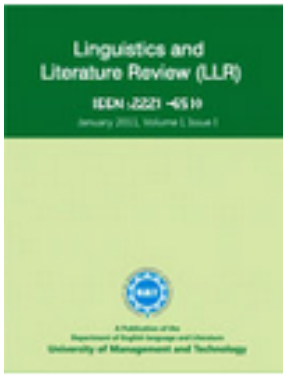

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Machiavelli: His Influence on the Elizabethan Drama and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

During the Elizabethan Age, the Machiavellian character developed to become one of the key dramatic types: a rogue and a pitiless calculator. Edward Meyer, in his Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama, indicated that there were about 400 direct references to Machiavelli in the Elizabethan literature. A good example is Marlowe's *The Jew Of Malta* where he has Machiavel to open the play. To the Tudor imagination, Machiavelli was the symbol of corruption and decadence driven by an insatiable "appetite" for power. But I argue that it was not as simple as that. One has the impression they had hardly read him, or, in the best of cases, misunderstood him. Indeed, it was not until Bacon and Hobbes, whose political thought agreed with Machiavelli's attack on religion, that some light was thrown on the founder of modern political science. Consequently, by the late eighteenth century, a more favourable judgement became popular. Then with the growth of romantic nationalism, they discovered that Machiavelli' s *The Prince* was not a dangerous guide for political criminals, but an objective study of sixteenth century Italian politics by a patriot hoping to help his country to unite and become a strong presence in Europe. Be that as it may, thanks to drama, Machiavelli entered the consciousness of the Anglo-Saxon secular world, but it expanded beyond it all over Europe. In the twentieth century, Antonio Gramsci (the first secretary of the Italian Communist Party) saw in Machiavelli a politician comparable to Marx. Unexpectedly, Mussolini wrote a sympathetic introductory essay to an edition of *The Prince*, though he had previously banned the philosopher's writings. However, even more surprisingly, Rauschning recounts that in his conversations with Hitler, the Fürher ranked Machiavelli with Wagner as among the influences shaping his thought. Hence, just like scholars, political leaders confront many contradictory interpretations according to their personal moral views, emotions, and conveniences. To this day, the Florentine's legacy has provoked almost uninterrupted controversy and there is little consensus about what Machiavelli actually said. Yet, we still live in his shadow. He is even seen as some sort of guide for the unscrupulous modern manager, while Tupac, a popular American rapper, charmed by his writings, called himself Makaveli. Meanwhile, the "vices" Machiavelli denounced: political instability, social disillusion, corruption, intrigue, immorality, and riots, still permeate political life in Italy and elsewhere. Therefore, on concluding, I would like to stress how he speaks to us not only of old far-off events but also, and memorably, of familiar matters of today.

Keywords:
Machiavelli, Elizabethan Theatre, Marlowe, Shakespeare, politics, philosophy, corruption, intrigue

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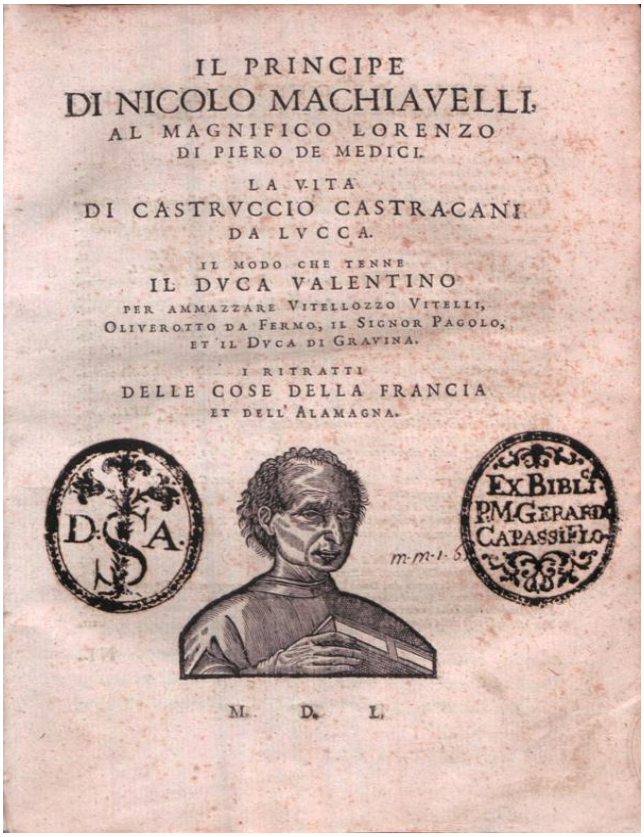


Figure 1. Front cover of Nicolò Machiavelli's First ed. of *Il Principe* [*The Prince*], 1550.

Part I

Nicolò Machiavelli's claim to worldwide fame is that of a statesman who revolutionised political thinking, which gained him the title of father of modern political theory. This is an aspect we will look into in the second part of this essay where we will trace the ever-continuing relevance of Machiavelli's thought to the varying socio-political scenarios up to these days. So, first, we will focus on the impact that Machiavelli (1469-1527) had on the English theatre in the Tudor and Jacobean Ages. That is when the typical Machiavellian character was first created and became a key dramatic type: an unscrupulous rascal, a harsh calculator. Edward Meyer, one of the major experts in the Elizabethan theatre, states: "During the course of reading I have noted no less than 395 references to Machiavelli in Elizabethan literature." (Meyer, 2007: preface XI). Likewise, Mario Praz, the world-known Italian anglicist, declared that the figure of Machiavelli dominated the Tudor dramatists either directly or indirectly.

A case in point is Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) with *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582) about which, Arthur Freeman argues that "If the play precedes *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris* it contains the first Machiavellian villain […]" (Freeman, 1967: 70). He is, in fact, referring to the protagonist of the play, Hieronimo, Knight-Marshal of Spain, who seeks revenge in a deceitful Machiavellian way, while Lorenzo, the son of the Duke of Castile, certainly not second to him, embodies Machiavelli's lessons. The other two plays Freeman refers to are both by Christopher

Marlowe (1564-1593) and represent further examples of "revenge" drama. For the purposes of this essay, I will focus on the *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1588-1592) in which Marlowe, with a fantastic *coup de théâtre*, has Machiavelli himself open the play in the prologue without appearing on the stage ever after. Paradoxically, that gives him a ubiquitousness beyond any expectation and proves to be a successful structural experiment. (Note that in 1590, when the tragedy was first staged, this type of figure was unusual but became common later.) The power of such a brilliant idea is felt throughout the play, especially in a world which is given over to wickedness and double-dealing. Therefore, on setting the tone, Machiavel, as he is called by Marlowe, "This distinguished Florentine, degraded into a personification of unscrupulous policy, was frequently appealed to on the Elizabethan stage." (Marlowe, 1961: 199)

> Albeit the world thinks Machiavel 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.
> To some perhaps my name is odious.
> But such as love me guard me from their tongues;
> And let them know that I am Machiavel,
> And weigh not men, and therefore not men's words.
> Admired I am of those that hate me most.
> Though some speak openly against my books
> Yet they will read me, and thereby attain
> To Peter's chair: and when they cast me off,
> Are poisoned by my climbing followers.
> I count religion but a childish toy,
> And hold there is no sin but ignorance.
> Birds of the air will tell of murders past!
> I am ashamed to hear such fooleries.
> […]
> But whither am I bound? I come not, I,
> To read a lecture here in Britain,
> But to present the tragedy of a Jew,
> Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed,
> Which money was not got without my means.
> I crave but this —grace him as he deserves,
> And let him not be entertained the worse
> Because he favours me. (Marlowe, 1961: 198)

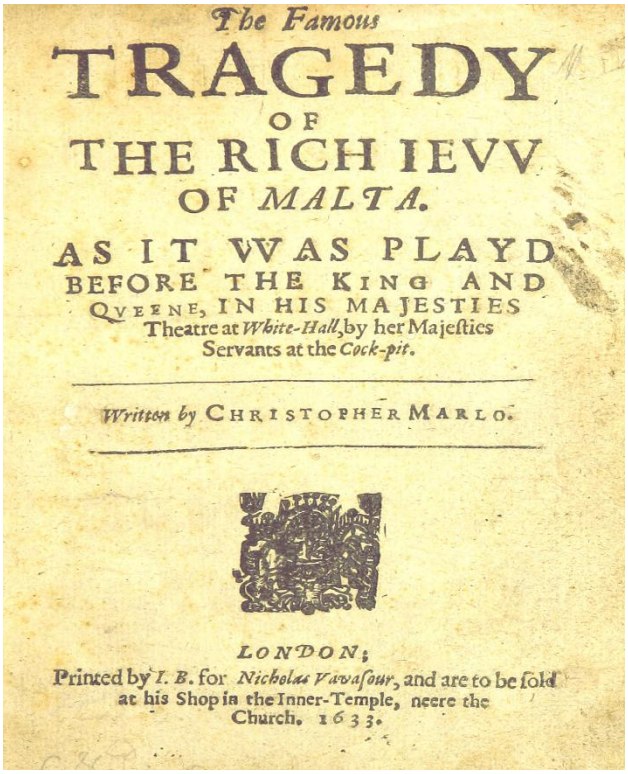


Figure 2. Front cover of Christopher Marlowe's First edition of *The Jew of Malta*, 1633.

Machiavel unexpectedly says that, though he had been dead for many years, he continued to live through his fame and thanks to the people that loved him, despite the fact that there were many who detested him too. He adds that his soul in the meantime crossed the Alps to "frolic"—playfully cause trouble—with friends in England. He knows that, however baffling, he is admired for his radical ideas by those who dislike him, including those who "attain / to Peter's chair" (aspire to become Pope.) However contradictory it may sound, he suggests that they do so by following his recommended methods and cannot resist the temptation to read him even if they officially "hated" his books. To say it in the words of Salinger, a highly reputed Elizabethan historian, "While Machiavelli was abused in public, therefore, he was studied in private for his effectual truth." (Salingar, 1985: 21). This is a picture Machiavel completes with a chilling touch in the lines 12-13 above, reading, "when they cast me off / Are poisoned by my climbing followers," which means that those who reject his writings end up poisoned by others with similar ambitions. Incidentally, this is a reference to some specific historical events, namely the murder of Pope Alexander VI in 1503, which was supposedly committed by his son Cesare Borgia, or the death of the Duke of Guise, a French nobleman whom Machiavel explicitly refers to in the passage quoted above. This shows how subtly Marlowe weaves these facts into the prologue, and how they naturally lead him to get Machiavel to allude to religion as a "toy" used by both the high ranks of the Church and the tyrants to achieve their own aims; thus, allowing him to make a parody of statesmanship and the posturings of Christian authority. There is no

doubt that the ecclesiastical and lay establishments did not have scruples and resorted to whatever means to satisfy their appetites. For example, they emptied "sin" of its religious meaning, by reducing it to just a moral restrain in order to keep their subjects under control and in a state of ignorance marked by superstition. Indeed, there is no presence of the Christian psychology of sin and redemption in the political treatises, *The Prince* and *The Discourses on Livy*. In both works, Machiavelli's idea of sin is linked to that of political error committed by rulers on trying to abide to Christian ethics, when they should have a pragmatic and merciless attitude. It follows that the rejection of religion, in the opening of *The Jew of Malta*, comes within a strategic view of the state aimed at anticipating the derogatory remarks Barabas makes about Christianity throughout the play. In line with that, Machiavel, on concluding the prologue, says that he is caught by surprise to find himself in Britain where he has not gone to give a "lecture," but "to present the tragedy of a Jew", Barabas, "Who smiles to see how full his bags are crammed, / Which money was not got without my means." (See quotation above). In other words, he takes his full responsibility and proudly says that Barabas has become rich because he has applied what he learnt from reading *The Prince*. He also remarks that in this way, Barabas, on "favouring" him as a thinker, exposed himself to the attacks of the envious, powerful members of the community to whom he tells they should refrain from doing that and treat him gently instead. We know that state of things results from the changing times, when the long-standing medieval mentality was gradually superseded by individualism, and the pursuit of admiration and honours drove people to acquire wealth and fame, which had become a source of happiness, although wealth was condemned in the Bible. So, if greed for whatever kind of power is a key theme in *The Jew of Malta*, we can see how Machiavelli's attitudes fit every actor in the play, Jews, Christians, slaves and prostitutes alike. They are all determined to have things their own way, engaged as they are in their struggle for power and self-interest. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Barabas more than anybody else is obsessed by an insatiable "appetite" for wealth, representing his ideal form of power.

Following all the above, a legitimate question arises: is Marlowe's Machiavel like the real Machiavelli? In my view, he is not. Nicolò Machiavelli was neither covetous nor scheming per se, while the Machiavel we have seen hitherto was mainly a caricature of the type of man that the English were charmed by and feared at the same time. There is enough evidence that the Elizabethan theatregoers and the population at large considered Machiavelli's ideas not only responsible for the cruel political intrigues in Italy but also around Europe. This is clearly the result of a superficial approach to the thinker that was based on malicious common place or misunderstanding, which were mainly shared by word of mouth instead of an in-depth study of his thought. Though one has to admit that, if on the one hand, Machiavelli is too complex to be reduced to a simple formula, on the other, he lends himself to create the villain characters needed by the Elizabethan theatre and society, as declared by Niemi:

> That work [*The Prince*], if more by repute and the vulgarization of its ideas than by any considered understanding of its arguments in context, exerted considerable influence on foreign, particularly Elizabethan and Jacobean, dramatists' conceptions of Italian court life

> and political intrigue – the devious Machiavellian schemer becoming a stock figure in many plays. (Richards, 1995: 659)

By contrast, another historian, Eustace Tillyard, says that, even in the seventeenth century, some scholars began to understand Machiavelli's position on religion and considered him seriously. Thus, they stopped misrepresenting the true nature of the message that both the man and the statesman really meant to convey:

> There had been Machiavelli, to whom the idea of a universe divinely ordered throughout was repugnant, and in the seventeenth century men began to understand and heed and not merely to travesty and abuse him. (Tillyard, 1980: 8)

Unfortunately, this honest and enlighted attitude was isolated and did not avoid the development of that picture of Machiavelli as a deceitful enemy of political morality, and an advocate of murder and treachery. Moreover, we should not underestimate how misleading it was that English readers could not read Machiavelli's works in their language until Dacres' translation of *The Prince* appeared, though as late as 1640, while the treatise, written in 1513, was first published in 1532. But a French translation was available in 1553, followed by a version in Latin in 1560, and another one in Italian in 1584 (see Alberici' and Wolfe's collaboration below). Yet, just out of curiosity, know that the first English edition was discovered, just fortuitously in 2012, during a collection evaluation in Norfolk, UK, by Andrew Bullock, the head of the book department at Keys auction house who said,

> "The Machiavelli was on a shelf hidden amongst a number of Common Prayer books, but some sort of sixth sense asserted itself, and I took it down to take a closer look."
> (Moodhe, 2012: 1)

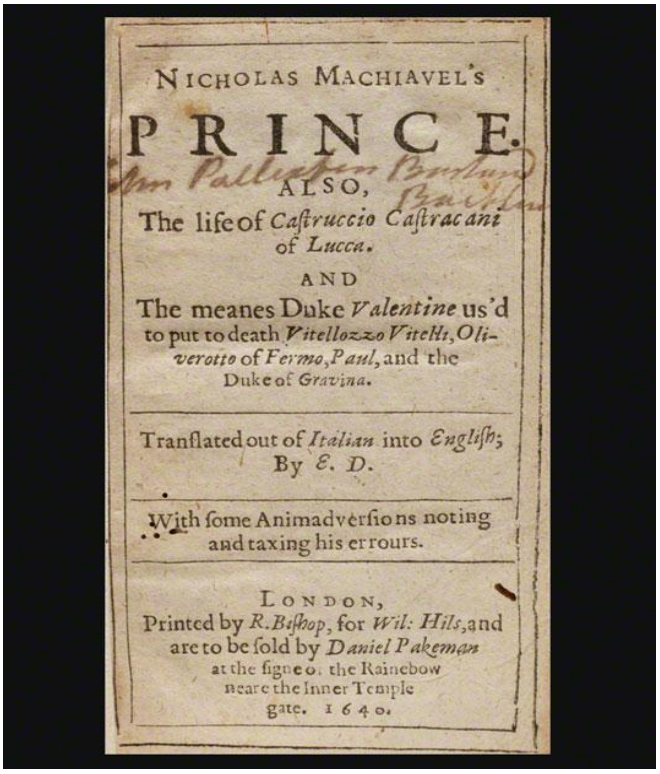

NICHOLAS MACHIAVEL'S
PRINCE.
ALSO,
The life of *Castruccio Castracani* of *Lucca*.
AND
The meanes Duke *Valentine* us'd to put to death *Vitellozzo Vitelli*, *Oliverotto* of *Fermo*, *Paul*, and the Duke of *Gravina*.
Translated out of *Italian* into *English*; By *E. D.*
With some Animadversions noting and taxing his errours.
LONDON,
Printed by *R. Bishop*, for *Wil: Hils*, and are to be sold by *Daniel Pakeman* at the signe of the Rainebow neare the Inner Temple gate. 1640.

Figure 3. Front cover of First English edition of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, 1640.

With respect to translation, we know well how much can be lost in rendering a text from one language into another. Anybody familiar with the issue would agree that, however good it may be, a subtle and highly philosophical text as *The Prince* can lend itself to misinterpretations, and loss of important nuances, especially if you are not a mother tongue reader. This is one of the factors that contributed to people's negative interpretation of Machiavelli which was reaching its apex towards the end of the 16th century. The circulation of Innocent Gentillet's *Discours Contre-Machiavel*, published in Geneva in 1576, further increased that state of things. Although some shorter attacks had been printed, this was the first book fully dedicated to create an unfavourable opinion of Machiavelli. The Italian Alberico Gentili (1552-1608) (a friend of the poet Sir Philip Sidney and a professor at Oxford University), and his English friend John Wolfe (1548- 1601), who spent many years in Florence to learn the printing art, devoted themselves to defend Machiavelli's reputation, maintaining among other things that the Florentine thinker wrote about tyranny because he was against it, and supported the "true prince" instead, or rather republican ideas. Wolfe in a short introduction to the first edition of *The Discourses*, published in London (England) in 1584, addressed a letter to the reader "Lo stampatore al benigno lettore" (The printer to the good reader), attacking any "slenderer" of Machiavelli (most likely thinking of detractors like Gentillet), saying that the political thinker was surely going to be remembered eternally, while anybody like Gentillet was "fit to be a salesman of sausage and dried fish." In turn, Gentili defended Machiavelli by giving a terrible review of Gentillet's book, which was translated into English by Simone Patericke only in 1602. In Meyer's authoritative opinion that was "the source

of all Elizabethan misunderstanding." (Meyer, 2007: Preface X) It is obvious that we cannot overlook the strong connections that Wolfe had with the Italian community of exiles, a bunch of reformers who for political and religious reasons had to move to England in that period, making him the most supportive publisher of Italian works between 1584 and 1591. Notably, the religious factor concerning Machiavelli's writings is highly important. As soon as *The Prince* was known, a lively debate was triggered. In Catholic countries, it appeared in the "Index librorum prohibitorum" (List of Prohibited Books), which Catholics were not allowed to read without permission because it was considered immoral or heretical. And, in Protestant countries, Machiavelli himself was identified with the cunning stratagems employed by the Jesuits to coax people to change their views. It is self-evident that, since England was a country imbued with the ideas of the Reformation, the socio-historical situation inevitably contributed to build up an image of Italy and Machiavelli as absolutely corrupted. It is no accident then that most *revenge* plays were set in Italy because it was, seen whereas the seed-bed of villainy, perversion and vice. Hence, Florence, where Machiavelli came from, became a civic centre where people learnt subservient manners and fawning flattery that represented the prevailing and amoral mentality of the time. Owing to the relevance Florence has to this essay, it will be interesting to note that Barabas too acknowledges how well he absorbed the local mentality. The unscrupulous villain-hero of *The Jew of Malta*, due to his thirst of revenge, that overwhelms not only him but also his daughter, launches an attack, springing with a vitriolic tone of hatred and contempt, against the Christians who had robbed him:

> I learn'd in Florence how to kiss my hand,
> Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
> And duck as low as any bare-foot friar;
> Hoping to see them starve upon a stall,
> Or else be gather'd for in our synagogue,
> That, when the offering-basin comes to me,
> Even for charity I may spit into't.

(Marlowe, 1961: Act II, sc. iii, 220)

Of course, besides Barabas, there are many other remarkable Machiavellian protagonists in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres: Iago, in Shakespeare's *Othello*; *Volpone*, *The Fox*, the title personage created by Ben Jonson, featuring an extremely sly sort of person. Such in which people include Cardinal Monticelso, the lovers Isabella and Ludovico, and Francisco De Medici, Duke of Florence in John Webster's tragedy *The White Devil*, set in Rome and Padua, which is strongly marked by poison, subterfuge and disguise. John Ford is on the same wavelength with his incestuous story between Giovanni and his sister Annabella in '*Tis Pity She' s a Whore* (1633), which takes place in Parma, another city of lust, immorality and vengeance where the main appetite is greed for sex, corruption and wealth.

Particular attention deserves also the Machiavellian usurper or tyrant, who is well represented in Shakespeare's Part Three of *Henry VI*, featuring the protagonist, Richard Duke of Gloucester

who refers to himself, in his first soliloquy, as the man who would "set the murderous Machiavel to school" (Shakespeare, 1966: Act III, sc. ii, 209), meaning that he would not only put in practice Machiavelli's cynical advice by taking an amoral attitude to manipulate the reality, but he would even surpass him.

> Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
> And cry "Content!" to what grieves my heart,
> And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
> And frame my face to all occasions.
> […]
> I can add colours to the chameleon,
> Change shapes with Proteus for advantages
> And set the murderous Machiavel to school
> Can I do this?, and cannot get a crown?
> Tut, were it further off, I'll pluck it down.
>
> (Shakespeare, 1966: Act III, sc. ii, 189)

According to history, Richard realised what he says in this last line and, thus, fulfils his wish to become King of England as recounted also in Shakespeare's next play, *Richard III* (1597). The rise to the throne of Richard reflects the dramatist's admiration for Machiavelli, which makes one think that Shakespeare not only knew the biography of Richard III, but must have known also *The Prince* so well (available in both Italian and French) to put in practice those principles that characterize Machiavelli's thought. Regarding King Richard, who reigned as Lord Protector between 1483- 1485, he was indeed a man of his changing times. He rejected metaphysics, and pioneered a pragmatic approach to politics, governed by daily circumstances rather than abstract medieval principles representing the King as a "divine" figure above all human beings. It will suffice to say that, coherently with Machiavelli's views and in order to usurp the throne, he committed a most atrocious and shocking act of treachery by deposing and probably killing his nephews, Edward IV and his younger brother Richard, Duke of York. He was a true Machiavellian, politics to him wasn't anything else but a practical affair, an amoral art, as it were.

Another relevant example of Machiavelli's influence on Shakespeare is represented by the Great Bard's last play, *The Tempest*, written in 1611 or 1612. To start with, the narration done by the protagonist of the comedy, Prospero, sounds as a worth mentioning compendium of *The Prince*. Prospero is guileful and schemes to get his Dukedom of Milan back throughout the whole story. He uses his conjuring powers to control the destiny of all the characters in the play. Nevertheless, he is not the only Machiavellian, as he was unrightfully overthrown by his also conniving Machiavellian brother, Antonio, who does that thanks to the support of Alonso, the King of Naples, another Machiavellian, in his own right. We meet Prospero in the second scene of the play where he explains to his daughter Miranda, how he had lost his Dukedom twelve years before when both of them, due to an order given by Antonio and Alonso, were abandoned in a leaky boat that came ashore on a remote small island south west of Sicily, which some critics have

identified with Pantelleria. On that occasion, we hear of Antonio, as a successful Machiavellian prince, long before he appears on the stage. Reputation precedes him and represents a vital factor, as for any victorious prince who wants to be favoured in acquiring and keeping the power. Note that this is most likely one of the lessons Shakespeare learnt from Machiavelli, who on referring to Severus states:

> Knowing the sloth of Emperor Julianus, Severus, who was leader of the army in Slavonia, persuaded the troops that it would be well to go to Rome to avenge the death of Pertinax, who had been slain by the Prætorian guard, and under this pretext, without revealing his aspirations to the throne, marched with his army to Rome and was in Italy before his departure was known. On his arrival in Rome the senate elected him emperor through fear, and killed Julianus. […]
>
> Whoever examines the actions of Severus […] will not be surprised that he, a new man, should have been able to hold so much power, since his great reputation defended him always from the hatred that his rapacity might have produced in the people. (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. XIX, 72-3.)

Likewise, in Prospero's words, Antonio ""having both the key/Of officer and office i' th' state/To what tune pleased his ear," (Shakespeare, 1966: Act III, sc. ii, 103-4) which means that he gradually usurped Prospero's position while building a good reputation for himself and gaining people's love, hearts and respect. Before showing his true intention of wanting to seize Prosperous' Dukedom, Antonio proves he has learnt the art of what Machiavelli calls "the great pretender," namely giving the illusion of being "merciful, faithful, humane, honest, and religious." (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. XVIII, 65) In addition, Machiavelli says that what matters most is that "Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are […]" (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. XVIII, 65). This statement may suggest that everybody, and perhaps Antonio himself, believed that he was doing his brother a favour since the latter was fully concentrated on his books and did not care of ruling. But the truth is that he was betraying the trust Prospero put in him. This cold-blooded hypocrisy of politicians and their preoccupation to show a public moral image of themselves recall what Machiavelli says in *The Prince* about Soderini, who did not "take care" of the Medici, when he had the power; on the contrary, he let himself be driven by morality and virtuosity. That, in the political world, seems to be a big mistake, a "vice", which in the case in question made him lose power and cost Machiavelli persecution.

However, as the story goes, in *The Tempest*, Prospero takes his revenge after twelve years. His plans to destroy Alonso's ship, on her route to Naples, are murderous and he is so cruel to make him believe that his son Ferdinand drowned, even if he is alive and has fallen in love with Miranda. In reaction to that, Prospero condemns him to carry logs all day long for the rest of his life. All that happens as a consequence of the tempest which he has created thanks to Ariel's help, thus causing Alonso's shipwreck who in turn becomes the victim of Prospero's manipulation through his magical powers.

In other words, he manages to do that through sorcery that links to another key theme: religion, which, again, can be related to Machiavelli's teaching. Prospero, like Pope Alexander VI,

who was mentioned in the prologue to *The Jew of Malta* quoted above, acted as a prince on running the church as a state. He managed to merge religion and political power by applying the power of religion in temporal affairs, as when he "best showed how a Pope might prevail both by money and by force. With Duke Valentine as his instrument and seizing the opportunity of the French invasion." (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. XI, 43). Hence, crushing any seditious attempt to change the "status quo" by the many Italian factions. Machiavelli says that, when Alexander died his son Cesare Borgia made a big mistake on naming Julius, Pontiff, because he should have proclaimed himself Pope, or perhaps even abolish the papacy. It is clear that Prospero avoided such a fatal mistake and, after landing on the island, merged religion and secular power through Machiavelli's manipulation of religion in the form of a spiritual being called Ariel, who, throughout the play, can appear just to him and act as an instigator with his singing and teasing. Prospero orders him to "Be subject/ To no sight but thine and mine, invisible/ To every eyeball else." (Shakespeare, 1966: Act I, sc. ii, 359-361). Only at the end, the audience discovers that the storm occurred thanks to Ariel's magic art, but everybody had been deceived by then and believed that Prospero was the only master on the island and that he could have such miraculous powers. Yet, we know that it is mainly through Ariel's art that Prospero could analyse human nature which, as far as he was concerned, was only negative since he had been overthrown from his Dukedom. So, just out of compassion for human beings' degraded natures, he eventually lifts his spell and forgives those who had plotted against him. His good-heartedness paves the way to a new regime where human suffering is sensibly lowered, though it cannot be completely eliminated. This is the new world envisaged by Prospero where the Machiavellian soldier, Ferdinand, will make sure that justice is administered as fairly as possible, whereas Miranda will take care of compassion and of the beauty of nature. Obviously this new reality does not seem to be aligned with Machiavelli's self-centered theories as presented in *The Prince*. In spite of that, a prince can still achieve glory which in *The Tempest* results from a compromise between the very corrupt realities of Naples and Milan and the attempt to refound them by establishing a new order. This recalls quite closely a point stressed by Machiavelli himself as follows:

> And truly, if a prince be anxious for glory and the good opinion of the world, he should rather wish to possess a corrupt, city, not to ruin it wholly like Caesar, but to reorganize it like Romulus. […]
>
> And, in fine, let him to whom Heaven has vouchsafed such an opportunity reflect that there are two ways open to him; one that will enable him to live securely and insure him glory after death, and the other that will make his life one of constant anxiety, and after death consign him to eternal infamy (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. X, 145)

Similarly, it is worth highlighting that Shakespeare too caught this dichotomy in *The Tempest*, which shows that Italy stood for him for the two extreme poles of civility and corruption, representing the essence of Italian politics as well as that of a Machiavellian prince.

All the above was epitomised in the epithet "Machiavellian", the symbol of amorality and decadence, leading to the coinage of the expression "Old Nick" (i.e. the Devil), that is Nicolò

Machiavelli who became the symbol of the Antichrist in the Manichean conception of the world that was being created by the English Protestants. Moreover, we cannot but stress that it was mainly through drama that the Florentine Secretary entered the consciousness of the Anglo-Saxon secular world. In particular, there was an absolute craze for him after 1570, especially among the students at Cambridge, including the polygraph Gabriel Harvey (1545- 1630), who in his *Pierces Supererogation* (1593) built up a Machiavellian ideal of "virtue". Incidentally, this is not the Christian principle, known in Italian as *virtù* which, was removed by Machiavelli, but was the equivalent of the Latin *virtus*, a quality typical of a brave and audacious man. Such a person is helped by fortune, a pagan goddess, if you like, who often favours brave people even if, being not easily controllable, may even destroy them. This, in turn, is an approach that paved the way to the Nietzschean superman (see *Marginialia*). Ideas of this nature found a suitable social situation in the political uncertainty surrounding the succession in the last years of Elizabeth's reign which paved the way to instability and disillusion in the first years of King James I's Reign. No wonder that in the Jacobean Age, Machiavelli's popularity continued to grow and turned him into a character of great stature, with a coherent philosophy of life, who reached the heights of stoicism as a true Senecan hero.

There again, it was this extreme attitude of mind that had a strong impact on the imagination of the time. Hence, as the Italian journalist, Luigi Barzini says in *The Fatal Attraction of Italy* (1981), the English loved and disliked this country depending on what Machiavelli's mesmerising mastermind managed to convey through the many characters drawn from him. It was enough for a character to say to another, "Now you are full Italian" to indicate his/her perfection in being a rascal to the contemporary audience. Despite that, rich families used to send their male offspring to Italy to help them become men of the world. Robert Ascham (1515: 32) wrote that, after spending only nine days in Italy, "an Englishman Italianized is [becomes] the Devil incarnated." (Ascham, 1967: 66). This expression echoed Thomas Nashe in one of his tales twenty-three years later, in 1594:

> *Italy*, the Paradise of the earth, and the Epicure's heaven, how doth it form our young master? It makes him to kiss his hand like an ape, […] when he salutes a man. From thence he brings the art of atheism, the art of epicurising, the art of whoring, the art of poisoning, the art of sodomitry. […] It is now a privy note amongst the better sort of men, when they would set a singular mark or brand on a notorious villain, to say he hath been in Italy. (Nashe, 1972: 235)

It is clear that the sentence, 'It makes him to kiss his hand like an ape' recalls the line, 'I learn'd in Florence how to kiss my hand' (see *The Jew of Malta*: 6) is most telling about the Florentine lifestyle in those days.

Part II

Most importantly, it is the overall picture depicted by Nashe that is intriguing and arises some interesting questions: has Italy continued to be seen as negatively as that through the centuries?

has Machiavelli continued to have any direct or indirect influence at the political level on such a chilling spectacle? or has a better and more objective judgment emerged of him? These questions lead us straight into the second part of this essay, specifically to the period "beyond" which I referred to in the title. Note though that to see a change of attitude towards Machiavelli, we do not need to go very far from the period we have taken into consideration hitherto. In fact, outside the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical world, and the pro-Machiavelli stands taken by Wolfe and Gentili, a more truthful and scientific interpretation of Machiavelli's thought began to appear with the two English empiricist philosophers Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). They followed up his steps to modernity and threw some light on his political theories applied to a highly egotistic society as the English one had become. Bacon admired Machiavelli's realism and expressed his gratitude saying, "hence we are beholden to Machiavel, and writers of that kind, who openly and unmasked declare what men do in fact, and not what they ought to do." (Bacon, 2011: Book II, ch. Three, 321). In agreement with that, Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618) synthesises Machiavelli's realism in the phrase, "Machiavel's two marks to shoot at, to wit, riches and glory" (Raleigh, 2009: Book I, Chap. 1: 42). Hobbes, in turn, with his attack on humanistic Aristotelianism, considering man a political animal, is in consonance with Machiavelli and Bacon as well as with other contemporary thinkers like the French essayist Montaigne. But what he shared with Machiavelli in particular was his thought on religion seen "as a powerful influence in human behaviour that should be controlled by the sovereign in the interest of social peace." (Femia, 2004: 97). Consequently, both of them rejected the idea that human beings are sinners from their birth and can only be saved by God, assuming that what is true instead is that people naturally tend to pursue their ambitions by improving themselves in the search of wealth and social achievement, i.e. reputation and prestige. Hobbes says, in line with Machiavelli, that there isn't any moral restrain that can stop human beings:

> But whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth *good*: and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*, and of his contempt, *vile* and *inconsiderable.* […] there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves. (Hobbes, 1962: 90)

By the mid-eighteenth century, an even more favourable judgment on Machiavelli became popular thanks also to a close follower of Hobbes, David Hume (1711: 76), a liberal theorist of the Age of Reason, who, in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, shows a surprising number of affinities, regarding domestic policy, leadership and international relations. This positive trend was confirmed outside Britain with the growth of romantic nationalism. Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), the early prophet of German unity, claimed that *The Prince* was not a dangerous guide for political criminals, but an objective study of sixteenth century Italian politics by a patriot hoping to help his country to unite and become a strong presence in Europe. In contrast, the Scottish historian, Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) openly showed his contempt for Machiavelli's "incredible sophisms", though as Praz puts it, perhaps he never wondered how much he himself owed to the Florentine thinker.

In any case, it was in Italy that the studies on Machiavelli reached a turning point in the twentieth century when Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the founder of the Italian Communist Party, saw him as a political philosopher comparable to Karl Marx (1818-83) for embodying the unity of thought and action, and for taking the "essentially revolutionary" course of abandoning traditional constraints in people's efforts to change the world. But Machiavelli arose the attention also on the right-wing front, Hermann Rauschning recounts that in his private conversations (1932-34) with Adolf Hitler, *Gespraeche mit Hitler*, published as *Hitler Speaks* (London, 1939), the Fürher asserted that the Italian thinker influenced him on shaping his thought as much as the composer Richard Wagner (1813-83) about whom he said: "Wagner's line of thought is intimately familiar to me. […] At every stage of my life I come back to him."

It will not be surprising to see that Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was equally fascinated by Machiavelli's theories. Indeed, he even felt the need to write a preface to *The Prince*, a decision which brought him no luck. The "Duce" wrote a sympathetic introductory essay that he meant to deliver in his "lectio magistralis" when he was going to be awarded an *honoris causa* degree by the University of Bologna in 1924. But, perhaps, due to his commitment to the forthcoming general elections, he made a bodge up of his work which aroused the scholars' puzzlement who postponed the date of the academic ceremony a few times and invited him to revise his presentation. The Duce lost his patience and gave up eventually. Nonetheless, at the end of April 1924, three weeks after he had won the elections, the essay appeared in the magazine "Gerarchia". There is no doubt that Mussolini loved *The Prince*, was knowledgeable about it, and maybe was already thinking of using it to justify his future doings. In fact, after the Fascist single party list won the General Election on 24 March 1929, the very same essay was published, even by the major Italian newspapers, under the title "Preludio al Machiavelli". The dictatorship was fully established by then, and Italy's gradual downfall began with the murder of Giacomo Matteotti (1885-1924), the leader of the Italian Socialist Party. Quite relevantly to this essay, at the beginning of July, the English magazine *english life* published posthumously Matteotti's last speech, a two-page piece entitled "Machiavelli, Mussolini and fascism." Ironically, it sounds as a critical reply to the Duce's superficial "Preludio," conceived as a screen to his tyrannical regime, while Matteotti rebuts Mussolini's conception of people and democracy of which he loses control, representing a development which Matteotti says that Machiavelli would have never allowed to happen. Therefore, he advises the "Duce" to cleanse fascism, instead of wasting time with his "crude effusioni" ("simple effusions") on Machiavelli, "la cui pubblicazione tende a infamare l'Italia di fronte al mondo intero," ("whose publication tends to bring shame on Italy before the whole world." *my translation*) (Matteotti, 1924: 87)

Following the fall of the Fascist regime, the Christian Democrats won the 1948 General Election and dominated the Italian political scene for about fifty years, meanwhile Machiavelli and his theories were virtually forgotten. However, although the Catholics had such a repulsing attitude towards him, they applied a cynical and often malicious approach to socio-political affairs. One of their leading historical figures, Giulio Andreotti, will never be forgotten for his famous aphorisms such as "power wears out those who don't have it," or "having a poor opinion is a sin,

but you always hit the mark."

An interest in Machiavelli aroused again only when Bettino Craxi (1934-2000), the secretary of the Socialist Party, or rather his ghost writer, Franco Gherardi, wrote the preface to *The Prince* for the first issue of a series of political books to appear with the weekly magazine "Epoca" in 1988. Craxi did not change anything and took the responsibility of what Gherardi had written. In brief, he used Machiavelli as an anti-communist to attack the Gramscian interpretation according to he Italian Communist Party leadership, thus lending himself to their polemical criticism. Most interesting, he apologised for his emphasis on the famous Machiavellian aphorism, "the end justifies the means," (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. xviii, 26) instead of focusing the attention on Machiavelli as the father of modern political thinking.

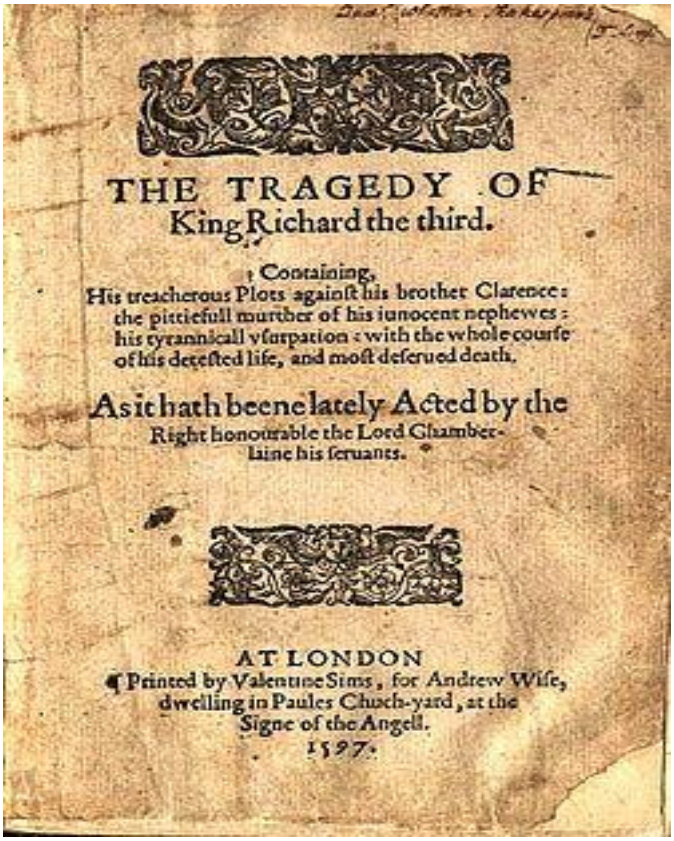
The third and last author to write a preface to *The Prince* was another Italian prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi (1936), Craxi's closest friend, in 1992. He wrote only three and a half pages for the third volume of a very expensive and luxurious series, printed by his own publishing house, Mondadori; it included Napoleon's annotations on *The Prince* (Paris: Guillon Monteleon, 1816). An economic edition appeared in 1994, during the national elections' campaign. In his preface, Berlusconi, like Mussolini and Craxi, after a short historical introduction declares that Machiavelli's work is still topical ("anche ai nostri giorni" / "even nowadays"), but he extends its usefulness to "all those people who hold positions of responsibility" ("tutti coloro che gestiscono posizioni di responsabilità" *My translations*). I believe that he was not necessarily thinking solely of politicians, after all he was not even one when he wrote that preface in 1992. Yet, it is true that *The Prince* was an incredible source of "inspiration" for his future political and entrepreneurial career. Indeed, there are also various other aspects which he admitted sharing with Machiavelli. For example, just like the best archers of the past, he said he was very good at aiming prudentially high in doing business, but he also showed a great ability in being a "fox" or a "lion" depending on the situation. Here is how Machiavelli puts it, "One must therefore be a fox to recognise traps, and a lion to frighten wolves." (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. xviii, 64) In other words, the fox is used as a symbol for astuteness and its counterpart, the lion, as a symbol for bravery. Likewise, Bersluconi shares the idea that "Everybody sees what you appear to be, few feel what you are" (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. xviii, 66) which has made him take particular care of his public image, but the physical, not the moral. Equally important to Berlusconi is what Machiavelli says about the desperate need for Italy to trust a new "redemptor", but what is laughable is that he believed he was Our Lord's Anointed ("l'Unto del Signore"):

> And although before now a gleam of hope has appeared which gave hope that some individual might be appointed by God for her [Italy's] redemption […] Behold how she [Italy] prays God to send someone to redeem her from this barbarous cruelty and insolence. Behold her ready and willing to follow any standard if only there be someone to raise it. (Machiavelli, 1950: ch. xxvi, 95)

Almost as if the structure of this essay has come full circle, Berlusconi leads us back to the Elizabethan theatre and William Shakespeare. Curiously enough, the Italian tycoon recalls King

Richard III and his psychodrama when he is trying to turn reality upside down by presenting himself as a victim of the media, though he still has virtually full control of the mediatic power in Italy. Then, we can say that all the great Elizabethan theatre characters speak to us not only of old, sad, far-off things but also, and memorably, of familiar matters of today. We can say that Machiavelli's legacy as a political thinker is no doubt topical. In agreement with the Florentine thinker, Tobias Jones in *The Dark Heart of Italy*, an account of his three-year voyage across the Italian peninsula, declares:

> There is in Italy, a yearning for a redeemer, for a politician who will raise a new banner and "cleanse those sores" arising from misrule. That was the appeal of Mussolini in 1922, or of the Christian Democrats in 1948. Each new political regime is seen as a bright dawn before being furiously rejected when that dawn appears as false as the last (which, naturally, only increases the yearning for another redeemer). (Jones, 2004: 192)


THE TRAGEDY OF
King Richard the third.

Containing,
His treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence:
the pittiefull murther of his innocent nephewes:
his tyrannicall vsurpation: with the whole course
of his detested life, and most deserued death.

As it hath beene lately Acted by the
Right honourable the Lord Chamber-
laine his seruants.

AT LONDON
Printed by Valentine Sims, for Andrew Wise,
dwelling in Paules Church-yard, at the
Signe of the Angell.
1597.

Figure 4: Front cover Shakespeare's *Richard III*, 1597.

Conclusion

On concluding, it is evident that just like scholars, political leaders confront many contradictory interpretations according to their personal moral views, emotions, and conveniences. To this day,

Machiavelli's legacy has provoked almost uninterrupted controversy and there is little consensus about what he actually said. In the meantime, the "vices" Machiavelli denounced: political instability, social disillusion, corruption, intrigue, immorality, violence and riots, still permeate political life especially in Italy where all that continues to be painfully relevant. (By way of example, Italy has the highest level of corruption in the European Union that is half of the total of the whole Union).

Nevertheless, I am pleased to say that it has become fashionable to see Machiavelli as a forerunner of modern democracy, whose scope is to promote popular participation and resolve the opposing claims of different interests and values. Was then his traditional sinister reputation undeserved? I believe that is the case. Fortunately, today's experts see him no longer as a treacherous flatterer of tyrants, or a forerunner of modern totalitarianism, but as a pragmatic pioneer of politics based on actual circumstances, who rejected theology, metaphysics and abstract idealistic principles. This is why Machiavelli's thought is considered most relevant for the contemporary world socio-political scenario: he has expanded his sphere of influence outside the political world. He is even seen as some sort of guide for the unscrupulous modern manager, as hinted at above by Berlusconi. Yet, however unexpected, Machiavelli is also known among today's youth. Surprisingly, he has arisen even the interest of Tupac, a popular American rapper, who charmed by his writings, calls himself Makaveli, while videogame lovers know him for games featuring the Florentine thinker as a member of the "Italian Brotherhood of Assassins," where he helps his Florentine ally Ezio Auditore and Leonardo da Vinci to chase Cesare Borgia in Valencia. Therefore, should we not conclude that we all still live in Machiavelli's shadow?

Figure 5. Cover of a collection of essays by F. Ceccarelli. Roma: Encyclopedia. Treccani, 2013.

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