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***CIRCULATING TEXTS IN THE RENAISSANCE:
SIMON PATERICKE'S TRANSLATION OF ANTI-
MACHIAVEL AND THE FORTUNES OF GENTILLET IN
ENGLAND***

Keywords: *Elizabethan translation; Anti-Machiavel; Gentillet; Machiavelli; Essex trial.*

Abstract: *Innocent Gentillet' Anti-Machiavel (1575) was the first Renaissance treatise devoted to a full-scale study of Machiavelli's works. The book had an important impact on the reception of Machiavelli in Elizabethan England even before its publication in English translation. The aim of this paper is twofold. First, I examine Simon Patericke's English translation of Anti-Machiavel (1602) by situating it within the larger context of the Elizabethan practice of translation. Patericke's translation can be viewed as a successful exponent of the new, humanist-inspired type of translation that emerged in the closing decades of the sixteenth century; a manner of translating which was generally characterised by a greater faithfulness to the source text, by a new accuracy and a new "stylistic freedom". Second, I consider the reasons that urged Patericke to choose for translation Gentillet's book as well as his option to use as introduction to his translation the preface written by the translator of Anti-Machiavel into Latin, thirty years before. Furthermore, I study the impact of Gentillet's treatise in the context of the Essex trial and argue that its publication in England involved a double movement: on the one hand, Gentillet was echoed by Francis Bacon in his prosecution of the Earl of Essex and his accomplices as Machiavellian traitors; on the other hand, Patericke translated and published Anti-Machiavel the year following the rebellion as a response and warning to what had been perceived as a sort of English Machiavellian movement.*

One of Niccolo Machiavelli's most ardent detractors in the sixteenth century was the Huguenot commentator Innocent Gentillet, a French lawyer, who, in 1576, published his *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un Royaume ou autre Principauté. Divisez en trois parties: à savoir, du Conseil, de la Religion et Police que doit tenir un Prince. Contre Nicolas Machiavel Florentin* (1576), a popular book among the Elizabethans, commonly referred to as *Anti-Machiavel*.

In his treatise, Gentillet takes over and rewrites fifty maxims derived from Machiavelli's *Il Principe and Discourses*; some of the maxims are rendered in Machiavelli's own words, but the majority represents Gentillet's reworking of what he interpreted to be the gist of Machiavelli's argument. The book is divided into

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three parts dealing with the prince's use of counsellors, with religion and the ruler's political behaviour respectively. Each part is divided into maxims, drawn supposedly from Machiavelli. Each maxim is followed by a concise summary of the chapter from which they were drawn and by a lengthy commentary and refutation.

Although some scholars have accused Gentillet of having distorted and misunderstood Machiavelli's meaning, his book still remains the "first known work devoted to a full-scale study of Machiavelli." (Anglo 283) Critics such as Victoria Kahn and Sidney Anglo have proven that Gentillet was a careful reader of Machiavelli who followed his ideas quite closely and who, on the whole, accomplished the difficult task he set himself to achieve "moderately well", even when assessed "from a modern critical standpoint." (Anglo 283) However, it cannot be denied that, at times, Gentillet simplified Machiavelli's text and omitted certain parts which could have rendered the figure of Machiavelli more complex.

Gentillet's work had been familiar to the Elizabethans long before its first English translation, being read both in the French original and in its Latin translation. The fortunes of Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel* in Elizabethan England have come in for much critical abuse. It was either given too much importance in the dissemination of the stereotyped Machiavel figure which emerged in the later sixteenth-century stock drama (Meyer X) or too little. Felix Raab, in his famous book *The English Face of Machiavelli*, dismisses Gentillet's influence in Elizabethan England altogether, claiming that Gentillet's popularity was "non-existent", that there was "no evidence" that the various versions of Gentillet were widely read in England and that he was "never of any importance in England"; all these assumptions amount to what he calls "the myth of Gentillet." (Raab 56, 70, 96) However, more recent critics have established that not only did Elizabethans read Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel* but they also responded to it in their discourses and sermons.

According to N.W. Bawcutt, one of the earliest Elizabethan borrowings from *Anti-Machiavel* occurs in John Stockwood's A Sermon Preached at Paul Crosse delivered and published in 1578. Deeply worried that the English people preferred going to plays to attending sermons, Stockwood denounced the danger posed by that "un pure Atheiste Machiavel" who was not ashamed to teach that "princes need make no accounte of godlynesse and true religion, but onely to make an outward eshewe of it: that (sayth he) is ynough, albeit in mynde they abhorre it" (Stockwood cit. in Bawcutt 865). Even more repulsive and outrageous was Machiavelli's assertion that Christians' religion "casteth them down into too much humilitie, abateth al courage and towardnesse, and maketh them fit to be wronged and spoiled", whereas "the religion of the Gentiles makes them of stout courage, and emboldneth them manly to achieve great matters." (865) All these remarks are drawn directly from the first three maxims of the second book of *Anti-Machiavel*; the filiation becomes even more evident the moment Stockwood decries the poison and filth spewed out by "this malaperte and pelting Town-cleark of Florence" and declaims against the way in which this "vile beaste in many courtes of other nations be the only Court booke, nay the Alcoran and God of Courtiers, whose divellish precepts they put in daylyure, learning to be godless." (865)

Therefore, when Simon Patericke published the first English translation of Gentillet's treatise, entitled *A Discourse upon the Meanes of Wel Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace, a Kingdome or Other Principalitie [...] Against Nicholas Machiavell the Florentine* (London, 1602), most Elizabethans were already accustomed with some of its most significant anti-Machiavellian arguments.

Simon Patericke's Translation of *Anti-Machiavel*

Patericke's translation of *Anti-Machiavel* into English is an outstanding exponent of the new, modern, humanistic type of translation that emerged in the closing decades of the sixteenth century (Morini 12).

Simon Patericke, who was matriculated as a pensioner at Peterhouse, Cambridge, in 1561 and was also a witness of Elizabeth I's visitation of Cambridge in August 1564, was described by his grandson Simon Patrick, bishop of Ely, as "a gentleman of good quality", "a person of religion and learning" who had travelled a lot in his youth and translated two books "out of the French tongue, of which he was a perfect master" (Dictionary of National Biography 45). Patericke was also the translator of *L'Estat de l'Eglise avec les discours des temps, depuis les Apostres sous Neron, jusques à présent, sous Charles V. Contenant en bref les histoires tant anciennes que nouvelles,... le commencement, accroissement et décadence de la religion chrestienne* by Jean Crespin, another Huguenot writer who, like Gentillet, had published his book in Genève.

Patericke's translation shares many features with other modern, humanist-inspired, late-Renaissance translations which were generally characterised by a greater faithfulness to the source text, by a new accuracy and a new "stylistic freedom." (Morini 12) Unlike earlier translators, whose numerous and rather conspicuous modifications of the text were reminiscent of the medieval manner of translating Patericke's translation is marked by an astonishing literalness and great accuracy.

An attentive comparison of the source with the target text reveals that Patericke follows closely the meaning and words of the original; there are no traces of omissions or additions, no single sentence is left out.

One of the few modifications that he makes is in order to correct Gentillet's own historical mistake. Speaking about the English War of the Roses and the rise of Henry Tudor, Gentillet mistakes the House of York for the House of Lancaster, a blunder that Patericke promptly rectifies (*A Discourse upon...*, 206). The only traces of "domestication" are the adaptation of proper names (Peter for Pierre, John for Jean) and a few short explanations meant either to guide the reader or to render the context clearer. Thus, in order to place the period when Machiavelli wrote his books in time, Gentillet mentions the reigns of Charles VIII and Louis XII, kings of France. In order to meet the needs of his own English audience, Patericke also inserts a reference to Henry VII and Henry VIII, kings of England (*Anti-Machiavel*, A i).

Patericke's closeness to Gentillet's letter not only on the macro-textual level but also on the micro-textual one is impressive. Whenever possible, he chooses to use English neologisms derived from French or Latin and he finds words that share a common etymology. Thus, he indirectly expresses his support for those who

advocated the enrichment of the English language by importing words derived from Latin and by borrowing from languages with a higher prestige, such as French and Italian. The entire sixteenth century was marked by the long-term linguistic war between the “archaizers” and the “neologizers”, between those who favoured the revival of obsolete words of Germanic descent in order to expand the vocabulary of the English language and those who thought that the vernacular could only profit by loaning and borrowing from languages with a higher prestige. John Checke was the undisputed champion of the archaizing field. However, translators from the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, such as John Florio and Simon Patericke, had definitely made their choice on the neologizers’ side.

In the case of Patericke, we can even speak of Frenchifying the text. Thus, he uses “contemner” and “encounter” (92, 94) for “contempteur” and “rencontre” (190, 194), “extream fear of conscience”, “the just divine vengeance” and “diviners and sorcerers” (95, 96) for “la juste vengeance divine”, “une extreme frayeur de la conscience” and “devinsorsorciers” (194); “incontinent” (187, 199) for “incontinent” (325, 340), even when the French word is used as an adverb, instead of using immediately or presently; “malignitie” and “maligne” (184-185) for their French counterparts “malignité” and “maligne” (336-337), instead of malicious or malignant, the synonyms that Cotgrave gives in his French-English dictionary; “bountie” for “bonté” instead of “goodness”, “honesty”; “marvaile” for “merveille” etc.

In his endeavour to stay as close as possible to the original he translates for instance “coups de poignards” (197) with “prickes of daggers” (96) instead of the most familiar dagger blows or dagger strokes. Likewise, he uses “to dominier” (197) for “dominer” (96). In Cotgrave’s dictionary “to domineer” is the fifth synonym given after the more common to govern, to rule, to command, to maister.

Nevertheless, there are also instances when Patericke doubles certain words in order to make his meaning fuller and uses both the French derived word and its more familiar counterpart, which is often of a Germanic descent. In order to translate the French “sangues” (192) he uses both the familiar “horse-leechers but also the word-for-word counterpart “blood-suckers” (92). Similarly, he translates the French “empescher” (193) by using both “to empeach” and “to hinder” (94).

Besides the impressive literalness, another modern feature of Patericke’s translation is the fact that he used for translation the French original and not an intermediary although he had access to the 1577 Latin translation of Gentillet’s work, whose dedicatory epistle Patericke translated and used as a preface to his own translation (Bawcutt 863).

The Epistle Dedicatorie

The Latin translation of Gentillet’s *Anti-Machiavel*, published anonymously at Genève (1577), by the Calvinist minister Lambert Daneau, was dedicated to two young English aristocrats known as Puritan sympathizers, Francis Hastings and Edward Bacon; both of them were coming from distinguished English families (Anglo 356). The epistle was a fiery warning to England to be cautious of the deadly

danger of Machiavellianism which had invaded all of France and was now threatening England too.

In the dedication to the first edition, Daneau openly and fiercely attacks the French Queen Mother, Catherine de Medicis, whose wicked and corrupt government was the main target of the Huguenot propaganda. She was the one considered culpable and directly responsible for the 1572 Saint Bartholomew's Massacre of the Huguenots (d'Andrea 398). The dedication that Patericke translated was the one that prefaced the second edition of the Latin translation of *Anti-Machiavel*, a version that had been expurgated of the direct vituperations against the French Queen Mother. However, it still preserved the assaults on the foreigners powerful at the French court and their portrayal as Satan's instruments. It also reiterated Gentillet's bitter attack against Machiavelli who was seen as the main agent responsible for the corruption of the "Italianized" French court and courtiers, for the decline of the law and the impairment of Christian morality and religion that had led to the French wars of religion:

then came forth the books of a most pernicious writer, which began not in secret and stealing manner...but by open meanes, and as it were a continual assault, utterly destroyed, not this or that virtue, but even all vertues at once. (*The Epistle Dedicatoire*, no pagination).

According to Gentillet, Machiavelli's books, "this deadly poison sent out of Italie", swiftly became a kind of compulsory reading for every single courtier who aspired to have any sort of reputation. Their effect was utterly detrimental to everyone since they had managed to take faith away from princes, authority from law and liberty from people. Gentillet's vilification of Machiavelli and Italians is permanently echoed in Daneau's letter:

Sathanuseth strangers of France, as his fittest instruments, to infect us stil with thus deadly poyson sent out of Italie, who have so highly promoted their Machiavellian bookes, that he is of no reputation in the Court of France, which hath not Machiavels writings at the fingers ends, and that both in the Italian and French tongues, & can apply his precepts to all purposes, as the Oracles of Apollo." (*The Epistle Dedicatoire*, no pagination)

According to Daneau, Machiavelli was not the first to undermine the Christian morality; such jeerers like Rabelais and Agrippa had run into that path long before him.

Describing the theatrical culture of the French court, Daneau opens his letter by quoting Solon on the harmful and injurious effects of the theatre and suggests that Machiavellianism was Satan's riposte to the Reformation (Kahn 542):

For when the cleare light of the Gospell began first to sprng and appeare, Sathan (to occupie and busiemens minds with toyish playes and trifles, that they rmight give no attendance unto true wisdome) devised this policie, to raise up jeasters and fooles in Courts, which creeping in, by quipping and prettie conceits, first in words, and after by bookes, utterng their pleasant jeasts in the Courts and banquets of kings and pnces, laboured to root up all the true pncples of Religion and Policie. (*The Epistle Dedicatoire*, no pagination)

Focusing on Machiavelli's popularity as rhetorician, Victoria Kahn claims that the beginning of the epistle, like Gentillet's *Preface* to the first part of his *Discourse*, equates Machiavelli with political innovation in theatrical terms and advances the image of Machiavelli as the stereotypical Machiavel, a figure of cunning and rhetorical skill (Kahn542).

Further on, the Epistle is devoted to the praise of the "most renowned Queen" Elizabeth I, whose wise government had preserved her realm safe, peaceful and flourishing, unlike the French soil which was swimming in blood. By opposition to the French nation that was governed according to such Machiavellian arts as "Guile, Pefidie and other Villanies", the English were ruled, according to Daneau, by true virtues such as "Clemencie, Justice and Faith" which were best expressed in the person of their most "gracious" Queen (*The Epistle Dedicatoire*, no pagination).

Daneau offers his translation as a kind of antidote in case England should get infected by the deadly poison of Machiavelli's writings too. Emphasising the significant role of translation in the circulation of knowledge, he states that he undertook this "labour" in order to impart the wisdom and learning of Gentillet's thoughts to the other nations of the Christendom. His dedication to the two young Englishmen is explained by his preference for England, a country he had never visited but which he held very dear since it had sheltered many Huguenot "bretheren" when they were banished for "the profession of the Gospell"; he also hoped to determine the two "to study and follow the contents of this booke, but especially the artes and vertues therein published" (*The Epistle Dedicatoire*, no pagination).

Anti-Machiavel, Francis Bacon and the Essex Trial

What about Patericke's reasons to choose for translation Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*? Why did he opt to "borrow" Daneau's dedication, written practically thirty years before, instead of writing one of his own? Although Patericke did not write his own preface and made no comment on his manner of translating nor offered any reason for his selecting for translation Gentillet's treatise, we may get some answers if we take a look at the historical context of the translation.

1601 was the year of the famous rebellion of Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex. Essex and his faction have often been associated with English Machiavellianism, members of his circle, such as Phillip Sidney and the Bacon brothers, being thoroughly familiar with Machiavelli's writings.

At the trial led against Essex immediately after his unsuccessful rebellion, Francis Bacon, Essex's former friend and political adviser, himself quite indebted to Machiavelli's writings, described the Earl of Essex as a Machiavellian schemer and accused him of having imperilled his queen and country by drifting into treasonable activities. According to a contemporaneous account, Bacon is said to have declared at the trial that he had never seen "such favour, so many digressions, such delivering of evidence by fractions, and so silly a defence of such great and notorious treasons. Further to prepare matter and give fire at once was one of Machiavel's precepts" (Harrison 159).

In this context, we may justly assume that Patericke had a very powerful reason to translate Gentillet who, throughout his treatise, attempts to prove, by offering numberless historical examples drawn from the recent and remote past, that all those Machiavellian tyrants who conduct themselves according to their “doctor’s” precepts will end tragically: the murderer will always be murdered, just as the breach of faith will almost inevitably result in “the total destruction and ruin of the perfidious and disloyal person.” (*A Discourse upon...* 200, 230, 264).

In the third part of the book, entitled *Of Policie*, the twelfth Machiavellian maxim that Gentillet discusses is the one that advises the prince to follow the nature of the beasts and combine the cunningness and astuteness of the fox with the force and violence of the lion. After putting forward Machiavelli’s arguments and examples in support of this maxim, Gentillet offers his own examples which have the opposite outcome than those of Machiavelli’s and purports to demonstrate that “these foxlike subtilities and deceits, whereof Machiavell meanes in his speech, doe not ever succeed well to them who use them, but most commonly they fall into their owne nets.” (*A Discourse upon...*, 224).

To support this idea he reports, among other various examples, the story of Hannibal, who took Marcellus, the Roman general as a prisoner and, upon finding the latter’s sealing ring, thought to use it to his advantage; thus he sent a letter stamped with Marcellus’ signet ring to the Salapians, whom he wanted to conquer, saying that the army of Marcellus was on the way thither and that Marcellus gave orders that the gates should be opened to receive them. However, the citizens had received letters a little while before from Crispinus who, outdoing Hannibal, had sent word to all the surrounding towns that Hannibal had got possession of Marcellus’ ring. When Hannibal’s messenger delivered his message the Salapians promised to do as they had been ordered. Obviously they armed themselves and having taken their station on the walls awaited the result of the stratagem. When Hannibal came with his soldiers, they drew up the portcullis as though they were gladly welcoming Marcellus. After having let in as many as they thought they could easily master, they dropped the portcullis and slew all those who had gained entrance, which “caused Hannibal to be taken in his own net.” (*A Discourse upon...*, 224). To make the moral of his example even clearer and to link it back and oppose it to Machiavelli’s advice, Gentillet quotes Titus Livius and concludes that:

Thus was he knowne and discovered for a Fox, so as often they turned his owne nets upon him, as they do upon Foxes, when they catch them, by bending their nets backward. And truly, it is most often seene, that such subtilties as tast of trecherie and disloyaltie, succeed not well. “For as captaine Quintius said to the Aetolians: Subtile and audacious counsels are at the first very agreeable and pleasant, but to guide, they are diffical and hard, and full of sorrow in the end.” (*A Discourse upon...*, 224).

The fate of the Earl of Essex was a most pertinent exemplification of Gentillet’s judgment. 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) 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:

But he on the other side making these her majesty's favours nothing else but wings for his ambition, and looking upon them not as her benefits, but as his advantages, supposing that to be his own metal which was but her mark and impression, was so given over by God, who often punisheth ingratitude by ambition, and ambition by treason, and treason by final ruin, as he had long ago plotted it in his heart to become a dangerous supplanter of that seat, whereof he ought to have been a principal supporter ; in such sort as now every man of common sense may discern not only his last actual and open treasons, but also his former more secret practices and preparations towards those his treasons, and that without any gloss or interpreter, but himself and his own doings. (Bacon 138)

Bacon's account testifies to the fact that in the aftermath of Essex's rebellion, Gentillet's book was translated and used to support the new Anti-Machiavellian movement of the Counter-Reformation (Birley 3).

Patericke's sown reason to borrow Daneau's dedication as preface to his own translation seems easier to be grasped. Its contents were completely suitable for the contemporary English context and he probably considered that it expressed better or just as well as he could the dangers represented by Machiavellian politics. With its vituperations against Machiavellians and the extolment of Elizabeth as the queen who represented all those virtues and qualities that were diametrically opposed to the ones promoted by Machiavelli and his followers, Daneau's preface was recontextualized, fitting perfectly its new historical context.

Not only did Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel* offer reasons to vilify anyone acting like Essex did, supporting thus the official propaganda against traitors and rebels but it also endorsed the allegations of the Tudor myth. The eighth maxim chosen by Gentillet in the third part of his book deals with Machiavelli's advice that a prince should not fear to be accounted cruel if in this manner he manages to make himself obeyed by his subjects. Among the many examples of ruthless tyrants who had part of cruel and violent deaths Gentillet also mentions the case of King Richard III of England.

Drawing his story from Philippe de Commines' *Memoires*, Gentillet insists on the providential interpretation of Richmond's defeat over Richard III and of his ascension to the throne of England. Thus, from the very beginning, Gentillet states that "A like punishment happened by the conduction and judgement of God to that cruel King Richard of England". Richmond is introduced as Richard's enemy sent by God "it was not long before God raised him up for enemy, the earle of Richmond..." (*A Discourse upon...*, 206) It was also God who "conducted that business sending a contrary winde" which forced Richmond to land not at Dover where Richard waited him with a large army but in the northern part of England where he was met by the nobles that supported him and marched towards London where, he was to be crowned King of England, not before having slain Richard, the murderous and cruel tyrant.

To conclude, Gentillet's fortunes in England involved a double movement: on the one hand, Gentillet was echoed by Bacon in his prosecution of Essex and his accomplices as Machiavellian traitors; on the other hand, Patericke translated the

Anti-Machiavel and published it the year following the rebellion as a response and warning to what had been perceived as a sort of English Machiavellian movement.

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