

Építész a kőfejtőben Architect in the Quarry



Tanulmányok
Dávidházi Péter
hatvanadik születésnapjára

Studies Presented to
Péter Dávidházi
On His Sixtieth Birthday

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(Szókratész kőbe faragja a három gráciát) című metszete alapján készült.
A metszet Johann Joachim Winckelmann *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der
griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* című értekezésének első,
1755-ös kiadásában jelent meg először.

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ANDRÁS KISÉRY

Of maximal interest

— · —
Playreading and policy in early-17th c. England

Ben Jonson's 1605 tragedy, *Sejanus*, opens with a self-congratulatory exchange between Silius and Sabinus about life at court and about their own virtuous distance from it. This prologue for two voices concludes in a couplet which reads as the matrix of Jonson's play about the rise and fall of Sejanus and about the apparent naiveté Tiberius uses as a disguise to outmaneuver him:

Tirannes Artes
Are to giue Flatterers grace, Accusers power
That those may seeme to kill whom they deuoure. (sig. B2r)

The generalized wisdom of these lines punctuates the end of the first movement of the scene, marking the entrance of two more characters, but the lines themselves are also set apart from the surrounding text by punctuation marks:

SEIANVS.

Our ^a lookes are call'd to question, and our wordes,
 How innocent so euer, are made *Crimes*;
 We shall not shortly dare to tell our dreames,
 Or thinke but 'twill be Treason. S A B. "Tirannes Artes
 "Are to giue Flatterers grace, Accusers power,
 "That those may see, me to kill whom they deuoure.
 Now ^b good *Cremutius Cordus*. COR. Haile to your Lordship.
 NAT. Who's that salutes your Cosin? LAT. 'Tis one *Cordus*,
 A Gentleman of Rome; one, that has writ
Annals of late, they say, and very well.

^a *vid. Tac.*
Ann. 1. pag.
4. & lib. 3.
pa. 62. Succ.
Tib. cap. 62
Senec. de
Benef. lib. 3.
cap. 26.
^b *De re-*
mutio Cor-
do vid Tac-
it. Annal.
lib. 4. pag.

The quotation marks don't enclose the passage, but indicate its beginning as well as each line through which it continues. The extensive notes flanking the text of the tragedy point the reader to Jonson's historical sources in what is both a deeply ambiguous effort to forestall accusations of an intended contemporary application, and at the same time Jonson's most sustained attempt at claiming scholarly credentials.¹ But the quotation marks are not part of this evidentiary apparatus: the passage they identify is not traced to any source by marginal reference. Early modern typography does not use the double inverted comma to indicate verbatim quotations. Puttenham's definition of the *gnome*, *sententia*, "directour" or "sage saye" in the *Arte of English Poesie* clarifies the significance of the symbol:

¹ For the significance of the quarto apparatus, see John JOWETT, "Fall before this Booke': The 1605 Quarto of *Sejanus*," *TEXT* 4 (1988): 279-295; John JOWETT, "Jonson's Authorization of Type in *Sejanus* and other Early Quartos," *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991): 254-265; Blair WORDEN, "Ben Jonson among the historians," = *Culture and politics in early Stuart England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, 67-89.

In waightie causes and for great purposes, wife perfwaders vfe graue & weighty speeches, specially in matter of aduise or counsel, for which purpose there is a maner of speech to alleage textes or authorities of wittie sentence, such as smatch morall doctrine and teach wisdom and good behaiour, by the Greeke originall we call him the *directour*; by the Latin he is called *sententia*: we may call him the *sage saye*, thus.

Gnome,
or the
Directiō.

- “ *Nature bids vs as a louing mother,*
- “ *To loue our selues first and next to loue another.*
- “ *The Prince that conets all to know and see,*
- “ *Had neede full milde and patient to bee.*
- “ *Nothing stickes faster by vs as appeares,*
- “ *Then that which we learne in our tender yeares.*

Sententia,
or the
Sage saye.

Although Puttenham does not mention the double inverted commas that appear in the left margin, for Richard Field, the printer of Puttenham’s tract, they really seem to go without saying. And although *The Arte of English Poesie* is replete with quotations in the modern sense, only the *sententiae* are marked in this way: the connection between the rhetorical and the typographical device is unambiguous.² Puttenham also considers another feature as self-evident: the didactic efficacy of the sentences is predicated upon their independence of context, and their resulting portability. Typography can separate them from the rest of the text because they are already separate or separable from it. The double inverted commas therefore indicate quotable, rather than quoted passages: appropriability, rather than private property, not a sentence the text extracts from an author, but a sentence that is to be extracted from the text.³ It is their user-orientedness that facilitates the reinsertion of texts equipped with typographically marked *sententiae* in the contexts of early modern reading practices, in the circulation of decontextualized fragments through the methodology of goal-oriented

² *The arte of English poesie*. At London: Printed by Richard Field, dwelling in the black-Friers, neere Ludgate, 1589 (STC 20519.5) p. 1[9]7, sig. 2Dr.

³ See Margreta de GRAZIA, “Shakespeare in Quotation Marks,” ed. Jean I. Marsden (1991), 57–72, at 57–60. For a critique of de Grazia’s extrapolations from her evidence to make an argument about epistemic changes, cf. Edmund G. C. KING, “Small-Scale Copyrights?: Quotation Marks in Theory and in Practice,” *Publications of the Bibliographical Society of America* 98, no. 1 (2004): 39–53.

selection, extraction, organization and re-deployment embodied in the commonplace book.⁴

In a recent essay, Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass propose a compelling reading of the significance of the typographical marking of *sententiae* in vernacular writing, arguing that their proliferation in literary and especially in dramatic texts around the turn of the century, and the simultaneous appearance of a series of printed literary commonplace books, like *Politeuphuia: Wits Common Wealth*, *Palladis Tamia*, or *Belvedere: The Garden of the Muses*, that include materials from poetry and plays, should be seen as parts of larger effort on the part of a group of publishers to promote dramatic texts by presenting them as somehow “literary,” which in this context means “worthy of commonplacing”. They further suggest that as a result of the success of this project, the printed texts of many plays written for the commercial stage were equipped with commonplace markers in the first decade and a half of the 17th century.⁵ In this reading, the commonplacing of sententious material is a practice that originates in a more highbrow context, to be

⁴ Drawing on G.K. Hunter’s seminal article on the marking of *sententiae*, Peter Beal points to the connection between typography and the practice of commonplacing and note taking: G. K. HUNTER, “The Marking of *Sententiae* in Elizabethan Printed Plays, Poems, and Romances,” *The Library* 5th ser. 6 (1951): 171–188, Peter BEAL, “Notions in Garrison: The Seventeenth-Century Commonplace Book,” = *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill, Binghamton, N.Y.: RETS, 1993, 135–136. See also Ann BLAIR, “Humanist Methods in Natural Philosophy: The Commonplace Book,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53, no. 4 (1992): 541–551, Ann MOSS, “Commonplace-Rhetoric and Thought-Patterns in Early Modern Culture,” = *The Recovery of Rhetoric: Persuasive Discourse and Disciplinarity in the Human Sciences*, ed. R. H. Roberts, et al., *Knowledge: Disciplinarity and Beyond*, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993. 49–60; Terence CAVE, “Problems of reading in the *Essais*,” = *Montaigne: Essays in Memory of Richard Sayce*, ed. I. D. McFarlane and Ian Maclean, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. 133–166.

⁵ See Roger CHARTIER and Peter STALLYBRASS, “Reading and authorship: the circulation of Shakespeare 1590–1619,” = *A concise companion to Shakespeare and the text*, ed. Andrew Murphy Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, 35–56. I would like to thank Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass for allowing me to read their article in manuscript, and Zack Lesser for calling my attention to

then extended to popular dramatic texts, eventually helping to elevate plays written for the public stage to literary status. The shape of this narrative is familiar from much current work on the history of the early modern book: it tells part of the story of the transition to modernity (in this case, to the rise of a textual universe that is organized by authorship while ignoring the material framework in which the texts are produced, thus including poetry as well as plays written for the commercial stage). It identifies a specific, distinctly pre-modern practice which, in the hands of innovative publishers, helps to bring about, in the long run, through a Hegelian cunning of reason, paradoxically modern results. The universal acid of capitalism, administered by the early modern book industry, transforms earlier forms and practices of reading and writing into “literature.”⁶

In what follows, I offer an argument about a subset of the group of texts supplied with commonplace markers that is pointing in a different direction, away from the gradual homogenization and elevation of the literary. I suggest that the sententious material printers highlighted in early 17th century tragedies also invited a distinctly non-poetic form of attention, connecting these plays to another set of printed and manuscript anthologies of short, pithy, portable statements: namely, to collections of politic maxims. Complementing the focus on the more general Erasmian humanism of the commonplace book, I link the tragedy of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart years to a more recent development, the patently late-humanist interest in “policy” or “reason of state.” I am describing a way in which Jacobean tragedy was participating in the circulation of political knowledge in early modern England, and ultimately arguing that the intrigue tragedies of the first decade of the century offered a model for the interpretive use of maxims in the contemplation of contemporary affairs of state.

While *sententiae* could of course be scattered over any writing, they were most powerfully associated with drama, and with tragic drama in particular. In his encyclopaedia of Renaissance poetics, *Poetices Libri Septem*, Julius Caesar Scaliger claims that *sententiae* are the pillars that

their work. See also Sasha ROBERTS, *Reading Shakespeare's poems in early modern England*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 129–142.

⁶ For a representative account see David Scott KASTAN, *Shakespeare and the Book*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

prop up the fabric of a tragedy.⁷ Jonson situates himself in the same tradition when in the preface to *Sejanus* he lists “fullness and frequency of sentence” among “the offices of a tragic writer”. For contemporary readers, these “stately speeches and wel sounding phrases” were among the main sources of the “notable morallitie”⁸ tragedy was supposed to communicate – and the full sense of the word “notable” is crucial here.

French printed drama commonly marks the *sententiae* inserted in the text by marginal double commas, and scholarship refers to these as a standard feature of Senecan tragedy.⁹ In England, the French model was available not only in imported books, but also in printshop imitations. The English translations of Garnier’s *Cornelia* by Kyd, and of *M. Antoine* by the Countess of Pembroke, marked their sentences closely following the French original:¹⁰

⁷ Lib. III. cap. 97, page 145 col 1 D. For useful discussions of Scaliger’s book, see August Buck’s introduction to Julius Caesar SCALIGER, *Poetices Libri Septem, Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe von Lyon 1561*, Friedrich Frommann: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1964, v-xx, and Marijke SPIES, “Between epic and lyric: the genres in J.C. Scaliger’s *Poetices Libri Septem*” = Spies, *Rhetoric, Rhetoricians and Poets: Studies in Renaissance Poetry and Poetics*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999, 21–28.

⁸ Sidney, *An apologie for poetrie*, l4v.

⁹ See e.g. the introduction to the Pléiade anthology of *Théâtre du XVIIe siècle*, ed. Jacques Scherer, Paris: Gallimard, 1975. Writing about French drama at the beginning of the 17th c., the editor claims “l’usage du monologue, des stances, de la stychomythie, des sentences, va jusqu’à l’abus,” vol. 1. p. xix; cp. also Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the themes of political tragedy in the sixteenth century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, 48–51; J. W. BINNS, “Seneca and neo-Latin tragedy in England,” = *Seneca*, ed. C. D. N. Costa, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, 205–234. For an excellent short general treatment of the functions of *sententiae* in Senecan drama, see Joel B. ALTMAN, *The Tudor play of mind: rhetorical inquiry and the development of Elizabethan drama*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, 242–245. Cp. also Marc FUMAROLI, *L’Age de l’éloquence: rhétorique et “res literaria” de la Renaissance au seuil de l’époque classique*, Genève: Droz, 1980, 93–101, 509–510.

¹⁰ *Cornélie, tragédie de Rob. Garnier*. Paris: R. Estienne, 1574, sig. dzv; and *Cornelia* [translated by Thomas Kyd]. London: Printed by Iames Roberts, for N[icholas] L[ing] and Iohn Busbie, 1594 (STC 11622) sig. B4r.

CORNELIE,

En quel antre infernal iras-tu désormais
 Du monde t'écarter, pour n'y nuire iamais
 Cic. Quelle fin à vos pleurs donra la Destinée,
 Race des Scipions! ne viendra la iournée
 Que le dueil, qui vous ronge, en ioye conuertit,
 Rende vostre desastre et le nostre amori?
 Cor. Ce ne sera iamais : le temps ny les Dieux mesmes
 Ne scauroyent arracher mes souffrances extremes:
 Sinon qu'ayant pitié de mes gemissemens,
 La mort noye ma vie avecques mes tourmens.
 " Cic. Les accidés humains sur nostre teste tournent,
 " Et iamais attachez en vn lieu ne se iournent,
 " Non plus que ce grad ciel, que nous voyoz tousiours
 " D'vn train infatigable entretenir ses iours.
 " Or ainsi que le ciel, des fortunes la source,
 " Court autour de la terre vne eternelle course,
 " Il ne faut estimer qu'vn desastre cruel
 " Que le ciel va lançant, dure perpetuel.
 " Aprez l'Hyuer glacé le beau Printemps fleuronne,
 " L'Esté chaud vi. nt apreç, apreç l'Esté l'Autonne:
 " Et iamais constamment l'influence des cieus,
 " Soit bonheur soit malheur ne verse en mesmes lieux.
 I'ay veu, quand il estoit ieune, acharnez contre Sylle
 Maire, Cinne, Carbone, tyranniser la ville,
 Et tant de sang épandre, où leurs glaiues plus forts
 Raugaçoeyent ennemis, qu'on ne voyoit que morts:
 Puis se vey tout soudain, comme le fort se ioué,
 Ces tyrans renuerser au plus bas de la roué,
 Perdre vie et puissance, exterminer par vn,
 Qui fist, pour se venger, plus de meurtre qu'aucun.
 Encor Sylle étouffint son pouuoir tyrannique,
 Rendit le libre honneur à nostre Re publique:

CORNELIA.

Cornelia.

Ne're shall I see that day, for Heauen and Time,
 Haute faild in power to calme my passion.
 Nor can they (should they pittie my complaints)
 Once ease my life, but with the pangs of death.

Cicero.

" The wide worlds accidents are apt to change.
 " And tickle Fortune staies not in a place.
 " But (like the Clowdes) continuallie doth range,
 " Or like the Sunne that hath the Night in chase.
 " Then as the Heauens (oy whom our hopes are guided)
 " Doe coast the Earth with an eternall course,
 " We must not thinke a miserie betided,
 " Will neuer cease, but still grow worse and worse.
 " When līe Wiuter's past, then comes the Spring,
 " Whom Sommers pride (with sultrie heate) pursues;
 " To whom mylde Autumne doth earthis treasure bring,
 " The sweetest season that the wife can chuse.
 " Heauens influence was nere so constant yet,
 " In good or bad as to continue it.

When I was young, I saw against poore Sylla,
 Proud Cynna, Marius, and Carbo fliest'd,
 So long, till they gan tyrannize the Towne,
 And spilt such store of blood in euery street,
 As there were none but dead-men to be seene.
 Within a while, I saw how Fortune plaid,

When in the early years of the 17th century, printers started to mark *sententiae* in plays written for the public stage, their practice was modeled not only on the printing of poetry, but also, and primarily, on books of dramatic literature we usually refer to as aristocratic closet drama. But even if the printing of Marston's, Chapman's, or Jonson's tragedies was imitating this Franco-Senecan model, many of the plays' *sententiae* were of a very different nature. What distinguishes Marston's *Sophonisba* from the several French tragedies about the Carthaginian princess, for example, is Marston's attention to the deliberations of the drama's courtier-politicians. The French tragedies are all rather heavily equipped with typographically marked tragic *sententiae*: and so is Marston's. But Marston's version balances the stoic laments and sentences of generalized, philosophical nature against another sort of sententious material: politic maxims, that is, *sententiae* about statecraft.

The typography (which frequently replaces the double inverted comma with italics: one edition of the Countess of Pembroke's translation of *Antoine* uses commas, and the next italics) does not even come close to highlighting all the potentially extractable maxims:¹¹

The Tragedie of Sophonisba.

Conquest by bloud is not so sweet as wit,
 For how so ere nice vertue censures of it,
 He hath the grace of warre, that hath wars profit.
 But Carthage well advise, that states comes on,
 With slow aduice, quicke execution,
 Haue here an Enginere long bred for plots,
 Cal'd an imposner, who knows this found excuse,
The onely dew that makes men sprout in Courtes, is vsfe,
Be't well or ill, his thirst is to be mute,
Such states must all commands, and wot dispute.
Knowing foule decedes with danger do begun
But with rewards do end: Sin is no sin
But in respects--
 Gel. Politique Lord, speake low tho heauen beares
 A face far from vs, Gods haue most long cares,
 Ioue has a hundred marble marble hands
 Car. O I, in Poetry or Tragique sceane.
 Gel. I feare Gods onely know what Poets mean.
 Car. Yet heare me: I will speake close truth and
 Nothing in Nature is vnferuifable, (cease,
 No, not euen *Amulity* it selfe,
 Is then for nought dishonestly in beeing;
 And if it be somtimes of forced vsfe,
 Wherein more vrgent then in sawing nations
 State shapcs are fodderd vp, with bafe, nay faulty.
 Yet necessary functions; some must lie,
 Some must betray, some murder, and some all,
 Each hath strong vsfe, as poyson in all purges
 Yet when some violent chance shall force a state,
 To breake giuen faith, or plot some stratagems,
 Princes ascribe that vile necessity
 Vnto Heauens wrath: and sure tho't be no vice,
 Yet t'is bad chance: states must not sticke to nice
 For *Masimissas* death fence bids forgiue
 Beware to offend greate men and let them liue
 For tis of empires body the mayne arme,
He that will do no good, shall doe no harme: yow haue my mind
 Gel. Although a stagelike patsion & weakc heate

* * *

Although he was not among the more typographically “sententious” authors, three works by Shakespeare also carry markings of *sententiae*, and a contemporary reference to two of them may help us clarify the

¹¹ *The vvonnder of vvomen or The tragedie of Sophonisba as it hath beene sundry times acted at the Blacke Friers. Written by Iohn Marston. Iohn Windet, 1606 (STC 17488) Sig. c1v.*

significance of this practice in the English context. In what is among the most frequently discussed marginal comments in the history of English literature, Gabriel Harvey makes a distinction between what look like two types of Shakespearean writing pleasing two distinct types of readers: *Venus and Adonis* the “younger sort” and *Lucrece* and *Hamlet* the “wiser”.¹² Colin Burrow has suggested that the lines marked as memorable *sententiae* in the 1594 quarto of *Lucrece* are among the indications of the gravity Shakespeare projected onto this poem in his 1593 dedication to *Venus and Adonis*, where he promised soon to present “some graver labour” to the Earl of Southampton.¹³ *Sententiae* in literary texts have, as Puttenham’s entry suggests, traditionally been seen as the quintessential sign of *gravitas*.¹⁴ What makes Harvey’s marginal note fascinating in this context is the fact that the other work he mentions as potentially pleasing “the wiser sort” is *Hamlet*, one of the only two plays by Shakespeare that were also equipped with “gnomic pointing”. Although the academic pretensions of *Hamlet*, Shakespeare’s only play that was printed with an indication of performances “in the two Vniversities of Cambridge and Oxford,”¹⁵ especially in combination with the academic pretensions of prince Hamlet, could perhaps be used

¹² Harvey’s Chaucer is now BL Add. MS 42518 G. The note is reprinted in C. Moore SMITH, *Gabriel Harvey’s marginalia*, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913, p. 232. The reference has been central to the debates about the date of *Hamlet*, although the Arden 3 editors are now compelled to agree with Philip Edwards who “concludes sensibly that Harvey ‘is really of little use in trying to date *Hamlet*’” – see Ann THOMPSON and Neil TAYLOR (eds.), *Hamlet*, London, Arden Shakespeare, 2006, 47–48, quoting Philip EDWARDS (ed.) *Hamlet*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1985, 5.

¹³ William SHAKESPEARE, *The complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 42.

¹⁴ As Bartolomeo Ricci wrote in *De imitatione libri tres* (Venezia, 1545): “Tra goediae vero gravitatem, de qua nunc agintur, adiuvari inprimis gravitate sententiarum, nemo non intelligit. quis autem unico Seneca in sentiis est crebrior? quis etiam gravior?” [Everyone knows that the weightiness of tragedy, which we are now discussing, is increased by the weightiness of the *sententiae* in particular. And which author is more studded with *sententiae* than peerless Seneca? Who is more dignified even?] (As quoted and translated in Binns, “Seneca and neo-Latin tragedy in England,” at 231.)

¹⁵ See the Q₁ title page

to account for the typographic gravity of the text, I would nonetheless like to return to Harvey's marginalia on fol. 422v. of the 1598 edition of Speght's Chaucer for another look, risking, I realize, the pedantic over-reading of the notes of a notorious pedant:

The Earle of Essex much commendes Albions England: and not unworthily, for diuerse notable pageants, before, & in the Chronicle. Sum English, & other Histories nowhere more sensibly described, or more inwardly discovered. The Lord Mountioy makes the like account of Daniels peece of the Chronicle, touching the Vsurpation of Henrie of Bullingbrooke. Which in deede is a fine, sententious, & politique peece of poetrie: as profitable, as pleasurable. The younger sort takes much delight in Shakespeares Venus, & Adonis: but his Lucrece, & his tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke, haue it in them, to please the wiser sort. Or such poets: or better: or none.

The passage is a survey of readings recommended by members of the political elite not only for the pleasures, but also, and it seems primarily, for the profits they yield as sources of historical knowledge and political prudence. The sentence about Shakespeare in this context reads less as a simple opposition between the two parts of this author's oeuvre, and more as a distinction between the frivolous love poetry that is in stark contrast both with Essex's and Mountjoy's recommendations, and with the Shakespearean writing that fits the context of "fine, sententious, and politique" works.¹⁶ The gravity and sententiousness of the printed texts of *Lucrece* and *Hamlet* thus seems a function not of their generic or institutional context, but of their engagement with, and instructiveness in, matters of statecraft. In what follows, I will pursue this connection, showing how the function of dramatic maxims in the dissemination of political knowledge can complement the understanding of their role in the general framework of humanist rhetoric and education.

¹⁶ The distinction between the preferred readings of the "younger" and the "wiser sort" is echoed by Henry Crosse, a puritan author who in the 1603 *Vertues Common-wealth* writes about "those vaine, idle, wanton Pamphlets and lasciuious loue-bookes, which as fire-brands, inflame the concupiscence of youth," books that are "as hurtful to youth, as *Machauile* to age." *Vertues common-vvealth: or The high-way to honour...* By Henry Crosse. London: Printed [by Thomas Creede] for Iohn Newbery, dwelling in Paules Church yard, at the signe of the Ball, 1603 (STC 6070.5), sig. N4r.

An octavo notebook now in the Folger Shakespeare Library contains over 10 pages of extracts from *Sejanus*, including the sentence quoted at the beginning of this paper.¹⁷ The owner of the notebook, identified by Kevin Sharpe as William Drake,¹⁸ was primarily interested in political writing: the bulk of the Folger notes consist of extracts from Giovanni Botero's *Della ragion di stato*, alongside notes on other political works. The notes of *Sejanus* constitute a sequence of phrases, sentences and maxims, listed in the order in which they appear in the play. In his note-taking, Drake pays close attention to the typographical marking of *sententiae*. He copies almost all of the passages marked by double inverted commas in the quarto, complemented by a couple of unmarked passages.

Nor are these extracts out of place in the notebook of a reader who, as Sharpe insists, kept returning to Machiavelli throughout his life. Although the margins of the quarto of *Sejanus* are teeming with references to the classical authorities Jonson enlists to vouch for his "integrity in the story," they are far from telling the whole story: while staying close to the sources, the play also revises the account in Tacitus and Suetonius making both Sejanus and Tiberius look more cunning, calculating and dissembling than they are in the historical record, turning them into neat illustrations of the qualities and strategies Machiavelli discusses in *The Prince*, and of contemporary perceptions of court policy in general¹⁹ – and the *sententiae* marked in the quarto are mostly articulations of precisely these attitudes and strategies.

The sentence quoted at the beginning of this paper Jonson seems to have adapted from an entry in his own commonplace book, *Discoveries*:

¹⁷ Folger MS V. a. 263, fol. 15r. Heather Wolfe, the Folger's curator of manuscripts, could not find any information regarding the provenance of the MS.

¹⁸ Kevin SHARPE, *Reading revolutions: the politics of reading in early modern England*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.; Kevin SHARPE, "Uncommonplaces? Sir William Drake's Reading Notes," = *The Reader Revealed*, ed. Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Washington, DC: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2001. 59-65. For an important, if not exactly generous corrective, see Blair WORDEN, "Pens and heads," *London Review of Books* 22, no. 16 (2000): 17-18.

¹⁹ A. R. DUTTON, "The sources, text, and readers of *Sejanus*: Jonson's Integrity in the story," *SP* 75 (1978): 185-7, Daniel C. BOUGHNER, "Sejanus and Machiavelli," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 1 (1961): 81-100.

A *Prince* should exercise his cruelty, not by himselfe, but by his Ministers: so hee may save himselfe, and his dignity with his people, by sacrificing those, when he list, saith the great *Doctor* of State, Machiavell.²⁰

Although Jonson gives no specific source for the maxim, it draws on materials in chapters 7 and 19 of *The Prince*. But the work of distillation into a single sentence was facilitated by an entry in another, printed collection of politic wisdom, the 34. Maxime of Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*:

A Prince which will exercise some cruell and rigorous act (saith M. Nicholas) he ought to give the commission thereof unto some other; to the end, he may not acquire evill will and enmitie by it. And yet if he feare, that such a delegation cannot be wholly exempted from blame (to have consented to the execution which was made by his Commissarie) he may cause the Commissarie to be slaine, to shew that he consented not to his crueltie.²¹

The political maxim as a form was identified with Machiavellianism,²² and Machiavelli's works were usually read for the maxims they contained or could be reduced to. Innocent Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel*, first published in an English translation in 1602, but available to readers in England decades earlier in the original French as well as in a Latin translation dedicated to Edward Bacon, offers a maxim-by-maxim refutation of the "great Doctor *Machiavell*; whose bookes rightly may be called, The French Courtiers *Alcoran*, they have them in so great estimation; imitating and observing his principles and Maximes, no more no

²⁰ *Discoveries* 1158-1163.

²¹ Gentillet 2H1 r-v, based on Chapter 19 of the *Prince*, where Machiavelli suggests that "Princes ought to cause others to take upon them the matters of blame and imputation; and upon themselves to take only those of grace and favour." *Nicholas Machiavel's Prince. Also, the life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca. And the meanes Duke Valentine us'd to put to death Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto of Fermo, Paul, and the Duke of Gravina. Translated out of Italian into English; by E.D. With some animadversions noting and taxing his errors.* London : Printed by R. Bishop, for Wil: Hills, 1640. STC 17168; p. 152, sig. H4v.

²² Napoleone ORSINI, "Policy: Or the language of Elizabethan Machiavellism," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 9 (1946), 122-134.

lesse than the Turkes doe the *Alcoran* of their great Prophet *Mahomet*.”²³ To critically engage with Machiavelli’s “subtilities” – which are “beastlie vanitie and madnesse, yea, full of extreame wickednesse” (sig. A2v) –, Gentillet claims to “have extracted and gathered, that which is properly his owne, and have reduced and brought it to certaine Maximes” (sig. A3r), offering them organized under three main headings. Each entry in the book begins with a maxim taken from or based on Machiavelli printed in italics (the single most important typographical alternative to inverted commas in marking detachable *sententiae* in print); this is followed first by Gentillet’s summary of Machiavelli’s reasons and examples supporting the maxim in a roman font, and then, finally, by Gentillet’s counterexamples and arguments in a much smaller typeface. By choosing to take on the challenge of the courtiers’ *Alcoran* in their terms, and giving pride of place to Machiavelli’s work analyzed into quotable maxims, he actually provided his readers with a primer in “policy,” and, as Edward Meyer showed over a century ago, became the primary source of the machiavellisms scattered in early modern tragedies²⁴ – many of them marked in the printed playtexts as *sententiae*.

Late-humanist political theory and the discourse of “reason of state” was frequently articulated in maxims: Lipsius’ *Six books of politics*²⁵ is based on maxims from various authorities, identified as such by italics. A translation of Francesco Sansovino’s *Concetti politici*, a popular collection of hundreds of standalone maxims extracted from Machiavelli,

²³ *A discourse vpon the meanes of vvel governing and maintaining in good peace, a kingdome, or other principalitie Divided into three parts, namely, the counsell, the religion, and the policie, vvhich a prince ought to hold and follow. Against Nicholas Machiavell the Florentine. Translated into English by Simon Patericke.* London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1602 (STC 11743), sig. A2v. For accounts of Gentillet’s book and its English readers, see Emile Gasquet, *Le Courant machiavelien dans la pensée et la littérature anglaises du XVIIe siècle*, *Etudes anglaises*; 51 (Paris; Montréal; Bruxelles: Didier, 1974), 169–183, Sydney ANGLO, *Machiavelli: the first century: studies in enthusiasm, hostility, and irrelevance*, (Oxford–Warburg studies) Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, 271–324.

²⁴ Edward Stockton MEYER, *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan drama*, Weimar: E. Felber, 1897.

²⁵ *Sixe bookes of politickes or ciuil doctrine, written in Latine by Iustus Lipsius.* London: Printed by Richard Field for William Ponsonby, 1594 (STC 15701).

Guicciardini, as well as classical authors, was available in English since 1590 as *The quintesence of wit being a corrant comfort of conceites, maximies, and poleticke deuises*.²⁶ Robert Dallington's 1613 *Aphorismes ciuill and militarie*,²⁷ dedicated to Prince Charles, closely follows the layout of the Gentillet folio, and tests its maxims against historical examples taken from Guicciardini's Italian histories, offering them as useful points of reference in matters of political prudence.

Such collections both provided models for building individual collections of politic wisdom, and were themselves ransacked for their contents. It was in this context, I argue, that many early modern readers encountered their playbooks, and the focus of their attention, and especially their attention to marked *sententiae*, was inevitably informed by this. William Drake, with his dozens of notebooks and obsessive copying may have been an exceptional phenomenon, and admittedly, the text of *Sejanus* is something of an oddity itself: but some other early 17th century notebooks show the same connection between an interest in affairs of state, politic maxims and playreading.

The notebook of Edward Pudsey, now in the Bodleian Library, is among the few surviving commonplace-books that contain extensive notes of plays. The greatest part of this MS is taken up by material from the cornerstones of early 17th century political literature: Livy, Tacitus, Guicciardini, Machiavelli (both the *Florentine histories* and Gentillet's maxims) and Commynes; this is supplemented by English and foreign authors on moral and civil (i.e. political) subjects, including Cornwallis, Bacon, and More's *Utopia*, and texts of contemporary political significance. Extracts from these works provide the context, physical as well as interpretive, for Pudsey's commonplacing of plays, mostly produced in the last years of the 16th and the first decade of the 17th century.

²⁶ *The quintesence of wit being a corrant comfort of conceites, maximies, and poleticke deuises, selected and gathered together by Francisco Sansouino. VVherin is set foorth sundrye excellent and wise sentences, worthie to be regarded and followed*. London: Printed by Edward Allde, 1590 (STC 21744); on Sansovino, see Paul F. GRENDLER, "Francesco Sansovino and Italian Popular History 1560-1600," *Studies in the Renaissance* 16 (1969), 139-180. Sidney Anglo offers a detailed if unimaginative survey of the widespread practice of dismembering Machiavelli into maxims: ANGLO 2005, 630-670.

²⁷ London: Imprinted [by R. Field] for Edward Blount, 1613 (STC 6197)

Whatever Pudsey was reading the plays for, it wasn't for their poetic beauties. The passages he copied from *Antonio's revenge*, for example, include both the *sententia* "he y^t speaks he knows not what neuer sins against his own conscience" (keyed to "ignorance" in the margin) as well as "States men y^t cleave thorough knotts of Craggie pollicies / vse men lyke wedges one to stryke out an other till &c" ("statists"). His notes show Pudsey interested in models for civil conversation and witty turns of phrase as well as in "policy" – and indeed, the interest in politic maxims is best understood as an important component of the repertoire of civil conversation. The interest I highlight here is another aspect of such gentlemanly (for lack of a better shorthand) engagement with plays. But while the mining of playtexts for felicitous expression persists into the mid-century and beyond,²⁸ the short period in which plays were equipped with various typographic marks of *sententiae* coincides with the first wave of the public interest in Tacitean and Machiavellian political theory, in the discourse about the reason of state, and with what has recently, and somewhat wishfully, been referred to as the "republican moment" of renaissance England.²⁹

"Gabriel Harvey thought that it was useless to read tragedies unless one knows how to distinguish philosophical from tyrannical sentences,"³⁰ – that is, the universalized Stoic wisdom of Seneca from politic maxims. English playbooks of the first two decades of the 17th century imagined an audience that was clearly capable of making the distinction, and was more fascinated by the latter. Drake's example shows that for an attentive reader, the often inconsistent and scarce quotation marks (or italics) were less binding than inviting: they sent him on a hunt

²⁸ Cp. Cotgrave's *Treasury* (1655), Abraham Wright's notebook (BL MS Add. 22608), and William How's miscellany (Folger MS V.a. 87).

²⁹ John GUY, "Monarchy and counsel: models of the state," = *The Sixteenth Century: 1485-1603*, ed. Patrick Collinson, *The short Oxford history of the British Isles*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 113-142; Andrew HADFIELD, *Shakespeare and republicanism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.; Martin DZELZAINIS, "Shakespeare and political thought," = *A companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, 100-116.

³⁰ On sig. 8v of Harvey's copy of Euripides: see Virginia Stern p. 174, translation modified. I owe this reference to Adam Hooks.

for further, unmarked maxims in their plays. But to what end? And what difference does this make to our reading of these plays? I can only gesture at some of the implications here.

Drake's reading of *Sejanus* is clearly motivated by an interest in politics, but it does not manifest a specific agenda or critique: he read *Sejanus* as "a fine, sententious, & politique peece" that has it in it "to please the wiser sort." His political interest is instrumentally oriented: rather than thinking about, in the loosely "Aristotelian" tradition, the forms of good government, he is focusing on "the knowledge of the means by which such a dominion can be founded, preserved, and extended," as Botero's influential treatise defined "reason of state."³¹ But Drake's example also suggests that pleasure, the pleasure taken by the wiser sort, is an important notion here. Unlike the heroes of the seminal work on the history of reading by Grafton, Jardine and Sherman,³² and Kevin Sharpe's protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, William Drake did not study his books for action. There is no trace in his notebooks, and no suggestion in anything we know about his life that he ever put

³¹ Quoted in Peter BURKE, "Tacitism, scepticism, and reason of state," = *The Cambridge history of political thought, 1450-1700*, ed. J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 479-498, at 480.

³² Although Lisa JARDINE and Anthony GRAFTON, "'Studied for action': How Gabriel Harvey read his Livy," *Past and Present*, no. 129 (1990), 30-78. has become the most-quoted statement, "Alien intelligence: Mercantile exchange and knowledge transactions in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*" = Lisa JARDINE, *Reading Shakespeare historically*, London, New York: Routledge, 1996.; William H. SHERMAN, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.; Lisa JARDINE and William SHERMAN, "Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in Late Elizabethan England," = *Religion, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, ed. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 102-124, Alan STEWART, "Instigating Treason: the Life and Death of Henry Cuffe, Secretary," = *Literature, Politics and Law in Renaissance England*, ed. Lorna Hutson and Erica Sheen, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005, 50-70. provide important elaborations and extensions of Jardine and Grafton's original essay, which discussed the textual traces left behind by Gabriel Harvey, whose own bids for employment never quite worked out.

his knowledge into practice or to critical use.³³ Like most early 17th century readers, Drake was an armchair politician. If they were seeking an application of their readings, they found it in fashioning themselves for social, conversational success.

I would even risk the parallel with fascination with 9/11 conspiracy theories or, less embarrassing perhaps, with the novels of Robert Ludlum. Which is not to claim that such fascination does not have serious political implications: the political implication of such fascination is that it sees the political sphere as an object of aesthetic contemplation, without the promise of or even interest in intervention, active engagement, or the exercise of civic virtues and duties. The early 17th century interest in “policy” long predates the rise of a Habermasian public sphere, and the flourishing of political intrigue tragedy in the same period resonated with this interest. Not only are these plays scattered with pronouncements that could immediately find their place in the notebooks of readers interested in the reason of state: their complex intrigue plots could also be seen as informed by, and through the unfolding dramatic action also testing, such maxims. As Harold Love puts it in a throwaway comment about mid 17th century writing, “Machiavelli provided a recipe book from which new fictions could be generated”³⁴: in the early 17th century, this maximized recipe book generated dramatic fictions offering an aesthetic pleasure on which the detached contemplation of affairs of state could be modelled.

³³ SHARPE 2000, 189–190, 306–307, and 90–91, 131–133.

³⁴ Harold LOVE, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-century England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 160–161.