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Henry Savile's Tacitus and the English role on the Continent: Leicester, Hotman, Lipsius

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Henry Savile's Tacitus and the English role on the Continent: Leicester, Hotman, Lipsius

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SUMMARY

This article argues that Henry Savile's widely admired Tacitus of 1591 should not be read as an implied call for a more aggressive English stance against Spanish advances on the Continent (as one recent article suggests), but precisely for a more restrained and prudential approach. Secondly, it calls into question the generally accepted view that Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, played a prominent role in the composition of the book. It argues that in reconstructing the work's original intellectual context and especially that of the supplement *The Ende of Nero and the beginning of Galba*, the main emphasis should not be on Essex's political and military career, but on that of his stepfather Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The article provides an investigation (as far as the surviving information allows) of the background in Continental politics and political thought in relation to the text of *The Ende*, which suggests that it should primarily be read from the perspective of the unsuccessful English intervention in the Low Countries in 1585–88.

KEYWORDS

Savile; Essex; Leicester; Lipsius; Tacitism; reason of state

Contents

1. Introduction.....	303
2. Biography and networks.....	305
2.1 Scholarly network c.1590–1610.....	307
3. Political interpretations of Savile's Tacitus.....	309
4. Savile's Tacitus from the perspective of Tacitism on the Continent.....	312
4.1. Prudentia and The Ende of Nero	313
5. <i>The Ende of Nero</i> and the English expedition in the Low Countries 1585–87	314
5.1. Savile, Essex and Leicester	316
6. Conclusion	318

1. Introduction

Henry Savile's translation of Tacitus's *Histories* and *Agricola* published in 1591 was the first in the English language and is widely considered the most important English edition of a Roman historian of its time. An outstanding feature of this book is the supplement of his own composition which Savile added to fill the gap between Tacitus's *Annals* and *Histories*, under the title *The Ende of*

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Nero and the beginning of Galba.¹ Savile's supplement was greatly admired from its publication onwards, and has attracted a fair deal of attention from modern scholarship. Its intellectual fascination, and indeed mystery, was further enhanced by the events of a decade later, when Savile's main patron at the time, Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex (1565–1601), appeared as the central figure in a rebellion against the dominant powers at court, the motivation of which was couched in terms similar to those in some of the 'Tacitist' literature that Savile's Tacitus belongs to. The implications of this for the interpretation of Savile's text have been the subject of several articles and book chapters in the recent scholarship² which, however, do not seem to have resulted in a definitive reading of Savile's Tacitus edition.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the backgrounds of Savile's Tacitism in Continental intellectual and political history in order to contribute to the on-going debate regarding Savile's political intentions in preparing the Tacitus edition in general and the supplement *The Ende* in particular.³ The results of this enquiry suggest, first, that the intended political purport of Savile's edition may not be a call for 'a more bellicose stand' on the Continent against the rise of Spanish power (as is suggested in one recent article), but precisely for a *less* ambitious and more prudential approach. Secondly, that the widely accepted connection between Essex's political ambitions and the composition of Savile's book should be re-examined, while the political career of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and the Netherlands campaign of 1585–88 might well be more important for Savile's book than Essex's political career.

With respect to method, the purpose of this paper is to argue once again for the recognition of 'Tacitism' as one of the relevant currents in elite intellectual culture of the decades around 1600—a recognition that is common enough in studies of particular authors and contexts, but still has not really found its way to the more general intellectual histories of the period.

In this article I shall first give a brief overview of Savile's biography and intellectual networks, based primarily on the available scholarship, but extended with some other findings. Next I shall discuss the most important recent literature on the Tacitus edition and its interpretation, and give a brief characterisation of the Tacitism relevant to the work. Finally I shall look at Savile's text in relation to the English operation in the Low Countries and present my own proposal for the interpretation of *The Ende*.

¹Henry Savile, *The ende of Nero and beginning of Galba Fower bookes of the Histories of Cornelius Tacitus. The life of Agricola*, colophon printed at the end: printed at Oxforde by Ioseph Barnes for Richard Wright, cum Privilegio M.D.LXXXI (1591). See the record STC 26342; apparently the London printer R. Robinson was also involved, but according to an addendum to the STC 'Robinson app[arently] pr[inted] only the dedic[ation] on 1st [par].2r-v'. Electronic copy available from Early English Books Online, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99852807

The end of the final book of Tacitus's *Annals* (Book 16) is missing from the manuscripts. This gap (one of several in the extant text of the *Annals*) robs us of Tacitus's account from the final part of the year 66 AD down to the end of the year 68. The *Histories* start from the beginning of the year 69.

²E.g. D. Womersley, 'Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Elizabethan Texts', *The Review of English Studies*, 42, no. 167 (1991), 313–42; M. Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics and the Uses of Roman Historians c. 1590–1630', in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, edited by K. Sharpe and P. Lake (Basingstoke, 1994), 21–43; P. Hammer, *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics. The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge, 1999), 306–8, 302–3, 335–36; P. Kewes, 'Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 74, no. 4 (2011), 515–51; A. Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford, 2012), 226–36.

³The literature on Tacitism(s) has become extensive, although overviews are still very limited. Below is a very small selection; for more literature see the bibliographies of these publications. P. Burke, 'Tacitism', in *Tacitus*, edited by T. Dorey (London, 1969), 149–71; idem, 'Tacitism, Scepticism and Reason of State' in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450–1700*, edited by J. Burns and M. Goldie, 479–98; U. Muhlack, 'Tacitismus' in *Der Neue Pauly* (Stuttgart, 2003), I, 353–58; M. van der Poel and J. Waszink, 'Tacitismus', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, edited by G. Ueding (Tübingen, 2009), IX, col. 1113–1123; J. Soll, *Publishing the Prince* (Ann Arbor, 2005). On English Tacitism see e.g., A.T. Bradford, 'Stuart Absolutism and the "Utility" of Tacitus', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 46, no. 2 (1983), 127–55; P. Kewes (ed), *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, 2006); K. Sharpe and P. Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (Basingstoke, 1994); D. Womersley, 'Sir John Hayward's Tacitism', *Renaissance Studies*, 6, no. 1 (1992), 46–59.

2. Biography and networks

Henry Savile was born in Over Bradley in Yorkshire in 1549, the son of Henry Savile and Elizabeth Ramsden. His father was an Oxford-trained lawyer and landowner of moderate prosperity.⁴ His branch of the family was Protestant but not as militantly so as other branches and Savile later befriended people of various convictions. In 1561 he matriculated at Brasenose College Oxford and became Fellow of Merton College in 1565, even before proceeding to take his BA in 1566, and MA in 1570. He held a number of college and university posts; for example in 1575 he was proctor (together with John Underhill, a protégé of Leicester)⁵; at Leicester's insistence these offices were extended with a year.

Savile first specialised in mathematics and astronomy; later he also turned to theology, history, patristics, the history of mathematics, English history and other fields; he was renowned for the scope and depth of his learning. He undertook a major modernisation of the teaching of astronomy at Oxford, inspired by Continental (mainly German) examples. In this respect he gained particular fame with a lecture series in 1570–71 on the history of mathematics and the interpretation of Ptolemy's *Almagest*. The nature and background of Savile's innovations in mathematics and astronomy have recently been explored in detail by Robert Goulding.⁶ For some time in 1566–67 Savile was part of a faction in Merton College which opposed the authority of the Dean, Thomas Bodley. Soon however Savile and Bodley developed a solid friendship, and Savile would later assist Bodley in building up the collection of the Bodleian Library.

In 1578 Savile departed Oxford for a European tour, following the example of Bodley who had left for the Continent in 1576. His travel companions included Robert Sidney (Philip's brother), the astronomer George Carew and one of his own pupils, the future obnoxious diplomat Henry Neville.⁷ Many of their destinations were places where they would meet fellow astronomers and scholars. First Savile travelled to Paris where he stayed with Bodley for some time, and met among others, François Viète and Joseph Scaliger. Next he travelled to Altdorf near Neurenberg (September 1580), to visit the mathematician Johannes Praetorius, and Breslau (nowadays Wrocław in Poland), to study with the renowned Hungarian Protestant convert Andreas Dudith (1533–89), once a Catholic bishop, then of Unitarian sympathies and living in scholarly retirement; and the German mathematician and astronomer Paul Wittich (Wittichius, 1546–86). In early 1581 Savile continued to Prague to visit the imperial physician Tadeáš Hájek (Hagecius); in July 1581 he was in Vienna, then went to Padua to stay with Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535–1601), botanist, collector of books and scientific instruments, and a beacon of learning in his own right. Pinelli and Savile exchanged copies of several texts in manuscript (the copies being made by Pinelli's scribe, Camillo Veneto). Next Savile travelled to Venice and Rome.⁸ In the spring of 1582 he was back in Neurenberg, and returned to England in the autumn of that year.⁹

The eighteenth-century *English Baronetage* states that for some time Savile acted as 'the Queen's resident' in the Low Countries. Although this is repeated in some of the modern scholarship, it

⁴R. Goulding, 'Sir Henry Savile', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 49 (Oxford, 2004), 109–18; Goulding, *Defending Hypathia. Ramus, Savile, and the Renaissance Discovery of Mathematical History* (Heidelberg, 2010), Archimedes XXV; W. Carr, 'Savile, Henry', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 50 (London, 1897), L, 367–70.

⁵M. Feingold, *The Mathematicians' Apprenticeship: Science, Universities and Society in England, 1560–1640* (Cambridge, 1984), 125 n. 2.

⁶Goulding, *Defending Hypathia*, 75–94; for a brief overview see Goulding, 'Henry Savile'.

⁷Neville (1561–1615) had a very unusual career, see M. Greengrass, 'Sir Henry Neville' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁸In Venice Savile met with Alvise Lullini and appears to have begun compiling a cosmographical commonplace-book, based on an extensive set of Venetian travel literature, most of which was only available in manuscript at the time. His commonplace-book lists, for a number of countries, information on its monarch and family, its treasury, council and juridical system, geographical nature, and so on. The manuscript thus testifies to his interest in politics at the time of his European journey. Savile probably had manuscript copies of some of the Venetian literature sent after him when he was back in England to continue the work. See J. Highfield, 'An Autograph Manuscript Commonplace Book of Henry Savile', *Bodleian Library Record*, 8 (1962–67), 73–83.

⁹Goulding, 'Henry Savile'; R.B. Todd, 'Henry and Thomas Savile in Italy', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 58, no. 2 (1996), 439–44.

appears to be untrue, as no traces of his stay in that area are extant; nor is it very obvious in his itinerary when this episode could have taken place. Given Savile's scientific and scholarly interests it seems unthinkable that he would not have paid a visit to the new university at Leiden which was gathering momentum right at that time. After the fall of Louvain to Parma in 1578, the university's 'founding father' Janus Dousa had succeeded in getting Justus Lipsius, the chief Tacitist scholar of the time, from Leuven to Leiden, and at the same time Leiden was at the centre of a vibrant Anglo-Dutch scholarly, political and cultural network.¹⁰ Dousa's *Album Amicorum* reflects his enormous personal and scholarly network but contains no entry by or on Savile, nor do the early records of the university. In 1575–77 the English ambassador in the rebellious provinces was Sir Thomas Wilson, who was succeeded by Sir Philip Sidney in 1577. Secretary to both was Daniel Rogers, who also appears independently as Elizabeth's envoy.¹¹

After his return to England Savile became tutor in Greek to the Queen (1582). Taking advantage of the Queen's influence he had himself elected as Warden of Merton College in 1585: this caused his appointment to become a cause of resentment within the college, while his authoritarian administration and the fact that he spent much time at the court, and not in Oxford, continued to cause dissatisfaction throughout his time in office. He appointed a sub-warden for the everyday management of the college; a practice which also met with opposition within the college and subsequently from the University. Nevertheless it is universally agreed that Merton flourished during Savile's wardenship. He instituted the Savilian professorships, appointed many new fellows, enlarged and improved the library, carried out building works and so on.

In 1591 the Tacitus edition appeared which is central to this article. In 1591 or 1592, when he was in his early forties, Savile married Margaret Dacres, with whom he had two children, Henry and Elizabeth. In 1595 he obtained another long-standing wish, again through court intervention. He was appointed as Provost of Eton—and again in contravention of the institution's statutes, for Savile was not in holy orders. This appointment was partly the result of an exercise of Essex's influence at court in favour of Savile. There is clear evidence for contacts between Savile and Essex in 1594–95¹² though that for the years before and after this period is much less decisive. The Tacitus of 1591 is often taken as evidence of their association dating back to that time and before, but we shall return to this point below. Nevertheless, after the failure of Essex's rebellion in 1601 Savile was put under arrest for a brief period, his relationship to Henry Cuffe, a participant in the plot, being another matter of special enquiry. Soon however Savile was released and all suspicions regarding him seem to have disappeared. He even had Essex's son and heir placed in his care at Merton. If any trace of the association with Essex remained it may even have contributed to Savile's being knighted by James I/VI in 1604.¹³ Savile's Tacitus was reprinted in 1604, 1612, 1622 and 1640, together with Richard Greneway's translation of Tacitus's *Annals* first published in 1598.¹⁴

In 1598 he published an edition of English histories and chronicles under the title *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores* (1598), which was rather critically received but is still important for the fact that the manuscript of one of the texts it contains was subsequently lost. From c.1600 he worked on a prestigiously conceived edition of the Church father Chrysostom (published 1610–12 in eight volumes), which he edited in co-operation with other scholars and which relied on the assistance of a wide

¹⁰Wotton, *English Baronetage* (1741), I, 155. As source for this information a footnote (b) refers to an inscription in the house of a George Savile (?). For Leiden, see J. Witkam, *De dagelijkse zaken van de Leidse Universiteit van 1581 tot 1596, Leiden 1970–1975*, 10 vols; the *Album Studiosorum* records a few Englishmen in 1581–82 but no Savile. The Anglo-Dutch network has been studied in exquisite detail by J. van Dorsten, *Poets, Patrons, and Professors: Sir Philip Sidney, Daniel Rogers, and the Leiden Humanists* (Leiden, 1962), but this work too contains no reference to Savile.

¹¹Van Dorsten, *Poets, Patrons*, 47 and passim. In 1578 Francis Walsingham was sent to the Netherlands on another official embassy (C. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* [The Hague, 1979], 66–70). It seems likely that Rogers and Savile were at least aware of each other, for both were in a network of correspondents which also included Thomas Savile (Henry's brother) and the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe. (J.R. Christianson, *On Tycho's Island, Tycho Brahe and his Assistants, 1570–1601* [Cambridge, 2000, repr. 2008], 413 n. 10).

¹²Goulding, 'Henry Savile', 115.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics', 34.

European network of librarians and manuscript-hunters. Unfortunately the work was not a commercial success. In 1620 he founded two Savilian professorships at Oxford in geometry and astronomy. The instructions for the chair reflect the same basic principles of mathematical education which informed his lectures in 1570. These positions have been filled continuously until the present. Henry Savile died at Eton on 19 February 1622.¹⁵

2.1. Scholarly network c.1590–1610

After his return to England in 1582, Savile remained in correspondence with scholars on the Continent. Here we shall concentrate on contacts relevant for our understanding of his Tacitism. An important connection for our purpose is that with Jean Hotman (1552–1635), son of François Hotman, the prominent Huguenot author of *Francogallia*. Jean Hotman came to Christ Church in Oxford in 1580 as a tutor and scholar and remained there until he departed for the Low Countries with the Earl of Leicester in May 1585. Two of his close friends at Oxford were the classicist Henry Cuffe and Savile's younger brother Thomas. As is apparent in their correspondence, Hotman and Thomas Savile discussed the interpretation of Tacitus and the merits of Justus Lipsius's famous edition in particular (Thomas Savile expressing fundamental doubts as to the quality of Lipsius's emendations in the text), and debated the politics of the Duke of Anjou's expedition to the Low Countries.¹⁶ Hotman seems to figure in Lipsius's correspondence from early 1585 onwards (in any case well before his departure to the Netherlands), and the wording suggests that their acquaintance had already existed for some time. Given their occupation with Lipsius's Tacitus edition, it does not seem far-fetched to assume that Hotman discussed his communications with Lipsius with the Savile brothers in Oxford, even if these letters are not preserved.¹⁷ Henry Savile's reference to Hotman as *mihi amicissimus*, 'my very good friend', in a (later) letter to De Thou confirms that he too knew Hotman well. Thus, we have every reason to believe that Henry Savile may have taken part in these discussions as well, given his interest in Tacitus. This even makes it possible that these discussions created this interest, or at least renewed it. The manuscript preserved in the Bodleian Library shows that Thomas was indeed involved in the preparation of Savile's Tacitus edition¹⁸ (which might even raise the question if, or to which extent, the edition was perhaps a joint effort by Henry and Thomas together). Hotman remained in correspondence with both Henry Cuffe and Thomas and Henry Savile after his time in Oxford, although Thomas Savile complained in a letter to Hotman about the absence of replies in the period the latter was in the Low Countries.¹⁹

Savile's contact with Joseph Scaliger was resumed in 1594–5 after the publication of Scaliger's *Cyclometrica* on the ancient problem of squaring a circle, which had been received very critically by the mathematical community. Scaliger was informed that Savile had drawn up a set of notes to the *Cyclometrica* (apparently in preparation for a book on the subject), and asked Savile to send them to him; the topic had in fact long been one of Savile's personal interests. Savile complied by explaining why he disagreed, but Scaliger's hopes for support from that side were rebuffed. Savile explained why he endorsed the widespread criticism of Scaliger's mathematical adventure. After this exchange, direct correspondence between Scaliger and Savile seems to have stopped and

¹⁵Goulding, 'Henry Savile', 115–18.

¹⁶G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes, 'Jean Hotman's English Connection', in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Academie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde* N.R., 53, no. 5 (1990), 161–224; esp. 175–76 and Appendix 2, Thomas Savile's valedictory poem to Hotman.

¹⁷See *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae*, II, edited by M. Nauwelaerts and S. Sué (Brussels, 1983), ep. 85 02 00 DO1 (and notes), to Janus Dousa in London: *Salve cum Hotomanno nostro si est istic*, 'Greetings to you and my friend Hotman if he is there'. The dating of Feb. 1585 is uncertain (Dousa was in London in Aug.–Sep. 1584 and July–Dec. 1585), but the addition 'if he is there' indicates that Lipsius was in contact with Hotman before the latter came to the Netherlands. The reference to Hotman in ep. 81 07 26 V (I, 162) is probably a writing error for *Holmannus*.

¹⁸Hammer, *Polarisation*, 307 n. 201.

¹⁹See *Francisci et Joannis Hotomanorum Epistolae* (...) ex bibl. Jani Guilielmi Meelii (Amsterdam, 1700), letter 100, 31 January 1587, pp. 346–47.

unfortunately no historical or literary scholarship entered their discussions.²⁰ With Justus Lipsius no direct correspondence seems to have taken place at all, and Lipsius seems not to have seen a copy of Savile's Tacitus before 1600. In that year he sends thanks to Jacobus Ortelianus for a copy of Savile's Tacitus and its Notes, which only he hopes he will be able to read, given his lack of knowledge of the English language.²¹

In 1606 Savile received a copy of the second volume of Jacques-Auguste de Thou's *Historia sui Temporis* from the author, with a letter in which De Thou explains that writing about the period 1560–72 and its events in Scotland is a risky business, probably even more so now that Elizabeth is dead than when she was still alive. He has restrained himself and mitigated his views and words in many places, but not so much as to depart from the truth, which would have gone contrary to the duties of the historian. He asks Savile to defend his good faith and honest intentions if his discussion should provoke protests; on the other hand, De Thou proclaims himself willing to adapt his text to the insight of people better informed. Savile replies in a long letter (dated 1 December 1607) in which he expresses his admiration for De Thou's history and addresses several other topics such as Andreas Dudith's biography. He does not provide much information about the roots and sources of his interest in Tacitus and Tacitism, although he mentions that the book and De Thou's letter came to him via his good friend [Jean] Hotman.²²

Savile's scholarly reputation appears to have been solid, wide-spread and lasting, although the fact that he wrote in English, unusual in humanist enquiries in his age, may have slowed down the reception of his works on the Continent. We have already seen that Lipsius only received Savile's Tacitus by 1600 (in the preface to a new edition of his own Notes to Tacitus issued in 1600 he still expresses regret at not having seen Savile's book). Hugo Grotius refers to Savile with great admiration. Letters with Isaac Casaubonus and Georg Lingelsheim in May–June 1613, when Grotius was in London for the Anglo-Dutch colonial negotiations of that year, indicate that he met Savile in person, and he shows himself very excited about this opportunity.²³ In several cases however it appears that communications between Savile and Continental scholars ran via Casaubonus (e.g. Grotius and Lingelsheim).

With respect to Savile's humanist oeuvre, an important role appears to have been reserved for his commentary on the Roman army, *A view of certaine militar matters, for the better understanding of the ancient Roman stories*, which appeared as an appendix (of 25 pages of dense print) to the notes in the 1591 Tacitus. Georg Lingelsheim published a Latin translation of this work in 1601.²⁴ In the (anonymous) preface he states that although the work was published 10 years ago he only recently saw it and was struck by its *elegantia* and *perspicuitas*, and translated it in response to demands from the scholarly community, although the same topic had also been treated by Lipsius in *De militia Romana* of 1596. Indeed the two works seem entirely independent from each other.²⁵

²⁰The *Correspondence of Joseph Justus Scaliger*, edited by P. Botley and D. van Miert, 2 (Geneva, 2012), esp. 1595 04 05 and 1595 04-06 00.

²¹See *Iusti Lipsi Epistolae* 13 (year 1600), 00 11 29 C, ed. J. Papy (Brussels, 2000): Lipsius received the book via the London-based Antwerpian antiquarian and Latin poet Jacobus Colius Ortelianus, a nephew of Abraham Ortelius.

²²*Vale, vir amplissime, (...) clarissimumque Hotomanum, mihiq[ue] amicissimum, cuius opera tuae ad me pervenerunt litterae, meo nomine, si placet, salutabis.* The letters are printed in *Sylloge Scriptorum varii generis et argumenti (...)*, VII (London, 1733), cap. 5 pp. 6–8; manuscript copies are kept in Bodleian Library Oxford, Ms. Carte 101, fol. 61–66. These copies do not seem to be the source of the text printed in the *Sylloge*: a note to De Thou's letter in the *Sylloge* refers to the many *lacunae* in the text; the copy in MS Carte 101 has similar but slightly different (mostly smaller) *lacunae*. The dates are a problem: although the *Sylloge* states explicitly that the letter by Savile is a reply to one by De Thou (and this seems confirmed by the content), there is no explanation for the gap of almost 16 months between the letters. The date of De Thou's letter both in the Oxford copy and the *Sylloge* reads: 'Lut Paris VI Kl. Vtil. 1606 -'. Sextilis = August; which gives 'Paris, 27 July 1606'.

²³H. Grotius, *Briefwisseling*, I, edited by P.C. Molhuysen (Den Haag, 1928), ep. 264 (p. 238), 271 (p. 247), 276 (p. 253); see also ep. 294 (p. 269), 308 (p. 284), 317 (p. 297), 329 (p. 307).

²⁴*Henrici Savilis Angli commentarius de Militia Romana ex Anglico Latinus factus*, Heidelbergae 1601. The translator is not named, but the copy in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (available through Google Books) carries an inscription by Lingelsheim identifying him as the translator.

²⁵For example, Lipsius's work takes the form of a passage-by-passage commentary on Polybius's discussion of the Roman army, while Savile's is based on a possibly 'Ramist' dichotomous subdivision of the topic, with no particular prominence given to Polybius as a source (only at the very end Savile includes one special discussion of one place in Polybius to clarify its meaning).

In June 1637 a great scholar of the next generation, Claudius Salmasius, sends thanks to André Rivet for sending him Lingelsheim's translation of Savile's commentary on the Roman army, which he sends back to him with great thanks 'as if had been new to him', for he has had a copy in his possession since his stay in Heidelberg.²⁶ The commentary was even translated into Latin a second time, this time by Isaac Gruterus, and published by Elzevier in 1649. In the preface this translator writes that he knew of the existence of Lingelsheim's translation but could not get his hands on a copy. Comparison of the texts shows that this is indeed an independent translation. Gruterus also added a Latin translation of Savile's notes to Tacitus, which, as he says, has long been desired by scholars, for in spite of their reputation they were so far only accessible to those in command of the English language. Leiden UL preserves a copy of this book with an inscription identifying it as the possession of (again) Claudius Salmasius, being a gift from B. de Saumaise in 1653.²⁷ In the learned Joannes Rosinus's work on Roman Antiquities of 1685, however, Savile's commentary does not appear in the extensive bibliography of scholarly literature on the Roman army²⁸; Joannes Fabricius' *Bibliographia Antiquaria* of 1716, a 'guidebook' to antiquarian scholarship, refers briefly to Lingelsheim's translation, and only once (for a discussion of *acies* and battle orders).²⁹

3. Political interpretations of Savile's Tacitus

The main new departure in the political interpretation of Savile's supplement came from David Womersley's article 'Savile's Translation of Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Elizabethan Texts' of 1991. Womersley's approach and conclusion found their way to several other contributions on the political and intellectual culture of the late Tudor period. Womersley's conclusions about Savile's text (though not his general approach) were challenged by Paulina Kewes in her article 'Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History' of 2011.³⁰ Before presenting my own view of the political purport of Savile's Tacitus I shall summarise these two articles in brief.

The aim of David Womersley's article is to provide an interpretation of Savile's supplement to Tacitus within the political thought of Savile's time, and especially to 'offer an account of how and where Savile's translation supports what seems to have been Essex's political strategy in the early 1590s'.

As the starting point of his discussion Womersley places the positive image that Savile presents of the rebellious commander Julius Vindex, who started the rebellion which would eventually bring down Nero but first killed the unfortunate Vindex himself. To highlight the deviancy of this positive image of a rebel, the article points to the period's political mentality with its all but absolute rejection of rebellion and remarks that, with respect to the picture given of Vindex, 'Savile rejects this official typology, asserting in its place the high principle which governs Vindex's actions' (p. 318).

Next the article investigates Savile's concept of virtue and brings out the Machiavellian aspect of *The Ende* with particular force and clarity. A distinction is made between moral virtue (as in 'the cardinal virtues') and what we shall call Machiavellian political virtue, the qualities needed by a ruler to 'maintain his state and achieve great things'. The second 'virtue' is morally neutral, 'discontinuous with moral virtue as it is understood in the private life', or 'the creative, amoral energy which Machiavelli, and Machiavelli alone, had argued was peculiar to successful politicians'. This distinction, and especially the second concept of Virtue, is then applied to Savile's image of Nero. With respect to Nero, 'the tendency of Savile's portrait is to expose the emperor to novel criteria: to see

²⁶The identification is made in the notes to Salmasius's and Rivet's correspondence; Rivet had lent the book to Salmasius; Claude Saumaise and André Rivet, *Correspondance échangée entre 1632 et 1648*, edited by P. Leroy and Hans Bots (Amsterdam, 1987), lettre XXXIII (pp. 78–79).

²⁷H. Savilius, *In Taciti Histor. Agricolæ vitam, et commentariis de militia romana* (Amsterdam, 1649), Leiden UL, 202 D5.

²⁸Joannes Rosinus, *Antiquitatum Romanarum Corpus Absolutissimum, etc* (Amsterdam, 1685), 711–12.

²⁹Joannes Fabricius, *Bibliographia Antiquaria sive Introduction in notitiam scriptorum qui antiquitates Hebraicas, Graecas, Romanas en Christianas scriptis illustraverunt*, editio secunda (Hamburg and Leipzig, 1716), 553 (with thanks to Dr Thomas Roebuck for the reference).

³⁰See lit. ref. in n. 3.

him in a primarily political, as opposed to moral, perspective' (p. 322). This means that the commonplace stigmatisation of Nero as the apex of depravity is left behind and replaced by a more temperate, and political rather than moral analysis of his failure. Particular emphasis is placed on the passage with the distinctly Machiavellian phrase that Nero '*disarmed himself both of the love and feare of his subjects*'.

Next a search is started 'whether the interpretation of *The Prince* implicit in Savile's dramatisation can be found elsewhere in 16th-C. political thought' (p. 326). For this is an odd reading indeed; Machiavelli was mostly read as 'primer for tyrants'. Womersley then points at Continental Protestant texts such as the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos*, which assert the right to resist a tyrannical monarch (especially if this tyranny harms the true Church) and moreover borrows important ideas from Machiavelli to argue this position. By such views Vindex, being a magistrate, would have had a right to act against the tyrant without breaking his God-given duty to obedience. Although this interpretation is attractive in that it links Savile's Protestant family background with Protestant political thought on the Continent, it is vulnerable to the objection (which Womersley does not address) that the notion of Savile covertly pursuing such interests sits uneasily with his own biography. Savile enjoyed the special favour of the Queen and owed both his appointments at Merton and Eton to her overruling of the traditional custom and rules applicable to these appointments. Moreover he had a reputation for ruling Merton College without much regard for other college members' opinions, relying instead on royal power as the basis of his authority. Though not strictly impossible, it seems odd to believe that just when he was in the middle of these tensions, he would also be expressing covert sympathies for constitutional thought and ideas of popular sovereignty which would have undermined his own authority if put into practice in his own environment. According to Womersley, '[Savile] dramatizes political actions informed by an almost republican spirit of civic action' and [...] 'in the 1590s was both intellectually and imaginatively inward with the politics of resistance' [...]. Nevertheless, in 1592 he 'employs the vocabulary of sacramental monarchy' and in 1616 reports that during his visit to Oxford, James I 'gave his hand to be kissed' (p. 331). Womersley then proceeds to solve the apparent contradiction between these two positions.

The dominance of the monarch and the oligarchy around her/him was such that '[i]n England in the late 16th C there was no public domain of politics' (p. 335). Nevertheless this must not be taken to mean that public opinion or popular sentiment were of no significance. On the contrary, Elizabeth and her ministers were extremely 'sensitive to every nuance of public feeling'.³¹ It is important to realise that a popular uprising could only be successful if it was adopted by a successful figure from the oligarchy around the monarch who employed it as the vehicle of his own ambitions. This 'reinforces the view of Elizabethan politics as decidedly oligarchic' (p. 340). With respect to the apparent contradiction in Savile, this means that, if we assume that Savile composed his Tacitus as a friend of Essex (p. 340), the positive reference to Vindex's rebellion can be read as support for Essex's ambitions. Which in turn means that the connection with Huguenot resistance theories appears not to be that relevant after all. 'Savile's depiction of the successful rebellion against Nero should not, despite his Huguenot connections and its own affiliations with Huguenot thought, be read as a justification of resistance to the established prince.' Rather, it 'reshapes into an intimate, Machiavellian joint the relation between military office and political consequence' which retrospectively stimulated misinterpretation of Savile's text (pp. 341–42). Womersley thus ends with a clear warning against proleptic readings of Savile's text.³²

In the article 'Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England' of 2011 Paulina Kewes proposes a different interpretation to Womersley's. Her main criticism of Womersley's interpretation is that it is written with the benefit of hindsight in that it adduces the

³¹Quoting W.T. MacCaffrey, 'Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics', in *Elizabethan Government and Society*, edited by S. Bindoff et al. (London, 1961), 97.

³²Womersley's view is largely accepted by Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics', who places Savile's Tacitus in the context of critical thought on the relationship between war and (courtly) politics, and emphasises that it must be understood as 'a practical guide to war and politics, produced under a patron [Essex] who aspired to become England's greatest general' (pp. 25–27).

eventual rebellious stance of the Essex circle to inform the reading of Savile's text of a decade earlier. According to Kewes, *The Ende* must be read not as 'a jaundiced anatomy of royal envy and courtly corruption nor an antimonarchical manifesto, but, rather, a searching analysis of international affairs and a call to arms in solidarity with England's Protestant allies' (p. 551). 'A serious contextual reading' according to Kewes, shows that at the moment of publication, 'the volume served first and foremost to articulate the pressing preoccupation with the dangers, which the Crown allegedly failed to address, from Spain, Catholicism, and the unsettled succession' (p. 516).

In contrast to Womersley, Kewes bases her discussion on Savile's Tacitus in its entirety (i.e., *The Ende of Nero ... the translation of the Histories*, the annotations, and the translation of the *Agricola*), not just the supplement of Savile's own composition. This decision makes it more difficult to isolate Savile's own implied views, for most of the content thus considered is primarily Tacitus's and not Savile's. In this respect it is evident that Kewes bases her argument in several places on a general consideration of the meanings and resonances which Tacitus's text would have had at the time, without producing a quote from Savile's text or translation to demonstrate that he actually read Tacitus that way. This is problematic since the perceived content of Tacitus's text is not a given but varies enormously between periods.³³

To illustrate the intellectual context of the early 1590s, Kewes describes the high tide of editions, translations and commentaries on Roman historians in England starting not long before the publication of Savile's Tacitus. Several Roman historians not previously available in England or in English became available in this time. Following Malcolm Smuts, Kewes perceives no break between the traditional and 'Late' humanism in England, only an 'ongoing conversation' (p. 525). She assumes that English scholars were well aware of the Continental developments in this field of study, and that with respect to the contemporary fascination for Tacitus England was no exception; signs of it can be identified in the interests of men like the Sidney brothers, Fulke Greville, Essex, Jonson, Anthony Bacon, and others.

In her description of the intellectual context, Kewes adduces many aspects which do not immediately contribute to a clear-cut view of the implied purport of Savile's book. This is not a weakness, however, for intellectual contexts did not exist for the purpose of providing clarity to the historian, and will always contain elements which somehow contribute to the whole of that context while being confusing to the interpretation of a specific text. In that sense this article undoubtedly does justice to the complex past reality it describes.

Kewes's discussion includes an excursion on Tacitus's views on liberty and tyranny as readers like Savile would have found them in Tacitus's text. It is not clear however that this discussion makes sufficient distinction between modern interpretations of what Tacitus has to say on this point, and those in Savile's time and place. Given the variation in the perceived content of Tacitus's texts between early-modern and modern times, more caution would have been in order. For example, the characterisation of Tacitus's narration of the Batavian revolt of AD 69 as 'exceptionally nasty' because 'the Batavian legions had regularly fought alongside the Roman ones and [therefore] their defection seemed the more galling' has no place in the English and Dutch intellectual contexts Kewes is out to describe, although two pages later the author appears to be well aware of this.

Next the article discusses the applications, in Protestant countries, of Roman history to construct a view of Rome's world domination as violent, tyrannical and deceitful, and thus (by the implied parallel with the Spanish empire and drive for domination) to make a call for military action against Spain's expanding influence on the Continent, following the example of Julius Vindex's, Claudius Civilis's and Calgacus's revolts against Roman domination. With this respect Tacitus's works serve not only as the source of a vision of Roman Machiavellism (while pretending to bring peace and justice to the world) but also as a source of military information and inspiration which, in the case of Savile's Tacitus, can be read in connection with Essex's military ambitions in the early

³³See J. Waszink, 'Inventio in the *Politica*: Commonplace-Books and the Structure of Political Thought' in *Lipsius in Leiden*, edited by K. Enekel and C. Heesakkers (Voorthuizen, 1997), 140–62.

1590s and even as support of it. This, according to Kewes, is the main purport of Savile's Tacitus, which she says must be read 'first and foremost as a commentary on [contemporary] international affairs'. She regards the situation in France (where Henry III had been struggling to preserve his authority in spite of the radically Catholic resistance against his rule by the *Ligue*, which received extensive support from Spain) as 'the principal context for Savile's work' (p. 546). This resumes a point made earlier (pp. 540–41) on parallels between AD 69 and the current situation on the Continent, with the suggestion that 'the purpose of Savile's book was to garner support for a more belligerent stand against Spain and so advance Essex's political goals.'

Another resonance which the narrative of the civil wars following the death of the last Julio-Claudian emperor would have carried in the context of 1591 is that relating to the unsettled succession at Elizabeth's death. These resonances however merely 'elicit speculation on future possibilities but do not add up to a coherent message or program' (p. 548), other than the implicit advice to arrange the matter in time (possibly by following the Roman example of adoption) and an implied warning that 'emperors may be made elsewhere than in Rome'.

Kewes's conclusion is that 'when restored to its immediate context, Savile's Tacitus emerges as a penetrating application of Roman history to the specific concerns of the early 1590s, above all the question of European politics and England's role in them. (...) [Moreover] the volume illuminates the scholarly and intellectual pursuits of Essex's Oxford clients aimed at bolstering their patron's militant Protestant internationalism' (pp. 548–49). In a final remark on Quentin Skinner's view that Roman history provided the inspiration for the development of a (subversive) republican concept of liberty, Kewes points out that contemporary readings and translations of Roman historians and even Aristotle are not anti-monarchical: which may mean that they 'could be subtly different from *the tenor of the original*' (italics mine; see remark above about the changing interpretations of classical texts).

4. Savile's Tacitus from the perspective of Tacitism on the Continent

With respect to Savile's mathematical and astronomical teaching, Robert Goulding has shown that Savile was deeply influenced by the contemporary teaching methods in Germany, which he wished to introduce in Oxford. With respect to his interests in history, politics and Tacitism, the evidence is much less abundant but points in a comparable direction.

Since Tacitus's *Histories* and *Annals* are ambiguous texts, many, and even conflicting interpretations of these texts are possible. By the end of the sixteenth century three main types of interpretation and re-use of the text would have been available to Savile.

- The 'republican' reading of Tacitus, the critique of autocratic government and the wider field of (often Protestant) thought on the original liberty of the Germanic peoples and their rights of resistance against tyrannical rulers—subjects for which Tacitus's *Germania* provided ample material.³⁴ This literature does not usually show interest in or relationship with Machiavelli's *Principe*.
- The more straightforwardly 'Machiavellian' application of Tacitus, present for example in several justifications of the St Bartholomew Massacre written in the 1570s.³⁵
- The Machiavellian-inspired reason of state Tacitism as represented by Justus Lipsius. It is this variety of Tacitism that would attract most interest and attention among liberal and 'politique'-minded European elites in the next few decades. The core idea in this branch of Tacitism is

³⁴A clear example is the extensive literature in the Low Countries on ancient Batavia which originally concentrates on its location and character, but acquires a sharp political and anti-autocratic edge after the beginning of the Dutch Revolt; contrast for example Gerard Geldenhouwer's works on ancient Batavia (see Geldenhouwer, *Historische Werken*, edited by I. Bejczy, M. Verweij and S. Stegeman [Hilversum, 1998]) with Hugo Grotius's *Antiquity of the Batavian Republic* (see H. Grotius, *The Antiquity of the Batavian Republic*. With the notes by Petrus Scriverius, edited and translated by Jan Waszink et al. (Assen, 2000).

³⁵See e.g., R. Tuck, *Philosophy and Government* (Cambridge, 1993), 41–45.

that the prince should *effectively* secure the well-being of his subjects, and that this gives him not only a right, but even a duty to override rules of justice, morality or religion when circumstances demand it ('mixed prudence'). In Lipsius's text this position has been made very visible by the replacement of *Iustitia* as the prince's main virtue with *Prudentia*. This position can be called moderately Machiavellian, as its centre of reference is princely power, which should not submit itself to other interests; and can be called moderately anti-Machiavellian at the same time, since its entire orientation and inspiration is ultimately moral, albeit not in the traditional sense of the word: the *effective* protection of the well-being of all. Thus this Tacitism can be read as a critique, not of power, but of ineffective and even of tyrannical power—which, paradoxically, may turn Lipsius into a source of inspiration even for Monarchomachs and republicans. Core texts for this Tacitism were Justus Lipsius's famous edition of Tacitus's text of 1574, followed by a Commentary in 1581, and his abundantly Tacitist political handbook, the *Politica*, first published in 1589.³⁶

The evidence collected so far leaves little doubt that *The Ende* should be read in connection with the third of these, the Lipsian 'prudential' Tacitism. The biographical information presented in the first section of this article clearly points, via Thomas Savile and Jean Hotman, to Lipsius. This squares entirely with the Machiavellian aspect of *The Ende*, as discussed by David Womersley, and the generally shared view that the perspective of Continental politics and political thought is crucial to Savile's Tacitus. Moreover, Savile's interest in Andreas Dudith and his (later) exchange with De Thou about him point at a sympathy with, or at least an interest in inter-confessional attitudes, '*politique*', and sceptical spheres of thought, i.e., the same spheres from which the ('Lipsian') Tacitism of around 1600 emerged.

4.1. *Prudentia and The Ende of Nero*

Womersley's article seems entirely right in problematising Savile's morally positive image of Vindex' rebellion and the Machiavellian analysis of Nero's ruin as the crucial interpretative issues concerning *The Ende*. Every satisfying interpretation of *The Ende* should offer an explanation of these aspects. From the perspective of Lipsian Tacitism, *The Ende* appears as a juxtaposition of two types of failed prudence.

The text presents the two men in their struggle with adversity. This composition suggests that these portraits should be read in relation, and in contrast, to each other. It is important to note that both Vindex and Nero are eventually overtaken by the course of events and destroyed. It would be wrong to say that Savile's Vindex fails, because Savile puts a strong emphasis on his virtuous motivation and the fact that his intervention put the train of events in motion that eventually terminated Nero's tyranny. Nevertheless, his example can hardly have inspired imitation. Vindex dies because he set moral principle over political reality, opting for a morally virtuous course of action at a time when he had no sufficient control over the circumstances required to have his initiative rewarded with success. The stress on Vindex's moral inspiration and the justness of his motivation serves to underline Savile's Machiavellian and indeed Lipsian analysis of political endeavours: without Prudence or the realistic assessment of circumstances and possibilities even the most virtuous course of action, like Vindex's, is bound to end in defeat (although one might also perceive a melancholy optimism in the notion that Vindex's initiative eventually toppled Nero).

In opposition to traditional humanist historiography, the new 'Tacitist' historians and political thinkers did not accept an inherent connection between virtue and success: Fortune is conquered by different means. This notion is expressed by Savile in neat and indeed truly Tacitean maxims

³⁶Tacitus, *Historiarum et Annalium libri qui exstant*, edited by J. Lipsius (Antwerp, 1574); J. Lipsius, *Ad Annales Corn. Taciti liber commentarius sive notae* (Antwerp, 1581); J. Lipsius, *Politica. Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*, edited with translation and introduction by Jan Waszink (Assen, 2004).

like ‘... *presuming good lucke to so good a meaning*’ early in *The Ende* (p. 2)³⁷ and the characterisation of Vindex as ‘*more vertuous then fortunate*’ (p. 6). This is connected to core ideas in *Il Principe* and Lipsius’s *Politica* such as the notion that strict moral virtue may be an obstacle to power and success rather than a necessary precondition.³⁸ It also brings to mind Lipsius’s second response to this problem (next to the acceptance of mixed prudence), i.e., his stress on the need for proper and realistic planning in both political affairs and military operations.³⁹

From this perspective Savile’s portrait of Vindex looks not like a salute to an heroic attempt to free the state from tyranny, but a warning against principled but unprudential political action. Savile’s portrait of Nero, epitomised in the phrase ‘*disarmed himself of the love and fear of his subjects*’ recalls the purport of weightiest and longest chapter in Lipsius’s *Politica*, 4.11 on the public image of the ruler.

Thus a reading of *The Ende* from this ‘Lipsian’ perspective produces an interpretation in which Savile’s supplement appears as a juxtaposition of two types of failed prudence, one moral (Julius Vindex) and one immoral (the tyrant Nero). As shall be argued below such a reading makes good sense in the context of recent English politics with respect to the Continent, i.e., the failure of the Earl of Leicester’s operation to assist the Dutch rebels against the Spanish re-conquest in 1585–7.

5. *The Ende of Nero and the English expedition in the Low Countries 1585–87*

Given the content of Tacitus’s *Histories* and the Continental connections outlined above, Paulina Kewes must be right in her conclusion that Savile’s Tacitus should primarily be read as a commentary on contemporary international affairs. Nevertheless, in the discussion of the intellectual backgrounds in the years before 1591 she omits consideration of England’s biggest contemporary adventure on the Continent, the campaign in the Low Countries led by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and especially its disappointing outcome.⁴⁰ The repeated call to the hesitating Queen to finally send military help to England’s Protestant co-religionists on the Continent, which Kewes perceives in the text, seems to belong more to the years before 1585 than to the late 1580s and early 1590s.⁴¹ By the time Savile’s Tacitus was completed, its author could not possibly have missed that an English intervention on the Continent had already been tried, and failed.⁴²

Elizabeth’s reluctance to engage in interventions on the Continent is one of the commonplaces of histories of the period.⁴³ Even after it started, she was never really committed to the Netherlands operation. Leicester himself was well aware of this lack of commitment, which soon became one of the greatest obstacles in the fulfilment of his task. Throughout the campaign, money and troops were never sufficiently forthcoming, due in no small degree to the Queen’s deliberate parsimony. The financial organisation is widely found to have been a mess: money, when it came did often not reach the soldiers to whom it was due, so that the danger of mutiny was permanent, and those in charge of

³⁷A model in Tacitus for this thought might have been *Histories* 2.33.2, translated by Savile as: ‘[Otho’s] brother Titianus and Proculus captains of the Gard, hastening upon ignorance and lacke of skill, protested, that fortune and all the gods, with the godhead of Otho, favoured the counsailes, and woulde without question prosper the enterprise (...)’ (Tacitus 1591, 73); original *Frater [Othonis] Titianus, et praefectus praetorii Proculus, imperitia properantes, fortunam et deos et numen Othonis adesse consiliis, affore conatibus testabantur* (there are no meaningful differences between modern Latin text and that in Lipsius’s and Savile’s time).

³⁸Lipsius, *Politica* 4.13.1: And here I hear someone calling to me that [the Prince] ‘*may lay no ambushes, may not simulate, may do nothing treacherously*’ (Cic.Off.3.68). O what pure hearts! Or rather: how childish! ‘*By fraud and deceit states are overthrown*’, the Philosopher remarks (Arist. Polit. 1304b20). Do you want it to be forbidden to be saved by the same means? And for the Prince now and then *To play the fox, when dealing with a fox?* (Erasmus Adag. 129).

³⁹Lipsius, *Politica* e.g. chapters 3.1, 3.7, 4.9.5, 4.9.6, 4.14, 5.2, 5.6, 5.15 sub 4, 5.16, 6.7.

⁴⁰Which is referred to only in passing (p. 528).

⁴¹F.G. Oosterhoff, *Leicester and the Netherlands 1586–1587* (Utrecht, 1988), 34, 38–39; W.T. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth and the Making of Policy 1572–1588* (Princeton, 1981), 302–47; Hammer, *Polarisation*, 389.

⁴²See in particular Kewes, ‘Savile’s Tacitus’, 540–41 where the parallel with the situation on the Continent and the threat of the Armada are brought up, the parallel between the Batavian and the Dutch Revolt is mentioned (but dismissed as ‘local and evanescent’) resulting in the suggestion that ‘the purpose of Savile’s book was to garner support for a more bellicose stand against Spain and so advance Essex’s political goals’.

⁴³E.g. MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth 1572–1588*, 344–47.

finances having no view of what was due, tried to put the blame on each other. Eventually even Leicester himself came under attack for financial mismanagement.⁴⁴ The Queen and many of her officers looked upon her new allies with disdain. Simultaneously, half in secret, she had negotiations running with the Spanish commander the Duke of Parma.

The Queen is reported to have feared that Leicester would assume ‘too great a state for a mere subject’.⁴⁵ When the Earl, after his arrival in the Netherlands, accepted the governor-generalship offered to him by the States-General, against Elizabeth’s explicit wishes, she was enraged and remained so for a very long time, especially since she was only informed of the fact at a very late stage.⁴⁶ In her view, Leicester should limit himself to the military business and act as her representative, but not more. She insisted on his public resignation from the post. The Queen’s resentment and determination to humiliate her commander publicly for this move has intrigued all contemporary and subsequent observers.

This, however, was only the chief one of innumerable conflicts that marked the operation. To name but a few, Leicester quarrelled with Sir John Norris, ‘the most experienced and probably the most able of his officers’ and soon, from the other side, became embroiled in an ever-deepening conflict with the States of the province of Holland over the limits of his authority, religious policy, personal appointments, and the content of what he saw as essential legislation (such as a ban on trade with the enemy). Much like Elizabeth in fact, the regents in Holland expected Leicester to confine himself to the military campaign and opposed any drive to give him wider political control. Leicester on the other hand enjoyed broad support in Dutch society, for example from orthodox Calvinists who perceived his puritanism as the antidote to the all-too-conciliatory policies of the urban regents (and who in turn came to oppose the States when they opposed Leicester), as well as many others who hoped English authority would bring discipline and purpose to the disorderly politics of the provinces.⁴⁷ An example, paradoxical perhaps, of this group is the academic *politique* Lipsius, who had hailed Leicester upon his arrival as the saviour of the Low Countries and viewed the States’ opposition to him as the definitive proof of the new state’s political inviability (and by October 1586 attempted to escape to Spanish-controlled territory before it was too late).⁴⁸

In military terms, Leicester’s few successes did little to stop the Spanish advance—hardly surprising given the state of his army and its organisation. His inability to accomplish his impossible mission led to his absence from the Low Countries for more than six months (December 1586 to mid-1587). When the English negotiations with the Spanish became a public secret, and, even more bafflingly, two English garrisons surrendered their towns and fortifications to the Spanish (Deventer and Zutphen), the English operation and Leicester in particular suffered a serious loss of credibility. However even then support for Leicester persisted in many places, notably among militant Calvinists. In the hope that this support would still be sufficiently widespread, Leicester tried to seize power by a coup in the summer of 1587, but failed. He finally returned to England early in 1588.

In short, in spite of the long hesitation that preceded it, the English intervention in the Low Countries is universally perceived as a hastily planned and badly managed affair, by a military organisation that was ‘at once primitive and clumsy’⁴⁹ and not equipped for such tasks; it was insufficiently funded and inconsistently supported by the Queen, put up against a military and political situation that was too complicated for its size and the capacities of its leadership, and hampered by an array of internal conflicts and disagreements, as well as by desertion and treason. The endemic political and

⁴⁴MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth 1572–1588*, 362–67.

⁴⁵MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth 1572–1588*, 351, 357–59.

⁴⁶S. Gristwood, *Elizabeth & Leicester* (London, 2007), 311–12.

⁴⁷Writing a generation later (in his Tacitist *Annales* on the Dutch revolt), Hugo Grotius came to view Leicester as the very cause and root of the rift in Dutch society between orthodox and more liberal ‘*politique*’ Calvinists (which developed into a near-civil war in his time), and presented a thoroughly negative image of the Earl’s person and policies (throughout Book 5). An English translation is forthcoming in the series *Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae*.

⁴⁸For discussions of the period, see e.g. Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 220–30; Oosterhoff, *Leicester*; on Lipsius, see Waszink, intr. to *Politica*, 25–27.

⁴⁹MacCaffrey, *Queen Elizabeth 1572–1588*, 354.

military disorganisation on the Dutch side, which the intervention was precisely expected to remedy, made matters worse still, and within Dutch society the English assistance itself became the cause of further conflict.

The themes of lack of support and conflicts among allies figure prominently in *The Ende*. Vindex is supported only after long hesitation even by Galba, and not at all by ‘the other lieutenants’ (pp. 2–3) who even forwarded his letters to Nero. In Germany the legions join in the general revolt but proclaim their own candidate emperor, Verginius Rufus, who then marches on France ‘pretending to warre against Vindex’. He besieges the town of Besançon, where they are met by Vindex’s army. The two commanders meet in secret and conclude an alliance ‘doubtlesse to ioine against Nero’. Vindex, now supposing the quarrel ended, prepares to enter the town with his troops. When they start doing so however, they are attacked by their new allies, either by a miscommunication or ‘fraud of Verginius side’. Seeing this unfortunate outcome, Vindex puts an end to his life (pp. 5–6). There follows the biographical epilogue on ‘Iulius Vindex, a man in the course of his action more vertuous then fortunate; who having no armie provided, no legion, no souldier in charge, while others more able lookt on ...’.

Like the English campaign in the Low Countries, the rebellion against Nero’s tyranny suffers from internal conflicts and a general lack of coherence, e.g. ‘much private choler passe under the shadow of publicke pretences’ (p. 3) and the theme of being attacked by one’s own allies might be felt to allude to the conflictual relationships with the regents in Holland and the States.

Beyond the text of Savile’s supplement, a key issue in Tacitus’s *Histories* is that of army commanders in a province assuming imperial ambitions and challenging the political authority at home. With this respect Tacitus’s text might resonate with the recent history of the English campaign and the Queen’s infamous anger and fear when Leicester accepted the Governor-Generalship, as the sources confirm that she did perceive this as a challenge to her own authority. Conversely, it might not be too far-fetched to think that a contemporary reader might have felt similarities between Elizabeth’s incomplete support of Leicester and Galba’s reluctant response to Vindex’s appeal.⁵⁰

The time span between the operation (1585–7) and the appearance of Savile’s Tacitus (1591) is perfectly suitable for Leicester’s expedition to have figured among Savile’s sources of inspiration. The struggles surrounding the operation were precisely the stuff that lent itself to ‘Tacitean’ observation and analysis.

In the context of British debates and perceptions, Savile’s supplement might then appear not so much as a call for military action on the Continent but rather as a reminder of the importance of caution and well-considered action; or even, in the aftermath of the failed intervention in the Netherlands, as a critical evaluation of the idea of foreign military intervention, rather than as a direct call for such action.

5.1. Savile, Essex and Leicester

This perspective would also suggest that the main background to Savile’s Tacitus is constituted not so much by Essex’s political career⁵¹, but that of his stepfather Leicester. Continuing Paulina Kewes’s argument that readings of Savile’s Tacitus from the perspective of Essex’s rebellion of 1601 are proleptic, the following points might be added.

Essex was Leicester’s stepson and served with him in the Netherlands in 1585 and 1586 (Leicester had married Essex’s mother, Lettice Knollys, in 1578 following the death of Walter Devereux in 1576). Essex distinguished himself in the battle at Zutphen in 1586 in which Sir Philip Sidney was mortally wounded. During the later phase of Leicester’s stay in the Netherlands, Essex stayed at the court in England, and was in frequent correspondence with Leicester.

⁵⁰Oosterhoff, *Leicester*, 125–30.

⁵¹As is widely assumed in the available interpretations of *The Ende*, e.g. by Womersley, Smuts, Goulding, Kewes and Gajda.

Apart from a shared interest in Tacitist themes, courtly politics and Savile's supposed (but mis-constructed) glorification of rebellion, the chief piece of evidence for the direct connection between Essex and Savile's Tacitus is a comment made by Ben Jonson to William Drummond in 1618 that Essex was the real author of the preface *A.B. to the Reader* in the front matter of Savile's book. According to some of the scholarship, this was 'an open secret' at the time.⁵² It should be noted that Essex ventured something similar after the capture of Cadiz in 1596, when he attempted to publish an account of the operation written by himself under a false name.⁵³ Nevertheless the truth of Jonson's statements need not necessarily be taken for granted. It is unclear what his source of information was; nor if Jonson (who was 19 years old in 1591) had any access at all to such information at the time.⁵⁴ There seems to be no evidence for, or reference to Essex's authorship other than Jonson's dinner conversation 27 years after the publication of the book. Is it imaginable that this story is a product of the same logic which in or after 1601 made a connection between Savile's Tacitus and Essex's rebellion and led to Savile's arrest?⁵⁵

But however this be, even if Essex is the author of *A.B. to the Reader*, this does not also mean that his political and military ambitions were on Savile's mind when he translated Tacitus' *Histories* and wrote *The Ende* in the period up to 1591. It has already been observed that the preface must have been added at the very last moment because it is missing, even from the corrected manuscript authorised for printing, which might well indicate that Essex's involvement with the project dates only from its final stages.⁵⁶ Essex had made his appearance at court when he was about 20 years old in 1585, but for the first few years operated entirely under his stepfather Leicester's wings. Most of the more detailed information regarding the connection between Savile and Essex seems to date from 1592 and later.⁵⁷ This relation is normally understood in the context of Essex's conscious (and politically charged) construction of a network of scholarly protégés and secretaries at Oxford.

⁵²E.g. Bradford, 'Utility of Tacitus', 153 n. 20.

⁵³Hammer, *Polarisation*, 252. It might be noted in this connection that the end matter of Savile's book records 'Printed at Oxforde (...) for Richard Wright' while another R. Wright (Robert, see note 60) was Essex's tutor at Cambridge.

⁵⁴The obvious name to think of here would be Anthony Bacon's (as has often been suggested, e.g. Bradford, 'Utility of Tacitus', 153 n. 20), Essex's main intelligence collector and known as a Tacitist (Hammer, *Polarisation*, p. 308 n. 205), but his 'recruitment' by Essex only started in 1592, on Bacon's return to England after a decade abroad, mainly in France (Hammer, *Polarisation*, 163ff). The tone of the preface is very much that of a scholar, which might lead one to think of men such as Thomas Bodley, Richard Montagu (a protégé of Savile) or perhaps Henry Cuffe, but these solutions do not explain the initials AB, nor (which is a more serious problem) why one of these men should have written the preface under a covered identity.

For Jonson's statement, see Ben Jonson, *Discoveries 1641 & Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden 1619* (Edinburgh, 1966), 16: 'Essex wrote that Epistle or Preface before the translation of y^e last part of Tacitus which is A B.' Jonson's contemporary and admirer Edmund Bolton (c.1575–1633) presents it emphatically as a rumour in his *Hypercritica*, and the similarity in formulation may be an indication that his information in fact came from Jonson; see J. Spingarn (ed.), *Critical Essays of the 17th C.*, Oxford 1908–1909, I, 115: 'And of such works the Late Earl of Essex under the letters A.B. (for Fames gives it to him) in an epistle before the translated Tacitus of his Friend Sr Henry Savil (...)'. The reference to the preface by John Florio referred to by Bradford n. 20 does not mention Essex's authorship. Thus, Ben Jonson's remark might well be the only source of the story.

⁵⁵The connection in the public eye between Essex and Tacitus having been further reinforced by the dedication of Richard Grenway's translation of the *Annals* to Essex in 1598. On the perception in 1601 of a 'malignant influence of scholarship' on Essex (weighing down primarily on Henry Cuffe), see Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 56–58.

⁵⁶Bodleian Library Oxford, MS Eng. Hist. d.240; see also Hammer, *Polarisation*, 307 n. 201. There is another MS copy of the opening portion of *The Ende*, with the dating 'Elizabethan', in the Cecil Papers archive in Hatfield house (CP 139 fol. 194–204; see *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the [...] Marquis of Salisbury preserved, at Hatfield House*, XIV, Addenda [London, 1923], 303). Unfortunately nothing appears to be known about the provenance of this MS, earlier ownerships, or possible links with other items in the collection (vol. XIV contains 'abstracts and copies accumulated during the preparation of the first 12 volumes' and 'contains also a very large number of papers that could not be dated beyond the apparent fact that they belonged to the reign of Elizabeth'). The Hatfield MS is a fair copy not in Savile's hand (possibly the same hand that made the Bodleian copy), but without corrections in Savile's hand which the Bodleian copy contains. It conforms almost completely to the printed text, including details such as punctuation and paragraph indentation, but there are some differences in wording (though very few) which show that it was not copied from the printed text. It might be an unfinished presentation copy intended for someone at the court (with thanks to HEI's anonymous reviewer, the Hatfield House archives and Dr Thomas Roebuck, University of East Anglia).

⁵⁷Compare Goulding, 'Henry Savile', 114–15, who assumes the opposite: 'Savile's friendship with Essex dated back to at least 1591' and 'meagre evidence survives for Savile's relationship with Essex after 1591', based on a belief that the Tacitus preface was indeed written by Essex and serves as proof of their association. I have not been able to consult H. Gazzard, *The Patronage of Robert, 2nd Earl of Essex c. 1577–1596*, unpublished D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 2000).

The serious growth of this network however only started in 1594; from 1588 to 1594 Essex employed only Thomas Smith and Edward Reynoldes as secretaries.⁵⁸ An important intermediary between Savile and Essex is often thought to be the classicist Henry Cuffe (1563–1601, also executed after the Essex rebellion), whom Savile made tutor at Merton in 1586 and who later entered Essex's service, but only in 1594. A legal document from August 1590 makes a connection between Essex and Savile⁵⁹, but by that time Savile's Tacitus must have been well underway, if not almost completed. In any case the intellectual engagement between Essex and his Oxford circle which underlies readings of *The Ende* in the context of Essex's ambitions, seems to have been in a very incipient stage by 1591. Thus, Savile's work on Tacitus may well be a *cause* rather than an *outcome* of Essex's deeper interest in him.

Personal and intellectual links between Savile and Leicester on the other hand are all clearly datable to the 1570s and 1580s, and look as important for the interpretation of Savile's Tacitus, if not more, than the association with Essex. Leicester had long been Chancellor of the University of Oxford and possessed a large crowd of sympathisers there.⁶⁰ As we have seen, Savile's own connection with Leicester dated back to at least 1575 when his (and John Underhill's) proctorship was extended at Leicester's request.

The acquaintance discussed above between Thomas and Henry Savile and Jean Hotman is particularly relevant in this respect. Hotman left Oxford in 1585 to become Leicester's secretary in the expedition to the Low Countries. When at Oxford, not only did Hotman share with the Savile brothers an interest in Tacitus, they also discussed the politics of the Duke of Anjou's expedition to the Low Countries—which was the very predecessor to Leicester's. However, Thomas Savile's complaints to Hotman about lacking replies when the latter is in the Netherlands should keep us from concluding too quickly that the Hotman connection provided Savile with direct information regarding the development of Leicester's campaign. Such news itself would probably have been available to him at the Court, where, as we have seen, Savile spent much time in the period he was Warden of Merton. The acquaintance with Hotman however, together with his other connections with Leicester, would have given him a special personal interest in the tensions and difficulties surrounding Leicester's campaign, and a Tacitean angle at them to boot. Thus it seems we have every reason to assume that these concerns did constitute an important backdrop to *The Ende*.

6. Conclusion

This discussion of Savile's Tacitus edition and the supplement *The Ende of Nero and the beginning of Galba* in particular, suggests that the widely assumed association between Savile's book and Essex's political and military career applies to the *reception* of the book (and Essex's involvement with Tacitism in the 1590s), rather than to the work's composition. The personal and intellectual connections between Henry and Thomas Savile, Jean Hotman and Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, which (other than those with Essex), are all firmly datable to years well before 1590/1, give reasons to suspect that

⁵⁸And of these, the contact with Smithe might as well be explained by Smithe's good relation with Leicester, as by Smithe's Oxonian role; while Reynoldes, although an Oxford graduate, possessed no standing as a scholar at all. See P. Hammer, "The Uses of Scholarship": The Secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c. 1585–1601', *English Historical Review*, 109, no. 430 (1994), 26–51, esp. pp. 28–33; and Hammer, *Polarisation*, 299–315, although Hammer believes that Savile's work on Tacitus 'flowed from study with Essex' (308).

⁵⁹The National Archives, SP 12/233 fol. 56r-v, dated 7 August 32 Eliz. (=1590) is a bond by Robert, Earl of Essex to the Queen in 10,000 marks to be paid by the earl, his heirs, executors or administrators unless the earl etc. observe, fulfil and keep all covenants, grants, articles and agreements expected on their part in an indenture dated the same day between the Queen on the one part and Essex on the other part, according to the terms thereof. To be void and of no effect if the conditions are observed or else to stand in full force and virtue. Signed, sealed and delivered by Henrici Savyle, Th: Smythe and R. Wright. For Smithe, see the previous note. Robert Wright (c.1553–c.1596), a fellow of Trinity, was appointed to become Essex's tutor at Cambridge and subsequently became head of his household; see Hammer, *Polarisation*, p. 25 and passim. (With thanks to HEI's anonymous reviewer and Dr Sean Cunningham of The National Archives).

⁶⁰Hammer, *Polarisation*, 301.

of the political careers defining the context to Savile's edition, that of Leicester might have been more important than that of Essex.⁶¹ Secondly, a consideration of the work from the perspective of Leicester's career (especially the English operation in the Low Countries), Savile's Continental network, and the book's backgrounds in Continental ('Lipsian') Tacitism, suggests that the implied political purport of Savile's Tacitus may not have been a call for 'a more bellicose stand' on the Continent against the rise of Spanish power, but precisely for a *less* ambitious and more prudential approach.

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⁶¹This is in fact confirmed by Alexandra Gajda's view (in her conclusion, p. 256) of Essex's relationship with the literature that educated him: 'Essex was a trusting product of his educational environment; a militarized ideal of active citizenship shaped his mentality, which *emphasised the rewards of honour won through virtuous service*' [italics mine]. As is obvious from the text itself and the discussion above, *The Ende* gives little place to such optimism: which implies yet another indication that we should not read Savile's book as a contribution to the 'ideology' behind Essex's ambitions. Gajda's subsequent page presents Essex more as a traditionally and straightforwardly moral reader of Tacitus than a 'Lipsian' one, which again sets him apart from Savile's approach to Tacitus. Unfortunately Gajda's discussion of Essex's intellectual roots in classical and renaissance political thought and history (216–36, esp. 220–23) blurs the distinction between traditional classical thought about virtue, *vita activa* and politics, and that put forward by the 'Late humanists' and Tacitists.