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**Machiavellian Providential Politics in Marlowe and Shakespeare:
A Comparative Perspective**

by

Joseph Khoury, B. Ed., B.A.H., B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture:
Comparative Literary Studies

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

10 September 2001

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C. Faulkner, Director

Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture:
Comparative Literary Studies

Department

D. Beecher (Thesis Supervisor)

A. Kinney (External Examiner)

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
10 September 2001

Abstract

Scholars have yet to show how Marlowe or Shakespeare were “answering” Machiavelli—whether in an out-and-out critique of his ideas, or as a begrudging admission that his political theories are suitable or necessary for the emerging nation-state. There is the additional difficulty of trying to prove that the two playwrights were directly influenced by him, a task made more difficult by the fact that one need not name the thinker one is criticizing. Without question, however, there are affinities that draw the three Renaissance men into a common circle of thought on history, power, loyalty, and other social and political issues, and these beg to be compared. Before attempting the comparison, I clarify the relationship that exists between the Englishmen and the Italian, while navigating through the difficult assumptions about literary influence, especially when hard evidence about the English writers’ “influences” remains elusive. Once I extrapolate these writers’ deeper acquaintance with Machiavelli’s thoughts, I proceed to treat the question of how they *adopted* and *adapted* him for their own particular purposes within the English ethos. I concern myself especially with the question of how religion is used in politics, the theme upon which Marlowe and Shakespeare focus in *Tamburlaine* and *Henry V*. I make an effort to answer the question of how Marlowe and Shakespeare viewed religion generally, and Christianity particularly, in light of the new worldview presented to them through the eyes of Machiavellian political philosophy which, I argue, is a political philosophy largely concerned with providential politics, the very theme that caused England to fear Machiavellian thinking even while adopting it. My conclusion is that Marlowe accepted and dramatized Machiavellian thinking, but in doing so he

presented it in the raw, as Machiavellism applied without the social and historical impediments around which a ruler must normally navigate. Shakespeare, on the other hand, while accepting Marlowe's perspective on Machiavellism, dramatized the Italian's thoughts within English history, displaying how the ideal Machiavellian constantly re-makes himself in order to manoeuvre around the historical forces that could potentially impede his quest for power.

To my late Father,
My first and best teacher.
'A was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

Hamlet

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Note on Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated, primary references are to the following editions:

- Machiavelli.** O: *Tutte le opere*. A cura di Mario Martelli. Milano: Sansoni, 1993.
- CW: *Chief Works and Others*. Trans. Allan Gilbert. Durham: Duke UP, 1965.
- AW: *The Art of War*. Trans. Ellis Farnsworth. Revised and edited by Neal Wood. New York: Da Capo P, 1990.
- D: *The Discourses*. Ed. Bernard Crick. Trans. Leslie J. Walker, S. J. Revised by Brian Richardson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.
- P: *The Prince*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.
- FH: *Florentine Histories*. Trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988.
- PM: *Portable Machiavelli*. Eds. and Trans. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
- Marlowe:** *The Complete Plays*. Ed. J. B. Steane. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.
- Shakespeare:** Except for 2 and 3 *Henry 6*, the references are to the individual Signet Classic editions, New American Library. Series edited by Sylvan Barnet. The 2 and 3 *Henry 6* edition is that of the single text in the Pelican Shakespeare, edited by Robert K. Turner, Jr. and George Walton Williams, 1967.

Biblical quotations are from the *Authorized King James Version*.

Introduction: English Machiavelli and the Comparative Approach

The historian [and the literary critic] is in effect committed irreducibly to the language of betting and guessing. (Skinner 1966 211)

A literary event can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it—if there are readers who again appropriate the past work or authors who want to imitate, outdo, or refute it. (Jauss 22)

Machiavelli's influence on the English Renaissance stage is incontestable, to the extent one adopts for a premise that the Machiavellian stage villain is a hyperbolical extrapolation of Machiavellian thought. The mention of the name alone is certain proof. But this satiric epitome of evil may be a kind of smokescreen that disguises a more serious analytical acknowledgement of the Florentine as a political thinker. The question is no longer how the bogeyman political philosopher arose in the English theatre in the name of a man mistrusted and misunderstood, but how, at the same time, the complexities, even the inevitabilities, of Machiavellian thought in the context of the rising nation-state found their way generically and arguably specifically into any analytical dramatic representation of historicized rulers, from tyrants and megalomaniacs to self-conscious strategists as astute men of state who mastered the arts of power through deft readings of their times and realities, and who held the state and their own survival within it as tantamount to their own self definition, actualization, and *raison d'être*. In these more subtle manifestations within the discipline of history itself, it may be seen that the inflated god-man of the oriental ruler as exemplified in a Tamburlaine, though purportedly the

most manifestly Machiavellian of rulers, is perhaps further in spirit from the Machiavel of *Il Principe* than Shakespeare's "Christian" kings who master the flexibilities of temporizing and contextualized self-assertion, who play the dynamics of peace as well as war, who name the terms of their own limitations while quietly subverting them, who rule sometimes deviously in the name of "this England," that makes them all survivors in a new world of *realpolitik*. It is with this Machiavelli in the English theatre that the following study is concerned, both as he was appropriated from the man and the *Zeitgeist*, which is thought created, and as it arose *sui generis* from English efforts in dynastic, constitutional, and diplomatic terms to define the new nation-state and its monarchy. Anatomizing the dialogue with, or "answering" of, Machiavel in the "political" plays of the two leading Tudor dramatists is the goal of the thesis to follow. Marlowe sets up the problematics of Machiavellian *realpolitik* on scales that vacillate between the ruler as monster and megalomaniac and the ruler as visionary, self-actualizer, and builder of empires in the face of fortune, resistance, and death. Shakespeare, I will argue, answers the Marlovian debate with Machiavelli, his two faces, with illustrations suffused in the personalities of English history, tantamount to an indirect debate with the Florentine. Paradoxically, Marlowe is the less Machiavellian of the two in his program of grandiosity and shock, while Shakespeare seems to acknowledge that Machiavellian strategies will become a *de facto* (in all but name) aspect of political survival.

The task of trying to prove that the two playwrights were directly influenced by Machiavelli, as many students of the Renaissance continue to suggest, is made more difficult by the fact that one need not name the thinker one is criticizing. The case for Shakespeare's familiarity with Machiavelli is more difficult to make than Marlowe's, a

point I will elaborate on below, especially in the chapter on Marlowe. Without question, however, there are affinities, defined by Aldridge as “resemblances in style, structure, mood or idea between two works which have no other necessary connection,” that draw the three Renaissance men into a common circle of thought on history, power, loyalty, love, and other social and political issues, and these beg to be compared.¹ The reason Shakespeare is the more problematic of the two writers I have chosen to compare with their Italian predecessor is that he discusses Machiavelli in a seemingly less explicit manner; and yet he is the dramatist most often discussed and about whom most assumptions regarding influence are made, often bad assumptions, or assumptions that may be plausible but that are not verified or verifiable. But before attempting such a comparison, I must clarify the relationship that exists between the Englishmen and the Italian, while establishing a roadmap that will be useful for drawing our attention to the quandaries encountered when making assumptions about literary influence, especially when hard evidence about Shakespeare’s “influences” remains elusive. Once I extrapolate these writers’ deeper acquaintance with the Italian thinker’s thoughts, then I will proceed to treat the question of how they used Machiavelli, how they *adopted* and *adapted* him for their own particular purposes, specifically how these playwrights reformulated the question of political action to suit the English ethos of the day. It is most important, therefore, to bracket the term “influence” at the start. I adopt J. T. Shaw’s definition:

An author may be considered to have been influenced by a foreign author
when something from without can be demonstrated to have produced upon

¹Aldridge is quoted in Weisstein (597). Affinity is a term also used by Hassan (36).

him and/or his artistic works an effect his native literary tradition and personal development do not explain. In contrast to imitation, influence shows the influenced author producing work which is essentially his own.

(91, qtd. in Weisstein 597, original emphasis)

To this definition, Weisstein has added that influence “suggests a more complicated pattern composed . . . of conscious and subconscious elements” and confirms that it “by no means precludes originality” (597).

1.1. Italy in England: Ambivalence Dramatized

Inglese italianato è un diavolo incarnato (An Englishman Italianized is the Devil incarnated). (Italianized Proverb in Ascham’s *The Schoolmaster* 66).

I live here in a paradise inhabited with devils. (Sir Henry Wotton to Lord Zouche. Written at Florence, 25 June 1592. Qtd. in Gasquet 9)

Italy and things Italian were both admired and feared by the English. This ambivalence is well documented on and off stage, but nowhere better exemplified than with the opposing receptions accorded to the works of Machiavelli and Castiglione, an ambivalence best expressed in Nashe’s *Unfortunate Traveller*. Nashe may not have been thinking about these two Italians specifically, but he does capture the uncertain English attitude towards Italy:

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, cringe his neck like a starveling, and play at heypass, repass come aloft, 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. The only probable good thing they have to keep us from utterly condemning it is that it maketh a man an excellent courtier, a curious carpet knight; which is, by interpretation, a fine close lecher, a glorious hypocrite. 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. (345)

Although this kind of reaction does not grapple with Machiavellian thinking at a meaningful level, it nevertheless tells us that the popularized Machiavel (atheist, poisoner, hypocrite, and so on) had become well-known, and therefore had to be contended with at some level of thought, even tamed, in order to make a serious discussion of Machiavellism acceptable. Notwithstanding such attacks, Italian learning was highly esteemed, as any glance at the reading habits and the number of translations of Italian works of the Elizabethans will tell us. Certainly, any well-educated Elizabethan would have had at least a smattering of Italian.² *The Mousetrap*, Hamlet reminds us, was “written in very choice Italian” (3.2. 263). English ambivalence regarding Italy was a state of mind ripe for exploitation by playwrights, especially in order “to influence audience response and, in some cases, provide cover for political opposition” (Marrapodi Introd. 7). This is exactly the ambivalence Marlowe exploited when he introduced Machevill onto

²See, for example, Gasquet's important chapters surveying the cultural relationships between England and Italy: “Les relations culturelles entre l'Angleterre et l'Italie” (11-25), and “L'opinion élisabéthaine sur l'Italie” (27-40).

the English stage, a discussion that I will expand upon in the chapter on Marlowe.

The theatrical effects used by English playwrights included Italian locales whose purpose was to provide an inherent link to the “dramatic structure,” to the extent that Italy became “a structural constituent in English Renaissance theatre,” thus making Italian culture the most appropriated alien culture in Renaissance England, an appropriation that relied upon a “protean myth” that was twisted to satisfy the particular theatrical needs of every dramatist.³ Shakespeare, for example, set eleven of his plays in Italy, and was clearly knowledgeable in Italian, using the untranslated *Gl'Ingannati* as a source for *Twelfth Night*, and a *novella* by Giraldi Cinthio as a source for *Othello*. Shakespeare also included a number of Italian phrases in a few of his plays.

The use of an Italian locale in a play signified much more than simple setting; it also conveyed all the negative associations of Italy carried by the English, along with the sometimes positive ones. This “mixed attitude of alternating praise and execration, together with the need to establish a clear sense of difference between these two worlds” (Locatelli 74), led to the creation of an Italy that is at once real and fictitious. The Italy of Shakespeare and his contemporaries

is a country in which the ‘real’ features—social, historical, geographical, political, cultural—are inextricably intertwined with the imaginary. [Their] Italy is the product of the written and oral traditions, and of the imagination, and is itself a mask behind which are hidden the features and problems of London and England. Italy is an Elizabethan myth fed by a

³The quoted phrases are from Marrapodi who discusses this aspect of English Renaissance drama at some length (Intro. 1, 2).

thousand sources, not least by the travellers who 'narrate' it. Italy is the Papal State, the courts of the Renaissance, Machiavelli; it is desire, nostalgia, utopia; it is the stage on which anything can happen—loves, murders, political intrigue, tragedies, comedies. (Lombardo 144-145)

The purpose of topography, which "is often loaded with a series of theatrical pointers," is to establish a social and political ambience necessary for the play. Topography also reveals the refined playwright's awareness of his audience's ideological prejudices, and is likely to be in tune with their needs to react a certain way, through reference to, or association with, certain "cultural constructs thematically tied to the concerns of the play" (Marrapodi Introd. 6-7), even while the playwright may be attempting to undermine their beliefs. An Elizabethan *political* reference to Italy is likely a reference to Machiavelli also, and therefore a reference to *de facto* political power. A Machiavellian reference is, to use Marrapodi's analysis of the use of a locale, "semantically over-determined: it acts on the playtext, determining the local climate, and colouring the dramatic interactions which take place within its boundaries" (Marrapodi Introd. 7). Of course, we must still separate the popular and general Nashe-like semantics regarding Italy from the serious, more specific Machiavelli-related semantics. The Elizabethans relied on Italy to account for the emerging modern political soul for which they had no ready-made vocabulary or theory, especially needed to account for the treachery and duplicity they saw in their own courts after the death of Henry VIII and the fight for power between Mary and Elizabeth. Half appropriating and half manufacturing Italy on the stage, they managed to create an English understanding of the new face of politics converging with analysis presumed in the name of Machiavelli who stood in for Italy and things Italian in certain political ways.

In *Twelfth Night*, for example, Malvolio wants to improve his mind by reading “politic authors” (2.5.161); arguably, he wants to become Machiavellian.⁴

To be Machiavellian, or just Italian, was not as simple as being deceitful, or atheistic, or just plain bad. A careful reading of English plays reveals that “frequently, stereotyped traits are evoked not to establish Italian identity but, paradoxically, to mark the fact that an Italian character deviates from the assumed norm” (Hoenselaars 40). This is because vice, and other characteristics, were beginning to be acknowledged as universal, instead of national specific, faults. Along with this recognition came also the recognition that attributing such faults “to a specific other was no more than a convenient and distorting projection of common human error, an error rooted in ethnocentric thought patterns.” The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries began the process of reappraising national stereotypes, becoming skeptical of the received opinions (Hoenselaars 43-44).⁵ They realized that the attempt to explain “English” traits to disbelieving Englishmen by attributing the traits to Italian decadence actually holds a mirror up to their audience; that is, while cautioning their fellow Englishmen that the traits are un-English, at the same time they were confessing and teaching the traits as quintessentially English. Still, the Elizabethans were Italophobic and *Machiavellophobic*, and the playwrights made good use of these fears, especially with the vices attributed to Machiavelli’s work, to the extent that

the semantic identification of Italy [and Machiavelli] with vice makes it

⁴This is Harry Levin’s interpretation as well (in Marrapodi 23).

⁵Montaigne’s *Les Essais* is the prime example of this re-evaluative process.

possible for Renaissance dramatists to avoid immediate Christian and overtly didactic connotations by placing their dramatic worlds outside the traditional religious context. What had to be shown in highly abstract allegorised form as a conflict between humankind and supernatural good and bad forces can now be represented as social interaction between more or less ordinary people. Vice finds itself secularised into a form of human behaviour, and it is projected on to a constructed Italianness that has become one of the dominant myths of Elizabethan/Jacobean society.

(Mahler 51)

The Elizabethan dramatists had recognized that how an author or his work is represented is not necessarily synonymous with the actual views of the author or his work. This is not to say, however, that the representation of a text does not survive separately from the author, having its own life. A text, in other words, has “a capacity for memory” (Lotman 18). Lotman goes on to explain, using the example of *Hamlet*:

Hamlet is not just a play by Shakespeare, but it is also the memory of all its interpretations, and what is more, it is also the memory of all those historical events which occurred outside the text but with which Shakespeare’s text can evoke associations. We may have forgotten what Shakespeare and his spectators knew, but we cannot forget what we have learnt since their time. And this is what gives the text new meanings.

(Lotman 18-19)

Machiavelli, the dramatists understood, was the text coupled to the English interpretations appended metaphorically and literally—through introductions by the translators—to the

Florentine's writings.⁶ The dramatists can offer correctives, but they cannot erase the history of the text. Lotman's theoretical observation about this phenomenon is worth reading:

The boundary. . . is ambivalent and one of its sides is always turned to the outside. . . . Since the boundary is a necessary part of the semiosphere and there can be no 'us' if there is no 'them', culture creates not only its own type of internal organization but also its own type of external 'disorganization.' In this sense we can say that the 'barbarian' is created by civilization and needs it as much as it needs him. The extreme edge of the semiosphere is a place of incessant dialogue. No matter whether the given culture sees the 'barbarian' as saviour or enemy, as a healthy moral influence or a perverted cannibal, it is dealing with a construct made in its own inverted image. (Lotman 142)

Lotman goes on to observe that, nonetheless, there always exists "a constant exchange, a search for a common language. . . [e]ven in order to wage war. . . ." This exchange leads to the use by the *receiver* culture of the achievements of the *source* culture *against* the source culture.⁷ Lotman concludes, however, that "these conflicts inevitably lead to cultural equalization and to the creation of a new semiosphere of more elevated order in

⁶Kahn, in her *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, discusses the role of the translators' introductions to Machiavelli's works. She argues that the translators offered a rhetorical Machiavelli to the English readers (125-131).

⁷Even-Zohar uses the terms *source* and *target* cultures. I will discuss Even-Zohar below, but I find that the term *target* suggests that the source culture is specifically directing its art to foreign cultures, which is not always the case, unless the source culture is attempting conquest of the foreign culture. I do not believe that Italy was purposely exporting Machiavelli.

which both parties can be included as equals" (Lotman 142). This equalization had not yet taken hold in Elizabethan or Jacobean England, but there was respect for certain Italian achievements, if not publicly, at least privately, and by important figures, the literary ones being the most distinguishable. Thinking about these matters, Pfister rightly concludes that what scholarship studying Italian reception in Elizabethan England needs to take into account is "the *constructedness* of the stereotypes [of Italy and things Italian]. What is at stake are not simply images of Italy, reflecting Italian reality, but constructions of Italy reflecting at least as much the interests, needs and anxieties of the English themselves" (Pfister 299). Adopting this cautionary route, however, does not suggest that we read "Shakespeare's [or Marlowe's] Italy as a mirror of Elizabethan policy, to construe allegorical equations between fictional plots and current politics, or to regard the Italy of these plays 'as metaphor for Shakespeare's England'" (Pfister 300 quoting Levith 86). Rather, the English reception of Italy generally, and Machiavelli particularly, is a dialogue in which the English had engaged for their own specific purpose of learning how best to cope with their political situation at a time when they had no idea how to overcome the conundrums in which they found themselves.

1.2. Machiavelli in England

Machiavellian political philosophy was commented upon by a number of writers in the 1540's. Outside the Italian editions in the hands of a few privileged Englishmen, // *Principe* became available to Elizabethan writers in Latin as early as 1560, and in English by 1585. We also know that between 1580 and 1585 John Wolfe published Machiavelli's

works in Italian, with false title pages.⁸ Clearly, there was strong demand for Machiavelli's writings. Raab asserts: "no one copies, translates and illicitly prints a writer if people are not interested in reading him" (52). The research into Machiavelli's reception in England has led to a re-evaluation of the relationship between English writers and their Italian predecessor. In 1948, Ribner gave the first plausible argument in support of Machiavellian impulses in Shakespeare, and consequently went on to argue for Machiavellian tendencies in other English Renaissance writers, especially Sidney, Spenser, and Marlowe.⁹ More recently, Donald Wineke and Julia Lupton, among others, have with reasonable success taken up Ribner's cause regarding Shakespeare and Machiavelli, using *1 Henry 6* and *Hamlet* as evidence in support of their respective theses. Although each critic who tackles an English writer's reception of Machiavelli takes a different approach to arrive at his or her respective conclusion, that this writer used Machiavellian political philosophy to defend a thesis he was advocating in a particular play, or that he was rejecting the Machiavellian perspective as unethical, or a variation of either of these views, all the critics fail to give the English writer credit for daring to carve out his own political philosophy, one that might be either different, similar, or

⁸The history of Machiavelli's reception in England is well documented. In addition to Raab, see Praz, Bawcutt, Ribner, Kahn, and others. See also Gasquet, who lists William Cecil, Sir Thomas Smith, Henry Percy, Lord Lumley, and William Watson among others whose libraries contained copies of some of Machiavelli's major writings (47). There is also a belief that Thomas Kyd himself owned an English manuscript of *Il Principe* (Watson 636). Gasquet's study of Machiavelli's concentrated reception in Elizabethan England is by far the best available. It is unfortunate, however, that it seems to be little read in the English speaking world. Mosse's *The Holy Pretence* (15-33) discusses Machiavelli's influence on England, especially in regard to the relationship between Christianity and the idea of reason of state. More recently, Dollimore has adumbrated the connection between religion and ideology in England, especially noting Machiavelli's and Montaigne's influence on the connection (3-28).

⁹See Ribner's articles: "Machiavelli and Sidney: *The Arcadia* of 1590," "Machiavelli and Sidney's *Discourse to the Queenes Majesty*," "Marlowe and Machiavelli."

complementary to Machiavelli's.¹⁰ I propose a more discerning methodology whose purpose is to force scholars seeking to prove that a writer or idea influenced another to demonstrate that the connections between the two sets of texts are such that the connections are "separable from chance" (Skinner 1966 204).¹¹ A careful reading of Machiavellism points to a conflation of influence theories—influence of both "men of practical affairs" and of political thinkers—and "a generic, descriptive term applied to a certain kind of political thought and/or conduct, irrespective of direct contact with the writings of the man himself" (Raab 5). Raab also warns against reading in the same manner Machiavellism of different nationalities, therefore transferring Machiavelli's reception in France, say, to England, or vice versa (6).¹² Likewise, we must be careful not to read different writers, even of the same nationality, in the same manner, because sometimes subtle differences in interpretation make for a very different kind of Machiavellism. The scholars who argue for influence must take into account "the complexity and variety of the sixteenth-century response to Machiavelli," which could

¹⁰Stephen Hollingshead's Ph.D. dissertation takes this approach, arguing that Shakespeare's purpose in the History plays is to reject Machiavelli's anti-Christian stance. Hollingshead concludes that Shakespeare ends his cycle, which begins with *Richard II*, by sketching for us a Christian king in the guise of Henry V. This is an interesting thesis, but one I cannot accept, for three reasons. First, Hollingshead assumes that Shakespeare was influenced by Machiavelli in a simple manner, setting aside the possibility that he may be wrong with his view that if Shakespeare was not influenced by Machiavelli his (Hollingshead's) argument would still stand. Second, I do not accept Hollingshead's thesis that Machiavelli was *simply* anti-Christian, as I will show in a separate chapter. Nevertheless, I do believe that Machiavelli's relationship to Christianity is complex. Third, I do not believe that Henry V is a Christian prince, but actually a perfect Machiavellian prince, as I will demonstrate in a chapter below.

¹¹I have to be less harsh about Lupton's thesis because Lupton takes a slightly different route to arrive at her conclusion, arguing that Shakespeare was answering not Machiavelli but an English translation of his *Il Principe*. That is, Lupton is saying that Shakespeare was influenced, or was answering, English Machiavellism, not Machiavelli. It is an interesting thesis, but one that still fails to tackle the question of influence head on.

¹²Beame gives a thorough review of French Machiavellism.

have been “one of strong admiration, or intense hatred, or a whole range of mixed feelings in between these two extremes” (Bawcutt 49, 8).¹³ Inevitably, Elizabethan Machiavellism must include not only Machiavelli’s theories, but those *attributed* to him as well.¹⁴

1.3. The Question of Influence

For the past few decades, scholars have typically accepted T. S. Eliot’s credo that

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not onesided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. (16)

No one doubts the value of comparing artists, but the question of how to determine if a writer was affected by a previous writer is not an easy one, and cannot be taken lightly, as it has often been. Scholars who jump at the chance to argue for A having influenced B typically fall into the trap of mistaking their own perceptions, influences, and analogies as writer B’s perceptions, influences, and analogies. That is, a reader sees a similarity in

¹³Kahn repeats Bawcutt’s thesis in her *Machiavellian Rhetoric* (282).

¹⁴Armstrong (1948 25) arrives at a similar conclusion, but he wrongly believes that Elizabethan Machiavellism was “largely derived from the attack made upon Machiavelli by. . . Gentillet” (26).

Shakespeare or Marlowe and Machiavelli and immediately believes that Shakespeare or Marlowe must have read Machiavelli because this particular similarity is there.¹⁵ The reader further assumes that a writer could not have arrived at his own ideas by himself, that some previous writer must have influenced him to write what he wrote. Following his assumption, the reader satisfies his curiosity about either what caused writer B to write what he wrote, or he mitigates his own inferiority complex regarding the fact that this writer thought something original which this reader had not thought, or he knocks the writer down a peg or two, thus suggesting that he is not as great as he is widely held to be.¹⁶ In either case, the reader has forced an issue where none may have existed. The fallacy this reader disguises as truth is that of believing that ideas occur only in a particular time and place, that they could not have occurred in two minds simultaneously, or at different times. I am not suggesting that influence does not exist—indeed, it does—but I am arguing that we often impose our value judgements on writer B whom we deem to have been influenced by writer A, for ascertaining an influence is an imposition of a value judgement (Guillén 62), one that diminishes Writer B's originality because influence presupposes causality which has, time and again, eluded proof. Causality, which means for the historian—and the literary critic—that he can “judge in a particular case that there was a necessary connection between the event and the circumstances cited to explain it” (Dray 158, qtd. in Skinner 202), is the first of a two-step process, the second being comparative or textual, and evaluates “the relevance or genetic function of that

¹⁵Skinner also discusses this view (1966 212).

¹⁶Although this argument may be read as a paraphrase of Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*, it is not. Bloom directs his argument towards writers, I towards critics. Also, I do not believe that writers simply react to previous writers; their ego is bigger than that.

effect” (Guillèn 62). Scholars who argue for influence on the basis of similarities in ideas or passages—on the basis of textual evidence—have confused “influences and similarities [and] how these two groups of facts are related” (Guillèn 59). Guillèn further points out “that an influence need not assume the recognisable form of a parallelism, just as every parallelism does not proceed from an influence” (59-60).

The distinction Guillèn raises is an important one, specifically because, as he also points out, the value of an influence is psychological, not aesthetic, because it judges its genetic function, whereas the value of a parallelism is aesthetic, because it does not rely on the question of how the work came to be (Guillèn 63). Still, we must be careful not to go too far in neglecting the idea of influence because we can all acknowledge that there are real influences that “shape and direct subsequent artistic activity” (Block 78). How far we take the concept when we compare two writers who share affinities is, therefore, the salient question. Hassan is correct when he redefines influence by shifting the components of similarity and causality to tradition and development, with development defined as “the modification of a tradition into another” (44). He argues, in a fashion similar to Eliot’s, that it is preferable to consider “the question of influences as one of intracultural significance, articulating itself with equal vigour in the historical, social, psychological, and aesthetic contexts of a literary work,” with the last two views being complementary (34-35). Hassan’s view, while laudable in some respects, can be taken too far, as indeed it has been by Harold Bloom, who dismisses the need for attempting to prove that B read A as “wearisome. . . source-hunting” (1973 31) because, in his view, a poem means another poem; the contents of the text are relegated to the backdrop of the poet’s need to write in order to show that he is capable of writing, Bloom concludes (1973 94). Influence, as

Bloom conceives it, “means that there are *no* texts, but only relationships *between* texts” (1975 3, original emphasis).

More recently, Even-Zohar argues that the term “influence” is too vague to be useful, and instead uses the term “interference.” He contends that “interference cannot be divorced from literary history [because] it is part of the historical existence of any cultural system” (54), but warns that it does not govern the literature, and so the attention it is given must be relative to how pervasive the interference is, which is dependent on the context in which the “target” literature finds itself. He defines interference “as a relation(ship) between literatures, whereby a certain literature A (a source literature) may become a source of direct or indirect loans for another literature B (a target literature),” such loans being at different levels of visibility in the target text (54).

Even-Zohar, echoing Shaw’s definition of influence cited above, continues with a thesis that I believe is relevant to the situation in Elizabethan England, that interference occurs more strongly when the target literature is a “dependent” system, that is, when it is either young or “when conditions within it have created a certain situation which cannot be dealt with by the relevant literature exclusively—or mainly—by means of its own sources” (55). Clearly, literature in Elizabethan England was not young, but it was treading uncertain grounds because of the political situation enveloping it, a declaration I will elucidate upon below.

Elizabethan England was in a state of trepidation. There was much uncertainty about humanity’s place in the universe; there were wars all around; there was excitement about the new sciences being developed, combined with the fears new developments bring with them; there was religious uncertainty; and there was political uncertainty. In

short, Marlowe and Shakespeare's age was one of fear, excitement, skepticism, all rolled up in one. As is the case with other writers, Marlowe and Shakespeare had to respond to the world around them. Marlowe, having received an MA from Cambridge, was clearly well aware of both classical and contemporary literature. Shakespeare, too, seems to have been aware of the classical literature (mainly in translation) being read in England, as well as the contemporary literature, both history (mainly chronicle) and fiction. A study of their sources clearly attests to this observation. We also know that Shakespeare was aware of some of the popular continental literature, especially works in Italian. Some of these he probably read in translation, others through the adaptations made by some of his English contemporaries or near-contemporaries, such as Barnabe Riche and Thomas Lodge. In either case, the natural question to ask when studying their influences is whether Marlowe and Shakespeare had access to writer X or Y, in this case Machiavelli. The fact that during the reign of Elizabeth there were three English translations of *Il Principe* confirms that interest in Machiavelli was high, and so anyone with a literary and/or political propensity would likely have made the time to read the treatise, possibly generating interest in the *Discorsi* and other writings by the Secretary.¹⁷ Nonetheless, the evidence for an answer to our question rests mainly on the playwrights' texts, some of whose analogies may seem like probabilities of influence, and about which we must of course remain mindful.

Marlowe was forthright about Machiavelli, bringing him on stage to speak, thus attesting that Machiavelli was well-known in England. Shakespeare is less direct than

¹⁷*The Art of War*, for example, was translated into English in 1560, and contained an elaborate dedication to Queen Elizabeth.

Marlowe but still negatively refers to Machiavelli's name three times, typically to mean the "Machiavellian" character of *Il Principe*, the *Machiavel*.¹⁸ Allusions or words such as "policy" can be offered as clues, but such evidence remains in the realm of a postulation, especially following Bawcutt's study of the word "policy" in early Tudor drama, in which he concludes that "the evil connotations of 'policy' were developed and expanded within the native tradition, by the tricksters, Vices, and Devils of the morality plays, long before the Machiavellian villain appeared on the scene," so that when the later Elizabethans came to respond to Machiavelli, they simply married the word to his name, thus forcing to the forefront its most negative connotations (1971 208-209).¹⁹ We go back to our conjecture that Shakespeare may have felt that he did not possess the tools or ideas necessary to answer certain questions about his political and historical surroundings, and so had to look for ideas elsewhere, ideas, or germs thereof, he found in Machiavelli. This is not uncommon in literature and philosophy, two arts that very much depend on the thoughts of others for their formulation and expansion. In England, the War of the Roses, Henry VIII's break with Rome, and the invasion of the Spanish Armada are events that, along with the vexing question of naming a successor to the Virgin Queen, placed the country in a position of political uncertainty, generating much anxiety at a time when certainty was in more demand, but was also more scarce. The fact that Shakespeare looked to Marlowe's plays for assistance in developing his own ideas suggests that he was in dialogue with other thinkers, including Machiavelli, to find out what they thought about

¹⁸The references occur in three plays only: *Merry Wives of Windsor* (3.1), *1 Henry 6* (5.4), and *3 Henry 6* (3.2).

¹⁹See also Orsini, "'Policy,' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism [sic]." A similar thesis to Bawcutt's was earlier adopted by Watson (633).

the kind of embroiled situation in which England found itself, a point I will elaborate upon in Chapter Four.

I am not suggesting that Shakespeare did not have his own ideas about England; Shakespeare clearly proved himself capable of asking the difficult political questions facing England, questions that he also raised to a higher ethical level. The debate over the possibility of Machiavelli's influence on Shakespeare arises partly because some critics believe that Shakespeare was recreating on stage Machiavelli's maxims about political action and its necessity of severing itself from ethical concerns.²⁰ The fact is that these questions were always asked, but not codified, until Machiavelli set them down.²¹ Machiavelli's genius was in forcing future generations, especially historians and the literati generally, to take account of the need to spell out the self-interest of princes, and why this self-interest is sometimes beneficial to the state.²² This is a theory that Shakespeare clearly understood, as evidenced by his writings. But he also shared other beliefs with Machiavelli, whether consciously or not, such as the belief that history is inherently tragic, that the human being is sometimes tragically dispensable for the sake of the state. Until now, critics who have argued that Shakespeare was influenced by Machiavelli have suggested that the influence was one-way, that Machiavelli "told" Shakespeare what to think. There is, however, the possibility that I have suggested, that

²⁰For example, Allan Bloom (1966 and 1981), Trafton, Strong, Cantor.

²¹One should not underestimate Leo Strauss's influential directive on how Machiavelli ought to be read, nor Strauss's famous statement that Machiavelli is the teacher of evil. As brilliant as Strauss is, he is wrong in this case, although his reading of Machiavelli is often persuasive and intriguing, to say the least. There are predecessors to Machiavelli's way of thinking, and Strauss himself points one out: Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*. See also F. Gilbert's "The Humanist Concept of the Prince..." (1977).

²²This is by no means the only thing Machiavelli accomplished, but it is an accomplishment that, even if it were the only one, cannot be underestimated or taken for granted.

Shakespeare (and Marlowe) may have sought Machiavellism out for particular reasons, a postulation supported by Michael Baxandall who, speaking about influence in art history, reversed the traditional way of thinking about influence in an eloquent yet forceful manner:

“Influence” is a curse of art criticism primarily because of its wrong-headed grammatical prejudice about who is the agent and who the patient: it seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account. If one says that X influenced Y it does seem that one is saying that X did something to Y rather than that Y did something to X. But in the consideration of good pictures and painters the second is always the more lively reality. . . . If we think of Y rather than X as the agent, the vocabulary is much richer and more attractively diversified: draw on, resort to, avail oneself of, appropriate from, have recourse to, adapt, misunderstand, refer to, pick up, take on, engage with, react to, quote, differentiate oneself from, assimilate oneself to, assimilate, align oneself with, copy, address, paraphrase, absorb, make a variation on, revive, continue, remodel, ape, emulate, travesty, parody, extract from, distort, attend to, resist, simplify, reconstitute, elaborate on, develop, face up to, master, subvert, perpetuate, reduce, promote, respond to, transform, tackle...—everyone will be able to think of others. Most of these relations just cannot be stated the other way round—in terms of X acting on Y rather than Y acting on X. To think in terms of influence blunts thought by

impoverishing the means of differentiation. (58-59)

But does this mean that Shakespeare was influenced by Machiavelli in such a way as not to repeat the Florentine's ideas, but to react against them? This is Hollingshead's thesis, but it is not an easily defensible one.²³ Shakespeare was influenced by Machiavelli in such a way that he adapted the Italian's ideas even while adopting them and, I will argue later, Shakespeare actually combined Machiavellism with the Marlovian reading of Machiavelli, itself a fairly accurate rendition of the Secretary's political thoughts. Here, I will introduce the name I have given to Shakespeare's reading of Machiavelli in concert with Marlowe's reading of the Italian, *Marlowe/Machiavelli*, an idea I will explore in more detail in Chapter Four. Block is correct to assert that the study of influences must remain a means instead of an end (80), the means leading towards a better understanding of the two or three writers' political and literary qualities. This is a proviso that we must adhere to lest we forget that a writer's reference to another may not be sufficient evidence for influence, but might in fact be a false lead for the reader, because it is possible that the writer may be purposely deceiving us in order to disguise an "ideological commitment" that he is hoping "to neutralize [with] the incantation of [the earlier writer's] name" (Skinner 206), a possibility that cannot be discounted when the argument is transferred to Marlowe's and Shakespeare's writings—playwrights rarely speak in their own voices.²⁴ Parallel ideas may not necessarily have been derived from another writer, but from somewhere else. The application of the doctrine of influence may at times be "irreducibly

²³See note 10 above.

²⁴This is also the theme of Pondrom's article on Edith Sitwell and Gertrude Stein.

arbitrary" (Skinner 210), a reading with which Jauss agrees, even mocking the "hypertrophied degree" to which "source study" grew, thus "dissolv[ing] the specific character of the literary work into a collection of 'influences' that could be increased at will" (8). But Jauss also understands that at times influence may not be arbitrary, not as long as we realize that writers—all artists—rather than being passive recipients of ideas, react to the ideas in such a manner as to adapt them, revise them, reject them, and sometimes even accept them, but always change them. The recipients "practise a form of bricolage, in other words selecting from the culture surrounding them whatever they find attractive, relevant or useful, and assimilating it (consciously or unconsciously) to what they already possess" (Burke 1996 3). It is therefore more useful for us to abandon the idea of straight influence and instead focus on the uses to which Machiavelli was put. For example, we must ask ourselves why the English focussed their energies more on the Machiavelli of *Il Principe* than the republican Machiavelli.²⁵ We must focus our own energies on how Machiavelli was assimilated in England, and from there gain an understanding of how Marlowe and Shakespeare played with the same ideas, but in their own ways, of course. In other words, Marlowe and Shakespeare could have been reacting not to Machiavelli but to the way the Florentine was understood in England. Their reaction to English Machiavellism, however, does not negate the possibility that they understood (or accepted or rejected) Machiavelli "proper"—whatever that may mean—but that they saw that their predecessor had codified the human condition as

²⁵This reading is in contrast to Kahn's in *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, where she argues that Machiavelli was read both ways, as a supporter of tyranny and as a republican. The stage Machiavel, however, was the rule, not the exception, of the first, tyrannical Machiavelli, as Kahn herself recognizes. Kahn attempts to show that Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was written with the Machiavellian rhetorical perspective in mind. Still, the assumption is that Shakespeare was simply reacting to Machiavelli.

played out in history, much as Marlowe and Shakespeare were doing in the plays and poems. The difference between the three men is that Machiavelli retained the persona of a politician in his writings; Marlowe and Shakespeare rarely, if ever, inserted themselves in their works, and were always working as fictionalizing artists.²⁶ Our understanding of Marlowe and Shakespeare's "Machiavellisms" will allow us to understand Machiavelli better, forcing us to admit that Machiavelli was a remarkably complex writer who thought deeply about matters personal, not just political, and who understood that human affairs are rarely as simple as they seem. At the same time, we will be able to put to rest the sometimes obsessive need to prove Machiavelli's influence on the English playwrights and, instead, accept the fact that readers, even if they were influenced by previous writers, always "domesticate their discoveries by a process of reinterpretation and recontextualization" (Burke 1996 3), what Shapiro calls "containment" (1988 269). Influence inevitably becomes contamination, for even the mere rejection of a thought argues that the thought has already influenced the writer rejecting it. To put the matter simply: to say that a writer was influenced by another does not suggest that the later writer was sermonising the earlier writer.

1.4. Marlowe and Shakespeare's Machiavellisms

As we noted above, there is an honourable list of scholars who have recorded the influence of Machiavelli on Marlowe and Shakespeare, beginning with Robert Greene's

²⁶Most scholars have accepted this statement regarding Shakespeare, but until recently have rarely done so regarding Marlowe whose plays have typically been read as manifestations of his own personality.

attack in *Groatsworth of Witte*. (1592):

Wonder not, (for with thee wil I first begin), thou famous gracer of
Tragedians, that Greene, who hath said with thee like the foole in his heart,
There is no God, should now giue glorie vnto his greatnesse: . . . Why
should thy excellent wit, his gift, be so blinded, that thou shouldst giue no
glory to the giuer? Is it pestilent Machiuilian pollicie that thou hast
studied?²⁷

The list, however, is not without its detractors, nor is it uniform in agreement on the type or depth of influence.²⁸ Nonetheless, the balance tips towards the belief that our playwrights are familiar with Machiavellian political philosophy, and that they are familiar with its English identity, sometimes equated with the papacy, as Marlowe's "Machevill" boldly declares in the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*,

Though some speak openly against my books,
Yet will they read me, and thereby attain
To Peter's chair. . . . (10-12)

The fear of Catholicism was heightened in England by the St. Bartholomew Massacre of Huguenots in France in 1572, an event that Marlowe turned into his *Massacre at Paris*, in which he characterizes the Duke of Guise as a first rate Machiavel, as Machevill in *The Jew* reminds the audience:

Albeit the world think Machevill is dead,

²⁷XII 141-142.

²⁸See note 8.

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. (Prologue 1-4)

The St. Bartholomew Massacre was a watershed event for both England and the continent, not so much because of the horrific proportions of the massacre—although that too of course had a powerful impact—but because the view of history was radically altered, specifically because the massacre—the work of *legitimate* rulers—forced into the foreground the view regarding the “incompatibility between the traditional view that history was tragedy ruled by divine providence, and the radical view that tragedy was history ruled by *raison d'état*” (Adams 67 original emphasis). After the French event, references to Machiavelli became frequent, both in England and on the continent, but the older view of history was still only in the process of being displaced by the newer view, especially in the tragedies being staged in London by “Greville, Marston, Shakespeare, Chapman, and Ben Jonson” (Adams 67). Curiously, Adams does not include in his list Marlowe whose *Tamburlaine* clearly defies the position that Providence ever had any role in history. Essentially, writers, and people in general, were becoming concerned not with the imagined, but the effectual reality of things, to repeat Machiavelli’s famous phrase. Nevertheless, Marlowe’s Machevill is not Machiavellian, but a thoroughgoing Machiavel, a stage figure, a type as opposed to a character. Machevill, in fact, is purposely muddled to sound out Mach-evil, both to associate him with the Italian pope, as the lines quoted above make clear, and to make full use of English anti-Semitism by associating him with the protagonist of the play, the Jew of Malta, Barabas, whose name automatically evokes anti-Semitic fervour because he bears the name of the prisoner freed by Pilate, the

prisoner who unwittingly forced the crucifixion of Jesus. The irony of Machevill's closing words cannot be missed:

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 cramm'd;
 Which money was not got without my means.
 I crave but this, - grace him as he deserves,
 And let him not be entertain'd the worse
 Because he favours me. (Prologue 28-35)

There is irony because of the fact that most of us desire the kind of wealth Barabas has; many of us go so far as to envy him; some of us might even apply these *Machevillian* "means" to obtain the wealth if we were certain of success without legal consequences. Machevill even calls Barabas' play a "tragedy," a term the audience, and many scholars, hesitate to repeat, some even calling the play a comedy, others siding with Eliot's famous interpretation of it as a farce. What do we make of Marlowe's prologue, of his association with Machiavelli or, for that matter, of Shakespeare's Machiavel, infamously voiced by Richard in *3 Henry VI*?²⁹

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,

²⁹These will be discussed in their more appropriate spaces. It is important to note that Shakespeare also wrote *Machevil*, not *Machiavel*, the latter being a recent editorial imposition.

And frame my face to all occasions.

I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;

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 murderous Machiavel to school.

Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?

Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down. (3.2.182-195)

Although a type, Machevill is not a misreading of Machiavelli's writings but a critique of it in a "God-centered world" (Scott 173). Machiavellism represented "the horror of atheism, of a political world no longer determined by the Will of a universal Providence manifested in Christian precepts of political morality" (Raab 69-70). This is perfectly apparent in the following anonymous Elizabethan critique of Machiavelli which, although perhaps one-sided, is nevertheless a fairly accurate representation of Machiavelli's understanding of religion:

. . . the hazard of turning one of the most principal and Auncient Monarchies of Christendome, from a most Christian Government unto a Machiavellian State. . . . And that is it, that I cal a Machiavellian State and Regiment: where Religion is put behind in the second and last place: where the civil Policie, I meane, is preferred before it, and not limited by any

rules of Religion, but the Religion framed to serve the time and policy; where both by word and example of the Rulers, the ruled are taught with every change of Prince to change also the face of their faith and Religion: where, in appearance and show only, a Religion is pretended, now one, now another, they force not greatly which, so that at hart there be none at all: where neither by hope nor fear of ought after this life, men are restrained from all manner of vice, nor moved to any vertue what so ever: but where it is free to slaunder, to belie, to forswear, to accuse, to corrupt, to oppresse, to robbe, to murther, and to commit every other outrage, never so barbarous (that promiseth to advance to present Policie in hand) without scruple, fear, or conscience of hell or heaven, of God or Divel: and where no restraint nor allurement is left in the hart of man, to bridle him from evil, nor to invite him to good: but for the vain fame only and fear of lay lawes, that reach no further then to this body and life: that I cal properly a Machiavellian State and Governance. (Anonymous *Treatise of Treasons against Queen Elizabeth and the Crown of England* qtd. in Gasquet 121).

The dramatists who attacked Machiavellian theory, according to Scott, "show an awareness of the imminence of the secular state and of the emergence of the 'new men'" (173), the proto-capitalist mercantile class.³⁰ Scott is correct in stating that the Machiavel is "a combination of "realistic" objections with others which are grounded in moral and religious conviction" (172). Her understanding of Machiavelli's writings is, like mine, of

³⁰See also Rackin (72-76).

a creed that presents an ideal picture of a prince, one unencumbered by the emotions—greed, jealousy, lust, among others—the conscience with which the practitioners of Machiavellism on the English stage are hampered. In the final analysis, “Machiavelli’s characters. . . are merely figures in a political diagram” (Scott 173). Scott also hints at one of my theses, that the major difference between Machiavelli and the Machiavel is in the creativity of the Machiavellian and the lack of it in the Machiavel. Scott’s quotation is valuable in full:

Whereas Machiavelli is primarily concerned with the reconstruction or establishment of stable power, once any necessary destruction has been carried out, the political Machiavel is rarely, if ever, allowed to proceed to the creative stage. Even where, as in the case of Henry IV, a character with Machiavellian traits manages to establish some measure of effective control, his efforts are doomed. In Elizabethan drama, if not always in Jacobean, crime does not pay; in the world in which the Machiavel moves there is no possibility of erecting stable political structures in isolation from the universal hierarchy which the ambition of the Machiavel inevitably violates.

This may explain in part why the Machiavel has been seen as no more than a caricature of Machiavelli’s prince. His destructiveness is emphasized and is presented as impious and wicked; he is unable to supply any justification for the chaos which he creates by going on to establish any form of stable government. Yet this does not change the fact that the precepts upon which the Machiavel’s conduct is based are essentially those

by which Machiavelli's politicians are guided; the difference is between the judgments, overt or implied, of the literary contexts in which they appear. (168)

Scott's analysis fails in one important respect, however, that of pointing out that the two most influential writers of the English stage do provide for a Machiavellian character: Marlowe in his *Tamburlaine*, Shakespeare in his *Henry V*, both of whose protagonists are impious and wicked, but also creative, Tamburlaine building a prosperous empire in which the arts and economic activities flourish, and Henry V in unifying the different factions of England and extending his realm to France. Nonetheless, both kings are ambitious to the extent of engaging in butchery for the sake of their ambitions. The only difference between the two kings is in their use of religion. Tamburlaine did not have the constraints of Christianity to bind him in his policies; Henry V did, but he circumvents its constraints with the aid of cunning rhetoric.

It is the very existence of Christianity that makes any analysis of Renaissance political thought or events interesting and difficult. There is no doubt that Machiavellian political philosophy made some Elizabethan political commentators cringe at the thought of having to circumvent Christianity for the sake of policy, a clear Machiavellian credo. Machiavelli, of course, recognized the dilemma between policy and Christianity encountered by rulers and attempted to minimize the conflict without lessening the effects of policy. As we will see in the following chapter, Machiavelli's view of religion and its necessary role in politics is very serious, a view equally accepted by all European rulers. That religion sometimes gave way to politics, to the extent that cruelty was a widespread effect of policy, was also recognized. It would be a gross mistake, therefore, to assume

with Meyer that the Elizabethans either did not know Machiavelli directly, or that they simply invented every cruelty and called it Machiavellian, for the English chronicles, both old and contemporary, provided Elizabethan readers with enough examples of cruelty for them to know that Machiavelli was not the inventor of cruelty. An equally gross mistake would be to accept Praz's statement that Machiavellism was simply a "superficial, passing record of a fashionable byword," which it clearly was not, as the radical alteration of the interpretation of history from something to be tolerated as one of God's mysteries to one that insisted that history is driven by princes who often impose their will on their subjects without regard for the people's well-being, but because reasons of state so dictate.³¹ In either view, history is tragic, but it need not be so if, according to the philosophers' teachings—be the philosophers Machiavelli, Erasmus, More, or others—the princes could alter their behaviours in such a manner as to minimize the negative impact of the policies on their subjects. Nevertheless, the conflict between the two radically opposite views of the ideal ruler, whether Christian or secular, which is to say, Machiavellian, is engaged in quite strongly in the Renaissance. Adams astutely points out that Erasmus' *The Education of the Christian Prince* and Machiavelli's *Il Principe* were written in the same year, and Shakespeare's Henry V clearly declares at the beginning of the play, "We are no tyrant, but a Christian king" (1.2.241).³²

Henry V's statement is in fact a repetition of Elizabethan propaganda whose purpose was to perpetuate the myth that Elizabeth was the perfect Christian "king," a

³¹ A similar conclusion is reached by Adams (72-73).

³² Adams is well aware that there is no direct connection between Erasmus and Machiavelli, but is simply pointing out that the conflict between the two views of kingship were, so to speak, "in the air."

myth that the people were simply expected to accept without question.³³ Armstrong, and scholars who have accepted his thesis,³⁴ argue that Elizabethan tyrants are “always presented as usurpers,” who are “invariably” defeated and replaced by “model kings,” as Henry VII replaced Richard III, for example. But these scholars are simply reiterating the Tudor Myth, and such a view does not support the plays as presented by Marlowe and the Shakespeare of the second tetralogy on,³⁵ a perspective that clearly favours the Machiavellian view of history and politics, one totally opposed to the historiography of the Christian tradition which saw history as “universal, providential, apocalyptic, and periodized,” and had been, until the arrival of the Italian humanist historiography, quite influential (Collingwood 49). Far from disappearing, Christian historiography co-existed with the new, secular historiography, both in conjunction with it and in opposition to it. The two forms of historiography carried out their battles for influence of the minds of the Elizabethans on the theatrical stage as well. When the two forms of historiography were co-mingled, it was to demonstrate that God influences human affairs in such a way that the unfolding of human history is rational. Politics might seem to be dictated by chance, but in the end the laws of God win out. The life of man, it was believed, cannot be the

³³The most fascinating discussion of Elizabeth's mythically generated mystique of power is Frances Yates' *Astraea*, especially Part II, “The Tudor Imperial Reform.”

³⁴Eugene Waith, for example.

³⁵Adams also critiques Armstrong for his view, for example observing that Claudius is supported in power by the Danes. As I will argue later, in agreement with Adams, when he wrote the first tetralogy, Shakespeare seemed to have believed in the providential idea of history (Adams 71). Rackin also adopts this view, but with reservations, arguing that the second tetralogy also “ends in providential redemption,” but in a “severely qualified” manner (61). I believe that in the second tetralogy Shakespeare changed his mind to side with Marlowe's perception of the “Machiavellian” view of the world, which is why Shakespeare rewrote Tamburlaine as Henry V, except in his English history Shakespeare highlights the tensions between the two worldviews.

simple play of fortune, no matter how much fortune came to control the secondary world of history, for Providence will in the end win out, and we cannot know God's reasons for allowing fortune to play its hand to the extent that He allows it. But this view, too, was giving way to the secularized, more tragic view of history where no first cause can effect the life of man.³⁶

1.5. Machiavellism Summarized

I will explore Machiavelli's writings in detail in the following chapter, but for now I will set the stage for my analysis by giving a summary of the Florentine's thoughts. The fundamental idea in Machiavelli, finely summarized by Wood, is "that disorder is natural to man, and that under certain circumstances conflict can be controlled and canalized so that its destructive force will become socially constructive. . . . Politics. . . for Machiavelli is similar to warfare" (1972 41). I take Wood's interpretation a step further and argue that war is the natural state of humanity, and that politics was invented in order to declare war by other means.³⁷ I believe that this is the core of Machiavelli's message, that because war is intended to satisfy our ambitious desires, which are the essential drive of humanity, the founding of a strong state is the rational halt for our emotional and incessant crusades for acquisition. The state, Wood further summarizes Machiavelli, "is the human invention born in violence, nourished by violence, and largely responsible for perpetuating violence..."(1972 42). Wood argues that Machiavelli's

³⁶The most fascinating recent discussion of the historiographical movement is Rackin's *Stages of History*. Peter Burke's *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* remains valuable.

³⁷I am, of course, reversing Clausewitz's maxim.

principal insight is that morality as altruistic self-denial can only be possible in conditions of relative security, [that] men cannot be expected to act morally, if by doing so they continuously jeopardize their own vital interests. Individual moral action will only occur where there is some expectation that others will act morally, and such an expectation will exist not under the anarchic law of the jungle, but in a relatively secure and stable society. (1972 50)

Wood further declares that

two more paradoxes. . . emerge from Machiavelli's writings. The first is that a personal morality of intention cannot exist without a political morality of consequences. The second is that ultimately morality depends upon prudential calculation rather than upon a spontaneous sense of altruism, and unless man is to be undone—rendering morality impossible and consequently meaningless—prudential calculation must be at the root of any viable social and political ethic. (1972 55-56)³⁸

In the God-centred world of the Renaissance, early reactions to Machiavelli's politico-philosophical writings were that he was an advocate of atheism. Whether this is true or not, scholarly opinion is that, as Parel neatly captures the general consensus, Machiavelli's "secular ethics of politics" does not reject or ignore "moral ideals, [but] rejects politics as a means to them" (1972 13). Nonetheless, negative reaction to Machiavelli has always been vigorous, and has been classified by Parel into "three types

³⁸Wood expands his argument in his long—and superb—introduction to the translation of Machiavelli's *The Art of War*.

of anti-Machiavellism”: the theological, the moralistic, and the Elizabethan dramatist type (1972 15), the last of which was for many years regarded as influenced indirectly by Innocent Gentillet’s thick tome, *Contre Machiavel*,³⁹ an argument that has been categorically disproved.⁴⁰ Parel makes the astute observation that Gentillet’s book seemed not to have had the same kind of negative influence traditionally attributed to it in England because the “*Anti-Machiavel* does not provide the full answer” to the question of why Machiavelli was bastardized on the Elizabethan stage (1972 22).⁴¹ Parel’s interesting answer to the question is that Machiavelli’s philosophy opposes the English politico-ideological view as found in the methodology of literature best exposed in Sidney’s *Defence of Poetry*, which argues that literature is always ideological and always, in Parel’s words, pulls the reader “towards the moral centre.” Machiavelli’s ideas, therefore, rubbed against the grain of English moralistic principles. But, Parel concludes, the English answer is equally wrong because it too cannot provide an “alternative to government and its concerns” because it is idealistic. Parel finally asserts that “anti-

³⁹This is the short and more popular title of Gentillet’s diatribe, the full title being, *Discours sur les Moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bon paix vn Royaume ou autre Principauté: Divisez en trois parties; assavoir, du Conseil, de la Religion et Police que doit tenir un Prince: Contre Nicholas Machiavel, Florentin.* (Paris 1576).

⁴⁰Praz (1928) was the first scholar to argue for a mitigation of Gentillet’s influence on England’s Machiavellism. Raab went so far as to discount the “Gentillet myth” (56, 257), a position also adopted by Ribner (1949, 1954). Although I would not discount Gentillet, I would argue that the argument first advocated by Meyer, and seconded by Lewis, is overrated. At any rate, if there was any *significant* influence resulting from Gentillet’s tome, it could not have been had before the work’s publication in 1602, well after Marlowe’s time, and after Shakespeare’s history plays. The English title of the work, translated by Simon Patricke, is *A Discourse vpon the Means of wel governing and maintaining in good peace, a Kingdome or other Principalitie. . . Against Nicholas Machiavel The Florentine* (London 1602).

⁴¹A number of interesting readings of Gentillet’s book, and its reception by the English, exist. See especially D’Andrea’s “The Political and Ideological context of Innocent Gentillet’s *Anti-Machiavel*,” Gasquet’s *Le courant machiavelien*, Kahn’s “Reading Machiavelli,” and Ribner’s “The significance of Gentillet’s *Contre-Machiavel*.”

Machiavellism. . . rests on an inability to communicate, often made worse by misperception of Machiavelli's method" (1972 23), an argument similar to Ribner's. Ribner, however, also takes Praz's view that the Machiavel owes more to Seneca and Cinthio than to Machiavelli (Praz 1928, 1958) and concludes that the figure of the Machiavel "has a history and a life of its own, [bearing] little relation to Machiavelli's thought," that it is a marriage between the Senecan "villain-hero" and the "vice of the morality and the devil of the miracle plays" (1954 350). This is a faulty view, and is especially odd considering that Ribner himself stresses that "Machiavelli was widely read," although he believes that the Elizabethans read Machiavelli's works "without the historical perspective that enables us to understand them today" (1949 155), a peculiar statement indeed because it assumes that the Elizabethans did not understand Machiavelli in relation to themselves, that we have such an understanding, and that our understanding of Machiavelli generally is better than the Elizabethans' understanding of Machiavelli. Ribner's statement is also ironic because he further argues that Marlowe reflected both the serious Machiavellian thought, in *Tamburlaine*, and the popular Machiavellism, in *The Jew of Malta*, via Machevill (1954 351). Although it is true that the discovery of documents about Machiavelli not available to the Elizabethans allows us to appreciate some of Machiavelli's thoughts in ways perhaps not possible for the Elizabethans, we must not assume that the Elizabethans did not understand Machiavelli, but rather that they understood him—could only understand him—in relation to their own norms, especially as we pointed out a few pages above, in relation to their God-centred world.

The English reaction to Machiavelli's key propositions was largely negative. Nevertheless, my contention is that Marlowe and Shakespeare did not so much reject

Machiavellism as explore it, each man from his own perspective, with Shakespeare adding Marlowe's Machiavellism to his own understanding of it. Marlowe was concerned with the question of unfettered human power, how far it could be taken, and what could result from its unhindered application; Tamburlaine is shown to be not a man but a god-man. Shakespeare, however, was concerned less with the *idea* of the supreme king and more with the *effectual* king who has no choice but to interact with the human beings around him as any other man would, but clearly as a man who holds a human office higher than his populace. Henry V understands that the king's office is a human invention, and that it is had or lost through human means. Even Richard II, who devoutly believes in the king as God's anointed on earth, and whose usurped crown eventually lands on Henry V's head, must acknowledge, if tragically, that the king is but a man, in the end "nothing" (4.1.200). Regardless of the differences between Marlowe and Shakespeare, both Tamburlaine and Henry V, like Machiavelli's ideal prince, want glory and human, earthly desire, not divine or transcendent ones, although Tamburlaine does also climb after divinity. I will outline a few parallels between Machiavelli's writings and *Tamburlaine* and *Henry V* in the following two sections of this chapter, but for now I will adumbrate the key elements to be found in Machiavelli's political "psychology,"⁴² into which Tamburlaine and Henry V fit perfectly. These are neatly captured by Germino (1972 60):

- I. men are basically selfish and anti-social—left to themselves, the agonistic impulses in the psyche predominate over the co-operative

⁴²Germino points out that there has traditionally been a resistance to refer to Machiavelli as a philosopher or systematic thinker, and hence a resistance to refer to Machiavelli's writings as philosophical. I do not share this view, but will not now be able to engage the discussion. Suffice it to say that while keeping this debate in mind I do occasionally refer to Machiavelli as a political philosopher and to his writings as philosophical.

- ones;
- II. nonetheless, the psychological potential for socialization exists in men—they can be influenced to act sacrificially on behalf of the collectivity;
 - III. the optimal social order is not a systematically repressive one, but one which allows for competition between the two great ‘humours’—or collective tendencies—into which every body politic is divided;
 - IV. for a society which is well-ordered to come into being, it is necessary that it be founded by a single superior man or heroic leader, and periodically be brought back to its origins through discipline and severity; and
 - V. dissimulation and fraud have been indispensable elements of political rule.

1.6. Marlowe and Machiavelli

The famous Prologue to *The Jew of Malta* has traditionally been read as a voicing of Marlowe’s own opinions regarding Machiavellian political thought. This Romantic reading of Marlowe’s works was a standard method of interpreting Marlowe from the 1800’s well into the 1930’s. The “moralist” reading of the Prologue as an ironic apologetic for Gentillet (Battenhouse 206-207) is equally wrong. Notwithstanding Battenhouse’s assertion about Marlowe’s purported Gentillism, Battenhouse is correct in noting that Marlowe uses Machiavelli’s works as a guide for characterizing Tamburlaine, but makes

use of “popular notions regarding Machiavelli” for characterizing Barabas (208).⁴³ Later in the dissertation, I will argue that in fact Marlowe’s Machiavellism in *The Jew of Malta* is sound, but that the true Machiavellian is Ferneze, not Barabas. Marlowe’s use of Machiavelli has been recorded by a number of scholars, as early as 1891 by Brandl, and then followed up by Meyer, Praz, and others. Battenhouse has summarized these and added some of his own. I will follow Battenhouse’s summary, with some modifications, noting especially Battenhouse’s opinion that “the new Machiavellian type of tyrant, represented in Tamburlaine, is a hero inspirited with a pagan religion; he is an anti-Christ” (216). This is not necessarily a wrong view of Tamburlaine, but it is one that Battenhouse advances in order to argue that Marlowe’s purpose in thus characterizing Tamburlaine is to advocate a pious, moralist, and orthodox view of the world, a conclusion I do not share. The following are the Machiavellian allusions to be found in *Tamburlaine*:

1. The Persian king Mycetes is a hereditary prince who loses power only because the exterior powers of the Turks and the Tartars advance on him and he cannot rely on his own powers for support, having aroused a hatred among his subjects because he had abused his position through extravagance and the arousal of mistrust (P 2, *One* 1.1). Cosroe seizes the throne, itself not an unnatural act, but he shamefully allows himself to be overthrown because he depended on fortune and a powerful ally. In seizing

⁴³Ribner (1954) also makes this argument. Battenhouse explicitly states that Marlowe makes use of *The Prince* only. I will not quibble, especially because we have no direct quotations or the like of Machiavelli in the plays, although I think it likely that Marlowe and other Elizabethan scholars and writers read the *Discourses* and *The Art of War* as well, and possibly even the *Florentine Histories*, especially considering the fact that there was strong demand in England for most of Machiavelli’s works, as discussed earlier.

power, Cosroe does follow Machiavellian precepts, persuading the nobility to support him, but he does not follow Machiavelli's advice to maintain power by not relying on the "approved Fortunes" of Tamburlaine instead believing that he can use the Scythian as an ally.

2. Machiavelli maintains that *fortuna* merely offers opportunities for success, that a successful prince is one who takes the opportunities *fortuna* presents and employs prudence and *virtù* in order to make the most of those opportunities, hence gaining and maintaining power. Tamburlaine is such a prince, mixing self-confidence, cunning, magnanimity, and cruelty. Furthermore, and this is the most important Machiavellian teaching, Tamburlaine is always prepared for war. He succeeds marvellously, and he dies leaving the most important gift any prince can bequeath his successors, a secure kingdom and his political wisdom.
3. Tamburlaine is compared both to a lion and a fox (P 18,19, *One* 1.1.31, 1.2.52).
4. Tamburlaine follows Machiavelli's advice regarding the manner a prince needs to adopt in order to gain a good reputation. The prince, Machiavelli says, must exhibit himself heroically, and he must never allow too much leisure for his subjects so that they are able to plot against him.
5. Tamburlaine also follows Machiavelli's advice by sharing some of the booty with his soldiers, by keeping his army well-disciplined, and by putting on feasts and spectacles (P 16, 19).
6. Tamburlaine makes himself out as the scourge of God, not unlike

Ferdinand of Aragon whose conquests were in the name of Christianity (P 21). But Tamburlaine also accepts Machiavelli's advice that a prince must "appear merciful, faithful, humane, honest, and religious" (P 18).

Tamburlaine treats his lieutenants with mercy, and is generally quite good to his people, is charming, magnanimous, etc., but is ferocious to his enemies. Nevertheless, his reputation is such that he can easily be cruel to his subjects if the need arises, as he warns his soldiers, for example, not to fight when dividing the booty.

7. The ideal prince's qualities are "greatness, spiritedness, gravity, and strength." These will ensure that the prince is loved by the people. What makes him held in contempt are a reputation of being "variable, light, effeminate, pusillanimous, irresolute" (P 19). The first set are qualities that Tamburlaine stresses his children must have, and the latter set are qualities Calyphas possesses. Tamburlaine even censures himself when he praises poetry because such thoughts are "effeminate and faint."
8. Machiavelli advises the prince to maintain the art of war as the supreme art because it is most necessary for the maintenance of the state, that the most important abstinence for him to exercise pertain to his subjects' properties and women (P 17 and 19), and that the prince must make his word irrevocable so that no one would think him irresolute (P 19). These lessons, in order, Tamburlaine learns well: he ensures that his camps are solidly maintained with great discipline; he trains his sons in the art of war; he does not rob his subjects; he does not marry Zenocrate until her father

approves the union; and he holds fast his rule regarding the colours of the tents when besieging cities.

9. Tamburlaine, like Machiavelli, believes that *fortuna* only gives opportunities, that the rest is up to the prince's *virtù*. Tamburlaine mocks fortune, and argues that "Virtue solely is the sum of glory" (*One* 5.2.126). This lesson is solidly illustrated with Cosroe's rise and fall. Menaphon tells Cosroe:

Fortune gives you opportunity

To gain the title of a conqueror

By curing of this maimed empery. (*One* 1.1.124-126)

Cosroe seizes his fortune but is not able to maintain it because he lacks Machiavellian *virtù*, unlike Tamburlaine who brings Cosroe to ruin.

1.7. Shakespeare and Machiavelli

We have already seen that Shakespeare refers to Machiavelli's name three times. So as not to end up simply categorizing those passages in Shakespeare that have a Machiavellian tinge to them, I will confine myself to pointing out the more prevalent parallels between Machiavelli and Shakespeare's second tetralogy ending with the play that most concerns us, *Henry V*, for it is clear that "the Henry plays confirm the Machiavellian hypothesis that princely power originates in force and fraud even as they draw their audience toward an acceptance of that power" (Greenblatt 1988 65):

1. The Duke of York's gardener outlines his belief that "the faults of the people are due to the rulers" (*Richard II* 3.4, D 3.29).

2. On his deathbed, Bolingbroke argues that hereditary kings enjoy more security than non-hereditary kings, an argument often repeated by Machiavelli (*2 Henry 4* 4.5.177-219 and especially P 2).
3. The manner in which Richard II lost his throne is well described in *Discorsi* 3.5.
4. Richard II breaks his own laws, hence endangering his own office, an action that Machiavelli warns always invites extreme dangers to the ruler (D 1.45).
5. The French Constable points out that Henry V emulates Brutus in his pretence of folly, a method of action recommended by Machiavelli if it serves a good political purpose (*Henry V* 2.4.30-40, D 3.2).
6. Bolingbroke's other son, John, relies on fraud instead of force in order to finish off his enemies (*2 Henry 4* 4.2), a lesson often reiterated by Machiavelli.

While this list can be expanded vastly, such expansion would invite the danger of reading almost every parallel, no matter how insignificant, as a translation of one of Machiavelli's maxims, surely an undesired consequence, and a misapplication of the concept of influence that pre-supposes Shakespeare simply pillaged Machiavelli for ideas.

Nonetheless, parallels that arise out of my analysis will be discussed with due caution, but now I must return to a fuller discussion of Machiavelli, especially as he theorizes the use of religion in politics, the theme upon which Marlowe and Shakespeare focus in the plays I have selected for interpretation, and which we must focus upon more clearly in order to answer the question of how Shakespeare and Marlowe view religion generally, and

Christianity particularly, in light of the new worldview presented to them through the eyes of Machiavellian political philosophy.

Machiavelli and Religion: Political Theology Humanized

2.1. Introduction

. . . perché, da un tempo in qua, io non dico mai quello che io credo, né credo mai quel che io dico, et se pure e' mi vien detto qualche volta il vero, io lo nascondo fra tante bugie, che è difficile a ritrovarlo. (Machiavelli to Guicciardini, 17 May 1521 O 1204).

. . . so, for some time now, I have not said what I believe, nor ever believed what I have said, and if indeed sometimes I do happen to tell the truth, I hide it among so many lies that it is hard to find. (My translation)

It is not possible, and perhaps not desirable, that we know Machiavelli's personal views on religion. Did Machiavelli believe in God? If so, was his God the Christian God? Did Machiavelli believe in personal or public religiosity? Did he genuinely believe in penitence and grace as ports for the salvation of sinners? Machiavelli left for us these, and many similar questions besides, to ponder over, questions that have been debated and answered both negatively and positively, and in almost every variation thereof. They are parts of a religious puzzle whose pieces Machiavelli only partially conjoins. And yet, our desire for definite answers to the questions he raises is heightened because Machiavelli toys with us, putting forth absolutist, often harsh statements that we unabashedly accept as truthful, only to have the statements either tempered with conditions or altogether rejected. Machiavelli's writings are often violent, sometimes patronizing, at times flattering, more often than not playful, but always deadly serious. We have no choice but to pore over his reflections, the most disheartening ones for many of his readers being

those he makes on religion and on the religious institutions. Those of us who have spent any time thinking about Machiavelli's questioning of religion do so not because he is questioning religion intrinsically—although he is doing that, too—but because his questioning of religion is tied directly to his thinking about the state. That is, Machiavelli's religion is not actually religion, but a political theology. In one stroke, Machiavelli accomplishes what some before him half-heartedly attempted but failed to do, and what most thought was impossible to do, transforming public religion, throwing it out of the heavens, forever closing the sky's doors on it. Machiavelli humanizes religion once again,⁴⁴ redefining it as a sociological institution like any other, but with the additional power to motivate people in ways other institutions can only dream of.⁴⁵

2.2. The Beginning of the Transformation

Your power is verbal, ours however is real.⁴⁶

Machiavelli's most radical achievement in the area of political theology is his ardent belief that the lawgiver, the founder, founds the state outside of divine authority which, however, he uses to maintain the state. Most intriguing about Machiavelli's political theology is that it runs parallel to Christianity: the prince is god, the city is man, war is

⁴⁴I say "once again" because I believe that Machiavelli took religion back to its Greek roots, doing to religion what Socrates did to philosophy, bringing it down from the heavens.

⁴⁵I realize that the adjective "public" in *public religion* is redundant, but it is necessary to stress it because I am not speaking about Machiavelli's personal beliefs, which are irrelevant to his political beliefs, having maintained a strict separation between the two. In other words, one can believe in God and yet support atheistic public policies. Or, to exemplify the point, one can believe that abortion is wrong but still support, or at least not oppose, its non-criminalization, as the debate in the recent federal election clearly attested to.

⁴⁶Pierre Flotte of papal claims against Philip of France (qtd. in Canning 347).

suffering for the end of rebirth in the new kingdom—the city reborn without the sins that enslave it to barbarians. Machiavelli is not anti-Christian, but a “revised” Christian for whom salvation is not otherworldly but earthly. Of course, Machiavelli was well aware that it was going to be safer for him to make use of Christianity rather than to found a new religion because he then could not be called a blasphemer, at least not with perfect certainty, and he also understood that founding a new religion to serve the state would be nearly impossible; therefore a prince—or a writer such as himself—must use the religion he has at hand, but manipulate it in such a way that it can serve the polity.

Using Christianity, however, has its own difficulties for the prince because Christianity inflicts the same kind of damage on a city as a “*tiranno virtuoso*”⁴⁷ does, fostering the worst kind of political corruption, idleness (*ozio*), which leads to stoicism regarding earthly life. In Christianity, the city of God is more important than the city of man; Machiavelli wants to reverse Augustine’s view, and asserts that the effects of Christianity on a city are the same as those of a *tiranno virtuoso* because neither can bestow honours on its subjects, reserving all honours for themselves, thus drowning all glory-producing traits:

La nostra religione ha glorificato più gli uomini umili e contemplativi, che gli attivi. Ha dipoi posto il sommo bene nella umiltà, abiezione, e nel dispregio delle cose umane: quell'altra lo poneva nella grandezza dello animo, nella fortezza del corpo, ed in tutte le altre cose atte a fare gli

⁴⁷It is rather unfortunate that the adjective “*virtuoso*” has been translated as “efficient” by Walker and as “vigorous” by Gilbert, although Walker does give the Italian word in a footnote. To their credit, however, there is no question that *virtuoso* carries these connotations. Ricci’s translation of the word as “enterprising” is the most accurate because it carries most senses of the Italian word, and it can connote both good and bad acts, obviously, for Machiavelli, necessitated by the circumstances.

uomini fortissimi. E se la religione nostra richiede che tu abbi in te
fortezza, vuole che tu sia atto a patire più che a fare una cosa forte. (O 149)

Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men
 of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation, and
 contempt for mundane things, whereas the other identified it with
 magnanimity, bodily strength, and everything else that conduces to make
 men very bold. And, if our religion demands that in you there be strength,
 what it asks for is strength to suffer rather than strength to do bold things.
 (D 2.2.278)

This kind of criticism has led some scholars, such as Hulliung, to argue that in
 Machiavelli "Christian values per se are attacked as corrupt and contrasted with the
 virtuous values enshrined by pagan religion" (68). Machiavelli's critique of Christianity,
 however, is not so unambiguous, given that it is tempered in the preface to Book One of
 the *Discorsi*, for example, with his statement that it is not just the Christian religion that
 has brought about the neglect of ancient political virtues today but also the lack of
 appreciation for ancient history. He writes that

Il che credo che nasca non tanto da la debolezza nella quale la presente
 religione ha condotto el mondo, o da quel male che ha fatto a molte
 provincie e città cristiane uno ambizioso ozio, quanto dal non avere vera
 cognizione delle storie, per non trarne, leggendole, quel senso né gustare di
 loro quel sapore che le hanno in sé. (D 1.pr. O 76)

This is due in my opinion not so much to the weak state to which the religion of today has brought the world, or to the evil wrought in many provinces and cities of Christendom by ambition conjoined with idleness, as to the lack of a proper appreciation of history, owing to people failing to realize the significance of what they read, and to their having no taste for the delicacies it comprises. (D 1.pr.98)

Machiavelli is subtly modifying his attack against Christianity, slowly preparing his readers for his more bold attacks against the religion generally and its “capi” particularly, characterizing Christian states as weak because they are possessed of *ambizioso ozio*, the very trait he will declare Christianity instills in people. We must point out that Machiavelli will later assert that newer religions have succeeded in destroying older religions by eliminating the languages of the old sects, but that in the Roman world this was not possible because the Latin tongue was the tongue of both the old and new religions:

quando e' non si vedesse come queste memorie de' tempi per diverse cagioni si spengano: delle quali, parte vengono dagli uomini, parte dal cielo. Quelle che vengono dagli uomini sono le variazioni delle sette e delle lingue. Perché, quando e' surge una setta nuova, cioè una religione nuova, il primo studio suo è, per darsi riputazione, estinguere la vecchia; e, quando gli occorre che gli ordinatori della nuova detta siano di lingua diversa, la spengono facilmente. La quale cosa si consce considerando e' modi che ha tenuti la setta Cristiana contro alla Gentile; la quale ha cancellati tutti gli ordini, tutte le cerimonie di quella, e spenta ogni

memoria di quella antica teologia. Vero è che non gli è riuscito spegnere in tutto la notizia delle cose fatte dagli uomini eccellenti di quella: il che è nato per avere quella mantenuta la lingua latina; il che feciono forzatamente, avendo a scrivere questa legge nuova con essa. (O 154)

. . . records of times gone are obliterated by diverse causes, of which some are due to men and some to heaven. Those which are due to men are changes in religious institutions and in language. For, when a new religious institution comes into being, i.e. a new religion, its first care is, for the sake of its own reputation, to wipe out the old one; and, when the founders of a new religion happen to speak a different tongue, the old one is easily abolished. This becomes clear if we consider the measures which Christianity adopted vis-a-vis Paganism; how it abolished all pagan institutions, all pagan rites, and destroyed the records of the theology of the ancients. It is true that Christianity did not succeed in wiping out altogether the record of what outstanding men of the old religion had done; which was due to the retention of the Latin language, for this they had to retain so that they might use it in writing down their new laws. (D 2.5.288-289)

Machiavelli continues, adding that if St. Gregory (540-604 AD) had a new language with which to write new laws, coupled with his efforts to burn "the works of poets and

historians," he would have succeeded in wiping out the ancients.⁴⁸ Machiavelli then momentarily turns into a prophet, claiming

che quello che ha voluto fare la setta Cristiana contro alla setta Gentile, la Gentile abbia fatto contro a quella che era innanzi a lei. E perché queste sette in cinque or in seimila anni variano due o tre volte, si perde la memoria delle cose fatte innanzi a quel tempo; e se pure ne resta alcun segno, si considera come cosa favolosa, e non è prestato loro fede. . . . (O 154)

that what Christianity did with regard to Paganism, Paganism did to the religion that preceded it; and, as there have been two or three changes of religion in five or six thousand years, the record of what happened before that has been lost; or, if of it there remains a trace, it is regarded as a fable and no credence is given to it. . . . (D 2.5.289)⁴⁹

Machiavelli's statement is simply that the end of Christianity is coming, that the new sect will undertake the same efforts as its predecessors and try to destroy the vestiges of Christianity. What Machiavelli is insinuating is that he, too, must make use of the

⁴⁸Sullivan believes that Machiavelli's reference to "the malignity of the times" (D 1.pr.) is actually a reference to Gregory's efforts to wipe out antiquity. Sullivan also notes that Machiavelli does not mention the Greek of the New Testament when discussing the antiquities (133 and note 14). I would suppose that the reason Machiavelli does not refer to the Greek language is twofold. First, it was the language of the new religion; second, it was a language foreign to the masses and therefore need not have concerned the political elite. Even in Machiavelli's Italy, Greek had only been recently introduced to the scholarly world, assisted by the efforts of Boccaccio.

⁴⁹One is reminded of W. B. Yeats' famous declaration, especially in his beautiful poem "The Second Coming," that religions have two thousand year life spans. One wonders if Yeats did not borrow this idea from Machiavelli.

language he has at hand, including the symbols, of course, in order to modify the Christianity surrounding him. Only then can he confidently proceed to give birth once more to Christianity, but this time to a more invigorated Christianity, one that takes into account his knowledge of things ancient and modern, and is more inclined to glorify the earthly realm. Machiavelli's Christianity will place the city of man on a realm higher than the city of God, reworking it so that it becomes *politically immanentist*, that is, so that its meaning comes to be accepted in the same manner as Voegelin argues Renaissance history came to be understood, as "a completely intramundane phenomenon, without transcendental irruptions" (1952 119).⁵⁰

To accomplish his formidable task, Machiavelli must be well-acquainted with the official religion of his day, and he must hold views that are easily transferred onto it, simplifying the process of its modification. Machiavelli will stage a symbiotic procedure in order to give rebirth to Christianity.⁵¹ He starts by acknowledging, alongside Christianity, that everyone is tainted by "original sin," although his version of sin is not theological but political, specifically tied to military conduct; that is, a prince or a city's disregard of military matters is a sin because the disregard renders the people helpless

⁵⁰I must point out that in the phrase "politically immanentist," the word "politically" is mine, not Voegelin's. Machiavelli does not wish to deny the concept of godhood in religion, or politics, arguing that a supreme being is politically useful, even necessary at times. By "politically," I mean that in the end Machiavelli probably does not care whether one is *privately* atheistic or not, as long as that person is *publicly* religious. Flanagan also points to Machiavelli's re-conception of *fortuna* as "immanent" (1972 144-145).

⁵¹I must say at the outset of my discussion that although my thesis starts out in a similar fashion to Sullivan's, our conclusions diverge radically, as the discussion will show. Nonetheless, Sullivan's Straussian thesis is interesting and quite subtly argued.

against their enemies.⁵²

Machiavelli's understanding of sin has not been unanimously agreed upon by scholars, but most acknowledge that he does revise the Christian notion of "original sin." Parel, for example, points out that Machiavelli includes ambition as one of the sins against charity, attributing the list to St. Paul (1 Cor. 13:13) even though St. Paul's list does not include ambition as a sin (1972 190). Parel also argues that "Machiavelli's acceptance of original sin and grace makes his worldview closer to that of Augustine and Dante than to that of Livy or Polybius" because ultimately Machiavelli "sees in grace a purely spiritual power which leads man only to his heavenly glory" (1972 207). Parel concludes his reading of Machiavelli as one declaring that "The man who aspires to *virtù* must be content to work with a 'fallen' human nature" (Parel 1972 208).

In like fashion, Prezzolini also views Machiavelli's outlooks as similar to the "familiar Christian conception of original sin . . . but without the possibility of redemption" (27, 29), and concurs with the view held by Berlin, over against Croce, that Machiavelli does not separate morality from politics, "but only from the morality of optimistic Christianity," stressing that for Machiavelli "politics is moral when directed toward the common good" (27, 29). This reading of Machiavelli is more accurate than Parel's because it takes into account Machiavelli's radical break from the Christian morality of his day. Nonetheless, Prezzolini's reading does not adequately explain Machiavelli's revision of Christianity, which I will now undertake to explain, returning to discuss Machiavelli's notion of sin at a more appropriate time.

⁵² Machiavelli's more important references to sin are found in the following sections of his writings: (P 12 49 O 275, D 2.18 O 172, AW 2.602 O 321).

2.3. Religion Objectified

Machiavelli is probably the first thinker to “objectify religion. . . , to separate himself from it in order to observe it as an object of inquiry” (Preuss 172, slightly modified). Machiavelli’s approach to religion successfully “bracketed out God as a causal factor accessible to rational calculation,” simply because for Machiavelli the truth of religion was not important, only its impact as the instigator or motivator of the citizenry’s actions (Preuss 173), a point that Fontana succinctly summarizes, writing that “a distinction is established between religion viewed as *religio*, and religion conceived as *fides*, where the former is used to develop and cement social bonds and the latter is a faith based on a transcendent ‘truth’” (639 original emphasis). Indeed, Machiavelli’s account of how he approached the ancients when preparing to read their works is actually a description of a religious ritual and transformation.⁵³ In Machiavelli, religion becomes “a broad term embracing all human attitudes occurring with references to a divine order [and has vast] strategic potential” for a ruler (Preuss 175). Although Machiavelli has been criticized for his supposed atheism, his contempt for religion, his devaluation of religion’s potential for human comfort, and a host of other thoughts, Preuss is correct in stating that in the end the criticisms are “really irrelevant since the truth of religion has no demonstrable connection with its power, which was the object of Machiavelli’s inquiry...” (176).⁵⁴ Most important for an accurate understanding of Machiavelli’s views on religion

⁵³Preuss also makes note of this, but he argues that Machiavelli found a “normative ideal” in the ancients, discarding Christianity altogether, or nearly so (174).

⁵⁴Berlin, recognizing religion’s “crucial social importance,” similarly writes that the “criterion of the worth of a religion is its role as a promoter of solidarity and cohesion,” and that a religion need not “rest on truth, provided that it is socially effective” (161).

is not whether religion conveys truths, but whether people believe that religion conveys truths. For Machiavelli, the “*verità effettuale della cosa*” is what is important about religion as well as about politics, not because religion is inherently political but because it is made political.⁵⁵ Machiavelli had discovered the all important truth that there are in fact two truths, the sociological—or political—truth, which can be known, and therefore discussed, and the metaphysical one, which cannot be known, and therefore cannot be verified, or discussed, according to reason. Machiavelli refers to the former, and does not care whether the latter *actually* exists, for it exists as long as people *believe* it exists. The belief in the existence of a meta-human entity had led to the philosophical concept of *metaxy* which, from Plato onwards, has argued that human beings exist between the beastly and godly realms, and the tension we experience between our human and divine realities is that which allows us to experience aspects of the divine, leading us to some truths.⁵⁶ Machiavelli continues to reserve a place for *metaxy*, but he discards its religious beyond, at least for the prince. Nevertheless, for the citizenry, Machiavelli insists that ultimately *metaxy* is that of the godhead of the state. The state can be paradise on earth, but paradise reduced to simple security and order gained at the cost of everything else. Machiavelli concludes that religion assists in the formation and strengthening of the laws and the military, sometimes validating them when nothing else can. The triad of religion,

⁵⁵Preuss arrives at a similar conclusion (176).

⁵⁶I realize that I am bordering on the simplistic, but this is not the place to engage fully in a discussion of this concept. *Metaxy* is the Anglicized version of the Greek term. Voegelin's discussion of the roots of this concept in Plato (especially *Symposium* 202-203), in *Anamnesis*, is a worthwhile but demanding read. See especially Chapter six of *Anamnesis*, “Reason: The Classic Experience.”

the laws, and the military thus combine to lay the foundation for a strong state.⁵⁷

Machiavelli declares that Italy's decadence is due to a lack of respect for these three foundational elements:

... chi nasce in Italia. . . e non sia diventato. . . oltramontano. . . ha ragione di biasimare i tempi suoi, e laudare gli altri: perché in quelli vi sono assai cose che gli fanno maravigliosi; in questi non è cosa alcuna che gli ricomperi da ogni estrema miseria, infamia e vituperio: dove non e osservanza di religione, non di leggi, non di milizia; ma sono maculati d'ogni ragione bruttura. (O 145)

... anyone born in Italy who has not become at heart an ultramontane. . . has good reason to criticize his own times and to praise others, since in the latter there are plenty of things to evoke his admiration, whereas in the former he comes across nothing but extreme misery, infamy and contempt, for there is no observance either of religion or of the laws, or of military traditions, but all is besmirched with filth of very kind. (D 2.pr. 267)

Bearing these preliminary remarks in mind, it is clear that Machiavelli's stance against Christianity must be explained in the light of his stance against religion generally, and against the leaders of religion particularly, for Machiavelli never speaks of religion without referring to one or more of its "capi." Simply speaking, religions also derive their

⁵⁷Preuss also makes note of this (176), but my reading diverges from his in that I argue that Machiavelli is ultimately critical of Numa because the Roman degraded the military foundation, placing it below religion.

authority from their rulers, a fact that leads Machiavelli to suggest that the heads of religious institutions ought to be treated in like manner to heads of secular institutions, that is to say, as princes like other princes. In Renaissance Europe, the *capi* of Christianity had immense, political and military powers.

Machiavelli's suggestion that the leaders of religious institutions are not to be accorded special status is given in a roundabout but unambiguous manner, a discussion to which I will turn momentarily, but first I must begin with Machiavelli's major criticism of Christianity, which he famously introduces in book two of the *Discorsi*, and which I cited earlier, essentially arguing that Christianity, in opposition to the pagan religion, glorifies contemplation, not action:

La religione antica, oltre a di questo, non beatificava se non uomini pieni di mondana gloria; come erano capitani di eserciti e principi di repubbliche. La nostra religione ha glorificato più gli uomini umili e contemplativi, che gli attivi. Ha dipoi posto il sommo bene nella umiltà, abiezione, e nel dispregio delle cose umane: quell'altra lo poneva nella grandezza dello animo, nella fortezza del corpo, ed in tutte le altre cose atte a fare gli uomini fortissimi. E se la religione nostra richiede che tu abbi in te fortezza, vuole che tu sia atto a patire più che a fare una cosa forte. (O 149)

[T]he old religion did not beatify men unless they were replete with worldly glory: army commanders, for instance, and rulers of republics. Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative men, rather than men of action. It has assigned as man's highest good humility, abnegation, and

contempt for mundane things, whereas the other identified it with magnanimity, bodily strength, and everything else that conduces to make men very bold. And, if our religion demands that in you there be strength, what it asks for is strength to suffer rather than strength to do bold things. (D 2.2. 278)

Contrary to the almost ubiquitous opinion that Machiavelli's attack on Christianity is solely for the purpose of glorifying Rome's notion of glory, that he simply detests weakness because it is not a "manly" virtue, Machiavelli actually attacks Christianity because

Questo modo di vivere, adunque, pare che abbi renduto il mondo debole, e datolo in preda agli uomini scelerati; i quali sicuramente lo possono maneggiare, veggendo come l'università degli uomini, per andarne in Paradiso, pensa più a sopportare le sue battiture che a vendicarle. (O 149-150)

This pattern of life, therefore, appears to have made the world weak, and to have handed it over as a prey to the wicked, who run it successfully and securely since they are well aware that the generality of men, with paradise for their goal, consider how best to bear, rather than how best to avenge, their injuries. (D.2.2 278)

Machiavelli continues his discussion, adding one of the most important statements he has written regarding Christianity, that it is not so much the religion itself that is to blame for the weakness and corruption of the world, but how it is interpreted:

E benché paia che si sia effeminato il mondo, e disarmato il Cielo, nasce più senza dubbio dalla viltà degli uomini, che hanno interpretato la nostra religione secondo l'ozio, e non secondo la virtù. Perché se considerassono come la ci permette la esaltazione e la difesa della patria, vedrebbero come la vuole che noi l'amiamo ed onoriamo, e prepariamoci a essere tali che noi la possiamo difendere. (O 150)

But, though it looks as if the world were become effeminate and as if heaven were powerless [disarmed], this undoubtedly is due rather to the pusillanimity of those who have interpreted our religion in terms of *laissez faire*, not in terms of *virtù*. For, had they borne in mind that religion permits us to exalt and defend the fatherland, they would have seen that it also wishes us to love and honour it, and to train ourselves to be such that we may defend it. (D 2.2.278)⁵⁸

This reading of Christianity seems to accord with the general Renaissance view that it is the intention behind the action that we must look to if we truly seek to understand the purpose of the action, in this case Machiavelli sharing with us his views on politics. His view that the intentions of the interpreters of Christianity are to make the citizenry weak so that they, the leaders, can maintain their grip on power, is a forerunner of many modern politico-philosophical views, and a repetition of the views of the sophists such as Gorgias, Protagoras, and especially Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, that justice is the advantage

⁵⁸ "*Laissez faire*" is Walker's emphasized translation of "l'ozio," which he footnotes. The bracketed word is my literal translation of "disarmato."

of the stronger. This would not be a radical view *if* this were all that Machiavelli is declaring.

Machiavelli is not saying that otherworldly Christianity is a false interpretation, a view that Sullivan also does not accept (40), because a few lines earlier than the quotations above, he writes,

Pensando dunque donde possa nascere, che, in quegli tempi antichi, i popoli fossero più amatori della libertà che in questi; credo nasca da quella medesima cagione che fa ora gli uomini manco forti: la quale credo sia la diversità della educazione nostra dall'antica, fondata nella diversità della religione nostra dall antica. Perché avendoci la nostra religione nostro la verità e la vera via, ci fa stimare meno l'onore del mondo. (O 149)

If one asks oneself how it comes about that peoples of old were more fond of liberty than they are today, I think the answer is that it is due to the same cause that makes men today less bold than they used to be; and this is due, I think, to the difference between our education and that of bygone times, which is based on the difference between our religion and the religion of those days. For our religion, having taught us the truth and the true way of life, leads us to ascribe less esteem to worldly honour. (D 2.2. 277)

This statement is most strange because it concedes the view that Christianity is true in its view of the world, that is, to honour the other world and exalt humility instead of glory, an interpretation of the world that flies in the face of everything Machiavelli believes. But if his view is that Christianity in the beginning showed the "truth and the true way of life,"

but that its later interpreters corrupted this teaching to suit their own purposes, then Machiavelli's task is to take us back to the birth of Christianity and re-teach us its truth. Sullivan argues that Machiavelli's task is to posit "a new temporal interpretation of Christianity" (41).

The temporal Christianity Machiavelli advocates is tied directly to his visions of love, mercy, piety, charity, and other similar attributes, which are in fact his re-writings of the Christian versions of these qualities. Machiavelli does not so much reject these qualities as reject the purported ends of their applications. This is to say that for Machiavelli qualities and actions must always be teleologically minded. To this end, Machiavelli blames not Christianity per se for making citizens humble, but its interpreters, and more specifically, the people who teach it, which is why in the section of *Discorsi* 2.2, as we quoted earlier, Machiavelli ties education directly to religion. Modern education, he asserts, has replaced the pagan "il grande ed il generoso"⁵⁹ values with meek ones which, in turn, have given birth to weak, divided states because

la debolezza de' presenti uomini, causata dalla debole educazione loro e dalla poca notizia delle cose, fa che si giudicano i giudicii antichi, parte inumani, parte impossibili. Ed hanno certe loro moderne opinioni, discosto al tutto dal vero; come è quella che dicevano e' savi della nostra città, un tempo fa: che bisognava tenere Pistoia con le parti, e Pisa con le fortezze; e non si avvegono, quanto l'una e l'altra di queste due cose è inutile. (O 234)

⁵⁹Walker mistranslates this phrase as "great and grand."

so feeble are men today owing to their defective education and to the little knowledge they have of affairs, that they look upon the judgments of their forefathers as inhuman in some cases and in others as impossible. Yet the modern views they held to are quite unsound; for instance, that advocated a while ago by wise folk in our city who said that Pistoia should be held by means of factions and Pisa by means of fortresses. They fail to see how futile such means are in both cases. (D 3.27. 479)

Machiavelli's "il grande ed il generoso" is a telling phrase because he was just speaking about executions, the "primo" method of dealing with the leaders of factions. Killings of this sort are grand because they are spectacular, affirming and perpetuating the virile values of the Romans; they are generous because they help to maintain the city through their ability to eliminate dangerous factions. In Machiavelli's sense, generosity is that quality which extends the life of the state. The longer a state is maintained, the less worried citizens need to be concerned about losing their patrimony. Generosity becomes not an act of giving—personal charity in Christianity—of what one has, but a charitable act of the state that allows for the longer maintenance of the state, which in turns allows the citizenry to maintain what they have for a longer period of time.

Machiavelli's rewriting of these traits is actually a reversal of their Christian conception, a reversal he also takes up in *Il Principe* 17, again using the example of Florence's conduct toward Pistoia, a concern dear to him because he had been directly involved in the negotiations between the two cities in 1501. Machiavelli heads the chapter in *Il Principe* with the title "Of Cruelty and Mercy [or Piety], and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved Than Feared, or the Contrary." The very title questions the Christian notions

regarding the qualities of mercy and cruelty, a questioning that Machiavelli extends by bringing back the example of Cesare Borgia and the fact that, as Machiavelli claims, “his cruelty restored the Romagna, united it, and reduced it to peace and to faith” (65), whereas Florence’s actions, which were merciful, “allowed Pistoia to be destroyed” (65). Machiavelli concludes that

Debbe, pertanto, uno principe non si curare della infamia di crudele, per tenere li sudditi suoi uniti e in fede; perché, con pochissimi esempi, sarà più pietoso che quelli e’ quali, per troppa pietà, lasciono seguire e’ disordini, di che ne nasca occisioni o rapine; perché queste sogliono offendere una universalità intera, e quelle esecuzioni che vengono dal principe offendono uno particolare. (O 282)

A prince, therefore, so as to keep his subjects united and faithful, should not care about the infamy of cruelty, because with very few examples he will be more merciful than those who for the sake of too much mercy allow disorders to continue, from which come killings or robberies; for these customarily harm a whole community, but the executions that come from the prince harm one particular person. (17.65-66)⁶⁰

Machiavelli continues his “dispute” by transforming the Christian notion of love, rejecting it in favour of fear as the ultimate *virtù* of a prince. This discussion begins in the chapter title where Machiavelli specifically names the Christian virtue of *pietate*,

⁶⁰Sullivan discusses this aspect of Machiavelli in a similar fashion (46), as does Orwin (1223).

variously translated as piety or mercy, and ties it to a choice of love or fear. Christian piety is itself first committed to God but then directly transferred to human beings:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (Jn. 13:34-35)

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus clearly establishes his example as the ultimate route to heaven—we must imitate His way if we want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, for example: “For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (Jn. 13:15). Machiavelli, however, does not believe that this perspective will allow for earthly peace, or a balanced ethical scale, as his example of Florence’s policy towards Pistoia verifies, clearly an example Machiavelli chose to include in both *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi* because it is fresh in the memory of his compatriots, and more relevant than the Roman example could ever be, even though it would have been more appropriate for him to include a Roman example in the *Discorsi*. By excluding a Roman example, however, Machiavelli is also suggesting that the Romans never committed an error of this kind simply because they never doubted the standard they had always committed themselves to, and which he has learned from them, a standard that is not Christian. Machiavelli seeks a love quite different from that conceived by Christianity, for his love is not the Christian love of the soul, but the love of one’s *patria*, the fatherland. Machiavelli wants religion to teach each citizen to love his country more than his soul, as Machiavelli, in his famous letter (no. 321, 16 April 1527), was to tell his friend Vettori: “amo la patria più dell’anima” (I love my fatherland more than my soul), a sentiment he

repeats in *Istorie Fiorentine* when narrating the plight of the Eight against the Church.⁶¹

Machiavelli gives the Eight his highest praise, telling us that “so much more did those citizens then esteem their fatherland than their souls” (3.7.114). Machiavelli is clearly attempting to topple the New Testament maxim, specifically spoken by Jesus,

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mk 8:36-37)

Machiavelli’s answer is glory, but not necessarily that which is for its own sake, but the glory one acquires through the eternal memory a leader gains from, and through, the history of the state. If the citizen who loves his *patria* more than his soul succeeds by founding and providing for the perpetual maintenance of the state, then that citizen will have eternal fame, the fame of the historians and the general people. That man, Machiavelli claims, commits the most selfless act possible, for his action is for the betterment of his fellow citizens, at his own cost. That man’s act is an act of ultimate martyrdom—even stronger than the Christian’s martyrdom, for it can be argued that while the Christian martyr condemns his body for the benefit of his soul, the perfect citizen, the martyred citizen, condemns his soul for the sake of the body politic. On the Machiavellian scales, the martyred citizen’s act is more worthy than the martyred Christian’s act, for the martyred Christian’s act is in fact a selfish act. This line of reasoning allows Machiavelli to say that Cesare Borgia “was much more merciful than the Florentine people” (P 17.65) because Cesare’s actions were undertaken for Italy’s sake.

⁶¹The Eight were called the Otto Santi, and the war the Otto Santi War (1375-1378).

But Machiavelli is not saying that one ought never to be merciful or loving, for it is preferable “to desire to be held merciful and not cruel.” Of course, to be *held* merciful is not the same as to *be* merciful, and so we are taken back to how one achieves the quality of mercy—clearly an *active* quality, as all qualities in Machiavelli’s thinking must be.⁶² Machiavelli declares that the quality of mercy must be cared for so as not to be *used* badly. This is the key word in Machiavelli’s dictates: how a quality is achieved depends on the end to which it is applied so that, for example, the *end* of a crime, that is, the end for which it is originated, is what turns a crime to *virtù*. Kahn stresses Machiavelli’s rhetorical use of the phrase “bene usate” in chapter eight of *Il Principe*: a crime whose end is good for the state—or the prince—is synonymous with *virtù* (1994 35). Machiavelli’s reasoning seems to extend towards a relativistic philosophy, but only if we exclude his first premise, that of the necessity of maintaining the state. His logic must be ascertained via his teleological philosophy, which has typically been mistakenly interpreted in a situational manner as the ends justify the means.⁶³ While this situational outlook is provisionally correct, the interpretation lacks Machiavelli’s ethical dimension to which I alluded earlier and which I will now explore in more detail.

Machiavelli’s major concern, from which he rarely departs, is that of maintaining an ordered state. His initial premise is that all human beings forever desire to acquire things they do not, or cannot, have, and those who have what they desire are fervent about

⁶²I would even argue that Machiavelli also declares *ozio* as an active trait, a person choosing to be inactive or lazy. In Machiavelli one always actively chooses which way one acts or does not act.

⁶³Orwin calls Machiavelli’s philosophical stance “utilitarian” (1226), whereas Kahn declares that “Machiavelli’s rhetorical politics confounds the usual distinctions between means and ends because it involves a mode of action that both is an end in itself and aims at success. *Virtù* is the rhetorical and prudential faculty that allows one to maintain power but is not identical with success in doing so” (1994 38).

maintaining their possessions. This contention is the cause of wars (D 1.37). Because this is our nature, the only motivator against this drive for possession—and hence war—is fear, which a wise prince will instill in all our hearts, partly through necessary executions which, Machiavelli argues, can either be the result of those perpetrated by the city on the factious leaders, law-breakers, and the like, or the result of wars that come about because of factions. In either case, killings will ensue. The more ethical conduct of a city is that which allows for fewer killings, through its commission of executions, instead of more killings through its omission of executions. Machiavelli's version of "love thy neighbour" is such that love can be known only through its negative side. Traits, argues Machiavelli, must be actively discerned.

How traits are ascertained depends partly on knowing the nature of men which, Machiavelli famously asserts is

che sieno ingrati, volubili, simulatori e dissimulanti, fuggitori de' pericoli, cupidi di guadagno. . . (O 282)

that they are ungrateful, fickle, pretenders and dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager for gain. (P 17.66)

The prince's subjects will forsake the prince if he has need for them simply because the subjects do not want to lose their possessions or their security. In agreement with Christianity, love, Machiavelli declares, "is held by a chain of obligation"; the chain "is broken at every opportunity," however, because people are concerned more "for their own utility" than for anyone else's. What strengthens the chain, he concludes, is fear because the "dread of punishment. . . never forsakes you" (P 17.67). Christ's mistake in His

conception of love, Machiavelli implies, is that he believed too much in the people, believing that they will not forsake Him, thus never breaking the chain of obligation love hooked up.

But is Machiavelli not mistaken in his interpretation of Christianity's notion of love? Does Christianity not also instill fear in the people, the fear of hell, for example, or at least the fear of not entering Heaven? Machiavelli's story of Baglioni seems to belie Machiavelli's claim that Christianity does not invoke fear in people, for it is fear of something that engendered Baglioni's lack of action toward the pope. Arguably, Baglioni's fear was not fear of hell, because he had, according to Machiavelli, already committed some atrocious sins likely condemning him to hell, at least should he not repent. Without extending ourselves further into theological territory, the fact remains that Baglioni's actions as narrated by Machiavelli suggest that he feared something. Machiavelli's discussions of Christianity and his reversal of its conceptions of love, mercy, and other like conceptions, indicate that people fear the loss of this-worldly (material) goods more than the loss of other-worldly goods—namely their souls. Machiavelli famously sums up this belief in his statement that a prince,

sopra tutto, astenersi dalla roba d'altri; perché gli uomini sdimenticano più presto la morte del padre che la perdita del patrimonio. (O 282)

above all, . . . must abstain from the property of others, because men forget the death of a father more quickly than the loss of a patrimony. (P 17.67)

Furthermore, Christianity has a safeguard for those who sin—forgiveness, which Machiavelli must first discard if a state is to be maintained in the manner he proposes.

Machiavelli's notion of forgiveness is revised in accordance with its applied purpose; again, it is teleological in orientation. Forgiveness, the essentially Christian notion,⁶⁴ is not easily granted by Machiavelli unless the crime to be forgiven is committed for the sake of the state; hence a Romulus could be forgiven for murdering his brother, and a Moses could be forgiven for murdering the three thousand Israelites, because both men went on to found cities, but Cesare Borgia and Baglioni are not to be forgiven because they failed in their efforts to secure their states. Machiavelli goes so far as to censure Cesare for "overestimating the power of forgiveness" (Sullivan 22):

Solamente si può accusarlo nella creazione di Iulio pontefice, nella quale lui ebbe mala elezione; perche. . . non potendo fare uno papa a suo modo, e' poteva tener che uno non fussi papa; e non doveva mai consentire al papato di quelli cardinali che lui avessi offesi, o che, diventati papi, avessino ad avere paura di lui. . . . E chi crede che ne' personaggi grandi e' benefizii nuovi faccino dimenticare le iniurie vecchie, s'inganna. Erro, adunque, el duca in questa elezione; e fu cagione dell'ultima ruina sua. (O 268-269)

One could only indict him in the creation of Julius as pontiff, in which he made a bad choice; for. . . though he could not make a pope to suit himself, he could have kept anyone from being pope. And he should never have accepted for the papacy those cardinals whom he had offended or who,

⁶⁴See Arendt's *The Human Condition* (section 33).

having become pope, would have to be afraid of him. . . . And whoever believes that among great personages new benefits will make old injuries be forgotten deceives himself. So the duke erred in this choice and it was the cause of his ultimate ruin. (P 7 33)

Machiavelli is actually also condemning Cesare for being like Baglioni, not knowing how to be wholly bad, for both men failed to arrest Julius' advancement. Both men, in the end, were themselves arrested by Christianity, specifically its notion that we must reject bad actions at all costs. By succumbing to Christianity—literally—Cesare and Baglioni brought disaster to their states and instead benefited the pope. Machiavelli's criticism, however, has a deeper, philosophical root. By seeking to convince his potential prince that he must know how to be bad, and that it is not a bad thing—indeed, that it is necessary to be so at times—Machiavelli is in fact opposing Christianity's attempts to convince its adherents that their primary social duty is to reject badness at all costs. Machiavelli, in opposition to Christianity, seeks to coopt badness in order to adapt it to beneficial use. In keeping with his teleological philosophy, Machiavelli denies the intrinsic quality of anything, instead arguing that the end to which a thing is applied is what makes it good or bad.⁶⁵

Machiavelli further retracts his admiration of Cesare when speaking of the duke's father in chapter eleven, "Of Ecclesiastical Principalities." He writes of Alexander VI:

di tutti e' pontefici che sono stati mai, mostrò quanto uno papa, e con il

⁶⁵It is important to note that even in the *Exhortation to Penitence*, where he seems to be satirical, Machiavelli sees man's role as teleological—in the *Exhortation* the end of man is directed towards God's praise.

danaio e con le forze, si posseva prevalere; e fece, *con lo instrumento de duca Valentino* e con la occasione della passata de' Franzesi, tutte quelle cose che io discorro di sopra nelle azioni del duca. (O 274 My emphasis)

Of all the pontiffs there have ever been he showed how far a pope could prevail with money and forces. With Duke Valentino *as his instrument* and with the invasion of the French as the opportunity, he did all the things I discussed above in the actions of the duke. (46 My emphasis)

Machiavelli is not being careless in his writing here, but is purposely retracting his earlier statements about Cesare, even going so far as to deny him agency. The important question is, why?

Machiavelli's task has been, from the beginning, to show why and how Christianity has enfeebled the citizenry, followed by an attempt to reverse the enfeeblement, a task not possible through simple rejection of the official, entrenched religion of his day. Machiavelli must therefore show that it is possible to take the present religion and to do with it what he says Cesare did with everything he attempted, "to renew old orders through new modes" (P 7 32).⁶⁶ Machiavelli had made this statement when he had nothing but admiration for Cesare, just before he began censuring him for his one error, just discussed. Now, in his attempt to reverse the traditional trend of Christian

⁶⁶Machiavelli was clearly aware, here and elsewhere, that in making a statement like this he was reminding his readers of Jesus' parable in Lk. 5:36-39: "And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better."

politics, he “recalls” how Alexander VI proceeded, by relying on the modes and orders that Machiavelli had earlier claimed Cesare employed. But in order not to besmear the pope’s image too much, Machiavelli declares that Alexander’s

lo intendo suo non fussi fare grande la Chiesa, ma il duca, nondimeno ciò
che fece tornò a grandezza della Chiesa; la quale, dopo la sua morte,
spento il duca, fu erede delle sue fatiche. (O 274)

intent might not have been to make the Church great, but rather the duke,
nonetheless what he did redounded to the greatness of the Church. After
his death, the duke being eliminated, the Church fell heir to his labors. (P
11 46-47)

And, Machiavelli continues, Alexander was able to leave the best gift any prince could make to his heir, a strong and stable principality. Nonetheless, Machiavelli does say that Alexander’s intention was to bring benefits to his son, not to the church, but that the church ended up benefiting from Alexander’s policies. It would seem that Machiavelli is safely justifying these non-Christian actions by claiming that unforeseen benefits are always a by-product of strong actions, even those actions intended to benefit people who do not end up receiving the rewards they were intended to receive. He is also stating that even the pope is actually more concerned about power politics than he is about his supposed true office, the theological care of his Christian flock.

Without question, Machiavelli’s outlook on Cesare is one of ambivalence. On the one hand, Machiavelli has nothing but perfect praise for the duke, and on the other hand, he steals the praise he has lavished on him in such a way that Cesare looks like a fool.

And yet, the image of the duke is nonetheless suggestive of other ideas, not the least of which is the idea of a liberator of Italy, one to be highly imitated,⁶⁷ and a point observed by a number of scholars, including Baron, Whitfield, and Sullivan, who suggest that the dedicatee of *Il Principe*, Lorenzo, has a relationship with his pope uncle similar to that of Cesare Borgia's relationship to his pope father. Sullivan further suggests that Machiavelli's inclusion of the Cesare episodes in *Il Principe* is intended to incline Lorenzo to adopt a course of action in which the unification of Italy would be controlled from Rome.⁶⁸

This reading is made all the more reasonable when we consider it alongside Machiavelli's discussion of ecclesiastical principalities which, in chapter eleven of *Principe*, he declares are an exception to his pronouncement that all states are either principalities or republics. He continues that ecclesiastical principalities "are acquired either by virtue or by fortune," but are maintained without them, because "they are sustained by orders that have grown old with religion." Machiavelli further declares that these states do not govern but simply exist, without fear of withering. He contends,

Solo, adunque, questi principati sono sicuri e felici. Ma sendo quelli retti da cagioni superiore, alle quali mente umana non aggiugne, lascerò il parlarne; perché, sendo esaltati e mantenuti da Dio, sarebbe officio di uomo prosuntuoso e temerario discorrerne.

⁶⁷Machiavelli confirms this idea in his letter to Vettori (no. 214, 26 August 1513).

⁶⁸Sullivan 18, Baron (1961 and 1991), Whitfield (1969 87). Although intriguing, Sullivan's acceptance of this thesis contradicts her notion that in Machiavelli's thinking Christianity is superfluous to politics, unless the pope reinterprets Christianity in a fashion conducive to Machiavelli's notion of glory politics.

Thus, only these principalities are secure and prosperous. But as they subsist by superior causes, to which the human mind does not reach, I will omit speaking of them; for since they are exalted and maintained by God, it would be the office of a presumptuous and foolhardy man to discourse on them.

Machiavelli, however, does proceed to discourse on them, introducing his narrative with the phrase

Nondimanco, se alcuno mi ricercassi donde viene che la Chiesa, nel temporale, sia venuta a tanta grandezza, con ciò sia che. . . (O 274),

Nonetheless, if someone were to inquire of me how it came about that the Church has come to such greatness in temporal affairs despite the fact that... (P 11.45),

a rhetorical technique that allows Machiavelli “to undermine the established tradition while simultaneously asserting its unquestioned and unquestionable status” (Fontana 641). But this chapter also allows Machiavelli to lay the blame for the Church’s power squarely on the temporal powers, a task he accomplishes both explicitly and implicitly.

Machiavelli’s explicit assertion is made in his narration of Alexander VI’s success in consolidating his and the Church’s power “with money and forces,” a new accomplishment, or “mode,” to use a Machiavellian word (46-47). Machiavelli further narrates that the Pope’s “instrument” was his son Cesare, thus reversing Cesare’s ranking by displacing all his *virtù* onto his pope father. Machiavelli even utters what is traditionally unutterable regarding the pope, that his actions were not only selfish but

temporal also, that Alexander's purpose was to make his son, not the Church, great, a discussion Machiavelli had begun in chapter seven (27), and continues in *Istorie Fiorentine* (1.23). With his narrative of Alexander's actions, Machiavelli in fact reverses his earlier statement that ecclesiastical principalities "subsist by superior causes," and are "exalted and maintained by God," a reversal further strengthened in chapter eighteen of *Il Principe*, where Machiavelli tells us that the perfect recent example of a prince following the methods of ruling Machiavelli is now outlining, specifically those that make use of both the fox and the lion, is Alexander:⁶⁹

Alessandro VI non fece mai altro, non pensò mai ad altro, che a ingannare uomini: e sempre trovò subietto da poterlo fare. E non fu mai uomo che avessi maggiore efficacia in asseverare, e con maggiori giuramenti affermassi una cosa, che la osservassi meno: nondimeno sempre li succedono gli inganni ad votum, perché conosceva bene questa parte del mondo. (O 283-284)

Alexander VI never did anything, nor ever thought of anything, but how to deceive men, and he always found a subject to whom he could do it. And there never was a man with greater efficacy in asserting a thing, and in affirming it with greater oaths, who observed it less; nonetheless, his deceits succeeded at his will, because he well knew this aspect of the world. (P 18.70)

⁶⁹Machiavelli's critique of France's fear of the pope is taken up again in the *Discorsi*, as discussed above.

Although in this chapter Machiavelli stresses the ways of the fox used by Alexander, earlier (in Chapter eleven) he had stressed Alexander's ways of the lion, undertaken by Cesare on his father's behalf.

Machiavelli's implicit critique of the Church, and of ecclesiastical principalities in general, is to render it in Italian eyes like the Caliphate, a rendition he accomplishes in his direct comparison of the two in chapter nineteen of *Il Principe*:

E avete a notare che questo stato del soldano è disforme da tutti altri principati, perché egli è simile al pontificato cristiano, il quale non si può chiamare né principato ereditario né principato nuovo. (O 288)

And you have to note that the sultan's state is formed unlike all other principalities because it is similar to the Christian pontificate, which cannot be called either a hereditary principality or a new principality. (82)

Machiavelli clearly understood that the office of the Sultan is also the seat of the Caliphate, the spiritual authority of Islam, the Caliph claiming direct descent from Muhammad, very much like the pope claiming his authority from Jesus through St. Peter via the Holy Ghost. The major difference between the Sultan/Caliph and the pope is that the Sultan had always maintained strong arms, a discussion Machiavelli had just completed before the statement we just quoted. We are thus reminded that Alexander had also begun the maintenance of strong arms, thus further rendering himself like the Sultan/Caliph. The suggestion that the pope has become like a Muslim cannot but be understood as a major insult, even a blasphemy, against the pope. The pope, therefore, could be assaulted with Christian blessings because he is moving himself away from

Christianity and toward Islam. Successful assaults on the pope could have been taken by Baglioni and King Francis, but were not (D 1.27 and 2.22).

Although Machiavelli declares that it was the “malignity of fortune” that caused the death of Cesare Borgia, his narration actually tells of other causes, specifically blaming Alexander’s lack of impetuosity. In chapter seven of *Il Principe*, Machiavelli discusses the four necessary conditions that Cesare had to fulfil if he was to secure himself in power, thus keeping Italy united, the fourth of which is the only condition he did not fulfil, that is, acquiring enough of the empire to be able to resist successful attacks “before the pope died” (31, my emphasis). Machiavelli proceeds in his narration, telling us that at the death of Alexander, Cesare had accomplished the first three conditions, and that he was in the process of accomplishing the last condition “the same year that Alexander died.” Had Cesare succeeded, Machiavelli continues, then he “would no longer have depended on the fortune and force of someone else, but on his own power and virtue.” The fortune and force to which Machiavelli is referring is clearly Alexander’s, for Machiavelli then declares,

Ma Alessandro morì dopo cinque anni ch’egli aveva cominciato a trarre fuori la spada. Lasciollo con lo stato di Romagna solamente assolidato, con tutti gli altri in aria, intra dua potentissimi eserciti inimici, e malato a morte. (O 268)

But Alexander died five years after he⁷⁰ had begun to draw his sword. He left the duke with only the state of Romagna consolidated, with all the others in the air, between two very powerful enemy armies, and sick to death. (P 7.31)

Machiavelli continues stressing the unfortunate time of Alexander's death, tying it directly to Cesare's own unfortunate time of death:

Ma se nella morte di Alessandro lui [Cesare] fussi stato sano. . . . E lui mi disse. . . che aveva pensato a ciò che potessi nascere, morendo el padre. . . eccetto che non pensò mai, in su la sua morte, di stare ancora lui per morire. (O 268)

But if at the death of Alexander the duke had been healthy. . . . And he told me. . . that he had thought about what might happen when his father was dying. . . except that he never thought that at his [Alexander's] death he himself would also be . . . dying. (32)

But why is Machiavelli obsessed with the timing of the Pope's death, especially how it relates to Cesare's fortune? The answer is given in the chapter on ecclesiastical principalities, when Machiavelli declares that "the brevity of their lives [as popes] was the cause" of their inability to eliminate factions, for the average life span of a Pope's office is ten years (P 11.46). Machiavelli then reminds us that because of this unfortunate trend

⁷⁰ Mansfield's note asks, "Alexander or Cesare?" I do not believe that there is reason to question the referent of the pronoun, the following pronoun clearly referring to Alexander. Still, even if the first "he" refers to Cesare, the theoretical lesson stands, and Cesare, we are told, was Alexander's instrument.

factions continue to plague Italy; "Then Alexander VI arose."

Machiavelli returns to Alexander because he is the pope who "showed how far a pope could prevail with money and forces," undertaking the actions that Machiavelli "discussed above in the actions of the duke." Machiavelli is here attempting to correct three wrong assumptions regarding Alexander, the Church, and Cesare. With regard to the father and son dyad, Alexander himself is to be blamed for Cesare's failure to unite Italy because it is Alexander's lack of impetuosity that finally caused his son's failure, having waited five years before beginning his war on the various Italian factions. Five years is too short a time in which to accomplish the unification of Italy. If fortune is arbiter of half our actions, and a pope typically lasts only ten years in office, then Alexander, having waited half that time to accomplish his task, gave fortune a head start on him and his son. Cesare's malignity of fortune was his father's extreme caution. Machiavelli's blame of Alexander is explicitly made in the following statement:

E benché lo intento suo non fussi fare grande la Chiesa, ma il duca,
nondimeno ciò che fece torno a grandezza della Chiesa; la quale, dopo la
sua morte, spento il duca, fu erede delle sue fatiche. Venne di poi papa
Iulio; e trovo la Chiesa grande, avendo tutta la Romagna e sendo spenti e'
baroni di Roma e, per le battiture di Alessandro, annullate quelle fazioni....
(O 274)

And though his intent might not have been to make the Church great, but rather the duke, nonetheless what he did redounded to the greatness of the Church. After his death, the duke being eliminated, the Church fell heir to

his labors. Then came pope Julius, and he found the Church great, since she had all Romagna, had eliminated the barons in Rome, and had annihilated those factions through the blows struck by Alexander. . . . (P 11.46-47)

“His,” repeated above, refers to Alexander. Oddly, though, Machiavelli’s reference to the duke being eliminated suggests a closer interpretation of the facts of Cesare’s death than Machiavelli’s traditional interpretation, that he had fallen ill and died. We know that Cesare was killed by Navarrese rebels in a battle in March 1507, and so his death was not as tragic as Machiavelli has led us to believe, until this statement at least, which suggests that the duke’s death was planned, and possibly by Julius, whom Cesare had allowed to ascend to the pontificate.⁷¹ That Machiavelli praises Julius’ impetuosity, as opposed to Alexander’s lack of it, is exceptionally clear in chapter twenty-five of *Il Principe*. Machiavelli also stresses that the Church had become “great” with Alexander, and Julius, finding it great, continued the path first trodden by Alexander, the path of increasing the glory of the Church. The implication of Machiavelli’s narrative is that Alexander was the Church’s first armed prophet, an extrapolation brought closer to the open in chapter nineteen when Machiavelli parallels the Sultanate with the Pontificate, as we just discussed.

Fontana correctly notes that Machiavelli is admiring of the temporal power of the Church as much as he is ironic and critical of it (642). Machiavelli admires the power of

⁷¹ Because the whole paragraph is an analysis of Alexander and his successor, I suggest that there is no doubt that the “his” of the second sentence refers to Alexander, not Cesare. As far as I am aware, no one has suggested this interpretation of Cesare’s death. Machiavelli, I argue, is using the verb *spegnere* in a rhetorical manner that *actively* implies “to extinguish” or, as Mansfield translates the verb, “to eliminate.”

the Church simply because it has amassed power to the extent that its power is not questioned, thus defying the traditional manner of thinking about the art of governance. The fact is that although the Church's power is derived from "superior causes" that cannot even be understood by the human mind, Machiavelli still in the end says that the Church's ability to maintain its power relies in part on its arms and in part on its ability to raise new princes through old orders, as Machiavelli, continuing his comparison of the Church to the Sultanate, a passage worthwhile repeating here, explains in *Il Principe*:

E avete a notare che questo stato del soldano è disforme da tutti altri principati, perché egli è simile al pontificato cristiano, il quale non si può chiamare né principato ereditario né principato nuovo; perché non e' figliuoli del principe vecchio sono eredi e rimangono signori, ma colui che è eletto a quel grado da coloro che ne hanno autorità. Ed essendo questo ordine antiquato, non si può chiamare principato nuovo, perché in quello non sono alcune di quelle difficoltà che sono ne' nuovi; perché, sebbene el principe è nuovo, gli ordini di quello stato sono vecchi, e ordinati a riceverlo come se fussi loro signore ereditario. (O 288-289)

And you have to note that the sultan's state is formed unlike all other principalities because it is similar to the Christian pontificate, which cannot be called either a hereditary principality or a new principality. For it is not the sons of the old prince who are the heirs and become the lords, but the one who is elected to that rank by those who have the authority for it. And this being an ancient order, one cannot call it a new principality,

because some of the difficulties in new principalities are not in it; for if the prince is indeed new, the orders of that state are old and are ordered to receive him as if he were their hereditary lord. (19.82)

This type of principality, according to Machiavellian logic, is not governed by the cyclical pattern of history to which he subscribes, at least not as long as the princes in these principalities follow the example of the Sultan, whose “kingdom. . . is in the hands of the soldiers [whom he] is required to keep [as] friends, without respect for the people” (P 19.82). These principalities are not republics either, and are more concerned about the welfare of the princes, not the people’s. Crucial in Machiavelli’s analysis is the fact that we are called to recognize two points respecting these types of principalities, which fall outside the purview Machiavelli had established at the beginning of *Il Principe*, that there are two types of principalities, hereditary and new. Ecclesiastical principalities are powerful and stable because they successfully combine hereditary orders with new princes, thus allowing the ruled to believe that the whole order is new, when in fact it only seems new. Machiavelli had earlier reminded us that sight does not show us the truth. Machiavelli also teaches the new prince that when old orders exist it is not always necessary to destroy them, but only to manipulate them to seem to be maintaining the old ways when in fact the new prince is manipulating them to his advantage, as Cesare had done when he “renew[ed] old orders through new modes” (P 7.32). This type of principality or republic—for this kind of state is actually a mixture of both specifically because a good republic installs institutions that are difficult to change, thus ensuring long term stability—is one that ultimately is capable of breaking the cyclical pattern of history, a pattern that takes a state to its ruin before raising it again to its glory. Machiavelli,

however, believes that a state need not experience ruin, if it revives itself. The ideal republic or princedom must be able to perpetuate itself, Machiavelli argues. Such a state intrinsically contains the birthing process, not unlike the phoenix, but without the death cycle. The rebirth is a skewed, and non-Christian, rebirth specifically because it denies the necessity of death.

Fontana points out that Machiavelli discusses ecclesiastical principalities within the context of a discussion of the Roman emperors and how they succeeded to the throne, a discussion that is undertaken in the *Discorsi* (1.10) also where Machiavelli declares that all good emperors, excepting Titus, were “adopted” to the throne, and all bad emperors had inherited it. This discussion sheds good light on Machiavelli’s view that ecclesiastical principalities are inherently superior to other types of principalities, having mixed the principles of election and inheritance into its regime.

Machiavelli’s discussion of ecclesiastical principalities allows us to extrapolate a number of other sentiments the Secretary holds, sentiments that are not in any way synonymous with those of his compatriots, and which were typically dangerous to voice openly. Nonetheless, Machiavelli wanted to air those sentiments, and so he coded them carefully, a code which a *sensata* reading will allow us to decode. The primary sentiment Machiavelli holds is that he admires Islamic *virtù*, which has allowed the empire to expand with vigour and solidity, something Europe has repeatedly failed to accomplish since the dissipation of the Roman empire and its adoption of Christianity.

In his brilliant article, Fontana advises us “that Machiavelli discusses various kinds of religion,” including primitive and varied forms of Christianity, Judaism, paganism, the papal principality, and Islam (639-640). Although Machiavelli makes

numerous references to the Ottoman Empire and the Saracens, and he compares the rule of the Papacy to that of the Sultanate, in his writings he never mentions Muhammad by name or otherwise, even when discussing the great founders. Fontana is convinced that “Machiavelli could not have been unaware that the reference to Moses as the armed prophet would immediately bring to mind Mohammed [sic] as another armed prophet” (640), a reading with which I agree.⁷² It is likely that Machiavelli did not want to invite more trouble to himself by lauding the founder of Islam as a venerable example of an armed prophet, especially because Europe was fearful of the Turks. Moreover, Machiavelli understood that elevating Muhammad’s status would generate onto the Secretary not only charges of blasphemy, but also would not attract supporters to his cause of Italian unity: in European eyes, Muhammad is not a worthy example for imitation. Nevertheless, the founder of Islam specifically, and Islam generally, were discussed by Europeans, generating an anti-Islamic prejudice that became quite prevalent in Europe, especially after Petrarca’s legitimization of it in his twenty-eighth Canzone:

Una parte del mondo è che si giace
mai sempre in ghiaccio et in gelate nevi,
tutta lontana dal camin del sole;
là sotto i giorni nubilosi et brevi,
nemica naturalmente di pace
nasce una gente a cui il morir non dole.

Questa se più devota che non sòle

⁷²There is no question that the histories of the two men are much alike. Both spoke with God, both led their people into battle, and both used the word and the sword to establish control of their nations.

col tedesco furor la spada cigne,
 Turchi Arabi et Caldei,
 con tutti quei che speran nelli Dei
 di qua dal mar che fa l'onde sanguigne,
 quanto sian da prezzar conoscer dèi:
 popolo ignudo paventoso et lento,
 che ferro mai non strigne
 ma tutt'i colpi suoi commette al vento.

There is a part of the world that always lies in ice and frozen snows, all
 distant from the part of the sun; there, beneath days cloudy and brief, is
 born a people naturally the enemy of the rest, whom dying does not pain.

If these, more devout than in the past, gird on their swords in their
 Teutonic rage, you can learn how much to value Turks, Arabs, and
 Chaldeans, with all those who hope in gods on this side of the sea whose
 waves are blood-colored: a naked, cowardly, and lazy people who never
 grasp the steel but entrust all their blows to the wind. (76-77).

Europe feared Islam for two main reasons. The first was conceptual, essentially a
 lack of understanding of the religion that, in the minds of the Europeans, led to the
 severance of Islam's linkages to Judaism and Christianity, leading also to the depiction of
 Muhammad—Macone in the Italian literature of the day—as a god, and in French
 Medieval writings, for example, as part of a trinity, alongside Tervagant and Apollyon,
 and sometimes even with a fourth god, Jupiter (Allaire 176). In Italy, Pulci's *Morgante*

also depicted Macone as a god, called upon to bestow victory in military enterprises, but he is also declared to be a false, even wicked, god (I, III, IV, XIII, XIV) .

The second reason to generate European fear of Islam was the sack of Constantinople in 1453, an act reminiscent of the sack of Rome in 410.⁷³ The loss of the Eastern seat of Christianity renewed the call for another crusade, a cause to which many humanists remained devoted, especially because the fear of the Turkish expansion into Europe was profounder than ever (Bisaha 186).⁷⁴ Pius II even died while attempting to organize a crusade. He saw the loss of the Byzantine city as a genuine, not simply symbolic, "return of barbarism," which is why, after the fall of Constantinople, humanists began calling the Turks "barbarians" (Bisaha 191, 193). Most intriguing, however, is the fact that there were a few humanists who were actually attracted to the Turks, not the least of whom was Salutati, who was almost unique in his view of the Turks as a "unified. . . formidable military machine," capable of devastating their enemies because of their vast discipline and their methods of recruiting and training potent soldiers.⁷⁵ Salutati even compares the Turks to the ancient Romans, a nearly blasphemous comparison because

⁷³Just as the sack of Rome in 410 was blamed on the lax religiosity of pagan Romans, so the sack of Constantinople was blamed on the lax religiosity of Christians. It was largely the sack of Rome that caused Augustine to defend Christianity, a defence that resulted in his magnum opus, *The City of God*.

⁷⁴Bisaha convincingly argues that Petrarch set the standard anti-Muslim rhetoric for the humanists by combining Classical concepts and ideas of the crusade into a compatible form, thus secularizing the rhetoric and successfully converting the already false image of Muslims from simple polytheistic anti-Christians into dangerous barbarians who want to eliminate the European bastion of civilization (188-189).

⁷⁵Salutati was referring to the *devshirme* (boy tribute) system that required subject (mainly Balkan) Christians to supply the army with boys of a certain age for the janissary (a corruption of the Turkish term *yeni cheri* literally meaning "new troops") military corps, that is the Sultan's standing elite guards. The boys were converted to the Muslim faith and trained rigorously in military matters. The system was founded by Murad I, and the janissaries' stern discipline was such that they were even forbidden to marry in order to maintain their loyalty to the Sultan.

Salutati had held up the Romans as worthy of imitation by his own society (Bisaha 194-195). It is possible that Machiavelli saw Salutati's praise of the Turks as a precedent for his own praise of them. Machiavelli, however, not to be outdone by anyone, takes Salutati's praise even further, by actually committing the blasphemy that Salutati did not commit, that is by comparing the Sultan to the pope, bringing the discussion back to a religious level.⁷⁶ And although Machiavelli does not name Muhammad in any of his writings, he bizarrely names him in one of his letters. Machiavelli's letter of 31 January 1515 (no. 239) to Francesco Vettori is interesting particularly because of its closing:

Et nel cadere el superbo ghiottone,/e' non dimenticò però Macone" (O
1192)

And in his fall the arrogant villain/Still did not forget Macone (my
translation),

a conflation of "several passages from the first *cantare* [sic] of Luigi Pulci's *Morgante*" (Najemy 1993 320).⁷⁷ In his poem, Pulci accepts the false but widespread belief that Muslims regarded Muhammad (Macone) as divine. Pulci's narrative tells of how Orlando slays two Moorish giants, Passamonte and Alabastro who, even as they are dying, do not forget to convey their faith in Muhammad. Najemy is correct to point out that in his reference to Macone Machiavelli is punning on his own name, but he is not correct in

⁷⁶Salutati, like Petrarch, wanted a resurgence of Italian nationalism, beginning with the expulsion of the barbarians. Bisaha, who makes note of the similarity between Machiavelli and Salutati, misses Machiavelli's religious association of the Sultan to the pope, and writes that "Machiavelli expressed admiration for the organization of the Turkish state and military, without getting bogged down in religious rhetoric and concerns. . ." (198).

⁷⁷The first line is a conflation of two or three passages, but the second is a direct quotation.

reading the letter ironically, that Paolo Vettori would be to Giuliano Medici what Remirro de Orco was to Cesare Borgia (P 7, 1993 320, 330-334), and that Machiavelli is finally free of the temptations to be politically involved. Najemy's reading is incorrect because he forgets about Machiavelli's very specific point that he advised Paolo to pursue the governorship over one of the cities Giuliano is about to possess, and that Paolo had accepted Machiavelli's advice. If anything, Machiavelli's letter seems to ask Francesco once more for political favours, that Francesco ought not to forget Macone, that is Niccolò, as he has tended to in previous years. However we read this odd reference to Macone, in order to understand the full import of Machiavelli's admiration for the Turks, and to see the full implication of his coded rhetoric, we must focus our attention now on the prophet whom Machiavelli names and applauds, Moses, remembering that Moses and Muhammad had very similar histories.

2.4. Armed Theology

Machiavelli's relationship to Moses has been recognized for many years, going as far back as Louis Machon, who actually defended Machiavelli from charges of atheism, and even bluntly claimed the following:

One may cease to be surprised that I draw parallels between Holy Scripture and the works of Machiavelli, and that I propose that his strongest and most formidable maxims were drawn from the book of books, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, if one considers that this sacred volume, which should be the study and meditation of all true Christians, teaches princes as well as subjects. . . . There is no secret of state in Plato, in Aristotle, or in

Tacitus that cannot be found in Wisdom and Ecclesiastics, and I maintain that these two books can teach great princes a politics finer and more subtle than exists among men. (Qtd. in Donaldson 188)⁷⁸

Machon's thesis, however, remained more or less unique until 1989, when de Grazia published his *Machiavelli in Hell*, an interesting book whose thesis—that Machiavelli is a misunderstood Christian moralist—is, in my opinion, unconvincing.⁷⁹ To say that Machiavelli is not a Christian moralist is not to say that he is against religion, for Machiavelli in fact is not anti-religion, but is against the idea of relegating religion to a non-political status. Machiavelli is the first thinker after Plato to formulate a state in which religion is coequal with the state and the polity is not a theocracy but a state that recognizes the essential qualities of religion, especially as a superior motivator of citizens. This formulation begins Machiavelli's unique reading of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, the first reading that, to my knowledge, openly declares the Bible as a historical and political text totally divorced from its theological roots.⁸⁰

Machiavelli's method of reading of the Bible is subtly stated in both *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi*. In *Il Principe*, Machiavelli tells us that

di Moisè non si debba ragionare, sendo suto uno mero esecutore delle cose che gli erano ordinate da Dio, tamen debbe essere ammirato solum per quella grazia che lo faceva degno di parlare con Dio. (O 264)

⁷⁸Machon's treatise, *Apologie pour Machiavel*, of which there are two versions, was written first in 1643, and the later one in 1668 from which this quotation is extracted. Donaldson's discussion of Machon's treatise is fascinating, as is Donaldson's whole book, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State*.

⁷⁹De Grazia's thesis has not gained a wide following.

⁸⁰In a recent article, Steven Marx adopts a view quite similar to Machon's.

one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God. (P 6.22)

This odd statement is reminiscent of a similar statement Machiavelli makes in the *Discorsi*, where he tells us that one ought not to discuss metaphysical things because we simply cannot know them (D 1.56). Yet, Machiavelli goes back to Moses in the *Discorsi* where he more clearly adumbrates his reading method:

E chi legge la Bibbia sensatamente, vedrà Moisè essere stato forzato, a volere che le sue leggi e che i suoi ordini andassero innanzi, ad ammazzare infiniti uomini, i quali, non mossi da altro che dall invidia, si opponevano a' disegni suoi. (O 237)

He who reads the Bible with discernment will see that, in order that Moses might set about making laws and institutions, he had to kill a very great number of men who, out of envy and nothing else, were opposed to his plans. (D 3.30.486)

Presumably, by *sensatamente* (discernment) Machiavelli means a political as opposed to a religious or devotional reading.⁸¹ Elsewhere, Machiavelli insists that the reading of history, including his own act of reading, is for the purpose of discovering the secret causes of actions, especially political actions. He admits that it is not simply imitation of

⁸¹ A number of scholars arrive at the same conclusion, including Geerken (580).

the ancients that will give a prince wisdom, but also the imitation of those things modern:

. . . ho giudicato necessario scrivere, sopra tutti quelli libri di Tito Livio che dalla malignità de' tempi non ci sono stati intercetti, quello che io, secondo le cognizione delle antique e moderne cose, iudicherò essere necessario per maggiore intelligenza di essi, a ciò che coloro che leggeranno queste mie dichiarazioni, possino più facilmente trarne quella utilità per la quale si debbe cercare la cognizione delle istorie. (O 76)

I have decided that on all the books by Titus Livius which the malice of the ages has not taken away from us, it is necessary that I write what, according to my knowledge of ancient and modern affairs, I judge necessary for the better understanding of them, in order that those who read these explanations of mine may more easily get from them that profit for which they should seek acquaintance with books [histories]. (D 1. Pr.)⁸²

In this passage, Machiavelli is telling us a number of things, especially admitting that his version of history is subjective, thus affirming his view that his path is untrodden by anyone else, and that the study of history must be utilitarian. Most important, however, is his view that the study of history must be *mediated* if it is to be of use to those undertaking its study, especially princes.

Perché, dove gli uomini hanno poca virtù la fortuna mostra assai la potenza

⁸²This is Gilbert's translation, which I judge better than Walker's. Still, I have literally translated the last word in this passage, *istorie* which, strangely, Gilbert renders as "books."

sua; e, perché la è varia, variano le repubbliche e gli stati spesso; e varieranno sempre, infino che non surga qualcuno che sia della antichità tanto amatore, che la regoli in modo, che la non abbia cagione di mostrare, a ogni girare di sole, quanto ella puote. (O 191)

For where men have but little virtue, fortune makes a great display of its power; and, since fortune changes, republics and governments frequently change; and will go on changing till someone comes along, so imbued with the love of antiquity that he regulates things in such fashion that fortune does not every time the sun turns round get a chance of showing what it can do. (D 2.30. 375-376)⁸³

Machiavelli's role becomes one of combined counsellor, historian, and theologian. He also becomes a supreme *political* moralist whose sole concern is his country's safety, declaring that when the fatherland's survival is at risk, no action is deserving of moral consideration:

. . . perché dove si delibera al tutto della salute della patria, non vi debbe cadere alcuna considerazione né di giusto né d'ingiusto, né di piatoso né di crudele, né di laudabile né d'ignominioso; anzi, posposto ogni altro rispetto, seguire al tutto quel partito che le salvi la vita, e mantenghile la libertà. (O 249)

⁸³Machiavelli makes a number of such references, including in his famous letter to Vettori (no. 216, 10 December 1513), the preface to Book three of *Istorie Fiorentine*, and elsewhere.

For when the safety of one's country wholly depends on the decision to be taken, no attention should be paid either to justice or injustice, to kindness or cruelty, or to its being praiseworthy or ignominious. On the contrary, every other consideration being set aside, that alternative should be wholeheartedly adopted which will save the life and preserve the freedom of one's country. (D 3.41.515)

In this discourse, Machiavelli links religion to country, essentially retreating to the Roman and Hebraic conception of religion, a notion in which "country, people, and god(s) are inextricably interwoven, such that one derives meaning and value from the other" (Fontana 657). Lest one miss the point, especially Lorenzo, Machiavelli makes his statement urgent, quoting Livy to justify the use of arms for the sake of liberating Italy: "for war is just to whom it is necessary, and arms are pious when there is no hope but in arms" (P 26.103). Machiavelli repeats this maxim in the *Discorsi* and *Istorie Fiorentine*, except this time to emphasize necessity: "War is justified, if necessity forces one to it, and to arm is a duty, if in arms lies one's hope" (D 3.12.442).⁸⁴ In order to set aside a potential rejoinder to his political philosophy, that if God wanted Italy united he would have caused its unification, Machiavelli puts forth a ready answer:

Dio non vuole fare ogni cosa, per non ci torre el libero arbitrio e parte di quella gloria che tocca a noi. (O 297)

God does not want to do everything, so as not to take free will from us and

⁸⁴The reference in *Florentine Histories* is 5.8.194, O 743. Machiavelli quotes the Latin from Livy 9.1.33

that part of the glory that falls to us. (P 26.103)

Just before making this statement, Machiavelli had repeated the miracles God brought about as Moses led the Israelites to their freedom from slavery into the promised land.

The question remains, by using Moses, a religious figure, as an example of a politically astute leader, was Machiavelli not taking a chance that could lead to a failure to convince his readers of the value of his (Machiavelli's) teachings? Why Moses, and why use religion in this way?

2.5. Political Favouritism

Felix Gilbert has shown that Florentines typically believed that they enjoyed a favoured relationship with God, that they had even received their constitution from him ((1965 41-44, 71). The resemblance of Florence to Israel, therefore, already existed in the minds of Machiavelli's contemporaries, to the extent that many painters, writers, sculptors, invoked Moses in their works.⁸⁵ Because Moses was well known to the Florentines, Geerken argues that Machiavelli does not delve into details regarding Moses because the Israeli founder was simply "part of a fabric of general understanding that bordered on the obvious which Machiavelli wished not to belie" (586). The invocation of "Moses, God, or Hebrew history. . . was nothing novel [because] these were familiar topoi" (588). Still, to interpret Moses as an astute political leader more concerned with military exploits leading to success than with theology is an innovative step that Machiavelli does not undertake lightly but boldly. And he does read the Bible in a *sensatamente* manner, and actually

⁸⁵The most famous, of course, is Michelangelo.

quite accurately. Geerken has shown that Machiavelli's interpretation of Moses' Levitical slaughter of 3 000 men at Sinai, which was *not* sanctioned by God but simply by Moses himself, as the necessary action to quell the envy of the factions opposed to Moses' plans is accurate. Psalm 106:16 and Numbers 16:1-3, for example, are clear that envy was the motivator for divisions in the Hebrew camps (Geerken 589). Geerken also reminds us that for Machiavelli envy is the cause of hate, which leads to factions, ambition, and so on. That Machiavelli was genuinely fearful of envy is clear at the very outset of the *Discorsi*, beginning the work with the unambiguous statement that envy is inherent in human nature. When he returns to a discussion of it in *Discorsi* 3.30, he makes clear that envy will ruin the state unless envy is destroyed. Machiavelli outlines two options for removing envy, one of which is

per qualche accidente forte e difficile, dove ciascuno, veggendosi perire, posposta ogni ambizione, corre volontariamente ad ubbidire a colui che crede che con la sua virtù lo possa liberare. (O 236)

by some serious misfortune, difficult to deal with, in which everybody sees disaster ahead and so, dropping any ambition, hastens to obey one whose virtue promises him freedom. (D 3.30.485)

This option relies on pure fortune, unless of course the prince devises some misfortune, such as war. The other means of removing envy is by violence, for

nel venire a qualche riputazione ed a qualche grandezza. . . veggendoti riputato più di loro, è impossibile che mai acquieschino, e stieno pazienti. E quando e' sono uomini che siano usi a vivere in una città corrotta, dove

la educazione non abbia fatto in loro alcuna bontà, è impossibile che, per accidente alcuno, mai si ridichino; e per ottenere la voglia loro, e soddisfare alla loro perversità d'animo, sarebbero contenti vedere la rovina della loro patria. A vincere questa invidia non ci è altro rimedio che la morte di coloro che l'hanno. (O 236-237)

in the contest for fame and power. . . as long as such men see that your reputation is greater than theirs, they will never remain quiet and bear it with patience. Moreover, should such men have been used to living in a corrupt city in which education had not done them any good, it is impossible for any misfortune to convert them to a better state of mind. Rather would they see their country ruined than fail to obtain their ends and satisfy their perverse mentality. To overcome envy of this kind the only remedy lies in the death of those who are imbued with it. (D 3.30.485-486)

This is the action Moses took, a man of *virtù* because he knew that there was no other course open to him, and so he not only punished those who were opposed to his rule, but also instilled fear in anyone else who might think again of opposing him in the future. Moses, in opposition to Savonarola and Piero Soderini, adopted a course of quick, violent action, not temporization, to remove envy. Savonarola had understood the danger of envy but did not use violence to quell it—he was an unarmed prophet, and Soderini's failure came about because he

credeva, col tempo, con la bontà, con la fortuna sua, col benificare alcuno,

spegnere questa invidia; vedendosi di assai fresca età, e con tanti nuovi favori che gli arrecava el modo del suo procedere, che credeva potere superare quelli tanti che per invidia se gli opponevano, senza alcuno scandolo, violenza e tumulto: e non sapeva che il tempo non si può aspettare, la bontà non basta, la fortuna varia, e la malignità non truova dono che la plachi.. (O 237)

believed that his goodness, the favour of fortune, and his beneficence towards all, in time would extinguish envy. For in view of his being as yet fairly young and of how much favour he had recently gained by his method of governing, he thought he would be able to get the better of those who through envy were opposing him, without either scandal, violence or disturbance. What he failed to realize was that time waits for no man, that goodness alone does not suffice, that fortune is changeable and that malice is not to be placated by gifts. (D 3.30.486-487)

Moses was an armed prophet, and Machiavelli could rely on the acceptance of his interpretation of Moses' action, even if it is not an accurate interpretation, because Moses was fulfilling God's plan; he was not only crushing a political rebellion against his own leadership, but also crushing a religious rebellion against God (Geerken 589). Of course, Moses' action wins Machiavelli's approval also because by undertaking such a bold and radical move he was condoning Machiavelli's recommendation, coming later in *Discorsi* 3.49, that to ensure compliance with one's leadership, one in ten must be punished, regardless of guilt or innocence, and one made earlier, that it was good for Brutus to have

killed his sons, both actions undertaken for the sake of the state.⁸⁶ In this, Machiavelli is proposing Moses as an example supporting his view that

il maggiore onore che possono avere gli uomini sia quello che
voluntariamente è loro dato dalla loro patria: credo che il maggiore bene
che si faccia, e il più grato a Dio, sia quello che si fa alla sua patria. (O 30)

the greatest honour men can have is that voluntarily given them by their
fatherland; I believe that the greatest good to be done and the most
pleasing to God is that which one does to one's fatherland. (*Discourse on
Remodelling the Government of Florence*. My translation)

Nonetheless, Machiavelli does transform Moses into a "recognizably 'modern' . . . civic
lawgiver and popular demagogue" (Brown 278), but in doing so Machiavelli was actually
following the example of Savonarola in order to undermine the popular and powerful
virtual leader of Florence, a discussion to which we must now turn.

2.6. Machiavelli and Savonarola

There is much contention surrounding the debate on how much Savonarola influenced
Machiavelli, or how Machiavelli felt about the popular friar, or even if Machiavelli started
out approving of the friar and then changed his mind about him. While all positions can
be reasonably sustained, Machiavelli's words more plausibly suggest that he actually

⁸⁶ Although we are told that 3 000 Israelites were killed, it seems that each of the Levites killed a brother and a neighbour and, possibly, a son as well, for Moses says to the Levites, after the bloodbath, that each of them has consecrated himself "even every man upon his son, and upon his brother" (Ex. 32:29). The NRSV is clearer: "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of a son or a brother, and so have brought a blessing on yourselves this day."

learned from the friar important lessons on how to succeed *and* fail in politics. This is to say that when Machiavelli mocks Savonarola he does so because the friar failed to use his power to the extent that necessity dictated he ought to have used it. Savonarola abused his office by not making full use of it. These preliminary remarks form the background to my discussion of Machiavelli's very important relationship to Savonarola, whose figure is forever present when Machiavelli names Moses.

Machiavelli's references to Moses were also intended to mock Savonarola, who had compared himself to Moses. In his famous letter to Becchi (no. 3, 9 March 1498), Machiavelli reports on Savonarola's Lenten sermon in which he compares himself to Moses leading Israel out of Egypt. In the sermon, Savonarola is Moses, Israel is Florence, Alexander VI is Pharaoh. Machiavelli calls Savonarola's preachings "lies," but comes back to make use of the comparisons for his own purposes. In chapter twenty-six of *Il Principe*, Italy is Israel and Lorenzo is Moses. The major difference between Machiavelli's and Savonarola's versions of Moses is the fact that Savonarola is a prophet unarmed, whereas Machiavelli's Moses is an armed prophet. The other important lesson Machiavelli had learned from Savonarola is that religion is an important factor in politics, especially in its powers of conviction. He concludes his letter to Becchi with the statement that

secondo el mio iudicio, viene secondando e tempi, et le sua bugie
colorendo. (O 1011)

according to my view, he keeps changing with the times and makes his lies
more believable. (PM 58).

Savonarola clearly possesses all elements necessary for the maintenance of one's power, except arms. Machiavelli makes up for Savonarola's lack by realizing that God "was an aggressive, political deity. . . a God who manifested himself in history by, among other things, speaking to men of *virtù*, potential agents like Moses" (Geerken 586). This statement, however, does not suggest that Machiavelli was a believer, only that he may have simply made use of a precedent—a religious, and therefore powerful, one—to support his views. If God had commissioned these acts previously, as Moses' history tells us, then why can such acts not be repeated by men as virtuous as Moses. Machiavelli's initial premise, we must remember, is that history runs in cycles but our natures are forever the same.

Machiavelli does not directly deny God's commission of these acts, but makes use of them. That Machiavelli may not believe in God is irrelevant to his argument, because he wants to use God as an instrument of force in politics, directly as the one who commissions necessary political acts, and indirectly as the teacher of princes. Fontana correctly points out that Moses' "great teacher"—God, is to be contrasted to Achilles' great teacher, Chiron, who taught the Greek hero and other ancient princes the art of ruling. Chiron's art differs from God's art, however, in that the pagan's art centres on the principles of both man and beast—metaphorically symbolized in the teacher's physique, whereas the Judeo-Christian art centres on the strictly divine principle. Fontana further argues that Machiavelli is the modern teacher who makes use of both the ancient and modern teachings, that is the pagan and Biblical teachings, in order to teach contemporary and future princes. The difference between Machiavelli's teachings and those of his two predecessors, Fontana claims, is that Machiavelli's teachings are open to question because

they rely on arguments, not force, even though “Paradoxically. . . Machiavelli’s new ways and methods. . . reveal the effectiveness of the tactics and techniques used by Moses, Romulus, and the rest” (645).

An important point regarding Machiavelli’s choice of effective teachers of the ancients, including Moses, is raised by Strauss, who argues that Machiavelli in essence “replaces the imitation of the God-Man Christ by the imitation of the Beast-Man Chiron.” While Strauss is to some extent correct in his observation, he does err in another respect, declaring that “Machiavelli mentions only one teacher of princes, namely Chiron. . .” (1958 78), thus forgetting about Moses’ “great teacher.” Strauss’s observation, therefore, needs to be modified; Machiavelli does not replace the imitation of the God-Man Christ, he does not even acknowledge it, thus implicitly stating that the God-Man Christ is not worthy of imitation because He was not concerned with things political. Machiavelli bypasses the Christian political teaching because such a teaching is not existent, except in denying politics.

Machiavelli’s revelation of Moses’ and Chiron’s teachings, but especially of Moses’, points not only to the effectiveness of Moses’ teachings, as well as those of other great men, but especially to God’s secret teachings, which Machiavelli does not call secret here, but says so indirectly by referring to Chiron’s teachings which, Machiavelli says, were known by the ancient writers who “copertamente” (covertly) taught them to princes by writing about Chiron, the teacher of such princes. Machiavelli essentially aligns himself with the ancient writers by suggesting that he, too, is teaching the lessons of rule covertly. But he proceeds even further than the ancients by telling his readers that he knows God’s teachings on the art of ruling, and it involves the lessons of how to be like

the fox and the lion, that is, deceptive, fraudulent, and so forth—beastly. Fontana summarizes Machiavelli's task well:

To assert, even by inference and by indirection, that God's teaching is preeminently political, and that "simulation and dissimulation" (*Prince* 18) are central to it, is to question the very nature of biblical authority and biblical narrative. Certainly, to reveal "openly" the political and historical character of God's teaching is to subvert both biblical and Christian religion. (645)

That Machiavelli is attempting to subvert Biblical and Christian religion becomes clearer in the *Discorsi* when he claims that all leaders have recourse to God when it becomes necessary to convince people of the need for unusual laws or actions that the people are hesitant to accept (1.11-15). Machiavelli's examples of wise rulers who reverted to religion in order to convince their respective peoples to accept the rulers' dictates are Lycurgus, Solon, and Numa, but not Moses. It becomes clear why Machiavelli excludes Moses in these chapters, especially when Machiavelli declares that wise rulers must accept as true whatever the religion dictates even though they might think it false (D 1.12).

Although Machiavelli does not speak of Moses directly here, he does so obliquely by referring to Savonarola who, we must remember, had compared himself to Moses, referring to himself as God's "ambassador" (Brown 1988 60), and who also, like Moses, had spoken to God—at least that was Savonarola's claim, which many Florentines had accepted. This is Machiavelli's point at the end of *Discorsi* 1.11, specifically when he writes,

E benché agli uomini rozzi più facilmente si persuada uno ordine o una opinione nuova, non è però per questo impossibile persuaderla ancora agli uomini civili e che presumono non essere rozzi. Al popolo di Firenze non pare essere né ignorante né rozzo: nondimeno da frate Girolamo Savonarola fu persuaso che parlava con Dio. Io non voglio giudicare s'egli era vero o no, perché d'uno tanto uomo se ne debbe parlare con riverenza: ma io dico bene, che infiniti lo credevono senza avere visto cosa nessuna straordinaria, da farlo loro credere; perché la vita sua, la dottorina e il soggetto che prese, erano sufficienti a fargli prestare fede. Non sia, pertanto, nessuno che si sbigottisca di non potere conseguire quel che è stato conseguito da altri; perché gli uomini, come nella prefazione nostra si disse, nacquero, vissero e morirono, sempre, con uno medesimo ordine. (O 94-95)

And, though it is easier to persuade rude men to adopt a new institution or a new standpoint, it does not follow that it is impossible to persuade civilized men to do so, i.e. those who do not look on themselves as rude men. It did not seem to the people of Florence that they were either ignorant or rude, yet they were persuaded by Friar Girolamo Savonarola that he had converse with God. I do not propose to decide whether it was so or not, because of so great a man one ought to speak with reverence; but I do say that vast numbers believed it was so, without having seen him do anything out of the common whereby to make them believe; for his life, his

teaching and the topic on which he preached, were sufficient to make them trust him. Let no one despair, then, of being able to effect that which has been effected by others; for, as we have said in our preface, men are born and live and die in an order which remains ever the same. (D 1.11.142)

Essentially, Machiavelli denies Savonarola's conversation with God, exemplifying his belief that it is possible to convince anyone of anything, especially with recourse to religion. More important, however, are Machiavelli's turns of phrase regarding Savonarola, which are similar to the phrases he makes regarding Moses. To repeat a statement quoted earlier, in *Il Principe*, Machiavelli tells us that

di Moisè non si debba ragionare. . . tamen debbe essere ammirato solum per quella grazia che lo faceva degno di parlare con Dio (O 264),

one should not reason about Moses. . . nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God (P 6.22),

a statement similar to the one regarding Savonarola, that one ought "not propose to decide whether it was so or not [speaking with God], because of so great a man one ought to speak with reverence." If Savonarola was able to deceive intelligent Florentines, who are reasonably well off, then is it not possible that Moses was able to deceive Israelites who were literally running for their lives, and always near starvation? If Savonarola is like Moses, then Florence is like the Israeli nation. The conclusion is inescapable: in their claim that they spoke with God, both men deceived their peoples in order to achieve political ends. Machiavelli's subtle rhetoric becomes quite transparent. Although he does

not make direct references either to Moses or to the revealed religions of the West in the important politico-theological discussions of *Discorsi* 1.11-15, Machiavelli's purpose is to subvert revealed religion along with pagan religion, which he has subverted openly in these chapters. This is why near the end of the *Discorsi*, in 3.30, he is able to say that one ought to read the Bible "sensatamente."⁸⁷ This methodology is exemplified in his interpretation of the Roman religion, to which we now turn in order to arrive at a clearer understanding of Machiavelli's critique of Christianity.

2.7. Machiavelli and Paganism

There is a misconception that Machiavelli's outlook on the Roman religion is straightforward, that he views it with respect, and that he holds it up as worthy of imitation, as a model for his revised Christianity, or the new religion he believes ought to be founded in Italy.⁸⁸ Although there is an element of truth to this misconception, especially in the fact that to some extent Machiavelli's functional view of religion is an imitation of the Roman historians' views on religion (Feld 84-85), the reality is that Machiavelli's relationship to paganism is as shaky as his relationship to Christianity. Nevertheless, between the two general positions regarding Machiavelli's view of religion, that it is either a servile tool of the state or that of sincere belief (clearly the former is the

⁸⁷My reading is similar to Fontana's (646-647), whose article is the only one of which I am aware makes any pertinent references to Islam, but does not engage it in a discussion, as I did above.

⁸⁸Some scholars maintain that Machiavelli himself wanted to found a new religion. Sullivan, for example, goes so far as to call Machiavelli a new *datore* (giver) (121). Elsewhere, Sullivan claims that Machiavelli believed that he was "sacrificing himself for the benefit of humanity. . . . as a martyred savior—as Christ-like" (144). I think Sullivan over-interprets the texts. Fontana argues from within the New Testament and concludes, via an astute method of extrapolation, that Machiavelli was surreptitiously subverting the Christian message of humility, truth, etc., in order to have it rejected in favour of a vigorous religion.

more widely accepted one), Najemy posits a third reading, that “Machiavelli was clearly in awe of the power of religion as a cultural and social force” (1999 665).⁸⁹ Najemy suggests that for Machiavelli “*religione* is the core of *educazione*” (1999 667 Najemy’s emphasis), and has illuminated for us Machiavelli’s concern regarding religion, that it is not with the truth of religion but with its impact on behaviour (1999 668). Machiavelli “insists that, as far as we can know and for all purposes that are relevant to this world, religion is a matter of ‘interpretations’ whose truth or falsity is measured by their effect on behaviour, institutions, society, and history” (1999 668). Machiavelli’s approach towards religion is “comparative and almost anthropological” (Najemy 1999 668), for example posting a long and mixed list of men who spoke, or “pretended” to speak, with gods in order to impress the citizenry, including one Hebrew, two Christians, two pagan Greeks, and three pagan Romans. From this fact, Najemy derives the conclusion that “the structure and power of the myth of sacred conversations in all religions” is what fascinated Machiavelli (1999 671). Nonetheless, Machiavelli’s observation cannot but lead him to conclude, as he does regarding the Roman conversations, that sacred conversations are simply tools recognized by all virtuoso rulers as powerful for the purposes of manipulating the polity, but not necessarily for bad ends or for purposes of self-interest only, as Machiavelli states, for example, in *Discorsi* 1.12. In his discussion of

⁸⁹Cassirer’s statement is exemplary of the former position: “in Machiavelli’s system, therefore, religion is indispensable. But it is no longer an end in itself; it has become a mere tool in the hands of the political rulers. It is not the foundation of man’s social life but a powerful weapon in all political struggles” (138). This position has been taken to its extremity by Sullivan who, in opposition to most Machiavellian scholars, does not believe that Machiavelli regarded religion “as a useful instrument of politics,” but as “pernicious and superfluous,” getting in the way of longing for a better life than in assisting in that longing (7). As I have pointed out, I disagree with Sullivan’s thesis but do accept some premises of her argument, for example, that Machiavelli “divorces [Christian notions, such as fear and the appeal to God] entirely from their theological context” (9).

Machiavelli's use of the term *religione* Najemy concludes that its meaning is

complete respect for the ceremonies, prayers, and rituals, not out of cynical concern for appearances, but because that respect was the foundation of obedience to the laws, of *educazione*, of loyal and disciplined armies, in short, of *civiltà*; and, at the same time, skilful interpretation, as necessity requires, of the strictures and demands of religion. . . . (1999 675)

Machiavelli's attitude towards interpretation is such that it must be undertaken according to necessity and in such a manner that it instills *virtù*. Machiavelli narrates an example of this kind of interpretation in *Discorsi* 1.14, where he discusses the Roman army's use of chickens in the taking of auspices before battle. The task of the chicken handlers was to report to the general whether the chickens ate or not, thus determining if the army is to proceed into battle, the Romans believing that if the chickens ate, victory would follow.

In a battle against the Samnites, the chicken handlers took the auspices but the chickens refused to eat. Nonetheless, knowing that the army was itching for battle and confident of victory, the chicken handlers lied. Papirius found out about the lie, as did some soldiers. In order to regain the confidence of the army, and "perché lo effetto corrispondesse al pronostico (that the result should agree with the prognostication)," Papirius ordered the chicken handlers to the front of the battle lines, where the head chicken handler "sendo da un soldato romano tratto uno dardo, a caso ammazzò il principe de' pullarii (was accidentally killed by a javelin thrown by a Roman soldier)." Papirius then proceeded to explain that this was the will of the gods because the keepers of the auspices had lied and that the army has now been purged of any blame. Machiavelli concludes that Papirius,

col sapere bene accomodare i disegni suoi agli auspicii, prese partito di azzuffarsi, senza che quello esercito si avvedesse che in alcuna parte quello avesse negletti gli ordini della loro religione. (O 98)

through knowing how to accommodate nicely his plans to the auspices, he engaged the enemy and beat them without the army's suspecting that he had in any way neglected what was prescribed by their religion. (D 1.14.149-150)

Najemy's research shows that these are Machiavelli's interpretations, not to be found anywhere in Livy, from whom Machiavelli took the story (1999 676). Machiavelli then proceeds to narrate a similar story but with quite different effects. Faced with a similar dilemma, Appius Pulcher, before engaging the Carthaginians in Sicily during the first Punic War, ordered that the chickens, which did not eat, be thrown into the sea, exclaiming, "Veggiamo se volessero bere! (Let's see if they won't drink!)," and he lost the battle because his troops lost all confidence. Machiavelli's point is bluntly stated: "l'uno [Papirius] fatto contro agli auspicii prudentemente, e l'altro [Pulcher] temerariamente (in contravening the auspices, [Papirius] had been prudent and the other [Pulcher] rash" (O 98 D 1.14.150).⁹⁰

It is Machiavelli's following narration regarding the use of religion that is opaque, requiring a little more care in interpretation. This is because in this narrative religion fails its practitioners. Machiavelli narrates the Samnites' recourse to religion, which

⁹⁰Both Najemy (1999 675-676) and Sullivan (109) discuss this episode also.

nonetheless resulted in their defeat by Rome, in fact by the same Papirius who had fraudulently used religion to win a previous battle against the Samnites. The Samnites, Machiavelli tells us, having lost confidence in their ability to defeat the Romans, resorted to religion in order to regain their confidence. Machiavelli writes admiringly of the Samnites, even quoting Livy who highlights their zeal for liberty:

They could rely now neither on their strength nor on that of others, yet they did not withdraw from the war, so far were they from becoming weary of defending liberty even without success, and so much did they prefer to be beaten rather than not try to win.⁹¹

The Samnites

Onde deliberarono fare l'ultima prova: e perché ei sapevano che, a volere vincere, era necessario indurre ostinazione negli animi de' soldati, e che a indurvela non era migliore mezzo che la religione (O 98),

determined, therefore, to make a final effort; and, since they knew it was necessary to instil into the minds of the soldiers an obstinate will to conquer, and that, to instil it, there were no better means than religion (D 1.15.149-150),

they revived a bloody and ferocious ritual that demanded sacrifices and oaths of honour requiring that the men unquestioningly obey the officers and not flee the battle.

Furthermore, the oath stipulated that a soldier kill a fellow soldier fleeing the battle. To

⁹¹Machiavelli quotes the original Latin.

make their “forty thousand” soldiers appear “yet more magnificent, they clad half of them in white, with crests and plumes on their helmets.” Machiavelli is clear that the Roman army became afraid of this spectacle. But Papirius encourages his men by interpreting the *Samnites’* religion in his army’s favour. He tells his soldiers that “crests do not cause wounds, and the Roman javelin goes through painted and gilded shields.” He then tells his soldiers that the oath the Samnites had taken serves only to instill fear, not strength, in the Samnites because “at one and the same time they were afraid of their fellow citizens, of the gods, and of the enemy.” The Romans won, Machiavelli tells us,

perché la virtù romana, e il timore concepito per le passate rotte, superò qualunque ostinazione ei potessero avere presa per virtù della religione e per il giuramento preso (O 99)

because the virtue of the Romans and the fear caused by past defeats more than counterbalanced any obstinacy they might have derived from the virtue of religions and from the oath they had taken. (D 1.15.152)

Two lessons are to be derived from this story. The first is the expressly stated one, that religion is a powerful motivator of soldiers, even when the odds of winning a battle are nearly non-existent. The second is the implied one, that a successful leader must learn to interpret his own, as well as his enemy’s, religion, which Papirius did in spite of strong odds against him. Machiavelli never comments on whether the interpretations Papirius gives are accurate or not, the point being moot, for the only thing that matters is the

victory at the end of the battle.⁹²

Sullivan reads this discourse differently, arguing that religious “appeals are sometimes counterproductive in attempting to inspire an army with confidence” (111). She correctly points out that this narrative highlights Machiavelli’s critique in *Discorsi* 1.12 of the Church for allowing Christianity’s original principles to wane. She further argues that 1.12 contradicts discourse 1.11, in which Machiavelli praises the Romans for fearing the gods, here proving that such fear may not always be beneficial to an army. Sullivan, however, misses the one essential point that denies the validity of her argument, that the Romans won partly because they were a more confident army, and partly because their generals had not allowed the Roman religious rituals to lapse, contrary to the practice of the Samnites. Machiavelli stresses in 1.15 that the Samnites knew that their hopes of winning the battle were slim at best, but that they had no other choice but to make a last ditch effort at victory, which only a religious ritual tied to a powerful oath could give them. Machiavelli’s point in this discourse is that a chance at victory is better than no chance, that the Samnites ought to be praised for their courageous effort:

Nondimento si vede come a loro non parve potere avere altro rifugio, né tentare altro rimedio a potere pigliare speranze di ricuperare la perduta virtù. Il che testifica appieno, quanta confidenza si possa avere mediante la religione bene usata. (D 1.15. O 98)

Nevertheless, it is clear that to them there did not appear to be anything

⁹²Najemy arrives at the same conclusions (679-680).

else to which they could have recourse or any other remedy they could try in the hope of recovering the virtue they had lost. This bears striking witness to the magnitude of that confidence which religion gives when properly used. (D 1.15. 153)

Sullivan's third point, that "the example of the Samnites provides a contrast to the modern states that Machiavelli castigates in *Discorsi* 2.2 for not tenaciously defending their liberty" (111), is also faulty, although she is correct in pointing out that the Samnites cannot recover "the virtue they had lost," therefore they should have tried harder to retain that *virtù*. Nonetheless, and this is Machiavelli's point stressed by his quotation of Livy at the beginning of the discourse, their form of ritual brought them closer to attaining or recovering that *virtù*, and it was a last ditch effort to retain their freedom, and therefore they must be commended for it. Machiavelli's point regarding the use of religion is not so much that it is intrinsically dangerous to the people, or "superfluous," as Sullivan argues, but that its wrongful manipulation by some people is dangerous. By wrongful Machiavelli understands politically harmful, as he wrote about Savonarola. Machiavelli writes admiringly about the religious leaders who interpret religion in such a way as to bring about politically successful enterprises—and this is the crux of his view.⁹³ Religion, without question, must serve political ends, and it can do so only if it is interpreted "secondo la *virtù*," not "secondo l'ozio," which is the manner in which Christianity has been interpreted. Had Christianity been interpreted according to *virtù*, that is in the Roman manner that stresses confidence, glory, and especially love for the patria and

⁹³The following paragraph is influenced by Najemy's reading of Machiavelli (1999 680-681).

liberty simultaneously with reverence to the divine, then Italy would be united and free. Machiavelli stresses, however, that Christianity was interpreted otherwise, which is why Italy is not free, and why it is in need of a second Moses. Machiavelli's reverence of Moses is specifically tied to Moses' ability to interpret religion in such a manner that it glorifies *virtù*; it is also why Machiavelli admires Savonarola, who successfully interpreted religion in like manner to Moses. Machiavelli lost his admiration for Savonarola because, unlike Moses, the friar did not recognize the equal need for arms alongside religion. It is not coincidental that in his political writings Machiavelli always speaks about Savonarola when speaking about Moses, as we stated earlier. It is also why in *Discorsi* 2.2 Machiavelli revisits the Roman war with the Samnites who, despite their ability to withstand Roman attacks for forty-six years are finally defeated by the "rare and very high order [of] virtue of the Roman people" (D 2.2.279), that is, Papirius Cursor, the man who crushed the Samnites only by interpreting their religion in a manner that serves his patria's ends. Religion, Machiavelli stresses, "is always a matter of interpretation" (Najemy 1999 680).

This functional view of religion is the key to Machiavelli's understanding of the benefits of religion, for Machiavelli does not want to place religion above the state, and yet does not want to place it below the state either, but on an equal footing with it. Machiavelli's point, as we shall show, is that religion can act as a guarantor of freedom, as that element of the state that can hold a tyrant back in his efforts to place himself above the state. Religion in Machiavelli is equivalent to the modern notion of a constitution. But whereas the modern constitution is contrived *after* the founding of a state, Machiavelli's understanding of religion is foundational, working its magic concomitantly with the

founding of the state. Machiavelli, however, is always careful to wilt away at religion's ability to raise itself up above the politico-military needs of the state. He cannot allow it to do so, understanding that conflicts between the military and religion must be resolved in favour of the military, but ideally with the assistance of religion. An astute political leader is ideally also an astute religious leader. Religions, too, need their princes.

Clearly for Machiavelli, one of the most important benefits of religion is its ability to allow for the easeful introduction of arms:

perché dove è religione, facilmente si possono introdurre l'armi; e dove sono l'armi e non religione, con difficoltà si può introdurre quella. (O 94)

For, where there is religion, it is easy to teach men to use arms, but where there are arms, but no religion, it is with difficulty that it can be introduced.

(D 1.11.140)

Still, Machiavelli contradicts himself immediately by claiming that Romulus did not need "God" to assist him in "establishing the senate and introducing other civic and military institutions," whereas Numa did because he feared that his authority would not suffice for the task (D 1.11.140). And, as Sullivan astutely points out, Machiavelli ranks Romulus, not Numa, as one of the four great founders of cities (113), even though in this particular discourse he claims that Rome is more indebted to Numa than to Romulus. Sullivan further points out that Machiavelli contradicts Livy by claiming that religion was instituted by Numa, even though Livy claims that religion existed before the founding of the city, that augury was used to determine which brother would rule the city, but that Romulus slew his brother in order to become sole ruler, and that Romulus actually

worshipped the gods.⁹⁴ Machiavelli's revision of Roman history is undertaken in order to declare that recourse to religion is not always necessary, stressed by the fact that of the two men, only Numa doubted his own authority, hence reverting to the authority of religion for support of his policies (Sullivan 114). There is, however, an additional, implied reason for Machiavelli's revision of Roman history: Numa is not cruel, Romulus is, even engaging in fratricide. The difference between the two men is highlighted in a direct comparison made a few discourses later, in a discussion outlining the modes a ruler needs to hold onto a state:

Da questo piglino esempio tutti i principi che tengono stato; ch chi somiglier Numa, lo terra o non terr secondo che i tempi o la fortuna gli girer sotto; ma chi somiglier Romolo, e fia come esso armato di prudenza e d'armi, lo terr in ogni modo, se da una ostinata ed eccessiva forza non gli tolto. (O 104)

From these examples let all princes who have dominions learn that, if they emulate Numa, they will hold them or fail to hold them according to the times or the fortune that befalls them. Whereas if they emulate Romulus and, like him, rely both on prudence and on arms, they will hold them in any case, unless some obstinate and overwhelming force takes them away. (D1.19.167)

A paragraph earlier, Machiavelli had insisted that Numa's successors had to "emulate

⁹⁴I have paraphrased Sullivan's recounting of Livy (113).

Romulus rather than Numa” in order to keep Rome from being swallowed by her neighbours, and ends the discourse by implying that Numa was a weak king. Further on, Machiavelli redoubles his attack against Numa, not by naming him, but by praising his successor Tullus who, when gaining the throne found that the Romans had forgotten how to fight, having been at peace for forty years (under Numa). Machiavelli faults Numa for this by declaring,

Ed è più vero che alcuna altra verità, che, se dove è uomini non è soldati,
nasce per difetto del principe, e non per altro difetto o di sito o di natura.
(O105)

It is indeed the truest of truths that if, where there are men, there are not
soldiers, it is their ruler's fault, not the fault of the situation or of nature.
(D 1.21.168)

In opposition to Romulus and Tullus, Numa relied on fortune, not *virtù*, to keep Rome's independence (D 1.19.167). Sullivan further claims that “Christianity's way of peace was prefigured in Numa's *“arti della pace”* (117, Sullivan's emphasis). Although her reading of Machiavelli's Numa is accurate, I disagree with the connection she makes between Numa's way and Christianity's simply because Numa figured many years before Christianity, and so his influence on Rome was clearly too far removed from the rise of Christianity. As well, Machiavelli clearly tells us that Numa's ways were reversed by Tullus and his successor Ancus. Machiavelli also stresses, I believe, that it is not so much Numa's introduction of religion that is the problem, as Machiavelli's narration of D 1.11, discussed above, shows, but Numa's lack of concern for arming the people, as D 1.21

declares. Furthermore, Machiavelli observes that Ancus possessed such “natural talents... that he could avail himself of peace and also carry on war” (D 1.19.166). He kept the ways of peace until “one fine day he discovered that his neighbours thought him effeminate and held him in little esteem” (D 1.19.166). Machiavelli’s point is that it is acceptable to be peaceful, but one must also be ready and willing to engage in war. This dichotomy, intrinsic to the state, forces Machiavelli to discern two distinctive types of religion, Fontana argues, one based on the opposition between the *virtù* instilling Roman religion and the humility and passivity teaching post-Roman one, Christianity. The other type of religion is prophetic, and Machiavelli here contrasts two sub-groups, the armed versus the unarmed prophet. Fontana thus distinguishes in Machiavelli the two essential kinds of religion, the prophetic and the unprophetic, with the former providing for an armed or unarmed prophet and the latter stressing either immanence or transcendence (640). Fontana attests that Machiavelli’s stress on *virtù* confirms that religion is not only *religio*, “a political technique to rule and to control the masses,” but also “presupposes a concern for a moral *fides* which, though certainly not transcendent, is nevertheless necessary to the construction of a political order based on *virtù*” (640). Fontana further declares that Machiavelli, with his stress on civil and military virtue, links the armed prophetic religion with the ancient Roman religion, thus setting up a polarity between “ancient Judaism, Islam, and a reformed Christianity (a kind of Lutheranism *ante litteram*)” against “primitive and post-classical Christianity” (640). Religion becomes a part of *virtù* (Strauss (1958 226). The metaphor that links the armed prophetic religion with the ancient Roman religion is Moses, the perfect prince who is both Romulus and Numa, both a political founder and a founder of religion.

But why does Machiavelli need to unite religion and politics? Why does he simply not discard religion, for after all, Machiavelli's intent is on making a strong state? The answer is simply that, ultimately, no ruler can rule without the consent of the people (O 29 CW 110),⁹⁵ and the easiest manner in which to gain consent is via the motivation provided by religion. Preuss astutely observes that in Machiavelli "divine authority served as a shortcut for explanation," especially when the reasoning is difficult to understand, citing *Discorsi* 1.11 as evidence:

E veramente, mai fu alcuno ordinatore di leggi straordinarie in uno popolo che non ricorresse a Dio; perché altrimenti non sarebbero accettate: perché sono molti i beni conosciuti da uno prudente, i quali non hanno in sé ragioni evidenti da poterli persuadere a altrui. Però gli uomini savi, che vogliono tôrre questa difficoltà, ricorrono a Dio. (O 94)

Nor in fact was there ever a legislator who, in introducing extraordinary laws to a people, did not have recourse to God, for otherwise they would not have been accepted, since many benefits of which a prudent man is aware, are not so evident to reason that he can convince others of them. Hence wise men, in order to escape this difficulty, have recourse to God. (D 1.11.141)⁹⁶

Preuss correctly points out that "reason may displace at least some of the functions of

⁹⁵ *Discursus florentinarum rerum mortem iunioris Laurentii Medices (A Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence)*.

⁹⁶ See also AW 4.128-129 (O 354).

religion," but clearly this cannot be the case when it comes to controlling the masses (180).

Debbono, adunque, i principi d'una repubblica o d'uno regno, i fondamenti della religione che loro tengono, mantenergli; e fatto questo, sarà loro facil cosa mantenere la loro repubblica religiosa, e, per conseguente, buona e unita. E debbono, tutte le cose che nascano in favore di quella, come che le giudicassono false, favorirle e accrescerle; e tanto più lo debbono fare, quanto più prudenti sono, e quanto più conoscitori delle cose naturali. E perché questo modo è stato osservato dagli uomini savi, ne è nato l'opinione dei miracoli, che si celebrano nelle religioni eziandio false; perché i prudenti gli augumentano, da qualunque principio e' si nascano; e l'autorità loro dà poi a quelli fede appresso a qualunque. (O 94-95)

The rulers of a republic or of a kingdom, therefore, should uphold the basic principles of the religion which they practise in, and, if this be done, it will be easy for them to keep their commonwealth religious, and, in consequence, good and united. They should also foster and encourage everything likely to be of help to this end, even though they be convinced that it is quite fallacious. And the more should they do this the greater their prudence and the more they know of natural laws. It was owing to wise men having taken due note of this that belief in miracles arose and that miracles are held in high esteem even by religions that are false; for to whatever they owed their origin, sensible men made much of them, and

their authority caused everybody to believe in them. (D 1.12.143)

It is important to point out that in this discourse, which is largely about the Church, Machiavelli stresses that miracles happen in “false” religions as well, and that they are confirmed as truth by “sensible” men, whom he equates with men of authority, for it is the authority of the leaders that “caused everybody to believe in them [the miracles].”

Machiavelli is forcing the reader to align Christianity with the “false” religions.

Machiavelli is concerned with another element, however, the nature of the citizenry which, he argues, has been taught to be deceptive, selfish, and generally unkind, by the papal court (D 1.12). In the *Istorie Fiorentine*, Machiavelli repeats his argument from which we can extrapolate an important political lesson:

E perché in tutti la religione e il timore di Dio è spento, il giuramento e la fede data tanto basta quanto l'utile: di che gli uomini si vagliano, non per osservarlo, ma perché sia mezzo a potere più facilmente ingannare; e quanto lo inganno riesce più facile e sicuro, tanta più gloria e loda se ne acquista: per questo gli uomini nocivi sono come industriosi lodati e i buoni come sciocchi biasimati. (O 693)

And because religion and fear of God have been eliminated in all, an oath and faith given last only as long as they are useful; so men make use of them not to observe them but to serve as a means of being able to deceive more easily. And the more easily and surely the deception succeeds, the more glory and praise is acquired from it; by this, harmful men are praised as industrious and good men are blamed as fools. (FH 3.5.110)

Machiavelli's lesson is that deception, which necessarily exists, must be monopolized by the state in order to ensure unity and security, for widespread deception creates disharmony in the people, eventually creating factions. This argument is stated in a different fashion, directed against the church instead of against the people, in the *Discorsi*, where Machiavelli argues that "it is the Church that has kept, and keeps, Italy divided." Machiavelli's argument, however, is not against the Church because it is the Church, but because it does not make good use of its powers to unite Italy, powers it has but does not expand sufficiently to achieve the objective he desires:

. . . perché, avendovi quella abitato e tenuto imperio temporale, non è stata sì potente né di tanta virtù che l'abbia potuto occupare la tirannide d'Italia e farsene principe; e non è stata, dall'altra parte, sì debole, che per paura di non perdere il dominio delle sue cose temporali, la non abbia potuto convocare uno potente che la difenda contro a quello che in Italia fusse diventato troppo potente. (O 96)

For, though the Church has its headquarters in Italy and has temporal power, neither its power nor its virtue has been sufficiently great for it to be able to usurp power in Italy and become its leader; nor yet, on the other hand, has it been so weak that it could not, when afraid of losing its dominion over things temporal, call upon one of the powers to defend it against an Italian state that had become too powerful. (D 1.12.145)

His argument here is the same as his admonishment of Alexander VI when he took too long to proceed in his effort to unite the Romagna. But Machiavelli is also aware that

religious divisions can cause more cruelty in war than nature:

Ma, intra tante variazioni, non fu di minore momento il variare della religione, perché, combattendo la consuetudine della antica fede con i miracoli della nuova, si generavano tumulti e discordie gravissime intra gli uomini; e se pure la cristiana religione fusse stata unita, ne sarebbe seguiti minori disordini; ma, combattendo la chiesa greca, la romana e la ravennate insieme, e di più le sette eretiche con le cattoliche, in molti modi contristavano il mondo. Di che ne è testimone l’Affrica, la quale sopportò molti più affani mediante la setta arriana, creduta dai Vandali, che per alcuna loro avarizia o naturale crudeltà. Vivendo adunque gli uomini intra tante persecuzioni, portavano descritto negli occhi lo spavento dello animo loro, perché, oltre alli infiniti mali che sopportavano, mancava buona parte di loro di potere rifuggire allo aiuto di Dio, nel quale tutti i miseri sogliono sperare; perché sendo la maggiore parte di loro incerti a quale Iddio dovessero ricorrere, mancando di ogni aiuto e d’ogni speranza, miseramente morivano. (O 637)

But among so many changes, change of religion was not of lesser moment, because in the struggle between the custom of the ancient faith and the miracles of the new, the gravest tumults and discords were generated among men. If indeed the Christian religion had been united, fewer disorders would have followed; but the struggles among the Greek Church, the Roman Church, and the Church at Ravenna—and even more, the

struggle between the heretical and the catholic sects—afflict the world in many modes. Witness to this is Africa, which suffered more anguish on account of the Arian sect believed in by the Vandals than through their avarice or natural cruelty. Living thus, among so many persecutions, men bore the terror of their spirit written in their eyes, because, aside from the infinite evils they endured, for a good part of them the possibility of seeking refuge in God, in whom all the miserable are wont to hope, was lacking. Therefore as the greater part of them were uncertain as to which God they ought to turn to, they died miserably, deprived of all help and all hope. (FH 1.5.15)

Machiavelli is a compassionate man who “does not say or imply. . . that humility, kindness, unworldliness, faith in God, sanctity, Christian love, unwavering truthfulness, compassion, are bad or unimportant attributes; or that cruelty, bad faith, power politics, sacrifice of innocent men to social needs, and so on, are good ones,” but that it is impossible to combine them in order to create a stable and strong society (Berlin 170-171). Machiavelli’s point is that the proper use of any of these at the right time is essential to successful political manoeuvring and, like Aristotle, he differentiates between a good man and a good citizen (Berlin 174), expounding what for him is the truth that the two kinds of men are incompatible, that one must choose one role or the other. Machiavelli’s ultimate concern is for the patria, even at the expense of the individual.

It is with this understanding that we can now make the solid claim that Machiavelli desires that Christianity be interpreted in a manner that values *virtù*, not

meekness (D 2.2).⁹⁷ He also makes the argument that in politics it is not always possible to choose between bad and good, but that the choice often must be for the better of the two worsts (P 17 and Cesare). His indicated preference in *Discorsi* 2.2 for the Roman *educazione* is only a partial preference, for in this discourse he also uses the phrase “disarmato il Cielo” (O 150), a phrase clearly intended to evoke the phrase “profeti disarmati” in chapter six of *Il Principe* (O 265), and one that markedly pits the armed religion of Moses versus the disarmed religion of Christ who, it is imperative to point out, is mentioned only twice in Machiavelli’s major political works, but never as a founder, even though Machiavelli specifically declares founders of religion as the most glorified kind of men (Fontana 654). Instead of Christ, Machiavelli holds Moses as the archetypical founder who founds, in Fontana’s phrase,

a new people *nel temporale*, and this people is constituted as such because within it is proliferated a shared definition (or belief) of a common good and a shared sense of a common way of life, which together embody a conception of the world that turns the disorganized, disaggregated former slaves into a conscious, coherent, and self-determining nation [whose] common good and way of life are not merely a spiritual or religious ideal but rather are realized and expressed concretely within the experience and practice of the people. (654)

This conception of a people, and especially its relationship to religion, is in stark opposition to the Christian conception, which demands—in Machiavelli’s mind, it has

⁹⁷Fontana also makes this argument (653).

been interpreted to demand—"a good located within the private, interior (or simply spiritual) life of the individual, and thus destroys or negates the very notion of a people in history, acting and living in space and time" (Fontana 654). In Christianity, the public space is not relevant to one's life; conceivably, one could abandon the public space altogether, thus negating Aristotle's dictum that man is a political animal; in the end, only one's relationship to God, not to others, is important. Fontana reminds us that Machiavelli calls the Gospel's truth simply that, "truth," not "effective truth," thus denying its "negative moral stance. . . toward the *vita activa*," thus positing its belief in "the moral inferiority of political and social life" (Fontana 654).

Machiavelli is very much aware of this dichotomy, and he seeks a solution for it from within the religious tradition itself, but in a roundabout way that does not bluntly attack Christianity. Machiavelli is explicit that religious institutions also become corrupted over time (D 3.1) and, as he stated earlier, those institutions could make the people servile, corrupt, and so on, caring for themselves only instead of for their fatherland. Clearly, Christianity in his view has become corrupt, and Machiavelli desires to recast the religion anew. In his discussion of the founding of a new city, Machiavelli writes that if a prince is setting up a new city that "is suited neither for the civil life characteristic of a monarchy nor yet that of a republic," then the prince should

fare ogni cosa, in quello stato, di nuovo: come è, nelle città fare nuovi governi con nuovi nomi, con nuove autorità, con nuovi uomini, fare i ricchi poveri, i poveri ricchi, come fece David quando ei diventò re: "qui esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes"; edificare, oltra di questo, nuove città, disfare delle edificate, cambiare gli abitatori da un

luogo a un altro; ed in somma, non lasciare cosa niuna intatta in quella provincia, e che non vi sia né grado, né ordine, né stato, né ricchezza, che chi la tiene non la riconosca da te. (O 109)

organize everything in that state afresh; e.g. in its cities to appoint new governors, with new titles and a new authority, that governors themselves being new men; to make the rich poor and the poor rich; as did David when he became king, “who filled the hungry with good things and the rich sent empty away”; as well as to build new cities, to destroy those already built, and to move the inhabitants from one place to another far distant from it; in short, to leave nothing of that province intact, and nothing in it... except it be held by such as recognize that it comes from you. (D 1.26.176-177)

In fact, Machiavelli is advocating a revolution in the full sense of the word, a reversal of everything to its opposite, as the Biblical quotation suggests. The quotation, however, is even more important than it seems at first, for it comes not from David, as Machiavelli claims, but from the Magnificat.⁹⁸ It is spoken by Mary in the context of “magnifying the Lord,” spelling out the revolution He has, and will continue, to undertake:

And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats,

⁹⁸This fact is universally recognized.

and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. (Lk 1.50-53)

There is no doubt that Machiavelli would have known that this statement comes from the Magnificat, it being regularly sung at masses, but in attributing the statement to David, Machiavelli is after something else; he is demanding a revolution, attempting to turn his prince into a god with powers similar to those attributed to God—and Jesus—by Mary; Machiavelli's discourse specifically says that the people must believe that everything comes from the prince. But in Machiavelli's day such an attribution cannot be made directly, and so a writer must resort to subtle means.⁹⁹ David is a safe alternative because he was a king, and he undertook some revolutionary means of conduct in order to maintain his state. David is also the precursor to Jesus; Machiavelli's attribution of the statement to David is made with a sly wink. Machiavelli is saying that if David can undertake such actions with God's blessing, and eventually God, through Jesus, undertakes similar actions, then a prince can do the same for Italy, the seat of the Church. Sullivan draws another parallel from this Biblical reference by comparing it to Machiavelli's later naming of Philip and Alexander in the same discourse, arguing that Machiavelli is in fact analogizing God and Jesus to Philip and Alexander, both fathers

⁹⁹ I sound Straussian here, but I am not, although I do agree with some of Strauss's ideas and interpretations. The difference between what I am suggesting now and Strauss's method is that Strauss comes to his material with his method ready in hand, imposing it on all that he reads, which makes for some very interesting interpretations. I do not believe that this approach is valid, but do agree that radical writers do have to take care when introducing ideas that are regarded as unacceptable to those holding power. Having said this, the critical point that Strauss fails to take into account is that he is not always aware of the context within which a text is written, or the difference between a manuscript and a printed text, for example. On these points, Gilbert's review of Strauss's *Thoughts on Machiavelli* is enlightening.

starting empires and leaving them to their sons to expand (Sullivan 217, note 18).¹⁰⁰

Machiavelli's discourse is radical also because Machiavelli, having referenced Christianity in this discourse, must also intend for religion to be included in "everything" that a new prince must renew when renovating a city (Mansfield 1972 122). But to understand more clearly Machiavelli's attribution of the Magnificat to David, we must contextualize it within Machiavelli's other Davidic narratives, especially in *Il Principe* and the *Exortatione alla penitenza* (*Exhortation on Penitence*), where it becomes more clear that Machiavelli is actually attempting a subtle rewriting of the religious tradition in order to have his radical approach become more easily accepted.

Machiavelli's sermon has raised opinions of all colours on all sides. It has been referred to as extremely pious and as a frivolous joke, but regardless of how one looks at it, it sheds brighter light on some of Machiavelli's other writings, including his references to David. For example, in *Discorsi* 1.19, David is described as having beaten and conquered his neighbours; here he is not. Machiavelli had clearly stated that a religious authority must not judge or interfere with a political authority—religion must be at the service of the state.¹⁰¹ Machiavelli twice calls King David a prophet, forgetting the tension between the religious and political offices especially highlighted in the confrontation between David and the prophet Nathan, and especially the rebuke of the King by Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1-12). In fact, Machiavelli is surreptitiously calling David an armed prophet, but without adding the famous adjective, regarding it as inappropriate for this

¹⁰⁰Sullivan is partially following Strauss who reads the "Magnificat" narrative as a subtle attribution of tyranny to God (1958 49, 1970 17).

¹⁰¹For example, D 1.11, P 21, D 1.15, D 1.12.

particular speech read to this particular community, the Company of Piety (CW 170). This reading becomes more transparent when we consider it in the light of Machiavelli's alteration of the David versus Goliath story in *Il Principe*, where Machiavelli arms David with a knife. The unarmed prophet becomes an armed prophet in Machiavelli's account, an account that highlights the desire for glory:

Offerendosi David a Saul di andare a combattere con Golia, provocatore filisteo, Saul, per dargli animo, l'armò delle arme sua; le quali, come David ebbe indosso, recusò, dicendo con quelle non si potere bene valere di se stesso, e però voleva trovare el nimico con la sua fromba e con il suo coltello. (O 278)

When David offered to Saul to go and fight Goliath, the Philistine challenger, Saul, to give him spirit, armed him with his own arms—which David, as soon as he had them on, refused, saying that with them he could not give a good account of himself, and so he would rather meet the enemy with his sling and his knife. (P 13.56)

In the Biblical account, David does not have a knife, just the sling and a rock, and after he knocks down Goliath he takes the Philistine's sword out and with it cuts off the giant's head (1 Sam. 17:38-40, 50-51). Machiavelli's recasting of this tale follows his advice in *Discorsi* 1.25, where he argues that at times it is necessary to introduce new customs mixed slightly with the old in order to make their acceptance easier, especially because people are more affected by the appearance of things than by their reality:

Colui che desidera o che vuole riformare uno stato d'una città, a volere che

sia accetto. . . è necessitato a ritenere l'ombra almanco de' modi antichi, acciò che a' popoli non paia avere mutato ordine, ancorché, in fatto, gli ordini nuovi fussero al tutto alieni dai passati; perché lo universale degli uomini si pascono così di quel che pare come di quello che è. . . .

[A]lterando le cose nuove le menti degli uomini, ti debbi ingegnare che quelle alterazioni ritenghino più dello antico sia possibile; e se i magistrati variano, e di numero e d'autorità e di tempo, degli antichi, che almeno ritenghino il nome. (O 108-109)

He who desires or proposes to change the form of government in a state and wishes it to be acceptable. . . must needs retain at least the shadow of its ancient customs, so that institutions may not appear to its people to have been changed, though in point of fact the new institutions may be radically different from the old ones. This he must do because men in general are as much affected by what a thing appears to be as by what it is, indeed they are frequently influenced more by appearances than by reality.... [S]ince novelties cause men to change their minds, you should see to it that changes retain as much as possible of what is old, and that, if changes are made in the number, the authority and the period of office of the magistrates, they should retain the traditional names. (D 1.25.175-176)

Having altered the story in a manner that is not likely to cause anyone to doubt its supposed veracity, Machiavelli could successfully impart his political lesson, stated directly in the *Discorsi*, where Machiavelli praises David not only for his *virtù*, which

includes his military and judicial abilities, but especially his having given his son Solomon a strong and united state (D 1.19). David, Jesus' ancestor, was an armed prophet just like the first great armed prophet, Moses.¹⁰²

Machiavelli's reasoning seems to be that because the great ancestors of God's present kingdom were armed prophets, and God is a powerful monarch who kills in order to ensure the survival of His kingdom, therefore, one must suppose, Jesus is also intended to be an armed prophet, but for the meek interpretations of His teachings by the *capi* of the Church. If this is indeed Machiavelli's reasoning, it presupposes that he is more attentive to the Jesus who stormed the money changers, the Jesus of the sword. This reading also presupposes that Machiavelli believes the Christian teaching to be militarily oriented, that "the Christian prince resembles God precisely because God himself sanctions Machiavellian principles" (Kahn 1994 103, Donaldson 82), for as Sullivan has pointed out, Christianity traditionally believed that it was engaged in a war (53):

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Cor. 10:3-6)

¹⁰²What is most interesting about Machiavelli's Davidic narratives is that Machiavelli remains silent about David's refusal to kill Saul (twice) who had tried to kill David. David's reason for refusing to kill Saul is that it is against God's law to use the sword against one of His anointed (1 Sam. 18, 24, 26). In everything else, David was a perfect king, even feigning madness to escape harm (1 Sam. 21:10-15).

There is a snippet of truth to this view, one which is shared by Colish (1999 601-602), for example, but more importantly, one referenced by Machiavelli himself, such as when he calls Christ “*imperadore nostro* (our emperor)” (*Exortatione* O 934, CW 173). But this is one reference, and overall Machiavelli rejects *Christianized* politics because it values the other-worldly life over the this-worldly one, hence condoning meekness instead of virility. Paganism, as opposed to the “Christian sect” (D 2.5), glorifies bodily strength as well as strength of the soul. Christianity cares not for the body (D 2.2.278).¹⁰³ Nonetheless, as Najemy correctly notes, Machiavelli is quite reticent “about the very status of Christian ‘truth’” (1999 663). Machiavelli is not interested in the question of whether Christianity teaches *the* truth, but whether it teaches the *effectual* truth of politics. Tenenti summarizes this point well:

[Machiavelli] not only does not want in any sense to be anti-Christian, but reserves for religion his highest consideration. . . . If [the Christianity of his time] had known how to make itself compatible with the needs of a virile people and how to release the collective energies indispensable to a community, Machiavelli would indeed have been the first to share in its faith. (Qtd. in Najemy 1999 662-663)

It is in this respect that Machiavelli makes a critical statement respecting the difference between divine and human rule, ultimately relying on human rule which takes its lessons from divine rule. He states,

E come la osservanza del culto divino è cagione della grandezza delle

¹⁰³It is interesting that Machiavelli took a chance in *Discorsi* 2.5 and called Christianity a sect instead of a religion.

repubbliche, così il dispregio di quello è cagione della rovina d'esse. Perché dove manca il timore di Dio, conviene o che quel regno rovini, o che sia sostenuto dal timore d'uno principe che sopperisca a' difetti della religione. (O 94)

And, as the observance of divine worship is the cause of greatness in republics, so the neglect of it is the cause of their ruin. Because, where the fear of God is wanting, it comes about either that a kingdom is ruined, or that it is kept going by the fear of a prince, which makes up for the lack of religion. (D 1.11.141)

Machiavelli knows that the institutional Christianity of his day is corrupt, is less concerned about the needs of the community, and it even forgets about the nature of humanity. His letter to Guicciardini (no. 261, 17 May 1521), concerning Machiavelli's own responsibility for choosing a preacher for Florence, makes the point clearly and humourously:

Io ero in sul cesso quando arrivò il vostro messo, et appunto pensavo alle stravaganze di questo mondo, et tutto ero volto a figurarmi un predicatore a mio modo per a Firenze. . . . [E]golino [cittadini] vorrieno un predicatore che insegnasse loro la via del Paradiso, et io vorrei trovarne uno che insegnassi loro la via di andare a casa il diavolo. . . . [P]erché io credo che questo sarebbe il vero modo ad andare in Paradiso: imparare la via dello Inferno per fuggirla. (O 1203)

I was sitting on the toilet when your messenger arrived, and precisely at that moment I was thinking about the absurdities of this world; I was completely absorbed in imagining my style of preacher for Florence

They [Florentines] would like a preacher who would teach them the way to Paradise, and I would like to find one who would teach them the way to go to the Devil's house. . . . For I believe that the following would be the true way to go to Paradise: learn the way to Hell in order to flee from it. (My translation)

2.8. Machiavelli and Philosophical Christianity

The Christian view of human nature is involved in the paradox of claiming a higher stature for man and of taking a more serious view of his evil than other anthropology. (Niebuhr *The Nature and Destiny of Man* vol. 1. P 1).

Machiavelli's reading of revealed religion is most astutely relayed in his comments on Christianity, which are not always directly made, but nonetheless are strewn here or there like landmines which, if not carefully removed, will blow up. As with other of Machiavelli's observations, his discussions of Christianity have the status of being widely and passionately interpreted in differing, sometimes opposing, fashions, a fact to which we alluded earlier. What concerns us now is how his Christianity is to be read in the light of his observations on the task of the armed prophet, especially because the Christianity of Machiavelli's day is in theory, if not in action, wildly opposed to the political philosophy the Secretary advocates.

Machiavelli's criticism of Christianity, to some of which we referred earlier, has

been generally agreed upon as either criticism of the religion itself or of the leaders of the religion.¹⁰⁴ Colish adopts a more interesting stance, arguing that Machiavelli's criticisms of Christianity are actually "texts with an antiSavonarolan [sic] subtext" (1999 601). She maintains that for Machiavelli Christianity properly used is politically useful but that his critique of Christianity is actually a critique of Savonarola's version of Christianity, which is the prevalent form of Christianity in late fifteenth-century Florence. It is a Christianity dedicated to other-worldly pursuits as opposed to this-worldly pursuits, and Colish summarizes Machiavelli's critique of it as politics in the service of religion, rather than religion in the service of politics (1999 614). Nevertheless, Colish believes that Machiavelli was not an opponent of Christianity generally, but of its non-use by the authorities for political ends. In support of her thesis, she reads certain passages literally, for example arguing that Machiavelli believes that "pilgrimage to the Holy Land. . . is a good work helping pilgrims win a celestial fatherland" (1999 604). Colish, however, fails to note that in this specific narrative Machiavelli is reporting an action of a man who *failed* to win an earthly fatherland, and Machiavelli is clear that

e per guadagnarsi la celeste patria, poi che gli [messer Rinaldo] aveva
perduta la terrestre, se ne andò al sepulcro di Cristo. (O 764)

so as to earn a celestial fatherland for himself, since he [Messer Rinaldo]
had lost his earthly one, he went to the Sepulchre of Christ. (FH 5.34.228)

¹⁰⁴ Again, as we have noted above, only a handful of scholars argue that Machiavelli is a Christian moralist, or that he actually accepts Christianity. Colish's article contains a vast bibliography of scholars who support the various interpretations of Machiavelli's critiques of religion generally and of Christianity particularly.

Colish repeats her error when she correctly points out that Machiavelli does support the use of Christianity in politics and war, but mistakenly reads Machiavelli's intention towards religion, especially in his narration about the leaders who use religion in order to improve their chances of winning wars (1999 607-608). The fact that Machiavelli stresses the need for religion in politics does not mean that Machiavelli liked the religion or was religious, only that he recognizes its potential as a motivator of men. Machiavelli is clear that the generals either pretended to have counsels with the divine, directly or indirectly, or only said that they had counsels with them; nowhere does Machiavelli suggest that they actually did. More significantly, Machiavelli's discussions of the importance and necessity for religion, especially religion's rituals, are typically linked to wars, especially when the army is not confident of victory. Here, also, Machiavelli's style is to be carefully pondered in order to understand more clearly what his avowed purpose is. Fontana astutely points out that "the movement from pagan to Christian religion, from analyzing the political and rational bases of pagan religion to questioning and uncovering the sacred and divine character of Christianity, is neatly and forcefully outlined by Machiavelli in his discussion of religion in *The Art of War*" (647). Machiavelli particularly highlights the generals' conscious deception of their men in battle, using religion in order to lead them to victory. Machiavelli begins his examples with the pagans, and ends them with

Carlo VII, re di Francia. . . diceva consigliarsi con una fanciulla mandata da Iddio, la quale si chiamò per tutto la Pulzella di Francia (O 354),

Charles VII of France. . . [who] pretended to be advised in every thing by a virgin sent from heaven, commonly called the virgin of France (AW

4.129),

that is, Jeanne d'Arc. Fontana also reminds us that Machiavelli's linguistic construction respecting all the men who claimed conversation with God are introduced as "Sulla said..., Moses said. . . , Savonarola said. . . ," so that "through deliberate indirection, [Machiavelli] subtly and gently leads the reader to ponder the political and historical character of Christianity. On the one hand he begins with the pretense of pagan leaders and ineluctably ends with the deception of Christian rulers" (647-648). A similar manner of writing can be gleaned from the *Discorsi* (2.2), where Machiavelli's parallel between Christianity and paganism and between "the truth and the true way" and the "honor of the world," revives his distinction in *Il Principe* between the effectual and the imaginary truth of the thing, thus "pointing to the ironic and contradictory relation between intention and action, action and consequence," which suggests that following the path of truth leads to death, not life—clearly a reversal of Christ's message from which Machiavelli claims his phrase above (Fontana 648-649).

The parallelism between paganism and Christianity is itself paralleled to that between Judaism and Christianity, intimated through the use of Moses, who exemplifies Machiavelli's belief that violence undertaken for the service of the state, no matter how radical the violence, is both for "the service of patriotic liberation [and] divinely blessed" (Geerken 593). But there is another contentious, more radical issue here: Moses is held in opposition to Jesus, for Jesus had ultimately proposed a peaceful, meek manner, finally apolitical, a manner supported by Savonarola. Jesus' way is understood by his maxim, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt. 22:21). Jesus' maxim essentially orders his followers not to participate in

the affairs of the state, to render glory to God, not the state, thus separating religion and politics.¹⁰⁵ Moses demands the reverse: that which glorifies the state glorifies God, and the reverse is equally true. In Machiavelli's political philosophy, religion is bad only when it does not serve to glorify the state.

Moses also gave Machiavelli the impetus to discuss Italian slavery, not in the sense of forced labour, but in the sense of not caring to liberate themselves, what Geerken refers to as a "slave mentality." Geerken argues that Machiavelli's purpose is to remind his compatriots that they were, like the Israelites in Egypt, leaderless and in need of a man who, like Moses, possessed a non-slave mentality to liberate them from the barbarians. Machiavelli does declare that the Italians had become "more enslaved than the Hebrews" (P 26.102).¹⁰⁶ But Moses also "provides a middle ground between pagan and Christian alternatives," testifying to the need for armed prophets because in the end neither unarmed prophets succeed in maintaining a state nor armed warriors without vision. Geerken concludes "that the military and the prophetic . . . must be conjoined if long-term political greatness is to be successfully achieved," that if this were not always the case then the Pharaoh would have succeeded in keeping the Israelites under his servitude, that Borgia would have maintained Italy, that Agathocles would have been regarded as a great man (595). Machiavelli "seems to have liked the tough, muscular, territorial Hebraism of the Torah" (Gundersheimer 44). Rhetorically, Machiavelli could count on his readers to come back to the belief that Christianity was taken too far away from its founding roots, that is,

¹⁰⁵This is historically ironic, the Church and state coming together at one point.

¹⁰⁶Geerken discusses this point (593).

from the more virile Judaism of its armed prophet. So as to make this point more bluntly, in *Discorsi* 2.8, Machiavelli declares that in the face of certain conquest it is preferable for an invaded people to run and conquer another country instead, thus saving themselves. He cites the example of the Maurusians “who fled before the face of Joshua, the robber, the son of Nun” (297). It is here that Machiavelli connivingly reconnects Christianity to Judaism in such a way as to undermine Christianity. Machiavelli quotes this statement in Latin, where the name of Joshua is “Jesu,” which is the Greek form of Joshua.¹⁰⁷ Of course, the Moors also became successful conquerors themselves, eventually adopting a religion that denies the divine state of Jesus. Machiavelli’s implied lesson is that both Judaism and Islam are successful conquerors because they do not rely on a religion that highlights humility above everything else. This lesson reinforces his lesson about state and religious rebirth, and is in keeping with Machiavelli’s upholding of the Sultan and the Mamelukes as ideal rulers because they provide the most security for their peoples; Christianity reborn would go back to Judaism, just as Islam actually bypassed Christianity, opting for a rebirth that is closer to Judaism than to Christianity.¹⁰⁸

To stress his lesson of successful conquest, Machiavelli declares that conquerors change the names of the places they occupy, and lists a few of these, including Judea after its conquest by Moses (D 2.8.296). Machiavelli also discusses the act of changing names of conquered places in the *Istorie Fiorentine*, especially highlighting the difference

¹⁰⁷ Machiavelli’s Latin is as follows: “Nos Maurusii, qui fugimus a facie Jesu latronis filii Navae” (O 157). Walker translates Maurusians as Moors.

¹⁰⁸ Although there is no space now in which to undertake a comparison between Judaism and Islam, suffice it to say that the two religions are law based, that is, they specify strict rules of conduct for most human actions and interactions.

between the ancients and their modern—Christian—conquerors. Along with changes of names, he includes as terrifying changes in “the laws, the customs, the mode of life, the religion, the language, the dress.” Machiavelli believes that any change is harmful to the state. He further says,

Hanno, oltre di questo, variato il nome, non solamente le provincie, ma i laghi, i fiumi, i mari e gli uomini; perché la Francia, l'Italia e la Spagna sono ripiene di nomi nuovi e al tutto dagli antichi alieni; come si vede, lasciandone indietro molti altri, che il Po, Garda, l'Arcipelago sono per nomi disformi agli antichi nominati: gli uomini ancora, di Cesari e Pompei, Pieri, Giovanni e Mattei diventorono. (637)

Moreover, not only have the names of provinces changed, but the names of lakes, rivers, seas, and men: for France, Italy, and Spain are filled with new names altogether foreign to the ancient. Thus one sees, leaving aside many others, that the Po, Garda, the Archipelago do not conform to the old names; men too, once Caesars and Pompeys, have become Peters, Johns, and Matthews. (FH 1.5.14-15)

Machiavelli's point is that the differences between the ancient and the new world are vast, not only in names, but also in the qualities of the men. The heroes of the old world—the Caesars and Pompeys—have simply become ordinary men now, Peters, Johns, and Matthews. In the sentence immediately following, Machiavelli asserts that changes in religion cause “the gravest tumults and discords. . . among men,” specifically because of “the struggle between the custom of the ancient faith and the miracles of the new.” His

point is well-taken historically, as the wars to establish and maintain Christianity have testified, but implied is also his point that a new republic must also sacrifice many citizens in order to revive itself. The new republic will have its Caesar, Pompey, Romulus—or Moses, each of whom has killed countless thousands in order to found their cities. Machiavelli's political science is not for the meek.

The question of Christianity's rebirth is specifically taken up by Machiavelli in the *Discorsi*, where he notes that clerical corruption had nearly ruined Christianity but for the intercessions of Saints Francis and Dominick:

Perché questi, con la povertà e con lo esempio della vita di Cristo, la ridussono nella mente degli uomini, che già vi era spenta: e furono sì potenti gli ordini loro nuovi, che ei sono cagione che la disonestà de' prelati e de' capi della religione non la rovinino; vivendo ancora poveramente, ed avendo tanto credito nelle confessioni con i popoli e nelle predicationi, che ei danno loro a intendere come egli è male dir male del male, e che sia bene vivere sotto la obediienza loro, e, se fanno errore, lasciargli gastigare a Dio. (O 196)

For these men by their poverty and by their exemplification of the life of Christ revived religion in the minds of men in whom it was already dead, and so powerful were the new religious orders that they prevented the depravity of prelates and of religious heads from bringing ruin on religion. They also lived so frugally and had such prestige with the populace as confessors and preachers that they convinced them it is an evil thing to talk

evilly of evil doing, and a good thing to live under obedience to such prelates, and that, if they did wrong, it must be left to God to chastise them. (D 3.1 389)

Machiavelli is insisting that the populace is markedly aware of the clergy's wrongdoings, but that the two saints taught the people to be resigned to them. Machiavelli is also writing that the populace's turning of their blind eye to the clergy is partially responsible for allowing the states of the clergy to be sustained "however they [ecclesiastical princes] proceed and live" (P 11.45). In the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli continues the discussion just quoted, but in a harsh manner:

e così quegli fanno il peggio che possono, perché non temono quella punizione che non veggono e non credono. Ha, adunque, questa rinnovazione mantenuto, e mantiene, questa religione. (O 196-197)

And, this being so, the latter behave as badly as they can, because they are not afraid of punishments which they do not see and in which they do not believe. It is, then, this revival which has maintained and continues to maintain this religion. (D 3.1. 389)

Clearly, Machiavelli is cynical about the leaders of the Church, but is he cynical about the above-named saints who managed through their own wills to renovate the religion, to bring it back to its principles? This is a question difficult to answer because the answer depends on the premises one puts forward regarding Christianity. If one holds that the original purpose of the Church was to keep people in awe so that they remain stoic, then the saints are *tiranni virtuosi* who acted as they needed to act in order to accomplish their

task at hand, in which case Machiavelli would have admired them.¹⁰⁹ If, however, Christianity's intention was always to help the oppressed people, then the saints acted in a manner beneficial to their own ends and not to the ends beneficial to the people. In this case, Machiavelli would have grouped the saints with the other clerics who simply use religion to bring benefits to themselves.

Machiavelli is also taking up a deeper, social critique. His rejection of Francis's and Dominic's *rebirthing* of Christianity is actually also a rejection of Dante's support for the two monks' reforms. Dante had held these men up as perfect examples of reformers (*Paradiso* xi-xii), both unarmed (Fontana 655), whereas Machiavelli designates them as men who handed the people over to corrupt rulers. The fact is that these saints were unarmed prophets who turned the people against arms, thus actually turning all of Italy against arms. Machiavelli's critique of the saints, and of Christianity generally, is actually a redoubled critique of the Augustinian worldview that had pitted the earthly city against the city of God, arguing for the glory of the latter city, an argument that Machiavelli rejects with vigour, preferring to relocate the "dichotomy within the historical sphere of political action and social conflict" (Fontana 655).

But Machiavelli also locates this dichotomy in the empirical world, specifically the world of touch. By evoking the senses of sight and touch, Machiavelli inverts their traditional hierarchical order:

E gli uomini, in universali, iudicano più agli occhi che alle mani; perché
tocca a vedere a ognuno, a sentire a pochi. Ognuno vede quello che tu pari,

¹⁰⁹ de Grazia interprets Machiavelli's discussion of the two men as one of admiration (90-92).

pochi sentono quello che tu se'; e quelli pochi non ardiscano opporsi alla opinione di molti che abbino la maestà dello stato che li defenda; e nelle azioni di tutti gli uomini, e massime de' principi, dove non è iudizio a chi reclamare, si guarda al fine. Facci dunque uno principe di vincere a mantenere lo stato: e' mezzi saranno sempre iudicati onorevoli e da ciascuno laudati; perché il vulgo ne va sempre preso con quello che pare, e con lo evento della cosa; e nel mondo non è se non vulgo. (O 284)

Men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands, because seeing is given to everyone, touching to few. Everyone sees how you appear, few touch what you are; and these few dare not oppose the opinion of many, who have the majesty of the state to defend them; and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no court to appeal to, one looks to the end. So let a prince win and maintain his state: the means will always be judged honourable, and will be praised by everyone. For the vulgar are taken in by the appearance and the outcome of a thing, and in the world there is no one but the vulgar. (P 18.71)

That the prince relies on appearance more than on anything else in order to maintain his power is made clear with the episode involving Francesco Soderini, as narrated in *Discorsi* 1.54. For Machiavelli, seeing and touching correspond to opinion and knowledge (Blanchard 596). Politically, this act of knowledge necessarily translates into an act of force, for the construction of a state is an act of will, therefore an act of touching. The world of touch shows us the effectual truth of things, for touching a thing, unlike simply

looking at it, allows us to verify the thing. By rejecting appearances, Machiavelli not only rejects the concept of faith, which is not dependent on how a thing *is* but on how it *seems* to someone, he also rejects any theoretical position depending on anything other than how something actually is.¹¹⁰ In other words, Machiavelli also rejects the Hellenistic conception of the world dependent on its transcendent reality perceived by reason. Plato is thrown out along with Christianity.¹¹¹

Nederman's thesis, however, asserting that Machiavelli's departure from "the medieval framework" is strictly in his view that the ruler's salvation is as much political as otherworldly (621), differs from mine. To support his view, Nederman argues that Machiavelli's thought is interspersed with "medieval Christian theology," especially his appeal to the concepts of grace and free will. More specifically, Nederman believes that the tension between Machiavelli's concepts of *fortuna* and *virtù* is "mediated" by the concept of "grace (grazia) of God which affords opportunities for successful action on earth that are not available to those who lack divine appointment" (620-621). Nederman determines that

Machiavelli proves to be neither a fatalist nor a voluntarist, instead advocating a recognizably Christian harmonization of determination and will: God freely grants us grace, but we must realize and perfect it by the

¹¹⁰ Machiavelli likely remembered the famous definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1-3: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

¹¹¹ Nietzsche clearly borrowed some of Machiavelli's ideas. It is not the place now to specify where and how, suffice it to say that, interestingly, Nietzsche does call Christianity Platonism for the masses.

action of our own free wills. (621)

Nederman's conviction is that "Machiavelli's solution to the predicament with which he is obsessed—the inability of human beings to conquer fortune permanently—drew directly upon central tenets of Christian theology" (625). Quoting *Discorsi* 1.10, Nederman judges that "Machiavelli consistently implies that there is some plan (however inscrutable) standing behind the course of human events" (627):

E veramente i cieli non possono dare agli uomini maggiore occasione di gloria. . . . E, in somma, considerino quelli a chi i cieli dànno tale occasione, come ei sono loro preposte due vie: l'una che li fa vivere sicuri, e dopo la morte li rende gloriosi; l'altra li fa vivere in continove angustie, e, dopo la morte, lasciare di sé una sempiterna infamia. (O 93)

Nor in very truth can the heavens afford men a better opportunity of acquiring renown In conclusion, then, let those to whom the heavens grant such opportunities reflect that two courses are open to them: either so to behave that in life they rest secure and in death become renowned, or so to behave that in life they are in continual straits, and in death leave behind an imperishable record of their infamy. (D 1.10.138)

Nederman adds that Machiavelli, in writing about *fortuna* or the heavens, always writes about them as being active forces: *fortuna* chooses a man, the heavens have bestowed upon men, and so forth. The problem with Nederman's interpretation is that he reads Machiavelli frankly, whereas Machiavelli was writing rhetorically in order to ensure more

open acceptance of his views.¹¹² At the simplest level, Machiavelli understood that his new, untrodden path would not gain favour if his views were bluntly radical, especially theologically, that they would simply be rejected outright. Machiavelli's contemporaries believed in the powers of *fortuna* and God, and incorporated both concepts into their ideas, political and otherwise. Machiavelli targets this paradigm of an active metahuman power regulating human affairs by coating the large pill he was giving with the received concepts in such a way that his medicine would be more easily swallowed. In Machiavelli's worldview, *fortuna*, the heavens, or God are present only in order to *rationalize* the radical prince who is about to reorganize Italy. It is in this sense that the Christian God and the Church leadership have been rationalized to the people, and Machiavelli recognizes that he must take the same path if there is any hope of acceptance for his radical programme. A perfect example of Machiavelli's rhetoric is displayed in his discussion of the "excellent" men of *Il Principe*, especially Moses whose actions Nederman reads as simply those carried out based on God's authority, the authority of grace (630). The reality is that Moses did not always act according to God's will, as Geerken has shown us. In essence, Machiavelli is opposing the latter half of Dante's reading of Moses as "legista e ubediente" (*Inferno* IV).¹¹³

Nonetheless, Nederman argues that the other excellent men that Machiavelli aligns with Moses as deserving of equal admiration also benefit from God's grace. Nederman

¹¹²Kahn argues that Machiavelli's rhetorical practice was such that the onus for interpreting Machiavelli's true intentions are placed on the reader. In this, Kahn is following Strauss's argument in *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. See her article in *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, later expanded into *Machiavellian Rhetoric*.

¹¹³Gundersheimer's article (45) brought Dante's line to my attention.

suggests this as the case because Machiavelli calls them prophets as well (631). Nederman is mistaken, however, because the stress Machiavelli lays is on the adjective attached to the noun—armed. Nowhere does Machiavelli suggest that “the other founders...enjoyed some special favor from God, both in terms of the gift of an opportunity for acting propitiously and the divine encouragement to seize the chance that they had been granted,” nor does Machiavelli mention or imply that, like Moses, they possessed “divine inspiration” (Nederman 631). Rather, Machiavelli’s text is clear that these men are like Moses only in the fact that they succeed in their efforts to unite their peoples and to found their fatherlands. If anything, Machiavelli brings Moses down a notch because he had divine guidance, a phrase Machiavelli need not have repeated when he turns the discussion to the other founders, but does so in order to stress the pagan founders’ greater excellence because their glory is based on their virtues alone. It is important to quote Machiavelli at length, even while repeating an earlier quotation:

E benché di Moisè non si debba ragionare, sendo suto uno mero esecutore delle cose che gli erano ordinate da Dio, tamen debbe essere ammirato solum per quella grazia che lo faceva degno di parlare con Dio. Ma consideriamo Ciro e gli altri che hanno acquistato o fondato regni: li troverrete tutti mirabili; e se si consideranno le azioni e ordini loro particolari, parranno non discrepanti da quelli di Moisè, che ebbe sì gran precettore. Ed esaminando le azioni e vita loro, non si vede che quelli avessino altro dalla fortuna che la occasione; la quale dette loro materia a potere introdurvi dentro quella forma parse loro; e senza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e senza quella virtù la occasione

sarebbe venuta invano. (O 264)

And although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with god. But let us consider Cyrus and the others who have acquired or founded kingdoms: you will find them all admirable; and if their particular actions and orders are considered, they will appear no different from those of Moses, who had so great a teacher. And as one examines their actions and lives, one does not see that they had anything else from fortune than the opportunity, which gave them the matter enabling them to introduce any form they pleased. Without that opportunity their virtue of spirit would have been eliminated, and without that virtue the opportunity would have come in vain. (P 6.22-23)

Nonetheless, Nederman's thesis is important because it raises important questions about Machiavelli's conception of *fortuna*, a conception that is still far from clear.

In his discussion of Machiavelli's concept of *fortuna*, Nederman concludes that *fortuna* cannot be thwarted without God's grace. Machiavelli, however, when making his declaration that men cannot thwart *fortuna*'s dictates, concludes that men must not give up their efforts to do so—they must maintain their *virtù*—for there is always hope of overcoming her, thus contradicting his earlier statement (D 2.29.372). Nederman recognizes Machiavelli's later statement but only in order to declare that Machiavelli's purpose is "to dispel as a by-product of human ignorance the notion that events and

circumstances are without rhyme or reason,” especially because we cannot understand *fortuna*’s purpose (628).

The very fact that *fortuna* presented the opportunity does not negate the fact that the excellent founders possessed *virtù*, for Machiavelli is clear that without that great *virtù*, the opportunity for action would have come to nought. And even *virtù*, Machiavelli stresses, requires arms, for without arms political action cannot succeed, and the radical reordering of the state would not be possible. Machiavelli’s stress, even on Moses, is that of the prophet being armed, for even prophecy—guidance from God—is useless without the sword. Again, Machiavelli is unambiguous:

È necessario pertanto, volendo discorrere bene questa parte, esaminare se questi innovatori stanno per loro medesimi o se dependano da altri; cioè, se per condurre l’opera loro bisogna che preghino, ovvero possono forzare. Nel primo caso capitano sempre male e non conducano cosa alcuna; ma, quando dependono da loro proprii e possono forzare, allora è che rare volte periclitano. Di qui nacque che tutti e’ profeti armati vinsono, e li disarmati ruinorono. . . . Moisè, Ciro, Teseo e Romulo non arebbono possuto fare osservare loro lungamente le loro costituzioni, se fussino stati disarmati: come ne’ nostri tempi intervenne a fra’ Girolamo Savonarola; (O 265)

It is however necessary, if one wants to discuss this aspect well, to examine whether these innovators stand by themselves or depend on others; that is, whether to carry out their deed they must *beg* or indeed can use force. In the first case they always come to ill and never accomplish

anything; but when they depend on their own and are able to use force, then it is that they are rarely in peril. From this it arises that all the armed prophets conquered and the unarmed ones were ruined. . . . Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus would not have been able to make their peoples observe their constitutions for long if they had been unarmed, as happened in our times to Brother Girolamo Savonarola. (P 6.24 my emphasis)

My emphasised word, “beg,” does not convey the full import Machiavelli attaches to it in the original Italian, which reads *preghino*, that is, these armed prophets must either pray or beg, or use force. The pun on pray is perhaps self-explanatory, but clearly Machiavelli does not believe that prayers alone can build states, as he later shows with his example of Savonarola. But prayers can assist in the building of states, as long as the prayers are enforced with arms. Now we can fully appreciate Machiavelli’s choice of religious, odd words, conveyed with the full power of the oxymoron. These include the phrase “armed prophet,” the word *preghino*, and his redefined word “sin, (*peccato*).” These are Christian words whose typical peaceful connotations have been bulldozed in order to convey Machiavelli’s politico-military standards. Machiavelli comes back to the word *prega* (she—Italy—is praying) to God to have “someone to redeem her from these barbarous cruelties and insults” (P 26.102, O 297). Tying prayers again to redemption through arms solidifies Machiavelli’s position that salvation on earth can be had only through arms. In fact, the whole of the penultimate chapter of *Il Principe* is organized around the principle of redemption. This is also the chapter in which God figures prominently, named more often in this brandishing of rhetoric than in the previous twenty-five chapters combined.

Lorenzo is essentially elevated to the position of redeemer, in like manner to Moses.¹¹⁴

Machiavelli's rhetorical flourish "conflates the fortune of the Medici with divine providence and the Church, and thus simultaneously debases religion and confers a certain grandeur on the rulers of Florence." Machiavelli's flattery of the Medici turns religious rhetoric into "a ruse of political necessity" (Kahn 1994 42-43).

2.9. Machiavelli and *Fortuna*

We must now explore in more detail Machiavelli's conception of *fortuna*, clearly a conception that is radically original, fully breaking away both from its Christian and classical conceptions. Simply stated, in Machiavelli's worldview the world is not a rational place with a specific end; rather, it is always in a state of irrational flux, thus necessitating the virtuous man's imposition of "modes and orders" on it. It is man's will that orders the world, that gives it a rational end. In his excellent article on Machiavelli's originality, Newell correctly argues that "Machiavelli's originality. . . lies in [his] paradoxical reliance on disorder. He is not merely arguing that fortune is unreliable, but that fortune's hindrances are in a strange way actually to be welcomed and are constitutive of sound psychology and statecraft" (1987 628). Newell points to Machiavelli's statement that chance can lead to the perfection of republics because disorder necessitates the need for a prudent organizer—a founder (D 1.2). Newell, however, fails to mention one other important aspect in this discourse: Machiavelli makes this remarkable statement, which

¹¹⁴By my count, there are three variations of the word "redeem" in this chapter: as passive noun, "sua redenzione" (297), as verb in past tense, "redimerno" (298), and in the closing paragraph as active noun, "uno suo redentore" (298). A number of scholars recognize the rhetoric of redemption of *Il Principe*, including Gundersheimer, Weinstein (1972 262), and Gilbert (1939).

actually sets up his original thesis that strife within a city is a necessary element guaranteeing a city's freedom, when discussing the original birth of cities. Fastening such a theory to his aetiology suggests that this theory is foundational for Machiavelli, that his political philosophy specifically, and his philosophy generally, is built on this theory. This is why Machiavelli can speak of the need for princes or republics to imitate fortune by deliberately cultivating hostilities within and outside the state and then stamping them out, thus proving the *virtù* of the prince or the republic (P 20.85, also P 9 and 21, D 3.30). By being calculative, that is, by applying one's *virtù*, one can plan how to proceed against *fortuna*, and by being impetuous, one recognizes the disorder inherent in the world, thus giving oneself the power to "preempt the impetuosity of *Fortuna*" (Newell 1987 629). Newell concludes that "by being willful in this way, Machiavelli suggests [that] we can tap fortune's willfulness into our own calculations," allowing us to "guard against fortune's caprices because we have liberated that capriciousness through our own selfish impulses" (1987 629).

Machiavelli's conception of *fortuna* is set up in opposition to the conception of it found in the writings of the classical and humanist thinkers who believed that the world is "rationally ordered." Machiavelli "squarely repudiates the belief that a supervening order of causes grounds man's hopes for peace and justice" (Newell 1987 613 slightly modified),¹¹⁵ and actually "never examines fortune under its traditional rubric of a

¹¹⁵Newell wrote his article in opposition to Skinner's argument in *Foundations*, where Skinner declares that Machiavelli's rejection of *fortuna* follows the pattern established by the humanists, specifically the pattern of rejecting the Augustinian belief that *fortuna* is a form of divine necessity that leaves little room for human freedom, and that the humanists reverted back to the "classical belief that the human predicament is best seen as a struggle between man's will and fortune's willfulness" (*Foundations* 94-95). In contrast to Skinner, Newell correctly argues that the classical philosophers "treat [fortune] as a subsidiary dimension within the complex of relations making up the order of causes," therefore not external to the

subsidiary dimension of the order of causes, but rather equates it with all conditions external to the human will" (1987 628). Nevertheless, Machiavelli never equates *fortuna* with God, although he does conflate them, but for purposes different from those envisioned by Nederman and other scholars who read Machiavelli as a Christian thinker, which is an odd reading considering that Machiavelli advocates the beating of *fortuna*, suggesting that God, too, must be beaten if a virtuous person is to succeed in his enterprise. If this is the case, then Machiavelli's blasphemy extends to the realm traditionally allotted only to Lucifer.

Machiavelli conflates *fortuna* and God because St. Augustine had done the same thing, except Machiavelli is conflating them for the purpose of rejecting God's intervention in politics, intervention that hinders the prince's ability to act. Machiavelli chooses to undertake his act of conflation when beginning his final assault on *fortuna*, and uses God's representative on earth as the virtuoso prince who preempts *fortuna* and beats her at her own game. This radical act of conflation is undertaken in the famous twenty-fifth chapter of *Il Principe*, where Julius II is held up as a prince worthy of imitation.

In this chapter, Machiavelli writes,

E' non mi è incognito come molti hanno avuto e hanno opinione che le cose del mondo sieno in modo povernate dalla fortuna e da Dio, che gli uomini con la prudenzia loro non possino correggerle, anzi non vi abbino remedio alcuno; e per questo potrebbero iudicare che non fussi da

world, especially because the world, they believed, was rationally ordered. Newell's thesis, again in opposition to Skinner, shows Machiavelli to be original in his views, especially respecting the opposition he stakes between *virtù* and *fortuna*. If Newell's reading is accurate, and I believe it is, then Machiavelli does not so much revive paganism as transform it into his manner of thinking. Newell's discussion of this issue is also taken up in an endnote (1987 629-630).

insudare moto nelle cose, ma lasciarsi governare alla sorte. (O 295)

It is not unknown to me that many have held and hold the opinion that worldly things are so governed by fortune and by God, that men cannot correct them with their prudence, indeed that they have no remedy at all; and on account of this they might judge that one need not sweat much over things but let oneself be governed by chance. (P 25.98)

By declaring that one could avoid the dictates of *fortuna*, Machiavelli is also admitting that one could avoid the dictates of God, because in this statement he aligns *fortuna* with God and by the end of the chapter Machiavelli's metaphoric young man has beaten the "lady" *fortuna* into submission to his will. One wonders whether the *donna fortuna* is not supposed to bring to mind the Christian Donna, thus implying that *fortuna* is Christianity.¹¹⁶ It is also intriguing that Machiavelli writes *donna fortuna* as a whore looking for a man to tame her. If this is the case, then Machiavelli is more blasphemous—in Christian eyes—than ever thought previously.

More interesting is the fact that the prince held up as worthy of imitation, specifically because he preempts *fortuna*, is the pope, for by preempting *fortuna* he is also preempting God who, as we just saw, was conflated with *fortuna*. This characterization of Julius is reminiscent of his earlier characterization, when he was held up as a prince who expanded his state's territories, who relied on arms and money to do so. Still, Machiavelli

¹¹⁶ John Freccero (163) points out that in Renaissance Italian *femina* was the word denoting "woman" and *donna* "lady." Machiavelli, for example, uses the plural word *femine* in the title of *Discorsi* 3.26. As far as I am aware, only Wootton translates *donna* as "lady" in his version of *Il Principe*. The most famous discussion of Machiavelli's gendered use of *fortuna* is Pitkin's.

sees one problem with Julius, that he does not change his mode of action, which was lucky for the pope because the time was suitable for Julius' impetuosity. But Machiavelli also pleads for impetuous action when one's choice for acting is not clear; it is preferable to act in an impetuous manner rather than in an overly cautious manner. The point for Machiavelli is that man always has a choice because he has will, and will belongs to *virtù*.

It is in this sense of one's ability to choose that *virtù* must be defined, and Wood concurs, defining *virtù* as "the essence of action," and *fortuna* as "the principle of behaviour" (1972 46). *Fortuna* becomes a passive force, while *virtù* is active, as Olschki observes (38).¹¹⁷ This observation certifies that *fortuna* is a non-entity, that it is simply a random conflation of disinterested forces, happenings, consequences, and so on, essentially random occurrences that the actor has simply not accounted, or could not account, for.¹¹⁸ The actor, however, can try to account for contingencies, as he does in Machiavelli's *Tercets on Fortune*, where Machiavelli points to the multiple wheels of *fortuna*, and how a virtuous man may succeed in his adventures if he maintains himself in harmony with her desires (O 978 CW 747).¹¹⁹ But this is an impossible task, for "ch'infino a Giove sua [fortuna] potenza teme (even by Jove her (*fortuna*) powers are feared)" (O 977 CW 746). The conclusion that there is no deity, Christian or otherwise, is inescapable if for Jove we read God. Equally noticeable is the fact that, as Flanagan observes, in Machiavelli's discussions of *fortuna* "superstitious associations" are

¹¹⁷Plamenantz and Whitfield argue that there is no doctrine of *virtù* in Machiavelli and that he uses the word in a variety of senses, but tending to associate it with energy, vigour, and strong *will* (Whitfield 1947 95-97, Plamenantz 1972 158-159. My emphasis).

¹¹⁸This is my interpretation of *fortuna*, not Olschki's.

¹¹⁹Flanagan discusses this poem (1972 141-145).

noticeably absent (1972 154).

The fact remains that Machiavelli believes that one must oppose *fortuna*, regardless of outcome. By modifying Livy's understanding of *fortuna* "from fate to contingency" (Kahn 1994 49), Machiavelli also modifies the concept of *virtù*, rewriting it as an "anthropocentric will that has no transcendental relation to the nonhuman world." Machiavelli ventures further, beginning the second book of the *Discorsi* with a rejection of Plutarch's view that *fortuna*, not *virtù*, was responsible for Rome's great success. To Plutarch's view, Machiavelli adds Livy's, whom he claims never puts "into the mouth of any Roman a speech in which he tells of virtue without conjoining fortune with it" (D 2.1. 270). Machiavelli rejects both historians' views, insisting that "it was the virtue of her armies that caused Rome to acquire an empire." By opposing Plutarch's and Livy's views, Machiavelli is also opposing the Christian view stressed by Augustine and repeated by Dante and others, that God is responsible for the success of kingdoms, as we have already stressed. Sullivan points to Machiavelli's repetition of the word "confession" in this discourse as Machiavelli's sneaky attack on Christianity's belief that political successes are God's handiwork (52). *Virtù* overcomes *fortuna* "not by transcending chance through transcending desire¹²⁰ [but] by yielding to our desires for glory, wealth, and power, as princes or as citizens of vigorous expansionist republics [by] orient[ing] ourselves by the disorder that is at the heart of all existence" (Newell 1987 628). With this understanding, I shall now attempt to redefine Machiavelli's dyad.

Rereading chapter fifteen of *Il Principe*, we realize that because he is demanding a

¹²⁰The essential argument in classical and Christian philosophy. See Newell (1987).

reconsideration of the qualities he names there, Machiavelli does not call them either virtues or vices, fully understanding that subjecting them to the heading of “virtue” or “vice” condemns them to an evaluative stature he is rejecting. Leaving these qualities open and relatively free of value allows the prince practising them to re-evaluate them to suit the times and circumstances in which he is applying them—the choice the virtuous man makes will force a value on an action that the prince’s will had wiped clean, thus forcing a new order on a new mode. Wood argues that “the core of Machiavelli’s humanism of action. . . is the conviction that man, in his constant struggle with Fortuna, can to an important extent hold his own and partially control his destiny if he will act with *virtù*” (1972 34). As Machiavelli conceives it, *virtù* becomes unambiguously linked to the creative process, especially the creation of the state. Machiavelli never excuses an immoral act, such as murder, unless it is inextricably tied to the founding or maintenance of the state, and then even the act of fratricide or the killing of one’s sons is excused.¹²¹ With this definition of *virtù*, we can now redefine *fortuna*.

Fortuna must ultimately be defined negatively as a lack of preparation, a lack of *prudenza*, a conception of it Machiavelli clearly makes at the very beginning of *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani* where he writes:

Credo bene che . . . la fortuna dimostrare al mondo di essere quella che faccia gli uomini grandi, e non la prudenza, comincia a dimostrare le sue forze in tempo che la prudenza non ci possa avere alcuna parte, anzi da lei

¹²¹Plamenantz makes a similar argument although he does not tie *virtù* to the creative process generally, as I do, but he adds that *virtù* is not “the end of the state” (1972 172), a statement with which I agree.

si abbi a ricognoscere il tutto. (O 615)

I well believe . . . that *fortuna* wishing to demonstrate to the world that it is she that makes men great, and not prudence, begins to demonstrate her forces at a time when prudence can possess no part in the matter, rather that from her it must be recognized comes everything.¹²²

This passage is crucial for a number of reasons, the first of which is that Machiavelli sets out the conflict between *fortuna* and *prudenza* at the very beginning of his narrative, which is very much about the power of *fortuna* and the potential of a man of *virtù* to overcome her. Machiavelli, however, does not narrate that Castruccio succeeds in overcoming *fortuna*, for she still wins, cutting him down at his prime, but Machiavelli does narrate that Castruccio never regretted his actions, only that he should have been more prudent, that it is a worthwhile lesson to give to future princes, as Castruccio teaches his adopted son.¹²³

Flanagan (1972 141), however, argues that Machiavelli does not unqualifiedly claim that one can overcome *fortuna* completely—at best, Machiavelli is ambiguous, usually adding that eventually one is bound to fail. In general, I agree with Flanagan's reading. Nonetheless, Machiavelli's statements suggest that the state, because it is a collection of people, vastly arching over limited individuals, can overcome *fortuna*, but the state must be so ordained that it outlasts the original founder. The state, too, must be

¹²² Although somewhat stilted, I have insisted on translating the passage literally.

¹²³ Flanagan's reading—one of the best articles on Machiavelli's concept of *fortuna*, I believe—carries a thesis similar to mine (136-137), but Flanagan, unlike me, does not define Machiavelli's *fortuna* as a lack.

virtuoso. The fundamental nature of a virtuous act must be the unfettered understanding “che la Fortuna non muta sententia, *dove non si muta ordine* (that Fortune does not change her decision *when there is no change in procedure*)” (O 13 CW 1443, my emphasis).¹²⁴ The removal of superceding causes allows the virtuous man to act in such a manner that he can realize his will, which must be synonymous with the will of the state. If this is the case, the state will last and remain in harmony with the needs of the people; if not, then the state will ultimately be doomed, for “né e cieli vogliono *o possono* sostenere una cosa che voglia ruinare ad ogni modo (the heavens do not wish *or are not able to* support a city that is determined to fall in any case)” (O 13 CW 1443, my emphasis).

2.10. Machiavelli and Hell

Machiavelli's *favola*, *Belfagor*, allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the Secretary's views on religion, and especially on how religion relates to politics, neatly compacting his views in a few pages. Machiavelli's novella is much understudied, perhaps because it is regarded as a strictly literary piece, an unfortunate prejudice not only because *Belfagor* has much to say about religion and politics, but also because it is an aesthetically satisfying literary masterpiece, one that should not be bypassed by those who appreciate excellent, comical literature.¹²⁵

Machiavelli's outrageous humour is extreme from the beginning. The story opens with him telling us that he is relating a story well known in Florentine history, and

¹²⁴“Parole da dirle sopra la provisione del danaio, facto un poco di proemio et di scusa (Words to be Spoken on the Law for Appropriating Money, After Giving a Little Introduction and Excuse)”.

¹²⁵In their discussions of Machiavelli, most scholars have bypassed *Belfagor*, even those scholars who have treated Machiavelli's ideas about religion.

repeated by a "santissimo uomo," a story that tells of failed exorcisms and then parallels the devil's life with Christ's life: the devil becomes flesh, suffers on earth, and returns to his point of origin in hell. Machiavelli's biting satire is unquestionably blasphemous. The basic outline of the story is that because of the numerous complaints of men that their misery is due to their wives, Pluto decides to investigate the matter by having one of his devils disguise himself as a man, marry, and live for a period of time on earth in order to know the truth of the increasing accusations. In the end, the devil himself flees from his wife, thus settling the matter as true. Without question, the story is misanthropic, at least on the surface, but it is brilliantly conceived and executed, and the political allegory has not, to my knowledge, been mimicked.

Machiavelli's story is an anti-comedy and an anti-utopia.¹²⁶ Typically, Renaissance comedies end with happy marriages; *Belfagor* ends with the dissolution of the marriage, and the state of things largely the way they were. *Belfagor* shows society's corruptions in their worst light. Nothing in this story is sacred, to the extent that, as Sumberg suggests, *Belfagor* leads the reader to believe that Satan "has set up a better regime than the one he rebelled against" (40).¹²⁷ Machiavelli's intentions, however, following his own advice in *Discorsi* 1.44, are hidden. Just as he suggests in the *Discorsi* that to attack Caesar safely one ought to praise Brutus (D 1.10), and in his letter to Guicciardini, that to know the way to heaven one must first know the way to hell (17 May 1521), here Machiavelli does not directly castigate heaven, but indirectly, thus reversing the traditionally propagated belief

¹²⁶As far as I am aware, no one has used these phrases to describe Machiavelli's novella.

¹²⁷Allan Gilbert makes a similar point in his introduction to the story (CW 869).

that we ought to look up for guidance, not down, as his novella now suggests. Hell becomes a “law-loving noble regime [that] cares for men,” Sumberg argues, and its purpose is to overturn the conventional view, which has been around since antiquity (41), beginning with Plato who had said that philosophers should keep company with the divine in order to find out the best political order (*Republic*. 500D). Machiavelli turns this belief around, instead keeping company with the devil in order to gain political understanding (Sumberg 46). This point is made more salient when we recognize that this novella is the only formal work in which the devil and hell are *not* absent, as they are in *Il Principe* and the *Discorsi* (Strauss 1970 1).

But Machiavelli also uproots the Christian notion of love, the very thing that corrupts the devil himself, Belfagor, when he falls in love with the woman, ironically named Onesta. Love, according to Machiavelli, is what makes us lose control, hence the devil eventually learns at great cost to avoid it, and the peasant seems not to have bought into it at all, choosing to keep women absent from his life. Love, however, has the religious dimension of being the mediator between man and God, according to the Christian tradition, and Machiavelli is attempting to discard this belief (Sumberg 45) by suggesting that love cannot be sustained because human beings do not hold to their obligations, thus “inganno o astuzia,” not love, are what liberate us from evils, corruption, and the like. This is specifically why Belfagor’s peasant ally in the hoaxes is a spirited, strong-willed, resourceful, and clever man who embodies all the elements that make up “*astuzia fortunata*,” as in *Il Principe* (9), using fraud as the means by which to prevail in his actions, even overcoming a rich merchant, the King of Naples, and the King of France, although he (the peasant) is unarmed. The peasant even outwits the devil. Machiavelli was

clearly aware of Jesus' warning to his disciples to beware the cynicism of men (Mt. 10:17).

But it is Machiavelli's fraud committed on the reader that is more relevant to our discussion. His *favola* clearly suggests that success is open to all men, that knowing how to prevail on earth counts for more than the knowledge that heaven or hell can give us, because earthly life is what ultimately counts on earth. *Belfagor* is the story that teaches the non-political man how to act (Sumberg 43). Machiavelli's naming of the peasant—Gianmatteo (John-Matthew)—is itself an act of blasphemy because the man is far from being pious, even using religion to advance his own gains. His elaborate religious ceremonies are the biggest hoaxes in the story at the same time as they are holy relics—for believers of course. Machiavelli, even here, can escape the accusation of blasphemy even as he blasphemes, defending himself, as he does at the outset of the narrative, by claiming that the story is not his but comes from Florentine history and has been retold by a saintly man. In some sense, Machiavelli himself is the saintly man who is out to protect the earthly paradise by teaching his readers how to avoid evil in the first place. Machiavelli even attacks the Church, and separates himself from humanist literature, by writing in the vernacular and by mocking Latin. The possessed girl in the story speaks in Latin (through the devil) until she is exorcised. Latin also contains the knowledge of the past, which Machiavelli wants to uproot, and he mocks philosophy, at least the "scholastic" kind, with its useless quarrels (Sumberg 45), something he had "lightly" engaged in in *Il Principe*.¹²⁸

¹²⁸See Gilbert's "The Humanist Concept of the Prince. . ." (1977).

Still, Machiavelli can have a laugh at our expense, for the devil's name, Belfagor, like the other names in the *favola*, suggests a subtle meaning, combining the two words *bel* and *figurare*, thus meaning handsome shape with a pun on shady (from *figura*). Machiavelli's subtlety suggests that the devil may not be as bad as our tradition has set him out to be, for even evil can lead us to its opposite, the road to hell showing us how to reach heaven. In this sense, Machiavelli himself becomes the mediator between us and God—and the devil.

2.11. Machiavelli's Idealized Prince: Castruccio Castracani

In Castruccio Castracani, Machiavelli envisions his ideal—fictional—prince. Castruccio is the prince who is best viewed, perhaps ironically, as Machiavelli's answer to Plato's challenge of attempting to realize the philosopher-king, for this is exactly what Castruccio is, a philosopher-king, but a *cinquecento* Italianized one.¹²⁹ Specifically, Castruccio is a Christian prince who philosophizes and politicizes within the Christian Italian Renaissance, but with a Machiavellian twist, for he is also the prototypical Machiavellian prince, the standard of comparison for other Italian princes, and the epitome for future princes. Of course, by referring to Castruccio as a Christian prince, I am not suggesting that he is a crusader for Christianity, because he is not. And by referring to him as a Machiavellian prince, I am not suggesting that he is a Machiavel, for he is not. Castruccio is Christian simply by virtue of the fact that he lives in a Christian society; he is

¹²⁹Sumberg argues that Machiavelli's dedication of the *Vita* to two young friends is intended to oppose Plato's claim in *The Laws* that political discussions ought to be the reserve of old men only. Sumberg rightly points to the closing statement of the *Arte della guerra* and to the introduction to Book II of the *Discorsi* for support of his statement (30).

Machiavellian by virtue of the fact that he functions within the political parameters envisioned by Machiavelli, acting according to those standards held up by the Secretary. This is to say that Castruccio is Christian by *perception* only; the fact that he is Machiavellian means that he is Christian only when he needs to be. Castruccio is to Machiavelli what the arrow is to the archer (P 6). If *Il Principe* is the theoretical treatise of the ideal prince, the *Vita* is its exemplum, the other side of the same coin.¹³⁰

The first point to remember about Castruccio is that he gave up the religious—Christian—life for the art of war, the non-Christian life of Jupiter. Sumberg argues that the *Vita* “reads almost like a sequel to the *Art of War*,” and that in the biography Machiavelli is concerned to put in practice the lesson he was advocating in the *Arte*, that it is preferable to give other states the law than to receive it from them, and that because all states are animated by the same principle, it is wise to go to war before the war comes to you (Sumberg 31). While this is true, Machiavelli’s intentions in this “biography” are more philosophically and politically subversive than that, for the narrative actually denigrates Christian political thought, casting it aside in favour of Machiavellian political philosophy.

As we have pointed out, Castruccio actually gives up the Christian life in favour of the life of the warrior. Machiavelli’s sketch of the warrior is doubly intriguing because he paints Castruccio as an orphaned infant, not unlike the most famous historical foundlings—and founders of political orders—Moses and Romulus. This fictional

¹³⁰ As Bondanella and Musa point out in their *Portable Machiavelli*, the *Vita* first appeared in the 1532 edition of *Il Principe*, and thereafter was often included in Italian and foreign editions of *Il Principe*. It is only recently that the *Vita* has been ignored as an important political tract (PM 519). Wootton also points out that the *Vita* was usually appended to *Il Principe* (xxvi).

Castruccio differs radically from the historical Castruccio, as does the age at which Machiavelli's Castruccio is made to die, forty-four as opposed to the real age of forty-seven; the fictional age is intended to model him closer to the antique heroes Machiavelli mentions at the close of the book. Ironically, the *Vita* is the only work in Machiavelli's *opere* in which he does not claim the superiority of the ancients over the moderns (Sumberg 30). This is because Machiavelli fashions Castruccio as a "grandissimo esemplo" of the political man, the ideal prince. In Sumberg's words, Castruccio "is politics as Socrates is philosophy" (35). In fact, Castruccio's life is enacted as nothing short of perfect, with his death as "the only banal event in his life" and the only time in which *fortuna* abandons him (Sumberg 31). Castruccio Castracani, not Cesare Borgia, is the perfect prince.

It is in this sense of the ideal *Italian* prince that one of Machiavelli's intention's in the writing of the *Vita*, as Sumberg asserts, is to castigate Florence, forcing it to demand new, strong leadership, by showing how a tiny state like Lucca managed to humiliate its larger and richer neighbour three times. Of course, much of what Machiavelli wrote in the *Vita* is false, even contradictory to his historical account of some of the incidents about Castruccio in the *Istorie Fiorentine*. For example, Machiavelli does not mention that Castruccio was a mercenary in his time, preferring to propagate his (Machiavelli's) belief that only citizen soldiers can grant victory to a state, as is the case in the fictitious biography of Castruccio.

There is no question that Machiavelli seeks to overthrow Florence's decadence. Machiavelli, however, is also attempting to overthrow papal, Christian rule, an attempt made evident by the near-absence of God in the *Vita*. Sumberg points out that God is

absent from the *Vita* with the exception of the incident in which the emperor presents Castruccio with a brocaded toga inscribed on the front with “Egli è quel che Dio vuole,” and on the back with “E’ sarà quel che Dio vorrà” (O 621). Sumberg correctly points out that it is the emperor who gives the brocade, and that Machiavelli makes certain to tell us that at that time the pope was staying in Avignon. Thus, Machiavelli is highlighting the fact that the pope may not necessarily be the disseminator of God’s word, nor does he care about Italy. Sumberg, however, forgets about the other reference to God in the biography, a significant reference specifically because God is referred to by Castruccio, but the narrative is given us in an indirect manner.

This reference to God is made in Castruccio’s answer to Stephano’s plea for clemency for the Poggio family after their attempted rebellion against Castruccio. Machiavelli writes that Castruccio “ringraziava Dio di avere avuto occasione di dimostrare la sua clemenza e liberalità (thanked God for the opportunity to demonstrate his clemency and goodwill)” (O 620, PM 530). Having the Poggio family in his grasp, Castruccio then proceeds to execute them all, including Stephano, who had calmed the rebellious party even before Castruccio had arrived on the scene. Machiavelli’s Castruccio believes that religion must be used for political expediency, nothing else. Even more interesting is the ambiguity of Castruccio’s indirectly reported speech. Machiavelli ensures that the “clemency and goodwill” can be understood as either God’s or Castruccio’s; either way, Castruccio comes out of the gruesome affair looking good, and unquestioned, having done God’s deed, and having made God look good. If one does not question God, then surely one cannot question God’s servant. This narrative is similar to Moses’ Levitical slaughter because both men acted on their own initiative, but pretended

that God had directed them in their actions.

Castruccio's rejection of Christianity is all the more apparent in the maxims he is made to speak at the end of the *Vita*, all culled from antiquity, mainly (thirty-one of thirty-four) from Diogenes' *Lives of the Famous Philosophers*. Strauss points out that the sayings attributed by Machiavelli to Castruccio actually belong to the following classical thinkers: one to Aristotle, four to Bion, a pupil of Theodorus, fifteen to Aristippus, and eleven to the Cynic Diogenes. The second last saying belongs to Dante's *Inferno* (21). Strauss concludes, not unjustly, that the sayings are intended to characterize Castruccio as a man who believes that all right is conventional, not "natural" (1958 224, 1970 9-10).¹³¹ But it is Castruccio's silence on Christianity, and Machiavelli's echoing of certain biblical incidents, that gives us Castruccio's perspective on the religion.

We can begin our discussion of Castruccio's rejection of Christianity by looking at Machiavelli's attributed sayings to Castruccio, and specifically how Machiavelli rewrites them, as Strauss has astutely observed. For example, the ancient maxim speaking about "the festivals of our gods" is changed by Castruccio to say "the festivals of our saints," an appropriate change considering that Italy is a Christian society. When one of the ancient philosophers says that he prefers to die like Socrates, Castruccio instead says that he would prefer to die like Caesar. Strauss further points out that Bion, the ancient atheist, actually repents his offences against the divine on his death bed, whereas Castruccio, on

¹³¹ Following the postmodern/poststructuralist flux, today we would substitute "constructed" for "conventional." Sumberg goes so far as to say that Castruccio might be regarded as a Cynic because the sayings are largely those of Cynics. Furthermore, Castruccio's family name, Castracani, "suggests a military-camp dog and a dog is the symbol of the Cynics" (37). Also, Sumberg points out that the sixth saying "equates dogs and philosophers" (37). But Sumberg also admits that Castruccio is political, thrives on glory, and so on, all manners and qualities opposed by the Cynics.

his death bed, speaks of *fortuna* five times, not once mentioning God. Castruccio also mentions this world but not the next, as does Machiavelli when narrating in his own name, who also mentions *fortuna* eight times, but never God (Strauss 1958 224-225).

Machiavelli's narration of the storm on the boat is unquestionably reminiscent of Jesus' miracle of stilling the storm.¹³² In the three gospel narratives, the disciples are exceedingly afraid, a fear that is regarded as arising out of lack of faith, and are rebuked by Jesus. The narratives are clear: faith in Christ disarms fear. The incident as reported in the *Vita*, however, overturns the conclusions of the gospel narratives, for here, Castruccio is rebuked for being fearful, an apparent contradiction to what Castruccio says about fear. Shortly after Machiavelli reports Castruccio's maxim that "men ought to try everything and fear nothing," Machiavelli reports that Castruccio was "frightened . . . very much" by a storm when he was travelling by sea. Castruccio's admonition of the man who had reproved the tyrant was that "each man values his life as much as it is worth" (543). The likely explanation for the contradiction is that fear must be directed against natural dangers as opposed to political or social ones. That is, one cannot oppose forces of nature, but one can oppose human forces. Nowhere in the *Vita* does Castruccio show concern for the other-world, or for his soul, but strictly for the state and for the life of glory, leading Sumberg to declare that the figure of Castruccio is the beginning of "the road to the materialist doctrine that there is nothing but body" (35).

Machiavelli's ideal prince is one whose life is dedicated strictly to the service of the state; in Machiavelli's political world, no separation between the private and the

¹³²Mt. 8:23-27, Mk. 4:36-41, Lk. 8:22-25.

public worlds is possible for the public man, to the extent that Machiavelli has Castruccio rejecting the most basic form of private life, remaining a bachelor and childless in order to have him become the progenitor of a new and stable political order, an accomplishment of more worth, in Machiavelli's view, for the political founder than of being the progenitor of children. Also, not having children, Castruccio can then pass his principality on to his adopted son Pagolo, without having to kill him off, a possibility he would have had to entertain had Castruccio fathered children of his own. Nevertheless, Castruccio leaves the world referring to Pagolo as "figliuolo mio" and of "al sangue nostro" (O 626).¹³³

If the writing of history, as Machiavelli argues, is intended as a guide for the future (D 2. Pr.), then Castruccio's history, as Machiavelli narrates it, is intended as an exemplum for future princes. Castruccio becomes the perfect example of Machiavellism proper, but not of English Machiavellism, that is, not of the Machiavellism that caused the birth of the Machiavel. Following this pattern of thinking, *Tamburlaine* and *Henry V* are Marlowe's and Shakespeare's versions of Machiavelli's *Vita di Castruccio Castracani*, although I am not suggesting that the English playwrights had read the biography, only that they had understood Machiavelli's manner of thinking and used it in order to expose both its positive and negative ramifications.¹³⁴ With these remarks in mind, we now turn

¹³³In his very interesting article, Michael Evans argues that Castruccio is concerned not with the state but with his own personal glory only. Evans rejects the thesis that Castruccio is Machiavelli's exemplary prince, but argues that the *Vita* was simply an exercise in humanist rhetoric attempted in order to gain employment, the writing of the *Istorie Fiorentine*. A similar, even more blunt argument is made by Wootton who argues that "Machiavelli is amusing himself by portraying "Machiavellism" in its most blatantly immoral form" (xxvii). It is ironic that Wootton at the same time as he argues that the *Vita* is a "satire" says that Machiavelli's true views are to be found in chapter eight of *Il Principe*. It seems to me that Castruccio behaves very much in the same way Machiavelli recommends in this chapter.

¹³⁴Again, I reiterate that we lack evidence regarding Marlowe's and Shakespeare's *specific* readings of Machiavelli, although it is more than likely that they did read at least some Machiavelli, as my chapter earlier tried to explicate.

to these plays in order to learn their forms of Machiavellism.

Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*: The God-Man Staged

Power is will as willing out beyond itself, precisely in that way to come to itself, to find and assert itself in the circumscribed simplicity of its essence.... (Heidegger *Nietzsche* 1.64)

3.1. Introduction

To the vast majority of those to whom his name means anything at all, it commemorates a militarist who perpetrated as many horrors in the span of twenty-four years as the last five Assyrian kings perpetrated in a hundred and twenty. . . . The crack-brained megalomania of [a] homicidal madman whose one idea is to impress the imagination of mankind with a sense of his military power by a hideous abuse of it. . . . (Toynbee Iv.500)

Toynbee is correct: Timur was a butcher, "perhaps the greatest artist in destruction known in the savage annals of mankind" (Fisher 1938 1. 405 qtd. In Thomas and Tydeman 71).¹³⁵

But this is not how the tyrant was always perceived, especially in the European mind of his contemporaries, all the way up to the eighteenth century. After he defeated the Turks in 1402, the West regarded him as a mirror for kings, an archetypal prince without flaws, and as the saviour of the Latin, Christian world from the heathen East. Adam Knobler argues that "the brief furor over Timur came at a time of great political tension between the Muslim and Christian worlds. Internal squabbling among European princes opened up the possibility—perhaps even the need—to search outside Europe for a possible saviour"

¹³⁵Because of the different transliterations and corruptions of his name, I will use the name Timur to refer to the historical man as characterized by present day historians. During the Renaissance, Timur was referred to as Tamerlano, Tamerlane, Tamburlaine, and a number of other variations of the name. For the sake of consistency, when referring to his Renaissance name, I will simply follow Marlowe's example and call him Tamburlaine.

(1995 348-349). Both Charles VI of France and Henry IV of England wrote Timur with great glee, thanking him for his amity towards Christian merchants in the Timurid territories, and congratulating him on his defeat of Bajazeth (Knobler 1995 343-344).¹³⁶ The furor sometimes reached exaggerated proportions, with exuberant accounts of Timur's exploits appearing in Europe, which was ready to see Timur as a secret "Christian who shared Latin animosity toward Islam and its rulers" (Knobler 2000 4).¹³⁷ Knobler points out that Thomas Walsingham and Adam of Usk went so far as to write that Timur and his forces, upon their recapture of Jerusalem, had converted to Christianity en masse, and even began wearing red crosses (2000 4 and 1995 344). This fiction is similar to that disseminated by John Foxe, although Foxe did not extend his claim to include Timur's supposed conversion to Christianity, but simply that the Tartar was an agent of God whose purpose was to mete out justice for the cruelty inflicted upon the Christians by the Ottoman infidels. The French chroniclers also wrote about Timur, but resisted including such elaborate stories (Knobler 1995 344). Marlowe, well aware of the glee accorded Timur, and well aware of the potential power of the image of such a man in a work of drama, also turns to the history of the potentate, refusing to see him as a Christian saviour, but, rather simply as a ruler who practices with full force the ideals of

¹³⁶ Adam Knobler points to the following parallel regarding Timur's fate in Western eyes: "Timur served as changing archetype for Western observers for the unknown East. His eventual shift from the status of ally to that of enemy closely parallels Western views during the age of colonialism, where the uncivilized "other" came to be looked upon with suspicion: a far cry from being the saviour of Christendom, who defeated the dreaded enemies of the West in 1402, and gave new hope to the Latin world" (1995 349). In keeping with Marlowe's name for him, and for ease of reference, I will refer to the Ottoman emperor as Bajazeth, although his name is spelled and pronounced in a variety of ways by different writers.

¹³⁷ This quotation comes from a manuscript of Professor Knobler's article, "Timur the (Terrible/Tartar) Trope: A Case of Repositioning in Popular Literature and History," forthcoming in the November issue of *Medieval Encounters*. Professor Knobler was kind enough to provide his manuscript to a complete stranger.

rulership necessary to the maintenance of the state, but not necessarily to the maintenance of a moral order, least of all a Christian moral order. Marlowe uses the history of the Tartar tyrant in order to test out Machiavellian precepts and, to advance his arguments, he continues the practice of his English compatriots, using Machiavelli's "tropes and topics," essentially adopting Machiavelli's "rhetorical approach to politics."¹³⁸ Marlowe was able to catapult his play to success partly because of his ability to portray clearly a man who represented violent political change, depicting "the Eastern world as an exotic place of incessant political upheaval" (Bevington 1989 6), and partly because Machiavellism had raised "the spectre of the Secular State" (Raab 61), especially because Constantinople had fallen to the Muslims in 1453, and the Turkish threat to Europe was strong (Bevington 1989 6). Marlowe, like Machiavelli, rethought the relationship between the moral and political orders.¹³⁹

3.2. Timur Europeanized

Marlowe embraces Machiavelli's belief that, in Voegelin's words, "the mediaeval *Christianitas* was falling apart into the Church and the national states," a turn of events resulting in the inability of "national interests [to] be effectively subordinated to the general interest" (145). Machiavelli's view is itself derived from his humanist predecessors, who had accepted the revitalized political views of the thirteenth century,

¹³⁸ Kahn (1994 xi, 4), although she is making a general statement, not referring to Marlowe specifically.

¹³⁹ This statement will be much qualified in a later discussion on politics and morality. Suffice it to say for now that neither Machiavelli nor Marlowe was immoral in his view of politics, at least not in my opinion.

views that “marked the great turning-point in medieval political thought,” the idea of the state “located within an overtly political and this-worldly dimension,” essentially secular and fashioned after the rediscovered political philosophy of Aristotle’s *Politics* and *Ethics* (Canning 341, 360).¹⁴⁰ Territorial states began to emerge, as did proto-nationalism (Canning 349-351), and after them a new style of historiography in Italy, beginning with Bruni’s *History of the People of Florence*, which concentrated its discussions on the city itself, making the city the protagonist in historical writings.

The rediscovery of Aristotle gave the medieval mind the impetus to argue for a nature of man that is political, not divinely created. The acceptance of this view did not necessarily mean the rejection of divine creation; God was still the creator of nature. Aristotelianism, however, allowed medieval thinkers to classify man’s different aspects, with political life categorized in a specifically political dimension (Canning 361). The distinction between church and state led to a variety of conclusions regarding the position of the church in civic matters. On the one hand, Aquinas differentiated between the church’s essential spiritual nature and the state’s political nature, but maintained that a valid role can be played by the Church in jurisdictional matters. On the other hand, Marsilius of Padua argued that only the state possessed jurisdiction in political matters (Canning 362). The humanists, aware of the role of the Church in history, took Marsilius’ view a step further, ignored the Church as a religious force, and turned the pope into a prince like any other prince. History—or historiography—which had been appropriated by Christianity, returned to its secular roots, paying homage to Livy and company. With the

¹⁴⁰Note also Pocock’s conclusion regarding Machiavelli’s break from the Medieval worldview: Machiavelli “departed from the medieval concept of a theologically determined human nature” (316-317).

city as the protagonist in history, and its leader as the dictator¹⁴¹ of its destiny, the discussion of history, politics, and morals became largely this-worldly,¹⁴² with allowance in some circles for the side-by-side existence of scholasticism and humanism (Canning 366).

Machiavelli, as we saw, also learned from his humanist predecessors their ideal of the paradigmatic ruler, or more precisely, of the prototypic ruler. Not satisfied with the humanists' model ruler, Machiavelli was to reshape him in his own, idealized version.¹⁴³ This prototypic ruler had been fashioned after the historical Timur, and altered to suit the idealistic society the Europeans wanted to forge but could not because of the constraints placed on politics by the Church.

To some extent, the Timurid ideal ruler had already penetrated European thought through diplomatic missions, acquainting the West "with the Order of God on which the Mongol imperial expansion was based, that is with the principle, 'In Heaven there is God, the eternal, the most high; on Earth Genghis Khan is the only and supreme lord'" (154).¹⁴⁴ Machiavelli's predecessor, Poggio Bracciolini, furthered the acquaintance, firmly

¹⁴¹I do not intend for the word to carry the negative connotations associated with it in this century, but simply to mean he who gives commands, or legislates, either good or bad legislation.

¹⁴²I do not mean to say that "other-worldly" discussions did not take place, or that there were not debates between this-worldly and other-worldly views, but that other-worldly discussions no longer carried the import they once did.

¹⁴³What I mean by "prototypic" is a ruler who enters the political stage without any forces, moral, religious, or otherwise, dictating to him any manner of action necessary to carry out his tasks.

¹⁴⁴Voegelin also states, "we must consider it a possibility that the Mongol ideas regarding the imperial position influenced, as one element anyway, the corresponding conception of Dante's *Monarchia*" (154). More research would have to be conducted to verify this intriguing statement. There is inconsistency in scholarly references to Timur. He is called Mongolian, Tartar, Scythian, and sometimes by other adjectives. I have maintained whatever adjective is used in direct quotations, but always the reference is to Timur.

establishing Timur's fame in Italy. The fame that Poggio insisted upon for the great actors of history, a fame that cannot be had without the historian, is that which inevitably dissolved the "Christian concern about the destiny of the soul in eternal beatitude," and replaced it instead with the "concern about the intramundane meaning of life" (Voegelin 157) or, more simply, glory. Voegelin summarizes the new worldview as follows: "The intramundane after-life of fame is substituted for the life beyond" (157). The new hero, as presented by Poggio, is one who is a conqueror at the same time as he is a builder; Timur conquers cities, but he also builds a new, sumptuous one, Samarkand, but only in order to symbolize his glory. This kind of hero expresses the new drive for meaning found only in the newly discovered "self-expression of the individual" in whom "the meaning of power and politics is demoniacally narrowed down" (Voegelin 161). Voegelin, recognizing that this expression of power is to be found in Machiavelli also, quickly tempers it by emphasizing that in Machiavelli's conception of power "the conqueror and his *virtù* are already toned down by the limitation of the career of the Prince to the salvation of his nation" (161).

After Poggio, the life of Timur became even more exotic in the Western mind, resulting in the creation of the literary genus, the *Vita Tamerlani*, whose originator was none other than Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pope Pius II, 1458-1464), a reading that Ellis-Fermor had also arrived at some years earlier.¹⁴⁵ The *Vita Tamerlani* has typically included the following elements:¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵Voegelin (161-162). Ellis-Fermor concurs: Pius' account of Timur "is summed up in one of its most representative forms" (1930, 1966 27).

¹⁴⁶These are taken from Voegelin (162).

- i Timur is of lowly origin;
- ii Emphasis on his early skill in winning followers at home;
- iii A history of his expansion from Transoxiana to Anatolia;
- iv A history of his victory at Ankara and the fate of Bajazeth;
- v An account of his notions about military discipline and his technique of siege;
- vi A history of his second expansion into Syria and Egypt;
- vii An account of his cruelty in conquest, his tricks in gaining an advantage, and his systematic use of terror to weaken the opposing army;
- viii "An anecdote in which Timur designates himself as a superhuman force, as the *ira Dei* and the *ultor peccatorum*";
- ix A comparison with Hannibal;¹⁴⁷
- x The enrichment of Samarkand.

This order, as will become clear, corresponds with the life of Tamburlaine as written by Marlowe who, in Part One, recognizing the *Vita Tamerlani* as a myth, follows it precisely and represents it in all its splendour. Part Two of Marlowe's adaptation of the *Vita Tamerlani* becomes not so much a denunciation of the myth, or a retreat from it, as an enhancement—even a humanization—of it. The fact is that because of this political tradition around the life of Timur, any further dramatization of it becomes a contribution

¹⁴⁷That Machiavelli was impressed by the image of Hannibal is a well established truth. Marlowe, however, learns from Perondinus that Tamburlaine and Hannibal were "both physically and in other respects. . . very similar." Tamburlaine was cunning, untrustworthy, and liked to commit atrocities. He was a man not given to reflection, preferring to rely on savagery, both against the enemy and his own soldiers, especially so he could keep the booty to himself. Perondinus concludes that "it was his [Tamburlaine's] wish to be seen as a brutal exponent of warfare, to be untiring in every enterprise he embarked on, to be able to impose his bestial yoke alike on those he attacked as on those against whom he stirred up the storms of war, or even against those who were enjoying undisturbed freedom" (118). Cambini also compares Tamburlaine to Hannibal, both in looks and in disposition (130).

to the political debate—an ideological gesture—of which Marlowe was well aware.

Voegelin correctly argues that the *Vita Tamerlani* “was not the writing of critical history, but. . . the forming of historical materials into an image that would satisfy a type” (164), as Zanobi Buondelmonti’s letter to Machiavelli (no. 254, 6 September 1520), thanking him for the gift of the *Life of Castruccio Castracani*, and critiquing Machiavelli’s use of ancient philosophical sayings, clearly attests to. Zanobi’s critique of the inclusion of the sayings falsely attributed to Castruccio were not a denunciation of Machiavelli, but a gentle admonishment of him, telling him that he could have made the sayings suit the character better; that is, Machiavelli should have better unified his technique of converting life cases into myths in such a way as to illustrate better the concepts of force and decision-making in action—Machiavelli could have written a better drama. Voegelin’s position is that “the experience of crushing power [sharpens] awareness of the fact that an existential force beyond good and evil manifests itself in the order of a polity,” and that the crushing power finally establishes itself as a creator and maintainer of “a new human order” (165). Voegelin concludes that the humanist historians responded to this experience by elevating it into a mythical image of which the *Vita Tamerlani* is one. In Voegelin’s words, “The *virtù* of the conquering prince became the source of order; and since the Christian, transcendental order of existence had become a dead letter for the Italian thinkers of the fifteenth century, the *virtù ordinata* of the prince, the only ordering force experienced as real, acquired human-divine, heroic proportions” (165). The figure of Timur became the emblem of “power in the raw” (155). That Machiavelli had “diligentemente” read Poggio, as he unambiguously declares (O 632), and that he was clearly aware of Pius II’s policies and (very likely) writings, is clear

from Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*.¹⁴⁸ In his political works, including in *The Vita di Castruccio Castracani*, as well as in his *Istorie Fiorentine*, especially with the Michele di Lando episode (3.16-18), Machiavelli responds to the humanists' call—while also manipulating it to suit his ideas—creating a heroic, idealized prince no different from Achilles, or Moses, or Tamburlaine.¹⁴⁹ This new prince gives Machiavelli the latitude he needs for his new way of narrating history and redefining political thought and practice.

Machiavelli is a myth-maker par excellence who also believes that anybody could accomplish the task of ruling as long as that person follows Machiavelli's precepts for successful rule; one's origins or "class" are not necessary for rulership. But Machiavelli wanted an Italian man to save Italy, thus creating an unlikely hero out of Castruccio Castracani, whose biographical similarities to the *Vita Tamerlani* are striking. I will paraphrase those summarized by Voegelin:¹⁵⁰

- i An infant whose origins are unknown is found in the garden by the sister of Antonio Castracani, a clergyman;
- ii Castracani adopts the boy and tries to inculcate in him his (the father's)

¹⁴⁸Pius thought of only benefiting Christians and helping the Church, and died while trying to arouse Christians against the Turks. One wonders if he did not adopt this policy partly in honour of Tamburlaine's defeat of the Turks in 1402. Machiavelli discusses Pius in *Istorie Fiorentine* 6.36-38, 7.4, 6, 9.

¹⁴⁹Although there is no direct evidence to support the claim, the similarities between Machiavelli's biography of Castruccio and the humanists' biographies of Tamburlaine are such that one cannot but take seriously Voegelin's claim that the image of Timur, as formed in the humanistic literature of the preceding generation, served to influence Machiavelli's image of his idealized prince (155). When I first read Marlowe's play, I was astounded by the similarities between his Tamburlaine and Machiavelli's Castruccio. It is after I began speculating that Marlowe may have based some of his ideas about the ideal ruler on Castruccio that I came across Voegelin's article. And although Marlowe may not have based his Tamburlaine on Machiavelli's idealized prince, he certainly must have been in dialogue with the Italian thinker. For a clear discussion of the Michele di Lando narrative in the *Istorie Fiorentine*, see Mark Phillips' "A Barefoot Boy. . . ."

¹⁵⁰Machiavelli's most clear statement about this desire is the penultimate chapter of *Il Principe*, but again, Michele di Lando represents the man who overcomes class and rules for the benefit of his city.

- own ideals, including the effort to educate him as a priest;
- iii At the age of fourteen, the boy rejects theological studies and takes up the art of arms;
 - iv The boy surpasses his comrades in his new studies;
 - v The boy acquires a charisma and commands confidence and loyalty from his friends;
 - vi Francesco Guinigi, a nobleman, discovers Castruccio after observing his conduct with his friends;
 - vii Guinigi persuades Castruccio's father to entrust the boy's future to him;
 - viii At the age of eighteen, Castruccio begins his political and military life, successfully expanding Lucca's domain;
 - ix *Fortuna* cuts short Castruccio's life in the midst of his most promising career; after a military victory, he catches a chill and dies from a fever.

Voegelin points out that Castruccio's life is the combined biographies of Moses and Cyrus, with adaptations intended to suit the Italian ideals Machiavelli envisions in his hero.

The ideals Machiavelli envisions in his prince are those that Tamburlaine never tires of repeating. Machiavelli sums them up in his sketch of Castruccio:

Niuno fu mai più audace a entrate ne' pericoli, ne più cauto a uscirne; e usava di dire che gli uomini debbono tentare ogni cosa, né di alcuna sbigottire, e che Dio è amatore degli uomini forti, perché si vede che sempre gastigagli impotenti con i potenti. (O 626).

No one was ever more bold in risking danger, nor more reluctant to leave it. He used to say that men ought to try everything and fear nothing since God loved strong men and always punished the weak by means of the strong. (PM 542)

This sentence, ending the narration of Castruccio's life and beginning the verbal display of his political wisdom, introduces "the element of *ira Dei* that we know from the *Vita Tamerlani*, the victorious prince becomes the *ultor peccatorum* . . . [Machiavelli accords] to power and *virtù* the meaning of a providential order of politics" (Voegelin 168). It is this notion of the furor of God that consistently appears in all the writings either concerning Timur or that are influenced by his life. The phrase, in its various manifestations, appears both directly and indirectly in the different literatures. Of interest to us specifically is Marlowe's play and how it uses the history of Timur to generate the themes with which it is concerned.

3.3. Marlowe's *Vita Tamerlani*

According to Golombek, Marlowe's play poses two problems: 1) To what extent do historical facts justify Marlowe's portrayal of Timur; and 2) Who originated the interpretation of Timur as an instrument of divine will (31)? Golombek, in opposition to Ellis-Fermor, who wrongly argues that Marlowe's Timur is "remote from the original" (1930, 1966 17), declares "that Marlowe was faithful, if not to the facts, at least to the impressions and attitudes of Timur's contemporaries [even] to the official chronicle, the *Zafarnama* (*Book of Victory*) of Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, [which] does not spare the harsh details of Timur's military campaigns" (31), even reporting the brutality of the massacres

at Isfahan in 1387 and at Damascus in 1401 with remarkable candour.¹⁵¹ At Isfahan, we are told, each military unit was assigned a quota of heads, but the massacre continued even after the quotas were met. Seventy thousand heads were heaped up to form a "minaret," not unlike those that Timur formed in other cities he razed. These minarets served as warnings to potential rebels (Golombek 31-32).¹⁵²

Marlowe's concept of Tamburlaine as the Scourge of God is not new, coming from his sources, and had already existed outside Europe, even in the highly defamatory Arabic biography of Timur by Ibn Arabshah, written in 1436-1437, in which the author declares that "Wherever he turned, victory led him, fortune was his forager, destiny favoured him, fate aided him, the will of God drove him, the purpose of God, the mighty and great, went before him in destroying men and countries" (118, trans. Sanders, qtd. in Golombek 32). Ibn Arabshah adds that Timur's spiritual guide, Shaykh Zaynuddin of Khwaf, stated the very principle to Timur himself: "We teach [kings concerning justice]...but they do not suffer themselves to be taught, and so we have appointed you Lord over them" (22, trans. Sanders, qtd. in Golombek 32). Even the respected historian Ibn Khaldun refers to Timur as "the sultan of the universe and the ruler of the world, and...that there has [never] appeared among men from Adam until this epoch a ruler like you" (36). Relating Timur's carnage, Ibn Khaldun repeats the Qur'an's dictum that "Allah is the master of His [own] affairs," implying what the latter part of the dictum explicitly states, that "most people do not know it (that God is the master of His [own] affairs)" (Ibn Khaldun 46, S.12.21). The tone of Ibn Khaldun's statement indicates that Ibn Khaldun is

¹⁵¹Scholarly consensus now is that Marlowe was fairly accurate in his portrayal of the Tartar tyrant.

¹⁵²See also Jean Aubin's seminal article, "Comment Tamerlan Prenait les Villes."

not pleased with Timur's conduct, that there is no reason for it, at least to the extent that Timur carries out his butcheries, but that its rationale must exist in God. This form of reasoning also suggests that Ibn Khaldun believes Timur to be the Scourge of God, referring to him as "one of the foremost of the kings and of their pharaohs," where "pharaohs" typically connotes "pride, insolence, audacity, and tyranny" (Fischel 117).¹⁵³ As if to make certain that his readers understand the implications of his statements, three paragraphs later, after characterizing Timur as "highly intelligent and perspicacious," Ibn Khaldun explicitly writes, "He [Timur] is one who is favoured by Allah—the power is Allah's, and he grants it to whom he chooses of his creatures" (47). In Renaissance Europe, especially in Machiavelli and his followers, Allah is replaced by *Fortuna*; and the Persian sources typically refer to Timur as *sahib qiran*, "the master of the happy constellation" or "the lord of the fortunate conjunction of planets" (Fischel 50). Other sources confirm that Timur viewed himself as the Scourge of God, especially apparent through the architecture he commissioned, including the monumental but incomplete imperial palace, Aq Saray (White Palace), whose arch spanned 22.3 metres and could be seen from a distance of 42 kilometres (Golombek 32-33). In the vestibule of the palace, one could still read the Qur'anic inscription in Kufic characters, or a geometric design of Kufic letters forming the phrase *almulk lillah* (the Dominion is God's) repeated over and over.

In his sources, Marlowe was able to read what the Arabic historians just told us, that "for the most part cruel kings and bloody tyrants are the Ministers of God" because "by them it hath pleased Him to chastise the wicked, perfecting and confirming to

¹⁵³In quoting Ibn Khaldun here, I used Fischel's literal translation as he gives it in his note and commentary. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get access to Ibn Khaldun's original work.

Himself such as love and fear Him . . . (Fortescue 82).¹⁵⁴ More interesting is the fact that Mexia also claims, à la Job, that God does double duty by having his scourges on the earth, who “approveth and trieth the just.”¹⁵⁵ Notwithstanding this claim, these tyrants shall not “escape the heavy judgment of God. For necessary is it that examples of ill happen, but woe be unto him by whom it happeneth.” God will surely punish the tyrants, and “Hell and damnation is certainly allotted” them. Also, they typically die “of some violent and ignominious death . . .” (83). This evaluation of Timur was repeated by many Renaissance authors, a fact from which Marlowe could not escape, and which clearly intrigued him because it remained within the providential historical domain, concluding that although these men served a greater purpose—God’s—they are nevertheless predestined to be destroyed. Marlowe was also to read in Fortescue’s rendition of Mexia the grudging admission of Tamburlaine’s cruelty: “Whence assuredly it cannot be said but that he was very cruel, though otherwise adorned with many rare virtues. But it is to be supposed that God stirred him up an instrument to chastise these princes, these proud and wicked nations” (88). This tempered judgment by the historian is displaced unto the tyrant himself who, in answering a Genoan merchant’s question of why the emperor was so cruel as to slaughter women and children, Tamburlaine, with “most furious wrath and ire, his face red and fiery, his eyes all flaming with burning sparkes, as it were blazing out of every side,” answered: “Thou supposest me to be a man, but thou too much abasest me, for none other am I but the wrath and vengeance of God, and ruin of the world” (88-89).

¹⁵⁴ Because Marlowe’s known sources have been, finally, collected neatly in one volume, and because on their own the sources are rarely found outside major libraries, I will refer simply to the sources’ authors and the page numbers in Thomas and Tydeman’s volume where the material is found.

¹⁵⁵ Although Mexia does not refer to Job, he does refer to “the Scriptures in many places . . .” (82).

Similarly, Cambini (130) and Whetstone (95) narrate this episode, but elsewhere Whetstone makes the direct evaluative statement that "Tamburlaine the Great, surnamed *flagellum dei*," the scourge of God (91), again concluding that Tamburlaine is foredoomed because he is still only the agent of God.¹⁵⁶ This split vision of men allowed to be perfect Machiavellians, seemingly by their own powers, only to be surrounded by a greater power they cannot see—Death—makes them part of a perverse, almost ironic tragic—Machiavellian—vision. I will return to this discussion below.

Perondinus' biography is clearly Marlowe's major source for the history of Tamburlaine, and the one most conducive to theatrical application. It is a fairly complete biography, divided into episodes, and allowing the characters to be painted with elaborate strokes. Bajazeth's humiliation at the hands of Tamburlaine, for example, is sympathetic. The minor characters Perondinus sketches provide Marlowe with the hints he needs to develop his own minor characters, such as Cosroe, Mycetes, the Soldan, and Calyphas.¹⁵⁷ This history of the Tartar tyrant is also closest in its application of humanist sentiments, and is all too likely well versed in Machiavelli's historical and philosophical attitudes.¹⁵⁸

In his biography, Perondinus stresses the importance of "Fortune's decree" in Tamburlaine's astronomical rise to power (97), and compares the Tartar to "Alexander the Great, another man guided by Fortune," even insisting that Tamburlaine was "mere shepherd and poorest of the poor" (97). His description of Tamburlaine, both intellectual

¹⁵⁶ Cambini writes that Tamburlaine scolded the Genoan merchant with the words that he (Tamburlaine) is the "the wrath of God sent to plague and punish the world" (130).

¹⁵⁷ Both Ellis-Fermor (1930 40) and Cunningham (14) discuss this aspect of Perondinus.

¹⁵⁸ Cunningham concludes that "Perondinus is, by implication, putting Marlowe in touch with Italian humanistic writing" (14). This is well and good, but it is a conclusion that assumes Marlowe was not in touch with the humanist writings directly, a conclusion that, even if not yet proven, cannot be drawn.

and physical (98), is nothing short of myth-making, going so far as to claim that his name was changed by his companions to "Timur Gutt, which in the Scythian language means *Sword of Fortune*" (98).¹⁵⁹ This is untrue, as untrue as Fulgosius' claim that "Temir. . . in the Scythian language means 'the thigh'. . . [and] 'lang'. . . indicates someone crippled in the hip. . ."(124).¹⁶⁰ Actually, Timur means "it shall shake." According to legend, upon Timur's birth, his father took the child and the mother to pay their respects to Sheik Shemsu-Deen who, upon their arrival, was in the midst of reading the 67th Surat of the Qur'an, which considers Dominion, Lordship, Sovereignty over the visible world:¹⁶¹ "Do you feel secure that He Who is in Heaven will not cause you to be swallowed up by the earth if it shakes [tamurru]." The Sheikh turned to the father and declared, "we have named your son Timur" (Markham xiv).¹⁶²

Aside from Tamburlaine's alignment to fortune, Perondinus has Tamburlaine feel "pity for the [Greek] Emperor thus cast on the waves of adverse fortune" because, Perondinus writes, "it is something deep in nature, that the afflictions of the unfortunate often attract the minds of others towards a sense of mercy, as if seeing in such suppliants a shared concern" (105). The shared concern Perondinus means is that of putting a halt to the Muslim expansion into Europe, causing "the utter destruction of that unyielding and senseless Ottoman. For it was his [Tamburlaine's] glorious and fated destiny to subjugate all Asia" (105). In narrating his history, Perondinus keeps this particular destiny in mind,

¹⁵⁹ Later, Perondinus admits that Timur had a visible limp because "one of his feet. . . was misshapen" (118).

¹⁶⁰ Fulgosius is correct, however, in that "lang" means "lame."

¹⁶¹ The Qur'anic word *Mulk* has all these connotations, but always in reference to the physical, not the heavenly, world where the word *Malakut* is used. Both words are derived from the same root.

¹⁶² I have given a literal translation of the Qur'anic verse (S 67:16).

writing of the pillage and rape of Armenia in a cold, objective manner (105-106).¹⁶³

Not unlike Machiavelli and the humanist historians before him, Marlowe also sees in Tamburlaine “a challenge to the political orthodoxies of Western Europe” (Bevington 1989 7). Among his sources for the play, Marlowe had also read Whetstone, who comments about Machiavelli throughout his narration of Tamburlaine, for example writing disapprovingly that “Machiavel” is one who prescribes policies “unseeming a Christian prince” (91). If he had not already done so, then surely through Whetstone’s comments Marlowe would have thought about Machiavelli.

The question remains, to what extent is Marlowe indebted to Machiavelli? Although we cannot answer the question with complete satisfaction because the documented evidence we have regarding Marlowe’s reading habits, travels, and social interactions is not abundant, and some of it is circumstantial, we can entertain certain suppositions, the first of which is that the Italian historians’ accounts of the life of Timur—which were among the “one hundred [available] Renaissance sources”—were influential both on the English understanding of the history of Timur and on the Machiavellian understanding of the ideal prince.¹⁶⁴ We also know that Marlowe likely read Pope Pius II’s account of Tamburlaine found in *Asiae Europaeque elegantiss. descriptio*, available to Marlowe at Corpus Christi, a book that Machiavelli probably read as well, and in which is found the phrase “Ira dei ego sum & orbis vastitas” (I am the

¹⁶³This is according to the English translation.

¹⁶⁴Godshalk (1974 105), who adds that Tamburlaine’s career was narrated “from varying points of view.” The influence on Machiavelli is discussed by Voegelin, as we saw above.

wrath of God and the desolation of the world).¹⁶⁵ For Marlowe, the “colossal figure” of Tamburlaine, which had “impinged on Elizabethan thought and sensibility at many levels,” allowed him to explore the relationship between “destiny and human will, providence and history” (Cunningham 10-11). It is also true that no two productions of the play have agreed on whether *Tamburlaine* glorifies or denigrates Machiavellian *virtù*, or whether the play is moral, immoral, or amoral (Leslie qtd. in Cunningham 84). At the cost of repeating myself from Chapter One, and weighing the evidence, we can conclude that, on balance, Marlowe was in contact with the Secretary’s writings, and was intrigued by their potential social and dramatic applications, especially if, as D’Andrea asserts, that Marlowe’s Prologue to *The Jew of Malta* actually contains a phrase from one of Machiavelli’s lesser read works, *The Art of War* (Book 7).¹⁶⁶ Machiavellism, as Marlowe correctly understood it, asserted itself especially as the reinvigoration of earthly ideals over against the “ascetic conception of the Middle Ages,” which had almost irretrievably bound humanity to the otherworldly realm. Machiavelli had completely severed theology from politics, summing it up in his famous phrase that he loved his country more than his soul (letter 321, 16 April 1527).¹⁶⁷ Marlowe, therefore, wrote Tamburlaine as

¹⁶⁵Bakeless convincingly discusses this possibility (1.223). The stress in the phrase is placed on the “I” and affirms Tamburlaine’s image of himself as God-like. Bakeless also lists some of the other important books that Marlowe likely had access to, including some of those found in the library of Marlowe’s *alma mater*.

¹⁶⁶D’Andrea’s article (1960) is assiduously presented. D’Andrea’s thesis is not far-fetched, especially if we remember that Machiavelli’s *Arte della guerra* was translated into English in 1560 and contained a five page dedication to Elizabeth. Of course, there are some scholars who deny Machiavelli’s influence on Marlowe, including Kocher (202), whose argument is contradictory and therefore unconvincing, discounting Machiavellian influence on Marlowe even as he claims that Marlowe “calls on Machiavelism [sic]” (49).

¹⁶⁷To say that Machiavelli severed theology from politics is not to say that he severed religion from politics, as our discussion of this issue in Chapter Two details. A number of scholars have recognized Machiavelli’s importance in this regard, including Praz, from whom the quotation is derived (131).

Machiavelli's idealized prince, a prince of heroic proportions, with an iron-clad will, whose sole virtue is glory for its own sake, who needs to prove himself superior to the world, and who believes that he cannot be judged but by the standards he sets himself, which are the standards of the needs of politics. This is the idealized hero of mythical proportions, one who properly belongs, if not to the divine realm, then to the semi-divine, but surely not to the human, realm. Marlowe understood that Machiavelli had patterned his prince on the career of Timur, and he follows suit, but he also uses Machiavellian theoretical impulses in order to critique both Machiavelli and Timur on their own grounds.¹⁶⁸ Marlowe's Tamburlaine is Machiavelli's Castruccio Castracani, "both Machiavellian prince and Scourge of God" (Golombek 31).¹⁶⁹ Machiavelli likened Castruccio to a "figliuoli di Giove o di qualche altro Dio (son of Jove or some other God)" (O 615); Marlowe likened Tamburlaine to a "fox" and a "lion" (*One* 1.1.31 and 1.2.52). I do not conclude that Marlowe's political philosophy is exemplified in *Tamburlaine*, only that Marlowe is studying some aspects of Machiavellism, even if we were to allow "that Part Two shows disenchantment with it [Machiavellian doctrine]" (Cunningham 16), a conclusion I do not share, as will become apparent below.

Cunningham, after walking a tightrope between the controversial positions that Marlowe was or was not influenced by Machiavelli, admits that "Part Two [of *Tamburlaine*] effects

¹⁶⁸Bevington agrees that Machiavelli "was influenced by the Timur legend, seeing in it a new way of thinking about history," and that Marlowe wrote *Tamburlaine* as "a Machiavellian" (1989 6), although Bevington does not register the qualifications that I make.

¹⁶⁹The likening of Tamburlaine to Castruccio is mine, not Golombek's. Traditionally, Castruccio's *Vita* was appended to *Il Principe*, suggesting that the renowned treatise is a theoretical discussion of the ideal prince, while the *Life* is an exemplification of him. David Wootton discards this theory, arguing instead that the *Vita*, in opposition to *Il Principe*, is a satirical discussion of Machiavellism, and a "shameful strategy" Machiavelli used for landing the job of historian of Florence (xxvii). Although Wootton's theory is interesting, I disagree with it, as I made apparent earlier (note 133).

a transition to a frame of action more directly and notoriously associated with Machiavelli—that of ‘necessary policy,’ here linked with the ‘scourge of God’ theme” (17). In the final analysis, Cunningham argues that “the mythical figure of the sources” is united with “Machiavelli’s own broad reflections on history” in order to force the continually shifting encounter between history as the hand of Providence and as the work of the individual will, between man-as-destined and hero-as-Destiny, between aspiration as *hubris* and as a natural drive, between strife as a perversion and as a normal condition, between man as mortal and as destined for imagined immortality. (16)

He adds that “the play dramatizes these oppositions vividly,” but without resolving them, nonetheless “conveying insistently a sense of man as himself the creator of his own world—a humanistic response to a humanistic tradition, but not reducible to creed or doctrine” (16), but then shifts back to state that Marlowe will become more “closely concerned with Machiavellian political craft,” and that in *Tamburlaine* he is simply “responding. . . to Machiavelli as a source of vigorous ideology” (16-17). Although I disagree with Cunningham that Marlowe will later align himself more with Machiavellian political craft, and taking heed of D’Andrea’s prudent statement (1960 247), I also caution that we must resist the temptation to read Marlowe’s thoughts on Machiavelli in the same manner we read Machiavelli instead of trying to understand how Marlowe interpreted the Italian’s writings. Nonetheless, Cunningham’s statement on the whole is ultimately sound.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Pondering the question of Machiavelli’s influence on Marlowe, Sanders also walks a tightrope, being dismissive and assertive of Marlowe’s Machiavellism at the same time, declaring that “we are. . . dealing here. . . with an ‘influence’ so diffuse and imprecise as to be hardly worth discussing,” adding that “the direct influence of Machiavelli on Marlowe we may, I think, dismiss as a useless, because

I will put forward one more hypothesis that, to my knowledge, has not yet been proposed: Paolo Giovio (Paulus Jovius), who was acquainted with Machiavelli, was read by Marlowe.¹⁷¹ Since Giovio wrote an important biography of Tamburlaine, we can surmise that Machiavelli was well aware of the history of the Scythian tyrant. We can also surmise that Marlowe, upon reading Giovio's account of Tamburlaine, which also has a biographical account of Machiavelli, was prompted to tie the two men—the tyrant in practice, and the philosopher of tyranny—together. Unlike Machiavelli's prince, however, Tamburlaine allows his hubris to get the better of him, for example slaying his son and burning the city in which his wife dies. More than anything, Marlowe depicted the unchanging Machiavellian, the Machiavellian who does not adapt himself to the necessity of the changing circumstances. It is this lack of adaptation that spells the unchanging Machiavellian's personal, if not political, destruction.

3.4. Marlowe and his sources

Regardless of the debate as to which sources Marlowe consulted, two factors remain indisputable, that he synthesized his materials "into a unified play" (Godshalk 1974 105) and that he consulted a number of sources, both English and Latin, and possibly Spanish,

unanswerable, question." Sanders writes this as he admits that, even if Marlowe had not read Machiavelli, "the Machiavel-myth. . . has rubbed off on Marlowe's drama [and that] Machiavelli. . . represents one of the central facts of Elizabethan culture" (61-62).

¹⁷¹ Machiavelli and Giovio probably met during some of the gatherings in the Rucellai gardens. Giovio greatly admired Machiavelli's writings, especially his comedies and the *Istorie Fiorentine*, but he later tempered his admiration for the Secretary. Nonetheless, Giovio had enough respect for Machiavelli to have included him in his *Elogia*. For a brief but valuable discussion of the relationship between the two men, including Machiavelli's influence on Giovio, see Zimmermann's important biography of Giovio (31-32, 92-93, and related notes).

French, and Italian in translation if not in the original.¹⁷² It is also quite possible that Marlowe had access to oral histories of Timur.¹⁷³ The scholarly consensus, as we stated earlier, is that Marlowe owed much of his biographical detail of Tamburlaine to Perondinus' account of the Tartar emperor. The *Vita Tamerlanis* is written in the Italian humanist historiographical tradition, with persistent obsession with the concept of *virtù* (Voegelin 165), making Perondinus' Timur "a being far more instinct with theatrical potential" (Thomas and Tydeman 75). Marlowe, more interested in the exploits of the general, makes little or no use of those parts of the narratives outlining the tyrant's childhood, thus beginning the life of Tamburlaine *in medias res*, even eliminating the details of how Tamburlaine had gained the trust of his comrades early in life, but nonetheless displaying the blind loyalty Tamburlaine has from his followers early in the play (*One.1.2.59-60*).

Marlowe's other major source is the Spaniard Pedro Mexía, whom Marlowe may have read in Spanish, but more likely in the English translations of Fortescue and Whetstone. Significant is the fact that most of the histories of the Tartar emperor repeat what Mexía, and before him Poggio, repeats, that Tamburlaine is in "no respect inferior" to any of the famous captains of the past, not even to Alexander, but that he has been unjustly ignored by historians who have written practically nothing with which "to

¹⁷² Marlowe's sources for this play have been thoroughly discussed by many scholars. There is no need to "reinvent the wheel," especially because no fresh ideas about the sources have been expounded lately. Instead, I will refer to those aspects of the sources useful to the advancement of my thesis, that is, that shed light on Marlowe's ideological stance, especially with respect to his marriage of the mythologized Tamburlaine to the theoretical impulses of Machiavellism. The sources are discussed in Cunningham, Ellis-Fermor, Battenhouse, Bakeless, Seaton, and others. Marlowe's sources have recently been collected and translated or modernised by Thomas and Tydeman. As I stated in note 154, my page references to the sources are to Thomas and Tydeman's wonderful edition.

¹⁷³ Bakeless discusses this possibility (I 231-232).

commend him to posterity" (Mexía 83). Similarly, Cambini tells us that Tamburlaine did not have anyone whose task it was to celebrate the tyrant's life in writing because "God giveth not all things to one man. And also it seemed that his great cruelty which he used toward those that he overcame did not deserve to have his fame celebrated by writing," adding that his cruelty might also be the reason Tamburlaine's successes did not "long remain to his posterity," his sons having lost the empire (131). Whetstone more boldly states that Tamburlaine, who led an army greater than Darius' or Xerxes' (94), deserves more renown in history: "Among the illustrious captains Romans and Grecians, none of their martial acts deserve to be proclaimed with more renown than the conquest and military disciplines of Tamburlaine. But such was the injury of his fortune as no worthy writers undertook his history at large. . . ." (93). This article of contention between Cambini and Whetstone, whether because of the Tartar's cruelty Tamburlaine's fame deserves celebration in history, is the only notable point of ambivalence regarding the tyrant found in most of the biographers. Marlowe clearly recognized and dramatized this theme.

As briefly discussed at the opening of the chapter, there is little doubt that Timur committed some of the most horrible crimes against humanity. The murder of women and children, for example, is recorded by Schiltberger, who says that Timur's cavalry at first refused to trample the children of a city under siege, but the emperor himself began the assault that encouraged his men to follow suit. Schiltberger's account, which may inaccurately refer to Isfahan, is corroborated by other, including Eastern, historians who also describe the construction of minarets built with the skulls of the thousands of victims (Schiltberger 29-30 and endnote on 133 and Aubin). Although Marlowe could not have

read Schiltberger, those sources the playwright did read all discuss the incident recorded by Schiltberger, or at least an incident similar to this one.¹⁷⁴ Mexía reports the sending forth of women and children in white apparel, carrying olive branches, begging for mercy, whom Tamburlaine ordered trampled by his cavalry. Marlowe ignores this episode, instead opting for the virgins only, leaving out the children, likely because the notion of trampling innocent children would have reversed all pity Tamburlaine may have earned from the audience. Marlowe's selective reading cannot be ignored, especially because most of his sources relate the story of the murder of children, with most not excusing it but emphasizing it with the admonishment of Tamburlaine by a Genoan merchant. In fact, most of the sources also describe the infamous colours of the tents with which Tamburlaine chose to signify his level of mercy, or lack thereof, towards his besieged cities, although there is some variation to the narrations.

In Perondinus, the white, red, and black tents he erects to signify the status of his mercy, or lack thereof, towards the city he is about to conquer become only one tent, that of Tamburlaine's headquarters (115). The people sent out with olive branches are described as "boys and girls" only. The Genoan merchant who questions Tamburlaine's actions towards the innocent children is simply an "Italian," but Tamburlaine's answer is little varied: "Tamburlaine scowled and glared at him with flashing eyes: 'Remember, I am the Wrath of the greatest God, and Disaster and Death to a depraved world'" (117). Whetstone also talks about the tents Tamburlaine raised to signify his attitude towards the people he was in the process of conquering, and of the people he trampled, even while they were seeking mercy, with olive branches in their hands, repeating the Genoan

¹⁷⁴As far as we know, Schiltberger's book was first published in the eighteenth century.

merchant's questioning of the general (95), as does Cambini (129-130). Fortescue, as we pointed out earlier, also included this episode from Mexia, but Fortescue changed the coloured tents to "ensigns" (88), which Marlowe changed to "flags" at the opening of *One* 5.2). The only other significant departure respecting this detail is in Foxe, where Tamburlaine's "attires," not tents, are white, red, and black (137), again a detail Marlowe made use of by having Tamburlaine dressed "all in black," as the stage directions at the opening of *One* 5.2 tell us. Giovio even narrates that Tamburlaine, because of his "ferocity and cruelty of spirit. . . received the title of 'Terror of the Universe' and 'Destroyer of the Orient,'" and that "he was dubbed 'Temer Cuthlas,' which utterance in the Tartar tongue means 'Lucky Sword'" (132).

Marlowe's significant departure from his sources stands out more because of his inclusion of other, less radical details. In most of the histories of Tamburlaine, the authors repeat the tyrant's successful victory over of the Persian general and the "thousand horse" sent out to crush him. The story highlights Tamburlaine's charm and his ability to win over enemies without a fight. Fortescue's Mexia also tells of how Tamburlaine sided with the rebellious brother against the king of Persia (84), a detail that Marlowe certainly did not overlook. Marlowe also took from his sources the story of Tamburlaine's abuse of Bajazeth, successfully combining feelings of pity and contempt for the Sultan, but in the end arousing our feelings of sympathy for the Turk and his wife. Of special interest is the fact that not all of the European accounts of Bajazeth's fate are derogatory to the Turkish emperor, and most Eastern accounts of the encounter between the two warlords relate Bajazeth's courage (Ellis-Fermor 1930, 1966 23), with the Byzantine Ducas going so far as to narrate that Timur treated his enemy with courtesy. Although we cannot be certain

that Marlowe was familiar with Eastern histories of the encounter between the two warlords, we can be certain that he plays with both perspectives, showing us an unjustly humiliated Bajazeth, especially with Zenocrate's poignant speech regarding the abuse suffered by the emperor and his wife at the hands of Tamburlaine.¹⁷⁵

In most of Marlowe's sources, Bajazeth is not narrated in a detestable manner but as a man who, in opposition to Tamburlaine, fortune brought down. Fortescue's Mexia reports that Bajazeth was extremely valiant, fighting alongside his soldiers even after many were fleeing the massacre. Mexia also narrates that Tamburlaine "incontinently closed him [Bajazeth] up in a cage of iron. . . pasturing him with the crumbs that fell from his table, and with other bad morsels, as he had been a dog" (86). The reason for this narration, the author tells us, is to teach us that we cannot trust fortune, which makes poor shepherds princes and princes "worse than dog[s]" (87). Fortescue's Mexia also comments that Tamburlaine also had to pay his "debt due unto Nature," his sons losing the empire he had acquired and, ironically, Bajazeth's sons regained the empire that Tamburlaine had stolen from their father (89). This is a Christian interpretation of the history of the region that Marlowe rejects in his play because the cycle he stages ends with Tamburlaine pleased at the fact that he left his sons a strong empire, and that he attains immortality through the lives of his sons.

De la Primaudaye's narration of Bajazeth's mistreatment by Tamburlaine is a brief

¹⁷⁵I disagree with Ellis-Fermor's reading of Marlowe's characterization of Bajazeth. She writes, "Bajazeth loses much of his dignity in the hands of the European historians, but it is Marlowe himself who, to enhance the glory of Tamburlaine, first strips him of his valour" (1930, 1966 23). Later, Ellis-Fermor writes that, for Marlowe, "Bajazeth is after all, only a foil for Tamburlaine. . . . Marlowe reduces the dignity and the valour of Bajazeth, presenting him as a self-indulgent, headstrong Oriental, thus leaving Tamburlaine secure in our undivided sympathy" (1930, 1966 40). I disagree with Ellis-Fermor that our sympathy for Tamburlaine is undivided.

rendition of Perondinus' account, highlighting the destruction of the Turk's pride, especially his imprisonment in a cage, his eating of the scraps thrown to him by Tamburlaine, and his being used as a horse block (1.76), a detail that Whetstone also added in his biography of the Tartar (92), and which Fulgosius also narrated, along with Bajazeth's suicide by bashing his head against the cage (125).

Ironically, Perondinus' Bajazeth is shown in a courageous and proud light (106-107), with the author stressing "the fickleness of Fortune" in his narration of Bajazeth's fate in the iron cage, his being fed like a dog, and his use by Tamburlaine as a mounting block (109-110). In reporting the fate of Bajazeth's wife, Perondinus writes of how, "before Bayazed's [sic] own eyes, Tamburlaine forced her, clad insultingly only in sandals and an extremely short military cloak, to serve drinks to the Scythian chieftains as they reclined, obscenely naked" (109). Perondinus continues, writing that Bajazeth

was pierced through by rage, seized by grief, and overwhelmed with insult; he begged for death, and, when in his right mind, made an inexorably determined vow to take his own life. By repeated blows against the iron bars of his cage he smashed his head so that it broke open and the brains spilled out, and so brought about his unhappy, mournful fate. (109)

Most interesting, however, is that Perondinus' account of the exchange between Tamburlaine and the Genoan merchant is related to Tamburlaine's treatment of the Turkish emperor. Tamburlaine's reply to the Genoan's entreaty for a respectful treatment of Bajazeth was, according to Perondinus' narrative, "in a truculent voice that this punishment was not being exacted from a king subdued by force of victorious arms but from a tyrant who had been a terror to all, whose cruelty had led him to depose and kill

his own elder brother Suleiman, and that the end he was suffering was therefore wholly appropriate" (110). Giovio, too, concerned that Tamburlaine's humiliation of Bajazeth would take away the reader's sympathies for the Scythian tyrant, adds the story of the Italian jewel merchant and his "gentle admonishment" of Tamburlaine, who "replied that he was imposing a fitting punishment not on a proud king who possessed nobility and power, but on a wicked and ungodly criminal, who had killed his own elder brother in a most cruel manner" (133).¹⁷⁶ Marlowe replaces the merchant's pleas with Zenocrate's plea, including in it the plea for Bajazeth's wife who, in Perondinus' account, is not even worthy of concern, but Marlowe does not include Tamburlaine's moralistic utterance about Bajazeth's act of fratricide, either because he does not want to reduce our feelings of pity for the Turk, or because he had already conceived of some scenes of Part Two, including Tamburlaine's killing of his own son.

By far, Marlowe's debasement of Bajazeth is more radical than the debasement found in *some* of the sources he consulted, although not in others, as we have seen. Marlowe's debasement of the Turkish emperor might be owing to the one found in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which approvingly glorifies Tamburlaine's treatment of the Turkish emperor as just punishment for persecuting Christians, who are rescued from Bajazeth's siege of Constantinople (136), a reading supported by Whetstone's less exalted statement that the Ottoman empire "sprung up, as a scourge sent and suffered by God, for the sins and iniquities of the Christians. . ." (92). Whetstone then sketches the two emperors in opposition to each other, showing how fortune aligns itself with one while

¹⁷⁶Perondinus was clearly aware of the fact that Bajazeth was cruel also, killing his brother Yakub, whom Perondinus mistakenly names Suleiman, in 1389 in order to possess sole control of the Ottoman empire. As far as I am aware, no other historian familiar to Marlowe, beside Perondinus and Giovio, narrates this fact.

dispensing with the other, here according to how one conducts himself towards Christianity, commenting on the “incertainty of worldly fortunes,” causing “Bajazeth, that in the morning was the mightiest emperor on the earth, at night . . . abased by one that in the beginning was but a poor shepherd” (94) who had just skyrocketed to power (93). Perondinus, too, treats Tamburlaine as the saviour of Christianity, or at least of Byzantium. His rendition of the reply to Manuel’s embassy to Tamburlaine, after the latter’s defeat of the Turks, is so contrary to Tamburlaine’s practice, because it is merciful, humble—Christian to the letter!—as to be laughable when placed in its historical perspective, even contradicting a sentence a few paragraphs later, emphasizing how much Tamburlaine held “peace and tranquillity in abhorrence” (112). The account ends with Perondinus writing that because of the in-fighting between the Christian princes Byzantium fell to the Turks, resulting in the “killing of Constantine Palaiologos amid great slaughter, to the harm of all Christendom” (111). Perondinus and Giovio’s accounts of Tamburlaine’s punishment of Bajazeth for killing his own brother—a clear reference to Cain and Abel—and Giovio’s unambiguous accusation of Bajazeth that he was “ungodly,” are also to be taken as justifications for the destruction of the Turkish empire and therefore as a saving of Christianity. Being an astute reader, it is unlikely that Marlowe did not see the contradiction in Perondinus’ interpretation of Tamburlaine, for Marlowe’s Tamburlaine is neither a saviour of Christianity nor a humble man in any way. Still, it is true that Tamburlaine’s first reference to himself as the scourge of God identifies him as a saviour of Christians from the Turks against whom he is about to battle for imperial supremacy of the region (*One.3.3.40-60*).

As we have seen, the treatment accorded Bajazeth by the European historians is

contradictory, intended on presenting a biased portrait in favour of Tamburlaine rather than an objective account of the encounter between the two enemies. More interesting is the fact that Tamburlaine's treatment of the Sultan is more skewed than the portrait given of Bajazeth. According to a note by Karl Neumann, the 1859 editor of Schiltberger's work, "Schiltberger's accounts agree perfectly with the statements made by Byzantine and Eastern historians. We are forced to conclude, after Hammer's searching enquiries, that there is no truth whatever in the story of Bajasid [sic] having been confined by Timur in an iron cage" (21, footnote). Clearly, though, Marlowe found the episodes of abuse of the Sultan dramatically useful to him, allowing him to build up his conqueror, but not solely for that purpose, for without question we do not consistently sympathize with Tamburlaine. Marlowe wants us to question our attitudes towards great men who are often termed great because of their butcheries. Cunningham, Weil, and others point out, for example, that the full import of the use of Bajazeth as a footstool, besides having a precedence in the received histories of Tamburlaine, also alludes to Psalm 110: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Cunningham 46).¹⁷⁷ Such an episode, prompting such a reference, cannot but confirm Tamburlaine as the scourge of God, and concurs with Marlowe's highly selective reading, such as his dismissal of his sources' references to the desert halting Tamburlaine's pursuit of lands beyond Egypt's immediate vicinity (Fortescue's *Mexia* 87, Perondinus 113). It is also clear that Marlowe does not relate the episode he found in John Bishop, reporting that shortly before his death Tamburlaine saw "two celestial signs and prodigies; the one

¹⁷⁷The psalm—of David—continues in that vein. One would think it was composed strictly for Tamburlaine! I stress David because of the similarities between the trio Tamburlaine, David, and Jesus, as I will discuss below.

of a man appearing in the air, holding in his hands a lance; and the other of a blazing star....” These, Tamburlaine was told, were tokens signifying his death before long, or the ruin of his empire (141). More fearful for Tamburlaine, Bishop narrates, was the vision the tyrant had of Bajazeth, who told the Scythian, “Now it shall not be long, villain, but that thou shalt worthily be paid for thy manifold outrages, and I too shall be revenged for the wearisome wrong that thou diddest to me, making me to die like unto a beast in mine own dung” (141). Tamburlaine, according to Bishop, was so consumed by this vision that he believed that Bajazeth beat and trampled him, and he died, leaving his empire to his two sons who lost it (141). Such an episode would have made Marlowe’s Tamburlaine too reflective and self-doubting, less concerned about glory, a debate that in his famous soliloquy he had had with himself—and rejected (*One.5.2.72-129*). Marlowe opts for the kind of Tamburlaine characterized by Perondinus, a Tamburlaine so vain that “he delighted in nothing short of undertaking those ventures that were considered by others the hardest and most difficult” (113), with Fortescue adding, so “that his policy and prowess might be the better known” (95).

3.5. The Play

The debate as to whether Marlowe conceived of his two part play as a single action or as two individual, perhaps unrelated, plays has not been resolved to anyone’s full satisfaction. There are plausible hypotheses to support both sides of the debate, but in the end the conclusions one draws must be balanced against those drawn by others.¹⁷⁸ The most negative assertion supporting the two-play hypothesis is made by Ellis-Fermor, who

¹⁷⁸It is not necessary for me to recount the whole debate, but I will relay those parts of it that are necessary to the argument I will be making.

believes that the second part of *Tamburlaine* is not thoughtfully constructed, even stating that in it "Marlowe had partially exhausted the interest in Tamburlaine's career and was at a loss for episodes to fill out the play," hence his need to include from his sources details which he had in the earlier play omitted in order not "to clog the action and take from the effect of Tamburlaine's comet-like movements" (1930, 1966 39 and footnote). Ellis-Fermor continues that in Part Two Marlowe's "sympathies and comments seem. . . to be continually breaking away from the tradition he himself had established" (1930, 1966 41). I disagree with her that there is "padding" in the play (41), or that it is "journeyman work" (46).¹⁷⁹ Rather, the play is well thought-out, a view supported by Eugene Waith, who argues that Marlowe's conception of his heroic figure is complex but constant throughout both parts of the play, that "The portrait is not changed: its lines are more deeply incised" (79).

A problem one encounters when trying to decide whether the two plays are actually related in ways other than by name alone, is that of attempting to link certain scenes in Part Two with episodes from Marlowe's biographical sources of the tyrant, a typically unrewarding exercise simply because there are few such episodes. Ellis-Fermor and scholars in her camp conclude that the lack of such episodes is proof that Marlowe had composed the second part in a rush to capitalize on the success of the first part, and that he really had no preconceived goals for his protagonist. The conclusions of these scholars are faulty for two reasons. First, they fail to recognize that Marlowe had in fact made his "hero" in Part One reach the uppermost apex possible for any man—a god

¹⁷⁹Kocher follows Ellis-Fermor, suggesting that 2 *Tamburlaine* is sloppy, especially near the end, and that Marlowe made Tamburlaine's death come about suddenly "because [Marlowe] considered that the time had arrived for ending the play." Kocher also explains away difficult passages as slipshod writing by Marlowe (90).

Tamburlaine cannot become. To have the tyrant conquer worlds beyond those he had conquered would impose a gross historical inaccuracy on the play. Having reached the maximum political height allotted the man, there is only one recourse left, Tamburlaine must fall, which becomes the goal of Part Two. Cunningham, thinking about this problem, astutely observes that Part One becomes the “source” for Part Two, even though the earlier play is “self-sufficient.” The fact that Part One is a self-sufficient play is proof that Marlowe thought strongly and creatively about the kind of play Part Two was to become, Cunningham noting that if Marlowe

had not written Part Two, the first play might have seemed an evasive and short-sighted work which raised questions about tyrannical self-assertion without satisfactorily following them through; or it might have stood as a powerful enigma, ending true to itself; or as a bold invitation to admire a frighteningly capacious heroic image, rightly issuing a victory. (65)

Part Two, however, is not made to stand alone. Marlowe makes full use of his earlier play and has Part Two mirror Part One in almost every respect. Tamburlaine’s attack on Cosroe is mirrored by Sigismund’s betrayal of Orcanes; Mycetes’ counterparts in Part Two are Almeda and Calyphas. Callapine’s tempting of Almeda away from Tamburlaine mirrors Tamburlaine’s winning of Theridamas from Mycetes; the torture of Bajazeth is mirrored by the bridling of the captured Turkish kings; Part Two, like Part One, also features a siege; Tamburlaine’s courtship of Zenocrate in the first play is mirrored by Theridamas’ courtship of Olympia, whose killing of her own son within Part Two mirrors Tamburlaine’s killing of his.¹⁸⁰ Helen Gardner further points out that both

¹⁸⁰One could find other mirrored episodes, but these are the major ones, as Cunningham points to (66).

women are captured as prizes of war, and both women with their beauty charm their captors. But whereas Tamburlaine succeeds in his wooing of Zenocrate—indeed, she succumbs to his passion before he speaks it—Theridamas fails in his bid to win Olympia (206). The ordering of the events is suggestive: in the first part, success in war follows success in love. In the second part, loss of love leads to loss of empire and, ultimately, to death. Olympia's death follows the murder of Calyphas, itself an example of failure following success (Gardner 206). Shapiro's conclusion, that Part Two does not resolve problems raised in Part One, but exacerbates them (1991 30-31), is apt.¹⁸¹ Taken together, the two parts of *Tamburlaine* portray a ruler whose political will is rivalled only by God's creative will. As the scourge of God, Tamburlaine is able to prove himself superior to everything human, eventually declaring himself superior to everything divine; he even declares himself superior to death itself. The declaration of the ruler as creator, one whose ordinances are to be questioned only by the ruler himself, is not a new mode of thinking, having precedence in the Bible, in Classical literature, in Henry VIII's union of church and state, and in Machiavelli's writings.¹⁸²

3.6. Tyranny and God-hood

Marlowe's theme of providential politics is central to the *Tamburlaine* plays. Tamburlaine is pictured as the scourge of God and as the devil, and yet also as a being who both understands and overcomes his human limitations. Providential politics in *Tamburlaine* is

¹⁸¹ A similar conclusion was arrived at earlier by Clifford Leech, who argued that Part Two's "casual structure" mirrors Tamburlaine's loss of control over events and his destiny (81-82). Leech, however, does not equate "casual structure" with sloppiness.

¹⁸² Of course, Henry VIII was termed Machiavelli's prince in action.

a veritable hodgepodge of incommensurate elements. The notion “Scourge of God” is clearly one that Marlowe stresses in both parts of his play where, including in the title page, the word “scourge” appears nineteen times. “Scourge’s” variant, “wrath,” appears eighteen times. If my count is accurate, it means that Marlowe uses the words equally within the text, with “scourge” additionally in the title page of the folio. Marlowe’s union of politics and religion is surprising only to the extent that we have been led to believe that he was an atheist, a view that has caused the proliferation of the opinion that Marlowe deemed religion unnecessary for us, that its sole purpose is as a tool for the oppression of the ruled by the rulers. Evidence supporting this idea has been typically derived from a number of sources, chiefly the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, as spoken by Machevill, accusations by Marlowe’s friends, including Kyd, that Marlowe was an atheist, and Robert Greene. While Marlowe may have been an atheist in the technical sense, that is, one who disbelieves in a deity, the reality is that the term as used by the Elizabethans could have carried any combination of meanings, including belief in religious dogma not supported by the polity. In this sense of the word, belief in Catholicism during Elizabeth’s reign, for example, would have been considered a form of atheism. Marlowe’s beliefs are not necessarily commensurate with the ideas and concepts he exposes in his plays, and the fact remains that his reliance on Biblical allusions, both from the Old and the New Testaments, are masterful.¹⁸³ The claim, still persistent in some circles, that the plays are projections of Marlowe’s personality, invalidates any sense of creativity by the poet. It is also much too difficult to infer from the plays Marlowe’s personality, as Judith Weil

¹⁸³I am not arguing that Marlowe did not intend to propagate certain beliefs, ideas, etc. I do believe that there is authorial intention in anything written. Certainly that was the belief during the Renaissance, and it is, today, a belief that has not been invalidated. I must stress that one’s beliefs and intentions are not necessarily commensurate.

assiduously observes: "Because Marlowe's ironic relationship with his audience varies from play to play, we probably cannot expect to infer his personal attitudes from any one work" (171).

Marlowe conveys his tyrant's politico-religious significance, and its critique, by underscoring the fact that Tamburlaine eventually comes to regard himself not only as the scourge of God, but *as* God, or at least a god. Furthermore, Tamburlaine's conception of godliness is linked to his conception of will; what Tamburlaine speaks will occur. Tamburlaine does not believe in fortune, for he is its master. Fortune rules those who have no will, and Tamburlaine is will personified.

Tamburlaine's conception of his divinity is reported in the play both in speech and symbolically. Richards highlights several important geographical and architectural metaphors that refer back to the Bible. The first is Tamburlaine's declaration that the "palace-royal" he will build in Samarcand shall have "shining turrets [that will] dismay the heavens,/And cast the fame of Ilion's tower to hell" (*Two* 4.3.112-113). The implicit first reference to the Tower of Babel accords perfectly with the explicit reference to the Greek tower, "especially," as Richards observes, because of "the notable irony that both of them fell" (306). Tamburlaine's dream of his city's glory, as he aspires to build it—and eventually does build it—is significant in another manner. Tamburlaine's declaration, "So will I ride through Samarcanda streets,/Until my soul, dissevered from this flesh,/Shall mount the milk-white way, and meet him there," transforms Samarcand into a heavenly city, perfectly fitting in with Tamburlaine's conception of himself as a god, and has, in Richards words, "a suggestion of Christian resurrection" (307). More significant is the irony of the passage, specifically because it is not to Samarcand that Tamburlaine is going

“but to Babylon, the ancient city of sin, the gateway to Hell” (Richards 307), an appropriate place to go to in view of the fact that in Act five Tamburlaine will say that Babylon has “lofty pillars, higher than the clouds. . . . Where Belus, Ninus, and great Alexander/Have rode in triumph” and, in a most ironic fashion, where Tamburlaine will triumph (*Two* 5.1.64-70). Tamburlaine, in fact, will die outside Babylon, the city of excess. Furthermore, Tamburlaine’s final speech to his son Amyras, when Tamburlaine is removed from his chariot and replaced by his son, is based on the story of Phaethon, who rode the sun-chariot too close to the earth, wreaking havoc in his path. The irony is that Tamburlaine has been riding his chariot on the earth, causing havoc as well, and now he is being cast out.¹⁸⁴ This scene does double duty by disposing of Tamburlaine’s image as God, instead transposing it into the image of Lucifer, the shining one who fell from Heaven because of his hubris. That Tamburlaine’s god-hood is regarded ambiguously is stated by Meander and Ortygius respectively:

Some powers divine, or else infernal, mixed

Their angry seeds at his conception:

For he was never sprung of human race.

What god, or fiend, or spirit of the earth,

Or monster turned to a manly shape,

¹⁸⁴The infamous opening scene of 2 *Tamburlaine* 4.3, showing Tamburlaine in his chariot, has its sources in a number of ancient texts. Richards concurs that it is a rewriting of the story of Phaethon (309) and, later, Marlowe borrows a similar scene from Plato’s version of the Phaethon story in the *Phaedrus*. Battenhouse (1941 169) argues that the scene is from Plato’s *Republic* (566D), and it very well could be, but I would suggest that Marlowe may have also taken the scene from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* because Marlowe has Tamburlaine imitate Achilles in the *Iliad* by simply showing his face to scare off the enemy. Battenhouse further points to Gascoigne’s re-enactment of the scene in the Dumb Show to *Jocasta* (1566).

Or of what mould or mettle he be made,
 What star or fate soever govern him,
 Let us put on our meet encountering minds;
 And, in detesting such a devilish thief,
 In love of honour and defence of right,
 Be arm'd against the hate of such a foe,
 Whether from earth, or hell, or heaven he grow. (*One* 2.6.9-11, 15-23)

These speeches are a rewriting of Ephesians 6:11 and Revelations 12:12:

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the
 inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you,
 having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

But not all speeches about Tamburlaine are ambiguous. Near the end of Part One, Zabina's statement, "Then is there left no Mahomet, no God,/No fiend, no Fortune," is a denial of anything more powerful than Tamburlaine. He himself had stated earlier that he turns the wheel of fortune himself. His victims consistently admit their helplessness against him. Near the end of Part Two, however, Tamburlaine is placed in relation to his own suffering, as the repeated use of the word "fate" indicates (Cunningham 50). These contradictory claims zero in on the fact that Tamburlaine is a cocktail consisting of "a chivalric hero [who] can display an aspiration which purifies energies, an exalted religious awareness, and he can speak a poetry of tender love and sympathetic human

feeling,” thus being at once a dichotomous figure who is “repellently inhuman [but] also portentously extra-human” (Cunningham 16, 44).

Of course, Tamburlaine must be both things because he is both fox and lion, both bestial and human, both human and divine, both divine and infernal. Marlowe, in building his protagonist's character, opted for the most ironic religious display possible on stage, sacrilegiously turning Tamburlaine into the Christ figure, the only being who was both man and God. Being the perfect dyad, Christ was able to use his divine powers to spawn the loyalty of potential followers to his mission, and his human side allowed him to be in touch with people on a more personal, *human* level. But Christ's mission was not for the sake of glory, at least not glory for its *own* sake; Tamburlaine's mission was. Tamburlaine could not spawn the loyalty that Christ's divinity, displayed through his miracles, generated. Nor could Tamburlaine convince people to follow him, except via the fear of the sword. Marlowe, in his attempt to rewrite Christ, was in fact lifting the veil of morality off the face of politics in order to paint a picture of the essence of politics as communicated through Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, a reading that also discards traditional Christianity by the wayside, and is the prevalent reading of Machiavelli in Elizabethan England, as Marlowe would have been aware of both from his sources and from his readings and discussions with many learned friends at Cambridge and elsewhere.¹⁸⁵ We have already seen that in his sources Marlowe had encountered Whetstone's comparison of Tamburlaine with Machiavelli's policies, a comparison in which Whetstone disapproves of the Secretary's views as un-Christian. Marlowe, possibly also having read Gentillet's attacks on Machiavelli's works as un-Christian, would have been too intrigued

¹⁸⁵ As we discussed earlier, Machiavelli's Christianity is more altered than discarded, basically *bene usate* for political purposes. But that was not the impression in Europe at that time.

to leave the thoughts unstaged, but he would also have been too lax not to have given the attacks his own creative flavouring.¹⁸⁶

3.7. The God-man Demands a Sacrifice

Marlowe's flavouring is clearly steeped in the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments. This is not to say that Marlowe was a practicing Christian, or a man of faith. This we can speculate about, but not confirm, but our speculation would hinder rather than assist our study. What we can confirm is that Marlowe's plays contain vast amounts of biblical phrases, allusions, echos, and metaphors. Marlowe consistently pillaged the Bible for images that would either confirm an idea he was in the throes of staging, or—and this is the Marlowe of bad reputation—he would look for an image or phrase that would radically alter the idea as embraced by Christianity.¹⁸⁷

The most prevalent of these images is the Christian notion of the sacrificed Son, an image repeated by the myths of other, especially Near-Eastern and Mediterranean cultures. Post-Christian writers who have referred to stories in which a father slays a son were clearly aware of the Christian antecedent that acts as a backdrop against which the later reference must be interpreted. The Roman reference to Junius Brutus' slaying of his sons cannot be interpreted with Christianity in mind, but Machiavelli's reading of Junius Brutus' act must be, as must Marlowe's extra-historical narration of Tamburlaine's murder of his son. Such an interpretation does not preclude the possibility that Marlowe's

¹⁸⁶ Although Gentillet's work was not published in England until 1602, it may have been available in manuscript form much earlier. At any rate, Gentillet was available in Latin as early as 1577. See D'Andrea (1960 230), and pages 44-46 above.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Cornelius' valuable study, *Christopher Marlowe's Use of the Bible*, has done much to show that Marlowe made much use of Christian, and general biblical, teachings in his writings.

narrative is also a rewriting of the story of Tantalus killing his own son in order to serve him as a meal for the gods, the reading adopted by Tromly (*passim*).

Tamburlaine's horrible murder of his son has been variously interpreted by scholars who typically either wish to justify Tamburlaine's unjustifiable conduct, or who wish to see the episode as one that does not stand on its own but merely reflects earlier episodes, or helps to characterize Tamburlaine further as a man aspiring to be a god. Indeed, Calyphas' murder does all these, but the action also stands on its own, especially because the murder of the son is the *only* murder Tamburlaine commits on stage.¹⁸⁸ Nor, as Kocher argues, is the murder of the son justifiable according to Renaissance military law, because Calyphas absents himself from battle without just cause (263). Kocher's argument further victimizes the victim, and Kocher fails to account for the natural law condemning a parent from murdering his child, a law that those witnessing the scene uphold and from which they attempt to dissuade Tamburlaine.

In an argument similar to Kocher's, Williams suggests that Calyphas is a coward specifically because he fears being hurt but that he actually does not mind hurting others. She cites the following exchange between father and son:

Tamburlaine. And, sirrah, if you mean to wear a crown,

When we shall meet the Turkish deputy

And all his viceroys, snatch it from his head,

And cleave his pericranion with thy sword.

Calyphas. If any man will hold him I will strike,

And cleave him to the channel with my sword. (*Two* 1.4.98-103)

¹⁸⁸ As far as I am aware, the only scholar to have noticed this fact is Cole (106).

Williams suggests that Calyphas is able to “dish it out, but he can’t take it [thus undermining] his later claim that he refuses to fight on ethical grounds,” quoting his statement:

I know, sir, what it is to kill a man;

It works remorse of conscience in me. (4.1.27-28)

But Williams misses an important component of the first speech, one that suggests that Calyphas was actually not arguing that he desires to hurt anyone, but that he was merely presenting an abstraction that simply satisfies his father. Calyphas specifically says that he would kill the Turk “*if* any man will hold him” (my emphasis). There is no change of mind between the first and second speeches. In the first speech, Calyphas simply mitigates his father’s anger, flattering him because the son does not want to be hurt by the father. Later, in the exchange between the three brothers, we are reminded that Calyphas had been warned to adopt a more masculine stance.

Scholars like Kocher and Williams, who claim that Calyphas is portrayed negatively, for example, effeminately, in order “to prevent conventional moral judgments, and humanitarian and Christian feelings, from compromising the almost unbounded admiration that he wishes to excite for his hero’s prowess” (Jump xviii), are mistaken because they are basing their judgments on the boundless status granted Tamburlaine in Part One, where his cruelty had not yet spilled over to the point of no return. But these scholars also miss another dramatic stroke of genius with which Marlowe characterizes the Calyphas/Tamburlaine relationship: Tamburlaine kills a silent Calyphas. The only other *silent* victim in the history of the world with which Elizabethan audiences would have been acquainted is Jesus, and Tamburlaine figuratively kills Him, an argument I

propose in opposition to Leech's reading of the action that Marlowe ensures Calyphas remain silent in order to maintain Tamburlaine's "high degree of power to the end" (1986 63).

Nonetheless, there is no question that the father and son are totally opposed in their worldviews. Calyphas' rejection of his father's appetite for wine/blood is echoed by the King of Amasia's speech about Tamburlaine, declaring him as "The monster that hath drunk a sea of blood,/And yet gapes still for more to quench his thirst. . ." (*Two* 5.2.13-14). This is another reference to Tamburlaine's monstrosity, including his possible participation in cannibalism, an idea Marlowe would have learned from Perondinus who claims that "it is the custom of the Massagetes, the Bactrians and of many Scythians to eat both human and horse flesh" (109).¹⁸⁹ The play's continual hints of cannibalism are quite uncomfortable because they are consistent in their nearness of realization. The conflation of thirst and rule is made early in the play, with Tamburlaine being described as a man "Thirsting with sovereignty and love of arms" (*One* 2.1.20), "That fiery thirster after sovereignty. . . /That none can quench but blood and empery" (*One* 2.6.31-33), "Bloody and insatiate Tamburlaine" (*One* 2.7.11). Tamburlaine also describes himself as possessing "The thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown" (*One* 2.7.12). Potential cannibalism is made to loom over the play even more with the further conflation of the drinking of wine and the spilling of blood during the banquet scene, a conflation that in Part Two will result in the murder of Calyphas. The banquet scene contains further exact references to cannibalism, usually made in a grotesquely humourous fashion, and these extend from one eating one's own body to eating one's spouse and children, the last

¹⁸⁹The European propagation of this belief is as old as Herodotus, carried forward by Plutarch and others. Williams points to these and other sources (71-72).

referring to Tantalus' crime of serving his child as dinner to the gods (Tromly 78).¹⁹⁰

Soria extends the theme of cannibalism to Tamburlaine and curses him for killing his son. Soria's curse is actually fulfilled, Tamburlaine having died exactly in the manner of the curse's wish. Soria curses,

May never spirit, vein or artier feed

The cursed substance of that cruel heart;

But, wanting moisture and remorseful blood,

Dry up with anger, and consume with heat. (*Two* 4.4.180-183)

Tamburlaine's physician's diagnosis of Tamburlaine's malady is given thus:

Your veins are full of accidental heat,

Whereby the moisture of your blood is dried. . . .

Your artiers, which amongst the veins convey

The lively spirits which the heart engenders,

Are parch'd and void of spirit, that the soul,

Wanting those organons by which it moves,

Cannot endure the argument of art. (5.3.84-97)

Rejecting the physician's recommendation to rest, Tamburlaine proceeds into battle and dies quickly thereafter.¹⁹¹

Tamburlaine's rejection of the physician's advice is directly linked to Tamburlaine's own views regarding his purpose in life. Simply put, Tamburlaine seeks

¹⁹⁰I have counted seven references in the Banquet scene alone.

¹⁹¹Williams points to the similarities between Soria's and the physician's words, but actually dismisses them, arguing that the physician's words are the only ones he could use to describe Tamburlaine's condition "with clinical precision," and that "there is little in the dramatic presentation of Tamburlaine's death to remind the audience of the King of Soria's curse" (64).

glory for its own sake. It is because of this lust for glory that one could speculate that Tamburlaine kills his son for the sake of the empire, that an effeminate son would not be able to hold onto the empire. In this respect, one could argue that Tamburlaine acts much like Junius Brutus did when he killed his sons. But this argument would have to show that, as was the case with Junius Brutus, there was a need for Tamburlaine to commit the atrocities he committed in order to secure the safety of the state—such as the killing of the virgins—and this argument is nowhere shown by Marlowe. That Tamburlaine is characterized as cruel for cruelty's own sake is made clear not only from the way Tamburlaine orders the murder of the virgins, but also from the way he uses the colours of his tents, and especially from the way he murders his son. The characters surrounding Tamburlaine demand that the audience feel pity for Calyphas, as do, ironically, Tamburlaine's emotions regarding his wife's death. Tamburlaine utterly destroys the city in which his wife dies, but then destroys his own son because Calyphas refuses to participate in the destruction of another city. In this respect, Duthie argues that Zenocrate would not have approved of Calyphas' conduct, he not obeying her advice to her sons to resemble their father's excellence. Duthie goes so far as to say that "Calyphas is presented not only as an unworthy son of Tamburlaine but also as an unworthy son of Zenocrate (235). This is a highly disagreeable argument because it denies the very basic notion of parental love, an emotion that is not necessarily rational, if love can ever be called rational, and Duthie's argument further shuts out Zenocrate's own defence of her sons when Tamburlaine, seen with them for the first time on stage, disapproves of their looks as "amorous,/Not martial as the sons of Tamburlaine" (*Two* 2.21-22). Williams correctly observes that in this statement Tamburlaine actually questions his own masculinity and

considers two alternatives: either he is “incapable of siring properly masculine sons,” or that Zenocrate is not satisfied with his sexual prowess and so looked elsewhere for satisfaction. Tamburlaine is not willing to entertain the first possibility, and so further contemplates the latter possibility, telling Zenocrate that their looks

Would make me think them bastards, not my sons,

But that I know they issu'd from thy womb,

That never look'd on man but Tamburlaine. (32-34)

Although at the end of this speech Tamburlaine withdraws his accusation of Zenocrate for adultery, Zenocrate nonetheless astutely defends herself and their sons, reassuring Tamburlaine that the boys “have their mother’s looks/But, when they list, their conquering father’s heart” (35-36).

Scholars have also paralleled Tamburlaine’s murder of his son to Olympia’s murder of her own son, some arguing that “Olympia’s virtues are to some extent a reflection of Tamburlaine’s own; the strong-minded killing of her son compares with Tamburlaine’s killing of Calyphas” (Steane 68-69). Williams claims that the audience is unlikely to have as much pity for Calyphas as for Olympia’s son, who demands that his mother kill him (65). Williams’ argument, however, again forgets the Christian injunction against taking one’s life, or the life of another, especially one’s child. There is also a vast difference between the reasons for the murder of the children: Olympia murders her son—who demanded that his mother take his life—in order to save him from torture, whereas Tamburlaine murders his son because Calyphas is a pacifist, thereby denigrating his father’s conceptions of glory and god-hood. This is the reason Tamburlaine finally denigrates Jove. It is this very conception of himself as a god that compels Tamburlaine to

murder his son, again aligning him to Alexander when he slew his philosopher Callisthenes, who had opposed Alexander's presumption to declare himself the son of Zeus, much as Tamburlaine declares kinship with Jupiter (Battenhouse 1941 165). Moreover, Tamburlaine's resemblance to the Judeo-Christian God, who also allows the murder of his Son, and who had earlier demanded that his subject Abraham murder his son Isaac, cannot be missed.¹⁹²

Unlike Gardner, who suggests that the Olympia and Calyphas episodes "show the limitations of human power. . . . hint[ing] at the hollowness of [military] triumphs" (207), I argue that in fact these episodes, especially the one enacted by Tamburlaine, proves how grotesque human power can be if not contained. Greenblatt is accurate in his observation that "The body is affirmed only in wounding and destroying it," and its reverse conception, symbolized by Calyphas, is killed by Tamburlaine (1980 211). Tamburlaine's obsession with the body is an admission that he is *only* human, not divine.¹⁹³ The only other wound Tamburlaine enacts on stage is the stabbing of his own arm in front of his sons, following which he makes a blood pact with his sons that was probably seen by the Renaissance audience as a blood pact with the devil.¹⁹⁴ The irony is that although both acts are undertaken to prove to him that he is invincible, they in fact highlight the opposite stance, that Tamburlaine is very much vincible—he, too, bleeds and is therefore only human. Tamburlaine desires in order to prove he can possess what he desires; he is "a

¹⁹²There is no question that the motives for the sacrifices and near-sacrifices were different, but the audience is reminded of the precedents nonetheless.

¹⁹³Unlike Greenblatt (1980 195, 210), I stress that it is Tamburlaine, not Marlowe, who is obsessed with the body as that which defines its "owner."

¹⁹⁴Battenhouse notes this as well (1941 255).

desiring machine that produces violence and death" (Greenblatt 1980 195).¹⁹⁵ Committing acts of violence is "a means of marking boundaries, effecting transformation, signaling closure" (Greenblatt 1980 197), in effect stamping our identity on that on which we commit the violent act, thus proving to the world that we are powerful. The irony is that in *Tamburlaine* the reverse effect is produced so that instead of transforming "space from the abstract to the human [Tamburlaine] further reduces the world to a map, the very emblem of abstraction" (Greenblatt 1980 198, *Two* 5.3.124-151). And the map, that is, the world he violated, ironically does not bear Tamburlaine's name; even the world he did rename will be lost to him and his heirs after Tamburlaine's death.

3.8. Honour and Self-Affirmation

Tamburlaine's obsession with expressing himself through violence is especially affirmed, as I have alluded to earlier, with the episode in which the virgins are slaughtered. This episode is extra-historical, invented by Marlowe for the simple purpose of highlighting Tamburlaine's seemingly unchangeable will. I will come back to this point presently, but for now it is important to make note of the fact that Tamburlaine's laws of war, as he himself wrote them, are the main concern of this episode, and are tied to the episode in which Tamburlaine murders his son, who was likely a virgin also. Tamburlaine, like the ancient gods, demands human sacrifices that must be pure which, in human terms, means sexually chaste. The difference between the gods and Tamburlaine is that Tamburlaine

¹⁹⁵Greenblatt, without saying so, borrows the phrase "desiring machine" from Felix and Guattari's *L'Anti-Oedipe*. The phrase is interesting, but I would caution the imposition of this poststructuralist reading on Marlowe.

sacrifices to himself for himself.¹⁹⁶

Marlowe's choice of having the virgins beg for mercy from Tamburlaine is intended to solicit pity from the audience for the lives of the virgins, but not hatred for Tamburlaine, as, for example, Tamburlaine's slaughter of women and children do in the historical accounts of the despot, as Marlowe would have read in all of his sources for the play. Marlowe's purpose in writing the play, especially this episode, is to push the boundaries of morality. Howe, for example, argues that Marlowe is attempting to show that "mercy and absolute power are compatible" (66), and that the virgins and the governor demonstrate "their willingness to change faiths, to value physical existence before all," not having recognized "superior power until it demonstrated itself in battle." Howe goes on to say that the virgins are "soulless," not having a "true life," that "their murder is simply a demonstration of what was already true: that they lacked life" (67). Howe supports his view with a quotation from Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano*, in which Castiglione writes that "it is more advantageous for them [those concerned with physical activities than with things of the mind] to obey than to command" (298 qtd. in Howe 199), concluding that "Marlowe has simply chosen to express this common Renaissance view literally" (199). Howe's reading, however intriguing it is, is sophistic, for it is, again, a justification of the despot's activities, and it is impossible, I propose, to value "true life" separate from physical existence.

Similar to Machiavelli's reading of Cesare Borgia, especially the Duke's aesthetic

¹⁹⁶In Judeo-Christianity-Islam, the narrative that symbolically ends the practice of human sacrifices is Abraham's near sacrifice of his son Isaac. God's sacrifice of his son is not quite a revival of the practice because by sacrificing His Son, God, in some sense, sacrifices Himself, or at least a part of Himself, not unlike Tamburlaine when he sacrificed his son, except that Tamburlaine, unlike God, sacrificed his son in order to glorify himself, whereas God wanted to save humanity.

use of violence against Orrico in *Il Principe* (7), Tamburlaine is guilty of “sublimating an ethical conflict into an aesthetic programme” for the simple purpose of continually renewing his reputation (Weil 131). He thus “must forever be raising up new enemies who deny his myth” (Weil 111). For Tamburlaine, corpses strewn the stage are reflections of his honour (Cunningham 64), which is why, ironically, the virgins, upon meeting Tamburlaine, refer to him as the “Image of honour and nobility” (*One* 5.1.76). But the virgins are actually attempting to save their own lives, thus flattering Tamburlaine at the same time as casting the blame for the destruction of the city on “our ruthless governor” (*One* 5.2.29). Tamburlaine himself declares that “honour. . . consists in shedding blood” (*One* 5.2.411–413), and compares everything with conquest, even rejecting the Aristotelean notion of honour, which dictates that it must be conferred by one’s peers, not the ordinary folk.¹⁹⁷ Tamburlaine cares not who recognizes his honour, for he defines it, and redefines it, himself. He solely will recognize his own honour.¹⁹⁸

In fact, Tamburlaine’s recognition of himself as honour personified is shifted according to his own understanding of honour, and this honour is equated with glory, itself based on death and destruction. According to Mead, Tamburlaine is a destroyer of class, geographical, and religious boundaries—a destroyer “of meaning itself” (91). The despot’s words give way to force, including the words spoken by Tamburlaine’s victims who are deprived “of any ability to construct meaning unless that meaning coincides with [Tamburlaine’s] own” (Mead 95). This aspect of Tamburlaine’s forceful construction of meaning is revealed not only by the easy manner in which he wins converts to his cause of

¹⁹⁷See Book IV of *Nicomachean Ethics*, especially 1123–1125.

¹⁹⁸Compare the Governor’s statement in *The Jew of Malta*: “Honour is bought with blood, and not with gold” (2.2.56).

destruction, such as Theridamas, but also by Bajazeth and Zabina's suicides, coming after their denial of a supreme being. Tamburlaine's forceful construction of meaning, however, is especially revealed when he calls Zenocrate: "Now Zenocrate, the world's fair eye" (*Two* 1.4.1). Tamburlaine's phrase actually subsumes his wife into himself, as his "fair I" (Mead 99). This reading supports the view that Zenocrate's death kills Tamburlaine's humanity, thus rendering him *perfectly* cruel.¹⁹⁹ Just before his death, Tamburlaine also subsumes death itself!

3.9. Death and Reality

See, where my slave, the ugly monster death,
Shaking and quivering, pale and wan for fear,
Stands aiming at me with his murdering dart,
Who flies away at every glance I give,
And, when I look away, comes stealing on! (*Two* 5.3.67-71)

Because Tamburlaine is the sole creator of reality, his death suggests that reality, too, will die with him, as he himself declares:

No, strike the drums, and, in revenge of this,
Come, let us charge our spears, and pierce his breast
Whose shoulders bear the axis of the world,
That, if I perish, heaven and earth may fade. (5.3.57-60)

Tamburlaine's mythical perspective is repeated by Celebinus, who declares to his father that "by your life we entertain our lives" (5.3.168). Finally, the infamous image of

¹⁹⁹Egan also argues that Zenocrate's death kills all humanity in Tamburlaine (20).

Phaethon is recalled when Amyras is invested into his father's throne. This image is ironic for two reasons. First, Phaethon's mis-guidance of the horses nearly burns up the earth, as Tamburlaine's own chariot has done; and second, we know that Tamburlaine's sons lose the empire—Tamburlaine's death does destroy his reality, but another reality replaces it.

There is further irony in the fact that, as Duthie correctly states, Tamburlaine's most dangerous foe in part one is Zenocrate, and in part two death (228).²⁰⁰ Zenocrate is dangerous to Tamburlaine only because her death is Death's first attack on Tamburlaine (Duthie 234). At the same time as Zenocrate reminds Tamburlaine of death's invincibility, even against Tamburlaine's rage, Tamburlaine needs Zenocrate because she added "more courage to [his] conquering mind" (T1.5.2.452).²⁰¹ When she dies, he carries her body with him on his conquests as a symbol of his incessant and unwinnable fight against mortality (Danson 222-223). Zenocrate's death also removes her moderating influence from him, bringing him blind rage.²⁰² Close to his death, Tamburlaine's threat against the gods is pathetic (Duthie 228):

Ah, friends, what shall I do? I cannot stand.

Come, carry me to war against the gods,

That thus envy the health of Tamburlaine. (*Two* 5.3.51-53)

Marlowe even adds a tinge of humour, which Tamburlaine never showed previously, to his protagonist. In response to Techelles' statement that Tamburlaine's "grief" cannot last, Tamburlaine answers, "Not last, Techelles? No, for I shall die" (*Two* 5.3.66). But

²⁰⁰Duthie points to *One* 5.2.88-96.

²⁰¹See also *One* 5.2.117-119.

²⁰²Battenhouse makes a similar argument (1941 235-236).

Tamburlaine takes comfort that he will live on in his sons (*Two* 5.3.168-174). His lack of will over death—the only thing over which he lacks will—still allows him to win a partial victory over it, having passed his conquests on to his sons, even while admitting that he is defeated by death (Duthie 230): “For Tamburlaine, the scourge of God, must die” (*Two* 5.3.248). Tamburlaine’s final acceptance of his own death is not actually an acceptance of his mortality, but of his immortality through his sons. He conveys to them a dualistic theory of humanity that is both un-Christian and un-Islamic. He satisfies his thirst for continuous, immortal conquest by telling them that he will continue to live through them, actually arguing that he is so powerful that he must perforce even conquer the boundaries of his body:

But, sons, this subject, not of force enough
 To hold the fiery spirit it contains,
 Must part, imparting his impressions
 By equal portions into both your breasts;
 My flesh, divided in your precious shapes,
 Shall still retain my spirit, though I die,
 And live in all your seeds immortally. (*Two* 5.3.169-175)

3.10. The Human-Divine Divide

It is nevertheless ironic that, throughout the play, Marlowe had forcibly slid the referent of death to mean both victory and destruction, as it must, depending on the perspective from which death is viewed. When Tamburlaine causes death, he gains glory. At the end of Part One, for example, Tamburlaine’s followers wear the “scarlet robes” of peace, an ironic

choice of colour that represents war, death, and destruction, all of which have oppressed us throughout the play. And it is amid death that Tamburlaine marries Zenocrate; in *Tamburlaine*, “the grotesque impinges on the beautiful” (Cunningham 85). This referential slide, apparent throughout Marlowe’s writings, is especially significant in *Tamburlaine* because this two-part play questions not only the human-divine relationship, but also the political attitude necessary to the relationship. I will restate the relationship Marlowe is questioning in this manner: if man created God, what is the relationship man has forced himself into in relation to his creation of the divine? Especially significant is the political element in the question: how does a man of *virtù* recast the relationship, and does he abuse it? Clearly, Marlowe’s answer to the second part of the political dimension of the question is a resounding yes, and his answer to the first part is simply that Christianity has determined the human-divine relationship for Europe specifically and England particularly.

The primary thesis in *Tamburlaine* “is that moral judgments are irrelevant” (Daiches 339). This is Marlowe’s Machiavellian critique of Christianity in relation to politics. In addition to this thesis, Marlowe also argues that religion can easily be used functionally, as a tool with which a ruler can oppress a people. The concept of the Scourge of God is at the heart of Marlowe’s critique of religion, showing the effortless slide of a ruler from being God’s scourge to becoming god himself. The further question Marlowe raises has to do with agency, specifically whether a ruler, without the constraints of religion, can act morally. Phrased another way, Marlowe is asking whether religion acts as a kind of Gyges’ ring, but in the opposite manner, as an institution that prevents one

from acting as though he had the ring.²⁰³

Marlowe opposes the Scholastics, especially in their conception of human agency, insofar as humanity is free to carry out its own affairs, as unable to alter the course of the affairs of the world, a determination that was considered the reserve of God alone (Godzich xx). Godzich astutely asks,

But what if Tamburlaine were nothing but the rediscovery of agency as an autonomous force? His lack of a moral dimension would precisely correspond to the amorality of the world flux and be free of any pathos.

Marlowe may well have represented at the beginning of our modernity the loosening away of what had until then been an attribute of God. (xxii)

This is an accurate summary of Marlowe's worldview, because Marlowe opposes traditional narratives that typically show the deposed king as playing a major role in the story, especially as the focus for the restoration of the traditional moral and political order. In *Tamburlaine*, Mycetes neither plays a major role, nor is able to restore the order that has been destroyed. Pavel notes that Mycetes' role is simply to inform the audience that in the face of Tamburlaine no adversary is strong (27). But I propose that Marlowe's purpose is also to use Mycetes as an emblem for those kings who do not have the ability to apply *de facto* power.

Possessed of the ability to apply *de facto* power, Tamburlaine is written like God, omniscient and omnipotent, fully capable of determining all courses of action. Part One of *Tamburlaine* is "epistemically open, [with] all characters hav[ing] access to the current

²⁰³Plato's *Republic* (359c-360d). In summary, the story is that Gyges, finding a ring that allows him to become invisible, commits regicide, marries the queen, and becomes ruler of the city. Plato gives another version of the story as well, but the moral question is the same: would a person, without constraints, practice justice? Herodotus offers another account of the Gyges story (*Histories* 1.8-13).

information” (Pavel 48). It is also an “internally motivated” play in which all significant actions are “fully determined by the decisions of the characters” without any traditional external interventions such as Providence or “an outside, unnamed invisible, volatile force, regulating the events independently of any of the parties present in the plot” (Pavel 48). Nonetheless, Tamburlaine, making full use of the power of religion, justifies his actions by claiming that they are motivated by God. After the third act, Tamburlaine begins warning his opponents of his intentions, and in Part Two he is no longer omnipotent, and so is not characterized as all-knowing. The play itself ends in an aporetic fashion with Callapine, who had eluded Tamburlaine a number of times, even escaping from him, plotting the largest war against the Scythian tyrant. Tamburlaine’s failure to maintain his grasp on unchecked power is agonizingly manifested to him with the death of Zenocrate, his ultimate prize now lost as well. Tamburlaine “is reduced to the status of mere spectator for the first time in either play” (Tromly 81), and he hones the point that it is not so much her death that he grieves but his loss of her, specifically, her being snatched away from him:

For amorous Jove hath snatch’d my love from hence,
 Meaning to make her stately queen of heaven.
 What god soever holds thee in his arms,
 Giving thee nectar and ambrosia,
 Behold me here, divine Zenocrate,
 Raving, impatient, desperate and mad,
 Breaking my steeled lance, with which I burst
 The rusty beams of Janus’ temple doors,

Letting out Death and tyrannising War. . . . (*Two* 2.4.107-116)

The great irony here is that in Part One Tamburlaine himself had snatched Zenocrate away from the rival King of Arabia. And, as in Part One, Tamburlaine refuses to let go of Zenocrate, earlier to grant her freedom, now to let her die, as she begs him (*Two* 4.66-67). Instead, Tamburlaine burns the city in which she dies and he carries her embalmed corpse with him, thus proving to the world—and to himself—that he still possesses her.²⁰⁴

Although the play does not state that the Timurid empire will collapse, Marlowe himself, and readers of history, know that this is exactly what transpires after Timur's death.²⁰⁵

With Tamburlaine's death, the Scourge of God theme also dies.²⁰⁶

3.11. God's Scourge

The question we must ask now is, how seriously did Marlowe take the Scourge of God theme? This is a critical question about which there is no scholarly consensus, but is nevertheless related to Machiavelli's conclusion that the perfect prince must in the end be no different from God.²⁰⁷ Kocher, following Thorp, argues that because the term "scourge of God" is first voiced in the middle of act three of the first Part of *Tamburlaine*, it "looks

²⁰⁴Tromly arrives at the same conclusion (82).

²⁰⁵The fact that the play does not follow Aristotle's rules for drama, especially his stipulation that an action begun in a work must be resolved with that work, does not make the play in any way inferior but actually raises important questions that will be answered in the following pages. Of course, a Marlovian play is not a Greek play, and so in some sense the point is moot but for the fact that a number of critics have charged that Marlowe's play, especially Part Two, fails in bringing about resolutions to certain actions, or is inconsistent, etc.

²⁰⁶Berek argues that Marlowe was purposely "open-ended" in *Tamburlaine* because he was attempting "to create subversive or transforming ethical challenges" in his audiences, and that he gradually adopted less open-ended means for doing so (77-78). In *1 Tamburlaine*, Marlowe presents "a hero who challenges Elizabethan orthodoxies and demands that audiences entertain the prospect that their conventional ideas are inadequate" (Berek 79).

²⁰⁷See Section 2.7, above, especially pages 130-135.

like an opportunistic afterthought on Marlowe's part designed to rally some favour to his hero as a protector of Christians" (79), a statement that denies the fact that Tamburlaine very much plays up the sentiment that he is carrying out God's will, eventually denying God's will and replacing it with his own will. In his footnote to the statement, Kocher adds the qualification that Tamburlaine's claim of being "the scourge of God is related by the western European narratives" (79). As I have shown, the term is actually ubiquitous in the Eastern sources as well, the point being that the concept debated in both worlds is whether a man can or should rule like God. One of the reasons why scholarship over *Tamburlaine* is assertively divided has to do with the seeming contradictions between the two parts of the play, as I discussed above. It is well to keep in mind that no matter which stand one takes on Marlowe's protagonist, one must remember that in Part Two Marlowe had "to consider his subject more shrewdly," having already successfully dealt with him in Part One (Leech 1958 92). Bartels attempts to break the two moulds set by Marlovian scholarship and argues that Tamburlaine is neither a villain nor a hero, but an ambivalent, "finally undecidable" figure: "Marlowe builds Tamburlaine's characterization upon a series of inconsistent and contradictory impressions, refusing finally to determine whether he is a barbarous villain or an awe-inspiring hero" (13, 7). I believe that Marlowe actually held strong opinions on men of Tamburlaine's stature, and that he took delight in creating a protagonist who is a "resplendent picture of a world-conqueror whose ambition was in essence the divine intoxication of the spirit and the senses which is the creative fount of all the arts" (Boas 99). Harry Levin correctly observes that "the humanism of the Renaissance led directly from contemplation to action; intellectual curiosity was a means toward a higher end." In this sense, Marlowe fits in well within the Renaissance

conception of the world, except that he extends the conception to its furthest limits, “interpreting knowledge as *libido sciendi* and virtue as *libido dominandi*” (Harry Levin 1955 57), in essence interpreting the world through Machiavellian eyes by writing the Scourge of God theme as a rhetorical method of attributing the ill one does to an outside cause, while covering the fact that it is entirely self-motivated. Tamburlaine pretends to be a pawn in a providential universe while, in deed, denying all such providentiality, eventually monopolizing providence himself. Marlowe correctly points out that this mode of monopolizing power is the ultimate Machiavellian coup.

In creating a Scourge of God, Marlowe still had to take into account his country’s prejudices, fully recognizing that they make for effective theatre. For example, he downplays the Persians’ Islamic heritage, instead making the Persians more Greek, a fact highlighted by their multiple references to the pagan gods. Islam is reserved for Tamburlaine’s and Europe’s arch-enemy, the Sultan, and Clifford Leech convincingly declares “that all Tamburlaine’s references to Mahomet come in Part II, where he is at a greater distance from the audience’s sympathy” (1986 46). These are the very references that will assist us in making more plausible observations regarding Marlowe’s views on religion.

Outside the Baines controversy, the most famous accusation hurled at Marlowe is his supposed atheism as stated by Greene when he paraphrases 2 *Tamburlaine*, “daring God out of heaven with that Atheist *Tamburlan*.”²⁰⁸ In fact, Tamburlaine does not dare God out of heaven, but Mahomet out of hell (Kocher 87); nevertheless, even as early as 1 *Tamburlaine*, when he usurps the Persian crown, Tamburlaine challenges the gods:

²⁰⁸ *Perimedes the Blacke-Smith*, 1588.

So; now it is more surer on my head

Than if the gods had held a parliament,

And all pronounc'd me king of Persia. (2.7. 65-67)

Statements of this sort have led critics, such as Peter Hall, to call *Tamburlaine* "the first atheist play, and in a way the first existential play" (256 qtd. in Geckle 32). The play might very well be the first in either genre, but Marlowe does not easily bring about either conclusion, and I would suggest that *Tamburlaine* is not so much an atheistic play as an anti-Christian play, arguing that Christianity cannot sustain a rigorous form of politics because it lacks the *virtù* necessary for hard politics. I would further argue that Marlowe does not believe it is possible for humanity to be atheistic because the will to deification, especially by tyrants, is ever present. Moreover, I would suggest that *Tamburlaine* is a proto-existential, not simply existential, play.

Kelsall argues that in *1 Tamburlaine* Marlowe "excludes the Christian world picture as consistently as many sixteenth-century Christians excluded the theatre" (74), a belief similar to Kocher's, that Marlowe instigates a "crusade against Christianity" (69). Marlowe's crusade against Christianity is strictly political, attempting to convince us that our accepted standards for judgement, that is, our Christian standards, are not up to the job of stopping the likes of Tamburlaine, a man who does not accept the ethical or moral standards of Christianity. This fascination of the Christian world with people not contained by Christian principles both attracted and repulsed Elizabethan audiences, thus extending the ranges of the humanly possible, opening up to pagan extremes the English and Christian notions of heroism and death. Marlowe was attempting to expand the borders of the accepted, English/Christian "economy" of life. He returns to this theme in

Dido, Queen of Carthage, where he writes Dido as an absolute ruler, even above the law:

And now, to make experience of my love,

Fair sister Anna, lead my lover forth,

And, seated on my jennet, let him ride,

As Dido's husband, through the Punic streets;

And will my guard, with Mauritanian darts

To wait upon him as their sovereign lord.

Anna. What if the citizens repine thereat?

Dido. Those that dislike what Dido gives in charge,

Command my guard to slay for their offence.

Shall vulgar peasants storm at what I do?

The ground is mine that gives them sustenance,

The air wherein they breathe, the water, fire,

All that they have, their lands, their goods, their lives,

And I, the *goddess* of all these, command

Aeneas ride as Carthaginian king. (4.4.64-78 my emphasis)

Kocher points out that Marlowe's sources do not in any way suggest that Dido was despotic (178). This kind of thinking also opposed ideal Tudor policy, but certainly not its mode of practice. As my emphasis indicates, for Marlowe, being a god is equal to being an absolute ruler because both possess the power to destroy. Of course, in order to ensure that the audience give its sympathies to Tamburlaine, Marlowe makes his protagonist sympathetic to Christians, even as Marlowe ensures that Christianity is derided for being incompatible with politics, a lesson he would have learned from Machiavelli and his

Roman predecessor, Lucan, parts of whose *Pharsalia* Marlowe translated:

Expediency is as far from the right as the stars from earth or fire from water. The power of kings is utterly destroyed, once they begin to weigh considerations of justice; and regard for virtue levels the strongholds of tyrants. It is boundless wickedness and unlimited slaughter that protect the unpopularity of a sovereign. If all your deeds are cruel, you will suffer for it the moment you cease from cruelty. If a man would be righteous, let him depart from a court. Virtue is incompatible with absolute power. (Lucan's *Pharsalia*, bk. 8 qtd. in Kocher 200).

But what exactly is Marlowe's stand on Christianity, and on Islam, and their relationship to politics? I will now turn to this question, and from here gain a better understanding of Tamburlaine's own understanding of himself as a god, or at least as one who aspires to be a god.

3.12. Christianity and Islam

Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* "liberates from its Christian and ethical framework the humanist conception of man as essentially free, dynamic and aspiring; more contentiously, this conception of man is not only liberated from a Christian framework but reestablished in open defiance of it" (Dollimore 112). It is along these Machiavellian lines that the brief exchange between Orcanes and Gazellus is based. Orcanes asks Gazellus' opinion regarding their victory over Sigismund who had broken his sworn peace treaty with the Muslims:

What say'st thou yet, Gazellus, to his foil,

Which we referr'd to justice of his Christ

And to his power, which here appears as full

As rays of Cynthia to the clearest sight?

To this poetic question, Gazellus bluntly answers,

'Tis but the fortune of the wars, my lord,

Whose power is often prov'd a miracle. (*Two* 2.3.27-32)

Gazellus' answer is surprising because a few lines earlier he, too, had attributed Sigismund's death to the Hungarian king's "perjur'd. . . villainy" (12-13). But in this scene nothing should surprise us because no one is certain of anything anybody says, all signifiers sliding into one another, making it difficult to grant meaning to anything specific. Orcanes, for example, is not certain whether it was "Christ or Mahomet" who granted him victory over the Christians, and following Gazellus' Machiavellian explanation, he can only retort in a Pascalian manner,

Yet in my thoughts shall Christ be honoured,

Not doing Mahomet an injury,

Whose power had share in this our victory. . . . (33-35)

Orcanes' statement is political specifically because he will not publicly grant Christ any say in the victory the Muslims have just won, but will do so privately. To make a public statement in support of Christianity would bring about the condemnation of his subjects. Instead, Orcanes will humiliate Sigismund in the worst manner possible, allowing his body to be fed upon by vultures.

This final disgrace to the Hungarian King is itself likely received with uncertainty by the audience. At the opening of the scene, Sigismund had repented for his sins and

asked for God's "mercy," dying with the word on his lips. What brings doubt to his actual fate is Orcanes' speech wondering whether it was Christ or Mahomet who had granted him the victory, which is to say, had brought about Sigismund's fate. Sigismund's contrition, which asked for "a second life in endless mercy," is countered by Orcanes with "The devils there, in chains of quenchless flame,/Shall lead his soul through Orcus' burning gulf,/From pain to pain, whose change shall never end" (9, 24-26). Even the fate of the dead is brought into doubt. More ironic is that after ordering Sigismund's body to be left in the open air, the Muslims depart for a banquet during which they will drink "Greekish wine," which is not only a reference to the impending fall of the Eastern Christian empire, but also to the Eucharist itself about to be parodied following "Our happy conquest and his [Sigismund's] angry fate" (47).²⁰⁹

Marlowe's presentation of Orcanes as a representative of the Muslim faith is critical, for Marlowe presents Orcanes as a Machiavellian character, or at least as one on his way to becoming so. The hypocrisy that Orcanes carries is evident in his desire to celebrate his military victory by drinking wine, an act that opposes one of the edicts of Islam against the consumption of alcohol. If this is not immediately apparent to the audience, then Orcanes' doubt of the existence of Christ is clear, for Orcanes twice doubts Christ's existence: "if there be a Christ," (2.2.39,64). Such a denial is actually a blasphemy even to Muslims, who believe that Christ is a great prophet, as Gazellus himself declares immediately before Orcanes' first statement of doubt regarding Christ's existence.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹Sigismund, a Catholic, repents in a fully Catholic, not Protestant, manner, as Cole observes (117).

²¹⁰As far as I am aware, Kocher is the only scholar to have taken note of Orcanes' statement (96).

Orcanes' doubt about the existence of Christ is important because he also doubts Tamburlaine's divinity or near-divinity, asserting that Tamburlaine's self-reference as the scourge of god is a rhetorical tool Tamburlaine invented for himself:

Now he that *calls himself the scourge of Jove*,
 The emperor of the world, and earthly god,
 Shall end the warlike progress he intends,
 And travel headlong to the lake of hell. . . . (*Two* 3.5.21-24 my emphasis)

A short while later, Tamburlaine admits this opinion, arguing that he must fulfill the role he has propagated, attempting to legitimate his megalomania:

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 cruelty,
 And plague such peasants as resist in me
 The power of Heaven's eternal majesty. (4.1.155-160)

Tamburlaine's awareness that he must continually renew the image of himself falters at one point. When Tamburlaine becomes ill, he comes close to acknowledging his mortality, that he might simply be a man:

What daring god torments my body thus,
 And seeks to conquer mighty Tamburlaine?
 Shall sickness prove me now to be a man,
 That have been term'd the terror of the world? (*Two* 5.3.42-45)

Before he takes his final breath, however, Tamburlaine re-instates his conception of

himself as “the scourge of god.” At an important level of consciousness, his insistence that the role of pure conqueror, which he has chosen “of his own will has virtually deprived him of will, and he has become a prisoner of his self-definition” (Egan 20). Tamburlaine leaves himself no choice but “to fit those terms” simply because he, like Machiavelli, believes that Being is will, that *de facto* power is equal to divinity. His claims to divine sanction, and later to divinity itself, testify to an important political truth that Machiavelli taught, that prophecy must be proved with military might.²¹¹

Tamburlaine’s inability to satisfy his incessant thirst for power is dramatized by his final command to bring him a map of the world displaying for him what lands he has not conquered, only to conclude that he now stays in Asia “against my will,” where he will die (*Two* 5.3.124-125, 143).

3.13. Conclusion: *Tamburlaine* and Genre

Battenhouse calls *Tamburlaine* “a pageant” (1941 150). Greenblatt insists that in *Tamburlaine* “All of the signals of the tragic are produced, but the play stubbornly, radically, refuses to become a tragedy” (1980 202). Judith Weil calls the two parts of the play “tragic riddles.” She argues that they “presuppose the value of history and continuity; Tamburlaine’s political conquests and family relationships equip us to regard him as a tragic figure. But at the same time the plays make Tamburlaine insensitive to the tragic elements of his own life; his imagination always gets the last triumphant word” (175). Daiches claims not only that the play is not a tragedy, but that it “lacks a moral pattern, lacks any real core of meaning” (327). Ribner argues that *Tamburlaine* is a history play in

²¹¹ Shepherd also discusses this aspect of the play (130-131).

the classical form, following the historical notion of Polybius (1953 252, 258), and Tucker Brooke goes so far as to claim that it is “more than any other drama, the source and original of the Elizabethan history play” (qtd. in Ribner 1953 251). Harry Levin observes that Marlowe, reversing the *Mirror for Magistrates* tradition reflecting the fall of princes, instead “exhibits the rise of commoners” (1955 48). Cole follows Levin in his belief that Marlowe’s play is an anti-*Mirror for Magistrates* (98). Some scholars attempt to squeeze Marlowe’s play into a genre by comparing the protagonist to some of Shakespeare’s protagonists. Tydeman and Thomas suggest that Tamburlaine does not need the audience’s sympathies, and he lacks the “self-awareness which denies him the nobility or moral courage of a Hamlet or a Lear [which] makes him unconvincing as a tragic hero” (1989 34). Similarly, Boas states that, unlike the “figures of tragic grandeur,” such as Macbeth and King Lear, Tamburlaine’s “career closes at last merely because all that live must die, and he looks forward to its continuation by his sons” (100). This is a false hope, however, because we know that Tamburlaine’s sons fail to maintain their father’s empire; this is, quite possibly, Tamburlaine’s tragedy, daring to believe that a mere human can outwit time or history. Finally, at a loss as to how to classify the play, Battenhouse argues that “*Tamburlaine* is an important mid-link between the academic drama of the Senecans and the popular drama of Shakespeare” (1941 205).

Of course, to classify a play is to interpret a play. If, indeed, *Tamburlaine* is a tragedy, as the prologue tells us, the natural question to ask is if we ought to feel any pity or remorse for the protagonist. If we do not regard the play as tragic, then we must ask ourselves if we are imposing a different genre on it, one not intended by its author. The question of classifying this play becomes critical in the light of our interpretation of it, and

I propose that in fact *Tamburlaine* is a “tragic glass,” but one that fits a very narrow definition of tragedy only implied by Marlowe.

Marlowe’s notion of tragedy must not be interpreted according to our notions of tragedy, especially in regard to Shakespeare’s plays. Without question, there is tragedy in *Tamburlaine*, but it is not the kind of tragedy that a *King Lear* or a *Macbeth* have displayed for us, for *Tamburlaine* is not a *King Lear* or a *Macbeth*. There is no doubt, however, that *Tamburlaine* experiences loss, but he does not do so in Part One. In fact, *Tamburlaine* ends as a comedy, with a wedding celebration, but a wedding grotesquely held in the midst of death, literally. The ending of Part One actually points to the Prologue where the opposition of what is to be expected is openly aired, the actor telling us to expect both “clownage” and “war” (Prologue 2-3).

Cole is correct to observe that the tragedy in the play is actually not of *Tamburlaine* but of his victims (87-88). This is true enough for Part One, but what if the Prologue was written after both parts of the play were staged? In this case, could the “tragic glass” refer to the protagonist? Arguably, *Tamburlaine* becomes tragic only in Part Two, and from the perspective of how he perceives himself only, that is, from a proto-existentialist perspective, which I will explore momentarily. In this sense, *Tamburlaine* is a character type, as is Machiavelli’s ideal prince, fitting in perfectly with the *Vita Tamerlani* genre.

Nevertheless, as Greenblatt and others have observed, the play is constructed in such a manner as to lead towards tragedy, for example *Tamburlaine* being struck down at the height of his power, but then the play successfully pulls itself back from the form at the very moment it is about to dive into it, *Tamburlaine* insisting that he will live through

his sons. This construction of the play sets it within the *De Casibus* form, but only superficially, for Marlowe wants the audience to take moral ambiguity from the play, asking them at the end of the prologue to “applaud his [Tamburlaine’s] fortunes as you please” (7-8). Still, while Marlowe in Part One rebels against the *De Casibus* tradition—for his hero only—the many rulers defeated by Tamburlaine suffer the fate outlined in the *De Casibus* cycle, except even here Cosroe actually blames his downfall not on fortune but on Tamburlaine. In fact, the refrain in the play is that it is Tamburlaine who is the master of fortune, who makes or breaks monarchs. In Marlowe’s treatment, the notion of *De Casibus* is rejected, or at least revised to stipulate that its occurrence is strictly based on the human confrontation of wills.²¹² Part Two seemingly regenerates the *De Casibus* tradition by showing us the near sudden death of Marlowe’s hero, but a closer look at the conclusion of the play dispenses with any ambivalence we might have had regarding the *De Casibus* genre, because in fact Tamburlaine dies as an emperor whose sole “tragedy” is that he did not conquer the rest of the world, as he had desired to do.

Tamburlaine’s manner and time of death is ambiguously regarded by many scholars who either view the tyrant’s death as caused by God or Mahomet because it occurs shortly after Tamburlaine orders the burning of the Alcoran, or because they want to believe that Marlowe simply had to kill off his protagonist, and so made up an excuse to do away with him. Neither view is valid because, in the first instance, enough time passes between Tamburlaine’s daring of Mahomet and Tamburlaine’s first cry of pain to make the connection between the two incidents doubtful (Leggatt 32).²¹³ Also, in the

²¹²For a similar but extended treatment of the *De Casibus* theme, see Cole.

²¹³Tromly has also followed this observation (90).

following scene, Callapine prays to "Sacred Mahomet" but is defeated because Tamburlaine simply shows his face during the battle causing Callapine's army to flee the field (*Two* 5.3.114-115). If God or Mahomet were responsible for granting victories, or anything else for that matter, then why would Mahomet not have granted Callapine a victory against Tamburlaine if he (Mahomet) was truly responsible for striking down the Scythian? As for Marlowe having to kill Tamburlaine because nothing else remains to be dramatized, the argument is not only an insult to Marlowe's intelligence, but also to the intelligence of the play and history. Tamburlaine dies a reasonably contented man, and his death is dramatized in a fashion not far from its historical precedence. The play possesses both human and historical necessity, and dramatic cause and inevitability. This is to say that, from a historical perspective, nothing produces Tamburlaine's death or halts his overreaching; Tamburlaine does not overreach and fall, but conquers all and dies. The tragic sense of life resides not in the irony of deeds but in mortality itself. This, in fact, is not tragic because all must die, most not attaining the greatness that Tamburlaine attains. The tragedy in *Tamburlaine* surfaces when we ask whether it is ironic for a man to aspire to the greatness that Tamburlaine actually achieves, only to lose that greatness in the end. To ask the question from a different perspective: why does humanity possess the ability to aspire to divinity, only to be cut off when we achieve it, or are about to achieve it?

It is important to point out that my argument necessitates that the two parts of the play be regarded as one seamless action that makes transparent Tamburlaine's loss of control over his own destiny. In Part Two, for example, Tamburlaine takes only one initiative, the siege of Babylon, and the other events either do not concern him, such as the battle between the Muslims and Christians, or are initiated by external forces, such as

the death of Zenocrate (Pavel 60). In addition to these, Pavel argues that “the most probable function of the Theridamas and Olympia episodes is to insist on the spread of Death around Tamburlaine” (58-59). Olympia’s ability to convince Theridamas of her ludicrous story about the salve also suggests that Tamburlaine is losing his power over those around him, even his prisoners. Olympia, like Callapine, escapes from Tamburlaine’s tyranny, although in a radical fashion. Especially noteworthy is the fact that Tamburlaine seems not to know about Theridamas’ encounter with Olympia. This lack of knowledge additionally suggests that Tamburlaine is losing his omniscience. In Pavelian fashion, Part Two does not possess “an epistemic centre; no character knows everything the spectator knows” (60). This is in total opposition to Part One in which, as Zenocrate’s servant, Anippe, reminds his mistress and us, that Tamburlaine is not controlled by fortune:

Madam, content yourself, and be resolv’d,
Your love hath Fortune so at his command,
That she shall stay and turn her wheel no more,
As long as life maintains his mighty arm
That fights for honour to adorn your head. (*One* 5.2.311-315)

The only enemy capable of defeating Tamburlaine is death. Tamburlaine’s tragedy becomes one written in the Machiavellian manner, as the ironic fall of the nearly perfect Machiavellian prince who, paradoxically, morally desires to order his state for the state’s own sake while necessarily serving his own self-interest. But *Tamburlaine* is only written in the Machiavellian genre, using Machiavellian political philosophy; it is not Machiavellian simply because Tamburlaine does not care to serve his state, only himself.

As we have seen, Tamburlaine attempts to escape death—to defeat it—but, naturally, he fails. Nevertheless, Tamburlaine did succeed in manipulating his subjects to believe that he can succeed in defeating death. Zenocrate's outlook toward her captor-husband began with the perspective Tamburlaine wanted everyone to propagate:

If Mahomet should come from heaven and swear

My royal lord is slain or conquered,

Yet should he not persuade me otherwise

But that he lives and will be conqueror. (*One* 3.3.208-211)

Near the end of the play, however, prefiguring Theridamas' question to Tamburlaine, if "Mahomet will suffer this" cruelty that Tamburlaine is unleashing on Bajazeth and Zabina (*One* 5.4.55), Zenocrate modifies her stance on Tamburlaine's pursuit of further glory, and even begins to repent her and his treatment of Bajazeth and Zabina:

Ah, Tamburlaine my love, sweet Tamburlaine,

That fights for sceptres and for slippery crowns,

Behold the Turk and his great emperess!

Thou that, in conduct of thy happy stars,

Sleep'st every night with conquest on thy brows,

And yet wouldst shun the wavering turns of war,

In fear and feeling of the like distress,

Behold the Turk and his great emperess!

Ah, mighty Jove and holy Mahomet,

Pardon my love! O, pardon his contempt

Of earthly fortune and respect of pity;

And let not conquest, ruthlessly pursu'd,
 Be equally against his life incens'd
 In this great Turk and hapless emperess!
 And pardon me that was not mov'd with ruth
 To see them live so long in misery! (*One* 5.2.300-307).

Leech takes Zenocrate's stance and sudden death, which follows Sigismund's death, to signify that Tamburlaine's fortune is beginning to turn, and that he is being made to pay a form of retribution for his actions, even as God's scourge. Leech concludes that "the idea of retribution is inserted into the play's fabric" (1986 47-49), a reinsertion of the providential pitted against the overreacher theme, as though the Machiavellian prince, in denying superstitions and obstacles in the name of the state may offend some hidden laws of justice, equity, public opinion, provocations of counter-resurgency, or some opposing myth that may take up arms against him. Leech, however, forgets that Tamburlaine "considers reason to be subordinate to natural appetite" (Kimbrough 287), and so assumes that Marlowe is in disagreement with his protagonist, as he likely is, but for reasons different from those Leech holds.

Weil argues that "it is Tamburlaine's *own* attitude which remains constant in the plays, not the attitudes of the author or of the audience" (107 original emphasis). While I do not agree fully with Weil, because I believe that Marlowe's writing of the two parts of the play is quite consistent in terms of how he develops and allows his themes to unfold, I also only half agree with Boas' statement that Tamburlaine's mocking of Mahomet before the burning of the Alcoran is actually "the voice not of Tamburlaine but of Marlowe, in realistic derision of direct divine intervention in human affairs" (98). I believe that it is

Tamburlaine as well as Marlowe who is making this declaration.

Of note is the fact that, when successful in their endeavours, all the characters but the jailer Almeda praise the gods, and when the contrary occurs, blame them.²¹⁴

Tamburlaine himself seems to waver in his belief in a supreme being, but by 2 *Tamburlaine*, as we have already seen, he denies the supremacy of any being but himself. If any doubt remains as to whether Tamburlaine believes in God, then his conception of God would be "as a compelling force, a potential or actual enemy, not as a source and object of love" (Kocher 302). In this respect, *Tamburlaine* is neither a Christian play nor a morality play. It "is neither a homily against presumption nor an exhortation to dream the impossible dream. It presents an emotionally complex vision of how man may lose the full potential of his humanity in pursuit of an inhuman goal" (Danson 1982 qtd. in Tydeman and Thomas 1989 26). The first part of the play, in Helen Gardner's summary, "glorifies the human will: the second displays its inevitable limits" (208). Tamburlaine is no different from Mortimer who, upon his fall from power, says,

Farewell, fair queen. Weep not for Mortimer,

That scorns the world, and, as a traveller,

Goes to discover countries yet unknown. (*Edward II* 5.6.64-66)²¹⁵

This is the ideal Machiavellian prince who does what he believes he must do, and dies without regrets, even if he is denying his very reality, for Marlowe was less concerned about dramatizing history at work, and more with dramatizing the ideals attempting to manipulate history. The lessons about the essence of these Machiavellian ideals were

²¹⁴Weil points this out as well (112).

²¹⁵This speech is likely the antecedent for Hamlet's "undiscovered country" (3.1.79).

accepted by Shakespeare, who then displayed them at work in history, the subject of the following chapter.

Shakespeare's Malovianism: Henry V as Tamburlaine Historicized

If at any time that servant Policy offend the Mistris of the House, which is Religion, Policy then (with Hagar) must be banished the house of Faith....

(Christopher Lever qtd. in Gasquet 51).

1. Introduction: Shakespeare "Reading" Marlowe

. . . had that king of poets breathed longer,
 No bastard eaglet's quill the world throughout
 Had been of force to mar what he had made,
 For why they were not expert in that trade:
 What mortal soul with Marlowe might contend,
 That could 'gainst reason force him stoop or bend?
 Whose silver charming tongue moved such delight
 That men would shun their sleep in still dark night
 To meditate upon his golden lines,
 His rare conceits and sweet according rhymes. (Henry Petowe *Poems* 94-95, 1598 qtd. in Shapiro 1991)

Richard III, who combines "the skepticism of Machiavel with the diabolic sadism of Barabas" (Bradbrook 1965 55 qtd. in Shapiro 1988 271), has been termed "the most Marlovian of [Shakespeare's] heroes" (Hammond in Arden ed. qtd. in Shapiro 1988 271). But Shakespeare also conceives of Richard III as one who can even outdo the Machiavel himself, setting him "to school" (3 *Henry VI* 3.2.193),²¹⁶ and Richard is his own prologue,

²¹⁶It is important to emphasize this phrase because most scholars have argued that Richard is Shakespeare's quintessential Machiavellian. Some scholars have even claimed that Richard is totally without a conscience (e.g. Jaffa 1981 287), forgetting that his conscience haunts him before the battle of Bosworth. We must also remember Machiavelli's advice that "one cannot call it virtue to kill one's citizens,

having the stage for forty-one lines before anyone else makes an entrance to the play titled after him. Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare extends much further than Richard III, however, Shakespeare having emulated Marlowe in tragedy, history, and comedy. The reason for Shakespeare's imitation of Marlowe has been argued in commercial terms, Shapiro declaring that the Elizabethan playhouse was the locus for "aggressive" imitation that was "fueled by and mirrored in the nascent capitalism upon which the commercial theater was founded" (1988 269). Clearly, however, Shakespeare's imitation of Marlowe was based on factors that went beyond simple commercial gain. And while we have no evidence regarding the personal relationship that the two most powerful playwrights of the era may or may not have had, there is no doubt that Shakespeare "was attuned to [the] disturbing features of Marlowe's plays [and that] his early engagement with Marlowe has a diffuse but powerful effect upon his work" (Shapiro 1988 271). I will return to Richard's *Tamburlaineanism* at a more opportune time, but now, in order to highlight how deeply Shakespeare thought about Marlowe's dramas, especially *Tamburlaine*, I will begin with a more general discussion of Shakespeare's borrowings from his great contemporary. The purpose of this preliminary exercise will also reveal some of the underlying politico-theoretical tensions between the two playwrights, tensions that are not opposed in their essence but in their mode of exposition. What will become apparent is that both playwrights thought deeply about Machiavellian ideas, with Marlowe showing ideal Machiavellism at work, Shakespeare dramatizing it historically.

betray one's friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion. . . ." (P 8.35). As I will repeat on numerous occasions, the major difference between Machiavelli's prince and Richard and Tamburlaine is that Machiavelli's prince *must* contain himself *within* the social and religious traditions of his polity even as he undermines the traditions, whereas Tamburlaine and Richard do not, although reality catches up with Richard just before the battle of Bosworth.

Marlowe's presence in Shakespeare is apparent in *Titus Andronicus*, especially in Aaron's opening soliloquy in which he glorifies Tamora in lines reminiscent of Tamburlaine's glorification of Zenocrate:

Now climbeth Tamora Olympus' top,
 Safe out of fortune's shot, and sits aloft,
 Secure of thunder's crack or lightning flash,
 Advanced above pale envy's threat'ning reach.
 As when the golden sun salutes the morn,
 And having gilt the ocean with his beams,
 Gallops the zodiac in his glistering coach,
 And overlooks the highest-peering hills;
 So Tamora:

Aaron's conception of Tamora is as an Olympian goddess, even above fortune. His conception of her is far too generous, for she is neither a goddess nor above fortune, having just experienced the most sorrowful loss of her son. But Aaron proceeds in his catalogue of Tamora:

Upon her wit doth earthly honour wait,
 And virtue stoops and trembles at her frown.
 Then, Aaron, arm thy heart, and fit thy thoughts
 To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress,
 And mount her pitch, whom thou in triumph long
 And faster bound to Aaron's charming eyes
 Than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus.

Tamora is not just a feared queen commanding great honour, but also one in whom Aaron could attain his desired greatness. Notwithstanding the fact that he desires power, Aaron thinks of himself as an amorous conqueror, as he specifies in words that practically steal a line from Tamburlaine's mouth:

Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!

I will be bright and shine in pearl and gold

To wait upon this new-made empress.

To wait, said I? To wanton with this queen,

This goddess, this Semiramis, this nymph,

This siren, that will charm Rome's Saturnine

And see his shipwrack and his commonweal's. (2.1.1-24 my emphasis)

The italicized line is paraphrased from Tamburlaine's "Lie here, ye weeds that I disdain to wear," spoken to Zenocrate upon her captivity, when Tamburlaine begins wooing her. Charney points out that Tamburlaine's wooing scene lacks the erotic tones of Aaron's speech, and also observes that we never hear Aaron speak in like manner again, concluding that Shakespeare is parodying Marlowe (1997 214-215). Shakespeare's purpose is to show that a Tamburlaine, or a Tamburlaine-like figure, is not realistic. But Shakespeare is also mocking Zenocrate, as Aaron's description of Tamora suggests. Aaron characterizes Tamora as lusty, even sleazy. She is like Semiramis, the Assyrian queen remembered for her lust and beauty; she is also a siren, a nymph, and a queen, the latter term, a pun on "quean," also denoting a prostitute, all types of women that bring destruction to men. Of course, Aaron's sexism is ironically apparent, for he is also describing some of his own characteristics, but it is Shakespeare's indirect reference to

Zenocrate that is intriguing, because in so describing Tamora, Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that Zenocrate too easily gave in to Tamburlaine's charm, preferring the crown at the cost of her conscience—and her betrothed Arabia.

Marlowe's style is equally present in the Prince of Morocco's speech over the caskets in *The Merchant of Venice*, which is actually a parody of Tamburlaine's speech following Zenocrate's death.²¹⁷ Morocco says,

From the four corners of the earth they come
 To kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint.
 The Hyrcanian deserts and the vasty wilds
 Of wide Arabia are as thoroughfares now
 For princes to come view fair Portia. (2.7.39-43)

Shapiro points also to Morocco's earlier speech, in which "he conflates prowess in the field with winning the object of his desire":

By this scimitar
 That slew the Sophy and a Persian prince,
 That won three fields of sultan Solyman,
 I would o'erstare the sternest eyes that look,
 Outbrave the heart most daring on the earth,
 Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
 Yea, mock the lion when 'a roars for prey,
 To win thee, lady. (2.1.24-31)

The lines do not suit the action of the play, and especially not this scene, because

²¹⁷See also Brooke (42).

Morocco's heroics are not required for the simple task of choosing a casket, and so it seems that Shakespeare is mocking Marlowe's protagonists as irrelevant in the new age of "venture capital and Bassanio's mercantile hazarding" (Shapiro 1988 274). Nevertheless, Shakespeare was clearly impressed by Marlowe's poetry, and turned to it time and again, proving that Marlowe's art was the most "consistently subject to . . . containment [either] by completing or continuing it" (Shapiro 1988 277 note 1).²¹⁸ Shakespeare imitates Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* also, but relocates the King of Navarre in *Love's Labour's Lost* (Shapiro 1991 103). In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare imitates Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd" (3.1.16-25). In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare refers to Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* with the words "little room," and is likely also referring to Marlowe's murder in the bar:

When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit
seconded by the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead
than a great reckoning in a little room" (3.3.10-13).²¹⁹

In *Julius Caesar*, Caesar's famous repetition that he "shall go forth," made in answer to Calpurnia's plea that he not go out on the Ides of March, is a mimicking of Marlowe's Guise in *The Massacre*, where the Guise himself haughtily responds to pleas not to go forth.²²⁰

Yet Caesar shall go forth.

²¹⁸By "containment," Shapiro means that Shakespeare attempted to emulate Marlowe in such a way that Shakespeare proved himself as capable a dramatist. See also page 33, above.

²¹⁹O. W. F. Lodge was the first to suggest that this statement refers to the famous Inn brawl, especially because the court deposition calls the brawl "le recknynge." I took the reference from Shapiro 1991 115).

²²⁰Shapiro (1991 123-124) also points to Shakespeare's adoption of Marlowe in this scene of *Julius Caesar*, as does Steane in his edition of Marlowe's plays (601).

Let mean conceits and baser men fear death:

Tut, they are peasants. I am Duke of Guise;

And princes with their looks engender fear.

After his stabbing, he responds, "Thus Caesar did go forth, and thus he died" (5.271-74, 94). Shakespeare's lines are similar, but spoken by Caesar himself, and capitalized upon not so much to make Caesar haughtier than the Guise—for that is likely not possible—but in order to remind the audience of another haughty ruler, Tamburlaine. Caesar says:

Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me

Ne'er looked but on my back. When they shall see

The face of Caesar, they are vanished.

A few lines later, he repeats,

Yet Caesar shall go forth; for these predictions

Are as the world in general as to Caesar.

And finally, he declares that

Danger knows full well

. That Caesar is more dangerous than he.

We are two lions littered in one day,

And I the elder and more terrible;

And Caesar shall go forth. (2.2.10-12, 29-30, 43-47)

Equally intriguing is Brutus' cry to the Romans, "Stoop, Romans, stoop,/And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood" (3.1.105-106), a speech reminiscent of two scenes in *Tamburlaine*, the first being Tamburlaine's cry to Bajazeth when forcing him to serve as his footstool: "Stoop, villain, stoop" (*1 Tamburlaine* 4.2.22), and the second being

Tamburlaine's cutting of his arm and enjoining his sons to

with your fingers search my wound,

And in my blood wash all your hands at once,

While I sit smiling to behold the sight. (2 *Tamburlaine* 3.2.126-128)

Garber astutely observes that Shakespeare even carries the smile into *Julius Caesar*, in Calpurnia's dream of Caesar's statue

which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,

Did run pure blood, and many lusty Romans

Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it. (2.2.77-79)

Shakespeare is actually also comparing Caesar to Tamburlaine in both attitude and language. Like Tamburlaine, Caesar speaks about himself as the most powerful entity alive. In saying so, he is also asking the audience to remember Tamburlaine's declaration in 2 *Tamburlaine* when, even as he is dying, Tamburlaine presents himself on the field in order to scare off the enemy:

My looks shall make them fly; and, might I follow,

There should not one of all the villain's power

Live to give offer of another fight. . . .

Draw, you slaves!

In spite of death, I will go show my face.

Thus are the villains, cowards fled for fear,

Like summer's vapours vanish'd by the sun. . . . (5.3.108-117)

In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare repeats two words from Tamburlaine's speech, "face" and "vanished," but he also has Caesar comparing himself to a lion, a comparison also made

of *Tamburlaine* (1 *Tamburlaine* 1.2.52). Clearly, Shakespeare is re-presenting the theme from *Tamburlaine*, the idea of a ruler who believes that he has a right to rule, and will stop at nothing to achieve his ambition.²²¹

What is most intriguing about Shakespeare's emulation of Marlowe is the fact that Shakespeare follows many of his contemporaries in imitating Marlowe's best known protagonist, *Tamburlaine*. *Tamburlaine* was by far the most imitated play in the Renaissance, with ten of the thirty-eight extant plays performed between 1587 and 1593 clearly indebted to it, and these imitations were enjoyed by popular audiences for their "splendid rhetoric and glamorous stage effects without having to yield to the discomfort of unconventional ideas" represented by Marlowe's play (Berek 58-59).²²² But the great gulf between Marlowe's play and *Tamburlaine*'s "weak sons," as Berek calls the imitations, because they attempt "to exploit new sensations while clinging to an undisturbing moral vision" (68), is not present in Shakespeare who, instead of evading the issues Marlowe raises, recasts them in English history, an attempt Marlowe does not make. My argument is supported by the fact that Shakespeare was clearly concerned with historiographical issues and how they bear on politics, and thus invented the English history play in order to explore the relationship of history to politics. The history play was

²²¹ In a brilliant reading of the Player's speech in *Hamlet*, Shapiro argues that the speech is a reference to Marlowe's *Dido* and "The Passionate Shepherd," further arguing that *Hamlet* "chiefly loved" this speech because it recalls for him a simpler, black and white time "in which remorseless killers like Pyrrhus could revenge the death of a father and murder a king without a moment's hesitation" (Shapiro 1991 130).

²²² Richard Levin traces the contemporary perception of *Tamburlaine* and shows that it was generally positive, its protagonist typically "perceived as a triumphant figure who possessed and wielded tremendous power" (57).

largely abandoned soon after Shakespeare himself ceased writing about English history.²²³ By far, Shakespeare's *intertextualization*²²⁴ of Marlowe's words centres on *Tamburlaine*, beginning with the *Henry VI* plays, moving on to *Richard III*, and ending with *Henry V*, the play that finally closes the chapter on Shakespeare's dialogue with Machiavelli. Here, I do not suggest that Shakespeare never refers to Machiavelli again—for example *Macbeth* is a play that is in dialogue with the Italian Secretary, but that *Henry V* gives Shakespeare's final answer to the vexing question of how an ideal Machiavellian prince can successfully work in history.

4.2. 1 *Henry VI*

Henry VI is really a third part to *Tamburlaine*,²²⁵ essentially showing that heirs to megalomaniac tyrants rarely sustain the empires founded by their fathers. Shakespeare's play literally begins with a "dead march" preparing for the passage of Henry V's "hearse" (1.1.104), words that recall the "doleful march" attending Zenocrate's "hearse" in 2 *Tamburlaine* (3.2).²²⁶ Shapiro speculates that Shakespeare's play may have even used the same hearse employed in *Tamburlaine* because both plays were performed at Henslowe's Rose, thus visually unifying the two plays. But more important correspondences between

²²³F. P. Wilson first pointed out this fact (106), followed by Ornstein (6), and then by Rackin (31). Rackin further adds that in Shakespeare's hands the history play "was clearly an experimental genre" (27).

²²⁴I prefer this word because it is objective, whereas *parody* carries with it negative connotations and *imitation* suggests no or little change of the original. Intertextuality, on the other hand, can be applied in a number of manners, from simple echos or allusions to another text, to direct quotations of a text, or a host of other references to the text being included in the new work.

²²⁵Riggs (98) and Shapiro arrive at the same conclusion. In the following section, my analysis meets Shapiro's (86-88) on many points.

²²⁶In a later section of this chapter, I will speculate on why Shakespeare wrote the two tetralogies in the reverse order.

the two plays come from the similar speeches spoken by Bedford and Tamburlaine. In *Henry VI*, the very first words spoken are by Bedford:

Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!
 Comets, importing change of times and states,
 Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,
 And with them scourge the bad revolting stars
 That have consented unto Henry's death! (1.1.1-5)

This speech clearly recalls Tamburlaine the "scourge," specifically when he remonstrates against heaven for taking away Zenocrate. He tells his generals to arm themselves, to

Raise cavalieros higher than the clouds,
 And with the cannon break the frame of heaven;
 Batter the shining palace of the sun,
 And shiver all the starry firmament,
 For amorous Jove hath snatch'd my love from hence. (*Two* 2.4.103-107)

To make the comparison with Tamburlaine certain, Gloucester answers Bedford with words that in spirit match Marlowe's "high astounding terms":

Virtue he had, deserving to command;
 His brandished sword did blind men with his beams;
 His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings;
 His sparkling eyes, replete with wrathful fire,
 More dazzled and drove back his enemies
 Than midday sun fierce bent against their faces.
 What should I say? His deeds exceed all speech:

He ne'er lift up his hand but conquered. (1.1.9-16)

Like Tamburlaine, Henry V was able to conquer without effort. His thoughts extended to his hands, bypassing speech and becoming deeds. The whole speech is reminiscent of Menaphon's dragon-like description of Tamburlaine:

Of stature tall, and straightly fashioned
 Like his desire, lift upwards and divine.
 So large of limbs, his joints so strongly knit,
 Such breadth of shoulders as might mainly bear
 Old Atlas' burden. 'Twixt his manly pitch. . .
 Are fix'd his piercing instruments of sight,
 Whose fiery circles bear encompassed
 A heaven of heavenly bodies in their spheres. . . . (2.1.7-16)

The comparison of the two kings is extended, recalling Tamburlaine's shameful torture of his captive kings drawing him in his chariot (2 *Tamburlaine* 4.3), but in Shakespeare's play, the lords compare themselves to Tamburlaine's captive kings, glorifying Henry as the "pamper'd jades of Asia" glorified Tamburlaine:

We mourn in black; why mourn we not in blood?
 Henry is dead and never shall revive.
 Upon a wooden coffin we attend,
 And death's dishonourable victory
 We with our stately presence glorify,
 Like captives bound to a triumphant car.
 What! Shall we curse the planets of mishap

That plotted thus our glory's overthrow? (1.1.17-24)

By drawing on *Tamburlaine* for words, Shakespeare makes Henry's vision overlap with Tamburlaine's. The speech is also a throwback to Tamburlaine's speech cursing the heavens for taking away Zenocrate. What follows, however, is Shakespeare's critical "transition from the world and language of heroic drama to one in which its ceremonials have no place, where the complex political interactions leave little room for the celebration of the heroic" (Shapiro 1991 88). The lords' bickering in the very presence of Henry's hearse sets the stage for the drama that is about to transpire, the drama that will ask, and attempt to answer, the question of what happens when a king of Tamburlaine's and Henry V's stature passes away. The answer, as Shakespeare will have it, is that a breakdown of the state is inevitable. David Riggs correctly notes that Shakespeare "reshaped Marlowe's heroic values to the point where they could be accommodated within a portrayal of fifteenth century English history on the Elizabethan stage" (21). This is not to say that Marlowe was not aware of the historical realities—he was too aware—but his interest lay in the exploration of the unchecked, extra-historical, abstract heroic qualities that a Tamburlaine or a Henry V possesses. History "treats" us to such men, who use and abuse those qualities, often exterminating everything before them. Do we honour these men, or do we thank our stars upon their deaths? This is Marlowe's question. Shakespeare very much understands Marlowe's question, recasts it in history, and extends it, asking "What then?"

Shakespeare hints at the answer to his question early in the first tetralogy, and by *Richard III* he provides a provisional one, which is to conceive of Richard in a similar way to Tamburlaine, but in order to do so one must remember Tamburlaine, and in Joan

La Pucelle Shakespeare provides us with a fully parodied Tamburlaine, for she too is a shepherd who throws off her “base vocation” in order to become a famed warrior and a scourge of God. She mimics Marlowe’s “high astounding terms” when she asserts her superiority to her French male compatriots:

My courage try by combat, if thou dar’st,
 And thou shalt find that I exceed my sex.
 Resolve on this, thou shalt be fortunate
 If thou receive me for thy warlike mate. (*1 Henry VI* 1.2.89-92)

The Dauphin acknowledges the Marlovian terms of Joan’s speech, and then proceeds to mock her (and Marlowe’s) style by punning on her declaration of courage, especially following her final line above:

Thou hast astonished me with thy high terms;
 Only this proof I’ll of thy valour make,
 In single combat thou shalt buckle with me,
 And if thou vanquishest, thy words are true;
 Otherwise I renounce all confidence. (93-97)

And a few lines later, the Dauphin further elevates Joan:

Was Mahomet inspired with a dove?
 Thou with an eagle art inspired then.
 Helen, the mother of great Constantine,
 Nor yet Saint Philip’s daughters, were like thee.
 Bright star of Venus, fall’n down on the earth,
 How may I reverently worship thee enough? (140-145)

Here, the Dauphin begins his idolatrous worship of Joan, turning her not only into the pagan goddess of love, but also into the Devil himself. The Dauphin extends this idolatry later, after the victory at Rouen, when he declares that

... all the priests and friars in my realm

Shall in procession sing her endless praise. . . .

No longer on Saint Denis will we cry,

But Joan la Pucelle shall be France's saint. (1.6.19-29)

Riggs, who first established the connection between Joan and Tamburlaine, argues that this speech confuses "Marlovian paganism. . . with Romish Catholicism," and that Joan suggests "divine Zenocrate" (107). Riggs takes his reading too far, failing to observe that Shakespeare is actually mocking the Dauphin, especially in comparison with the Dauphin's English opposite, Talbot, who relies on his own honour and courage, and not on anyone else's, to fight and win.²²⁷ Even Shakespeare's glorification of Tamburlaine-like Talbot, who describes himself as one who "Razeth your cities, and subverts your towns,/And in a moment makes them desolate" (2.3.65-66), is made physically to resemble a weakling, surprising the Countess who asks,

Is this the scourge of France?

Is this the Talbot, so much feared abroad

That with his name the mothers still their babies?

I see report is fabulous and false.

I thought I should have seen some Hercules,

A second Hector, for his grim aspect

²²⁷Cartelli (86) also points to the Tamburlaine echoes in *2 Henry VI* (4.7.110-115, 5.1.28-29).

And large proportion of his strong-knit limbs.

Alas, this is a child, a silly dwarf!

It cannot be this weak and writhled shrimp

Should strike such terror to his enemies. (2.3.15-24)

Talbot's answer is equally spoken in Marlovian terms, but to mock Marlowe's conception of *Tamburlaine*, for according to Talbot it is not necessary that a conqueror be huge in physical proportion:

No, no, I am but shadow of myself:

You are deceived, my substance is not here,

For what you see is but the smallest part

And least proportion of humanity.

I tell you, madam, were the whole frame here,

It is of such a spacious lofty pitch,

Your roof were not sufficient to contain't. (2.3.50-56)

Shakespeare further humanizes Talbot by making him lose a battle to Joan (1.5).

Shakespeare's point is that not everyone who possesses *virtù* is able to win all battles and rule, especially if such a person is more concerned with his country, not himself. Talbot is such a person, losing battles and dying, and his country, as a consequence of his death, suffers. *Fortuna*, coupled with our inability to account for all contingencies, has a way of breaking us down.

4.3. 2 *Henry 6*

In 2 *Henry 6*, Shakespeare returns to the themes found in *Tamburlaine*, but this time to

reformulate them without the comic interpolations found in *1 Henry VI*. Specifically, Shakespeare is interested in the declaration reverberating throughout *Tamburlaine*, that certain people have the right to rule by virtue of their strength, honour, energy—their *virtù*. York, a shadow of a Machiavellian character, declares,

Ah, Sancta Majestas! Who would not buy thee dear;

Let them obey that knows not how to rule.

This hand was made to handle naught but gold;

I cannot give due action to my words

Except a sword or sceptre balance it. (*2 Henry 6* 5.1.5-9)

When he does meet the ineffectual King Henry VI, York mocks him:

King did I call thee? No! Thou are not king,

Not fit to govern and rule multitudes,

Which dar'st not, no, nor canst not rule a traitor.

That head of thine doth not become a crown;

Thy hand is made to grasp a palmer's staff

And not to grace an awful princely sceptre.

That gold must round engirt these brows of mine,

Whose smile and frown, like to Achilles' spear,

Is able with the change to kill and cure.

Here is a hand to hold a sceptre up

And with the same to act controlling laws.

Give place. By heaven, thou shalt rule no more

O'er him whom heaven created for thy ruler. (5.1.93-106)

Like Tamburlaine, York asserts his right to rule based not on lineage, as Henry's is, but on *virtù*, which includes balancing the sceptre with the sword. Riggs points out that in this speech York does *not* reiterate his hereditary claims to the throne. He does, however, reinvigorate Menaphon's description of Tamburlaine, especially of his eyebrows, and the comparison with Achilles:

Pale of complexion, wrought in him with passion,
 Thirsting with sovereignty and love of arms,
 His lofty brows in folds do figure death,
 And in their smoothness amity and life.
 About them hangs a knot of amber hair,
 Wrapped in curls, as fierce Achilles' was,
 On which the breath of heaven delights to play,
 Making it dance with wanton majesty. (*1 Tamburlaine* 2.1.19-26)

York, too, has brows that could "kill and cure."²²⁸ This repetition of the semiotics of the body are metonyms for commanding authority, a necessary component of rulership, which Henry VI lacks, as proved in his description of kingliness when he prophesies the rise of "England's hope":

This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
 His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
 His head by nature framed to wear a crown,
 His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself

²²⁸ Also to be noted is the comparison between York's hand and Tamburlaine's "arms and finger," described in the following four lines of this speech. The power of the king's look's ability to grant or take life is repeated in *1 Tamburlaine* (2.5.57-64, and 3.2.72-75), with the word "brow" repeated in the latter speech.

Likely in time to bless a regal throne. (*3 Henry VI* 4.6.68-74)

Henry describes a king like himself, tending to the art of prayer, not the art of ruling—lacking *virtù*. The timing of his prophesy, spoken shortly after he had resolved to withdraw from the world of politics in order to live a pastoral life, is proof of his tendency:

Therefore, that I may conquer fortune's spite

By living low, where fortune cannot hurt me,

And that the people of this blessed land

May not be punished with my thwarting stars. . . . (4.6.19-22)

The fact that Henry VI describes the first Tudor monarch in such peaceful means belies the fact that Henry VII seized power with the sword.

4.4. Richard III

Having taken the movement thus far, Shakespeare will now tease us with a provisional answer—his version of a “weak son,” an English Tamburlaine but with a crooked back instead of Tamburlaine’s “stature tall.” In *3 Henry VI*, Richard is identified with Tamburlaine, even echoing Tamburlaine’s famous desire for “The sweet fruition of an earthly crown” (*1 Tamburlaine* 2.6.29):

And, father, do but think

How sweet a thing it is to wear a crown,

Within whose circuit is Elysium

And all that poets feign of bliss and joy. (*3 Henry VI* 1.2.28-31)

Like Tamburlaine, Richard moves from one conquest to another, except his conquests are

largely had through language, and when he murders, unlike Tamburlaine, it is a few people within a specific stratum of society, typically members of the nobility. Nonetheless, Richard remains far from Tamburlaine. When he eventually possesses the crown, Richard is overthrown—almost immediately following his grasp of the crown—and order is restored with the new Tudor monarch. Without doubt, the providential ending of *Richard III* is unsatisfying, even unpersuasive.²²⁹ We can speculate that at that time Shakespeare found no other way in which he could conclude his tetralogy without altering English history, and so turned to the predictable *Deus ex machina* form.²³⁰ It is also possible, as Shapiro argues, that Shakespeare simply wanted to dramatize the tension between “the overreaching hero set against the inevitability of the providential scheme that brings him low,” a pattern that Marlowe followed in *Edward II*, *The Massacre at Paris*, and *Faustus* (1991 96).²³¹ This point is echoed by Ribner, who suggests that *Richard III* continues the theme found in *Tamburlaine* but that, in opposition to Marlowe, Shakespeare disapproves of the protagonist’s drive for power (1965 113). Ribner, however, cannot with certainty declare that Marlowe approves of Tamburlaine’s conduct, because Marlowe has his hero cut off as well, although not in the manner in which Shakespeare has Richard cut off. In opposition to the Shakespeare of the first tetralogy, and as we saw in the previous chapter, Marlowe’s play is rooted in a non-providential, Machiavellian historiographical context. Shakespeare’s dissatisfaction with his ending of *Richard III*, and his desire to revise his own notions about what drives

²²⁹Shapiro also concludes that the ending to *Richard III* is “not entirely persuasive” (96).

²³⁰This is a term that Rackin also applies to the play (56).

²³¹I am not convinced that this moralistic pattern in Marlowe is the essence of his plays.

history, cause him to revisit his parodic gestures of Marlowe's Scythian tyrant, but this time Shakespeare arms himself with a more certain, less God-centred, and perhaps even more cynical view of history and politics—a Machiavellian view of history tinged with Marlowe's dialogue with the Italian's perspective. Turning to the history that eventually led to the fall of Richard III, Shakespeare is able to offer not only an exciting history of England's most honoured king, Henry V, but also a corrective to his own history of Henry V's failed successor. At the same time as Shakespeare is able to correct his own previous historical assumptions, he is able to retract his parody of Marlowe, but not without first acknowledging Marlowe's—and Machiavelli's—accurate view that tyrants often do place their desires for rule before anything else, the very desires that drive history. My argument, summarized, is that Shakespeare offers the same view as Marlowe regarding “the nature of heroism, kingship, and drama,” but unlike Marlowe he presents the vision within the societal constraints of Elizabethan England.²³² Whereas Richard is conceived of as “a puppet-master” who successfully combines the figure of the Machiavel with that of the jester, thus successfully playing everyone he encounters, in the end he himself proves to be a puppet played by God, for example acquiring a conscience and admitting that “my mind is changed” (4.4.456 Mallett 66, 71). At the time of *Richard III*, Shakespeare was still captivated by the Medieval mould of thinking about kingship, which he gradually ditched, finally accepting the more “causal” issues of power and survival by talent and judgement—by *virtù*. During the writing of the first tetralogy, Shakespeare was still enthralled by the “two levels of providence” with which his sources had furnished him:

²³² Here, I am offering a corrective to Garber who argues that “Shakespeare made use of Marlowe in advancing his own, very different theories about the nature of heroism, kingship, and drama itself” (3). I argue that Shakespeare's theories do not differ from Marlowe's.

“general providence, leading to the eventual accession of the Tudors, and particular providence, a kind of even-handed justice which ensures that the murderers become the murdered” (Mallett 65). By the end of the first tetralogy, these two schemes co-exist, but “with a Machiavellian stress on the clashing of human wills” (65). According to this reading, Henry VI is then sacrificed in order to pay for Richard II’s murder (general providence) while at the same time he (Henry VI) is seen as an incompetent king (human will). These opposing worldviews—providential versus human—are made to clash in *Richard III* where Richard not only opposes, but also defies, providence by paraphrasing Machiavellian principles, here substituting “conscience” for “religion”:

Conscience is but a word that cowards use,

Devised at first to keep the strong in awe;

Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law! (5.3.310-312)

But Richard cannot sustain this perspective; Henry V can, and does.²³³ Having described how an empire falls, and how would-be rulers attempt to thrust themselves into power, Shakespeare turns the clock back to the time when the now-lost English empire was built, and how a successful ruler built it. Shakespeare had, by the mid-1590's, seen and contemplated Machiavellian political precepts on the Marlovian stage and, having accepted their truths regarding the hard workings of *de facto* power, decided to dramatize them himself, but within the English historical tradition of its most admired and

²³³ Mallett argues that Henry V “is intelligible to us only if we see him as a trickster. . . . by being a kind of Machiavel, a completely successful trickster in moral terms, with the result that we can no longer speculate as to what, if anything, lies in the inner man” (64-65). Mallett’s article is one of the most fascinating readings of *Henry V* I have encountered, but I disagree with Mallett on this particular point. We do, and so do the Bishops and the French, see what is in Henry V, and so we do not encounter a “blankness” in the King, but fear, which is why Henry can lead England to war without anyone opposing his policy. Henry relies on the instillment of fear in those who successfully pierce the façade of kindness, holiness, etc., that he puts up. In like fashion to Mallett, but without reference to him, Greenblatt reads Henry as a “juggler” (1988 41), using the term supposedly Marlowe attributed to Moses.

successful practitioner, the glorified Henry V. As a successful practitioner of Machiavellian politics, Henry's conduct "is more appalling than anything in *Richard III*" (Mallett 65). Henry is Shakespeare's equivalent to Marlowe's Ferneze, and *Henry V* marks "the disintegration of theologically based notions about service to the king" (Cannon 86), replacing the notion not with another superior, metaphysical notion that enjoins us to obey the king, but with the simple, Machiavellian notion that deception or outright force compels us to obey the king. Henry V is the *historical-ideal* Tamburlaine/Machiavellian prince. Shakespeare has finally made the leap to Machiavellian consciousness.

4.5. Shakespeare's Corrective: The Second Tetralogy

Richard II begins Shakespeare's second historical cycle by paying homage both to Marlowe and Machiavelli. By echoing Marlowe's "face that launched a thousand ships" speech (*Faustus* 5.1.97-116), Shakespeare was suggesting that Richard's fall was to cause the fall of England just as Helen's face caused the fall of Troy; and England's other name was Troynovaunt, New Troy (Garber 3). By admitting that Bolingbroke "outfaced" him, Richard is also comparing the usurping king to Tamburlaine.²³⁴ Echoing some of Machiavelli's advice regarding how kings lose power, as I outlined in Chapter Two, Shakespeare then proceeds to show us how kings gain and maintain power. A weak king

²³⁴Here is Richard's whole speech:

Was this face the face
That every day under his household roof
Did keep ten thousand men? Was this the face
That, like the sun, did make beholders wink?
Is this the face which faced so many follies,
And was at last outfaced by Bolingbroke? (*Richard II* 4.1.282-287)

is not desirable because he causes the ruin of nations. Having shown how Richard II falls—he is the epitome of the failed Machiavellian prince—Shakespeare moves on to show not only a Machiavellian-like king in Henry IV,²³⁵ but also comes back to parody Tamburlaine, except this time in order to show the unsuccessful and successful Tamburlaine-like men in history, represented by Hotspur and Henry V respectively.

Garber likens Hotspur to Tamburlaine, not only in the comparison of the two characters to the heroes of classical mythology, but also in their categorization as rebels who align themselves with usurping kings and then turn on them for their own gain. But it is their language especially that brings the two men into the same camp (Garber 4).

Hotspur's own "mighty line" runs thus:

By heaven methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks. . . . (*1 Henry 4* 1.3.199-203)

Hotspur's language is that of overreaching, and an echo of a passage from *1 Tamburlaine* in which the tortured Bajazeth implores

Ye Furies, that can mask invisible,
Dive to the bottom of Avernus' pool,
And in your hands bring hellish poison up,
And squeeze it in the cup of Tamburlaine! (4.4.17-20)

²³⁵Ribner was the first scholar to outline Henry IV's Machiavellism, and later, Rutter. I will argue that in fact Henry V is the actual ideal Machiavellian, not his father, although they are quite close in their approaches to ruling.

The speech that most juxtaposes Hotspur with Tamburlaine is the one the Englishman gives on the battlefield at Shewsbury:

And if we live, we live to tread on kings;

If die, brave death, when princes die with us. (5.2.85-86)

The echo of the speech is not only to words, but also to a literal treading upon a king, for Tamburlaine had used Bajazeth as his footstool. Zabina denounces Tamburlaine for “treading him [Bajazeth] beneath thy loathsome feet” (*I Tamburlaine* 4.2.64).

Shakespeare further echoes Marlowe when he has Hotspur claim that he will redirect the Trent river’s course in order to force a more equitable division of the land between him and the other rebels (Mortimer and Glendower):

I’ll have the current in this place dammed up,

And here the smug and silver Trent shall run

In a new current fair and evenly.

It shall not wind with such a deep indent

To rob me of so rich a bottom here.

Glendower: Not wind? It shall, it must! You see it doth. (3.1.100-105)

The parody comes from the comparison of this speech to Tamburlaine’s complaint to Zenocrate that all maps lie, and that with his pen

I will confute those blind geographers

That make a triple region of the world,

Excluding regions that I mean to trace,

And with this pen reduce them to a map,

Calling the provinces, cities, and towns,

After my name and thine, Zenocrate. (*1 Tamburlaine* 4.4.81-86)

In *2 Tamburlaine*, while dying, Tamburlaine demands a map of the world so he can “see how much/Is left for me to conquer all the world” (5.3.124-125). Tamburlaine’s claims, in contrast to Hotspur’s, are quite modest, because Tamburlaine is only seeking to conquer the world in order to change it, not to divert a river. Hotspur’s claims are intended to overreach even mighty Tamburlaine. Garber further points out that Shakespeare’s Holinshed source for *Henry IV* only records the intended division of the kingdom, in one sentence, without referring to anyone’s dissatisfaction with the plan. Shakespeare thus invented the river episode in order to highlight Hotspur’s characteristic as Shakespeare had thought of him for the purposes of the play (Garber 6-7).

Garber labels Shakespeare’s recalling of Tamburlaine “a metadramatic confrontation” whose purpose is to show that “Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere. . . /And all the budding honours on thy crest/I’ll crop to make a garland for my head” (*1 Henry 4* 5.4.64, 71-72), as Hal declares to Hotspur when finally confronting him, literally stealing the very last words out of Hotspur’s mouth. Garber reads the “two stars” as Shakespeare and Marlowe, that is, “Hal’s victory over Hotspur as a metaphor for Shakespeare’s dramatic victory over Marlowe, a subversion of the Marlovian sublime into a tempered mold of revision and balanced complexity” (7). Garber’s examples of Marlovian impulses in Shakespeare are reasonable enough, but she takes her conclusion too far, assuming, for example, that Shakespeare was proud of Henry V, a reading I do not share and in which I will engage momentarily. For all of Garber’s insight, she still falls in the camp of elevating Shakespeare up above everyone else, but at the cost of another

genius, Marlowe.²³⁶

The most famous parody of Tamburlaine, by far, is Pistol's

Shall packhorses

And hollow pampered jades of Asia,

Which cannot go but thirty mile a day,

Compare with Caesars, and with Cannibals,

And Trojan Greeks? (*2 Henry 4* 2.4.167-171)

Pistol's parody is actually an attempt to pass himself off as the heroic figure of Tamburlaine.²³⁷ This effort was begun in *2 Henry IV*, continues in *Henry V*, and is significant in a number of ways, not the least of which is the fact that it supports the argument made by Richard Levin, that Tamburlaine was received as a heroic figure by the Elizabethan public. More significant than this argument, however, is Shakespeare's underhanded commentary both on the abstract Tamburlaine hero, as dramatized by Marlowe, and on the actual Tamburlaine-like hero as dramatized by Shakespeare himself, in the guise of Henry V. Pistol's mockery of Tamburlaine forces us to compare Tamburlaine with Henry V while forcing us to question the very notion of what it is to be heroic. I use the word "mockery" purposely, repeating the Chorus' directive in Act Four of *Henry V*, bidding us to "sit and see,/Minding true things by what their mock'ries be" (52-53). The word "mockeries" has a dual meaning, connoting both imitation and parody in the negative sense, and we are reminded of its use by the newly installed Henry V, near

²³⁶I admit that I, too, engage in "Bardolatry" and, admittedly, Shakespeare is superior to his contemporaries, not only in poetry, but also in dramatic structure. Having said this, I also believe that Marlowe has outdone Shakespeare in a number of plays, especially in Shakespeare's early plays. One wonders what Marlowe's achievements would have been had he lived beyond his twenty-nine years.

²³⁷Leslie Hotson was the first to make this point (qtd. in Barton 1975 100).

the close of 2 *Henry 4*,

And, Princes all, believe me, I beseech you,

My father is gone wild into his grave,

For in his tomb lie my affections,

And with his spirits sadly I survive,

To mock the expectation of the world,

To frustrate prophecies, and to raze out

Rotten opinion, who hath writ me down

After my seeming.

(5.2.122-129)

Henry's use of the word is slippery, for he is openly telling everyone that he was deceptive in his Hal days, that he, as king, no longer is. This reply is in opposition to his retort to the Dauphin's gift of tennis balls, an angry answer in which Henry blames his merriment on simple youth but also admits that his youthful mockeries were actually a process of learning:

And we understand him well,

How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,

Not measuring what use we made of them. . . .

And tell the pleasant prince this mock of his

Hath turned his balls to gunstones, and his soul

Shall stand sore charged for the wasteful vengeance

That shall fly with them; for many a thousand widows

Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands,

Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down;

And some are yet ungotten and unborn

That shall have cause to curse the Dauphin's scorn. (*Henry V* 1.2.266-288)

But to admit deception will itself prove to be the strongest deception, at the end of 2 *Henry 4*, for example, telling the world that he knows not Falstaff, and in *Henry V* pretending not to know Bardolph and deceiving all his soldiers by disguising himself as one of them.

Mockery, however, also serves as a criticism of the king in other ways, especially in his comparison with the ordinary English folk. A few lines following the Chorus in *Henry V*, and speaking to the disguised King, Pistol himself claims to be "as good a gentleman as the Emperor" (4.1.42), and earlier he had deceived Fluellen to the extent that the Captain compares Pistol to Mark Anthony (3.6.14). But Shakespeare's most biting critique of Henry (and Tamburlaine) is made at the point where Henry orders the French soldiers killed and Pistol then sounds his French line, "Coup' la gorge," a line often stricken from the play, usually with Henry's order that "every soldier kill his prisoners" (4.6.37). I will return to this important discussion later.²³⁸ Of course, there are other similarities between the king and Pistol, including, for example, the fact that both steal, Pistol on a small scale, but Henry from the Church and the Commons (forcing them to finance his wars), and both succeed in deceiving others. And when Henry and Pistol encounter each other before the battle of Agincourt, they in fact encounter each other's "ghost."²³⁹ The most important aspect of Henry V, however, is his dichotomous

²³⁸The Signet paperback edition includes Henry's order but expunges Pistol's statement. The Oxford edition has both, and is one of the few to do so. Shapiro is one of the few critics to point this out, and my reading is close to his (1991 101).

²³⁹The word is Shapiro's, although he applies it only to Pistol as Henry's ghost (101).

characterization by Shakespeare, both as a prince who desires to be no less than a Tamburlaine, and as a man who desires to be seen no less than as a pious Christian, a marriage of two manners of being that is in fact perfectly incompatible but works to great political advantage, triumphantly creating the multiple selves that satisfy all expectations and all strata of society: "Everyone sees how you appear, few touch what you are; and these few dare not oppose the opinion of many. . ." (*Il Principe* 18.71).

4.6. Henry V: Marlowe and Machiavelli Amalgamated

Henry V is "warlike," "mirror of all Christian kings," a "royal captain," has a "cheerful semblance," gives a "largess universal like the sun," is able to "thaw cold fear," his body is a "paradise [for] celestial spirits," he is versed in theology, politics, and war, is able to solve any problem whatever by "unloosening the Gordian knot," and is a masterful rhetorician, able to speak "sweet and honey'd sentences." These qualities have led scholars like Ribner to call Henry "Shakespeare's Christian Tamburlaine, noteworthy for his mercy rather than cruelty, and for his submission to the will of God rather than rebellion against it" (1965 185). This characterization of Henry V is doubtful²⁴⁰ because Henry is Christian only in talk, for example ordering the slaughter of the French prisoners, a most un-Christian action. Henry fully accepts Machiavelli's dictum to seem religious but not actually be so (P 18.70). Robert Egan takes up Ribner's account of Henry and reads it in a more complex manner, arguing that Henry starts out as a man characterized by a dichotomous personality of a Christian man and a conquering prince, the latter being the only identity Tamburlaine, not being Christian, accepts for himself. Finally, Egan

²⁴⁰Battenhouse calls it "superficial" (1974 71).

argues, the sickness in Henry's army forces Henry to recognize his own mortality, to become fully aware of his own "rediscovered humanity," and to synthesize his identity, thus retaining "both sides of the dichotomy, making compromises when possible but otherwise remaining outward Prince and inward Christian," symbolized by his union with Katherine (26-27). Egan's argument, while complex, evades certain issues and commits a number of errors. First, Henry's order to slaughter the prisoners is given after what Egan calls Henry's "Christian pact" with his soldiers (27). Battenhouse further notes that the pact itself "is made on the basis of *coveting* honour," not brotherhood, and is supremely ironic because the Crispin brothers suffered for a cause radically different from Henry's (1974 72 original emphasis).²⁴¹ Furthermore, during his visit to his soldiers on the night before the battle of Agincourt, Henry is not so much patient with his soldiers, as evasive, not answering William's question regarding the justice or injustice of the war. Rather than becoming more human, as Egan would have it, Battenhouse argues that Henry "becomes somewhat steel-like, by his sacrificing to his chosen role a good deal of the natural humanity evident in his early scenes with Falstaff" (1974 72). Goddard goes even further, writing that Henry becomes "something that comes too close for comfort to Machiavelli's ideal prince" (267). Goddard's observation should not be shocking to anyone because this is exactly Shakespeare's purpose for Henry, showing us a Machiavellian/Tamburlainean prince in history. The assumptions that Egan, Battenhouse, and Goddard make is that Henry V is not the Hal of 1 and 2 *Henry 4*, when in fact he is, declaring at the beginning of the cycle that he is dissembling in order to learn how to manipulate the public when he eventually comes into the crown, a plan that obviously worked well enough to fool his

²⁴¹Henry's speech is in 4.3.

father. Both Henry V and Tamburlaine, for example, are compared to Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Henry is also shown to be desirous of “crowns and coronets” (2 Chorus 10), and what is not stated in *Henry V*, but which would have been clearly known by contemporary audiences, is that Henry, like Tamburlaine, died of a fever he had acquired during a foreign campaign. Moreover, the Chorus speaks of Henry VI losing the French realm. Ironically, the implicit and explicit statements in *Henry V* are the reverse of those made in *2 Tamburlaine*, where Tamburlaine’s death of a fever is explicitly stated, but the loss of his empire by his sons is only implied. The more evident similarities between *Henry V* and *Tamburlaine* are outlined below:²⁴²

- A. Both men liken themselves to the sun: Tamburlaine views himself as “the chiefest lamp of all the earth,” and Henry V declares that he will “rise. . . with so full a glory/That I will dazzle all the eyes of France.” Henry also directly likens himself to the sun in his first soliloquy in *1 Henry 4*.
- B. Both men disdain shepherding—Henry metaphorically—in favour of horsemanship. Tamburlaine famously discards his “shepherd’s weeds” and turns to conquer horsemen in order to become a conquering one. The opening Chorus enjoins us to imagine Harry with “horses. . . /Printing their proud hoofs i’t’h’ receiving earth” (27-28). In the next Chorus, we are told that “the youth of England. . . sell the pasture now to buy the horse” (2. 1, 5). When wooing Kate, Henry tells her that “thou wouldst think I had sold my farm to buy my crown,” and then adds that “vaulting into my saddle with my armour on my back” is a stronger skill in him than wooing a lady (5.2.125, 137).
- C. Exeter tells the French king that

²⁴²Battenhouse outlines these points as well (1974 73-75), and we share some analytical similarities, but there are also clear differences in our interpretations of the play.

if you hide the crown

Even in your hearts, there will he rake for it.

Therefore in fierce tempest is he coming,

In thunder and in earthquake, like a Jove,

That, if requiring fail, he will compel. . . . (2.4.97-101)

This speech parallels Tamburlaine's mocking of Mycetes' hiding of his crown, and it parallels Tamburlaine's frequent comparison of himself to Jove, to thunder, and to an earthquake.

- D. While it is true that Henry threatens atrocities more than he actually orders, nonetheless he does give the command to every soldier at Agincourt to "kill his prisoners," and shortly thereafter he threatens to cut the throat of every newly captured Frenchman (4.7.58-59), a threat not executed only because the French give the day to Henry a few lines later. In this threat, as in his threats at Harfleur, Henry V is as close to Tamburlaine as the legendary victory at Agincourt is close to the Scythian's legendary victories, a fact stressed by Shakespeare's acceptance of Henry's loss of only thirty men to the French 10 000, silently passing over Holinshed's admission that "other writers of greater credit affirm that there were slain above five or six hundred persons" (200-201).²⁴³ As Battenhouse well observes, Henry's humility after his battles, which I argue is a play to public opinion, is the only characteristic differentiating him from the Scythian tyrant. Even Henry's piety is actually a rhetorical strategy by which God's arm, not Henry's, becomes responsible for the bloodshed.

²⁴³Of course, even with these numbers the English victory over the French is legendary, but not as much as if the true numbers are as Shakespeare reports. Quotations of Holinshed are from the excerpts included in the individual Signet editions of Shakespeare's plays.

Ironically, even here, in his order that “be it death proclaimed through our host/To boast of this, or take that praise from God/Which is His only” (4.8.116-118), Henry’s *virtual* religiosity relies on his subjects’ *real* fear of death. Furthermore, Battenhouse observes that Kate’s language lesson is actually a critique of the English “hand,” which “consists of nails, bilbow, nick, and ‘de sin,’” and so reminds us of the sin of the English in cutting the necks of the French, a reminder repeated not only by Henry, but also by Pistol and Captain MacMorris, who says, “So God sa’ me, ‘tis shame to stand still, it is shame by my hand. And there is throats to be cut, and works to be done, and there ish nothing done, so Chrish sa’ me, law” (3.2.112-115). Captain Jamy ironically adds that, “By the mess [i.e. mass], ere theise eyes of mine take themselves to slomber, I’ll de gud service, or I’ll lig i’t’h’grund for it. Ay owe Got a death, and I’ll pay’t as valorously as I may, that sall I suerly do . . .” (116-119). This form of sacrilege—really an offer of human sacrifices—is certified by Henry himself when, after the battle of Agincourt, he orders the performance of “holy rites,” with the singing of “*Non nobis* and *Te Deum*” (4.8.124-125).²⁴⁴ The similarity to Tamburlaine’s banquet—a parody of the Last supper—after his defeat of Bajazeth is apparent (*I Tamburlaine* 4). And not unlike Tamburlaine’s offering of the banquet to “the god of war,” Henry’s holy rites are offered to the “God of battles” (4.1.277). Clearly, Henry is following his father’s advice to dissemble, to dress himself in “a robe pontifical,” “in such humility/That I did pluck allegiance from men’s hearts,” (*I Henry* 4 3.2.56, 51-52). Henry V, outdoing his father, becomes the Machiavellian king par excellence. The English Tamburlaine is ultimately less cruel than his Scythian predecessor only

²⁴⁴The Latin is for the beginning of Psalm 115, “Give praise not unto us, O God,” and of the canticle, “We praise Thee, O God.” See note to the Oxford edition of the play.

because Henry is constrained by the Christianity surrounding him.

- E. Tamburlaine's shedding of his blood by cutting his arm is more subtly repeated in *Henry V* by words, not action, when Henry tells his soldiers, "For he today that sheds his blood with me/Shall be my brother," and he envisions days in the future when every surviving member of this "band of brothers" will "strip his sleeve and show his scars/And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day'" (4.3.61-62, 60, 47-48).

Furthermore, Henry V equates honour with blood, as he tells his father when promising him that he will return to his proper way of conduct (as opposed to his life in the tavern): "I will wear a garment all of blood,/And stain my favours in a bloody mask" (1 *Henry 4* 3.2.135-136).

- F. Henry V's rejection of Falstaff who, Mistress Quickly declares, died of a broken heart because Henry banished him, is parallel to Tamburlaine's murder of his son, Calyphas. Fluellen, even though he calls Henry's rejection of Falstaff "good judgements" (4.7.43), nevertheless likens the rejection to Alexander's killing of his friend Cleitus (4.7.31-35). Battenhouse also argues that there is strong similarity between Calyphas and Falstaff, in that both are apathetic to military honour, both like to drink, and both are considered cowardly and a disgrace to the court, and both are discarded in order to improve the king's image (1974 75).²⁴⁵

- G. Pistol's famous remark, "Let us to France, like horseleeches, my boys,/To suck, to suck, the very blood to suck" (2.3.49-50), is said right after Falstaff's heart-wrenching death, thus not only foreshadowing the carnage about to take place in France, but also

²⁴⁵Of course, Falstaff's rejection, while sad, is nevertheless more humane than the murder of Calyphas by his own father.

suggesting that Henry V had treated Falstaff with the same barbarity.²⁴⁶ Pistol's lines also offer a corrective to the Archbishop's early euphemistic comparison of the troops to honeybees (1.2.187-189), an effort undertaken to redirect Henry V's threat to the Church onto France.

The seventh point is tied to another corrective, that intended by the comic interpolations, which also offer an opposing perspective to the Chorus. The Chorus itself, which Shakespeare seems to have borrowed from Greene and Peele's employment of the Chorus in their "conqueror" plays (Egan 18-19),²⁴⁷ is patriotic only on the surface, apologizing for speaking in war-like terms of Henry, thus rhetorically emphasizing Henry's status as a warrior, in opposition to his famous claim that "We are no tyrant, but a Christian king" (1.2.241).²⁴⁸ This important dichotomy was well understood by the Elizabethans, who correctly perceived that the combination of *raison d'état* and Christianity could be a powerful, tyrannical force difficult to overcome. Adams summarizes this sentiment well:

[A]udiences, or the more politicized among them, could sense at times that when those rival myths of power—the Christian prince and the Machiavellian tyrant—came into confrontation, they tended to fuse into a single, frightful image, one able to generate enormous popular fear because it expressed a real and even limitless power to destroy. (89)

²⁴⁶Battenhouse (1974 76) concurs with this reading.

²⁴⁷In particular, Greene's *Alphonsus* and Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*.

²⁴⁸Again, Rackin is non-committal in her view of Shakespeare's use of the Chorus. Rackin does admit that Shakespeare "deliberately clashed" the two views—those of the Chorus and the dramatic action—but she concludes that he lets both views "stand" (69), whereas I argue that the Chorus is undermined, itself being only provisionally patriotic.

In this last respect, much effort is expended in the play to ensure that Henry is regarded not as a tyrant, but as a Christian monarch, the very perception he himself attempts to uphold rhetorically—"so shall the world perceive" (*1 Henry 4* 5.5.58), all the while pursuing opposing policies.²⁴⁹ To maintain the Christian perception—a perception that Shakespeare explodes in the opening scene of the play, with the Bishops egging Henry on his course of war with France—Henry and his cohorts astutely employ non-Christian rhetoric when policies of war are suggested or pursued. God for Henry becomes the "God of battles," and when Exeter warns France to give in to Henry he tells the French that if they hide the crown Henry will "rake for it. . . . In thunder and in earthquake, like a Jove. . ." (2.4.97-100). This is the very military—and pagan—rhetoric introducing the play. The Chorus specifically refers to "warlike Harry, like himself," that is incomparable, "Assume the port of Mars, and at his heels/(Leashed in, like hounds) should famine, sword, and fire/Crouch for employment" (Prologue 5-7). This perspective sheds light on the difference between Henry's prayer and Shakespeare's other praying usurper king, Claudius.²⁵⁰ Unlike Claudius, who admits that his prayers for forgiveness are not genuine because he does not want to give up the throne, and God cannot be tricked into accepting false prayers, Henry V is less troubled by his prayers because he had prayed to the "God of Battles," and so in asking for victory in spite of the fact that his war is not a just war, he can hope that God would forgive him (Mallett 79-80). This attitude makes Harry not Christian but pagan, not meek but warlike, not charitable but as an employer of

²⁴⁹Taylor tries to force Henry into a moral stance with respect to the King's desires for war. Walking a very tight rope, Taylor reads the exchange between the King and the Church in the following manner: "Henry *may* be looking for a fight, [it is] not necessarily *this* fight or any fight he cannot morally justify to himself and others" (38 original emphases).

²⁵⁰It is interesting that Macbeth, Shakespeare's most guilt-ridden usurper king, could not pray.

famine, sword, and fire. In other words, Harry is like Tamburlaine.

To understand the full impact of Henry's prayer to the "God of battles," it is instructive to contrast it with Henry VII's prayer, which says:

O thou, whose captain I account myself,
 Look on my forces with a gracious eye! . . .
 Make us they ministers of chastisement,
 That we may praise thee in the victory!
 To thee I do commend my watchful soul
 Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes.

Sleeping and waking, O defend me still! (*Richard III* 5.3.109-118)²⁵¹

In contrast to the earlier Henry, Henry VII maintains himself as God's instrument, an acknowledgement suitable to a king who clearly believes in an active, superior force, and who believes himself to be the superior force's agent. Henry VII was pre-Machiavellian in his views. Henry V seems to believe in a supreme being, but in this particular speech, the God he prays to is the God of battles, a possible pagan god—likely Mars. Of course, Shakespeare wanted to ensure subtlety in his portrayal of Henry V, and having the admired English king pray to Mars would not have been looked on kindly by the English court, or the English public. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's Chorus likens Henry to Mars, the god of battles, and like Henry VII, Henry V calls himself God's instrument, except in his conception of himself as such, he fashions himself as God's scourge, like Tamburlaine, and he argues that war is God's punishment for sinners, restating the

²⁵¹Sullivan points to this contrast also (1996 142).

arguments in Psalms 139:7-10, and Jeremiah 51:20.²⁵²

Now, if these men have defeated the law and outrun native punishment,
though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God. War is
his beadle, war is his vengeance; so that here men are punished for before-
breach of the King's laws in now the King's quarrel. (4.1.170-175)

Henry thus fully justifies his ambition and steals the victory away from his men, instead giving it to God's arm, therefore to himself.

At Harfleur (3.3), Henry proves himself least Christian. He warns the town that "This is the latest parole we will admit," that "as I am a soldier,/A name that in my thoughts becomes me best," if he begins the siege of the town he will not stop until "in her ashes she lie buried." He will offer no mercy, allowing the soldiers to take "liberty of bloody hand. . . /With conscience wide as hell, mowing like grass/Your fresh fair virgins and your flow'ring infants." He then refers to the coming siege as an "impious war,/Arrayed in flames like to the prince of fiends," that is Lucifer, and blames *the inhabitants* for it:

What is't to me, when you yourselves are cause,
If your pure maidens fall into the hand
Of hot and forcing violation?

He justifies his blame of the inhabitants of Harfleur by declaring that it is not possible to stop soldiers from "licentious wickedness" once begun, and tells the "men of Harfleur [to]/Take pity of your town and of your people/Whiles yet my soldiers are in my command," thus once again diverting responsibility for the war away from himself and

²⁵²Gary Taylor's edition of *Henry V* also points to Amos 9:2.

unto his soldiers. He further bullies the people by specifying the crimes to be committed should the city not open its gates to him: the raping of “shrill-shrieking daughters,” the pulling of fathers’ “silver beards,” the dashing of “most reverend heads” on the walls, and the spitting upon pikes of naked infants. With this last potential crime, Shakespeare is echoing Marlowe once again, in *Dido Queen of Carthage*, where in the description of the siege of Troy the words “virgin,” “pikes,” and “dash’d” are found closely bound together (2.1.188-199), as they are in Henry’s speech (Merriam 321).²⁵³ But Henry also brings up the story of Herod’s slaughter of babies in his attempt to kill Jesus, thus ironically aligning himself against Christianity. He concludes with his question to the town:

What say you? Will you yield, and this avoid?

Or, guilty in defense, be thus destroyed?

Harry’s question suggests that he can, in fact, restrain his soldiers from committing crimes, as his hanging of Bardolph for the commission of a petty crime attests. When the town opens its gates, Henry orders that mercy be used towards the people. But would he have committed the atrocities he had voiced? I think the answer is a resounding “yes,” because when he came upon Harfleur he clearly told his soldiers that the law of arms is dramatically opposed to the law of peace. It is worthwhile quoting the scene at length:

In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man

As modest stillness and humility;

But when the blast of war blows in our ears,

Then imitate the action of the tiger:

Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,

²⁵³Merriam cites many words and phrases that Shakespeare clearly borrowed from Marlowe (322), too many to repeat here.

Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage;
 Then lend the eye a terrible aspect:
 Let it pry through the portage of the head
 Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it
 As fearfully as doth a galled rock
 O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
 Swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean.
 Now set the teeth, and stretch the nostril wide,
 Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit
 To his full height! . . .
 Be copy now to men of grosser blood
 And teach them how to war? . . .
 I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,
 Straining upon the start. The game's afoot!
 Follow your spirit; and upon this charge,
 Cry, "God for Harry, England and Saint George!" (3.1)

As Egan has noted, the imagery in this speech is "dehumanizing," the soldiers turned into tigers and dogs, the eye a cannon, the head a portage, the brow a galled rock (24). The human being, and therefore all humanity, is being shut out of Harry and all the English.

What is most interesting, however, is the order of the names in the charging cry Henry enjoins his soldiers to shout, telling them to ask God to support Harry *before* supporting England and Saint George, thus placing himself above England and its patron saint. Should the counter-argument, that in fact Harry is God's anointed, placed there to

care for England, arise, then we must reiterate that Harry is actually a usurper king, and therefore does not properly belong at the head of England in any case. Even rhetorically, Henry's cry places God and Saint George at the outer ends of the statement, thus bordering him and England, protecting them, as it were. Still, Harry has placed himself above England, and closer to God. No matter how one looks at the statement, it is rhetorically masterful, and it enforces Henry's position above England.

4.7. Henry V as Janus?

Whatever may be said about *Tamburlaine*, no matter how contradictory, one characterization is certain: the pursuit of his obsessive desire is unchanging, for unlike Shakespeare's characters, who typically "undergo radical shifts in apparent identity," Marlowe's characters tend to "amaze or dismay us by the sheer tenacity of their will to be always themselves" (Danson 217).²⁵⁴ Although Danson's generalization is intriguing, I would insist on the qualification that Marlowe's characters desire to remain single-minded in their identity but cannot because the human tendency is to be varied in our identity, no matter how tenaciously we fight the will-to-variety. Danson himself points out that Queen Isabel is both a "loyal, abused wife *and* a machiavellian [sic] accomplice of Mortimer," while Gaveston is both a "devoted lover *and* [an] ambitious manipulator," although Danson mitigates these split identities as "tolerably consistent" because they arise "from the point of view of political expediency" (232 original emphasis). In this last respect, therefore, I agree with Danson that Marlowe's protagonists are single-minded in their quests for power. So is Henry V, although he attempts to paint an image of himself

²⁵⁴Ribner also believes that the characters in *Tamburlaine* are "fixed and changeless" (1953 263).

as a humble Christian. Henry's quest to be regarded as a Christian king, not a tyrant, is understood as simply that, an attempt at propaganda, a desire to be seen as humble, peaceful, and so on. The very phrase "Christian king" may be an oxymoron. The church hierarchy is clearly aware of Henry's propaganda, indeed had to be aware of it, or else they would not have even attempted to persuade him of the validity of his quest for France, a policy that was clearly stipulated with the very last words spoken in *2 Henry 4*, by Lancaster, who stated that Henry V had, upon being crowned king, set his military eyes on France. Ribner, and scholars in his camp, too eager to justify Henry V's actions, forget Lancaster's words and reject Henry's French campaign as one carried out not "to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels," but because "the rightness of his cause [is] demonstrated beyond dispute, and upon this rightness he sets all of his hopes for victory" (1965 178-179).

Nevertheless, Henry makes an effort to distinguish between the private and public personae. His declaration indicates an awareness of the conflict inherent between Christianity and politics:

We are no tyrant, but a Christian king,

Unto whose grace our passion is as subject

As is our wretches fettr'd in our prisons. (1.2.241-243)

Applying this motto, he condemns the traitors who were endangering England, and forgives the drunkard who had abused the king, claiming that "Touching our person, seek we no revenge" (2.2.174). Henry's efforts to maintain the separation between the private Christian man and the public Christian king are by no means easily achieved, and can never be completely successful in perception, but can be successful in their application, as

the Williams episode will show presently.

Barton calls Henry “the God-man incarnate,” and refers to his conception as the perfect, “inherently tragic Tudor doctrine of the king’s two bodies” (1975 102). Although I agree with Barton generally, I disagree with her reading that Henry’s conception is tragic, for this reading suggests that Henry actually prefers his personal life to his public life, clearly a preference he does not have. Henry is power hungry, has planned his conquests well, and is perfectly rhetorical, thus ensuring that his power base is perceived as Christian, humane, and so forth. Henry’s realization is that he cannot be anything but a king, for no separation between private and public is allowable in the king. It is perhaps in this sense that Barton is using the term “tragic,” but I must stress that tragedy cannot come about unless one experiences a heavy loss, and the loss must be regarded as unnecessarily had. Henry does not perceive such a loss, except perhaps in Scroop’s foiled rebellion, where Henry speaks to Scroop in the personal “I,” not the impersonal “We,” although in his use of the pronouns he is also rhetorical, using them to further his own endeavours and according to the circumstances in which he finds himself, for example using “I” when addressing the governor of Harfleur, and when making his Crispin speech.²⁵⁵ Both speeches actually serve to heighten Henry’s military might, for after speaking to the governor in the first person singular, and he achieves his wishes, Henry quickly reverts to

²⁵⁵Riggs, borrowing Aristotle’s analysis in the *Poetics*, distinguishes between the tragical and historical plays by differentiating their thematic considerations. He argues that plays whose purpose is to signify the virtues or vices of the hero “mainly as they reflect on his personal destiny,” and whose arrangement is such that they “produce a feeling of universal woe, or admiration” are likely to be called tragic. Those plays whose concern is not with the heroic virtues in themselves but “in relation to the priorities that are taken to regulate the ethos of a particular civilization” are historical plays proper (20). Riggs’ point is well-taken, and the distinction is useful, but I believe that Shakespeare often blurs these boundaries, for example a play can be regarded as historical for one character and tragic for another. In *Henry V*, I will argue below that the tragedy is experienced by England, although this is articulated only at the very end of the play. Certainly tragedy is experienced by France.

the royal first person when addressing his uncle Exeter, the purpose of the “I,” that Henry himself is there to do his own will, being served. Henry’s Crispin speech achieves the same purpose as the Harfleur speech, except that its rhetoric is directly opposite the earlier one. In this case, Henry is in fact back in the tavern, serving up comradeship, necessary for motivating the soldiers to fight against great odds. Henry is aware that it is not possible to motivate soldiers by speaking to them in an impersonal voice, and so he reverts to the personal “I,” the very “I” that actually conquers Harfleur, a town that would not have been conquered without Henry’s Tamburlaine-like threats which turn out to be empty, or are at least seem so.²⁵⁶

Henry’s personal “I,” in opposition to his public “We,” is best analysed within the context of his Eastcheap “friends,” who provide us with a comical analogy to the highly serious political drama of the *Henry 4* and *Henry V* plays, beginning with Falstaff’s and Hal’s enactment of the King’s court early on in *1 Henry 4* (2.4), when the pretending king Hal banishes Falstaff. The very serious comical interludes in Eastcheap actually enact all the political events in the cycle, episode for episode. In *Henry V*, Pistol and Bardolph’s quarrel over Mistress Quickly is a parody of Henry’s fight for France. Pistol and Bardolph’s solution to their quarrel is for both to go “to France together. Why the devil should we keep knives to cut one another’s throats?” (2.1.94-95). This is the same solution Henry sought for England. And like Henry, Pistol buys the peace from Bardolph, but quite cheaply, paying one “noble.” The irony of the situation in which Pistol and Bardolph find themselves is that Bardolph, when caught stealing a pax, is hanged, but when Henry steals France he is praised. Sadly, Henry does not admit knowing Bardolph

²⁵⁶Barton’s discussion of Henry’s use of these pronouns is enlightening (1975 103-106).

(he is unforgettable!), and Bardolph's wish earlier, about Falstaff, is answered: "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell!" (2.3.7-8).

It is by placing Henry on the battlefield, and in disguise, that Shakespeare makes clear the great gulf dividing the two selves of the king, specifically with the debate engaged in by the disguised king against Williams, a common soldier. The well-known debate is whether a king is responsible for his soldiers' souls, and whether there is, in fact, a difference between a king and a man, an argument forcibly expanded by Williams, who argues that it is "foolish" to believe

that a poor and a private displeasure can [influence] a monarch! You may
as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a
peacock's feather. You'll never trust his word after! (4.1.203-207)

Williams' point is that the gap between the king and the commoner is too vast to be bridgeable, thus dismissing Henry's whole argument that in essence there is no difference between a king and a man. Williams' stance is actually the theoretical conception of Henry's active distancing from his tavern days, including the tragic banishment of Falstaff. Williams is vindicated by Shakespeare who, as Barton points out, has Williams dismissed with Henry's generous but silencing gesture. Williams does not thank Henry, and he actually refuses Fluellen's gift of money; he cannot, however, refuse Henry's for such refusal would bring about Henry's wrath (1975 101).

Two other highly noticeable orders of silence are given by Henry V, the more famous to Falstaff when the new king banishes his old comrade, ordering him, "Reply not to me" (*1 Henry 4* 5.5.56), an order that leads to Falstaff's death of a broken heart. The other order of silence is, like the order to Williams, not spoken but enacted: Bardolph's

(and Nym's) hanging. All of Henry's orders of silence are in fact Henry's attempts to keep his friends in check, be they truly conceived of as friends or not, so that, following his father's advice, they do not possess the power to injure the king. The older Henry had advised his son,

And all my friends, which thou must make thy friends,
 Have but their stings and teeth newly ta'en out,
 By whose fell working I was first advanced
 And by whose power I well might lodge a fear
 To be again displaced. (2 *Henry IV* 4.5.204-208)

As we saw earlier, the importance of this advice is brought to the fore by the example of Scroop's rebellion.

The essence of Henry V's political rejection of natural morality in favour of political morality is captured by his order to kill the French prisoners, seemingly given in order to free up his already greatly outnumbered soldiers for the fresh attack by the newly reinforced French soldiers (4.6.36).²⁵⁷ Henry threatens to repeat his order after the English repel the renewed French attack and take another host of French prisoners, but seems not to have carried out his threat because Montjoy enters and gives Henry the victory. Henry's order to kill the soldiers is questioned by Shakespeare via the dialogue between Gower and Fluellen. Fluellen compares Henry to "Alexander the Pig" who had, while drunk, killed "his best friend Cleitus," a comparison of which Gower, interrupting Fluellen, highly disapproves. Fluellen's retort to Gower is that Henry correctly, in sound mind and

²⁵⁷Taylor's introduction (32) points to a similar order given by an English general in Ireland in 1580, where 600 soldier-prisoners were killed, an action approved of by Spenser in his *View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596).

body, "turned away the fat knight"—that is, not killed him. But this interpretation, we know, is itself questionable because earlier in the play we were told by Mistress Quickly that "The King has killed his [Falstaff's] heart" (2.1.91). If the Hostess' statement is deniable, so too is Gower's interruption of Fluellen's speech, that "Our King is not like him [Alexander] in that. He never killed any of his friends" (4.7.42-43), a statement easily falsified with the hanging of Nym and Bardolph and, one could possibly add, the Boy's death at the hands of the French, brought about because of Henry's invasion of France.

Gower and Fluellen nevertheless believe that Henry's act of killing the prisoners is justified because of the cowardly conduct of the French in killing the boys in the baggage train and stealing the King's coffers.²⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Shakespeare does not justify the killing of the prisoners, instead showing it for what it is, a cowardly act, an act dramatized by Pistol's cutting of his own prisoner's throat, this after he had promised him mercy—in exchange for 200 hundred crowns (4.4). The scene in which Pistol cuts his prisoner's throat has typically been purged of most editions of the play.²⁵⁹ The fact that the very last words of the scene in which Henry orders the killing of the prisoners belong to Pistol is

²⁵⁸Taylor argues that Gower's use of the perfect, not simple past, tense suggests that the Captain is saying not that "the king *caused* the prisoners to be executed because of the attack on the baggage train' but 'given the barbarity of the subsequent French conduct, the king *has* quite justifiably *caused* the death of his prisoners'" (243). I am not certain that this is not hair splitting, especially considering that Taylor also argues that Henry is *not* aware of the massacre of the baggage train or the pilfering of the contents of his tent (33), a most unlikely reading of the scene, especially given the fact that the killing of the boys is an anomalous event, and against the laws of war and Henry would likely have been informed of the events immediately. Given also the fact that Henry expressly abhors thievery, and it is his tent that is raided, surely he would have been informed of the event. Why else would Henry be angry if not because of these two aberrant actions? Greenblatt (1988 174, note 57) and Edelman (35) also find Taylor's explanation suspect, but Edelman argues that Henry's order to kill the prisoners is simply an inconsistency in the play, one that ought to be included with the other inconsistencies found in Shakespeare's oeuvres. I suggest that the two versions of the play, one including the slaughter, the other excluding it, are possibly Shakespeare's moment of vacillation regarding how he himself saw Harry.

²⁵⁹Although I have not consulted every edition of *Henry V*, the only edition of which I am aware that includes the scene is Taylor's Oxford edition (1982).

suggestive of a number of issues, and has, in fact, been prepared for us by Shakespeare, beginning back in Act Two, in the tavern.²⁶⁰

Pistol's final words, "Coup' la gorge," were spoken in 4.4, where Pistol says "Oui couper la gorge, par ma foi" (4.4.33).²⁶¹ The business of throat cutting, however, was discussed earlier in the play, when Pistol and Nym threatened to cut each other's throats, with Pistol actually using the French phrase, although somewhat incorrectly, "Couple a gorge" (2.1.74). Pistol's phrase not only foreshadows the coming throat cutting in France, but also the fact that in not cutting Nym's throat, he had to pay the noble he owes his friend who, in turn, has sold his mercy for the noble Pistol has paid for it. The exchange of money for mercy settles the "war" between the two taverners, but in France no such, "civilized" settlement can occur, for Henry must possess what he desires according to his own articles, as the penultimate scene spells out; Henry is his own judge and executor. The reverse is true for Pistol, who, again, loses money because he is ordered to kill the prisoner whose life he had vowed to exchange for money; instead, Pistol must resort again to a life of thievery, but now all alone, being the only survivor of the tavern crowd. This supremely dramatic moment is, also, a supremely touching moment only because Pistol chooses to remain loyal to Henry who has unforgivingly betrayed everyone of his tavern friends. Henry's subsumption of the private self into the public self is mocked as an inhuman act while it is also shown to be a perfectly Machiavellian mode of thinking that in the end becomes quite futile because Henry's heir will lose everything Henry has just gained in France. Political gain comes with moral loss, and Henry's moral loss begins

²⁶⁰Shakespeare's "anticipatory, or proleptic, parody is a major structural principle" of his tetralogy, and he uses the device to encourage skepticism of "high seriousness" (Greenblatt 1988 55).

²⁶¹I am using Taylor's text which explains the reasonably accurate French (236).

with his figurative banishment of Falstaff in *1 Henry 4* (2.4.479-480).

Derek Traversi has argued that by losing Falstaff, Henry loses the human part of himself (58). But Henry loses only the physical Falstaff, keeping the man's soul hidden in his (Henry's) inner world, having coopted the lessons his surrogate father had taught him. Especially relevant for Henry was Falstaff's teaching that deception in policy is necessary. Ironically, Falstaff also taught the new king that it is necessary to banish the teacher in order to gain the world. During Hal's mock encounter with his father, Falstaff, playing the younger Henry, begs the Prince, playing the King, not to banish Falstaff, for to "banish plump Jack [is to] banish all the world!" Fully realising that it is not possible to keep both Falstaff and the world as they stand, Henry simply adjusts this dictum, banishing Falstaff physically in order to keep the world. Henry, however, admits that Falstaff was his "tutor," and grants him enough money so "that lack of means enforce you not to evils," on the condition that the jolly knight reform himself (*2 Henry 4* 5.5.67-72), although the grant itself comes after Falstaff had forced the new king to speak to him, thus forcing Henry both to banish Falstaff and to provide for him in order to make the world believe that the new king has at least a grain of mercy for the poor.²⁶²

Henry's banishment of Falstaff can only be physical simply because Falstaff taught Hal (1) the art of deception, including theatrics, (2) the art of communication, including knowing what to say to whom and according to station, intellect, and other such attributes, and (3) the art of patience. In short, Falstaff taught Hal the ultimate art of governance, thus allowing him to move closer to Tamburlaine, but a historical, not abstract, Tamburlaine. Henry's movement towards Tamburlaine begins in earnest in

²⁶² As far as I am aware, Tebbetts is the only one to point to these lines, although I disagree with him that Henry's banishment is tempered with genuine mercy (14).

Henry 4 when he decides to shed his lowly, tavern habits, including of course his friendship with Falstaff, replacing them with the habits of nobility. The new habits Henry wears are both metaphoric and actual, made known to us on stage in the opening scenes of *Henry V*, which clearly reinforces Henry's banishment of Falstaff (and all the tavern folk) by having Henry surrounded only by high Churchmen and the nobility.²⁶³ Shakespeare, like Marlowe, accepts Machiavelli's conception of the king as one with a single, public body—at least he must present himself, and be perceived, as such.

The most important lesson Henry learned from Falstaff is that of applying necessity when it is advantageous to make use of it in order to further one's endeavours. This is to say that Henry learned to replace natural morality with political—and Machiavellian—morality. Falstaff, whose name perfectly accords with his character—*false-staff*—is, like Henry IV, Machiavellian, but with a conscience, falsely believing that Hal cared about him, at least enough to continue desiring the knight's company.²⁶⁴

Henry especially learned from Falstaff that one must do what is necessary to survive. Shakespeare extends this lesson to add another dimension to Hal's character, specifically involving his relationship with his usurping father, who rightly fears his eldest son who, in *1 Henry 4*, reminds his father that he *could have* allowed him to be killed

²⁶³This point is also made by Taylor (44).

²⁶⁴Jensen also notes the knight's name: "*Fals-taff*," although she does not call him Machiavellian (244). Spiekerman also reads Henry as a Machiavellian with a conscience, but he argues that Henry V learns from Falstaff to cast aside his conscience (122-123). I would agree with this reading only if by learning this skill from Falstaff we qualify "learning" with "negatively," for Falstaff would not cast aside his best friend, and he dies a conscientious man.

during the battle of Shrewsbury.²⁶⁵ After rescuing his father from certain death, the king tells Hal to

Stay and breath awhile.

Thou hast redeemed thy lost opinion,

And showed thou mak'st some tender of my life,

In this fair rescue thou hast brought to me. (5.4.46-49)

Hal answers his father in a brutally candid fashion:

O God, they did me too much injury

That ever said I heark'ned for your death.

If it were so, I might have let alone

The insulting hand of Douglas over you,

Which would have been as speedy in your end

As all the poisonous potions in the world,

And saved the treacherous labour of your son. (5.4.50-56)

But is Hal's candid manner honest? Henry IV is a paranoid king, always looking over his shoulders, among both friends and foes, to ensure no one is conspiring to depose him.

Still thinking in Medieval terms—possibly because he is nearing death, and so is afraid of what is beyond the grave, he tells Hal that he fears him because Hal may be God's

instrument of scourge against Henry:

I know not whether God will have it so

For some displeasing service I have done,

That, in his secret doom, out of my blood

²⁶⁵Spiekerman also argues that Henry feared Harry, and although we arrive at similar conclusions, we diverge somewhat in our argumentative paths.

He'll breed revengement and a scourge for me;

But thou dost in thy passages of life

Make me believe that thou art only marked

For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven

To punish my mistreadings. (3.2.4-11)

Henry then teaches his son the art of ruling, especially the importance of proper, kingly perception by the public, and then bluntly declares:

But wherefore do I tell these news to thee?

Why, Harry, do I tell thee of my foes,

Which art my nearest and dearest enemy?

Thou that art like enough, through vassal fear,

Base inclination, and the start of spleen,

To fight against me under Percy's pay,

To do his heels and curtsy at his frowns,

To show how much thou art degenerate. (121-128)

Hal attempts to convince his father of filial loyalty, which Henry seems to accept, but in fact had not fully accepted it until Hal's rescue of his father from Douglas' sword. One must wonder, though, if Harry did not truly want his father dead but had held back murdering him in order not to lose the support of the nobility who had backed Henry IV's quest for the crown. In one sense, Hal's banishment of Falstaff is in fact a banishment of his father also, or one of his fathers.²⁶⁶ Certainly, during the mock meeting of king and

²⁶⁶Tebbetts calls Falstaff Henry's "anti-father" (8). Curiously, Tebbetts ignores this contentious issue when discussing family and politics. Spiekerman argues that Hal is caught between his father and Falstaff.

son, when Hal suggested they ought to exchange roles, Falstaff asks Hal,

Depose me? If thou dost it half so gravely, so majestically, both in word
and matter, hang me up by the heels for a rabbit-sucker or a poulter's hare
(1 *Henry 4* 2.4.434-436),

and the Prologue to *Henry V* tells us that Henry "Assume[s] the port of Mars," a name that the older Henry had attributed to Hotspur (1 *Henry 4* 3.2.112). Henry IV admires Hotspur partly because he sees his younger self in Percy, which is ironic because Hotspur is attempting to usurp the throne, just as Henry himself had usurped the throne.

I have spoken much about Henry's portrayal as a warrior, a necessarily accurate portrayal at the same time as it is a deceptive one, for the whole play in fact is a deception that the playwright himself underscores through the Chorus, asking us to deceive ourselves by pretending that we are in "The vasty fields of France" when, in fact, we are only "Within this wooden O" (Prologue 12-13). From the very beginning, we are asked to imagine war; indeed, the whole play is about nothing else, except there is actually no warfare in it, ironically (Jensen 248). The deception practiced on the audience is indicative of the deception Henry himself practices on everyone. This is certified by the fact that the killing of the prisoners is the only action for which Henry takes full responsibility. This is not to say that Henry is not responsible for the war, only that he makes others believe that he is not by practising a powerful art of manipulation, one that makes those manipulated appear to be manipulating the king, as the opening scene with the bishops, and the scene with Scroop, Cambridge, and Grey shows, with Henry cautioning the Archbishop not to "bow your reading" in order not to awaken "our sleeping sword of war" (1.2.14, 22). This is a staged scene, for before the meeting we are told that

the Archbishop and the King had already discussed the “causes now in hand. . . /As touching France” (1.1.77, 79), and that the Church had agreed to finance these “causes.” In this earlier scene, we were also told that the details of the plan presented by the Archbishop were postponed because the French ambassador had arrived to meet with the King. The scene makes it clear that Henry had sent word to France regarding issues that “task our thoughts” (1.2.6), and these have to do with his claim to the throne, as his charge to the Archbishop regarding the interpretation of the Salic Law makes clear, and as the French ambassador’s words before he presents the tennis balls reiterate (1.2.246-253). Henry then turns the blame for the coming war onto the Dauphin’s mocking response, a strategy he repeats when besieging Harfleur, blaming the siege on the inhabitants, as we saw earlier. Of course, in the end, even after successfully blaming others for his wars, Henry displaces the final responsibility for wars onto God Himself.²⁶⁷ In addition to being redundant, Henry’s exposition of the Salic law is ironic because its denial would also deny Henry his own rule.

After winning the war, Henry admits that he need not have attempted to win the love of Katherine, having already won her on the battlefield, but he proceeds with this second conquest in order to show the French that his marriage to her is based on genuine love and therefore the French ought to accept Henry’s rule. Of course, the comical scene also serves to lighten up the audience’s emotions after such a harsh battle (that we

²⁶⁷Sullivan discusses Henry’s strategy in a similar fashion (1996 139), as do Traister and Jensen. Traister compares Henry V’s public theatrics to those of Richard II, and concludes that Henry is the better—more politically effective—actor because he can act to all occasions, unlike the “monotonous” Richard who is more concerned with his “interior drama” rather than the public perception of it (118). Jensen highlights Shakespeare’s departure from Holinshed’s account of the discussions between Henry and the Church, and also argues that Shakespeare, rather than imitating his sources for Henry V, instead offers a rival account of the English king, one that neither debunks “Henry’s high reputation nor to sentimentalize his portrait, but to make a king worthy of our admiration both for his unflinching realism and for his righteousness”(236-241).

actually do not see), and it gives Shakespeare the opportunity to make biting commentary on Henry's ambition, for example having both Henry and France agree that the French cities were "turned into a maid" (5.2.334).

4.8. Henry V as the God-King?

Possibly remembering Edward's beautiful lament,

But what are kings, when regiment is gone,

But perfect shadows in a sunshine day? (*Edward II* 5.1.26-27),

Henry's whole purpose, from the very start, was to prove to the world that he in fact could be "the sun" (*1 Henry 4* 1.2.201), that he is "the maker of manners," that the world must "cursy" to him because he is "great" and everyone else is "weak" (*Henry V* 5.2.281-284). In this speech to Katherine, in which he convinces her to kiss him before they are wed, Henry actually repeats his battlefield speech (4.1.230-289), in which he summarizes the king's role as myth-maker and god—that is, perfectly Machiavellian. The battlefield speech is the culmination of the second tetralogy and is therefore totally in opposition to the opening play of the tetralogy, *Richard II*, the play in which the king views himself not as God, but as God's anointed, and as one who confuses ceremony and reality. This is to say that Henry V, unlike Richard II, knows that he makes fiction in order to manipulate the polity and retain power.

This important statement, that strong kings deserve to rule, which we looked at when discussing the first tetralogy, is reinforced in the second tetralogy, beginning with Richard II's assertion that "they well deserve to have/That know the strong'st and surest way to get" (3.3.198-199). Henry V echoes this sentiment when he accepts the crown

from his father as something that rightly belongs to him now:

You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me;

Then plain and right must my possession be. (*2 Henry IV* 4.5.221-222)

Mallett correctly observes that this myth of equating “‘possession’ with the ‘right to possess’ really makes power a secular matter” (74).²⁶⁸ Ironically, in his statement Henry V is admitting that anybody could make the claim he is making if that person is able to usurp the crown from him. This is specifically what transpired when Richard III crowned himself king after deposing Henry VI, an action that Ribner prefers to interpret as ordained by God for the purpose of scourging England for her sins, a scourge who then must be destroyed and replaced by the good king once the scourging task is accomplished. Ribner argues that Richmond’s prayer before the battle is intended to support the belief that Richmond is only God’s instrument, not a free, self-serving agent (1965 117-118), the latter a reading I have argued is the case, and one that Shakespeare eventually rejected, preferring the Machiavellian historiographical universe to the medieval one proffered in the first tetralogy.²⁶⁹

How I differ from Ribner is in my perspective that Shakespeare still had to justify Richmond’s seizure of power from Richard, although rebellions were generally condemned, even against bad kings. To make his justification, Shakespeare turned to

²⁶⁸ Although Mallett and I share this point, I disagree with his conclusion that Henry is not “a self-conscious Machiavellian [but] a parody of the true king he claims to be, who is unaware of the distortion that he presents” (80). On the contrary, Henry is too well aware that he presents distortions—in fact he relies on them to rule absolutely.

²⁶⁹ Of course, we know that Henry VII commissioned Polydore Vergil to write a history of England that would demonstrate the Tudors’ right to the throne, a history that apotheosised Henry V. This form of historiography, which alters historical events in order to justify political purposes, parallels Machiavellian historiography. Ribner (1965 19) and Mosse (1954 326, 1957 14-33) make a similar argument, but do not suggest the tie to Polydore Vergil, as I have. Of course, my claim needs to be examined in detail, and I merely present it as a possibility.

Marlowe, in whose plays Shakespeare recognized an important challenge to the generally accepted belief that rebellion against a king is not a justifiable act. Machevill's statement in *The Jew of Malta* is specific: "What right had Caesar to the empery?" Shakespeare recasts this statement in *2 Henry 4* with Harry unequivocally declaring to his father, as we have pointed out above, and which is worth repeating,

You won it [crown], wore it, kept it, gave it me.

Then plain and right must my possession be. (4.5.221-222)

In this respect, Riggs correctly observes that "despite the playwright's readiness to endorse, on occasion, Elizabethan dogma about the moral necessity of hierarchical loyalties, it by no means follows that *Henry VI* [and the first tetralogy] exists merely to illustrate the providential ratification of that dogma" (5). Although this conclusion may not be clearly visible in the first tetralogy, it is very much so in the second cycle, most apparent in *Richard II*, when Richard proclaims that he has the divine right to kingship but refuses to protect his place using human means, thus unknowingly proving that in reality no such right exists, that successfully applied *de facto* power is the only guarantor of kingship. This statement is certified by the fact that the rebellions against Henry IV are undertaken in the name of the deposed Richard, not God. And by having Richard halt the trial by combat between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, the second tetralogy is disavowing providential historiography, thus unwittingly displacing the divine presence in history with the Machiavellian presence, for like the theory of divine right, trial by combat "rests on the assumption that God takes a hand in human events, ensuring that might derives from right, that power derives from authority, and not the other way around" (Rackin 49-50). It therefore is not sufficient to say with Ribner that Shakespeare accepts

Machiavelli's observations of what is required of a king to rule successfully but rejects Machiavelli's divorce between the public and private virtues, that "for Shakespeare the good king must first be a good man" (1965 159).²⁷⁰ This hard and fast split between morality and politics simply cannot exist in the king because the king, Machiavelli concludes, must bow to necessity, which places itself—and therefore the king—above the distinction between morality and politics. To be more accurate about this observation, political morality is not the same as social morality, which is why only a man capable of turning away a Falstaff could be capable of killing prisoners, thus capable of becoming "the hero-king of Agincourt" (Taylor 33-34). Lord Acton restates this truth memorably: "Great men are almost always bad men" (335-336).

Both Shakespeare and Marlowe understood this concept. The difference between the two rival playwrights²⁷¹ is that Marlowe is forever concerned with his protagonist, Shakespeare with the state, England. As the final Chorus in *Henry V* makes clear, England, not Henry, is the true protagonist, she is the one bleeding in the final lines of the play. Even here, the Chorus alludes to Marlowe, declaring that the play was staged in a "little room," a phrase invented by Shakespeare's great rival. Shakespeare recognized what was valuable in Marlowe—his Machiavellian appropriations, the magnificent but

²⁷⁰ Ribner argues that Richard II is weak in public virtue, Henry IV in private virtue, and that Henry V is successful in both, even suggesting that *Henry V* is Shakespeare's "mirror for princes" (1965 192). Ribner further elucidates his thesis, arguing that the two parts of Henry IV are actually educational plays whose purpose is to show us how an "ideal king is made," with Part One dedicated to teaching Harry the art of war, Part Two the art of peace (1965 168). I fail to understand how Ribner could justify his thesis when, ironically, the art of peace comes at the expense of war, and that even a foreign war entails murder, rape, destruction, etc., if not for England, this time for France.

²⁷¹ F. P. Wilson argues that Marlowe was "the only man of Shakespeare's age who could have been a rival poet" (131), and Bradbrook suggests that *Venus and Adonis* was Shakespeare's response to Greene's warning to Marlowe about Shakespeare's rise to poetic rivalry, and to Greene's charges of Shakespeare's ignorance (1980 199).

ultimately futile heroics of his protagonists, and his unhindered exploration of providential politics. Shakespeare borrows these, but in adapted form. By applying the principles historically, for example making use of the religious institutions, Shakespeare explodes the ideas on the English stage. If it is true, as seems likely, that in *Edward II* Marlowe actually imitates Shakespeare, borrowing the style from 2 and 3 *Henry VI*,²⁷² then it is also likely that Marlowe was rejecting Shakespeare's tendency towards providential history, instead fully opting for the Machiavellian strain of history, as seems clear from Mortimer's speech, which denies the role of Providence in human affairs:

Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel
There is a point, to which when men aspire,
They tumble headlong down: that point I touch'd,
And, seeing there was no place to mount up higher,
Why shall I grieve at my declining fall? (5.6.59-63)

Mortimer simply accepts his lot in life, and along with denying the hand of Providence in human affairs, he probably also denies the existence of God.²⁷³ The denial of the hand of Providence in human affairs is the movement that Shakespeare parallels in his second tetralogy, where Providence is not only pushed to the sidelines, but is also used to political advantage. Equally relevant, and more poignant than Mortimer's words, are

²⁷²Shapiro and Barton, for example, accept this argument, and Shapiro further argues that Marlowe abandoned the Shakespearean style midway through the play, returning to his own proven style (1991 92). The recognition of the similarity between these three plays has led some critics to argue that Shakespeare simply revised Marlowe's earlier works. See, for example, Bakeless 2: 221-241.

²⁷³Ribner believes that in *Edward II* Marlowe recognizes that "the Machiavellian brand of *virtù* will not suffice," even though he retains the belief that history is not controlled by providence. In this respect, *Edward II* is similar to *Tamburlaine*, and even though *Edward II* is an English history play, nowhere does the play refer to the orthodox belief in the divine right of kings, or in the king's responsibility to God (1965 128-129).

Richard II's words to Bolingbroke, spoken upon Bolingbroke's crowning of himself. The deposed Richard hails the usurping king:

God save the King! Will no man say "Amen"?

Am I both priest and clerk? Well, then, amen.

God save the King. . . (4.1.172-174)

This passage contains the fundamental testament that the king who believed himself to be God's anointed, and hence believed that Providence drives history, is the only one uttering a prayer. Everyone else is silent, attesting to the fact that *de facto* power is what drives history, and all fear this power because the new king, unlike Richard, deploys it with efficiency.²⁷⁴

4.9. Conclusion

There is no doubt that Shakespeare acknowledges his debt to Marlowe through "parodic recollections," but he also "exorcises" Marlowe (Shapiro 1991 81-82, Charney 1997 220), especially in *Henry V*, laying "the ghost of Tamburlaine as a hero, making it impossible for him to be taken seriously again until the Restoration" (Barton 1975 100).²⁷⁵ It is

²⁷⁴ Adams supposes that the silence following the hail to the monarch in this scene is remarkably parallel to the silence following Stubbs' hail to the monarch, after having his right hand cut off because he wrote the treatise condemning Elizabeth's proposed marriage to Alençon and that the audience may have picked up on it (86). One wonders if this similarity was not noted by Elizabeth also who had declared that Richard II is her. For a fascinating discussion of the Stubbs incident, see Adams.

²⁷⁵ Shapiro argues that in *Henry V* "Shakespeare conclusively resolve[s] his engagement with early Marlovian history. . . by writing a Tamburlaine play that indicated what had changed politically and poetically between the Armada threats of 1588 and 1599" (1991 85). Shapiro's argument, that the Spanish Armada threat gave birth to the genre of heroic history (82-83), is borrowed from Bevington who observes that "in the years of the Armada, dramatists preferred to invoke memories of Crécy and Agincourt rather than deal face-to-face with the Armada victory itself. Such avoidance of literalism helped create the dramatic genre that most forcefully represents the culmination of Tudor political drama: the English history play" (1968 301). There is some truth to what Bevington and Shapiro declare, but I believe that this argument does not sufficiently justify the vast borrowing from Marlovian drama that took place during those years, especially by Shakespeare. To imitate someone is to criticize someone, and to do so is to admit

because *Tamburlaine* was such a powerful influence on the Elizabethans that Shakespeare was compelled, in *Henry V*, to write “through, or over, Marlovian history” (Shapiro 1991 99).²⁷⁶ His conclusion to *Henry V* combines the endings to both parts of *Tamburlaine*.

First, Henry’s marriage to Katherine is a rewriting of *Tamburlaine*’s marriage to Zenocrate. In this sense, *Henry V* is a comedy “but with a sardonic twist,” because Katherine is forced into her marriage by a conquered father (Shapiro 1991 101). Second, like the ending to 2 *Tamburlaine*, *Henry V* concludes with the knowledge that Henry V’s victories over France are for nought because “the world’s best garden” will be lost by the future king. The difference between the two plays is that Marlowe does not explicitly state the conclusion that *Tamburlaine*’s sons will lose the empire, but the audience is left with the knowledge that Callapine is arming for a major war against the Scythians.

Shakespeare’s blunt statement is both actual history and a cynical critique of the “star of England.”

Nevertheless, there is a major difference between *Tamburlaine* and *Henry V* in that Henry’s choices are revocable, simply because he can resort to Christian rhetoric in order to alter his choice, and *Tamburlaine* cannot. For example, Harfleur, contrary to the narrative in the chronicles, is spared (Holinshed 187-188). The Christianity surrounding Henry allows Shakespeare to write *Henry V* as a comedy, one that ends with a marriage, much like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or *Measure for Measure*. In this, Shakespeare is

intellectual curiosity *and* respect, even while disagreeing with the person one is criticizing.

²⁷⁶Charney bluntly declares that “Shakespeare goes out of his way to conceal his indebtedness to Marlowe,” that Marlowe’s plays serve as “models” for Shakespeare’s where they are “embedded” (1997 213). He further declares that with Pistol’s parody of *Tamburlaine*, Shakespeare has finally “exorcised” *Tamburlaine* whom he no longer thinks of “in a protagonist’s role” (1997 220). In an earlier article, Charney had asserted that Shakespeare “recoiled” from Marlowe’s influence (1979 35).

following Greene, whose *Alphonsus* is identical in structure to *Tamburlaine*, and whose hero follows Tamburlaine's rise to power. Alphonsus, however, at the height of his power reveres Cupid as well as Mars, and marries the daughter of a conquered king, and so the play concludes with marriage festivities. But Shakespeare, as we have seen, does not conclude *Henry V* in a festive manner, rather in a paradoxical fashion, pointing out that France will be lost by Henry V's heir, and that England will experience great tragedy. As if to vindicate himself and his newly adopted Machiavellian view of history, he then reminds the audience that he has already staged that tragedy (in the first tetralogy), that what he has just shown is not a lie, and that the audience ought to accept his view as an accurate explanation of the workings of history and politics:

and for their sake [first tetralogy],

In your fair minds let this acceptance take. (Epilogue 13-14).

Conclusion: Machiavelli's Children, or Politics with Theology Left Out

It does me a little relish of Paradox, that wherever I come Machiavelli is verbally cursed and damned, and yet practically embraced and asserted.

(William Sancroft qtd. in Mosse 1954 326).

There is no question that Machiavelli's influence on political thought is vast, and continues to reign supreme. Marlowe and Shakespeare, as we have seen, were very much aware of the negative consequences of unrestrained Machiavellism; in effect, the general understanding of Machiavellism as we have it is the English version dramatized by them, for example translating Machiavelli's *virtù* as "will," thus demolishing "the cautiousness and thoughtfulness recommended by *virtù*," instead focussing more on ambition than *virtù*, even at the cost of everything else (Rutter 16). Machiavellism is not simply the Republican tradition (pace Pocock) but actually has to do more with the concerns the dramatists recognized, such as atheism and the dissemblance of rulers, among other concerns. Marlowe and Shakespeare had warned us about the dangers of kings who seek glory strictly for their own sakes. The primary danger the dramatists saw was in a politics that lacks a theological dimension, for theology, they argued, lodges a moral dimension in the political actor, forcing him to restrain himself in his actions. Marlowe and Shakespeare's concerns were shared by a number of Englishmen because the English reception of Machiavelli "coincided with a trend of English casuistical divinity which had practical historical and theological roots" (Mosse 1954 326). The English traditionally believed that they must suffer whatever tyranny God sent their way, for it was God's will that propelled history, as the following sermon excerpts illustrate:

As in reading of the holy Scriptures we shall find, in very many and almost

infinite places as well of the Old Testament as of the New, that kings and princes, as well the evil as the good, do reign by God's ordinance, and that subjects are bounden to obey them. . . that God defendeth them against their enemies, and destroyeth their enemies horribly. . . .

God, say the holy Scriptures, maketh a wicked man to reign for the sins of the people. Again, God giveth a prince in his anger, meaning an evil one, and taketh away a prince in his displeasure, meaning specially when he taketh away a good prince for the sins of the people, as in our memory he took away our good Josias, King Edward in his young and good years for our wickedness. (Church of England 589, 594-595 qtd. in Armstrong 1946 164).

Presumably, God replaced King Edward VI by Mary in order to chastise the English, and when the English repented, God brought back a good prince, Elizabeth:

. . . for subjects to deserve through their sins to have an evil prince, and then to rebel against him, were double and treble evil, by provoking God more to plague them. Nay, let us either deserve to have a good prince, or let us patiently suffer and obey such as we deserve. (595)

And suffer and obey the bad prince they must, for the Bible is specific in its injunction against harming one of God's anointed:

. . . the Lord keep me, saith David, from doing that thing, and from laying hands upon my lord God's anointed. For who can lay his hand upon the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? (602)

But Machiavelli, of course, spurned this perspective, and Marlowe and Shakespeare accepted his reasoning. This is not to say that our two playwrights believed that Machiavelli invented the ideas he wrote about, only that he exposed them for what they are, exposing their inner workings, we might say. This is the very outlook penned on the title page of one of the Elizabethan English manuscript translations of *Il Principe*. The title page talks about Machiavelli, “who teaches what kings do in states, without thinking that Hell awaits kings who behave in the way he describes” (qtd. in Orsini 167). The epigram clearly stipulates that Machiavelli did not invent any of the views contained in the book, but was simply, in a matter-of-fact manner, reporting the doings of kings. Such an exposition was clearly regarded as dangerous by Elizabeth, and so her court banned the publication of Machiavelli’s works.²⁷⁷

Marlowe’s declaration that Machiavelli’s books come to England from Italy via France (Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*) is probably an accurate description of the journey Machiavelli’s books and ideas took in order to arrive to England, but Marlowe was more interested in capitalizing on the English hatred of France after the St. Bartholomew Day massacre. Nevertheless, Marlowe’s play entrenched the stereotype of the Machiavel, “although his [Marlowe’s] secret purpose. . . was to satirize and undercut it” (Minshull 53). This is because Marlowe’s Prologue shows “considerable insight into Machiavelli’s philosophy. . . of power politics in which conventional religious and moral scruples play little part” (38), although the true Machiavellian in *The Jew of Malta* is not Barabas but the Christian Ferneze. The fact that Marlowe presents a character who is advertized as, and who perceives himself to be, Machiavellian but is actually not—Barabas, and a

²⁷⁷*The Art of War*, however, had been published and dedicated to her in 1560.

character who is not advertized as such but who actually is Machiavellian—Ferneze, conforms with Machevill's claim in the Prologue, that "such as love me guard me from their tongues," exactly what Ferneze does. A perfect Machiavellian is one not perceived as such. Marlowe's intention in the play is one of presenting Barabas' supposed Machiavellism as a "red herring" to the true Machiavellism of Ferneze.²⁷⁸ Machevill's approval of Barabas is ironic because it is "an item of disinformation of the type to be expected from a politician renowned for cunning and dissimulating arts" (Minshull 41).

But something more serious is undertaken by Marlowe, for his purpose is actually to toy with his audience, to frustrate their expectations, for example in Part One of *Tamburlaine*, by not having a prince fall from power, and then reversing this expectation in Part Two.²⁷⁹ Looking at *The Jew of Malta* once more, Cartelli observes that Machevill "invites the playgoer to experience the pleasure of release from moral and intellectual constraints, to entertain the feeling that he or she is bound by none of the illusions that bind more slavish spirits. . . . he comes 'to frolic with his friends'" (167). More interesting is the fact that at the same time as he tells the audience that he comes not "To read a lecture here in Britain," he in fact does lecture the audience on the effectual, not imaginative, reality of politics and morality. More ironic than the fact that Barabas turns out to be a quite ineffective Machiavellian, and Ferneze the true Machiavellian, is the closing appeal in Machevill's prologue, when he asks the audience to "grace him [Barabas] as he deserves,/And let him not be entertain'd the worse/Because he favours me." This appeal throws the audience into a state of ambivalence from which it may not

²⁷⁸The phrase "red herring" is Minshull's (42).

²⁷⁹Both Tromly (85-86) and Greenblatt (1980 202) make this argument as well.

recover because they are asked to trust Machevill, a known deceiver who had just reminded them that he is deceptive. The prologue is a masterful moral conundrum: If a liar tells us a lie, is he in fact lying? Whether we believe Machevill or not, we submit ourselves to deceptiveness. What to do? Marlowe had recognized, and is now testing, Machiavelli's theory that we have been teased into acquiescing to moral complacency, believing imagination to be reality. Cartelli believes that the Baines deposition contains the Machiavellism that is detectable in Marlowe's plays, that the appeal of Machiavellism to Marlowe is its ability to demystify what is traditionally held to be natural or unknowable. By writing the Machevill as a metadramatic device whose purpose is to create doubt in the minds of the audience as to the reliability of the narrative to be enacted in front of them, Marlowe challenges his audience in a way they had not been challenged before—by turning them into skeptics, forcing them to question their beliefs through what Shepherd calls "a process of estrangement" (29). By making use of popular Machiavellism, Marlowe could then seriously discuss Machiavellism proper.

Shakespeare, too, wanted to discuss Machiavellism proper, but he does so without having to capitalize on popular Machiavellism because Marlowe had already walked that path. Over against Marlowe, Shakespeare was interested in studying Machiavellism in history, not at the abstract level. Would a Machiavellian prince act in the perfect—abstract or ideal—Machiavellian manner? In other words, would an English king do what a Caesar—or a Tamburlaine—did? Cassius' statement about Julius Caesar is representative of Shakespeare's concerns regarding these types of men: "Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf/But that he sees the Romans are but sheep" (*Julius Caesar* 1.3.104-105). Shakespeare's concerns were real, and related to Elizabethan use, or abuse,

of power. Shakespeare likely remembered the John Stubbs incident some years before. Stubbs, who was quickly identified as the previously anonymous author of the August, 1579 book, *The Discovery of a Gaping gulf Whereinto England Is Like to Be Swallowed*, which was quickly denounced as a "lewde seditious booke. . . seditiously dispersed unto sundry comers of the Realm," containing false "Lybel," and was destroyed, had stated that Alençon would not become a Protestant should he marry Elizabeth, and his conversion would not be genuine if he were formally to convert. Stubbs writes that "these [French] discoursers. . . use the word of God with as little conscience as they do Machiavel" (qtd. in Adams 79-80). Adams observes that Stubbs' arguments are the same as those in Sidney's private letter to the Queen, and the same as those used by other members of the ruling class who had opposed the union. It is therefore important to point out that the Queen's opposition was not to the book per se, but to the precedent such a publication would set, if left unpunished, of the right of a subject to discuss openly questions that were traditionally regarded unthinkable in public. Elizabeth's declaration was explicit: subjects, "by these kind of popular Libels [cannot presume to possess the] authoritie to argue and determine, in every blinde corner, at their severall willes, of the affaires of publike estate; A thing most pernicious in any estate" (qtd. in Adams 80). Stubbs and his publisher, William Page, had their right hands cut off, an event that William Camden dramatically describes:

Hereby had Stubbs and Page their right hands cut off with a Cleaver driven thorow the wrist with the force of a beetle, upon a scaffold in the market place at Westminster. . . . I remember (being present thereat,) that when Stubbs, having his right hand cut off, put off his hat with his left, and sayd

with a loud voyce. *God save the Queene*: the multitude standing about. was altogether silent, either out of horreur of this new and unwonted punishment, or else out of pittie towards the man being of most honest and unblameable report, or else out of hatred of the marriage. which most men presaged would be the overthrow of Religion. (*Annales*, qtd. in Adams 83 original italics).

This punishment causes the same kind of dumb reaction in the audience as that inflicted on Orrico by Cesare Borgia, according to Machiavelli's narrative in *Il Principe* (7).

Camden also notes that in order to minimize the negative impact of this horror on the public, the Queen ordered the Jesuit Campion's trial for conspiracy moved up quickly, even while Alençon was in England, because "the 'horror of this new and unwonted punishment' inflicted upon Stubbs could no more be concealed than the fact that it was the direct result of Elizabeth's abuse of her power-to-destroy" (Adams 85).

In agreement with Machiavelli, Shakespeare well knew that rulers must, sometimes, act immorally in order to enact morality. This is the essential irony of politics, and the very reason that religion and politics are inherently incompatible, unless they are fused in such a manner that they are separately unrecognizable. This was Machiavelli's goal in his rewriting of Christianity. Marlowe's application of Machiavelli's theoretical thrust gave us the indelicate drama of *Tamburlaine*, unveiling the dangers of such a policy. Marlowe had recognized that Machiavelli's unlikely heroes—those who applied the kinds of policies Machiavelli recommends—were themselves non-Christian in practice. Marlowe himself turned to a Muslim—and not a good one at that—in order to dramatize this theory.

For Shakespeare, Marlowe's Machiavellism was short-sighted only because it did not consider English history. Nevertheless, Shakespeare recognized that Marlowe/Machiavelli's insights into the nature of the relationship between religion and politics is essentially accurate. Looking at English history through the eyes of his contemporary and his Italian predecessor, Shakespeare was able to reinterpret his country's history with more vigour and insight than previously imaginable. But Shakespeare also pointed out the path an astute ruler carves out in order to manipulate Christianity while also applying the ideals of a Machiavellian prince. *Henry V* is Shakespeare's answer to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and, even more than a Castruccio, Henry V is Shakespeare's answer to Machiavelli's failed Cesare.

I have argued that *Tamburlaine* is the perfect abstract Machiavellian prince, one who need not concern himself with historical contingencies, one who could simply enact his will without hesitation, one who is will personified. *Tamburlaine*, in fact, is not a character, but a type, an idea staged. It is clear that *Tamburlaine* was highly admired by its Renaissance audiences, and that *Tamburlaine* was not regarded in the manner that we typically regard him, as a butcher. The reality is that our morals are perhaps different from those held during the Renaissance. It is also probable that *Tamburlaine* was praised because he delayed the Turkish conquest of Constantinople. More than any other reason, however, *Tamburlaine* represented the ultimate in what we would today call machismo, the confident man who achieves what he sets out to achieve, the epitome of the will to satisfy its desires. Cartelli asserts that *Tamburlaine* succeeded because it showed the highly stratified Elizabethan audience a man who unequivocally defeated royalty. At the same time, the protagonist's "presumption [is] at once a socially volatile and

psychologically provocative construction," hence building an even stronger curiosity in the audience (67). Extending Esler's thesis, which argues that the *Tamburlaine* plays brought into focus "a new view of ambition [tied to] the aspiring mind of the Elizabethan younger generation" (1966 80 qtd. in Cartelli 70), Cartelli agrees that *Tamburlaine* "can be said to dramatize a Renaissance version of the will to power," but also speculates "that something like a will to power had already become (or was in the process of becoming) a popular fantasy that could be exploited and enlarged upon in a theatrical context" (70). *Tamburlaine* was written as a pure master, and thus the play created an aura of "amoral wonder" in the audience (Levin 1984 53). This sense of amoral wonder was both exposed and celebrated by *Tamburlaine*. Clifford Geertz, theorizing politics and ceremony, and following Max Weber, writes that "The very thing that the elaborate mystique of court ceremonial is supposed to conceal—that majesty is made, not born—is demonstrated by it" (153). Geertz appropriately chooses Elizabethan England as an example of the process of political mystique:

In sixteenth-century England, the political centre of society was the point at which the tension between the passions that power excited and the ideals it was supposed to serve was screwed to its highest pitch; and the symbolism of the progress was, consequently, admonitory and covenantal: the subjects warned, and the queen promised. (160)

It is specifically in the sense of one's ability to master his surroundings that Machiavelli was admired as the philosopher of the *proto*-will-to-power, to use Nietzschean language. It is perhaps in this sense that we can better understand why *Tamburlaine* is called a tragedy. Without doubt, *Tamburlaine* is not tragic in the Aristotelian sense, nor in any

other but the Machiavellian sense, that is, of the strong, creative man who wills his way on the world only to fail in the end because *fortuna* must prove to the world that it is she, not this powerful prince, who controls the course of human affairs. This is the tragedy of Machiavelli's prince, first epitomized by Cesare Borgia and later by Castruccio Castracani, and it is also the tragedy of Tamburlaine.²⁸⁰ But this also is the tragedy of Henry V, as the Chorus tells us, although without using the word "tragedy." Nevertheless, the Chorus in *Henry V* clearly states that "Fortune made [Henry's] sword," with which he won France, which his son, Henry VI, then lost and "made his England bleed" (5.2.6, 12). The fall from glory, however, need not occur during the prince's life time, but can, and usually does, follow his death, as is the case with Machiavelli's presentation of Castruccio, with Marlowe's presentation of Tamburlaine, and with Shakespeare's presentation of Henry V. In some sense, we could plausibly argue that our three authors are proto-existentialists.²⁸¹

Finally, to reflect on the implications of this study for our own society, it is instructive to point to our national anthem as an emblem of the debate engaged in by our three Renaissance writers. Canada's English anthem asks God to "keep our land glorious and free." The French anthem, mistakenly believed to be a translation of the English one—when, in fact, the English anthem is actually a loose "translation" of the French anthem—literally says, in the first verse,

O Canada! Land of our forefathers

²⁸⁰ Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti's thesis that Machiavelli is essentially a writer of tragedy remains the best discussion on the subject.

²⁸¹ I use the term not in its formal definition, but only as a simple way of making the point that the general outlook on life of our authors is tragic.

Thy brow is wreathed with a glorious garland of flowers.

As in thy arm ready to wield the sword,

So also is it ready to carry the cross.

Thy history is an epic of the most brilliant exploits. . . .

Thy valour steeped in faith

Will protect our homes and our rights

Will protect our homes and our rights. (Emphasis added)²⁸²

Most Canadians fail to recognize that this song is actually a Catholic call to arms against Protestant English oppression. Here is Routhier's original poem:

O Canada! Terre de nos aïeux,

Ton front est ceint de fleurons glorieux!

Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,

Il sait porter la croix!

Ton histoire est une épopée

Des plus brillants exploits.

Et ta valeur, de foi trempée,

Protégera nos foyers et nos droits

Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.

Sous l'oeil de Dieu, près du fleuve géant,

Le Canadien grandit en espérant,

Il est né d'une race fière,

Béni fut son berceau;

²⁸²These two versions of the anthem are available in both official languages on the Government of Canada website: www.pch.gc.ca/symb/anthm_e.htm.

Le ciel a marqué sa carrière
Dans ce monde nouveau.
Toujours guidé par Sa lumière,
Il gardera l'honneur de son drapeau,
Il gardera l'honneur de son drapeau.
De son patron, précurseur du vrai Dieu,
Il porte au front l'auréole de feu;
Ennemi de la tyrannie,
Mais plein de loyauté,
Il veut garder dans l'harmonie
Sa fière liberté.
Et par l'effort de son génie,
Sur notre Sol asseoir la vérité,
Sur notre Sol asseoir la vérité!
Amour sacré du trône et de l'autel
Remplis nos cœurs de ton souffle immortel.
Parmi les races étrangères
Notre guide est la foi;
Sachons être un peuple de frères,
Sous le joug de la loi;
Et répétons comme nos pères
Le cri vainqueur: «Pour le Christ et le Roi»
Le cri vainqueur: «Pour le Christ et le Roi». (My emphasis)

The anthem, extolling the virtue of action, including past violence to defend French rights, emphasises that the Roman Catholic faith is integral to the Québec nation. What the anthem tells us most, however, is that even in our day and age in the West, the role of theology in politics has not been settled, and perhaps can never be. Nevertheless, it is one that we often—mistakenly—take for granted.

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