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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

The Literary Afterlife of the Essex Circle: Fulke Greville, Tacitus, and BL Additional MS 18638

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The friends, followers, and fans of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, made no small contribution to the world of early modern English letters.¹ Both before and after his spectacular demise, Essex's intellectual interests—most notably, his famous devotion to Cornelius Tacitus—sparked the political and philosophical writings of devotees like Sir Henry Savile, Sir John Hayward, Antonio Perez, and the brothers Francis and Anthony Bacon, while the earl's formidable cultural standing also helped shape the production of literary onlookers like Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare.² And indeed, death did little to curb this trend: Essex's memory became a site of fierce cultural contestation in the Stuart regime—which even found him resurrected, in pamphlets such as *Robert Earle of Essex, his ghost*—and his surviving

I wish to thank Frank Whigham, Richard Strier, Paulina Kewes, Jason Powell, Jessica K. Printz, and the readers and staff of *Modern Philology*.

1. In the past two decades, Paul E. J. Hammer has thoroughly revised the traditional cartoon of Essex the playboy by emphasizing the sophisticated intellectual engagements of both the earl and his circle. See, e.g., "The Earl of Essex, Fulke Greville, and the Employment of Scholars," *Studies in Philology* 91 (1994): 167–80, "The Use of Scholarship: The Secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c. 1585–1601," *English Historical Review* 109 (1994): 26–51, and especially the indispensable *The Polarisation of Elizabethan Politics: The Political Career of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, 1585–1597* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), which has deeply informed this essay throughout.

2. Unsurprisingly, the literature on this subject is voluminous. For some representative work, see Bradley J. Irish, "Libels and the Essex Rising," *Notes and Queries* 59 (2012): 87–89; Alzada J. Tipton, "'Lively Patterns . . . For Affayres of State': Sir John Hayward's *The Life and Reign of King Henrie III* and the Earl of Essex," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 33 (2002): 769–94; John Channing Briggs, "Chapman's *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades*: Mirror for Essex," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 21 (1981): 59–73; Hugh Gazzard, "'Those Graue Presentments of Antiquitie': Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* and the Earl of Essex," *Review of English Studies* 51 (2000): 423–50; Paul E. J. Hammer, "Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59 (2008): 1–35.

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followers, many of whom retained social affinity, continued to generate texts in the intellectual modes that the Essex circle helped to establish in the 1590s.³

In what follows, I attempt to contribute to our growing understanding of the Essex circle's literary afterlife by contextualizing BL Additional MS 18638, an early seventeenth-century manuscript containing a partial English translation of *Diana*, Jorge de Montemayor's Spanish pastoral romance. The manuscript, I suggest, offers unacknowledged testimony on the matter, both in the document itself and in the circumstances that can be found to surround its production—this, despite the fact that the earl had lost his head nearly two decades before its creation. While the manuscript contains a link between Essex and Tacitus that has not, to my knowledge, yet been noted, it also suggests how the Essex circle's legacy extended to a variety of literary forms, such as Arcadian romance and Italian satire. When situated in this context, BL Additional MS 18638 tells a story about the interests of one of late Elizabethan England's greatest political networks and reminds us how the connection between the surviving Essexians and their literary and intellectual past remained a potent node of social meaning well into the seventeenth century.

In the final years of Elizabeth's reign, the Cambridge-trained lawyer Sir Thomas Wilson (d. 1629)—best known today as the author of *The State of England, Anno Dom. 1600*, (possible) nephew of humanist and privy counselor Thomas Wilson (1523/24–1581)—embarked on a tour of the continent, as prelude to an eventual career in the service of the Stuart kings.⁴ During his European travels, he passed time translating Jorge de Montemayor's midcentury Spanish prose romance *Diana*, "to keepe [his] English, in iourneying with the vnpleasing proccaccios of Italy or the clumps Wagagnors of Germany, and the Muletiers of other parts."⁵ In his preface, Wilson

3. Thomas Scott, *Robert Earle of Essex, his ghost* ([London], 1624). See also Alzada J. Tipton, "The Transformation of the Earl of Essex: Post-execution Ballads and 'The Phoenix and the Turtle,'" *Studies in Philology* 99 (2002): 57–80. The afterlife of the Essex circle is discussed throughout the text.

4. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *ODNB*) entry on the elder Wilson affirms this relation; that of the younger claims "there is no corroborative evidence for this and he is not mentioned in the elder Wilson's will" (n.p.). See A. F. Pollard, "Wilson, Sir Thomas (d. 1629)," rev. Sean Kelsey, in *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29690>; Susan Doran and Jonathan Woolfson, "Wilson, Thomas (1523/4–1581)," in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29688>. For *The State of England* see The National Archives (hereafter TNA), SP 12/280; it was first published as Thomas Wilson, "The State of England Anno Dom. 1600 by Thomas Wilson," ed. F. J. Fisher, *Camden Miscellany* 16 (1936): 1–47.

5. British Library (hereafter BL), Additional MS 18638, fol. 3. When transcribing manuscripts throughout, I have silently expanded abbreviations. A *proccaccio* is a carrier of goods; see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "proccaccio, *n.*" On the document, see D. M. Anderson, "Sir

admits to little literary ambition: “Soe it may bee said of mee that I shewe my vanitie enough in this [that] after 15 yeares painfully spent in Universities studies, I shold bestow soe many ydle howres, in transplanting vaine amorous conceits out of an Exotique language.”⁶ Yet his translation would lead a far more interesting life than such protestation suggests—as quiet witness to some twenty years of courtly politics under the reign of a queen and king.

In 1596, Wilson dedicated the fruits of his labor to a rising star of the Elizabethan court. He prepared a manuscript of his translation for Henry Wriothesley, “the Erle of Southampton,” who was at the time “vppon the Spanish voiage with my Lord of Essex.”⁷ Though best known today as Shakespeare’s patron, the young Southampton led a dashing life alongside Essex, whose martial prowess he admired and sought to imitate; indeed, Southampton was a primary party in the earl’s infamous uprising of 1601 and only narrowly escaped the fate of his friend and mentor.⁸ The Spanish voyage that Wilson recalls was the so-called Cadiz Raid of 1596, the shining military achievement of Essex’s short career, in which he and his men besieged the Spanish coastal hub of Cadiz.⁹ Cadiz marked Southampton’s official entry into the sport of war, which would carry him alongside Essex to the Azores in 1597, and to Ireland in 1599.

Wilson ingratiate himself to the militaristic Essex circle with a sly bit of irony, offering a swashbuckling Spanish romance—“Wherein vnder the names and vailes of Sheppards and their Louers are couertly discoursed manie noble actions & affections of the Spanish nation”—at the moment that Southampton and his mentor were storming the gates of Cadiz.¹⁰ First published in the mid-sixteenth century, Jorge de Montemayor’s *Diana* was a milestone in the development of European pastoral romance—but as Wilson was well aware, this choice of text would have an even more personal

Thomas Wilson’s Translation of Montemayor’s *Diana*,” *Review of English Studies* 7 (1956): 176–81. The text has been printed, with some commentary, as Henry Thomas, “Diana de Monte Mayor, Done Out of Spanish by Thomas Wilson,” *Revue Hispanique* 50 (1920): 367–418.

6. BL Additional MS 18638, fol. 4.

7. *Ibid.*, fol. 2.

8. On Southampton’s life, see G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968); Park Honan, “Wriothesley, Henry, third earl of Southampton (1573–1624),” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30073>. For Essex, see Hammer, *Polarisation*; Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Janet Dickinson, *Court Politics and the Earl of Essex, 1589–1601* (London, Pickering & Chatto, 2012); *Essex: The Cultural Impact of an Elizabethan Courtier*, ed. Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester University Press, 2013).

9. See Paul E. J. Hammer, “Myth-Making: Politics, Propaganda, and the Capture of Cadiz in 1596,” *Historical Journal* 40 (1997): 621–42.

10. BL Additional MS 18638, fol. 2.

significance to Essex and his followers.¹¹ For it is Montemayor's pastoralism, Wilson reminds them, that directly inspired "that admirable & never enough praised booke of Sir Philip Sidneyes *Arcadia*," that essential document of Elizabethan chivalric fantasy. The *New Arcadia*, in fact, adopts much of *Diana*'s narrative structure and imitates some episodes directly, while two of Sidney's *Certain Sonnets* translate its verse.¹² As paragon of aristocratic martial virtue, the shepherd knight exerted a profound influence on the young Essex and would provide the heroic archetype on which the earl modeled his career; on his deathbed in the Netherlands, Sidney famously bestowed his sword to Essex, who would go on to marry his friend's widow.¹³ (In fact, just two years later, the association of Sidney and Essex was implicitly reinforced in the first printed English translation of *Diana*: in 1598, Bartholomew Yong of the Middle Temple dedicated his *Diana of George of Montemayor* to Lady Penelope [née Devereux] Rich, sister to the earl of Essex and the woman who Sidney immortalized as his Stella.)¹⁴ Throughout his career, Essex consciously positioned himself as Sidney's symbolic successor in the Elizabethan court, and there is every reason to think that he would not be displeased with Wilson's linkage of his circle to its secular saint. A fierce opponent of the Catholic forces on the continent, Sidney was sent to his grave by a Spanish musket in a battle that Essex survived—and it is with particular resonance that Wilson invokes this heroic lineage just as the earl and his own devotee were scoring revenge against the hated troops of Philip II.

So in 1596, Thomas Wilson dedicated his manuscript translation of Montemayor's *Diana* to Southampton, the Earl of Essex's protégé, while actively invoking the memory of Sir Philip Sidney, the blueprint of Elizabethan chivalry and hero to the Essex circle.¹⁵ But this is only part of the

11. W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), 58–60.

12. BL Additional MS 18638, fol. 2. For Sidney's debt to Montemayor, see Paul John Cooke, "The Spanish Romances in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, 1939); Jose de Oliveira e Silva, "Sir Philip Sidney and the Castilian Tongue," *Comparative Literature* 34 (1982): 130–45.

13. On Sidney and Essex, see Hammer, *Polarisation*, 51–54; Gajda, *Earl of Essex*, 68–70; Richard Wood, "'Cleverly Playing the Stoic': The Earl of Essex, Sir Philip Sidney and Surviving Elizabeth's Court," in Connolly and Hopkins, *Essex*, 25–46.

14. Bartholomew Yong, *Diana of George of Montemayor* (London, 1598). For a modern edition, see *A Critical Edition of Yong's Translation of George of Montemayor's Diana and Gil Polo's Enamoured Diana*, ed. Judith M. Kennedy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968).

15. Other evidence tentatively links Wilson to the Essex circle. According to the *ODNB*, Wilson may be the "Tho. Wilson" whose signature appears on the first page of a treatise on Ireland dedicated in 1599 to "the Right honorable Peere, Robert Earle of Essex"; see TNA, SP 63/203, fol. 283. James R. Siemon suggests that Wilson makes favorable reference to Essex in *The State of England*; see "'Word Itself against the Word': Close Reading after Voloshinov," in *Shakespeare*

story—because there survives only one copy of Wilson’s translation, itself partial, dating some two decades later and prepared for a different purpose entirely.

BL Additional MS 18638 is an early seventeenth-century presentation copy of the English *Diana*—inscribed by Wilson, alongside his original dedication to Southampton, to “the right honorable Sir Fulke Grevyll knight Privie Counsellor to his Majesty & Chancellor of the Exchequer, my most honorable and truly worthy to be honored frend.”¹⁶ Some two decades after offering his translation to Southampton, Wilson was as shrewd with this second dedication as he was with the first.¹⁷ Sir Fulke Greville, created Baron Brooke in 1621, had a variously fortuneed career as courtier and administrator to a queen and two kings—but he is best known today, in spite of his own literary creations, for his magisterial biography of close friend Philip Sidney, and even more importantly, for guiding his friend’s *Arcadia* into print.¹⁸ (In fact, Wilson’s dedication is one of the key pieces of independent evidence that establishes Greville’s editorial role.)¹⁹ Just as Wilson’s first inscription engaged the Essex circle’s reverence for Sidney, his reimaged preface to Greville even more explicitly celebrates the bond between Sidney and his new dedicatee:

I know you will well esteeme of [this translation], because that your most noble and never enough honored frend Sir Phillipp Siddney did very much affect and imitate the excellent Author there of, whose might well tearme his booke Diana (as the sister of Apollo, & the twinn borne with him) as his Arcadia (which by your noble vertue the world so hapily enioyes) might well haue had the name of Phoebus, for never was our age lightned with two starres of such high and emenent witt, as are the bookes of these two excelling Authors.²⁰

As a founding figure in the establishment of Sidney’s literary legacy, Greville is appropriately praised for his editorial efforts—and this remark, in

Reread: The Texts in New Contexts, ed. Russ McDonald (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 250.

16. BL Additional MS 18638, fol. 3. There is disagreement about whether the manuscript is in Wilson’s hand; see Thomas, “Diana de Monte Mayor,” 367; Anderson, “Montemayor’s *Diana*,” 12.

17. The nomenclature helps us date the manuscript between October 1614 (when Greville was named chancellor of the exchequer) and January 1621 (when he was raised to the peerage as Baron Brooke). Wilson’s signature (fol. 6) does not refer to his own knighthood, granted in July 1618—so it seems unlikely that it was prepared subsequently.

18. For Greville’s life, see R. A. Rebholz, *The Life of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); John Gouws, “Greville, Fulke, first Baron Brooke of Beauchamps Court (1554–1628),” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11516>.

19. See Joel B. Davis, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia and the Invention of English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 28.

20. BL Additional MS 18638, fols. 4v–5.

light of the first dedication, implicitly links Essex and Southampton's martial triumphs with Greville's literary ones.²¹

It initially seems curious that Wilson preserves the original dedication, diluting a focus that might otherwise be heaped entirely on Greville—until we remember that, along with Sidney, it was Essex who most prominently shaped Greville's early career, as patron, advocate, and friend.²² It did not take long for Greville to gravitate toward Essex, Sidney's cultural heir, and public performances like the Accession Day tilts of 1590 soon worked to establish their mutual guardianship of the shepherd knight's memory.²³ Their growing relationship implicitly guided the first printing of Sidney's *Arcadia*, which Greville published in 1590. As Joel Davis has demonstrated, Greville's editorial emphasis on the text's more pessimistic features seem designed to ingratiate himself to Essex and his circle, who were beginning to develop their temperamental devotion to the grimness of Tacitus.²⁴ Moreover, Greville served several logistical functions for Essex during the Cadiz raid of 1596—including an apparent role in the courtly propaganda campaign it sparked—and it is thus particularly appropriate that, some two decades later, Wilson retains the occasion of his initial dedication.²⁵ In the surviving manuscript, the preservation of these paratextual elements bears witness to Greville's membership in the esteemed legacy of the Essex circle, honoring him as a natural heir to Wilson's translation.

But Wilson's new preface also contains a more intricate reminder of Greville's social network. To excuse himself for presenting only a partial translation, Wilson offers a curiously elaborate consolation, which I quote here in full:

thinking of other things, [I] made the rest of this miscary, but I will make a sute to Apollo as his beloued childrene of Pernassus did to him to recouer the lost bookes of Cornelius Tacitus. And I hope to haue a better answeare from him then they had, whoe looking for grace & thanks for making that motion to recouer the workes of that Father of humane Prudence, and Inuenter of moderne policie, in stead therof were answered with a

21. It is possible that, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, Wilson had a hand in publishing works of Sidney; see Pollard, "Wilson," n.p.

22. It is worth noting that, despite his love for Essex, Greville strove to remain on favorable terms with Robert Cecil, the earl's nemesis at court; this neutrality would, at the very least, shield Greville from the vortex of paranoia that finally undid Essex and his loyalists.

23. In these tilts, "The Earle of Essex & M. Foulke Greeuill" mutually mourned "Sweete Sydney, fairest shepheard of our greene"; see George Peele, *Polyhymnia describing, the honourable triumph at tylt, before her Maiestie, on the 17 of Nouember* (London, 1590), A2, A4v.

24. Joel Davis, "Multiple *Arcadias* and the Literary Quarrel between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke," *Studies in Philology* 101 (2004): 401–30. See also Wood, "'Cleverly Playing the Stoic.'"

25. See Hammer, "Myth-Making"; Hammer, "Earl of Essex, Fulke Greville."

frowning countenance that they were ignorant men to make such a request, as though from that which was left of his writing, of the crueltie of Tiberius and the rapacity of Nero, moderne Princes had not learned enough per rodere et radere ipopuli [to gnaw and raze the people], but that they must needes haue the obscaenity and tyrannie of Caligula & Domitian, those odious Monsters of Nature, which out of divine providence were lost and exterminated for the benefitt of the world, for the good wherof, it had beene good (said hee), che Tacito hauesse semper tacciuto [that Tacitus had always been silent].²⁶

I have found no discussion of this odd moment—which, as we will see below, is adopted from a provocative contemporary Italian satire. With this digression, Wilson further thickens the associative texture of his document by bringing to mind the Essex circle's well-known affinity for Cornelius Tacitus.

Scholars have thoroughly documented the Essex circle's interest in Tacitus, whose emphasis on the naked realities of statecraft suited their increasingly cynical temperament.²⁷ Essex, we know, read Tacitus actively, and many of his associates (such as Henry Savile, Henry Wotton, and Antonio Perez) and would-be's (most famously, John Hayward) are linked with the Tacitean explosion of the 1590s—including Fulke Greville, who displayed a lifelong commitment to the Roman historian throughout his scholarly endeavors.²⁸ After the earl's death, Tacitus continued to fuel the outlook of many surviving Essex partisans, who took refuge in the court of the young Prince Henry—the new heir (in contrast to his *rex pacificus* father) to the

26. BL Additional MS 18638, fols. 3–4. Translation mine.

27. The literature on the rise of Tacitus in Renaissance political thought (and on Tacitus and the Essex circle) is also vast. See, e.g., J. H. M. Salmon, "Stoicism and Roman Example: Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50 (1989): 199–225; Salmon, "Seneca and Tacitus in Jacobean England" in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 169–88; Alan T. Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism and the 'Utility' of Tacitus," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983): 127–55; Edwin B. Benjamin, "Bacon and Tacitus," *Classical Philology* 60 (1965): 102–10; Benjamin, "Sir John Hayward and Tacitus," *Review of English Studies* 8 (1957): 275–76; David Womersley, "Sir Henry Savile's Translation of Tacitus and the Political Interpretation of Elizabethan Texts," *Review of English Studies* 42 (1991): 313–42; Womersley, "Sir John Hayward's Tacitism," *Renaissance Studies* 6 (1992): 46–59; Peter Burke, "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State" in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 479–98; *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*, ed. T. J. Luce and A. J. Woodman (Princeton University Press, 1993); Kenneth C. Schellhase, *Tacitus in Renaissance Political Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1976); Alexandra Gajda, "Tacitus and Political Thought in Early Modern Europe, c. 1530–c. 1640," in *The Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, ed. A. J. Woodman (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 253–68; Gajda, "The Earl of Essex and 'Politick History,'" in Connolly and Hopkins, *Essex*, 237–59; Paulina Kewes, "Henry Savile's Tacitus and the Politics of Roman History in Late Elizabethan England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 74 (2011): 515–51.

28. For Greville's interest in Tacitus, see Rebholz, *Life*, 293–302.

Sidney-Essex mantle of Protestant militancy, whose early death in 1612 would be yet another blow to the similarly minded.²⁹ The “cynical or negative aspects” of Tacitean-inflected politics, embraced by the Essex circle in the 1590s, thus grew even deeper roots among survivors in the seventeenth century, when the themes of “imperial tyranny and courtly corruption . . . would carry special *frisson* under James I and Charles I.”³⁰

Given this context, I cannot think it an accident that, sometime in the second decade of the new king’s reign, Wilson places a bizarrely elaborate reference to Tacitus in a manuscript bearing the names of five men, each of whom boasts some association (most quite intimate) with the Essex circle.³¹ But while taking obvious pain to flatter Greville’s continued interest in the Roman historian, he also attempts to induce a sense of nostalgia. By preserving his original dedication, Wilson reanimates and reunites the monumental personalities of the Essex circle, while his newly deployed reference to Tacitus pointedly invokes a central piece of the symbolic capital that helped make those personalities adhere.³² While the reference to Cadiz nods at Greville’s (and the remaining Essexian’s) current disappointment with James’s pacifism, the newly penned manuscript also becomes an artifact of the past, transporting both giver and recipient to the golden age of Essex’s chief glory—and to the origins of Tacitus as an intellectual and affective symbol of that social network. Tacitus helps anchor this double-time, in which the Greville of the mid-1610s is presented with an elegant time capsule of his greener years, even if it cannot help but also reflect the unhappy present.

Wilson’s tale of Tacitus and Apollo is an incident adopted from Traiano Boccalini’s *Ragguagli di Parnaso* (1612)—a majestic satire in which Apollo, from his heavenly court of Parnassus, adjudicates various matters of state and society.³³ A literary agitator of the highest order, Boccalini ruthlessly

29. See Roy C. Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986). Greville, his career stalled by Robert Cecil, was not among those in Henry’s court—but his most famous work, the Tacitean *A Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, was likely intended for the prince. See Rebholz, *Life*, chap. 11.

30. Salmon, “Stoicism and Roman Example,” 220; Kewes, “Henry Savile’s Tacitus,” 516.

31. Sidney, Essex, Southampton, Greville, and Wilson himself, if he is indeed the “Tho. Wilson” discussed in n. 4.

32. As the Jacobean reign continued, the formerly cult interest in Tacitus began to swell into a fad; it may be that Wilson is also reminding Greville of his authentic claim. See Bradford, “Stuart Absolutism,” 138.

33. Traiano Boccalini, *De Ragguagli di Parnaso* (Venice, 1612). Wilson’s dedication, quoted above, translates the following from this edition: “Padre della prudenza Humana, e del vero inuentor della moderna Politica, Cornelio Tacito” (390); “e non vi pare, che dal crudel gouerno di Tiberio, e dalla rapace vita di Nerone, tanto esattamente scritta dal vostro Tacito, alcuni moderni Prencipi habbiano cauati Precetti nobilissimi da rodere, e radere, che vorreste, che hauessero commodità di veder se nelle vite di Caligola, e di Domitiano, che solo acciò per-

skewered the leading political and intellectual figures of his day—but he was also an ardent devotee of Tacitus, on whose works he composed a weighty commentary (published posthumously).³⁴ This inclination is evident in the *Ragguagli*, which uses “hundreds of Tacitean citations to comment on the princes and courtiers” of Renaissance Europe—and in which both Tacitus and his modern editor Justus Lipsius star in several episodes.³⁵ Early in the first book, a sequence of dispatches considers the implications of the Tacitean mode. In one, Tacitus himself is arraigned before Apollo’s court: the “seditious argument” of his histories, it is alleged by a host of worldly statesmen, “hath framed a kinde of spectacles, that work most pernicious effects for Princes; for so much as being put vpon the noses of silly and simple people, they so refine and sharpen their sight, as they make them see and prie into the most hidden and secret thoughts of others.”³⁶ For this crime, the injured princes request that Tacitus “for euer be expulsed the society and conuersation of all men,” but Apollo, loath to deprive his realm of the “Prince of all Politicall Historians,” dismisses the charge, on the condition that Tacitus be a bit more mindful of what state secrets he unfolds.³⁷ In a related tale, Justus Lipsius, the renowned sixteenth-century editor of Seneca and Tacitus, must face charges that “hee loued not Tacitus as a friend, that he honoured not him as a Master, and regardfull Patron, but adored him as his Apollo and Deitie”; when brought before the court, Lipsius openly asserts “*Tacitus* to be the chiefe Standard bearer of all famous *Historians*, the Father of humane wisdom, the Oracle of perfect reason of *State*, the absolute Master of *Politicians*.”³⁸ Though sentenced to death for this blasphemy, Lipsius refuses to recant—and thus finds himself praised by Apollo and pardoned for this “verteous constancie,” which confirms that he “hast read [*Tacitus*] with delight, studied him with profit, and learnt him to thy great aduantage.”³⁹

But it is a third entry on Tacitus that Wilson adopts in his preface. In this episode, “the chiefeest learned men of *Parnassus*”—who “with continuall

petuamente stessero ascose le obscenità, e le crudeltadi, che vsarono quei sozzi mostri di Natura, la Maestà di Dio per vostro grandissimo beneficio ha estermiate dal Mondo?” (391); “Felice il mondo tutto, se Tacito hauesse sempre taciuto” (392).

34. Boccalini, *Comentari di Traiano Boccalini Romano sopra Cornelio Tacito* (Cosmopoli [Amsterdam], 1677). On Boccalini, see William F. Marquardt, “The First English Translators of Traiano Boccalini’s *Ragguagli Di Parnaso*: A Study of Literary Relationships,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 15 (1951): 1–19; Gajda, “Tacitus and Political Thought,” 264–65; Schellhase, *Tacitus*, 145–50.

35. Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 144.

36. Boccalini, *The New-found Politicke* (London, 1626), 29. Though Wilson, we will see, uses the Italian original, I quote from the English translation here, which I discuss in detail below.

37. *Ibid.*, 31.

38. *Ibid.*, 16.

39. *Ibid.*, 24.

brackish teares bewailed the disastrous losse of the *Annales* and Histories of *Cornelius Tacitus*; the father of humane wisdom, and true inuenter of modern *Policie*—implore Apollo to “repaire the damages, which the iniury of times had caused, both to [Tacitus’s] reputation, and to the generall commoditie of his vertuous followers, by framing all that anew, which at this day is wanting in his most excellent workes.”⁴⁰ This time, however, Apollo is “much offended” by the suggestion, proclaiming that “all moderne *Policie* is but the trash of your so beloued *Tacitus*, and as a contagious disease hath infected all the world”:

And doth it not seeme vnto you, that from the cruell gouernment of *Tiberius*, and from the prodigious life of *Nero*, so exactly written by your *Tacitus*, some moderne Princes haue drawne most exquisite precepts, how to gnaw to the bone, and how to shaue to the braine? But that you would also haue them [read] in the liues of *Caligula* and *Domitianus* . . . the lothsome obscenities, and the barbarous cruelties, which those two vgly monsters of Nature committed.⁴¹

“A happie and beneficiall gaine,” Apollo proclaims instead, “hath the losse beene of the greatest part of *Tacitus* his labours”—and indeed, “Thrice happie were all the world, if *Tacitus* had euer held his peace.”⁴²

In Apollo’s response, Boccalini cheekily lampoons the increasingly vocal Renaissance backlash against Tacitus, which condemned the Roman as a forerunner to Machiavelli and corruptor of modern statecraft.⁴³ In selecting his anecdote, then, Wilson not only flatters Greville’s fondness for Tacitus but does so by referring to an international conversation on the utility of Tacitus that the Essex circle had virtually initiated in England. What’s more, the Essex circle had been popularly associated with exactly the sort of bibliographic reconstruction that Apollo’s petitioners imagine. To his *Fower Bookes of the Histories of Cornelius Tacitus*—the enormously influential first English translation of the historian—noted intellectual and Essex client Sir Henry Savile appended an essay titled “The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba,” a piece of original history designed to restore the lacuna between the surviving texts of Tacitus’s *Annales* and *Historiae*.⁴⁴ Ben Jonson deemed this intervention the edition’s greatest virtue:

But when I read that special piece, restored,
Where Nero falls, and Galba is adored,

40. *Ibid.*, 26–27.

41. *Ibid.*, 27.

42. *Ibid.*, 28.

43. See Schellhase, *Tacitus*, 123–43.

44. Henry Savile, *The Ende of Nero and Beginning of Galba. Fower Bookes of the Histories of Cornelius Tacitus* (London, 1591).

To thine own proper I ascribe then more;
 And gratulate the breach, I grieved before:
 Which Fate (it seems) caused in the history,
 Only to boast thy merit in supply.⁴⁵

(7–12)

(According to Jonson, it was Essex himself who penned the anonymous preface to Savile's edition, which has been deemed "a seminal document of the Tacitean revival in England"; modern scholars often follow this ascription, which was echoed in the seventeenth century by historiographer Edmund Bolton.)⁴⁶ The "chiefest learned men" of Apollo's Parnassus would have greatly admired the literary efforts of Essex and his followers, as Wilson's reference slyly brings to mind.

In the second decade of the seventeenth century, it was a contemporary reference indeed. The *Ragguagli* were not translated into English until 1626, so it seems certain that Wilson employed Boccalini's recently published original—hence, in the manuscript, Apollo's concluding remark remains in Italian. We know that Boccalini and his work were on the radar of the English court: in June 1613, John Chamberlain gave Sir Dudley Carleton (stationed in Venice) his "thancks for the booke of Ragguagli you sent me," while a year earlier Boccalini had praised Tacitus in a dispatch "Al re d'Inghlitterra, Giacomo I" himself, which presumably included a copy of his work.⁴⁷ When Greville was establishing himself as chancellor of the exchequer, Wilson had long served the king as a keeper of records. Did a copy of Boccalini make it into both of their hands? Would Greville have known the source of Wilson's allusion, and even further appreciated the reference to his favorite historian?

This is impossible to know until further evidence is uncovered; to study manuscripts is to live with narratives and reconstructions that are inevitably partial, and to situate them in a social and intellectual universe that is ever expanding. BL Additional MS 18638 is a case in point. While I have argued that Wilson's manuscript is a deliberate tribute to the historical ethos of the Essex circle—and a witness to its lasting association with the Tacitean mode—there is a final way in which the circumstances of this document

45. Jonson, "To Sir Henry Savile," in *The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (London: Penguin, 1996). See also Womersley, "Sir Henry Savile's Translation," 314–15.

46. Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism," 132. See Jonson, "Conversations with William Drummond," in *Complete Poems*, lines 372–73; Edmund Bolton, "Hypercritica," in *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. J. E. Spingarn, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1908–9), 1:115.

47. *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), 1:457; Traiano Boccalini, *Ragguagli di Parnaso e scritti minori*, ed. Luigi Firpo, 3 vols. (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1948), 3:361. See Bradford, "Stuart Absolutism," 138, who wonders if Bolton saw the copy sent to the king.

point to the long half-life of the Essex/Tacitus junction, quite independently of Wilson and Greville: Sir William Vaughan, the man who prepared the first notable English edition of Boccalini's *Ragguagli* in 1626, had also been in the orbit of the Essex circle some three decades earlier.⁴⁸

Remembered both for his literary pursuits and his advocacy of colonization, Sir William had a wide interest in law, medicine, and philosophy.⁴⁹ But most notably for our purposes, his family had deep ties to Essex, and from their family estate of Golden Grove, Carmarthenshire had formed a part of the earl's power base in Wales.⁵⁰ Their Elizabethan patriarch was Walter Vaughan (d. 1598), a member of Parliament and local sheriff who wore the young earl's livery in the 1580s.⁵¹ This loyalty, in fact, ran him afoul of the authorities in 1586, after he reprieved (on his patron's behalf) another such Essex-man in his custody.⁵² While campaigning with his stepfather in the Low Countries, Essex wrote personally on behalf of his servant. The earl affirmed that Vaughan "hath bene an affectionate follower of me and my house," and he assured that "what fauour yow shall shew [to him] I shall esteeme yt as done vnto myself."⁵³ In the final years of his life, Walter Vaughan's ties to Essex were cemented by his second marriage to Letitia Perrot—whose half brother Sir Thomas Perrot had married Dorothy Devereux, the earl's younger sister.

But a stronger connection was forged by Walter's eldest son John (c. 1574–1634), the future Earl of Carbery, whose early career was connected to Essex.⁵⁴ An Oxford-educated member of the Inner Temple, John

48. Vaughan is the editor behind *The New-found Politicke*, a three-part partial translation of the *Ragguagli*; John Florio translated the first part, Vaughan the third, while the second, prepared by (it seems) Thomas Scott, was initially published in Utrecht four years earlier as *News from Pernassus*. Vaughan was the mastermind of the expanded, composite edition. See Marquardt, "First English Translators."

49. See Ceri Davies, "Vaughan, Sir William (c. 1575–1641)," in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28151>.

50. Hammer, *Polarisation*, 276, 278. For a partial descriptive genealogy of the Vaughans, see J. Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain & Ireland for 1852*, 2 vols. (London, 1852), 2:1532–33; *Dictionary of Welsh Biography Down to 1940* (London: William Lewis, 1959), 995–96. See also Francis Jones, "The Vaughans of Golden Grove I: The Earls of Carbery" *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1963): 96–145.

51. There is no *ODNB* article on Walter Vaughan, but see his entry (as well as those of family members) in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1558–1603*, ed. P. W. Hasler, 3 vols. (London: HMSO, 1981).

52. Jones, "Vaughans," 104; Hammer, *Polarisation*, 21.

53. TNA, SP 12/190, fol. 94. Some documents in this saga are preserved in BL Harleian MSS 6993, 6994, and 7002; see *A Catalogue of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts*, 2 vols. (London, 1709).

54. See Lloyd Bowen, "Vaughan, John, first earl of Carbery (1574/75–1634)," in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28133>.

Vaughan entered the earl's retinue in the 1590s; he notably served in the Irish campaign of 1599, one of the many men knighted by Essex (in blatant disregard of the queen's prohibition to the contrary).⁵⁵ But Vaughan was also an associate of fellow Welshman Sir Gelly Meyrick, Essex's steward and co-conspirator—and in 1598 he married Meyrick's daughter Margaret, intensifying the bonds of kinship between Vaughan and Devereux by another degree. During the Essex rising, this affinity threatened to be costly. According to the crown, Vaughan and several Meyrick kinsmen had been dangerously prepared to join their master in treason:

Neither maie the sonnes in Lawe of Sir Gelley Merricke named Davyde and William Gwyn be thought cleere of this Rebellion, for that they (accompanied with others att the tyme of the Earles apprehension) were att Colbroke comminge to him—but therevpon were discomforted, and returned to Wales, sendinge their myndes by James Pryce afoursaide to Sir Gelley, vnto whome his goinge was all to late. And the like did Sir John Vaughan.⁵⁶

Other documents similarly refer to “certen Walshmen” who marched “towardses London as farre as Colbrooke & hearinge the Earle of Essex was committed, they returned posting backe agayne.”⁵⁷

Despite this wise retreat, Vaughan remained on the crown's radar, and subsequent investigation uncovered troubling circumstantial evidence. Sources revealed that “about mychelmas last the ii knightes meyricke [Gelly and his brother Francis] traveled much the most parte of carmarthen and pembroke shires,” where they “conveyed & caryed many great trunckes suspectid & thought to conteyne moch money plate & threasure . . . into Carmarthen shire towardses Sir John Vaughns howse.”⁵⁸ It was thus at “Sir John Vaughans in Carmarthyne sheere” that “most of the treasure of Sir Gelle Meyricke is conveyed,” and where “Sir Gellye his wyffe removed & carried her plate and principall stuffe (as itt is informed) fortnight or three weekes before this trayterous act attempted.”⁵⁹ These reports cast significant doubt on Vaughan's loyalty to the queen:

Neither maie Sir John Vaughan . . . knighted by the Earle in Irelande married to Sir Gelley Merrickes daughter be thought vnacquainted with

55. Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.142, fol. 29. See also, Folger MS V.b.41, fol. 287v for Essex's creation of knights in Ireland.

56. The Cecil Papers (hereafter CP), Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, 83/97.

57. CP 73/112.

58. CP 77/74.

59. CP 77/55; 76/107; see also TNA, PC 2/26, 114. Reports suggested that Meyrick may have also “conveyed his gooddes to one Roger Vaughan” of Radnorshire, another of his Welsh associates (CP 73/112). “Sir Gelley,” it was said, “estated his landes vpon him in trust” before

this Rebellion, much lesse is he to be putt in trust for execucion of anie publicke services touchinge discoveringe apprehendinge or followinge of aine of this traiterous combynacion or their estates for her Majesties most advantage.⁶⁰

Eager to clear himself of such suspicion, Vaughan professed his “true loyaltie to her highnes, and . . . honeste inocencie aswell therein” to Robert Cecil directly, even traveling to London “voluntarilie to present himself vnto” privy council inquiry; in his account, the libelous rumors of his involvement were spread by a “lewde preist,” whom Vaughan had “presequited . . . for maynteyning and harboring of a suspected Seminary.”⁶¹ The Privy Council found no other evidence on the fortunate Vaughan, who would go onto a career of royal service under the Stuart kings. But his links to Essex had threatened to be costly.

Through his father and brother, then, Sir William Vaughan had immediate connection to the extended circle of the earl of Essex. This fact is exemplified by his first major literary work, *Poematum Libellus* (1598)—a cluster of poems anchored by an encomium to Essex, celebrating in Latin verse the earl’s noble attributes and martial service.⁶² The image of Essex would remain with Vaughan for decades. In 1626, the same year he released his edition of Boccalini, Vaughan revealed his own affinity for Tacitus in *The Golden Fleece*, a professed imitation of the *Ragguagli* in which Apollo’s court hosts fierce debate on the issues of the day—and in which both Boccalini and “the most ancient” Tacitus are summoned to proffer their expert testimony.⁶³ But in Vaughan’s Parnassus, we also learn that “*Robert Earle of Essex*” is “*Lord High Marshall*” of Apollo’s realm and “*Sir Philip Sidney*” serves as “*Prouost Marshall of his Court*”—the two figures, to come full circle, that anchored my initial discussion of Wilson’s translation.⁶⁴

Vaughan’s translation of Boccalini appeared a decade after Wilson prepared the only surviving manuscript of his English *Diana*. This underscores my larger point about the history of BL Additional MS 18638; it is a document that, through a network of direct and associative nodes, speaks not

the rising, “doubtinge what might ensue” in its after aftermath (CP 83/97, 73/112). But there was, it seems, some optimism among their followers: “yf yt [meaning the rising] so ffall out,” one servant gossiped to another, “thy Master meainge Meyrick will sure be a duke and my Master meainge the Vaughan wilbe an Earle at leaste” (CP 77/72). See the entry on Roger Vaughan in *History of Parliament*.

60. CP 83/97.

61. CP 181/129; TNA, PC 2/26, 159–60; CP 181/129.

62. Vaughan, *Poematum Libellus* (London, 1598).

63. Vaughan, *The Golden Fleece* (London, 1626), pt. 3, 72. See Andrew Fitzmaurice, “American Corruption,” in *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson*, ed. John F. McDiarmid (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007): 217–31.

64. Vaughan, *Golden Fleece*, pt. 1, 21.

only to the well-established linkage of Essex and Tacitus but also to the other literary forms orbiting in the Essex circle's intellectual universe. In the surviving manuscript, these forms link men like Greville and Wilson to the Elizabethan worthies of a time well past—further documenting the Essex circle's vibrant textual afterlife.