudors, especially at a time when the related Scottish Stuart dynasty was preparing their own path to succession.

This latter problem is in turn reflected in the plot of *Hamlet*, written between 1599 and 1601, which is based on the mythical motif of the Clytemnestra. It may have been interpreted as an allusion to events that occurred in Scotland in 1567: the murder of Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, and the accusation that this act had been committed by his wife, Maria Stuart, mother of King James VI of Scotland and, since 1603, King James I of England.⁹⁸ The ‘Scottish’ question also returns in the last of the great Shakespearean tragedies – *Macbeth* – which was written between 1603 and 1606 to celebrate the accession of the Stuarts in England.⁹⁹ It would undoubtedly be interesting to read this play through the concept of total obedience of the subjects to the royal authority, even if a king turns into a tyrant, expressed by King James in his book *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598).¹⁰⁰

In this drama, Shakespeare deliberately chose a dark period in the history of medieval Scotland, when the principle of the hereditary passing of the crown was not yet fully stabilized, and the embers of a once elective throne were still glowing.¹⁰¹ The choice of such a period and political situation was intended to place the problem of tyranny into a broader context than merely the rather obvious prism of Macbeth’s *tyrannia ex defectu tituli*. Of all the characters in his

97 H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 8, cf. also a detailed analysis with regard to political allusiveness of the first tetralogy, *ibid.*, 47, 57 ff., the second tetralogy, esp. in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*, *ibid.*, 70–76.

98 *Ibid.*, 99.

99 E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays*, 315 ff.

100 H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 109 ff.

101 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 30, 159.

plays, Macbeth is the one who Shakespeare most often refers to as a tyrant,¹⁰² and, like Richard III, forces to confess to the sin of tyranny. Although Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis and Cawdor famous for his war-time successes, does not have as much self-awareness as the Duke of Gloucester, he surpasses him in his emotionality.¹⁰³ In short, *Macbeth* is an elaborate psychological depiction of the process of becoming a tyrant.¹⁰⁴ The catalogue of Macbeth's diabolical transgressions – usurpation, willingness to murder and confiscate the property of the nobility, deception, and lies – point without a doubt to an arche-tyrant and correspond to the conventions of that era for presentation of a tyrant in political and didactic literature.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, clear signs of suffering, as well as the courage to face fate and death, give Macbeth, like Richard III, the qualities of a titan, making them both, according to W. A. Armstrong, 'Prometheus of the Reversed Moral Order.'¹⁰⁶

In *Macbeth*, literary historians try to find examples of ideal rulers who would be the antithesis of the title character. The passage most frequently cited is the famous dialogue from Act IV, Scene 3 between Malcolm, the son of the murdered King Duncan, and Macduff, Thane of Fife, which contains a detailed analysis of the phenomena of *tyrannia ex defectu tituli* and *tyrannia ex parte exercitii*. The specificity of this fragment lies in the fact that Malcolm contrasts Macbeth's tyranny by usurpation with the image of his own, merely potential tyranny 'in the manner of exercising power.'

At another point, Shakespeare uses the words of Macduff to depict the essence of tyranny:

Boundless intemperance
In nature is a tyrant [...].¹⁰⁷

It is very likely that this passage was intended to lead the reader to conclude that in every ruler (and man) there are dark forces pushing him to commit the crime of 'boundless intemperance,' whether or not his power is based on the right of

102 Ibid., 32.

103 Cf. the extensive literary analysis of *Macbeth* in: *ibid.*, Chapter II, here esp. a comparison of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*, 40.

104 T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' 144.

105 W.A. Armstrong, 'Elizabethan Conception of the Tyrant,' 172 ff.

106 Ibid., 175, 178, 181.

107 W. Shakespeare, 'The Tragedy of Macbeth,' in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W.J. Graig, London 1916 [later cited as 'The Tragedy of Macbeth'], Act IV, Scene 3, 998.

succession. This motif is clearly defined in this scene by the traditional antithesis tyrant-king, shown as a clash between princely virtues and tyrannical vices:

Tyrant
[...] bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name; but there's no bottom, none [...] ¹⁰⁸

King
[...] The king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude [...] ¹⁰⁹

The fullest embodiment of this medieval ideal of a good ruler is the charismatic figure of Edward the Confessor,¹¹⁰ who possessed the ability to heal people and the gift of foretelling the future:

[...] but, at his touch,
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,
They presently amend. [...]
The healing benediction. With his strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy.¹¹¹

However, the Scottish power elite presented in *Macbeth* lacks a figure with such qualities. Although this matter is the subject of dispute among Shakespeareans, it is difficult to consider Duncan – a ruler who is too gullible and generous, and rather devoid of military talent – a reflection of this pattern.¹¹² He resembles somewhat the figure of Henry VI from the first tetralogy – overly pious, weak, even effeminate, who according to a clear suggestion by Shakespeare was not enough strong to stay in power.¹¹³

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

110 Cf. the analysis of this excerpt e.g. in: W.A. Armstrong, 'Elizabethan Conception of the Tyrant,' 173 ff.; T. Schieder, 'Shakespeare und Machiavelli,' 151; M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, esp. 19 ff., 26.

111 'The Tragedy of Macbeth,' Act IV, Scene 3, 999.

112 Cf. the analysis of this character and a summary of the discussion in: U. Baumann, 'Macbeth und Duncan als Herrscher In Shakespeare's "Macbeth,"' in: *Basileus und Tyrann...*, 363–378.

113 M. Beyer, 'Never was monarch...,' 321, 323 ff., 327; H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 47.

The key figure in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is undoubtedly Lady Macbeth. She is to some extent unique since female characters in Shakespeare's historical dramas are generally of little significance. In general, in his so-called political plays, only the figure of Cleopatra (*Anthony and Cleopatra*, 1606) attracts more attention. Traditionally female rulers are less distinct characters, often being depicted as a witch or courtesan at the side of an emotionally cold Caesar – a Machiavellian type – or a passionate, loving Anthony.¹¹⁴ The situation is different in *Macbeth*, which is permeated by a 'gender conflict' on at least two levels.¹¹⁵ The first is that Lady Macbeth, by putting forward the idea of murdering King Duncan and usurping the throne, provokingly challenges her husband, calling on him to show his 'masculinity.' He replies (Act I, Scene 7):

Prithee, peace:
I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none.¹¹⁶

Lady Macbeth responds equally firmly:

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. [...] ¹¹⁷

The second level of conflict concerns her obsession with power, her murderous instincts, her lack of desire for motherhood (and thus secure succession to the throne), and even her wish to be 'genderless' ('unsex me'), thereby placing herself outside the order of nature (Act I, Scene 5).

[...] Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here,
And fill from the crown to the toe top full
Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature

114 Cf. an article written from a feminist perspective that argues with traditional interpretations, B. Pangen, 'Shakespeares Kleopatra – Herrscherin, Hexe, Hurre,' in: *Basileus und Tyrann.*, 379–387. The author makes a reference to the opinions of researchers looking for similarities between Cleopatra and Elizabeth I.

115 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 33–40.

116 'The Tragedy of Macbeth,' Act I, Scene 7, 984.

117 Ibid.

Shake my fell purpose [...].
 [...] Come to my woman's breasts,
 And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
 Wherever, in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mischief [...].¹¹⁸

As a result, in an attempt to affirm his masculinity, Macbeth, too, chooses to enter onto the path of tyranny and bestiality, becoming 'bear-like'¹¹⁹. He loses part of his humanity, although he retains his heroic qualities, unlike his wife, who ends her life by committing suicide. The price she pays for her inability to escape her own gendered identity, for her rebellion against nature, is remorse and insanity – a metaphorical reference to the rapes of tyranny.¹²⁰ Although a literary historian would see such a judgment as simplistic,¹²¹ it is precisely Lady Macbeth who, because of her unbridled lust for power, traditionally and patriarchally perceived as incompatible with her sex, is the direct cause of her husband's entry onto the path of crime and tyranny. The other female characters involved in Macbeth's tyranny are the fantastic witches,¹²² who in foretelling Macbeth's bright future in a manner he finds cryptic, are not referring to the Thanes of Glamis and Cawdor, but to his innocent companion Banquo, the invented protoplast of the Stuart dynasty,¹²³ who will from 1603 sit on the thrones of Scotland and England.

A woman thus becomes the cause of usurpation and tyranny. Shakespeare paraphrases and enriches the classical motif of the Clytemnestra here, referring in this way to events that took place less than half a century earlier in Scotland, tied to the controversial and notorious figure of Mary I Stuart, better known as Mary, Queen of Scots. At the same time, he touches on an issue which until recently had been of major relevance – the 'gender-neutral' female rulers of Scotland and England in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

118 *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 5, 982.

119 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 37.

120 *Ibid.*, esp. 35 ff.

121 U. Baumann, 'Macbeth und Duncan als Herrscher In Shakespeare's "Macbeth,"' 368 ff.

122 M.A. McGrail, *Tyranny in Shakespeare*, 33.

123 Shakespeare took this character from Holinshed's *Chronicles Of England, Scotland and Ireland*, in which Banquo was presented as an ancestor of King James. However, unlike in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Banquo in Shakespeare's play is not an accomplice to Duncan's murder. Shakespeare decided to change this detail, presumably to please King James.

Chapter III. The Woman as Tyrant: Mary, Queen of Scots, *versus* Elizabeth I, Queen of England

*All ages have esteemed a female government a rarity if prosperous a wonder; and if both long and prosperous almost a miracle.
But this lady reigned forty-four years complete, yet did not outlive her felicity.¹*

The Problem of Women's Rule in the Late Sixteenth Century

The figure of the bloodthirsty, tyrannical Lady Macbeth created by Shakespeare is more than just a literary invention and an in-depth analysis of the human psyche. It is a reflection of the problem of women's rule faced by Mary Stuart and Elizabeth I Tudor's subjects in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The role of the queen-wife or queen-mother under the authority of the king-man had been the norm throughout several thousands of years of monarchical rule. As Regina Schulte put it, only in the presence of her spouse did the queen have a 'full body'² – and so her person was merely an addition to the male monarch's leading role in politics and life. A model example of this is found in post-medieval and early modern France: women from the ruling dynasty under the new Salician law from the fourteenth century onwards were excluded from the possibility of succession to the throne, while royal wives at the coronation ceremony were only anointed with holy oil, while the male monarchs received a balm, allegedly sent from heaven, that gave them the charisma to heal scrofula by laying on their hands.³ Royal wives could only play a significant role in politics in one case, that of widowhood, when, as regents on behalf of their male descendants, they exercised independent rule until their successor came of

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- 1 F. Bacon, 'Elizabeth,' in: *The Moral and Historical Works of Lord Bacon*, ed. J. Dewey, London 1874, 481.
 - 2 R. Schulte, 'Der Körper der Königin – konzeptionelle Annäherungen,' in: *Der Körper der Königin. Geschlecht und Herrschaft in der höfischen Welt*, ed. R. Schulte, Frankfurt/M.–New York 2002, 11.
 - 3 *Geschichte der Frauen*, vol. 3: Frühe Neuzeit, ed. A. Farge, N. Zemon Davies, Frankfurt/M.–New York 1994, 193.

age.⁴ Even then, however, their situation was particularly difficult. They were exposed to attacks from patriarchal public opinion, as shown by the example of Catherine Medici, whose honour and faith were judged as *le [sic!] patron de tyranie*; she was described as a daughter of Italy, not very popular in France, and a supposedly faithful follower of Machiavelli.⁵ All in all, for ambitious and dynamic royal or princely spouses of the Renaissance period who sought an outlet for their energy, the safest role was that of patroness of the arts, or sometimes of author, such as Henry IV of the House of Bourbon's grandmother, Margaret of Angoulême, or his wife, Margot de Valois.⁶

In the politicized and overheated atmosphere of France in the 1570s, the problem of women's rule could obviously not escape the eye of the attentive observer Jean Bodin. In his *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, he carried out a devastating attack on women's exercise of power, even forging a special term for the phenomenon: gynocracy. In discussing the phenomenon of female rule, Bodin stated that *la gynocratie* not only flouts divine and natural law but also human rights: 'If natural law is violated by gynocracy, so are the civil law and the law of nations, and to an even greater degree. By them the woman is required to follow her husband though he have neither lands nor possessions⁷. In support of this thesis, he presented a number of examples of historical gynocracies: from Semiramis and Cleopatra to the modern Mary I Tudor, as well as a catalogue of reasons why women should not rule.⁸ Female rulers murder their spouses, promote the rule of their favourites, and get involved in marital conflicts; as a result of their marriages, countries fall under the rule of foreign princes or plunge into war and rebellion. Nevertheless, Bodin did not in any way justify disobedience to such monarchs. Rebellion against women's rule may have resulted when those governments become intolerable to their subjects, but, in his opinion, it had no legal basis.⁹

4 Cf. the discussion of this long-neglected problem in historiography in: H. Wunder, 'Einleitung,' in: *Dynastie und Herrschaftssicherung. Geschlechter und Geschlecht*, ed. H. Wunder, Berlin 2002, 9–13 ff.

5 *Geschichte der Frauen*, vol. 3, 194.

6 M. L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, München 1993, 192 ff.

7 J. Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, trans. M. J. Tooley, Oxford n.d., http://www.yorku.ca/comminel/courses/3020pdf/six_books.pdf accessed 18.09.2020, 212.

8 Cf. analysis in: H. Quaritsch, 'Staatsräson in Bodins "Republique," in: *Staatsräson. Studien zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs*, ed. R. Schnurr, Berlin 1975, vol. 1, 371, 390 ff.; and the more general commentary in: *Geschichte der Frauen*, vol. 3, 187; H. Wunder, 'Einleitung,' 13 ff.; M. L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, 192.

9 J. Bodin, *Les Six Livres de la République*, Paris 1993 [1583]. http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/bodin_jean/six_livres_republique/six_livres_republique.html, accessed 18.09.2020, 307ff; H. Quaritsch, 'Staatsräson in Bodins "Republique," 390 ff.

Bodin's conclusions on the phenomenon of gyneocracy are clear: married women should, by nature, be subject to the rule of their spouses, and the state does not deserve to be called that if a woman functions as its sovereign. These views cohere not only with the framework of the then-dominant patriarchal mentality but also with philosophical concepts of state and power. They are rooted in concepts articulated in Antiquity – the power of the monarch, although it is public rather than private, is in fact a reflection of the power of the master of the house and the father of the family.¹⁰ At the same time, the power that God has given a husband over his wife is, according to Bodin: 'has a double significance, first in the literal sense of marital authority, and second in the moral sense of the soul over the body, and the reason over concupiscence, which the Scriptures always identify with the woman.'¹¹

These considerations are not original to Bodin. The vision of the state as a great family and of the prince's rule as the father of a broadly defined 'home' (ancient *oikos*), i.e. his court and lands, dominates commonly in the political philosophy of the time.¹² Importantly, however, this concept is not only patriarchal, misogynistic, and discriminatory towards women. It also leaves the door open to other forms of discrimination, this time against men. According to some sixteenth-century authors, only married men, preferably fathers of families and therefore experienced, could hold state offices.¹³ In fact, unmarried women, although usually under the authority of legal guardians when their father died, seem to have been in a slightly better position than married women. As Bodin writes, neither cohabiting partner has the privilege of authority over the other, nor does a fiancé over a fiancée, because only marriage and the fulfilment of the *consumatum* condition would grant the right to command a woman as one's wife.¹⁴

This undoubtedly patriarchal way of thinking can lead to discrimination against unmarried men and some limited privilege for unmarried women. Such discrimination results from the supremacy of the concept of parental society, which excludes and marginalizes unmarried men. However, in the case of unmarried women, this margin would also mean a niche of relative freedom which, apart from cohabitation, would best be guaranteed by a prolonged engagement,

10 Cf. Chapter Four, Part Two of the present book.

11 *Six Books...*, 10.

12 Cf. examples in I. Kąkolewski, 'Dyscyplina społeczna. Etos urzędniczy, nadużycia i korupcja w świetle niemieckich XVI-wiecznych zwierciadeł monarszych,' *Przegląd Historyczny* 83, 1992, no. 2, 211.

13 *Ibid.*, 212.

14 *Six books...*, 10.

discontinued and then renewed, a kind of interregnum or interim state in private life. We will consider this phenomenon in the example of Elizabeth I of the House of Tudor. Of course, an opposition between the married community and a marginalized 'minority' of unmarried men and women, from the point of view of a historian living at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, must yield to a perspective dominated by a fairly simplistic, culturally and historically conditioned 'unity of opposites' (male-female antithesis), and the cardinal question: what led to the male monopoly of power and the exclusion of women in the era of patriarchy?

Contrary to the claims of Jacob Burckhardt, the outstanding nineteenth-century historian who looked at isolated examples of women in the power elite in Renaissance Italy, women's status does not seem to have changed significantly in the sixteenth century compared with the Middle Ages. Jean Michelet's exaggerated statement that the sixteenth century was the century of women's rule appears similarly conditioned by the nineteenth-century discovery of the 'Woman Question.' However, putting aside two earlier Spanish examples, Isabella I of Castile and Joanna the Mad, the Italian case of Caterina Sforza or, a little later, the key role of the mother of kings and regent Catherine de' Medici in France,¹⁵ the latter half of the sixteenth century seems an unprecedented period, at least in the history of the British Isles. It comprises the rule in England of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor, and in Scotland of Mary Stuart, preceded by the regency period of her widowed mother, Mary of Guise.

The English precedent is particularly interesting. In England, the rule of two women, the Tudor half-sisters Mary I and Elizabeth I, who were allowed to inherit the throne by the so-called Third Act of Succession (1544) and by Henry VIII's will (1546), lasted a total of half a century, requiring the creation of a new, strong foundation for the legitimacy and governance of women.¹⁶ In this respect, the short, though particularly difficult, reign of the Catholic Mary Tudor, which in Protestant England gave her the nickname of 'Bloody Mary,' was

15 Cf. discussion of Italian examples of female ruler and Catherine de' Medici in: M.L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, München 1993, 188 ff.

16 Cf. discussion of the unprecedented nature of the rule of the Tudor women in: C. Levin, *'The Heart and Stomach of a King': Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, Philadelphia 1996, 2, 7; L. Montrose, 'Elizabeth hinter dem Spiegel: Die Einbildung der zwei Körper der Königin,' in: *Der Körper der Königin...*, 73 ff.; C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 40, 1987, 421-45, here 424.

to prove decisive.¹⁷ The acts voted through by Parliament at the beginning of her reign gave the queen a 'full and absolute' right to power, which only her male predecessors had previously held. Even more importantly, Parliament (1554), in view of her marriage to the Habsburg Philip II, stipulated that Mary's sovereignty in state affairs was to remain unrestricted.¹⁸ This created an extraordinary situation: the male king remained only a spouse, and his wife was the real regent.¹⁹

A similar situation of unequal legal status and simultaneous reversal of customary roles occurred almost 10 years later in neighbouring Scotland with regard to Mary Stuart, who had the status of legitimate heir, and her spouse Henry Darnley, who held at least a *de facto* subordinate position. The situation that Elizabeth I created for herself was different. Continuing to apply the solutions created during the reign of her predecessor and stubbornly tantalizing both her subjects and diplomatic circles in other countries with mirages of potential marriages, while at the same time consistently refusing to get married, she developed a unique position – the only female ruler of the Renaissance era who, despite being unmarried and childless, achieved fully sovereign status.²⁰ As the historian Rachel Weil notes, Elizabeth I has been connected to some other ruling queens of England²¹ (and distinguished from, for example, the queens of France) by the fact that their bodies belonged not to their spouses, but to themselves and, like the bodies of male rulers (based on the concept of the 'two bodies

17 Cf. outline of the history of Mary I in: J. Guy, *Tudor England*, Oxford–New York 1990, 226–249; P. Williams, *The Later Tudors. England 1547–1603*, 86–124.

18 For a detailed account of the provisions contained in the 1554 marriage prenuptial law between Mary I and Philip II and the act of Parliament from the same year cf. C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 427 ff.

19 C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power,' 7 ff.; L. Montrose, 'Elizabeth hinter dem Spiegel: Die Einbildung der zwei Körper der Königin,' 75.

20 M.L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, 190.

21 R. Schulte, 'Der Körper der Königin – konzeptionelle Annäherungen,' 13, treats the rule of Elizabeth I as the beginning of a new era and vision of the state in which the traditional division of male roles (power) and female roles (subordination) were challenged, albeit unsystematically. The culmination of this trend on the continent would be the rule of Empress Maria Theresa, and in England of Queen Victoria. A similar view is presented in: R. Weil, 'Der Königliche Leib, sein Geschlecht und die Konstruktion der Monarchie,' in: *Der Körper der Königin...*, 99 ff., who stresses in this respect the importance of the rule in England of Queen Mary I, Elizabeth I Tudor, Mary II, and Anna Stuart.

of the king' created during Elizabeth's reign) symbolized the immortal body of the Kingdom.²²

John Knox and His Concept of Women's Rule as Tyranny by Nature

The Catholic and in the full sense Counter-Reformation rule of Mary I Tudor elicited a robust wave of criticism of her church policy and religious persecution from ardent Protestant believers. The English exile community also created many political treatises in the spirit of Monarcho-machism, formulating concepts anticipating those articulated about 20 years later by French Huguenots.²³ This wave also produced the misogynistic pamphlet of John Knox (1505–1572), a Scottish Calvinist and clergyman who was active under Edward VI in England, and a religious refugee in Geneva from 1554.²⁴ There he published *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* in 1558,²⁵ at the end of Mary Tudor's reign and just before Elizabeth took the throne; he wrote some other works published in the same year, all dealing with the political and religious situation in Scotland under the Catholic Queen-Regent Mary of Guise. Let us examine more closely Knox's political anti-feminism and misogyny, contained in his pamphlet.

Knox's designation of this book as a pamphlet spotlights the work's propagandistic overtones. Written in an extremely emotional tone, the pamphlet contains aggressive invective against the main targets of its criticism. Thus, terms such as *traitoress* and *bastard*²⁶ combined with *cursed Jezabel of England*,²⁷ if we remember the period in which the work was written and the declared anti-Catholicism of

22 R. Weil, 'Der Königliche Leib, sein Geschlecht und die Konstruktion der Monarchie,' 101.

23 Cf. discussion of the contents of treaties of English Protestant exiles from the 1550s in: J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 106–120; R.M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and Resistance Theory, 1550–1580,' 194–200; and the more analytical approach to the issue of women's governance in: C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 430–450.

24 Cf. J. Ridley, *John Knox*, Oxford 1968, esp. 265–285; *The Dictionary of National Biography*, London 1959–1960, vol.11 (entry 'John Knox'), 308–328, esp. 312 ff

25 J. Knox, 'The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women' in: *The Political Writings of John Knox. The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women and Other Selected Works*, ed. M.A. Breslow, Washington 1985, 37–80.

26 *Ibid.*, 37.

27 *Ibid.*, 77.

its author, undoubtedly point to Queen Mary Tudor.²⁸ The circle of the criticized, however, expands when we consider the expression *our mischievous Maries*.²⁹ This was most certainly directed at the Scottish regent, Mary of Guise, and potentially her daughter and official successor to the throne of Scotland, Mary Stuart, who had long been at the French court awaiting her marriage to Francois II. At the same time, *that cruel monster* Mary Tudor and her *bloody tyranny* are linked to support from 'foreign' influences, i.e. the Spaniards, in England, as are the actions of Mary of Guise (*a crafty dame*) with the interference of her French compatriots in the affairs of Scotland.³⁰ In any case, the Catholic powers, Spain and France, according to the canon of Protestant propaganda, are directly referred to as *two cruel tyrants*.³¹ The surrender of power to women is placed by Knox on an equal footing with allowing foreigners to take power: each is a sign of tyranny. Misogyny is here clearly linked to xenophobia.

John Knox's letter was general in scope. It was not only an attack on the rule of a specific woman and foreign influences hidden among her power elite, but was filled with both misogynistic emotion and a general protest against women's rule based on rational arguments. Simplifying somewhat, we can say that the method of argumentation used by the author of *The First Blast* is two-pronged. First, it mainly uses numerous biblical examples to prove the unprecedented nature of the 'wicked Maries' government. Second, by means of arguments derived from a specific understanding of natural law, it tries to justify the thesis that the power of a woman over a man is unnatural and is therefore in its very nature tyrannical.³²

The biblical examples collected by Knox are intended to prove a claim which, in an age of thinking in religious terms and searching for arguments in the canon of the Bible, had an enormous impact on the perception of contemporary life. 'Israel did not know any kings of women,'³³ the author states, to undermine the legitimacy of existing female sovereigns. In doing so, he cited two types of biblical examples: Jezebel and Athaliah (see Table 4). The name of Jezebel might be associated with two biblical figures: the harlot Jezebel, mentioned in the New Testament, but also, crucially, the Old Testament wife of King Ahab of Israel,

28 J. Ridley, *John Knox*, 268.

29 J. Knox, 'The First Blast...', 66.

30 *Ibid.*, 70.

31 *Ibid.*, 72.

32 For Knox, natural law is above all a mixture of biblical precepts and *ius gentium* norms taken from the *Digesta*. On the concept of his law of nature cf. C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 432–436.

33 J. Knox, 'The First Blast...', 62.

who, to establish the cult of Baal, ordered the altars of Yahweh to be destroyed and His prophets killed. Queen Judah Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, did the same, ordering the murder of members of the royal family. Significantly, both queens died as a result of a rebellion by Yahweh's devout followers against idolatry and violations of God's law.

In turn, the exemplary figures of the Old Testament prophetesses (not queens) Deborah and Huldah were cited by Knox to refute the argument that the Old Testament approved of the legal rule of women as monarchs. Jezebel and Athaliah, as royal wives, exercised a *de facto* influence on governments, or for some time exercised power, but, according to the Scottish author, did so in an undoubtedly usurpatory and tyrannical way. Here, Knox returns to the Old Testament and, discussing the example of the five daughters of Zelophehad, he comes to the conclusion that, although women in ancient Israel were granted the right to inherit property, they never had power.³⁴ The tyranny of women's rule would thus be inherent in the very fact of a woman's wielding power, an illegal and therefore usurpatory form of government. In turn, Jezebel and Athaliah's departure from the role of devout believers, subservient to the will of Jahweh, would justify the classification of their rule as *tyrannia ex parte exercitii*, the essence of which in this case was religious persecution and dissuasion of their subjects from true faith. These examples are intended to support *Knox's thesis that women's governments, if they do come into being, are inherently usurpatory and that resistance to them is not only the right but the religious duty of their subjects.*

Table 4: Favourable and Unfavourable Examples of Female Biblical Rulers in John Knox's *The First Blast*

Favourable examples of Biblical women	Unfavourable examples of Biblical women
Prophetess Deborah (Judges 4,5) Prophetess Huldah (2 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 34) Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27)	harlot Jezebel NT, Revelation 2:20–25 Queen of Israel Jezebel, daughter of Ithobaal, King of Tyre; wife of Ahab, King of Israel (1 Kings 16, 18, 19, 21; 2 Kings 9) Athaliah, queen of Israel, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 8:16–11:16 and 2 Chronicles 22:10–23:15)

34 Ibid., 70 ff., 73 ff.

Table 5: 'Typical' Female and Male Characteristics According to John Knox in *The First Blast*

Feminine characteristics	Masculine characteristics
<i>Blind, sick, impotent, foolish, mad, frenetic, weak, frail, impatient, inconstant, variable, cruel, cowardly, foolish fondness, vanity, avarice, pride, ambition, lacking the spirit of regiment</i>	<i>Clearly see, strong, discrete, wisdom, understanding, virtue, temperance, modesty</i>

Knox's assertion of the tyrannical and usurpatory nature of the rule of women is supported by an analysis of the laws of nature and is part of an extensive series of arguments that leads to the main thesis: any rule of woman over man is against nature. If a woman acquires such authority, she is 'more than monster in nature.'³⁵ A husband who is subordinate to his wife is, furthermore, unworthy to exercise any official power. The advocacy of women's rule therefore contradicts God's law and the natural order of things.³⁶ The author of *The First Blast* seeks to prove this claim by citing the traditional view, based both on the Bible (the figure of Eve in the Book of Genesis) and Aristotle's *Politics*, of the inferiority of woman to man and her 'virtue' of submission to all (male) power.³⁷ Reference is also made to the classical antithesis, dating from Antiquity, of the characteristics of the female and male psyche, commonly regarded as 'typical.' (see Table 5).

Thus, the traits attributed here to the female psyche – lack of constancy, changeability, madness (*mad, frenetic*), cruelty, unbridled pride, ambition, stinginess, and vanity – are associated with the traditional catalogue of the vices of tyrants. They contradict the traditional, truly princely cardinal virtues, seen by Knox as typical of men: *wisdom, temperance, modesty*, as well as such masculine qualities as sobriety of vision and strength, to which he contrasts feminine blindness, weakness, and sentimentalism ('foolish fondness'). This misogynistic vision of feminine nature by definition excludes women from independent governance, even if the author seems, in the margins, to allow for such a possibility

35 Ibid., 38.

36 Ibid., 42 ff.

37 C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 434.

due to an extraordinary act of Providence.³⁸ The premise that women lack the right *spirit of regiment*³⁹ led Knox to his final conclusion: that woman *by nature* is a tyrant, and her power a form of usurpation (*usurping power*).⁴⁰ In addition, her execution of such power is argued to bring to light ostensibly natural feminine traits that endow her with what moderately well-educated contemporary readers would necessarily have associated with a 'tyrant in the way he exercises power' (*tyrannus ex parte exercitii*).

This conclusion, which excludes women from the governance, has important implications for the law, or even more so, for the duty imposed by God to resist the power of women as tyrannical. Knox applies it to three groups of subjects. First, to the preachers who, like Old Testament prophets, are supposed to preach the truth and condemn the tyranny of women's rule;⁴¹ second, to the officials of the kingdom, who should speak out against the female ruler as an apostate and rebel against God's law (and at the same time, Knox adds that appointments of new officials by a woman-monarch, by nature a usurper and tyrant, are invalid⁴²; third, it is mostly the nobles, but also the whole community of subjects, who have an obligation to overthrow tyranny, following the example of the Biblical Israelites who raised a revolt against the government of Athaliah.⁴³

Knox also comes to similar conclusions in his other writings published in Geneva in 1558. In an extended version of *Letter to the Regent of Scotland*, addressed to Mary of Guise, he styles himself as the prophets Ezekiel, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Daniel; this last, the defender of pious Jews persecuted by Nebuchadnezzar, was particularly popular in the period. Knox identifies idolatry as the defining feature of tyranny.⁴⁴ In doing so, he inverts the traditional definition of rebellion: rebels against God are loyal subjects who are mired in the ruler's false faith, not rebels who oppose heresy and defend the true faith. They merely perform their religious duties and remain loyal to God in denouncing idolatry.⁴⁵

38 J. Knox, 'The First Blast...', 42.

39 *Ibid.*, 43.

40 *Ibid.*, 45, 47, 73 ff.

41 *Ibid.*, 39.

42 *Ibid.*, 73 ff.

43 *Ibid.*, 75.

44 J. Knox, 'Letter to the Regent of Scotland (1558); in: *The Political Writings of John Knox...*, 99 ff.

45 *Ibid.*, 88 ff.

At the same time, John Knox appears a staunch opponent of religious freedom.⁴⁶ As he himself admits, he is not concerned with the 'liberty of tongue,' but the 'liberty of my tongue.'⁴⁷ All in all, the *Letter to the Regent of Scotland* is only slightly more courteous towards the female sex than the *First Blast*, in which he called on all the faithful to pursue 'freedom' by eliminating 'the monstrous empire of women.'⁴⁸ However, here too, he identifies governments of women with usurped abuse and tyranny.⁴⁹

We find similar arguments in his *Appellation to the Nobility*, and the *Letter to the Commonalty of Scotland*. Both of these attacks, published in 1558, are targeted at the many-headed tyranny of the priests, including the pope, the bishops, and the Catholic clergy.⁵⁰ To prevent such tyranny from emerging, Knox allows for support to be sought among secular authorities,⁵¹ especially the nobility, whom God 'appointed heads in your commonwealth [...] to be his lieutenants [...] to be magistraces and to rule above your bretheren [...] ye are appointed to reign as fathers above their children.' At the same time, the Scottish author, aiming to drag his native nobility towards the Reformation, elevates the prestige of that class to equal stature with the king, by referring to Psalm 82 and allowing its members, like monarchs, 'to be called gods'⁵². Thus he demands that the nobility fulfil their obligation to resist idolatry and the power that upholds it, not only by passive resistance, like the three pious Jews who refused to obey the commands of Nebuchadnezzar,⁵³ but by killing their opponents and those who deviate from true faith!⁵⁴

Knox also addresses Mary Tudor's subjects in England, referring to her as 'that Jezabel,' who, together with her followers, the papists, should be sentenced to death, putting an end to their Satanic 'usurped tyranny.'⁵⁵ In this case, too, the Scottish preacher vents his hatred for the 'monstriferous empire of a wicked

46 *Ibid.*, 96 ff.

47 *Ibid.*, 101 ff.

48 J. Knox, 'The First Blast...', 76.

49 Cf. J. Knox, 'Letter to the Regent of Scotland...', 96 ff.

50 Cf. J. Knox, 'Appellation to the Nobility (1558)', in: *The Political Writings of John Knox...*, 106 ff., 138 ff.; his, 'Letter to the Commonalty of Scotland', in: *ibid.*, 154 ff. Cf.: J. Ridley, *John Knox*, 273 ff.

51 J. Knox, 'Appellation to the Nobility...', 112 ff.

52 *Ibid.*, 114 ff.

53 *Ibid.*, 126 ff.

54 *Ibid.*, 128 ff.

55 *Ibid.*, 134 ff.

woman' and the foreigners (the Spanish papists) who back her.⁵⁶ This combination of xenophobia and misogyny must have been suggestive and extremely propagandistically resonant at a time of severe religious conflicts in a traditionally patriarchal culture.

The misogynistic tones that John Knox struck could be read as directed against all the women in power in England and Scotland at the time, including the generation that followed the governments of Marys Tudor and Guise. Knox's thesis offended the Protestant ruler, Elizabeth I Tudor, who ascended the English throne in the year *The First Blast* was published. Her angry reaction elicited confusion amongst the Calvinist establishment in Geneva. Calvin himself was forced, contrary to his own beliefs, to dissociate himself from the radically anti-feminist tone of *The First Blast*.⁵⁷ In response to a letter from Sir William Cecil, counsellor to the new queen, he frankly confessed that he had once, in a private conversation with Knox, expressed his conviction that women's rule was 'a departure from the primordial and proper order of nature and should be counted among the punishments, equalling slavery, for original sin,' except for exceptional situations when God might allow a single woman to rule, 'to stigmatize the sloth of men, or to shine more brightly his own glory.'⁵⁸ In a letter written to Elizabeth, Knox himself defended his stance against the 'usurped Authority and unjust Regiment of Women.'⁵⁹ However, in *The Second Blast*, written in July 1558, in which he stated his most important ideas in outline, the author changed the tone of his claims a little, turning their blade not so much against government by women as generally against tyranny that forces the Christians to heresy. He also declared that a monarch can rule true Christians if he takes the throne by election, not by birth.⁶⁰ It is doubtful that Elizabeth found this claim easier to accept than the theses in *The First Blast*.

56 *Ibid.*, 142.

57 In a conversation with Knox in 1557, and therefore before his writing *The First Blast*, Calvin expressed his conviction that women's rule is a violation of the order of nature. On the other hand, however, he stressed that biblical examples such as Huldah and Deborah indicate that queens can play a special role in the Church and that because of their monarchy prerogatives they are in a different position than other women; cf. J. Ridley, *John Knox*, 267 ff.; *ibid.*, 281.

58 Cf. P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power. Elisabethean Literature and the Unmarried Queen*, London 1989, 69.

59 Cf. C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King,' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 10 ff.; *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol.11, 315.

60 J. Knox, 'The Second Blast (1558);' in: *The Political Writings of John Knox...*, 158 ff.

The Virgin Queen's personal aversion to this pamphlet prevented Knox from returning to England from exile, instead directing his itinerary towards his native Scotland, where he became one of the leading figures in the Presbyterian camp, especially after the Scottish Reformation Parliament rejected papal jurisdiction and approved a Protestant confession of faith in 1560. In the 1560s, the misogynist Knox naturally became a leading critic and mocker of the female governance of Mary Stuart, who returned from France after the death of her husband, Francis II, to the country in 1561. His famous audiences at the Queen's court, which often drove her to fits of crying and convalescence, were filled with acerbic spite and condescension, directed not only at her Catholicism but also at rule by the fairer sex.⁶¹ In his monumental *History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland*, Knox attacked Mary Stuart with the same invective as the two previous Marys, her mother and English cousin, comparing her to Jezebel and Athaliah.⁶² He returned to the themes he had touched upon in his earlier writings, summarizing or expanding them, outlining, for example, the anti-reformation policy of the House of Guise – *the tyrantis in France*⁶³ – and their connections with the Scottish court. He repeated once again his arguments justifying Scottish resistance not only against the regent, Mary of Guise,⁶⁴ but also against her daughter as well.⁶⁵ Besides, he engaged with polemics elicited by his earlier anti-feminist works, defending himself and fiercely attacking from the ramparts of misogyny. In the text, Knox sarcastically tells Mary Stuart that he would agree to live under the rule of a woman, if at all, as St Paul had lived under Nero.⁶⁶ At the same time, he expresses his intolerance of Catholicism, and grants the 'people of God' the right to exercise justice against a monarch supporting a heretical religion; he demands the death penalty for idolaters.⁶⁷

61 J. Knox, 'The History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland,' in: *The Works of John Knox*, ed. D. Laing, vol.1–2, Edinburgh 1895, here vol. 2, 277–285, 371–389.

62 *Ibid.*, vol.1, 124, 218.

63 *Ibid.*, vol.2, 133 ff.

64 *Ibid.*, vol.1, 410 ff., 428, 442 ff.

65 *Ibid.*, vol.2, 435–458.

66 Cf. C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 431; *Ibid.*, 441 ff.

67 J. Ridley, *John Knox*, 276: 'Knox did not call for an indiscriminate massacre of Catholics in Catholic states, but for relentless application of the Heath penalty by a Protestant government against Catholic counter-revolutionaries.'

John Knox's criticism of Mary Stuart was a reflection of a broader phenomenon – the unfavourable, hypercritical position of Presbyterian public opinion in Scotland towards the woman on the throne, who was deeply entangled in personal problems and struggling to cope with a complicated game of survival between fighting clans, factions, and court coteries. The situation was aggravated by scandals erupting around her private life. First, the notorious murder of her Italian secretary and favourite, David Rizzio, by a faction opposed to her, in March 1566, followed by rumours of Mary's alleged complicity in the assassination of her second husband Henry Darnley in February 1567. Next, her subsequent hasty morganatic marriage to James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell,⁶⁸ an episode that ended with the imprisonment and forced abdication of the Queen of Scotland in July 1567 in favour of her underage son, James VI.⁶⁹ Finally, her failed attempt to provoke a rebellion in 1568 to regain the throne forced Mary Stuart to flee to neighbouring England, where she took protection under her Protestant cousin Elizabeth I. There, she spent nearly twenty years in prison.

The paradox, at least from today's point of view, is that John Knox's political ideas – both the doctrine of popular sovereignty and the right of resistance and his sympathies with the elective monarchy – were clearly at odds with his aggressive intolerance of other faiths, specifically Roman Catholicism, and his misogyny. From the perspective of most of his contemporaries, however, it was his views on the subservient role of the monarch vis-à-vis the governed society and the broad formula of the right of resistance that might have raised objections.

His concept of a broad right of resistance, the imposition on a whole society of a duty to actively oppose any ruler who violates God's commandments, far surpassed in its radicalism the ideas of the French Monarchomachs, who propagated the idea of a resistance to tyrannical authorities that would be organized and controlled by the 'lower authorities.' We find similarly radical theses about the sovereignty of the 'people' and their right, or rather their religious duty, to oppose heretical and tyrannical power in the writings of other authors from the late 1550s. This is true of John Ponet and Christopher Goodman, English Calvinists and religious refugees from the time of Mary I Tudor's rule who were the pioneers and vanguard of European Monarchomachism.⁷⁰

68 To present basic facts from Mary Stuart's life I used two biographies: A. Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, London 1969; J. Wormald, *Mary Queen of Scots. A Study in Failure*, London 1988.

69 Cf. J. Knox, 'The History of the Reformation...', in: *The Works...*, vol.2, 565 ff.

70 Cf. R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572–1576*, 194–200; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Early Modern Political Thought*, vol.1–2, Cambridge

The arguments presented by Goodman, like Knox an exile in Geneva and a supporter of the principle of elective government, also give voice to an intense strain of misogyny. Government by women, he wrote, goes 'against nature and God's ordinance,'⁷¹ because women remain incapable of exercising power over their families or wielding any state office. The reign of Mary I Tudor, he argued, allegedly the illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII, is particularly usurpatory. All the more reason for Goodman to demand not only the dethroning of the English Jezebel, but her execution as punishment for promoting heresy.⁷² It is apparent that the foreign origin of Mary's husband, Philip II of Spain, posed an additional problem for Christopher Goodman and others like him. All in all, this led to the conclusion that people should beware of electing three kinds of rulers: arrogant ones, foreigners, and women.⁷³

In this misogynistic way of thinking, contempt for women's governments as tyrannical was inherently combined with interdominationally driven xenophobia. As with Knox, woman (as 'foreigner' and 'stranger' par excellence) is pushed to the margins, and excluded from power. No wonder that some polemicists mistakenly attributed *The First Blast* to Goodman.⁷⁴ Although the writings of both authors published in 1558 shared a radical call for resistance, and provoked fierce criticism for 'subversion' in Protestant circles,⁷⁵ their views, combining misogyny and xenophobia, were by no means exceptional. In this context, the marriage of Mary I Tudor to Philip II (1554) provided the impetus for a series of publications warning of the disastrous influence of Spaniards. In Scotland, in turn, French influence contributed to the wave of xenophobia. In discussing these two phenomena, another English author and religious refugee, Anthony Gilby, in *An Admonition to England and Scotland, to Call them to Repentance* (Geneva, 1558), precisely explained the essence of both phobias: the rule of foreigners, like that of women, can be seen as a curse sent down by God.⁷⁶

1980, here vol.2, 221, 227–230, 234–238; J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 106–120.

71 Qtd. after R.M. Kingdon, *Myths about the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacres 1572–1576*, 196.

72 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 117 ff.

73 Cf. Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 2, 229.

74 Cf. D. Laing, *The Works of John Knox*, vol.4, 361.

75 Cf. J. Ridley, *John Knox*, 280, 283.

76 A. Gilby, *An Admonition to England and Scotland, to Call them to Repentance*, in: *The Works of John Knox*, vol.4, 553 ff. Cf.: C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 430 ff.

The roots of the ideas developed since the late 1550s by an earlier generation of British Monarchomachs, namely, a religiously motivated injunction to an active right of resistance against the tyrannical and heretical power, stemmed in large part not only from their struggle for their own religious freedoms but also from their protest against women's governments. Misogyny and anti-feminism, widespread in patriarchal society, encouraged these ideas, which were enhanced with xenophobic slogans and accompanied by a call for intolerance towards religions other than one's own. From the perspective of today's observer, the paradox and grotesquerie of the link between the birth of the concept of the broad right of active resistance and early modern anti-feminism are evident here. At least, that is how it appears at first glance.

For several reasons, however, these concepts should not be too hastily identified with the modern ideology of revolution. First, early British Monarchomachs were far from creating a secular vision of state and revolution. Their way of thinking, suffused with religiosity, required an interpretation of political life, the existence and functioning of the state, and resistance to the abuse of power in religious terms, as an expression of divine will. Their political arguments therefore did not stem from a de-theologized, secular concept of the state. Second, in the same spirit, the authors, refugees from the British Isles, interpreted *ius resisti* not as a sovereign right belonging per se to the political community, but as an injunction to defend the 'true faith' against heretics, whom they excluded from society. The intolerance of Knox and those of like mind led to the principle of a religious monopoly rather than equality of rights for all members of the community.

George Buchanan – Monarchomachism and the Problem of Female Tyranny

However, the secular concept of revolution, formulated at the time of Europe's collapse into confessional division, also has its roots in Scotland under Mary Stuart. It emerged from the pen of perhaps the most radical of the early Monarchomachs, the eminent Scottish humanist George Buchanan (1506–1582). Buchanan necessarily participated in the debate on women's rule that continued in the Isles from the early 1570s. Like Knox, though his religious views were less defined and zealous, he was forced to leave his native Scotland in the late 1530s for a longer stay in France, where he came into contact with a circle that anticipated the later *Politiques* in advocating a religious compromise. Upon returning to Scotland in the early 1560s, he ingratiated himself with Mary Stuart, receiving the position of her Latin secretary and tutor. At the same time, he maintained close contact

with both the English ambassador to Scotland and the Protestant camp. Thanks to a friendly client relationship with Lord Moray, the leader of the Calvinist side and illegitimate son of James V and half-brother to Mary who became regent after her abdication, he finally found himself in the anti-Marian camp. In July 1567, Buchanan acted as prosecutor of the Queen of Scots and Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which led to her abdication.⁷⁷

His main theoretical work, *De jure regni apud Scotos* (published 1578) was created after Mary Stuart's abdication.⁷⁸ Distributed before publication in manuscript form, it was intended, among other things, to prove the legitimacy of the rebellion of the Scottish states against the Queen-Tyrant. Similarly, his pamphlets written between 1568 and 1570, *A detection of the actions of Mary Queen of Scots* (published in 1571)⁷⁹ – the first public accusation against Mary – and *An Admonition to the True Lords Maintainers of Justice and Obedience to the King's Grace* (published in 1571)⁸⁰ – made specific accusations against the Queen of Scots, mainly her alleged involvement in a conspiracy against her second husband Henry Darnley. Finally, in extensive passages of his monumental *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (published in 1582), written mostly in the late the 1560s and early 1570s, he tried once again to expose the tyrannical machinations of Mary Stuart.⁸¹

Buchanan's concept of political power can be outlined as follows. The state and the forms of government are not given directly by God, but created by people themselves on the basis of a mutual compact between the governing and the governed in order to improve their existence and secure their rights.⁸²

77 M. Meyer-Cohn, *George Buchanan als Publizist und Historiker Maria Stuarts. Eine Quellenkritische Untersuchung auf Grundlage der Lennoxmanuskripte*, Heidelberg 1913, 1–11. J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 336 ff.: '[...] his thought is French rather than Scottish.' For more on this subject, see: H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution,' *The English Historical Review*, Supplement 3, 1966, 20 ff.

78 G. Buchanan, *The Power of the Crown in Scotland*, ed. C. Flinn Arrwood, Austin 1949.

79 Cf. G. Buchanan, 'A Detection of Mary Queen of Scott,' in: *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart. George Buchanan's Account*, ed. W.A. Gatherer, Edinburgh 1958 [repr. 1978], 165–180.

80 G. Buchanan, 'An Admonition to the True Lords Maintainers of Justice and Obedience to the King's Grace,' in: *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart...*, 183–199.

81 See the English translation 'Rerum Scotticarum Historia' in: *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart...*, 44–161. Cf. W.A. Gatherer, *Buchanan as Historian*, *ibid.*, 3–42; H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution,' 15 ff., 35.

82 G. Buchanan, *The Power of the Crown...*, esp. Chapter XLVII, 142.

Therefore, it is the people who have the power to establish and abolish fundamental rights, and the ruler is merely a community-elected 'minister.' The people do not transfer their primary sovereignty to the monarch in any way, but only delegate it to him. They therefore have the right to revoke a previous decision and overthrow the power to which they have previously agreed to be subject if that power enters on a path of tyranny.⁸³ The people also have the right to bring all officials of the Crown, including kings, to justice,⁸⁴ and a ruler who has committed a crime surrenders his or her exceptional status before the law.⁸⁵ Hence, Buchanan concludes: 'It is not the king or the poor man who stands trial, but murderers.'⁸⁶

Buchanan's theory notably presents an antinomy between his rather innovative concept of freedom and his definition of tyranny, which avoids the traditional division into *a tyrant ex defective titula* and *a tyrant ex parte exercitii*. Thus, on the one hand, the author criticises the supporters of tyranny (and Mary Stuart) who, by submitting to the whims of tyrants, 'destroy their own freedom of speech and action.'⁸⁷ At the same time, he opposes these two fundamental freedoms of the governed to the 'untamed freedom' of the governing, identified with absolute and arbitrary power, the best examples of which are the papacy⁸⁸ and tyranny. The latter is closer to the 'servile nature' of Asians than to Europeans, who are used to living in a limited monarchy.⁸⁹ Buchanan, in the spirit of the humanist tradition of Erasmus, although in a much more decisive fashion, embraces the idea of an elective monarchy.⁹⁰ Like Erasmus and Thomas More earlier, he criticizes the elaborate pomp and circumstance of power, proposing

83 Ibid., Chapter XL, 124: 'the people may, for just cause, demand that any power they have committed to anyone shall be given back to them.'

84 Ibid. Chapter XLIII, 130–133 and Chapter XLV.

85 Ibid., Chapter XL, 123: 'Now we maintain that the people, from whom our kings hold the powers to which they lay legal claim, have an authority above that of kings; and that the people of the nation have the same authority with respect to the rulers have with respect to one person from among the citizens.'

86 Ibid., Chapter XLV, 141 and Chapter XL: 'There is abundant proof that the king who is being tried for a crime is on trial with respect to the crime, and not as respects his kingship,' 119–124.

87 Ibid., Chapter II, 42.

88 Ibid., Chapter XXII, 75.

89 Ibid., Chapter XXXVIII, XXXIX, esp. 111 ff.

90 Ibid., Chapters XXXII and XXXIII.

Table 6 Features of 'political' and 'tyrannical' governments according to George Buchanan

Political governments	Tyrannical governments
In harmony with nature	Against nature
The king rules over his subjects, who willingly recognize his power	A tyrant rules over his subjects who are reluctant to recognize his power
Royal and 'political' power is the power of a free man over free people	Tyrannical power is the rule of a slave-owner over his slaves
Subjects look after the health and safety of the King	Foreigners oppress their subjects for the benefit of a tyrant
The King exercises power for the benefit of all	A tyrant exercises power for his own benefit

to look at 'some kings' dressed in their festive robes as comparable to 'children's dolls' on a stage.⁹¹

Not only the freedom of the governed but also the freedom of the governing, understood as acting within the limits of the law that guarantees them a greater feeling of security towards their subjects, is, according to Buchanan, the hallmark of 'political,' i.e., royal rule, to which he opposes the rule of tyrants (see Table 6).⁹²

The author of *De jure regni apud Scotos* departs, in his definition of tyranny, from the traditional juxtaposition of *tyrannia ex defectu tituli* and *tyrannia ex parte exercitii*. According to him, the most important issue is whether sovereigns recognize the sovereignty of the law. For usurpers, it would be best if they were legalized by the 'free choice of the people.' Once they respect the laws, they will become legal monarchs;⁹³ whereas legal rulers, if they break the law, become tyrants,⁹⁴ against whom any resistance is justified. Buchanan thus here revalues the traditional categories of usurper and tyrant based on the way power is exercised. First of all, by allowing the legalization of the rule of those

91 Ibid., 94. Cf. R.F. Hardin, *Civil Idolatry. Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spencer, Shakespeare, and Milton*, 69.

92 G. Buchanan, *The Power of the Crown...*, Chapter XXIX, 92 ff.

93 Ibid., 146: 'there are tyrants who are sanctioned by the free suffrage of the people, and because they observe due limits in their conduct of governmental affairs we deem them worthy of being called kings. No man will have my support in attacking any of those rulers who, though they acquired their power by force or by fraud, govern in the spirit of the constitution.'

94 Ibid., Chapter XXVIII, 90 ff.

who have gained power by force or through fraud, Buchanan seems to indicate that the factor legitimizing power is by no means the way it is gained, but solely the exercise of power according to the law. Breaking with the dogma of the legality of the origin of power, he replaces it with another category, the legality of governance. This, in turn, enables him to move smoothly over the problem faced by traditional monarchist political philosophy, namely the assumption of the legality of hereditary rule and illegality per se of resistance to it. The value that legitimizes the right of subjects to overthrow a tyrant's power is to be their 'freedom' under the law of nature.⁹⁵

The assumption of the sovereignty of the people is, for George Buchanan, the basic premise for the thesis that the right of active resistance applies to the entire political community; if people have been deceived and harmed by the ruler, then compensation can be given to the whole community, and not just the assembly representing it.⁹⁶ Unlike the radical Calvinists on the continent, though working from similar assumptions, he did not subscribe to the 'ephoral argument.' Like the earlier British Monarchomachs, Buchanan was an advocate of the right of resistance available to the whole community. However, he was fundamentally different from them in his secular vision of the state and politics,⁹⁷ which was not entirely consistent with official Presbyterian doctrines of state and power, nor with the tastes of the Scottish royalists. It is therefore no wonder that *De jure regni* was condemned by the Scottish Parliament when James VI came of age and began to rule independently in 1584.⁹⁸

For George Buchanan, the right of resistance was a primarily a right that inherently belonged to all who were governed, and not – as in Knox's case, for example – mainly a religious precept and duty of a community that professes the 'true' faith.⁹⁹ The way the 'Reformation fathers' thought about freedom was also alien to Buchanan: the distinction they drew between the 'external' freedom they despised and truly Christian spiritual freedom.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Buchanan, who became also a leading theorist and pamphleteer of the Presbyterian party, would therefore be the first doctrinaire of the Reformation era to formulate a secular concept

95 Ibid., Chapter XLV, 14 ff.

96 Ibid., Chapter XXXIV, 102 ff.

97 H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution,' 9 ff.

98 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 338.

99 G. Buchanan, *The Power of the Crown...*, Chapter XLVIII: 'Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God,' 143.

100 Cf. above, Part Two, Chapter I.

of the right of resistance as a natural right.¹⁰¹ Quentin Skinner even described his concept as 'a populist and almost anarchistic view of the right of revolution.'¹⁰²

Contrary to the opinions of earlier historians who focused mainly on Calvinist circles on the continent, Skinner referenced the currents from the political thought of the late Middle Ages (specifically, the influence of the later conciliarists, a circle of scholars who revived those ideas at the Sorbonne in the early sixteenth century) that might have shaped concepts created by Knox and Buchanan. One of the most eminent representatives of this milieu was the Scotsman John Mair (1467–1550), who through his students in France influenced the views of Jean Calvin, and after his return to his homeland in 1518 taught at the University of Glasgow, before teaching John Knox and George Buchanan at St Andrew's beginning in 1522. Mair's ideas about the secular origins of power and the right of resistance were adopted and radicalized by the humanist Buchanan to a greater degree than by the firebrand preacher Knox.¹⁰³

However, their entanglement in the debate on women's governance undoubtedly connects the doctrines of the two Scots, John Knox and George Buchanan, despite the different distribution of religious emphases. *De jure regni apud Scotos*, which, contains no direct reference to this problem, was, after all, intended to prove the legitimacy of the Scottish revolt against the queen-tyrant, which led to her arrest and dethronement. Without creating a general political theory of anti-feminism like Knox, Buchanan in *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* also strikes notes of misogyny. While he admits that the Scots were accustomed to tolerating distaff rule by the grandmother and mother of Mary Stuart,¹⁰⁴ in discussing the issue of her marriage to Darnley, Buchanan critically weighs the question whether a woman should be allowed to choose her spouse.¹⁰⁵ Later, in describing the history of Scotland after Darnley's death, he expresses outrage that the Queen has betrayed her duty as a widow by seeking the company of Bothwell and other noblemen and 'playing sports that are completely unsuitable for a woman.'¹⁰⁶

101 J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 340 ff. Cf. H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution,' 11.

102 Q. Skinner, 'The Origins of the Calvinist Theory of Revolution,' in: *After the Reformation. Essays in Honor of J.H. Hexter*, ed. B.C. Malament, Manchester 1980, 309–330, esp. 313 ff.

103 *Ibid.*, 320 ff., 324; cf. J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 336 ff.; H.R. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution,' 22.

104 G. Buchanan, 'Rerum Scotticarum Historia,' 80.

105 *Ibid.*, 85.

106 *Ibid.*, 119 f.

Throughout this work, accusations accumulate, asserting that the Queen of Scots is practicing tyrannical politics.

In *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* the reader is struck by the combination of accusations that Mary Stuart pulled ‘tyrannical strings’ with an attack on the abuses allegedly committed by foreigners, namely, newcomers from Italy. The queen is said to have taken the ‘first step to tyranny’ in intending to make them her palace guards. The brunt of the criticism is directed primarily at the person of Italian David Rizzio, a private secretary of Mary Queen. In the description of Italians as ‘greedy robbers, born and raised in tyranny, accustomed to perverted soldiering,’¹⁰⁷ one can find a xenophobic line of argumentation similar to those used in France during the peak in anti-Italian and anti-Machiavellian feeling there in the 1570s. It is likely that as a result of the close political ties between the two countries, anti-Machiavellism took root in the British Isles during the last period of Mary Stuart’s reign and, together with fashionable anti-Italian xenophobia, was instrumentalized there for anti-Marian propaganda.¹⁰⁸ The combination of these two currents – anti-feminism and xenophobia – is significant. In terms of propaganda it was intended to evoke emotional associations: to equate a woman who departed from her traditionally assigned role with a foreigner.

Among other allegations against the Queen of Scots, her alleged participation in a conspiracy to assassinate Darnley and her alleged poisoning of her spouse, played a crucial role.¹⁰⁹ Buchanan also extensively discusses this issue in *A detection of the actions of Mary Queen of Scots*, conceived as a propaganda pamphlet. At the same time he portrays Mary Stuart in the traditional image of a tyrant combined with the stereotypical view of the female psyche (already familiar from a reading of Knox) as unstable, immodest and profligate, easily succumbing to whims and annoyance, dissolute, haughty, and full of hatred and cruelty towards her spouse, followed by her display of an extremely hypocritical, almost theatrical spectacle of mourning for him. In addition to this, Buchanan cites the ultimate tyrannical vice of sowing discord among her subjects.¹¹⁰ *An Admonition*, written after the political murder of the Moray Regent in 1570, features accusations of tyranny against Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk,¹¹¹ who was considered a candidate for the hand of Mary Stuart while she was imprisoned in England, and

107 *Ibid.*, 81 ff., 91, 96, 100.

108 Cf. above, Part Three, Chapter II.

109 G. Buchanan, ‘*Rerum Scotticarum Historia*’, 109–113.

110 G. Buchanan, ‘*A Detection of Mary Queen of Scots*’, 165–169, 171, 176 ff.

111 G. Buchanan, ‘*An Admonition to the True Lords Maintainers...*’, 194.

against the pro-Marian party in Scotland, which centred around a collective tyrant, i.e. the aristocratic Hamilton family.¹¹² In certain areas, the letter links misogyny and xenophobia: the association of political abuses in Scotland with the governments of Mary of Guise (*a woman stranger*)¹¹³ and Mary Stuart, which have contributed to the spread of ‘domestic tyranny’ and descent into the yoke of foreign bondage (*thralldom of strangers*).¹¹⁴ The latter seems mostly to refer to the French.¹¹⁵

An analysis of the writings of both Scottish Monarchomachs, John Knox and George Buchanan, makes two things clear. First, the intertwining of xenophobia and anti-feminism as propaganda threads in their works, intended to evoke hostile associations in broad circles of contemporary public opinion by identifying as a foreigner a woman who moved outside her traditionally assigned role. As a result, the female ruler became a foreigner in the eyes of the male ‘majority,’ who perceived political reality in patriarchal categories. Worse still, as a foreigner, instead of remaining on the margins where the foreign minority belonged, she usurped the right to play a privileged and superior role. In the eyes of the patriarchal public this role was perfectly in line with the classic combination of tyranny and foreignness. It made the female king a kind of natural usurper and tyrant. Second, however paradoxical this may sound to us today, in the context of the intensification of religious conflict in the late sixteenth century, misogyny and anti-feminism created a breeding ground for the radical slogans of British Monarchomachs, including their concept of the active right of resistance.

The Phenomenon of ‘Two Queens on One Island’ – the Image of the Good and Bad Queen¹¹⁶

George Buchanan’s views can be defended against the accusation of political anti-feminism by citing his dedication of anti-Marian pamphlets to Elizabeth I,¹¹⁷ the Virgin Queen utterly loyal to her subjects and, as he wrote in his *History*, citing words she used in one of her well-known speeches to Parliament, ‘married

112 *Ibid.*, 195 ff.

113 *Ibid.*, 190.

114 *Ibid.*, 183.

115 *Ibid.*, 186.

116 Cf. e.g. a popular book: A. Plowden, *Two Queens in One Isle. The Deadly Relationship of Elizabeth I & Mary Queen of Scots*, Brighton 1984.

117 G. Buchanan, *A Detection of Mary Queen of Scots*, 165; his, ‘An Admonition to the True Lords Maintainers...’, 197.

to [her] kingdom.¹¹⁸ Buchanan's writings became part of the anti-Marian and Protestant propaganda that developed vigorously in England in the late 1560s and early 1570s,¹¹⁹ in which 'an existing language of misogyny was deployed to establish 'a good queen, bad queen' opposition.'¹²⁰

The first massive propaganda attack by Scottish Protestants on Mary Stuart took place in 1565, when the Queen, to Elizabeth's displeasure as well, decided to marry the Catholic Darnley. It is telling that this criticism was directed not so much against Mary's religion as against her supposedly immoral behaviour, namely that she chose her spouse not on practical grounds but on the basis of physical desire. The extreme aspects of her behaviour were accentuated, including her sharp temper, in which she resembled a whole series of tyrants, and which could lead her to commit crimes. The authors also highlighted the increase in French (and thus Catholic) influence in Scotland,¹²¹ combining criticism of 'femininity' with criticism of 'foreignness.' Another wave of anti-Marian propaganda, this time based on accusations of complicity in Darnley's murder, coincided with the rebellion of Scottish lords from the Presbyterian camp and their forced abdication of Mary in the summer of 1567. Efforts were also made, in the spirit of Buchanan, to argue the legality of resistance by the governed and the deposition of rulers, using the concept of the popular sovereignty. In many propaganda prints distributed in that period, the Queen's religious otherness began to be more clearly emphasized. The propagandists sometimes resorted to unrefined language, calling her a 'mermaid' – a term then commonly synonymous with 'prostitute.'¹²² Certainly, word of this campaign swiftly reached England, where the slandered Mary, Queen of Scots, would soon go into exile.

Anti-Marian currents in the English theatre, inspired by Scottish propaganda hostile to Mary, became apparent early, in late 1567, in the play *A new interlude of Vice containing the history of Horestes with the cruel revengement of his father's death upon his one natural mother*, performed in the presence of Queen Elizabeth I. It is considered to be the first English revenge drama, forming a

118 G. Buchanan, 'Rerum Scoticarum Historia,' 58.

119 Cf. J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen. Mary Stuart in Sixteenth-Century Literature*, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1964, esp. Chapters 'Emergence of the issues: 1565–1568' and 'Elisabethan «Semi-Publicity» against Mary: 1568–1586.'

120 A. McLaren, 'Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism. Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots, and the Genesis of English Anti-Catholicism,' *American Historical Review*, June 2002, 747.

121 J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...* 33 ff.

122 *Ibid.*, 40 ff.

bridge between medieval morality plays and Elizabethan drama. Its author, John Puckering, an English politician and parliamentarian, deployed some rather transparent references to current events. He analogized Mary Stuart to Clytemnestra, the mother of Orestes (James VI), who murdered her husband Agamemnon (Henry Darnley) in order to allow Aegisthus (Bothwell) to rule, and Elizabeth and her advisors to Idomeneus, the king of Crete, one of the bravest heroes in the Trojan War.¹²³ Comparisons of the Queen of Scots to both the mythical Clytemnestra and the biblical Jezebel or the insidious Delilah of the Book of Judges, who deprived Samson of his power, and of Bothwell to the mythical Sardanapalus, symbolizing Oriental tyranny and dissolution, or the Roman Emperor Heliogabal, are also encountered in Scottish political poetry justifying the deposition of Mary Stuart. The themes of that poetry echoed in neighbouring England,¹²⁴ as did the anti-Machiavellian rhetoric used to criticize the Queen of Scotland.¹²⁵

The prospect of Mary Stuart's return to the Scottish throne after the assassination of Regent Moray in 1570, the publicized plans for her possible marriage to an English Catholic related to the Tudors, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and the legal titles of Mary herself to the succession of the English crown all exacerbated unrest in Protestant England. It was further exacerbated by the papal bull issued in 1570 in which Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth as a heretic and usurper.¹²⁶ At the same time the English Parliament tried, in vain, to persuade Elizabeth to execute Mary and thus end her claims to the English crown. This, in turn, intensified the propaganda attack on the imprisoned Queen of Scotland in England, as evidenced by the publication of pamphlets excerpted from George Buchanan's *Detection* and *An Admonition*. The print editions of those works, like other English anti-Marian pamphlets, drew interest from the highest echelons of society.

This adhered to the tactics of Elizabeth and her advisers, who officially tried to discourage slanders of the Tudors' Scottish 'cousin.' In reality, they allowed, and even generated, attacks on the allegedly immoral behaviour and character of the

123 Cf. H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics. Shakespeare to Dryden*, Oxford 1996, 21 ff.; J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...*, 46.

124 *Ibid.*, 42 ff.

125 M. Praz, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethans*, London 1928, 6 ff.

126 Cf. *Select Statutes and other Constitutional Documents Illustrative of the Reigns Elisabeth and James I*, ed. G.W. Prothero, Oxford 1964, 195 ff; *An Outline of British History with Illustrative Documents and Annotated Index*, ed. M. Misztal, Kraków 2002, 127 ff.

dethroned Queen of Scots in treatises, pamphlets and ballads, appearing seemingly without the imprimatur of the Elizabethan censor.¹²⁷ They were supposed to strain the image of Mary Stuart's morals both in the eyes of British public opinion and on the continent. The pamphlets sought to emphasize her sexual promiscuity, combining that charge with accusations of tyranny and inability to govern personally. Intense in their vehemence, they identified Mary with Jezebel and opposed her to Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen, who embodied all virtues.¹²⁸ The opposition between the images of the two queens, 'good' and 'bad,' began to set the tone for the English propaganda of the time. It remains unclear, however, what solutions were being proposed for a basic problem: the general justification of the legitimacy of women's rule.

Here we must return to John Knox's polemic *The First Blast*. The work was published in the year of the 'English Jezebel' Mary I Tudor's death and the beginning of the reign of her successor, Elizabeth I Tudor. The indignation of the latter with Knox's pamphlet and his rather tenacious reaction has been mentioned previously. However, it is worth noting several works that polemicized with his theses while also making an *apologia* for the new English ruler.¹²⁹ As early as 1559, John Aylmer, the former tutor of Lady Jane Grey, Mary Tudor's rival to the crown and Queen of England for nine days, imprisoned and sentenced to death by her Catholic opponent, responded to Knox's anti-female clarion call. In his work *Harborrowe for faithfull and trewe subjects*, Aylmer stressed the legitimacy of Elizabeth's rule and her hereditary right to the succession of the English crown and the consequent divine sanction for her rule. At the same time, he shared, at least in part, Knox's misogynistic views, rejecting not so much the unflattering judgments of the female sex as the Scotsman's religious zealotry. Aylmer argued that women should not perform any ecclesiastical functions and were inherently less competent than men to hold political office, but that this did not mean that they were completely incapable of doing so, as many examples from history showed. Meanwhile, the argument that the rule of women and children is criticized in the Bible is rejected; Aylmer claims that in the Bible, women's rule merely serves as a metaphor for bad governance and does not refer to the power of real women such as the biblical Deborah, Judith, and Esther, or Elizabeth herself.¹³⁰

127 J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...*, 55–68.

128 Cf. A. McLaren, 'Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism...' 751–759; H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 23 ff.

129 Cf. D. Laing, in: *The Works of John Knox*, vol.4, 147, 353, 360 ff.

130 Cf. C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King,' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 11 ff., 131, 139; P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power...*, 69 ff.; J. Ridley, *John Knox*,

The latter was praised by Aylmer for her humility, modesty, and lack of prodigality, including wearing simple robes, features corresponding to the religious ideals of femininity of the time as proclaimed in homilies.¹³¹ Not only did they present a stark contrast to the disparaging, propagandistic image of Mary Stuart that emerged in the next decade, but they also contrasted sharply with Elizabeth's ambitions and vision of herself. In keeping with the conventional notions of that era, Aylmer assured his readers that Queen Elizabeth would properly perform her marital duties in the future. While he added reassuringly that she would be subordinate to her husband, the head of their union, in matters of marriage, as a monarch she would remain the head of the Kingdom of England, whose form of government was *rule mixte*, a type of limited monarchy.¹³² Here we touch on the most important argument in Aylmer's apologia for female rule. In order to reassure public opinion, the author of *Harborowe for faithfull and trewe subjects* followed a line of argumentation typical of other apologists of women's rule in England: that the institutions of a mixed system, Parliament, and natural rights were the best safeguard against all abuses of power, those committed by men as well as women.¹³³

Completely different was the argumentation used 10 years later by one of the first apologists of Mary Stuart's rule and his attempt to defend female governance shortly after the Queen of Scots' dethronement and flight to England. The work in question is *A Defence of the Honour of [...] Marie Queene of Scotland*, which was first published in 1569, most probably in Reims, France (despite the title page naming London as the place of publication), from whence it was smuggled into England. The author was John Leslie, a Scottish Catholic and Bishop of Ross, one of Mary's closest spiritual and political advisors after her return from France to Scotland in 1561. Following her imprisonment in England in late 1568, Leslie became the main representative of her interests in the country until he was imprisoned on suspicion of involvement in a conspiracy against Elizabeth's government in 1571. Three years later, having been forced to leave the British Isles,

282 ff.; C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 437–441.

131 *The Second Book of the Homilies* from 1563 can serve here as an example; see C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King,' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 12 ff.

132 C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King,' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 11 ff.; C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 440.

133 F. Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli*, 13 ff.; C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 441.

he continued to write pro-Marian treatises and speeches during his exile. His *Defence* is the most remarkable example of early pro-Marian literature.¹³⁴

Defence is divided into three parts. In the first, Leslie tries to dismiss the accusations of immorality made by the Protestant camp against the Queen of Scotland. Curiously, he builds the crowning argument from fundamentally different assumptions about the nature of woman than those held by Knox and his followers. Womanly nature itself, in his opinion, ruled out the atrocities Mary was accused of: 'Thys sexe naturallye abhorrethe dry buttherlye practises: surely rare yt ys to heare dry fowle practises in women.'¹³⁵ Unlike Knox and his misogynistic followers, Leslie presented an image of the female sex as by nature mild, a view no less conventional and stereotypical than theirs. Trying to distance his queen from the accusation of murdering Henry Darnley, he passes the blame on to Moray and other Scottish lords, accusing them first of conspiring to murder Darnley and then of raising a rebellion to dethrone Mary. Also, unlike George Buchanan, the Bishop of Ross is strongly in favour of the principle of monarchs' infallible hereditary right to the throne.¹³⁶

The third part of Leslie's apologia for Mary Stuart is an extensive polemic with John Knox's *The First Blast*. Leslie argues here that in well-organized states, women wielding monarchical power are subject to papal authority as a sufficient safeguard against more serious abuses. Although the author, a Catholic, urged Elizabeth to help Mary, some passages attacked the unmarried Queen of England. Her Scottish cousin, Leslie argues, had fulfilled her natural womanly duty of motherhood by giving birth to a male successor, James VI.¹³⁷ The work of the Bishop of Ross, many new editions of which had been published by the end of the sixteenth century, gathered arguments that set out a typical Catholic line of defence of Mary Stuart for the future. Another crowning argument, the martyr's death for the faith, was to enhance the 'white' legend of Mary in the apologias written after her execution in 1587.¹³⁸

134 See the extensive discussion of John Leslie's writings in: J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...*, 87–93, 102 ff.; C. Jordan, 'Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought,' 442–445.

135 Qtd. after J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...*, 89.

136 See the discussion of John Leslie's works and the political context in which they were written in: H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 22, 30 ff.; J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...*, 91.

137 A. McLaren, 'Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism...', 750 ff.

138 A particularly important role was played here by a work written by Leslie's successor, Adam Blackwood, in France, entitled *Martyre de la Roynne d'Escosse* (1587). It was a propaganda response to Protestant attacks contained in works like John Foxe's

In the next revised version of the 1571 *Defence*, Leslie hit harder on the note of hostility to Elizabeth I, shunning her childlessness.¹³⁹ Along with the emphasis on the 'natural' duty of women to bear children, his argument was directed at the failures of government by Elizabeth, the Virgin Queen who consistently refused to marry. From Leslie's traditional perspective, the decision of the English monarch defied the natural boundaries of her gender. Similarly, in the eyes of many contemporary Englishmen, the declaration in the Queen's parliamentary speech at the very beginning of her reign of mystical marriage to only one spouse – the Kingdom of England – and spiritual motherhood to her subjects ceased to be a purely rhetorical figure over time.¹⁴⁰ This declaration, to the displeasure of many, remained in effect for the next 40 years, until the death of the Virgin Queen. Official Elizabethan propaganda, however, turned her old age and childlessness into an asset that would legitimize female rule better than Mary Stuart's dramatic marriages and motherhood.

For almost 19 years of exile and imprisonment in England until Mary's execution, two legends formed about the Queen of Scots, one black and one white, depending on the confessional denomination of authors in England and on the Continent, in narratives abundantly enriched in subsequent centuries. As we have seen, English Protestant propaganda played an enormous role in spreading the unfavourable image of her. In order to challenge Mary Stuart's claims to the English crown, this propaganda wove an extremely 'gendered' antithesis of the 'good' queen (Elizabeth) and 'bad' queen (Mary), beginning in the late 1560s and early 1570s (see Table 7).

The basic antithesis, creating a contrast between the two figures, was the contrast between Elizabeth's virginity, mystical marriage to her kingdom and role as 'mother of the nation' to Mary's tyranny and married state associated with her perfidy and sexual promiscuity. Later, Elizabeth's attributes would also include spiritual motherhood to her anticipated successor, James VI of Scotland. To the opposition: Virgin-Queen – harlot-tyrant, a religious antithesis was fervidly added: Elizabeth as the symbolic 'woman clothed with the Sun,' the ruler of the true Christian Church, the opposite of the Papist Church, the 'false Church' and its follower Mary Stuart, stylized as Jezebel. At the same time, the rights of blood

influential *Book of Martyrs*, stigmatizing the rule of Mary I and lionizing Elizabeth I. See J.E. Phillips, *Images of a Queen...*, 106 ff.

139 Ibid. 105.

140 C. Levin, *The Heart and Stomach of a King: Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 41, draws attention to the initially purely rhetorical significance of this phrase. Cf. also P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power...*, 66.

Table 7: Image of the ‘Good’ (Elizabeth) and ‘Bad’ (Mary) Queen in Elizabethan Propaganda of the Late 1560s and Early 1570s^a

Elizabeth I – ‘good’ queen	Mary Stuart– ‘bad’ queen
<i>Our natural lady and mistress</i>	<i>A woman [...] of corrupt affections [...] untemperable by her estate</i>
Purity and virginity Mystical marriage to the Kingdom of England	Tyranny Real marriage, perfidy, sexual debauchery, bloodshed
Woman clothed with the Sun the English, Protestants – ‘Reformed Christians’	Jezebel Papists, false Church, rebels

^aBased on A. McLaren, ‘Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism...’, 760 ff., 765 ff.

that legitimized succession to the English crown were passed over in silence, as both royal cousins descended in a straight line from Henry VII; instead, emphasis was placed on the antithesis between the monarchical virtues of one ruler and the tyrannical vices of the other.

The black and white image of the ‘two queens on one island,’ Elizabeth, the ruling Queen of England, and Mary, the dethroned and imprisoned Queen of Scots who nevertheless harboured claims, supported by some Catholics, to the English crown, survived in official Elizabethan propaganda for the decade or two that followed. It was only the discovery in the 1580s of the Catholic Babington Plot on the life of Elizabeth, provoked by the English authorities, and the deliberate entanglement of Mary Stuart in it, followed by her trial and execution in 1587, that brought a final solution to the politically awkward situation.¹⁴¹ Mary, who still considered herself a sovereign monarch, vainly refused to submit to any court. Accused of ‘*diversas res tendetes ad laesionem, mortem et destructionem regalis personae Dominae nostrae Reginae,*’ she had to appear before a judicial committee specially set up by the English Parliament. The official trial documents referred to the accused as *Scotorum Regina*, or as merely the daughter and heir of King James V of Scotland – *communiter vocatam Reginam Scotorum*.¹⁴² Her usurpatory ambition for the English crown was emphasized: ‘*praedicta Maria praetendens titulum ad coronam hujus regni*

141 See the comprehensive discussion of the context and course of events in: A. Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 475–542.

142 See ‘Commission for the Trial,’ in: *Select Statutes...*, 140 ff.

Angliae.¹⁴³ This was probably intended to blur the impression that a crowned head, which was soon to fall under the blow of the executioner's sword, was sitting on the defendant's bench.

Elizabeth, as the 'good' queen, on whose signature the sentence of the death depended, faced one of the most difficult dilemmas of her life: whether or not to approve the execution of her monarch 'sister.' After long hesitation, she signed. This situation naturally required that the official English propaganda of the time stylize Elizabeth's behaviour appropriately in order to remove from her any suspicion of participation in the regicide. First, the queen and her entourage skilfully shifted the blame to the royal secretary, Davison, who had presented the document for her to sign; he was soon imprisoned. Second, both in courtiers' conversations with the indecisive Elizabeth and in the campaign for the imminent execution of Mary Stuart waged by some Anglican preachers at the same time, there developed a whole arsenal of arguments referring to examples of the dethroning of the historical rulers of England and the murders of rivals to the English throne which would, in the eyes of the public, justify the imposition of the death sentence. William Camden, the most eminent chronicler on Elizabethan times, recalling the precedents of historical pretenders' dethronement and elimination evoked both at court and in a more radical and vulgar form by Protestant preachers, concluded eloquently: 'All which [i.e., all kings of England previously removed from power – I.K.] were for light causes (if their faults were compared with heirs) made away.'¹⁴⁴

Nevertheless, the case of the trial and execution of Mary Stuart was exceptional. It stirred unease in the consciousness of Elizabeth and her contemporaries, and of future generations. It could have been seen as sacrilegious to subject an anointed monarch to public execution, establishing the legal basis for similar actions in the future. Over half a century later, the legalized regicide of the

143 See 'Sentence on Mary, Queen of Scots,' in: *Ibid.*, 143 ff.

144 Cf. the relevant analysis of excerpts from William Camden's *Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum regnante Elisabetha* (1615, 1627, English ed. 1629) in: H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 26. Here Camden discusses extensively the dilemmas that Elizabeth I faced at the time, presenting them in the form of a dialogue between the Queen and her courtiers, who sought to execute Mary. To convince Elizabeth, they use a number of examples of the deposition of past rulers of England and the murder of their rivals to the throne. On the image of Elizabeth in Camden's *Annals* see P. Collison, 'William Camden and the Anti-Myth of Elizabeth. Setting the Mould?,' in: *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. S. Doran, T.S. Freeman, Hampshire 2003, 79–98.

Scottish ruler was cited by John Milton as a precedent for the legality of executing Charles I Stuart, Mary's grandson, in 1649.¹⁴⁵

Strategies of the Woman-King – the Cult of Elizabeth

Attempts at apologia for women's rule in political treaties such as Aylmer's, or the propagandistic framing of the 'good' and 'bad' queen such as in pro-Elizabethan and anti-Marian pamphlets, represent only one of multiple components in the strategy for legalizing the rule of Elizabeth I. The strategy was broad and complex. It used various media and methods of influencing the opinion of the queen's subjects not only at the level of high culture and court culture (court poetry, official iconography, elements of power ceremony) but also within lower and more popular culture (e.g. church sermons).

The poetry of Edmund Spenser provides an excellent example from the level of court culture. Although the author spent part of his life in Ireland, his writings are ranked by literary experts among the preeminent works of Elizabethan court culture. Particularly relevant in the context of our study is the famous poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590–1596),¹⁴⁶ whose educational message 'reveals the humanist to the high calling of the poet, the man of vision who must use his abilities in the service of the state.'¹⁴⁷

It is crucial to read Spenser's poem from the perspective of the politics of its time, including the debate on the question of women's governance; it contains allusions to real political figures and events of the time clothed in the form of metaphors, symbols, and allegories. The plot threads and characters of *The Faerie Queene* resemble, on the one hand, the thirteenth-century *Roman de la rose* and, on the other, our contemporary fantasy literature, also full of allusiveness and allegorical references to reality, maintaining fairy tale and mythological conventions. Undoubtedly, 'mythologizing' was an important literary instrument for Spenser, and it also served the needs of official propaganda well. For example, in Book V of his poem, where the word 'tyrant' is most often repeated, the characters are evocatively named: for example, Mercilla (*Mercy*), associated with Elizabeth, and her antithesis, Lucifera, who lives in the House of Pride, personifies tyranny and is clearly based on Mary Stuart. Likewise, the evil Duessa, involved with a Satanic nunnery, evokes the whore of Babylon, and embodies the four vices: pleasure, wealth, vindictiveness, and tyranny. Her trial is a moral

145 H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 27 ff.

146 *Spenser's Faerie Queen*, vol. 2, books IV–VII, ed. J.C. Smith, Oxford 1909, 159–308.

147 S. Coote, *The Penguin Short History of English Literature*, London 1993, 74–84, here 74.

victory not only for Mercilla (Elizabeth) but also for the well-governed state over tyranny. The allusiveness of this thread, a few years after the execution of the Queen of Scots, is beyond doubt. The same applies to the description of Mercilla's recognition (according to her name, the ruler 'full of mercy') of the principle of *raisons d'état* and the resulting necessity of using the executioner's sword to punish evil. In turn, Mary's actions could be associated with the figure of Souldan (=Sultan), a personification of the untamed lust for power. Souldan is also defeated by Mercilla and her knights, as is the tyrannical figure of Gerioneo, symbolizing idolatry and exploitation of subjects.¹⁴⁸

Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* and the political allusions it contains are interesting for several reasons. As Richard F. Hardin argued, Spenser was not just a devoted and uncritical propagandist of the Elizabethan government. Like the other apologists for the English queen, he praised the ideal of the mixed monarchy. His literary approach consisted, on the one hand, of idealizing and mythologizing the English queen as the figure of a virgin ruler, The Fairie Queen, surrounded by a procession of faithful knight-advisers, and, on the other hand, of smuggling in criticism of the effects of her policies (excessive delay in taking the decision to execute Duessa-Mary Stuart) and her entourage (the Privy Council and court, compared to an animal herd). Spenser's poem also had a didactic function and was part of the dualistic propaganda of the 'good' and 'bad' queen. It created a clear opposition between the symbol of mercy and love, Mercilla-Elizabeth, and the tyrannical figures who embody the lack of love and mercy which inevitably evoked associations with their real-life counterpart, Mary Tudor.¹⁴⁹ Elizabethan propaganda eagerly presented Mercy as Elizabeth's signature trait, placing it alongside other traditional monarchy cardinal virtues: justice, prudence and fortitude, and sometimes temperance.¹⁵⁰

148 See the detailed analysis of Book V of Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* in: R.F. Hardin, *Civil Idolatry. Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton*, chapter titled 'Spenser's Anatomy of Tyranny,' 91 ff. Cf. also P. Williams, *The Later Tudors. England 1547–1603*, 442 ff.

149 R.F. Hardin, *Civil Idolatry. Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton*, 17, 91 ff., 96, 117. Cf. also A. Hadfield, 'Duessa's Trial and Elizabeth's Error. Judging Elizabeth in Spenser's "The Fairie Queene," in: *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 56–78.

150 J.N. King, 'The Royal Image,' in: *Tudor Political Culture*, ed. D. Hoak, Cambridge 1995, 124, draws attention to the replacement of Temperance by Mercy on a woodcut depicting Elizabeth on the throne, which adorned the 1569 edition of the *Bishop's Bible* from 1569. This move, according to King: 'could have provided a "prop" for the queen's private "dramatization" of her public role as an evangelical monarch.' Cf. also P. Williams, *The Later Tudors. England 1547–1603*, 423–432, esp. 426.

Spenser's mythologization of Elizabeth is a reflection of a wider phenomenon which historians have called the 'cult of Elizabeth.' At the level of court culture, official iconographic representations, as well as the stylization of her person during various court festivals and ceremonial marches through the City of London, especially during the last ten years of her reign, this cult was intended to enliven the image of the aging queen and make it more attractive to her subjects. The queen was stylized on the model of figures from Roman and Celtic mythology, who were also revived by contemporary literature: Diana, Cynthia, Venus, Astraea, Gloriana and Belpheobe ('beautiful Diana'). In these styles, a 'unity of opposites' often occurred. The almost 70-year-old Elizabeth was therefore simultaneously identified as Venus, Queen of Love and Beauty, and Astraea, Virgin-Queen. References to these symbols, which were clearly visible in the portrait art of the time, are a good illustration of the propaganda mythologization and 'deification' of the female ruler. These treatments created one of the permanent foundations of the ideology of royal power of the Elizabethan era. They were the result of an erudite, secular instrumentalization of her image, addressed to an appropriately educated audience, able to read the content contained in such personifications. These were presented in the sphere of the high and court culture of the time, although of course they could also affect the lower strata, especially through ceremonial royal marches through the City of London. This secularized cult of Elizabeth was undoubtedly an important element of the ideology and the legitimization of her female rule.¹⁵¹

At the popular level, in turn, of greater importance were the references to the figures of biblical women which John Aylmer advanced in his apologia and which were perfectly suited to be promoted and publicized from preacher's pulpits. In addition to Deborah from the Book of Judges, who inspired the Israelites with the spirit of the struggle against the Canaanites, Elizabeth was eagerly compared to Esther, from the Book of Esther, the Jewish wife of the Persian King Ahasuerus, and the brave Judith from the apocryphal Book of Judith. However, the most important comparison at the level of popular culture was the indirect

151 On this subject, see esp. Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth. Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1977. Cf. also a comparative analysis of the official artwork of Tudor images from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I in: J.N. King, 'The Royal Image,' 104-132, esp. 122 ff.; e.g., on comparisons to the virginal figures of Astraea and Diana and metaphors of virginity in Renaissance literature in England, France, and other countries in: P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power...*, esp. chapter III: 'Three-personed Queen: The Courtly Cult of Elizabeth I and Its Subjects' and chapter VI: 'Rewriting Chastity: Representations of the Unmarried Queen.'

identification of the English queen with the Blessed Virgin Mary, closely related to the queen's stylization as an eternal virgin. This began in the mid-1570s and was buttressed by the fact that the Queen's birthday was celebrated as a public holiday on 7 September, i.e. on the eve of the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as her Accession Day, celebrated annually throughout the country on 17 November. On these occasions preachers could make comparisons in their homilies between the Queen and biblical figures.¹⁵² The cult of Elizabeth I's virginity in Protestant England was able, according to some historians, to function as a substitute for the Mariolatry rejected in the Protestant world and, at the same time, an instrument of social manipulation that strengthened her feminine rule and legitimized Elizabeth's decision to remain in her maiden state.¹⁵³ Hence, the symbolism characteristic of the cult of the Virgin Mary was used both in the iconographic representations of the Virgin Queen and in court ceremonies: for example, the blue colour of the dress that Elizabeth wore on certain occasions.¹⁵⁴

At the same time, in taking part in the rituals of healing scrofula by laying on of hands, dating back to the Middle Ages and revived under the Tudors, Elizabeth I was not only emphasizing the traditional, charismatic character of her royal power. In doing so, she also imitated the behaviour of early Anglo-Saxon holy women (Saints Frideswick and Uncumber) whose miracles and healings were seen as signs of their purity and virginity. Of course, these stylings could satisfy the cravings of the broad masses of her subjects, who beneath the narrow surface of 'Reformed Christianity' continued to think in traditional terms. However, under pressure from more advanced Protestant circles, other elements of the ideology of monarchical charisma were eliminated from Elizabethan ceremonialism.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, in England, unlike in France, where the healing of scrofula

152 Cf. examples in: A. Walsham, 'A Very Deborah? The Myth of Elizabeth I as a Providential Monarch,' in: *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 143–163; C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 27–30.

153 Cf. polemic commentary on the ideas of F. Yates and R. Strong, presented in: S. Doran, 'Virginity, Divinity and Power. The Portraits of Elizabeth I,' in: *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 171–199.

154 C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 33.

155 The ceremonial healing of scrofula (King's Evil) by a laying of hands and the blessing of healing rings by monarchs dated back to Edward the Confessor and ended under Edward IV and Richard III. After being renewed by Henry VII, these practices continued during the reign of Mary I and Elizabeth I, although the last of the Tudors most likely ended the ritual blessing of the rings at the behest of Protestants. More an extensive on this subject, see: C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King' *Elizabeth*

was reserved exclusively for male rulers, the queen could heal by laying on of hands. Thus, the power of the English female monarch had a magical charisma which made her similar to the ideal of the king, Edward the Confessor, who was claimed to have powers of healing scrofula.

However, the mythology and cult of Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen alone were not enough. Public opinion has long been keen to marry its monarchy and thus ensure the continuation of the dynasty and its rule. By refusing to marry and give birth to an heir, Elizabeth, as the last of the Tudors, undermined the common patterns and norms of behaviour attributed to her gender. In order to legitimize her not only female but heirless leadership, Elizabethan propaganda therefore had to develop a much more elaborate arsenal of arguments than just the image of the virtuous Virgin Queen. This was all the truer because among Catholics, who did not accept Henry VIII's first divorce, there were passionate denunciations of her illegitimate origins, as well as rumours of successive lovers and a host of illegitimate children. In Catholic anti-Elizabethan propaganda on the continent, alongside conventional comparisons between the Queen of England and the Old Testament Queen Jezebel or the Roman emperors known for their persecution of Christians, Nero and Diocletian, we also encounter examples of her being compared to Messalina, the faithless wife of Claudius. At the same time, however, rumours were spread about Elisabeth's alleged infertility, or even a disability that prevented her from having sexual relations.¹⁵⁶

In order to combat the dangers created by such slander an attempt was made, with reference to the antonymous concept of 'the king's two bodies' created in England under the rule of Elizabeth – the mystical and immortal body of the political kingdom and the mortal and physical body of the queen. Thus, from the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign, the image of her two gender identities was promoted: queen and king at the same time.

A problem posed for the Protestant queen's subjects, and not only in Puritan circles, arose from the question of a woman's authority over the Anglican Church. At the very beginning of Elizabeth's reign, both her apologist, Aylmer, and the Anglican bishop John Jewel argued that in church matters she had only formal

I and the Politics of Sex and Power, 16–24, 36; Cf. M. Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Monarchy and Miracles in France and England*, trans. J.E. Anderson, London 1973.

156 C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 80–89, who points out that Mary I Tudor was never the subject of gossip with sexual overtones, but was consistently perceived first as a virgin and then as a wife; *Ibid.*, 89.

jurisdiction and not clerical authority since a woman could not be a priest.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, denying her the title of High Head of the Church of England as *a woman by birthe and nature*, Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York, stated that Elizabeth by God's grace was also *our kinge and quene*. According to this reasoning, the last of the Tudors could have a male political body and a female mortal body. This way of thinking was also reflected in official documents and nomenclature. The seeds of such a framing had already crystallized during the Catholic rule of Mary I, but the issue of women's rule became more problematic at the beginning of the reign of her Protestant successor.¹⁵⁸ Hence, in the 1559 Act of Supremacy, Elizabeth, as a female king, did not receive the title of *the supreme head of the Church of England*, like Henry VIII,¹⁵⁹ but only *the supreme governor [...] in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things and causes*, receiving at the same time the prerogatives of monarchical power and control over the Church, similar to those held by her father from 1534.¹⁶⁰ It is telling, however, that she was named *Governor*, not *Governess*.

In the future, too, Elizabeth was sometimes referred to as *prince* or *king* rather than *princess*, and by others she was sometimes called *sacred general*, and in the war she was seen marching *King-like*. She was compared not only to Plato and the prophet Daniel but also hermaphroditically to Adam and Eve at the same time – *Lord or Lordly Lady*. The queen herself was able to masterfully use the metaphor of the body (the female body hidden in the male body of the king) to legitimize ruling as a woman and, furthermore, a childless one. The best example of this is, of course, the famous speech she made at Tilbury during the crisis caused by the Spanish Armada invasion in 1588: 'I may have the body of a weak and feable woman, but I have the hearth and stomach of a king.'¹⁶¹ From this perspective, she was a king in the body of a queen. As may be seen, in the symbolic-political sphere, Elizabeth sometimes had to present herself as a man and be presented as such by the dominant majority of male political actors, including the propagandists and ideologues of her feminine power. This image of 'king in

157 P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power...*, 70.

158 The above quotes and comments are qtd. after C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King,' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 121 ff.

159 'Act of Supremacy' (1534), in: *Select Documents of English Constitutional History*, ed. G.B. Adams, New York 1901, 239 ff.

160 'Act of Supremacy' (1559), in: *Ibid.*, 296–302, here 297, 299.

161 The above quotes are qtd. after C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King,' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 131 ff., 141, 143 ff.

queen,' the combination of two sex roles in one person, undoubtedly contained a hermaphrodite element.

On the one hand, this harmonized with the intellectual climate of London at the time, or to be more precise, its southern suburbs, where theatrical life was buzzing with activity. The exchange of roles between the two sexes was by no means an uncommon cultural phenomenon here. In the Elizabethan era, the playing of women's roles by male actors, or 14–16-year-old boys to be precise, was a part of the canon of acting. On the other hand, the reverse behaviour – having the female characters in the plays disguise themselves as men and the actors thus play a role of their own gender – was one of the favourite tricks of comic and dramatic playwrights, of which we find excellent examples in Shakespeare's plays. The device was also sometimes used to create romantic escapades and adventures. This cross-dressing was therefore permitted in certain cultural spheres; but only at specific moments.¹⁶²

At the same time, however, women parading the streets of London in men's clothes during the Jacobean era were accused of prostitution. It is perhaps no coincidence that Philip Stubbs' *Anatomy of Abuses* treatise was published in print in 1583, during the Elizabethan era; in it, women with masculine character and in masculine disguise are portrayed as the cause of the fall of good manners and called 'hermofrodithi, that is, monsters of both kindes, halfe women, halfe men.' This view was by no means isolated at the time, and in the seventeenth century it continued to circulate, in the *Hic-Mulier* pamphlets.¹⁶³

With a bit of ill will, supported by religious hostility, the image of the virtuous Virgin Queen could be turned into an image of a monstrous hermaphrodite. A good example can be found in a source which, though not English, presents a clear view of how Elizabeth I was perceived in the hostile Catholic camp. The work in question is an account written in Latin by an anonymous author, entitled *Mercurius Sarmaticus ex Belgio Anglicus*,¹⁶⁴ of a diplomatic trip

162 Ibid., 123–131; M.L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, 191.

163 Cf. this and other examples of criticism of hermaphroditism in: C. Levin, 'The Heart and Stomach of a King.' *Elizabeth I and the Politics of Sex and Power*, 127. For more on Philip Stubbs' treatise see P. Williams, *The Later Tudors. England 1547–1603*, 447, 451 ff.

164 Translations of quotations from *Mercurius Sarmaticus ex Belgio Anglicus*, a copy of which has been preserved as manuscript no. BK 1541 in the Polish Academy of Sciences Library at Kórnik, have been made here on the basis of the Polish translation and are cited from it: *Merkuriusz sarmacki z Niderlandów i Anglii, czyli zwięzła relacja z dwóch poselstw do Niderlandów i Anglii, które z woli Najjaśniejszego i Najpotężniejszego Króla Polski i Szwecji etc. i za zgodą Jego dostojników, senatorów i*

to England by Paweł Działyński, sent there in 1597 by King Sigismund III of Poland, an ally of the Habsburgs and Spain, to intervene in order to return the ships from Gdańsk that the English had seized. The bold speech by this Polish envoy in which he articulated, among other things, the principle of freedom of navigation at sea, elicited a sharp reaction from the queen and outrage in court circles.¹⁶⁵ The differences in customs and political mentality between the two countries were undoubtedly to blame. Proud, like almost every Polish noble of the Polish-Lithuanian elective monarchy, Działyński spoke too freely in front of Elizabeth for her taste. For the queen's part, in her improvised Latin riposte, she did not refrain from emphasizing the superiority of hereditary monarchy over the Polish system of electing the king.¹⁶⁶ It is possible that the overly emotional reaction of the queen was also due to her 'succession complex,' which intensified in the 1590s when public opinion in England was loudly debating solutions to the problem of succession to the throne.¹⁶⁷

The main part of *Mercurius Sarmaticus* describes the political system of the Kingdom of England and the characteristics of Elizabeth's rule from the Polish perspective. The anonymous author, a member of Działyński's delegation,¹⁶⁸

Sejmu gorliwie i chwalebnie sprawował i uczynił sławnymi oświecony i wspinały pan Paweł Działyński. Roku Pańskiego 1597, ed. R. Marciniak, 1978.

- 165 The reactions of the English court were full of admiration for Elizabeth's reply to the ambassador, which 'lived on as a treasured memory through several generations,' see J.E. Neal, *Elżbieta Wielka*, 325. A good example of this is the letter praising Elizabeth's speech from Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, to Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, dated 26 VII 1597 r., in: *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series of the Reign of Elizabeth 1595-1597; preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office*, vol. 4, ed. M.A. Everett Green, London 1869, 473 ff.
- 166 In his speech before Elizabeth, Działyński stuck closely to the text of the parliamentary instructions written down at the Sejm in Warsaw in March of 1597; *Mercurius Sarmaticus...*, 34-37. A replica of Elizabeth and a more extensive, official reply from the Queen's advisers, William Cecil, Charles Howard, Robert Cecil and John Fortescue, also contained critical remarks about limited royal power in Poland-Lithuania; *Ibid.*, 37-47.
- 167 See also the analysis of Camden's message in his *Annals* about this incident in: H. Erskine-Hill, *Poetry and the Realm of Politics...*, 18.
- 168 Who authored the *Mercurius Sarmaticus* remains unclear. English diplomatic correspondence from that period confirms that "The history of the former embassy, together with that of the States, is penned in Latin by one J.M. who was in the train of the embassy Zedlinsky [sic!]; it is a virulent libel against her Majesty, entitled "Mercurius sarmaticus." See the appendix to the correspondence of the English envoy in Poland John Peyton, dated 24 [14 old style] V 1598, in: *Calendar of the*

looking at the country he is visiting through the prism of Sarmatian freedoms and sensitive to the idea of *absolutum dominium*, describes England under Tudor's rule with an abundance of pejorative terms. The context in which they were used would surely have raised objections from a philosopher of the time but it perfectly reflects the political mentality of the average Polish Catholic, for whom absolutism equated to despotism and tyranny. Thus we read in *Mercurius Sarmaticus* about the Kingdom of England as 'despotic England' and an 'absolute monarchy'.¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth herself, moreover, is unabashedly described as an 'English schoolmarm dictator,' an all-powerful ruler who 'rules tyrannically,' comparably to the tyranny of the 'Dionysus, Nero, Tiberius and others,' whom she has surpassed with her 'unheard-of despotism.'¹⁷⁰ The accusations against her perfectly fit the mold of the traditional image of a tyrant: she violates the right to property, to travel abroad, to freedom of speech, and the religious freedoms of her subjects. To this, the author adds a condemnation of the queen's absolutist practices, which according to him naturally amount to tyranny and constitute a repudiation of the system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He therefore points to the allegedly unlimited freedom of the English Queen to establish and abolish rights, declare war, grant and remove offices and nobility, and to the limitation of Parliament's power by a group of Elisabeth's advisers, who furthermore are 'effeminate' and belong to a Secret Council.¹⁷¹

The most striking feature of the criticism in *Mercurius Sarmaticus* is the association of tyranny with the very existence of governments ruled by women. We read about the 'tyrannical and extraordinary oppression of a free nation by a woman' and the despotic and simultaneously feminine form of rule that surpasses all previous tyrants. Added to this are restrictions on freedom of speech and the supposition that Elizabeth was created by a 'demon' and references to her alleged black magic practices. However, the strongest invective results from the Catholic author's contempt for the *hommage* and worship rendered to the Queen, which he likens to a new idolatry. Hence the horror of the Polish Catholic noblemen when he speaks of the last of the Tudors as resembling a 'long-haired priest,' greeting with his outstretched hand the people gathered before him on their knees; hence also his outrage at the elevation of Elizabeth during the anniversary

Manuscripts of the Most Honorable the Marquis of Salisbury preserved at Hatfield House (Historical Manuscripts Commission), vol. 8, London 1899, 167 ff. S.

169 *Merkuriusz sarmacki...*, 29 ff., 48.

170 *Ibid.*, 30 ff.

171 *Ibid.*

celebrations of her birthday and coronation ‘above the Blessed Virgin Mary.’ In addition, there are a number of very sharp pieces of invective striking at the position of the Queen as the head of the Anglican Church: a ‘dangerous predator of all churches,’ a woman proclaimed by Satan as the ‘new anti-pope of the new faith,’ ‘a harlot pope,’ ‘a wild she-wolf pope,’ and, very eloquently, ‘a hermaphrodite pope, [who] like a chameleon changes [...] sex.’ A short passage, thrown in as an aside, praising the Queen’s personal talents – her ‘versatile abilities and a volatile mind,’ with comparisons to Semiramis and ‘the Brutuses’ – is a purely rhetorical figure for the purpose of emphasizing the contrast with her predominant tyrannical vices.¹⁷²

The description of Elizabeth in *Mercurius Sarmaticus* from the viewpoint of a foreign and confessionally hostile observer emotionally and radically evaluates the ideology and cult of power of a female monarch. First, as a kind of Elizabetholatry (as an equivalent to Catholic Mariolatry); second, as the hermaphroditism of her position as the head of the ‘heretical’ Church. This image was typical of the ‘black’ image of Elizabeth developed in counter-reformation propaganda on the continent. It stood also in opposition to the ‘white’ legend of Mary Stuart, the ruler perceived by Catholics as a martyr for the faith, after 1587. Polish historian Janusz Tazbir points to the derivative nature of the ‘black’ legend of Elizabeth, based largely on translations of Western writings, in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where various *topoi* circulating in other countries of Catholic Europe at that time were appropriated. The Polish Protestant apologists of Elizabeth I followed a similar strategy in creating her positive portrait. However, anti-Elizabethan tones in Poland were hit harder, especially after the papal bull of 1570. In general, these positive and negative opinions about Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart created a Polish variant of the propaganda model of the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ queen, although these roles were distributed in the reverse direction from those in the Isles.¹⁷³ Thus, the author of *Mercurius Sarmaticus* looked at the Queen of England from a perspective that had largely crystallized as early as the 1570s.

English diplomacy, seeking as a matter of official duty to counteract the denigration of Elizabeth and dissemination of an unflattering image of her among a denominationally and politically hostile camp, intervened immediately to urge the banning of *Mercurius Sarmaticus*, manuscripts of which were circulating in

172 Ibid., 32 ff.

173 J. Tazbir, ‘Elżbieta I Tudor w opinii staropolskiej,’ *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, 34, 1989, 49, 68 ff.

Poland.¹⁷⁴ However, in sixteenth-century England, during the crisis stirred by the question of succession of an aging, unmarried, and childless female ruler, the accusations made in *Mercurius Sarmaticus* could only have reached fertile ground among the most elite Catholic circles. In the opinion of the Protestant majority of Englishmen who after almost 40 years of Elizabeth's reign were used to mythologizing and cultivating adoration of the 'good' Queen, these allegations were an expression of denominational hostility. Robert Devereux himself, the Earl of Essex and then still the Queen's favourite, but in the near future a rebel against her rule, expressed this reaction in his correspondence. In a reply to a letter from Sir Cecil, Devereux shares his delight at Elizabeth's eloquent riposte to Działyński's speech. He praised not only her wisdom and her 'princely triumph' over 'that braving Polart' but also stressed her superhuman heroic nature: "The heroes would be but as other men if they had not unusual and unlooked for encounters, and sure Her Majesty is made of the same stuff of which the ancients believed their heroes to be formed; that is, her mind of gold, her body of brass. [...] for when other metals break and rust and lose both form and colour, she holds her own colours, which no other of nature can match, or of art imitate. But how dare my melancholy spirit praise her?"¹⁷⁵

This passage is full of erudite Neo-Platonic references, fashionable at the time and typical of late Elizabethan culture. In the eyes of an English politician, general, and intellectual, who emphasized in the form of a rhetorical figure and fashionable notion the exceptional quality of his personality as a melancholiac, the body of the hero-queen had even more supernatural qualities. As Robert Devereux wrote, it was made of two indestructible metals: her mind of gold, and the rest of bronze. It is worth considering the hidden meaning of Essex's words, deciphering the meaning of both metals, ascribed to them at that time. Gold symbolized the Sun – 'the eye and brain of the whole universe' – a symbol of God and power. Bronze, in turn, was an alloy of a few metals: above all, copper, which symbolized the planet Venus, to which favourable influence was attributed (*Fortuna Minor*); tin, associated with King Jupiter – the most fortunate planet

174 Cf. an excerpt from the above-quoted correspondence from May 1598 of John Peyton, the English envoy in Poland, on *Mercurius Sarmaticus*: 'as yet it only in written copie. We talked with a gentelman of account to fit, who promised to speak of Voywode of Siradia, that He might deal with the king for its inhibition'; *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, vol. 8, 167 ff.

175 Reply from the Earl of Essex to a letter to him from Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury dated 26 VII [old style] 1597, in: *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Elizabeth*, vol. 4, 476.

(*Fortuna Major*); and finally, zinc and lead, the latter associated with imperious Saturn. As is known, the ringed planet was supposed to endow people with a melancholic disposition, as well as bring various misfortunes to earth (*Fortuna Major*).¹⁷⁶ At the same time, Saturn's influence was associated with the onset of a fashionable, 'brilliant' form of melancholy, ascribed, as we earlier saw, to outstanding people.

In this erudite way, Essex, first, suggested the spiritual affinity of his own 'melancholic' personality with that of the Queen. Second, by attributing to her feminine body the properties of all these metals, he elevated that body not only to the position of mythological male heroes, but even to the firmament of heaven, to the group of the most important god-rulers of Antiquity, both male and female. In this way he immortalized Elizabeth's mortal body and freed it from the limitations commonly attributed to her gender, referencing then-fashionable alchemical ideas and practices, which were based on the premise that 'the transformation into gold is achieved through the combination of two opposing metals in which any type of contrast (sun and moon, warmth and cold, man and woman [...]) is expressed.'¹⁷⁷ From this principle of the 'unity of opposites' promoted by Neoplatonists emerged another symbol of the fullness of humanity fashionable in the Renaissance era: the figure of the androgyne, created by Plato in his *Symposium* to explain the phenomenon of male-female erotic attraction.¹⁷⁸

Epilogue: Women's Rule as Naturally Tyrannical and the Place of Women in Sixteenth-Century Society

The portrayal of women's rule as by nature tyrannical is one aspect of a broader problem – misogynistic attitudes entrenched as a social norm. The roots of the fear of the 'other' sex are ancient and set the tone for the lives of patriarchal societies in diverse parts of the world and at various times. The antithesis of the two sexes – the female as the Dionysian type, closer to instincts and nature in its biological meaning *versus* the Apollonian male, more rational and conditioned by culture and history – has survived in people's mentality from Antiquity to the present day. In turn, the identification of sexuality (not only female) with sin, which was the essence of the Christian antithesis of spirituality and carnality, further

176 On the symbolism of these metals in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance see C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Cambridge 1994, 105 ff.

177 U. Nicola, *Filozofia*, Warszawa 2006, 220.

178 *Ibid.*, 106.

strengthened this opposition, creating one of the basic categories of medieval culture, based on St Augustine's concept of the male body as a reflection of the image of God and reason, with the female body as an obstacle to reason, and the resulting conclusion that a woman should be subordinated to a man, entered the philosophical canon that endured beyond the medieval period.¹⁷⁹

The misogynistic thought outlined here, even if it was a dominant attitude and a cultural norm in patriarchal societies, was only one of two aspects of male-female relations in the culture of the time. The second pole was a kind of pro-feminism, a proclamation of values commonly regarded as feminine, visible, for example, through the development since the twelfth century of the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but also the culture of courtly love, which can be interpreted as a counterweight to the first attitude.¹⁸⁰ Of course, the basic question as to which of the poles dominated in a given period of history can be formulated differently, namely: Which of the aspects had a greater impact on whether women or men actually governed?

Nowadays, historians, increasingly accustomed to perceiving gender as a cultural construct,¹⁸¹ stress the convergence at the beginning of modern ages of two phobias: anti-Semitism and witch-hunting, as manifestations of feelings that were the result of helplessness before the untamed forces of nature in the society of the pre-industrial era, dominated by a sense of constant fear. In this context, the Jew and the woman were often assigned the role of scapegoat, which allowed accumulated social frustrations to be released. A woman – like a Jew, who was the foreigner *par excellence* – could be seen as representing not only the 'other' but even the 'foreign' sex. According to Jean Delumeau, it was at the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy and the Black Death in Western Europe that the fear of women and of Jews as emissaries of the devil grew among part of the social elite. This demonizing anti-feminism was fully articulated and publicized in the age of widespread print circulation and reinforced by ecclesiastical teachings in the age of denominational divisions.¹⁸² On the Catholic side, the provisions of the Council of Trent played an important role in the increase of written texts

179 Cf. extensive treatment of this topic in: J. Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident. XIV^e-XVIII^e siècles*, Paris 1978, here esp. Chapter X 'Les Agents de Satan: III – La Femme', 398–420; A broad overview of the different attitudes and symptoms of misogyny in different eras is provided in D.D. Gilmore, *Misogyny: The Male Malady*, Philadelphia 2001.

180 J. Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident...*, 421 ff.

181 Cf. Michel Foucault's famous *History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley, New York 1990, esp. 15–35.

182 J. Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident...*, 398 ff.

hostile to women, texts recalling the traditional principle that women should sit at home and public affairs should be the domain of men exclusively. Still, the same council had an impact on the strengthening of the cult of the Virgin Mary and thus on the popularization of the *mulier fortis* model associated with it. By the same token, in the Protestant world, despite its unfavourable attitude to celibacy, it was the norm in the social realm to emphasize the superiority of the man over the woman, and to criticize the right of a woman to choose her spouse; the belief that the female body was inferior to the male body, and that only marriage would stabilize the changing and unstable female personality, was also common. The virtues extolled as womanly were modesty, gentleness, compassion, kindness, piety and, above all, obedience to the will of the man.¹⁸³

The antithesis presented earlier, related to the idea of women's rule as tyrannical by nature, between feminine tyranny and masculine politics, fit within a traditional ancient and medieval opposition that dominated the mentality and culture of the sixteenth century (cf. Table 8).

The association of the feminine element with evil must also have influenced the inevitable association of woman with tyranny just as the feature of 'effeminacy' was associated with classical tyrannical vices¹⁸⁴ – besides untamed sensuality, indulgence in pleasures and vanity, there were anger, fury, and cruelty. Meanwhile, medical science in the sixteenth century eagerly repeated in printed editions of ancient works ideas about the handicap, fragility, and melancholy (in the negative sense of the word, as a pathology) of women, using the Aristotelian paradigm of the superiority of what is naturally male (warm, dry) over what is female (cold, wet). Among many examples of such publications, it is worth mentioning here the repeatedly reissued (as many as twelve editions over a period of

183 P. Crawford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500–1750,' in: *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science. The History of Attitudes to Sexuality*, ed. R. Porter, M. Teich, Cambridge 1994, 84–106, esp. 84–91; R. Martensen, 'The Transformation of Eve. Women's Bodies, Medicine and Culture in Early Modern England,' in: *Ibid.*, 107–133, here 121.

184 Hence, for example, the anonymous author of *Mercurius Sarmaticus* described the advisors to the tyrannical ruler Elizabeth I as 'effeminate.' A similar use of the word can be found in Francis Bacon's obituary for Elizabeth I, where he praises her for, among other things, 'peaceable dispositions [...] becoming of her sex,' stating that: 'For had her empire fallen among Palmyrenians, or in soft unwarlike Asia, it had been a less wonder, since a female throne would have suited an effeminate people [emphasis mine. – I.K.]; but in England, a hardly military nation, for all things to be directed and governed by a woman, is the matter of highest admiration'; see F. Bacon, 'Elizabeth,' 482–483.

Table 8: Antithetical Male and Female Characteristics in Sixteenth-century Culture^a

Male	Female
Natural features:	Natural features:
Dry	Wet
Warm	Cold
Moral qualities:	Moral qualities:
Honourable	Dishonourable
Legal	Lawlessness
Good	Evil
God	The Devil

^aA. McLaren, 'Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism...', 742.

thirty years) treatise of the court counsellor and physician to Henry III, Laurent Jaubert, *Erreurs populaires* (1578), dedicated to the king's sister and later wife of the future Henry IV, Margot de Valois, a savant and *femme fatale*. Referring to the authority of Aristotle, Jaubert stated: 'a woman is a man, mutilated and incomplete.'¹⁸⁵

The belief in the physiological similarity of women to men, but as less perfect and less 'warm,' was particularly strong in the Platonic tradition. Female reproductive organs were perceived as similar to male genitals, but turned inwards, as can be seen in the figures in Vesalius' *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543). In turn, Aristotelianism and late medieval neo-Aristotelianism emphasized the differences in the 'seed' of both sexes: the male seed was supposed to be more active and thus play a more important role in fertilization.¹⁸⁶ This so-called *one-sex model of gender identity*¹⁸⁷ – the image of humanity as masculine, and of woman as a mutilated, incomplete man – was to survive for centuries to come, and its echoes still resound in the Freudian concept of female 'penis envy.'

A variant of this way of thinking was the accentuation of the duality – the divine element (top of the body) and the animal element (bottom of the body) – in the chimeric female creature. A brilliant example is again provided here by the Crown witness, the eminent author and co-creator of the era, William

185 J. Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident...*, 436 ff.

186 Cf. R. Martensen, 'The Transformation of Eve. Women's Bodies, Medicine and Culture in Early Modern England,' 109 ff.; P. Crowford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500–1750,' 85 ff., 91.

187 A. McLaren, 'Gender, Religion, and Early Modern Nationalism...', 742.

Shakespeare, in a passage in *King Lear* (Act IV, Scene 6). This tragedy was written at the very beginning of the seventeenth century, probably first performed for the general public in 'The Globe,' and later in 1606 at the court of James I in Whitehall Palace. It tells the story of whether, how and when the downfall, misery, suffering, and madness of the ruler allow him to discover his own humanity, but do not allow him to escape from the tyranny of other rulers:

Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit
 To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,
 When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,
 And frustrate his proud will.¹⁸⁸

As in *Macbeth*, the destructive force leading to the downfall of the monarch and father in one person is womanhood in the form of the unbridled greed for power of Goneril and Regan, Lear's two tyrannical daughters. They can be boldly described as spiritual daughters of Lady Macbeth. It is they (especially the treacherous Goneril) who are compared by the wandering, homeless and wretched Lear to a 'grateful lady' or 'polecat' (*fitchew*), meaning prostitute in common English at the time. His speech, full of sexual symbols and references and laced with the bitterness of misogynistic fantasies, expresses male helplessness ('I need soldiers') in the face of female lusts, emotions and 'rebellious appetite.' Rebellious, and therefore undermining the order of Nature at the moment when female desires make a power grab:

To't, luxury, pell-mell! for I lack soldiers.
 Behold yond simpering dame,
 Whose face between her forks presageth snow;
 That minces virtue, and does shake the head
 To hear of pleasure's name;
 The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't
 With a more riotous appetite.¹⁸⁹

Hence the comparison of woman to a half-human, half-beast creature:

Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
 Though women all above:
 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
 Beneath is all the fiends':

188 W. Shakespeare, 'King Lear,' in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W.J. Graig, London 1916, Act IV, Scene 6, 1080–1081.

189 *King Lear*, Act IV, Scene 6, 1081.

There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphorous pit,
 Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!¹⁹⁰

As David D. Gilmore commented in a psychoanalytical reading: "The line "beneath is all the fiends" is associated with the belief that women's genital orifice was the portal of the fiend himself, the devil."¹⁹¹ By no accident is this chimerical feminine-animal figure associated with a centaur (in ancient images, female centaurs also appeared), a symbol of that which is devoid of reason: passion, animal lust, brutal force, and cunning, as well as tyranny. In Shakespeare's view – judging from his creations, the tyrannical figure of Lady Macbeth and her spiritual daughters Goneril and Regan – the animal side of femininity, if combined with the 'appetite' for power, becomes a force leading towards the path of tyranny. This force destroys the masculine element, although at the same time, it reveals that which is human in men at the moment of their downfall. At the same time, however, at least for a partial counterbalance, that same seemingly misogynist Shakespeare sometimes created figures of women full of goodness and courage such as Cordelia, Lear's one decent daughter, the complete opposite of her sisters, who are cold, devoid of affection for their father, greedy, power-hungry, and tyrannical.

Other English playwrights of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, namely Jonson, Chapman and, above all, Webster, expressed their opinions about women in a similarly misogynistic, although less brilliantly poetical, fashion. John Webster (*The White Devil*, 1609 and *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1612) compared woman to leprosy and gangrene.¹⁹² In his Neoplatonic poetry, George Chapman, on the one hand, exalted Elizabeth I as Cynthia, while on the other hand, he seemed to suggest, in a veiled manner, her relationship with Hecate¹⁹³ – the goddess of sorceresses and witches. Similar ambiguities occur with the figure of Titania, queen of the magical realm of fairies in Shakespeare's comedic *Midsummer Night's Dream*, suffused with Neoplatonic metaphors.¹⁹⁴

190 Ibid.

191 D.D. Gilmore, *Misogyny: The Male Malady*, 37.

192 Ibid., 117.

193 P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power...*, 143.

194 In 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream,' there is a much more direct reference to Elizabeth I as 'a fair vestal throned by the west,' whom Cupid did not manage to seduce with an arrow of love: 'And the imperial votaress passed on/ In maiden meditation, fancy-free'; see W. Shakespeare, 'A Midsummer's Night Dream,' *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W.J. Craig, London 1916, Act II, Scene 1, 201. In turn, M.L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, 191, points out that the figure of Hippolyte, Queen of the Amazons, may also be the embodiment of Elizabeth in this play, but she is finally

The fairy Puck, who first appears in this play, acts as a substitute for the magical agency of Cupid, with which he experiments on Titania. Embodying confusion and sexual desire, this figure can be interpreted as a symbol of the chaotic nature of the queen's rule – over both herself and her kingdom.¹⁹⁵

The diabolical-woman paradigm, widespread in the culture of the witch-hunting era, was complemented by tyrannical-woman paradigm, which played a key role in the political anti-feminism of the time and in the debate over the issue of rule by women. This discussion involved not only the British Isles, but was also taking place on the continent, in relation to political issues there. Thus polemicists from the camp of sixteenth-century French lawyers opposed to women's rule would often repeat the arguments for the inferiority of feminine nature – the volatility, instability, and animalistic essence of women.¹⁹⁶ Here again we encounter a set of characteristics traditionally associated with tyranny. One may receive the impression that imparting the stigma of tyranny, alongside the stigma of magic, was the favourite compensatory measure of early-modern patriarchal society, one that simultaneously bears witness to the plight of all women.

According to most historians, the legal situation of women at the beginning of the early modern era deteriorated despite some scattered instances of improvements.¹⁹⁷ The current historiography is dominated by the image of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the time in which absolutism and paternalism developed and the authority of both monarch and father grew,¹⁹⁸ with mothers in a subordinate position and children marginalized.¹⁹⁹ The commonness of attitudes hostile to women seems to be confirmed by the popular literature of the time. To what extent, however, does the current emphasis on these tendencies result from the growing acceptance of the feminist paradigm in culture and social history research since the late twentieth century?

In early modern culture, the opposite, pro-feminist pole appears to have been an elite and marginal phenomenon.²⁰⁰ Nevertheless, it should be remembered

married to a male ruler, Theseus. According to M.L. King, in 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream' Shakespeare seems to express a belief in the abnormality of women's rule.

195 P. Berry, *Of Chastity of Power...*, 143.

196 J. Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident...*, 436 ff.

197 *Ibid.*, 313 ff.

198 This is the main thesis of a collective work *Histoire des pères et de la paternité*, eds. J. Delumeau, D. Roche, Paris 1990.

199 É. Badinter, *Mother Love: Myth and Reality. Motherhood in Modern History*, New York 1981.

200 J. Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident...*, 443 ff.

that it was Renaissance humanism, represented by such people as Juan Luis Vives (Mary Tudor's tutor) and Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, that emphasized the need of education of women, although still limited in comparison with that of men.²⁰¹ Thomas Elyot, in a work revealingly titled *The Defense of Good Woomen* (1540), demanded that a more universal education program should include women involved in public life. In fact, the education of female members of the ruling houses was incomparably more comprehensive than that of other women. A certain line of argumentation defending women's rule (though it is unclear to what extent it expresses the authors' sincere intentions) can be found in the posthumous praises of Elizabeth I written by the historian John Hayward, whom she had had thrown in prison a few years earlier, as well as by Sir Francis Bacon himself, who elsewhere expresses belief in the superiority of the male nature over the female. The idea was to emphasize the traits traditionally attributed to the 'good' side of femininity which patriarchal society would like to see as the dominant features of feminine nature: apart from physical beauty, these included mercy²⁰² and compliance, conducive to maintaining external peace and prosperity for Her Majesty's subjects in the long term. Reference was also made to the particularity of Elizabeth's methods of governance, their dissimilarity to those of the infamous (among Protestants) Catherine de' Medici.²⁰³

In addition to the mass of texts hostile to women written in the sixteenth century, there were also profeminist treatises written by men, proclaiming the praises of outstanding women and feminine values and even advancing notions of equality between the sexes. A special place here belongs to *On the Nobility*

201 On the education of women in the Renaissance and the era of humanism cf. M.L. King, *Frauen in der Renaissance*, 197 ff.

202 Cf. John Hayward's laudatory description of Elizabeth, in which among the virtues he ascribes to his queen are many conventionally to male monarchs, including qualities of the intellect: 'In life, shee was most innocent; in desires, moderate; in purpose, just; of spirit, above credit and almost capacity of her sex; of divine witt, as well for depth of judgment [...] of wonderful knowledge both in learning and affayres; skilfull not only in the Latine and Greeke, but alsoe in divers other forraine languages: none knew better the hardest art of all others, that is, of commanding men.' J. Hayward, *Annals of the First Four Years of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, London 1840, 7 ff.

203 F. Bacon, 'Elisabeth' in: *The Moral and Historical Works of Lord Bacon*, ed. J. Dewey, London 1874, 183 ff., Bacon claims that Elizabeth, despite the fact that she was a woman, ruled without any support, stressing that she used a very different method of governing than the French Queen-Mother Catherine de' Medici. From both of these queens, however, their subjects expected no less experience and proficiency in the art of governing than 'from the greatest kings'; *Ibid.*, 492.

and Preeminence of the Female Sex (*De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminae sexus*, 1529) by the German humanist Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa. Based on theological and biological arguments, he tried to demonstrate the superiority of women over men. He cited a whole range of biblical and mythical figures of women rulers, pointing to ancient examples of their office and concluding with a compassionate tone: 'the tyranny of Men [emphasis mine – I.K.] usurpt the dispose of all business, and unjust laws, foolish customes, and an ill mode of education, retrencht their liberties [...] not out of any natural or divine reason, or necessity, but only by the prevalancy of custome, education, chance, or some tyrannical occasion.'²⁰⁴ Similarly, in the vision developed by More in *Utopia*, women no longer appear as mothers and housewives, but as citizens and participants in public life. It is, however, hard to resist the impression that these views carry something of the atmosphere of a 'topsy-turvy world' – the favourite literary treatment of Renaissance humanists.

We must not forget literature written by women themselves, stimulated by the expansion of the new medium – print – which became more marked in the latter half of the sixteenth century. It must be noted that the new medium not only influenced the perception of reality but also, in a sense, changed that reality. The humanist debate on the position and character of women, the so-called *querelle de femmes*, was particularly important here. In their writings, participants in that debate raised various issues of public life, including the problem of tyranny.²⁰⁵ It seems to me that the debate on the issue of women's governance in the latter half of the sixteenth century, which is analysed in this chapter, played a particular role in both pro- and anti-feminist discourse of the time. It is true that Knox's *The First Blast* was not the first utterance in the anti-feminist and profeminist discourse in England, but it caused a real storm – a series of 'pro' and 'anti' pamphlets, which in England stretched all the way to the Jacobean era. What is more, during the Elizabethan period, polemics concerning the power of women, specifically the opposition in English propaganda of the 'good' and 'bad'

204 H.C. Agrippa [von Nettesheim], *Female Pre-eminence, or, The Dignity and Excellency of That Sex Above the Male: An Ingenious Discourse [...]*, London 1670, 76.

205 As examples, we could name here: G. Passi, *Donneschi diffetti. Nuovamente riformati, e posti in luce [...]*; *Con tre tavole, la prima delle cose contenute nell'opera, la seconda delle cose notabili, la terza degli'autori*, Venetia 1601 (Herzog August Bibliothek, item no. M: Lk 636), esp. Chapter XXXII, 'Delle donne tirane,' and L. Marinella, *La Nobilta et l'ecellenza delle donne co' diffetti et mancamenti de gli huomini*, Venetia 1601 (Herzog August Bibliothek, item no. A: 33.7 Phys), esp. the section titled 'De gli uomini Tiranni, & usurpatori de gli Stati.'

Queen, as well as various forms of the cult of Elizabeth, including Elizabetholatry and the masculinization of the Queen, were reflections of a phenomenon that existed outside political and cultural elites. The pro-feminist argumentation in the debate on women's rule in the latter half of the sixteenth century and the pro-feminist stylization of Elizabeth as Virgin-Queen-and-King in one person in the political and ceremonial culture of the period were inevitably transmitted to the broader public. This was a consequence of the simple fact that there were 'two queens on one island' – long and effective female governance in England and its failure in Scotland.

Pro-feminist voices in the debate on women's governance of the latter half of the sixteenth century (although sometimes coloured with misogyny) seem to be at least a partial counterbalance to prevailing early modern anti-feminism. It is important to see the presence of gender bipolarity in both Renaissance culture and other eras. The anti-feminist and pro-feminist elements of culture are a reflection of the sexual duality of nature and history. At the same time, they reflect the male and female conflict as a 'unity of opposites' – an inseparable opposition and complementarity.

Afterword: Relativization of Tyranny in the Political Culture of the Sixteenth Century

Freedom, Tyranny and the ‘Triple Fear Syndrome’

Discovered, disseminated and re-interpreted texts from Antiquity, especially those derived from the tradition of political Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism, were elevated to the status of canonical texts that shaped the philosophy and culture of the Renaissance. The canon of exemplars was also extended to include some re-interpreted themes borrowed from Antiquity. In terms of tyranny, particularly the exemplar of the Caesar’s murder by Brutus was vital, shaping the early Renaissance debate on the admissibility of tyrannicide. In turn, the canon of ancient exemplars fed into the canon of new political ideas.

One of the fundamental premises of the political thought in the early modern period was Aristotle’s typology of political systems and their degeneration, as well as the resulting binary opposition between kingship and tyranny. From the perspective of the history of philosophical and political theories, an important shift in the understanding of this binary opposition occurred alongside the rediscovery of Platonic tradition in the period of Renaissance.¹ Particularly important here was a radical concept of freedom, born towards the end of the fifteenth century, within the circle of Florentine intellectuals influenced by Plato’s ideas. The concept shifted freedom from the objective sanction of natural laws to the subjective sanction of human will. The Neoplatonic formula of fifteenth-century humanism devoted much space to the apology of freedom, and revealed its new meaning: ‘It no longer had a norm in an objective [i.e. ‘naturalistic,’ following Aristotle – I.K.] order of laws, but the will derived its energy from its subjectivity, which prevails over reason and creates new laws irrespective of the unworthy Nature.’² Thus, in Neoplatonic reasoning, freedom ceased to be – as Janusz Ekes

1 An extensive discussion of the evolution of key concepts of nature, power and freedom in the political philosophy of the Renaissance was included in the study by J. Ekes, *Natura–wolność–władza. Studium z dziejów myśli politycznej renesansu*, Warszawa 2001, esp. Chapter 2: *Władza wolności* [*The Power of Freedom*]. My subsequent comments on the Renaissance discourse about freedom and tyranny are mainly based on the above publication.

2 *Ibid.*, 40.

put it – a ‘natural fact,’ defined mainly by natural laws (in line with the tradition of political Aristotelianism). Instead, it was transformed into a ‘cultural’ fact, i.e. defined also by human positivist laws. Such a radical notion of freedom could lead to a humanist extremism that shines through Poggio Bracciolini’s radical claim of 1450 A.D., in which he stated that only commoners and the mobs have been constrained by the laws and that serious, prudent and modest people needed no laws, since they have established the norms by themselves. The strong reject and violate the laws created for those who are weak, and who lack courage and wealth. For Bracciolini, it was no coincidence that all great and memorable works were born out of injustice and violence, in short, out of violation of laws.³

Certainly, the tone of such statement could have been dictated by the trauma that plagued late medieval and Renaissance Italy – endless wars, internal strife, plots and political assassinations, which were intensified at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by the invasions and rivalries on the Apennine Peninsula by two European powers: the Habsburgs and France. Nevertheless, Bracciolini’s words reflect the intellectual climate in which Niccolò Machiavelli created the figure of a ‘new prince’ in pursuit of ‘memorable works’ and not shying away from using ‘injustice and violence.’ Machiavelli appears here as the heir to this radical concept of the law and freedom.

However, in philosophy and political writing at the turn of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, the Aristotelian tradition also began to regain its vitality, introducing its naturalistic understanding of freedom and law as well as praise for the ‘mixed’ system of government. Many Renaissance authors admired the political model of the Roman Republic for its ‘mixed’ constitution, civil liberties and critique of royal rule, perceived, in line with the Roman tradition, as tyrannical. However, this idealized vision of republican Rome was inevitably at odds with the medieval monarchical tradition, in which king’s rule was seen as the best political system and constituted the main opposite of tyranny. Thus, alongside the humanist, Plato-inspired, radical concept of freedom as a value resulting from human will, there was the Aristotelian (and Thomistic) concept, which treated freedom as ‘natural,’ i.e. mainly belonging to the realm of Nature. At times, the humanist vision of human freedom, with its roots in Plato’s philosophical views, was reconciled with parts of Aristotle’s legacy.⁴

3 Ibid., 41 ff. Cf. Remarks on Bracciolini’s and Machiavelli’s views in: S. Świeżawski, *U źródeł nowożytnej etyki. Filozofia moralna w Europie XV wieku*, Kraków 1987, 137.

4 J. Ekes, *Natura–wolność–władza*, 63 ff.

The Renaissance concept of citizenship was especially important for the notion of political freedom in that period, understood as a value secured against the abuses of tyranny by a good legal system, and enjoyed by all citizens as a whole. It drew upon both Aristotle’s definition and the traditions of Roman law. Notably, in the sixteenth century conceptualizations inspired by Aristotelianism and Stoicism, the basic premise was not the contradiction, but harmony between values perceived as ‘natural’: freedom and authority in opposition to tyranny and anarchy.⁵ The anarchy was seen as the absence of authority, posing a key danger to the functioning of a society – in fact, more dangerous than tyranny, which at least was a kind of (degenerated) authority.

Despite the importance of this philosophical discourse, in which the opposition between freedom and tyranny played a major role, the opposition between kingship-tyranny remained dominant not only in philosophy but also in the political mentality of the Renaissance. Niccolò Machiavelli’s relativization of tyranny – an intellectual manoeuvre that was part of emerging Italian Renaissance thinking in terms of political realism and rejection of traditional ethical norms in politics (Vettori, Guicciardini) – did not undermine, in a broader sense, the conviction that the binary opposition of kingship-tyranny remained valid. This was due, among other things, to the systematic anti-Machiavelism (Gentillet) that emerged during the period of religious wars raging in the second half of the sixteenth century. Within the political views of that period, the classical opposition between kingship and tyranny became especially relevant in Europe during the emergence of the Protestant doctrine of active resistance, first in Lutheran circles in the Holy Roman Empire, and then among Calvinists in France and British Isles. The concepts of resistance developed by the British and French Monarchomachs may be even interpreted as a harbinger of ‘revolutionary ideology.’

Single aspects of Machiavellian ‘transmoralism’ were only adopted by the relativist ‘anti-Machiavellian’ trend or the ‘moralized’ Machiavellism (Lipsius). They also found resonance in the concept of ‘*raison d’état*’ (Botero), developed at the end of the sixteenth century, which became fashionable especially in the pro-absolutist political thought of the next century. However, relativization of tyranny occurred not only on the level of sophisticated political philosophy but also in sixteenth-century propaganda literature. Examples include caricatural representations of authority in the emerging pasquinade literature in Italy at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, or successive versions

5 J. Ekes, *Natura-wolność-władza*, 66.

of *Callimachus' Advice* in early sixteenth-century Poland, and various propaganda writings promoting the Muscovite candidacy to the Polish throne during the first interregnum (1572–1574) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. However, it would be incorrect to conclude that supporters of absolutistic rule were more prone to adopt a relativistic approach to tyranny than advocates of limited monarchy or ‘mixed’ government. Neither Machiavelli, fascinated by the system of republican Rome and an actual supporter of republican forms of government in Florence, nor pro-Muscovite commentators in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, were proponents of absolute power.

What is more, both in the writings of those in favour of the radical binary opposition between kingship and tyranny, and those representing a more relativistic approach, we encounter reflections, usually made as an aside, which relativize the problem of tyranny. Out of these reflections arises a particular ‘triple-fear syndrome’ – *horror anarchiae*, *horror mutationis* and *horror* (or rather, *contemptus*) *plebei* – characteristic of the mentality that prevailed in the political life of pre-revolutionary and pre-industrial Europe. Both the supporters of a more traditional way of thinking in terms of clear-cut categories and those representing a more relativistic approach were attached to the maxim: ‘Better a hundred years of tyranny than a single day of sedition’ (Le Jay). This *horror anarchiae* stemmed not only from negative experiences caused by constant religious wars of the sixteenth century but also from the conservative attitude typical of the era before the Great French Revolution: ‘Nothing harries a state except innovation; change alone gives form to injustice and tyranny (Montaigne). It can be described as *horror mutationis* or the fear of transformation resulting from the prevalent role of tradition perceived as a supreme value in the pre-revolutionary and pre-industrial political mentality, according to the principle: the more ‘ancient’ the laws and institutions, the more perfect. Both fears were closely linked to the *contemptus plebei* – contempt for mobs and their rule, inherited from Greek Antiquity, seen as ‘multi-headed’ tyranny: the ‘mob rule,’ or ochlocracy.

It seems that the ‘triple-fear syndrome’ had a significant impact on the way in which, through Reformation, people started to conceptualize ‘freedom.’ In addition to the humanist and Renaissance discourse on freedom as an opposition to tyranny, presented above, which occurred on the philosophical level, according to popular understanding freedom was still identified above all with estate-based rights and privileges guaranteeing personal security, property and religious freedom contrasted with lawlessness, anarchy and chaos. Such a traditional, estate-based understanding of freedom was particularly relevant in the sixteenth-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nevertheless, with

the development of the Reformation in Europe, the theological perspective contrasting the purely 'external' freedom of the individual living in a political community, with the internal and 'spiritual' freedom of a Christian (Luther), began to play more important role. This opposition, especially in the first phase of the Reformation, hampered more radical concepts of resistance against political abuse, legitimizing only passive resistance deemed consistent with the ethos of martyrdom of the early Christians. Certainly, the preference for spiritual and internal freedom over the 'external,' in connection with the 'triple-fear syndrome' (*horror anarchiae*, *horror mutationis* and *contemptus plebei*) – gave rise to the reluctance with which the 'Fathers of the Reformation' originally approached the concept of active resistance and to their criticisms of Protestant radicals trying to forcefully establish Scripture-based dominion on earth.

The 'triple-fear syndrome' later became, however, an important premise for the theorists of the right to active resistance, both among some Lutherans in German countries, and the Huguenot Monarchomachs in France. Hence their ideas that would legalize rebellion against tyrannical rule through its 'institutionalization' – granting the right to initiate resistance only to 'lower authorities.' The more radical idea of a broader social resistance, motivated mainly by confessional considerations, was mainly found among some British Monarchomachs (Knox, Ponet, Goodman), while the more secular concept of resistance by broad social groups was still very exceptional (Buchanan).

The Sixteenth-Century 'Media Revolution,' the Image of Power and the Circulation of Social Energy

When we observe the changes in the political culture code of the turn of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, we may conclude that the development of the canon of instruments played a major role in the sixteenth century perceptions of the world of power in general, and so the perception of tyranny itself. Of key importance here was the wider dissemination of printing. The progress achieved in printing techniques and the growing importance of printed books in the sixteenth century may have constituted 'the main revolutionary factor in the domain of contemporary culture'⁶ of humanism and the Renaissance, even though the audiences of written word in Europe were still limited to on average 10 percent of the society at that time. The mass printing of books in the sixteenth century, along with printed ephemerals, pamphlets, and printing press

6 A. Wyczański, *Polska w Europie XVI stulecia*, Poznań 1999, 176.

prototypes, immensely contributed to the intensification of the circulation of information and social communication, including the ‘interpersonal exchange of meanings and symbols,’⁷ regardless of the fact that handwritten texts still played a vital role. The ‘early-modern period media revolution’ was a result of the expanding distribution of printed texts (Michael Giesecke) over the century of Reformation and confessional divisions in Europe, effecting the shift from ‘mono-medium’ culture, i.e. one based on handwritten texts (besides the basic, oral communication) to the more ‘multi-media’ culture (based on printed, handwritten and oral media).⁸

This process enabled not only intensification of social communication but also an unprecedented dissemination of the elite culture of writing, and, consequently, development and diversification of literary genres, and enriching their content. The new technique of communication must, therefore, have had an impact on the emergence of new genres and literary forms, as well as new content conveyed as broadly defined fiction writing. The emergence of a secular theatre, which was a multi-media means of communication involving simultaneous visual and oral messages, based on handwritten or printed text, and especially the public theatre as a bridge between ‘high’ and ‘low’ (folk) culture, played here a pivotal role.

Notably, the image of rulers presented in literature became more and more ‘anthropomorphized,’ often departing from the schematic black-and-white moralizing image of authority represented in traditional *specula principis*. Hence, as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, along with the birth of the historical novel (Morus, Machiavelli), there was also a ‘de-theologized,’ completely secular, literary image of a ruler, a man plagued by various passions and weaknesses. The image attained its full psychological depth especially in plays written for the Elizabethan public theatre, an art combining elements of high and low culture. As the image of monarchical power became more ‘psychologized,’ there appeared an increased interest in the problem of tyranny. The latter could then already be seen not only as a violation of the laws of a political community, but – more metaphorically – as violations of various norms of life, including the spiritual life of a human individual. In this cultural context, the issue of tyranny – political evil,

7 J. Pirożyński, *Z dziejów obiegu informacji w Europie XVI w. Nowiny z Polski w kolekcji Jana Jakuba Wicka w Zurychu z lat 1560–1587*, 44.

8 M. Giesecke, *Der Buchdruck in der frühen Neuzeit. Eine historische Fallstudie über die Durchsetzung neuer Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien*, Frankfurt/M. 1991, 65.

murder and cruelty, in short: extreme states of human behaviour and psyche – provided attractive and fashionable literary material for talented or prominent authors (from More and Machiavelli to Shakespeare). It seems that it was precisely in the literature of that era – and especially in the elusive tendency of so-called literary anti-Machiavellism which highlighted contradictions in human psyche and behaviour – that the opposition between a king and a tyrant became more and more akin to the 'unity of opposites,' i.e. a vision of humans and their 'double' nature that was fashionable in the Renaissance culture imbued with neo-Platonic philosophy.

Playwriting and the emergence of public theatre in Elizabethan England played a special role in the process of anthropomorphizing the image of authority in the Renaissance culture. Theatrical play, more than other literary genres that addressed individual readers, was meant not for an individual spectator, but to an entire audience, a public coming from different social strata, and milieus. Thus, the narrative patterns and literary conventions used by playwrights had to satisfy a variety of tastes. In their works the playwrights touched upon various collective representations, conventions, and stereotypes that were attractive to audiences located at different places both within the space of the theatre and on the social ladder. Of course, the legibility of the conventional representations included in the performances depended on the level of education and access to the written word culture, which was limited to the society's elites. That is why the intentions of the authors and people linked to theatre in general mostly focused on influencing the emotional imagination of the audience by means of an 'social energy'⁹ produced by words and scenes: evoking outbursts of crying, laughter, indignation, erotic excitement and a thousand other feelings – in a word, the empathetic reflexes towards the play protagonists, with whom the audience could identify, being transferred in their imagination, to the stage themselves. Thus, the images of stage heroes and scoundrels became increasingly more human, familiar, and attractive to the audience.

Surely the metaphor of the *theatrum mundi*, well grounded in Renaissance culture, was helpful in facilitating such 'crossing' of the symbolic boundary between the audience and the stage. It was repeated in various forms and related to various issues, both on the theatrical stage where it was performed by actors, and on the political scene by those in power: the kings were in fact merely actors on the

9 The key inspiration for this interpretation was the daring book by S. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Berkeley 1988, 5.

stage of life. But it was not merely actors who dressed as kings and exposed their rulers' souls. Through the actors' performance, this opportunity was also open for the spectators, who emphatically joined in the scenes. Thus, the audience also partook in this theatrical 'mistaken-identity' – the mutual exchange of robes and souls between historical and fictional tyrannical kings and the actors. The cultural 'energy' of words, scenes and feelings, produced in public theatres and so far reserved for the rulers and higher social strata, flowed in the direction of the rulers' subjects through the imagination of authors and actors, transformed into what after Stephen Greenblatt we can dub 'social energy,' manifested and shaped within aesthetic literary forms.¹⁰ It was an indispensable social-manipulation element, maintaining the balance within a society and its culture: by addressing the abuse and distortions of power, it gave impetus not so much to rebellion and resistance, but to empathy with those in power, maintaining the prevailing political and moral order. Of course, among the vital tools of circulation of 'social energy,' there were not only plays and theatre but also fiction, which targeted mainly the individual reader (therefore a narrower, literate public), including many different genres of Renaissance writing, presenting an increasingly anthropomorphized image of those in power.

Two other cultural phenomena contributed to a more anthropological insight into the problem of tyranny in the late Renaissance. There was a transition from the more traditional identification of the ruler's mental illness with tyranny (the biblical *topos* of Nebuchadnezzar and Saul) to a new outlook on the ruler's madness from the perspective of the neo-Platonic concept of melancholy as a state of genius and a 'fashionable' aberration of the spirit. This evolution was accompanied by a modified approach to the ruler's mental illness and a shift from forced isolation of the ruler, still practiced at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to more humane treatment and therapy in line with the rules developed

10 Stephen Greenblatt, who coined the term 'social energy,' defined it as follows: 'the capacity of certain verbal, aural, and visual traces to produce, shape, and organize collective physical and mental experiences. Hence it is associated with repeatable forms of pleasure and interest, with the capacity to arouse disquiet, pain, fear, the beating of the heart, pity, laughter, tension, relief, wonder. In its aesthetic modes, social energy must have a minimal predictability – enough to make simple repetitions possible – and minimal range: enough to reach out beyond a single creator or consumer to some community, however constricted. Occasionally [...] the predictability and range will be greater: large numbers of men and women of different social classes and different beliefs will be induced to explode with laughter or weep or experience a complex blend of anxiety and exaltation'; *ibid.*, 6 f., see also 40–65.

in the sixteenth century by the competing medical traditions inspired by Galen and Paracelsus.

Another phenomenon contributing to a more anthropological perception and presentation of the world of power was the debate on the admissibility of women's rule, publicized in the second half of the sixteenth century by contemporary literature, theatre, and social commentaries. It included two main lines of argument – on the one hand, the argument based on traditional misogyny, and therefore quite popular, treating the rule by a woman as a tyranny by nature, and on the other hand, a more apologetic argument, attempting to either create a propaganda cult of the ruling female monarch, or to create a more masculine or more androgenic image of her. Thus, in the sixteenth-century discourse on the female rulers, the traditional 'unity of opposites,' of masculine vs. feminine, coincided with an equally traditional opposition between kingship and tyranny.

Concluding Remarks on the History of the Term 'Tyranny'

I have strived to locate the concept of tyranny itself, as well as the 'unity of opposites' of tyranny and kingship within the sixteenth-century discourse about authority at different levels of its contemporary culture. Here, I wish to limit my considerations to briefly outlining the later history of the word 'tyranny,' especially in the philosophical and intellectual reflection narratives of the following centuries.

Over the seventeenth and eighteen centuries we can observe the gradual disappearance of the notion of 'tyranny' from both such narratives and, in some cases, even from social commentaries and political propaganda, where it became increasingly replaced by the term 'despotism.'¹¹ Even though over the next two centuries the word 'tyranny' retained its key vernacular role in the language and the political mentality of Europeans, it appears that apart from the breakthrough moments of political turmoil and confrontation, its capacity to convey emotional

11 See the synthesis in: H. Mandt, 'Tyranis, Despotie,' in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck, vol. 6, Klett-Cotta 1990, 670–675; her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht. Studien zur deutschen politischen Theorie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt-Neuwied 1974, 75–84; R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* 13, 1950, 287–301; M. Richter, 'Despotism,' in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. 2, New York 1973, 1–18, and especially 4–14.

meanings began to dwindle.¹² Words and concepts that are too often used, especially in situations of tension and conflict, are subject to emotional de-evaluation and relativization of their meaning through various pejorative associations with these very situations. This, in turn, may lead to the need to replace them with terms less popular and less ‘worn out.’

A reflection of this can be found in the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, perceived by its interpreters as the next step, after Machiavelli, towards relativization of tyranny in the political philosophy of the West. Rationalism and anti-Aristotelianism professed by the author of *Leviathan* (1651) led him to sceptical approach to the classical kingship-tyranny opposition and to claim that people are inclined to call tyranny any monarchical power with which they are disaffected.¹³ Hence his diagnosis of ‘tyrannophobia,’ a disease manifesting in the fear of a strong monarchy triggered by reading of writing by the ancient Greek and Roman authors and their apology of tyrannicide, or rather, of regicide. Hobbes’ proposal for therapy is quite radical: he recommends a ban on public reading of such works and an immediate correction of their content: ‘discreet Masters, as are fit to take away their Venime.’¹⁴ Instead, Hobbes proposed to shift attention to a different opposition, distinguishing, among three kinds of the political ‘Commonwealth by Institution’ (monarchy, aristocracy, democracies), on the one hand, and, on the other hand ‘despotical dominion,’ depending on the way in which they were created: by establishing political institutions through a voluntary consent and contract between the sovereign and the people (Commonwealth by Institution), or by gaining power by force, through conquest and war (despotical dominion). However, in both cases, the rule of the sovereign, Hobbes argued, is based, in fact, on the contractual consent of the people,

12 Just like during the English Civil War, and especially the debate on the legality of the sentencing of Charles I Stuart in 1649 and shortly after. The regicide supporters in England at that time were, on the one hand, influenced by the sixteenth century concepts of the right of resistance formulated by Theodor Beza and *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, and on the other hand, like Milton, by Cicero, claiming that a tyrant, just like a ‘wild beast,’ can be killed by anyone; M. Dzelzainis, *Anti-monarchism in English Republicanism*, in *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage, Vol. 1: Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. van Gelderen, Q. Skinner, Cambridge 2002, 27–41, esp. 36–38. See also B. Worden, *Republicanism, Regicide and Republic. The English Experience*, in *ibid.*, 307–327, esp. 311, 313, 317 and 322.

13 T. Hobbes, *Leviathan: Revised Student Edition* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), ed. R. Tuck, Cambridge 1997.

14 *Ibid.*, 226 ff.

resulting, either from their universal fear of one another, or from their fear of the conqueror.¹⁵

Here, the Hobbesian concept of despotic rule departed from the popular association between the terms despotic and tyrannical as well as with the traditional Aristotelian association of despotism with 'oriental' or 'barbaric' countries outside European cultural and geographic boundaries. He intended to convince readers of the need to introduce absolute rule of the sovereign within the formula of a political Commonwealth, and according to some readers, justify Oliver Cromwell's usurpatory rule. However, despite his enormous influence on the social contract theory, some of Hobbes' views on the absolute power of sovereign, who would be even entitled to transgress property rights of his subjects, could not survive in England, which following the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 evolved towards a parliamentary monarchy.¹⁶ In Great Britain, the term 'despotic' soon began to be associated with the despised system of monarchic-absolutist rule that had developed in some countries of the European continent.¹⁷

In France, in turn, the term *despotique* began to circulate during the Fronde in the pamphlets distributed by the political opponents of Mazarin's power as the chief minister of France, although in terms of frequency it was much more

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- 15 Ibid., 188 ff. See discussion in: H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 673 ff.; her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 75–78; R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' 288 ff.; for a broader discussion, in the context of Hobbes' writing and polemics with Locke's views see: M. Richter, 'Despotism,' 5 ff.; also for juxtaposition with Machiavelli's ideas, see: T. Schölderle, *Das Prinzip der Macht. Neuzeitliches Politik- und Staatsdenken bei Thomas Hobbes und Nicolo Machiavelli*, Berlin–Cambridge (Mass.) 2002.
- 16 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 79–82; R. Koebner, 'Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,' 292–301. Cf. W.R.E. Velema, '“That a Republic is Better than a Monarchy”: Anti-monarchism in Early Modern Dutch Political Thought,' in *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, vol. 1, 9–25, here 12–19; J. Scott, *Classical Republicanism in Seventeenth-century England and the Netherlands*, in *ibid.*, 61–81, here 67–71.
- 17 For example, see the critical remarks on absolute monarchy by the English translator (1731) of the Danish *Lex Regia* (1665) in: E. Ekkman, 'The Danish Royal Law,' *Journal of Modern History* 29, 1957, 104 ff. Discussion of diverse context of the term 'tyranny' and the opposition *absolute monarchies – free governments*, as well as the critique of the Danish absolutism in England following the 'Glorious Revolution,' S. Zurbuchen, 'Republicanism and Toleration,' in: *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage, Vol. 2: The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. M. van Gelderen, Q. Skinner, Cambridge 2002, 47–57.

infrequent than the term *tyranique*, still in common use in the seventeenth century. Only after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) at the time of assault on the Palatinate by Louis XVI (1688/1689) did the expression *puissance arbitraire et despotique* used in Huguenot texts against Le Roi Soleil, heretofore implying a system of government traditional for the countries of the Orient, begin to take root in France, while the term ‘tyrannical’ referred more to the concrete conduct of individual rulers. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, at the end of the reign of Louis XIV, a novel expression *despotisme* (noun) became fashionable and was frequently used by intellectuals promoting reforms and opposing his rule.¹⁸

The next stage of the discourse is marked by *The Spirit of Laws* by Montesquieu (1748). He decided not to use the ethically marked term ‘tyranny’ as the main systemic notion of his political theory. Instead, he redefined ‘despotism’ as a type of state in which legislature, judiciary and executive power rested in one hand, as was mainly the case in Asian countries.¹⁹ A despotic state therefore remained the opposite of both the limited monarchy that was characteristic of Europe and the separation of powers principle he delineated. Montesquieu’s concept became widespread in the later part of the eighteenth century, heralding the fight against absolutist monarchy and increasingly displacing ‘tyranny’ as a way to define the abuses of monarchical power.²⁰ Also, the political system of Great Britain which inspired Montesquieu was seen in some intellectual circles as a contradiction of ‘enlightened despotism’ or ‘enlightened absolutism,’ to use terms which were only to be introduced to science and language in the first half of the next century.²¹ Nevertheless, this type of monarchical power also had its great supporters among philosophers of the Enlightenment. Among the reform-oriented French physiocrats, it was seen as a positive manifestation of the so-called *despotisme legal*, contrasted with the Asian *despotisme arbitraire*.²² All in all, in the eighteenth

18 R. Koebner, ‘Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,’ 292–301; H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 85 ff.; her, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 674 f.; M. Richter, ‘Despotism,’ 7 f.

19 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, vol. 1, trans. T. Nugent, New York 1899, esp. pages 16–18, 26–27, 54–75, 264–270.

20 See the discussion of Montesquieu’s ideas in H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 87–91; her, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 675 ff.; R. Koebner, ‘Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,’ 275 ff.; M. Richter, ‘Despotism,’ 8 ff.

21 M. Richter, ‘Despotism,’ 12.

22 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 677 ff.; M. Richter, ‘Despot and Despotism. Vicissitudes of a Political Term,’ 12 ff. Also see a more general discussion of the critique of absolutism

century, the term 'despotism,' as a systemic concept, began to circulate widely and was adopted by the legal and political sciences, while 'tyranny' remained a common invective and a slogan pertaining to propaganda in the struggle against monarchical absolutism.²³

As a result of the emergence of a positive modern concept of the Revolution and the thorough re-evaluation of the monocratic system among radical thinkers sparked by the Great French Revolution, there appeared a tendency to treat monarchy in general as the equivalent of tyranny and despotism. A similar way of thinking (close to the realism or even political cynicism of Vettori at the beginning of the sixteenth century) – stating that since a tyrant is one who selfishly pursues only his own good, then from the beginning of the world there were no kings but only tyrants (Jean Jacques Rousseau), can be found in the period preceding the year 1789 as well as afterwards, especially during Jacobin rule.²⁴ Along with the increasingly confrontative attitudes and the desire for a complete reversal of the existing order, the rhetoric of the revolutionary radicals was accompanied by play-on-words bearing witness to the revolution in the language of propaganda. Hence, Robespierre described the Revolution and revolutionary terror in a positive sense as 'the despotism of freedom over tyranny.'²⁵

In turn, during the Restoration, the imperative of liberal supporters of constitutional monarchy to fight against the re-established *ancien régime* led to greater transparency in terms of both action and political phraseology. At the beginning of the 1820s, a new expression, the noun 'absolutism,' appeared in France. It was first used exclusively for propaganda purposes, as a slogan of the liberals in the struggle against conservative anti-parliamentary and anti-constitutional attitudes. Later, however, the term became extremely popular and soon was adopted as a systemic concept by historical science and political theory studies.²⁶ In the 1840s, it was subject to a scholarly typology (sixteenth-century religious absolutism, seventeenth-century classical absolutism, eighteenth-century

in France prior to the 1789 revolution in: J.K. Wright, 'The Idea of a Republican Constitution in Old Regime France,' in: *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, vol. 1, 289–306.

23 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 91; her, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 681–684.

24 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 677–680, 684; also, from the standpoint of Kant's philosophical ideas see the analysis in: her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 110–158. Also see M. Richter, 'Despotism,' 14–17.

25 Qtd. after M. Richter, 'Despotism,' 13 ff.

26 N. Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism. Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy*, London–New York 1992, 208 ff.

enlightened absolutism). However, the new noun still did not manage to completely replace, either in practice or in theory, the more traditional terms.

In general, we can say that since the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the words ‘tyranny’ and ‘despotism’ have often been used as synonyms, although the latter was predominantly used in theoretical considerations.²⁷ The meaning and semantic field of both words were most often determined by political views, i.e. they depended on the political camp and the professed ideology of the politicians and intellectuals who discussed them both in Europe and in the new born United States of America. Apart from the criticism of monocratic forms of despotism or tyranny, new visions of the multi-headed ‘tyranny of majority’ (the term attributed to various ‘Founding Fathers’ of the United States) appeared as well. The latter phenomenon was discussed by Alexis de Tocqueville in his essay *Democracy in America* (1835). He noticed a danger of a new form ‘despotism’ within modern democracy, because of its tendency to radical equality and claims to rule upon numbers, but also resulting from the supremacy of selfish individualism and materialism of the ruling classes that might become more dangerous than the traditional monocratic tyrannies in the past. With systemic criticism, distinguishing between less dangerous tyranny of government, being prevented by the civic liberties, and of more vicious kind of democratic ‘tyranny of majority’, oppressing the minority of society, came up John Stuart Mill in his work *On Liberty* (1859)²⁸.

In turn, in Germany until the Revolutions of 1848, the liberals used the term ‘despotism’ both to denounce monarchical absolutism and to criticize democracy as a multi-headed tyranny.²⁹ The democrats, meanwhile, criticized the ‘tyranny’ of the monarchist governments of both Napoleon I Bonaparte and the German ‘petty tyrants’ (*Zwergtyrannen*), praising the Revolution and tyrannicide, and defending democracy from its perception as ‘tyranny of the majority.’ In a similar vein, in the second half of the nineteenth century, socialists used slogans against monarchy, tyranny, despotism, and absolutism while in their criticisms of the capitalism imbuing them with economic meanings (Marx, Engels).³⁰ In contrast, German conservatives of the first half of the nineteenth century, while upholding

27 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 685.

28 Ibid., 677–680, 684; cf. also criticism of the despotic abuses of government from the Kantian perspective in her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, pp. 110–158. Cf. M. Richter, ‘Despotism,’ 14, 17.

29 H. Mandt, ‘Tyrannis, Despotie,’ 690.

30 See the discussion of the concept of despotism in Marx and his inspiration with Hegel in M. Richter, ‘Despotism,’ 16 ff.

the legitimacy of absolute monarchy, warned against liberal or democratic despotism and stigmatized despotism of parties, parliaments or crowds.³¹

Following the development of the power-related discourse after the political and cultural shift caused by the Revolutions of 1848, there were two tendencies that have been visible since the second half of the nineteenth century. The first is the increasingly clear replacement of the notions of 'tyranny' and 'despotism' (with the latter clearly becoming a historicized term denoting of a certain stage in history) by more recent terms such as absolutism, Bonapartism, Caesarism and dictatorship. At the end of this path, there lies the practical exclusion of the systemic concepts of monocratic 'tyranny' and 'despotism' from the discourse on modern political systems and from the social and political sciences of the early twentieth century in general – brought about by the decline of European monarchism and the predominance of liberal-democratic systems. Second, in the period after 1850, the notion of 'dictatorship' may have taken on a more positive meaning: denoting a transitional form of government in the proposals put forward by various political groups, ideologies, and intellectual trends from socialist-Marxists (the dictatorship of the proletariat) to conservatives.³²

Burckhardt and Machiavelli

The intellectual ambiance of the mid-nineteenth century holds the key to explaining Jacob Burckhardt's hypothesis, mentioned at the beginning of this book, deriving modern individualism from tyranny or from the despotism of the Italian states in the Renaissance.³³ It might seem paradoxical that while elaborating his view of the Renaissance as the period marking the 'rediscovery' of the human being and development of individualism, Burckhardt devoted more time to morally ambiguous figures hailing from the world of power and politics than to present a model description of *uomo universale*.³⁴ His interpretation was strongly influenced by nineteenth century cultural phenomena and intellectual constructs.

31 See an outline of this problem in H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 685–696; her, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 5 ff., 143 ff.

32 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 699 ff.

33 See the Introduction to this book.

34 A. Buck, 'Burckhardt und die italienische Renaissance,' in *Renaissance und Renaissanceismus von Jacob Burckhardt bis Thomas Mann*, ed. A. Buck, Tübingen 1990, 5–12, here 11.

First, the rehabilitation of Niccolò Machiavelli and his works began at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, despite the predominance of critique over apology, as in previous centuries, there was a continued line of defence that saw Machiavelli as the first anti-Machiavellist thinker – a perverse exponent, warning against the dangers of absolute power abuses by monarchs and against tyranny. The eighteenth-century apologists referred more often to *Discorsi* than to *Il Principe*, which only became more openly popular in the next century. Although in the nineteenth century there were still many critics representing different shades of anti-Machiavellism, as well as attempts to defend Machiavellian ideas as universal truths about politics, there was also a significant new tone in the apology of Niccolò Machiavelli as the author of *The Prince*. First in Herder, then in Hegel, Fichte and Ranke, despite all the differences and nuances in their assessment of Machiavelli's work, there is a tendency to consider his most famous work from a historicizing perspective, taking into account the historical context in which it was created. Hegel drew an important parallel between the political breakdown of sixteenth-century Italy, dominated by 'barbarians' from beyond the Alps, and a similar situation of Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century during the Napoleonic dominations. Another important factor was the longing for a power that, regardless of ethical constraints, could accomplish the work of strengthening or even unifying Germany at that time.³⁵ Undoubtedly the key role during the period of Romanticism was played by the emerging sense of a more modern national consciousness and the need to create nation-states.

In short, at the brink of the nineteenth century Machiavelli was spared eternal condemnation due to two phenomena. First, a new approach to the question of nation and the state, which triggered a new social ethic in which traditional values of an individual and of a community were subordinated to the interest of an objectivized nation, or (as in Hegel) to the state, dictating moral priorities. Second, his salvation was brought about by a more modern and objectivized (more 'scientific' in our understanding) approach to history. It no longer called for absolutist views (moralizing and educating), but for 'history-oriented' ones, i.e. situating ideas expressed in the past within the historical context in which they came into being. Such an increasingly 'objective' historical attitude was conducive to a more relative assessment of past phenomena, and could provide

35 A. Elkan, 'Die Entdeckung Machiavellis in Deutschland zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts,' *Historische Zeitschrift* 119, 1919, 427–458.

inspiration for new historical perspectives and myths to legitimize or criticize contemporary ideas and phenomena.

In spite of recurrent condemnations, a similar reevaluation of Machiavelli's work as created by a prophet of Italian nation-state building happened in various countries of nineteenth-century Europe.³⁶ These efforts culminated in the middle of this century, when the author of *Il Principe*, a fervent advocate of Italian unification, was placed on the banners of the Italian *risorgimento*. At the time of publication of the second edition of *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Leipzig 1869), which marked the beginning of the great career of this historical bestseller of the modern era, a convention of historians from all over the world, celebrating the 400th anniversary of Machiavelli's birth, was organized in Florence.³⁷ The symbolic convergence of these two events is not accidental.

Machiavelli's political philosophy, with its pragmatism and realism, was well suited to the needs and intellectual constructs of the nineteenth century and resulted in the 'discovery' and inclusion of his ideas within the canon of political and social sciences of that time. One of these constructs was the aforementioned positivist approach to the concept of 'dictatorship,' increasingly understood as a necessary transitional stage of systemic transformation.³⁸ Despite the prevailing vision of history that was no longer cyclical but linear, such an approach was close to the Machiavellian premise stating the necessity of tyranny in history, especially the tyranny of an outstanding individual leading the state out of misery. Already in Fichte's philosophy, and even more clearly in Hegel's, there appeared a clearly Machiavellian motif. Hegel, while emphasizing the role of great individuals in history, stated that both the emergence of tyranny within a crisis-stricken state and its demise are an expression of a historical necessity.³⁹ Certainly, Hegel's views had an indirect influence on the development of the concept of history and the rethinking of modernity by Ranke's generation, followed by Burckhardt's, despite their polemics with some of the theses of this influential German philosopher. Like Ranke, Burckhardt rejected the concept of the

36 One of the major turning points for the nineteenth-century 'rehabilitation' of Machiavelli was the essay by T.B. Macaulay, 'Machiavelli,' *Edinburgh Review* 45, 1827, repr. in *Machiavelli*, vol. 1, ed. J. Dunn, I. Harris, Cheltenham 1997, 1–37. For a detailed discussion of both critical and praising reception, as well as a balanced critique of the first half of the nineteenth century see Robert von Mohl, *Die Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften. In Monographien dargestellt*, vol. 3, Erlangen 1858.

37 J. Malarczyk, *U źródeł włoskiego realizmu politycznego...*, 77.

38 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 699.

39 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, esp. 201, also 159–205.

‘philosophy of history.’⁴⁰ For Burckhardt, history was not so much a quest for universal truths, but a narrative about past things, and the creation of a ‘realistic’ yet subjective (unlike Ranke’s) image of the past.⁴¹

Undoubtedly, the emergence of the concept of political realism (*Realpolitik*)⁴² and the glorification of the use of force in politics (*Machtstaat*) in the mid-nineteenth century also influenced the thinking of Burckhardt’s contemporaries. Both concepts became popular in the second half of that century, in the climate of modern nationalism and the Bismarck’s ‘fire and iron’ policy as a necessary tool for the actualization of the nation-state’s interests. The conservative views developed in Germany by Heinrich Treitschke, the advocate of German reunification under the aegis of Prussia, and the latter’s civilizing role in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, are all cases in point. Inspired by reading Machiavelli in his youth, it certainly influenced both his fascination with ‘despotism’ as the path to German unification and his conviction (expressed in similar words to Burckhardt’s) that tyrants are the fullest expression of the individualism of great figures. Hence Treitschke’s emphasis on the historical necessity of tyrants – *genialer Selbstherrscher-Staatsman-Dichter-Denker* – as the architects of ‘great history.’ He replaced the theoretical and systemic definition of tyranny with a historical presentation of its various manifestations. At the same time, he made a rather telling mistake, probably due to his skipping Aristotle and ancient writers, claiming that the concept of ‘tyranny’ did not become pejorative until the fifteenth century!⁴³

Despite all the differences – Treitschke’s journalistic shallowness and the scholarly depth of Burckhardt’s vision of cultural history, the apology of Prussia and unification of Germany in 1871 – of the former and the critical attitude

40 See F. Gilbert, *Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, Princeton 1990, 12, for an anti-Hegelian views of Leopold Ranke, one of the teachers of the young Burckhardt. Burckhardt as well-made disparaging comments about Hegel; see H. White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*, Baltimore 1973, 237.

41 Burckhardt did not wish to achieve a ‘photographic’ representation of the past, but a ‘realist’ one, in the spirit of the paintings of the Italian Renaissance masters. Realist, would then mean representing objects in appropriate, ‘real’ proportions vis-a-vis each other, and capturing the whole of the representation – either a painting on the canvas or the image of a historical period. See H. White, *Metahistory...*, 255–261.

42 H. Mandt, *Tyrannislehre und Widerstandsrecht...*, 205 ff.

43 See a far-reaching discussion of Treitschke’s views along with inspiration by Machiavelli and influence of Burckhardt’s ideas in *Ibid.*, 209–241.

to these events of the latter⁴⁴ – it is striking that the two authors are both situated in the intellectual atmosphere of the mid-nineteenth century, from which the contemporary doctrine of political realism also emerged and which sparked the ‘Renaissance’ of Machiavelli’s doctrine. That is why it seems so important to capture the intellectual climate which fostered scholarly and academic activities of the great historian from Basel. It is this climate that generated a pathos to which Burckhardt attuned himself as he considered the problem of despotism and tyranny in the Renaissance. This tone is clearly audible, despite the irony-driven narrative that was characteristic of his major works in which he used aphorism and anecdote with an admixture of mockery and irony to structure his arguments – features emphasized by Hayden White in his interpretation of Burckhardt’s writing in the context of nineteenth century historiography.⁴⁵

It is worth studying his views on tyranny as expressed in two other works by the Swiss historian – *History of Greek Culture*⁴⁶ and *Reflections on History*.⁴⁷ Both were published after Burckhardt’s death, but they were crafted out of his collected manuscripts, which served as notes for the author’s university lectures. *History of Greek Culture* is marked by common sense, a critical approach to ancient sources, and a kind of anti-Aristotle stance on the phenomenon of tyranny. Burckhardt did not treat tyranny in the Aristotelian vein – that is, as a degeneration of the monarchical system – but he saw it as a temporary and necessary stage in the development of Greek city-states. Furthermore, he claimed that ‘in every talented and ambitious Greek dwelt a tyrant and demagogue.’⁴⁸ By characterizing the various forms and periods of Greek tyranny since the 6th century BCE to the Hellenes and Romans, Burckhardt undermined the exclusively

44 Burckhardt’s complex stance on Germany and Germanness is discussed in R. Kasperowicz, *Zweite, ideale Schöpfung. Sztuka w myśleniu historycznym Jacoba Burckhardta*, Lublin 2004, 64.

45 H. White, *Metahistory...*, chapter titled ‘Burckhardt: Historical Realism as Satire,’ 230–263, esp. 250 ff. White convincingly picks out of Burckhardt’s writing elements of satire, irony, epistemological skepticism, pessimism in psychological interpretations, and realism in the way he constructs the image of the past, while neglecting the element of pathos. It is taken into account in his statement that, according to Burckhardt, who was mainly interested in periods of breakthroughs and crises in history, the historian’s task would be to collect ‘ruins’ and ‘fragments’ of the past, which contain the ‘pathos’ of past crises; *ibid.*, 263.

46 J. Burckhardt, *History of Greek Culture*, trans. P. Hilty, Mineola 2013.

47 J. Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History*, ed. James Hastings Nichols. New York 1943.

48 J. Burckhardt, *History of Greek Culture*, 56.

pejorative image of tyrannical rule created in classical Greek literature and tradition at a time when democracy was flourishing.⁴⁹ Without denying the possibility of various abuses, he pointed e.g. to the role of tyrants as patrons of science and art.⁵⁰ As an aside, he compared their problems with the exercise of power and succession with similar problems faced by tyrants in the Italian states of the Renaissance, pointing to the potential inspirations for Machiavelli's 'new prince' in the Aristotelian vision of the art of simulacra as a 'therapy' for tyranny.⁵¹

Even more interesting for a proper reading of the culture of the nineteenth century, especially the second half in which Burckhardt was situated, are his reflections on the historical role of the so-called great individuals in *Reflections on History*. Having characterized the phenomenon of 'greatness' of eminent personalities in art, literature, and science, Burckhardt turned to an analysis of the 'great people,' i.e., people holding power, who contributed to the world's development in other domains ('the great men of the rest of the world movement in history').⁵² He defined their historical 'greatness' as the conjunction of their personality and actions in relation to what was general and specific for the historical period in which they lived. They were, in a way, the essence and encapsulation of their contemporary historical moment – 'They subsume States, religions, cultures and crises.'⁵³ At the same time, they were great reformers and innovators, able to successfully confront the existing structures and thus make civilizing breakthroughs. They led countries, religions, and culture from a lower to a higher level of civilization, as Genghis Khan and Peter the Great allegedly had done.⁵⁴

Burckhardt included other hereditary rulers in the gallery of 'great' individuals, although he stressed the difficulty they had in achieving 'greatness' because of their birth right to rule and their tendency for unbridled enjoyment of life and power. Nevertheless, hereditary leaders like Alexander the Great, Charlemagne, the Hohenzollern king Frederick the Great, and even William III of Orange, sometimes succeeded.⁵⁵ At the same time, however, Burckhardt referenced politically self-made men such as Julius Caesar, Pope Gregory I, Cardinal

49 Ibid., 56–72.

50 Ibid., 60.

51 Ibid., 122.

52 J. Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History*, 324.

53 Ibid., 325.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 327.

Richelieu, and often referred to the statements by Napoleon I.⁵⁶ Finally, he tried to appreciate the greatness of Bismarck,⁵⁷ juxtaposed in a single paragraph with Alexander the Great, characterizing the essence of the drama and pathos of the life of those truly 'great.' They must not only confront the existing order to creatively change it, but they must also force their own will upon others, sometimes by merely sensing and anticipating the trend of the era and the unconscious will of the collective – the nation.⁵⁸

Nonetheless, Burckhardt denied historical greatness both to those who left behind only ruins (like Tamburlaine) or who represented merely one particular historic trend, even if they strived for radical change (Robespierre, Saint-Just). Oriental despots who were usually working towards staying in power rather than making civilizing breakthroughs lacked greatness.⁵⁹ Nor did he find great individuals among the ancient tyrants, mainly because of the limited possibilities of the territorial expansion of the Greek *poleis*. However, he was far from using ethical judgement of tyranny as a systemic degeneration, since he admitted that among the ancient tyrants there were 'interesting and important minds.'⁶⁰

The key to the subject matter discussed here, however, seems to be an excerpt of his deliberations, although not free from polemical interjections, that was made in the spirit of Machiavellian transmoralism. The excerpt in question concerns the exemption of outstanding individuals from the obligation to observe the customary standards of conduct. Never in the history of mankind has power emerged without crime, and the most important material and spiritual goods cherished by nations could only be secured by strong power. The crimes behind it, including violations of agreements, if in the general interest,⁶¹ are treated by posterity with forbearance and indulgence since they ultimately benefit the state or nation when committed by the 'great ones,' even if they are private. Here, Burckhardt clearly departed from the classical concept of a tyrant, allowing for

56 Ibid., 329, 331 ff. For the evaluation of Napoleon I as a Great individual capable of changing the course of history see F. Gilbert, *Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, 8.

57 Ibid., 339. Cf. R. Kasperowicz, *Zweite, ideale Schöpfung...*, 66 ff and 177 ff.

58 J. Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History*, 339.

59 Ibid., 326–327.

60 Ibid., 335.

61 Here also the figures of David, Constantine the Great, Clovis, who were forgiven for all wickedness, because they contributed to the strengthening of religion and because of other merits for the general public. The crimes of Richard III, on the other hand, were caused exclusively by his personal, selfish interest, and therefore were not treated with indulgence by the posterity; Ibid., 339.

the 'mysterious coincidence between the egoism of the individual and the thing we call the common weal, or the greatness, the glory of the community.'⁶²

Moreover, crimes committed by great individuals prevent many others from committing crimes and are therefore accepted by those who are subject to the rule.⁶³ The egoism of an eminent historical figure restrains the excessive egoism of many individuals, so that they 'add up to a power' that serves the purposes of the ruler and the good of the public. The decisive question is whether actions by great individuals in violation of traditional norms lead to lasting success. Here, Burckhardt resorts to a 'pathos of individualism,' indicating the close ties between the madness and the genius of the great rulers and their above-average sensitivity and intensity of experience, which for many people can justify their actions.⁶⁴

In the spirit of Machiavellian transmoralism, these reflections become relativized by Burckhardt's caveat: the exemption of eminent individuals from the obligation to observe customary norms cannot be treated in an absolute manner. After all, a nation which benefits from such an exemption for the ruler is not an unlimited, unconditioned, absolute entity. All crimes also involve negative consequences for those in whose interests they have been committed, and 'the delimitation of praiseworthy or necessary crime after the fashion of the *Principe* is a fallacy.'⁶⁵ Despite this proviso, reflecting the profound 'moralism'⁶⁶ of Burckhardt's work and thought, the significance of the whole argument remains transmoral in the style of Machiavelli.

These views should probably be considered from the perspective of the intellectual climate of late Romanticism as well as specific intellectual constructs accompanying the mental breakthrough that took place in the second half of

62 Ibid.

63 E.g. Catherine Medici as the main culprit responsible for the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, sparing the House of Guise complete responsibility for this crime. Burckhardt stated that if only Catherine had shown true greatness, 'the French nation would have entirely overlooked the horror'; Ibid., 341.

64 Ibid., 340. H. White, *Metahistory*..., 236, recognized that Burckhardt's protagonists are always dynamic personalities who have their own vision of the world and who rise above the universally recognized virtues and the ordinary human condition through acts of will that subordinate the world to the domination of their own ego.

65 J. Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History*, 340.

66 The dominant features of moralism in the intellectual approach and the work of Jacob Burckhardt have been highlighted by R. Kasperowicz, *Zweite, ideale Schöpfung*..., 107 ff. and elsewhere.

the nineteenth century. The similarity between Burckhard's *Gewaltmenschen* and the Nietzschean concept of *Übermensch*,⁶⁷ grounded, among other things, in the mythologized image of a 'Renaissance man,' is mysterious or often misinterpreted. Very often scholars point out to the relationship between the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, another Basel-based professor and an ardent student and admirer of Jacob Burckhardt, and some of the latter's ideas.⁶⁸ In terms of modern intellectual ties with Burckhardt's ideas, his concept of culture appears crucial. He derives culture from the sphere of human impulses and pre-rational behaviour.⁶⁹ In his view, the Renaissance marked the appearance (i.e., in the official version of culture) of the three basic human impulses – desire for power and fame, possession, and sensuality – previously constrained by the corset of the Christian culture and medieval morality. This fundamental significance and the impact of 'innate impulses' on the transformations of culture in Burckhardt's vision does not exactly correspond to the terminology of Sigmund Freud but nevertheless indicates a paradigm shift that occurred on the eve of Freudianism: the shift of emphasis from the level of rationality and consciousness to the level of the subconscious and innate impulses. The course of history and the shaping of culture are determined not by 'real spiritual' factors, as Burckhardt's great teacher Leopold von Ranke would have it, nor by the human imperative to actualize 'freedom,' as Johann Gustav Droysen believed, but by the nature of human impulses, translated into cultural artefacts.⁷⁰ In fact, this way of thinking, in a sense, was close to the pessimistic anthropologizing in Niccolò Machiavelli's vision developed 400 years before.

The anthropological pessimism and transmoralism of Machiavelli's views of power provided, along many other sources, inspiration for Burckhardt's 'realistic' vision of cultural history. So did Machiavellian 'realism,' irony and sarcasm in his narration and conclusions. To all this, despite his own ironic style, Burckhardt added the pathos-driven praise of modern individualism. All of these elements were recurrent motifs in the widely understood culture of the second half of

67 R. Kasperowicz, *Zweite, ideale Schöpfung...*, 106, see also 27, fn. 23.

68 See L. Farulli, 'Nietzsche und die Renaissance. Die Reflexion über Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung,' in *Renaissance und Renaissancismus...*, 54–70, here esp. pp 54–58; A. Buck, 'Burckhardt und die italienische Renaissance,' 11 ff.; F. Gilbert, *Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, 75.

69 Here I rely on the interpretation by W. Hardtwig, 'Jacob Burckhardts 'Kultur der Renaissance' und Max Webers 'Protestantische Ethik.' Ein Vergleich,' in *Renaissance und Renaissancismus...*, 54–70, here esp. 15.

70 *Ibid.*, 15–18.

the nineteenth century. It was the moment not only of rehabilitation but of a 'Renaissance' in Machiavelli's rediscovered and reviewed ideas.⁷¹ It marked the emergence of the Realpolitik doctrine and the creation of a modern vision of the Renaissance as the 'discovery' of the human individual.

Burckhardt's final reflections on the essence of 'greatness' in history are quite telling. On the one hand, the author concludes that great individuals are indispensable for the achievement of breakthroughs in human history. On the other hand, he makes a seemingly trivial complaint about the lack of really great individuals in his own lifetime and the gradual increase of overall mediocrity resulting from the masses' sole desire to improve their living conditions.⁷²

No wonder, then, that in his reflection on modern times, wishing to express abomination towards the dominant tendencies of mass culture and of an increasingly fashionable democratization, he spoke with sarcasm about the aspirations of the popular masses for freedom and used the term 'despotism of the masses,' which in the future would lead to 'tyranny, which will mean the end of history.' He was also a harsh critic of the 'revolution period' initiated in 1789, which in his view, introduced 'despotism that will serve other despotisms for the whole eternity.'⁷³ Apparently, Burckhardt suffered from the 'triple fear syndrome' typical of the pre-industrial and pre-revolutionary era, with particularly pronounced *contemptus plebei*. From this point of view, the monocratic 'despotism' of the eminent rulers of the Italian Renaissance seemed to him far better than the contemporary 'despotism of the masses' of the Age of Revolution. The evolution of Jacob Burckhardt's political sympathies from youthful liberalism to criticism of revolutions and radical ideas after the Revolutions of 1848 must have played

71 An important role in the historical evaluations of Machiavelli's doctrine was played by the classic work of Robert von Mohl, *Die Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften*, vol. III, 521–559, published a year before the first edition of Burckhardt's *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1859). The author, using previous evaluations of Florence-based thinker, from the sixteenth century to nearly the end of the 1850s, presented his own balanced evaluation of his work, which he summarized in a sentence: 'Geradezu verächtlich und pöbelhaft ist blosses Schimpfen. Machiavelli hat gesündigt, aber mehr ist gegen ihn gesündigt worden'; *ibid.* 541. At the same time, Robert von Mohl advocated a historically-oriented approach to *The Prince* and Machiavelli's other writings in the context of the turn of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

72 J. Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History*, 345–346.

73 Qtd. after H. White, *Metahistory...*, 235 and 248; also see the introductory chapter of this book.

an important role in his assessment.⁷⁴ Hence his praise of Renaissance monocratic 'despotism' must be placed within the conservative discourse about power (and its abuse) of the second half of the nineteenth century,⁷⁵ even if Burckhardt presented only his own conservative intellectual stance and did not share the specific views of other European conservatives of the time.⁷⁶

Visions of the past reconstructed by historians are not faithful reconstructions of historical reality, but rather models of the past created by historians. Burckhardt was perfectly aware of the subjective character of the image of the past that he reconstructed.⁷⁷ In this sense, the description of the past also contains elements of contemporary critique or advocacy, and the past becomes an object of myth-making catering to the needs of current discourses and construction of collective imagery necessary to sustain the societies' historical awareness. Thus, Burckhardt's idealized vision of the Renaissance and the emergence of modern individualism out of Renaissance tyranny can be treated as an expression of his critique of (and an escape from) contemporary reality, and especially politics as 'unworthy of a gentleman's taste.'⁷⁸ Hence, in the land of historical utopia, he was able to find his refuge.⁷⁹

His ideas were shaped during the period when history became 'scientific' mainly by establishing contemporary methods of research and critical analysis of historical sources. Jacob Burckhardt was the father of the modern history of culture. In addition, he accomplished a task typical of historians both before and after their discipline became 'scientific': the historian not only recreates and preserves images of the past in the collective memory, but is responsible for the temporal transfer of ideas drawn more or less consciously from other periods and placed in the respective canons of culture of his or her own era. This is especially true when searching for the roots in the past that 'nursed' one's own era. Burckhardt did exactly that when he saw the Renaissance as the 'mother' of modernity,⁸⁰ just as we seek our contemporary parentage in the views of Burckhardt and Freud.

74 See F. Gilbert, *Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, 62–66; H. White, *Metahistory...*, 234 ff.

75 H. Mandt, 'Tyrannis, Despotie,' 697 ff.

76 R. Kasperowicz, *Zweite, ideale Schöpfung...*, 17, 174 ff.

77 H. White, *Metahistory...*, 251.

78 Qtd. after *Ibid.*, 234; also see F. Gilbert, *Reflections on Ranke and Burckhardt*, 66 ff.

79 A. Buck, 'Burckhardt und die italienische Renaissance,' esp. 8 ff.

80 H. White, *Metahistory...*, 244.

Burckhardt introduced his own highly evocative vision of the Renaissance into the canon of historical knowledge and consciousness, a broad segment of the culture of that time. He was one of the most important figures who contributed to the 'renaissance' of the Renaissance – i.e., the introduction of a specific vision of that era, as well as its source texts, into the code of modern culture. Thus, he greatly enriched the culture of the nineteenth and twentieth century. At the same time, his scholarly vision inspired a circle of his contemporaries to develop the myth of the Renaissance and the 'Renaissance man,' to some extent detached from historical reality, which served as an instrument of both a thorough and seemingly 'constructive' critique of their surrounding reality.

This was facilitated by the historicism that dominated the culture of that part of the nineteenth century – an intellectual attitude willing to use the props of the past to express current messages. That was how Burckhardt became, willingly or not, one of the initiators (next to Nietzsche and Count de Gobineau) of a trend developed in their contemporary culture which we may dub 'Renaissance-ism,' a cult of the Renaissance levelled at egalitarianism and democratism. These were the very phenomena that conservative circles of the time perceived as the most serious threats. Hence, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau worshipped the Renaissance elites – the 'great' individuals who could set the tone for the entire era. Friedrich Nietzsche, in turn, wished to find an antidote to the decadence of the world around him, and saw in the Renaissance an upheaval in the realm of morality, the first symptoms of a break with Judeo-Christian values for the benefit of supposedly free thinking, that is, free of the ethical falsehoods of the 'pagan' Renaissance man, and heralding the arrival of the modern *Übermensch*.⁸¹

Machiavelli's *The Prince* began to receive a rather positive, historicizing interpretation at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the following decades, as Machiavelli's political realism was becoming increasingly recognized, his most famous work was gaining the status of a canonical text in modern culture. Jacob Burckhardt himself, with his deliberations included in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and his *Reflections on History*, made a serious contribution to Machiavelli's rehabilitation.⁸² However, as the era of monarchism in Europe came to an end, his thesis, which derived modern individualism from

81 See A. Buck, 'Einführung,' in: *Renaissance und Renaissancismus...*, 2 ff.; his, *Burckhardt und die italienische Renaissance*, 11; L. Farulli, 'Nietzsche und die Renaissance. Die Reflexion über Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung,' 67 ff.; a critique from within the Polish literature on the subject R. Kasperowicz, *Zweite, ideale Schöpfung...*, 27 ff.

82 W. Kerrigan and G. Braden, 'The Prince and the Playhouse. A Fable,' in: his, *The Idea of the Renaissance*, Baltimore–London 1989, pages 56, 61 ff.

the Renaissance concept of monocratic tyranny, was slowly forgotten. The same fate awaited the pathos of individualism – perhaps a minor motif in the work of Burckhardt, but which was, nonetheless, very fashionable in the intellectual sphere of the blooming Nietzschean philosophy. However, the predominantly anti-heroic irony of Burckhardt's writing remains convincing until today. It is this irony that determines the continued success of *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and the iconic emergence of modern individualism encapsulated in it.

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