

# MARGINAL REACTIONS: RESPONSES TO TRANSLATIONS OF MACHIAVELLI IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH MARGINALIA

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- 252** Harry loaded up his quill a second time and wrote, "My name is Harry Potter."  
The words shone momentarily on the page and they too sank without trace. Then, at last, something happened.  
Oozing back out of the page, in his very own ink, came words Harry had never written.  
"Hello, *Harry Potter*. My name is Tom Riddle. How did you come by my diary?" (Rowling 179)

This is the central episode of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the second book of J.K. Rowling's saga. The enchanted diary, apparently blank, shows its full potential as a locus of note-taking: when Harry inserts a comment, the book answers. It will later become a door between one world and another, a liminal space connecting the present with the past, as books should do. The *Harry Potter* novels can always be relied upon to provide reflections on conventional modes of thinking. By attributing this magic function to the diary, in the deliberately pre-electronic atmosphere of Hogwarts, Rowling harks back at a medieval notion of the book as a site of sharing.

My second example comes from the fourteenth century and concerns one of the most famous books of Italian proto-humanism: the Codex Ambrosianus (now Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, S.P. 10/27, olim A. 49 inf). This is a magnificent parchment codex containing Virgil's main works, plus some works by Statius, Horace, and others (Lord 254-57). Decorated with rubrics and a painting by Simone Martini on the frontispiece, the manuscript also has another characteristic: the Virgilian text is surrounded by the commentary on Virgil written by the grammarian Servius Marius Honoratus. Over the years, Petrarch interpolated his own notes, sometimes inserting a personal touch in allusions to Laura or to his own life, occasionally creating a fascinating dialogue with the previous authors, and enriching the text with a further frame of marginalia. A striking instance is the passage from the eighth Eclogue in

which Virgil presents the symbol of conquest:

A te principium, tibi desinet. Accipe iussis  
 carmina coepta tuis, atque hanc sine tempora circum  
 inter victrices hederam tibi serpere lauros. (VIII.11-13)<sup>1</sup>

Servius responds to this passage with a comment, “Laurus Caesarum atque uictorum est, hederam poetarum.”<sup>2</sup> Petrarch himself responds to Servius, calling to his aid yet another poet, Statius, and noting on the margin, “sed et laurus. Unde Statius in j<sup>o</sup> Achill: Cui gemine florent uatumque ducumque Certatim laurus.”<sup>3</sup> The physicality of the book has transformed it from a simple repository of knowledge into a locus of discussion. Marginalia create a space; or, they enter a space to which they had been invited by the very layout of the text.

Indirect confirmation of this point comes from my last example, at Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1408: a late-sixteenth-century short treatise titled *An apology for the obscurity of alchemical books, & the secrecy observed by the professors of this art*. Here, the writer, commenting on Chaucer’s description of the alchemical process and the obscurity of all such writings, adds, “Thus much j finde by groaping at the matter, that nothing staieth a clerk more, then doeth the bare letter” (Schuler 318). The author thus posits the bare letter as the central, vital node in the creation of a locus of discussion, in which one or many voices can enter, preordained by those who participated in the first construction of a manuscript, or added later. The margins can even challenge the central text, and superimpose a new meaning onto it. As Alain de Lille notes, “Sed quia auctoritas cereum habet nasum, id est in diversum potest flecti sensum, rationibus roborandum est” (Alanus ab Insulis 333 A).<sup>4</sup>

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Over the last thirty years there has been a debate as to whether this use of the book as a physical site of sharing acquired special importance in early modern Europe. This article is intended as a contribution to this debate. In the following pages, I shall analyze a number of manuscripts and early printed texts marking the dissemination of Machiavelli’s *Principe* in the British Isles. The manuscripts are the extant witnesses of the English translations that appeared before the first printed English edition in 1642; the printed texts are copies of the *Principe* in Italian, Latin, or French circulating in the British Isles in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The study of early modern readers has been given new impulse thanks to the work of scholars such as Roger Chartier, Heather Jackson, Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, William Sherman, Kevin Sharpe, and a number of others. Jardine and Grafton, as early as 1990, set some guidelines by positing scholarly reading as “always goal-orientated—an active, rather than a passive pursuit” (30). They note the professionalization of this activity, which was often accompanied by specialized equipment and proposed itself mostly as a public, rather than a private performance. In support of their hypothesis, they quote from Sir Henry Wotton, the sixteenth-century English writer and ambassador, in whose commonplace book appears a passage in which he exhorts readers to a well-organized activity:

In reading of history, a soldier should draw the platform of battles he meets with, plant the squadrons and order the whole frame as he finds it written, so he shall print it firmly in his mind and apt his mind for actions. A politique should find the characters of personages and apply them to some of the Court he lives in, which will likewise confirm his memory and give scope and matter for conjecture and invention. A friend to confer readings together most necessary. (Smith 494)

254 The reader, however, will not have missed the repeated use of *should*, which seems to show that Wotton was expressing a wish rather than describing a practice; above all, there is here a problem concerning the definition of *reader*. We might question whether note-taking is so important in early modern Europe or whether, as modern scholars, we are attributing excessive importance to it: what may be said with a certain degree of assurance was that it was more widespread thanks to the increased availability of paper, which has the double advantage of being more durable than papyrus or, of course, wax tablets, and less expensive than parchment. It was easier to make notes on paper, and more testimonies of this use have survived, making it possible for modern scholarship to undertake extensive analysis (Blair 303-16). In the extant examples, however, note-taking presents too wide a range to make Wotton's taxonomy a description of a generalized habit; it indicates the opposite. What Wotton is describing is professional reading: his two readers are by no means scholars in the modern sense. They are active persons who *use* their texts for a very specific purpose.

The idea of *using* a book, as opposed to the notion of reading it, has been defined over the past ten years with reference to early modern books, especially thanks to the work undertaken by William Sherman in 2008. We have learned to focus on the early modern regard for books as tools, to mistrust the reverence we feel towards an early printed book, and to consider rather its portability, accessibility, and openness to comments, notes, and scribbles. *Usus libri* is a very practical attitude, as shown by Geoffrey Whitney in his Emblem 171, "*Usus libri, non lectio prudentes facit*":<sup>5</sup>

The volumes great, who so doth still peruse,  
And dailie turns, and gazeth on the same,  
If that the fruicte therof, he do not use,  
He reapes but toile, and never gaineth fame:  
    Firste reade, then marke, then practise that is good,  
    For without use, we drinke but LETHE flood.

Of practise longe, experience doth proceede;  
And wisdome then, doth evermore ensue:  
Then printe in minde, what wee in printe do reade,  
Els loose wee time, and books in vaine do vewe:  
    Wee maie not haste, our talent to bestowe,  
    Nor hide it up, whereby no good shall growe. (171)<sup>6</sup>

The emblem is particularly revealing in its use of verbs. The idea of *marking* the book is highlighted as the necessary passage between passive reading and active practicing; the printed quality of the book—which excludes, apparently, manuscripts from

Whitney's reflection—is transposed into the metaphor of printing in the mind; just *viewing* the book is no longer an option.

The revolution of printing in early modern Europe has not only offered modern scholarship the opportunity of analyzing a significantly increasing body of evidence on note-taking, but also of gauging the role of readers in a completely different setting. One such novelty may be constituted by what has been called humanist excerpting, although the humanists themselves invoked classical precedents for this practice (Blair 305–06). The very invocation of classical precedents speaks to a newly fashionable attitude, and the existence of a durable, light, ready-to-hand medium on which to take notes gave new strength and life to the notes themselves. It made sense to collect them in commonplace books, and to make them interact with the original text by superimposing handwritten notes onto a printed text.

Marks in books come in all sizes and types. Heidi Brayman Hackel provides a useful taxonomy of readers' marks in books, dividing them into three main categories: the first are marks that indicate active reading and engage a dialogue with the text by underlining, cross-referencing, or querying it; the second category includes marks of ownership, such as signatures or *ex-libris*, which highlight the role of the book as a physical object; the third are marks recording events unconnected with the book itself, such as debts or marriages. She concludes by noting that “for each of these three kinds of notes, the book takes on a different role: as intellectual process, as valued object, and as available paper” (Hackel 138). All these marks may variously qualify as notes, marginalia, glosses, and in some cases, *scholia*. To Hackel's list, William Sherman adds a further category, describing marks that do not qualify as annotations by employing the term *graffiti* for all signs that do not seem to relate to the central text: “doodles, pen practices, ownership formulae, and a wide variety of quotidian marks that were entered in books simply because they offered a convenient space for writing and archiving” (23). Jason Scott-Warren elaborates on the use of graffiti, reminding us that, in the pre-modern era, graffiti was not illegal: “writing on walls, for a wide variety of purposes, seems in the past to have been socially acceptable and even sanctioned” (364). From this perspective, the book is thus like a wall: a public space in which a community of readers and writers may meet and share texts; and occasionally, as we have seen, the graffiti on the book may have nothing to do with the book itself.

A number of studies on early modern marginalia have focused on individual early modern readers. Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, together with other scholars, have studied the collection of books owned and annotated by Gabriel Harvey, while William Sherman has analyzed the annotations of John Dee—in both cases, readers who could not resist the blank margin. What this article attempts is a horizontal reading, looking at specimens of the same book as it is read—and hopefully annotated—by different persons. I have chosen Machiavelli's *Prince* as it is disseminated in the British Isles, since we have testimonies of its controversial nature shortly after its composition (Richardson 18–39), and we know that in the British Isles this contro-

versy turned Machiavelli, on the stage and in popular writings, into an early modern representation of the medieval Vice.

A complete census is impossible: Machiavelli's *Principe* did not appear in print in English until 1640, when Edward Dacres's translation was published, but the text was far from unknown in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: not only did a number of copies in Italian, French, and Latin circulate, but there was also a significant dissemination of English translations and compendia in manuscript, as has been shown by recent studies (Anglo; Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*). Analogous attempts to offer a census of marginalia have already shown that this is a herculean task: in his 1994 *Books with Manuscript*, Robin Alston notes that he has looked at volumes in the British Library in which there were "significant" notes, sometimes authorial, excluding what was trivial, and excluding volumes in the Manuscript, Music, and Map collections: even so, "the total number of items identified here exceeds 25,000" (vii). Interestingly, Alston also presupposes that early printed books opened up a

**256** space of dialogue:

one group of books which were very likely intended to be annotated, and accordingly provided with generous margins, are books printed before 1501. For the most part following a tradition established in the twelfth century in the production of manuscripts of texts for study at the universities, the early printers provided their readers with ample space on which to record their comments, and it is hardly surprising that such a large percentage of surviving incunabula are annotated: in this listing over 900 examples. (xiii)

This is challengeable, of course, since early printers might not have had university readers in mind, and might have wanted to protect the printed area from trimming, water, and other forms of damage by providing extra blank space. But it is a phenomenon we do find—although not always, and by no means systematically—in the case of some early editions of Machiavelli.

Preliminary results offer a partial answer to the question of what readers wrote on the margins of Machiavelli's *Prince*: predominantly, nothing at all. The census of copies of the early editions of this book I am preparing is full of entries signaling the absence of marks of any kind, suggesting that, when we stop looking at very special readers such as Harvey or Dee, marginalia or marks in books are not so common as one would suppose. Readers are by no means consistent or thorough: it is not infrequent to see that a book has marks only at the beginning, as in the case of the copy of the 1580 edition of Telius's Latin version (now at Oxford, Bodleian Library, Toynbee 512), and then nothing else; or a mark in one page, while being immaculate elsewhere. But even when books are not clean, they rarely show the reader's response, or do so only in a negative way, as in the 1551 copy of Machiavelli's *Opere*, now at the Codrington Library, Oxford, in which somebody has methodically crossed through all traces of Machiavelli's name, while leaving the texts at the disposal of future readers. Otherwise we find corrections, explanations, and helps in the case of missing text, but very rarely a comment of a non-linguistic nature. The vitriol of contemporary writers seems to concern those who have heard of, but have not actually read,

Machiavelli: readers are simply intent upon understanding the text, or perhaps helping other readers to understand it.

This preliminary hypothesis is supported by the case of a very special reader. In a letter to Edward Denny dated 22 May 1580, Philip Sidney advises him on reading, beginning with the Scriptures but then moving on what we would call utilitarian reading, what concerns “the trade of our lives”:

For a physician must study one thinge, and a Lawyer an other, but to you th<sup>t</sup> with good reason bend your selfe to souldiery, what books can deliver, stands in the books th<sup>t</sup> profess the arte, & in historyes. The first shewes what should be done, and the other what hath bene done. Of the first sorte is Langeai in french, and Machiavell in Italian, and many other wherof I will not take vpon me to iudge, but this I thinke if you will study them, it shall be necessary for you to exercise your hande in setting downe what you reed, as in descriptions of battaillons, camps, and marches, with some practise of Arithmetike, which sportingly you may exercise. (qtd. in Osborn 537)

Jardine and Grafton link this passage to Machiavelli’s *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, but it is in fact probable that the book Sidney alluded to was *L’arte della guerra*, then available in a printed English translation and much more popular in sixteenth-century Europe than it is now; endearingly, Gabriel Harvey decorates a page describing a battle scene from his copy of the *Arte of Warre* by inserting a Mars symbol at the end of every line (Jardine and Grafton 69). The passage is, in any case, interesting since it suggests a “scientific,” professional approach, something akin to what Jardine and Grafton posit as humanist scholarly reading. It also suggests that Sidney linked Machiavelli to the Italian language—and in the absence of a printed English translation, it may be proved that a number of English readers approached his works in the original. In fact, we even have an English printer who printed Machiavelli’s works in their original language: John Wolfe (1548?-1601), who between 1584 and 1588 published *Prince*, *Discorsi*, *Arte della Guerra*, *Istorie Fiorentine*, and *L’Asino d’oro*, all in Italian, and all indicating on the title page an Italian printer and printing place. For the extant copies of the Wolfe *Prince* in particular we can see proof of attentive reading, but of a reading that looks at this text, short, pithy, and lexically poor, more as a linguistic challenge than as a moral or political puzzle. The same impression is confirmed by instances of excerpting, as in MS Harley 966, now in the British Library, a small quarto dated 1591-92 and signed by Henry Mordaunt. In the *Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts*, Harley 966 is described in the following terms:

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Codex chartaceus in 4to, tenuis, sed proba manu scriptus, A.D. 1591. in usum Henrici Mordauntij, primogeniti filij Ludovici Baronis de Turvey, patris etiam Johannis Mordauntij Comitis Petroburgensis; in quo continentur,  
 1. Tractatus Politicus, de Gubernatione Reipublicae. 1.  
 2. Generalis Temporum Descriptio. 12.  
 3. Praecepta Politica ac Rhetorica. 21. (*Catalogue* 485)<sup>7</sup>

The first of these sections bears the title “Tractatus de Monarchia,” which suggests

a closeness to Machiavelli's *Prince*, a fact actually confirmed by what we read. It is a summary, in Latin, of the *Prince*, constructed by putting together key sentences from the Latin version that was circulating at the time. At the same time we know from the manuscript that this summary was put together for a very specific reader: Henry, fourth Lord Mordaunt (1568-1609), a minor nobleman of Catholic sympathies.<sup>8</sup> We can therefore see how a book is prepared, almost predigested, for an intended reader. And once more, the process seems to be one of simplification, avoiding all references to obscure Italian states and contemporary or past political cases, in order to focus on the gnomic nature of the *Prince*, which is thus reduced to a collection of maxims.

In addition, in the case of England there is also a special corpus: five different translations, preceding Dacres's printed 1640 translation, and extant in nine manuscripts. Their liminal status as translations instead of original texts, as manuscripts circulating in the age of printing, gives them a special value; a comparison may be instituted with the manuscript of *Biathanatos* that John Donne gave to his friend

**258** Robert Ker in 1619, writing in the accompanying note:

because it is upon a misinterpretable subject, I have always gone so near suppressing it, as that it is only not burnt; no hand hath passed upon it to copy it, nor many eyes to read it [...] Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousy; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it know the date of it, and that it is written by Jack Donne, and not by Dr. Donne. Reserve it for me if I live, and if I die I only forbid it the press and the fire; publish it not, but yet burn it not, and between those do what you will with it. (qtd. in Wollman 88)

Like Donne's manuscript, these translations are thus between the press and the fire, and readers' notes and marginalia may show an awareness of this situation. It is possible for the Machiavelli manuscripts under examination to distinguish with a fair degree of certainty the various hands, thus comparing the hand (or hands) that composed the main text and the hand(s) that intervened with marginalia.

This is a list of the extant manuscripts:

**Translation A:**

1. London, British Library, MS Harley 6795.vi, fols 103r–159v;
2. Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Eng. 1014;
3. London, British Library, MS Harley 967;
4. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 792.iii, fols 1r–40r.

**Translation B (closely related with Translation A):**

1. London, British Library, MS Harley 364.xx, fols 46r–109v;
2. London, British Library, MS Harley 2292.

**Translation C:**

1. Oxford, Queen's College Library, MS 251.

**Translation D:**

1. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Hawthornden 2064, fols 144r–187v.

**Translation E:**

1. London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS Sion L40.2/E2.<sup>9</sup>

This situation, whether the result of chance or the direct consequence of the

incendiary contents of Machiavelli's treatise, generated a fluctuating, flexible, and eloquent text; readers established a close relation with a book that was in equal measure admired and hated, and made it into a locus of discussion and intervention. This early modern scribal community is a very vocal one: comments, marginalia, extracts, and marks populate the written pages of Machiavelli's text.

It is useful to compare these marginalia with one's own expectations, particularly as we consider the treatment Machiavelli commonly, and famously, received at the hands of early modern pamphleteers, playwrights, and satirical poets in early modern Europe. *Diabolus loquitur*: the devil speaks. This is what an anonymous early modern reader has written on the margin of Chapter 18 of one of the manuscript translations of the *Principe*,<sup>10</sup> at the point in which Machiavelli expounds his controversial theory of the lion and the fox: the prince, he contends, should imitate the lion in its ferociousness and the fox in its cunning. Hence this reader's censoriousness. This sorts out well with well-known passages such as the Prologue of Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, or the strictures of Thomas Nashe. This type of comment is, however, an extremely rare occurrence. The translators/scribes may condemn the cynicism of Machiavelli's political proposal, but this reaction is by no means the only or even the predominant one; more often, he is simply interrogated as a repository of historical exempla or a collector of political maxims. The Machiavelli manuscripts under examination offer instances of all these practices; in some cases, there has been an accretion of marginalia and graffiti due to different readers over time, while other manuscripts appear to be perfectly clean. The same can be observed if we consider early printed copies of the same text: in one of the copies of the *Discorsi* printed in England in 1584, we find a number of graffiti (for instance, on the guardsheet, a note saying, "Quene Ann died at 4 a clocke in the morninge the 2 of. March 1608")<sup>11</sup> which seem to be far less frequent in the case of manuscript translations, though they appear on the guard sheet of the recently discovered translation in Lambeth Palace Library. On the other hand, manucula and other signs of careful reading are often present. But there are also some more curious facts.

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Jason Scott-Warren observes that "in early modern books, names are perhaps the most prominent kinds of graffiti" (366-67), especially as marks of ownership, an observation that tallies with contemporary practice and is further supported by the higher financial value printed books had in the sixteenth century. Yet here, the Machiavelli manuscripts offer the first surprise: names are conspicuous by their absence, especially as marks of ownership. An exception appears to be the only known Scottish translation of *The Prince*, made by William Fowler; this is a lucky case in which we know the name and something of the personality of the translator/scribe, and we also know that the extant manuscript is Fowler's own working copy. However, although the manuscript is undoubtedly in Fowler's hand, the hand that has inserted his name at the beginning of the translation is not the same (Stenson 34-35). Normally William Fowler loved inserting his own name or initials even in ephemeral pieces of the greatest brevity, destined to remain among his own papers



and not to circulate. In this case, however, even he prefers anonymity.

In the case of other manuscripts, we observe a different phenomenon. As Scott-Warren has noted, “there are many aspects of the marking up of the early modern book that do not make much sense unless we learn to think of it as a quasi-public environment” (375). This is particularly true of liminal spaces (guard sheets, frontispiece, colophon), which precede or follow the text itself, enclosing it and marking the boundary between inside and outside. Keen note-scribblers such as Gabriel Harvey might use the title page as a space for lengthy annotations, even for “a proto-review of the book in hand” (Scott-Warren 376): in such instances, an experienced reader such as Harvey is offering the next reader an introductory, even warning, paratext. In this area one finds, for example, caveats, when the book may appear to be controversial, which is exactly the case with the Machiavelli manuscripts, especially as concerns the group I have called translations A and B; this group shows signs of greatest circulation and reading. In London, British Library, MS Harley 967 (probably the earliest

**260** witnesses of Translation A), for instance, we read:

N.M. politia nefaria. To know to abhorr this Politique! maie read Th'ideal ground of his impieties; But not to practise his damned policies! for that, to Auern, doth down the brod waie lead. (fol. 1r)

On the verso of the same page, we read:

The Prince of Nicholas Machiauel citizen, and secretarie of Florence, dedicated to the noble Prince Laurence, sonn of Peter de Medicis. Whoe telle, and teacheth, what kinges doe in states, But dreames not, Hell is for such potentates. CSM. Translated out of Italian into English.

It is evident in this case that the translator or copyist is keeping a distance from the contents while exonerating Machiavelli of direct responsibility. At the end of the translation, but in a different hand, is written: “Nay, they are cannibals, whose policie Abhorrs the prime ideal integritie” (fol. 60r).

The paratext protects the boundaries between reader and text, and warns the former of the potential danger of the latter. This is the same manuscript in which we find the marginal comment “Diabolus loquitur” (fol. 37v). A similar attitude may be found in the two manuscripts containing translation B. A page at the end of the translation presents the full title of the work and a motto:

The Prince of Nicholas Machiauel Citizen & Secretarie of florence. Dedicated to the Noble Prince Lawrence sonne of Peter de Medices. Translated out of Italian into English wellcome to me in measure and in meane / to much is naught. yet doe not leaue me cleane. A:P:K:<sup>12</sup>

But the most important example comes from Cambridge (MA), Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Eng. 1014: at the end of the translation, on fol. 50v (a leaf originally left blank at the end of the manuscript) we read:

This booke not only discovers the knowledge of much euill, but also the shortest and

most effectuall waies to perpetrate the same. Here is shewed that we should not with a rude heate or naturall instinct or by other example but artificially as it were only for a further end follow ether vertue or vice, making noe difference but by the profit we may receiue when we haue occasion to vse them. the Author teacheth what men doe and not what they ought to doe. this Machiuele expresseth of himselfe in the 5th of his Florentine history where he thus writeth SS in declaring things haped in this bad world, we shall not set downe the vertue of any Captaine the Courage of any Souldier or the loue of any Citicen towards his Country yet you shall see what cunning aid all (?) princes and great men haue vsed to mayntayne the reputation they did not deserve which will perchance prooue no lesse worthy to be known then those of antient tyme and albeite the actions of our moderne princes are not to be admired for their vertue and greatnes yet for other qualities they are with noe lesse admiration considered seeing so many noble mynds were by so few and corrupt kept vnder and in awe. (Machiavelli, *Machiavelli's The Prince* 177)

This passage, in a different hand from the one responsible for the main text, throws light on a possible Elizabethan reading of the *Principe*. Though alluding to the traditional interpretation of Machiavelli as the bogus demon of popular imagination (“much euill” in the opening sentence is obviously a pun on the writer’s name), it offers an interpretation of the treatise as a realistic analysis of the behavior of rulers, showing an acquaintance with another important work by Machiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine*, published in an English translation in 1595.

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We find a completely different situation in two other manuscripts, corresponding to translations C and E. In this case the opening and closing pages tell us little, since they have been cut in the case of C, and filled with later and unrelated graffiti in E. But the texts, in both cases clearly and neatly set out, are in both cases accompanied by a set of notations, almost always in the same hand that pens the main text, that reveal an analogous attitude. In the case of Oxford, Queen’s College, MS 251 (translation C), actual marginalia are reduced to a minimum: on fol. 19, the word *Tuscan*e accompanies and explains the *Hetruria* appearing in the translation (ch. VII); fol. 20 has a chunky maniculum highlighting the sentence “For hee that immagins, that in great estates, new benefitts, will putt owt of remembrance, owld wronges: deceaues him selfe” (ch. VII); on fol. 28 a tiny trefoil, in a different ink, is set next to the sentence “Thos kinde of Princes often stand in Danger, who seeke to leape from a Ciuile gouernement vnto an Absolute” (ch. IX). These signs are too sparse to bear systematic interpretation, yet they all point at the desire to instill in the reader principles of good government.<sup>13</sup> An incomplete list on fol. 97, written in the same hand as most of the translation, including names and key concepts, is more interesting. The latter are listed here:

- Assotiat with the needli 76.<sup>14</sup>
- Auxiliari forces dangerous .39.
- Benefitts how to bestow .25.
- Changes in gouernemente dangerous. 28
- Diuisiun keeps subiectes in obedience \_\_\_\_\_ 70.
- Discontented persons which at first seldom ... 71.

Feared better than loued .51.  
 French withowt Swiz little worthe 42.  
 Frugal princes greatest 48.  
 Hatred ruins prince 72.  
 He that contemnes his owne life is ... of an other when see well 65  
 Kingdoms best put by they owne forse 42.  
 Lodowicks errors .7.  
 Newtraliti dangerous 75  
 Officers well chosen and often with the princes 77.  
 Parliaments good for princes 60.  
 Princes art is warr 43.  
 Promises by princes not cast to bee kepte 53  
 Princes nuly risen must maintayne armes \_\_\_\_ 69. (Petrina, "A Treatise")

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The list proposes a reading of the text guided by its main topics: as in the case of the summary present in Harley 966, one may treat the *Prince* as a treatise in abstract political principles, ignoring the many excursus into ancient history or contemporary events. The key topics do not include some issues that are now fundamental to our understanding of Machiavelli, such as his exhortation to successful rulers that they should at least seem to be religious (ch. XVIII), or his warning that a successful invader should kill not only the defeated previous ruler but also his family (ch. IV). The *Prince* appears here as a more traditional "*Fürstenspiegel*," or mirror for princes, and some of the most incendiary statements are, if not eliminated, made less relevant. The list of topics might also have been planned as part of a project for a set of marginalia—a case of preparing the manuscript, perhaps for scholarly reading or for scholarly excerpting. The practice of humanist excerpting seems well established in some of the manuscripts examined here, and it may offer some useful pointers towards the study of cognitive practices; as Lorraine Daston suggests, this form of excerpting tells us much about "economies of attention, arts of memory, the solidification and erosion of belief" (444).

In translation E (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS Sion L40.2/E2), marginalia, in the same hand as the main text throughout, are reasonably frequent and carefully organized; most of them consist of the word "Nota," and there is an occasional underlining of a word. Sometimes the marginal note repeats a name mentioned in the text (this is the case for "Alex: 6;," Pope Alexander Borgia, and "Julius," Pope Julius II, on p. 106); sometimes the reference is to a key concept, as on page 16, in which the marginal note, reading "feauer Hectica," repeats the topic discussed on the page. As well, on p. 17, the layout and use of "Nota" in the margins reinforce the overall strategy; in this passage, in Chapter 3, Machiavelli introduces a general consideration:

Né piacque mai loro quello che è tutto di in bocca de' savi de' nostri tempi, di godere il beneficio del tempo, ma sì bene quello della virtù e prudenza loro: perché il tempo si caccia innanzi ogni cosa e può condurre seco bene come male e male come bene. (Machiavelli, *Principe* 2013, 19-20)<sup>15</sup>

The translator highlights, through the use of clearer handwriting, the idea of enjoy-

ing the benefit of time:

THAT WEE OUGHT TO ENJOY THE COMMODITIE OF THE TYME AS IT HAPENETH did  
not please them: butt contrarily they followed a sentence formyng from their owne  
wisdom and virtue that TYME CARRIETH ALL THINGS WITH YT & MAY AS WELL BRING  
WITH YT GOOD AS EUELL & EUELL AS GOOD. (n.p.)

Next to “THAT WE OUGHT,” we have the marginal note with “*Nota.*” Evidently, here as elsewhere, the translator, or the scribe, is highlighting *sententiae* for the readers’ use. Such a use, both as concerns names and keywords, highlights that marginalia are inserted, by the same scribe who pens the text, as a tool for reading: the suggested use of the text is scanning rather than intensive reading. We have here an instance of the work of a professional reader: what Jardine and Grafton call “the scholar, retained to ‘read’ with his employer and his employer’s associates” (Jardine and Grafton 34; see also Hadfield 17), described in early modern texts as “gatherer” and by modern scholarship as “facilitator” (Jardine and Grafton 35). This practice finds some correspondence in early printed editions: for instance, the 1571 Gohory editions of the *Discorsi* and the *Prince* have printed marginal notes drawing the reader’s attention to the person, or place, or topic (sometimes in French and sometimes in Latin), being discussed in that particular passage; at the end of the *Discorsi* (not of the *Prince*), there is a “Table des choses singulieres continues es [*sic*] trois Liures de Discours de Nic. Macchiauel,” very similar to what can be found in the Queen’s College manuscript. This practice, however, is by no means the norm, as other editions, such as Giunta or Wolfe, present no such features.

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What the examples discussed here show is a very clear strategy on the part of the scribe, underlying a specific conception of reading: this text, often extremely elliptical in its brevity, is transformed into an almost scientific manual for good government to which one might recur for one or the other *sententia* or exemplum. Caveats and warnings of a political or moralistic nature are placed at the beginning or end of the text, as to warn the reader coming from outside, as it were, while inside the text one tends to find more guidelines on how to use this. By translating, transcribing, copying, and annotating, these scribes/translators prepare a reader-friendly version of the text, and point out for us a number of early modern readers’ expectations. Machiavelli is no longer a frightening Satanic writer, but an author who writes of politics with the dispassionate attention of a scientist.

The categories of marginalia proposed at the beginning of this paper may suggest that texts are unaware of their marginalia, or that marginalia spring up freely and randomly. The examination proposed here gives rise to a different observation. Sometimes marginalia appear to be part of the general plan, so that the layout of the main text is not only set to accommodate them, but also to highlight them. Text and marginalia help each other in presenting the reader with a well-defined reading experience. This seems to be especially true in the case of manuscripts as opposed to printed books, especially since, in preparing a manuscript, a scribe can usefully

and easily build his own marginalia. For us, marginalia are a very personal matter: we write on books so as to have notes that will be useful for ourselves alone; but the early modern reading experience may often involve a community of more than one. In the age of printing, books are provided with their own paratexts and marginalia; it appears in our case that this creates a closure, as printed marginalia are fixed, and contrast with the freedom of manuscript marginalia. The practice of printed texts generates a need for paratexts, and the proliferation of explanatory or indexing marginalia that closely mirror printing practice. In the passage from manuscript to print, marginalia become part of a set of prepared tools for the interpretation of the text. As such, they have the function of indexing or offering a reference, a keyword to anchor a specific passage to a specific meaning. Conversely, they are sometimes transformed into the footnote as *glossa*.

264 In December 1513, Machiavelli, then in exile, is completing his *Prince* and coming to terms with his life in the rustic countryside. In a famous letter to the Florentine ambassador Francesco Vettori, he describes his day, wasted in a thousand domestic occupations, and then adds:

Venuta la sera, mi ritorno in casa ed entro nel mio scrittoio; e in su l'uscio mi spoglio quella veste cotidiana, piena di fango e di loto, e mi metto panni reali e curiali; e rivestito condecientemente, entro nelle antique corti delli antiqui huomini, dove, da loro ricevuto amorevolmente, mi pasco di quel cibo, che solum è mio, e che io nacqui per lui; dove io non mi vergogno parlare con loro e domandarli della ragione delle loro azioni; e quelli per loro humanità mi rispondono; e non sento per quattro ore di tempo alcuna noia: sdimentico ogni affanno, non temo la povertà, non mi sbigottisce la morte: tutto mi transferisco in loro.

E, perché Dante dice che non fa scienza senza lo ritenere lo avere inteso, io ho notato quello di che per la loro conversazione ho fatto capitale, e composto uno opuscolo De principatibus; dove io mi profondo quanto io posso nelle cogitazioni di questo subietto, disputando che cosa è principato, di quale spezie sono, come e' si acquistono, come e' si mantengono, perché e' si perdono. (Machiavelli, *Principe* 1971, 29-30)<sup>16</sup>

The *Prince* was thus conceived as the result of an intellectual conversation with the great minds of the past. It is appropriate that later readers of this work would continue this conversation, appropriating the space of the page.

## NOTES

1. "My song, begun from you, will end with you; accept this poem I have undertaken following your advice, and let the ivy be entwined with the winner's laurels." All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
2. "The laurel belongs to Caesars and victors, the ivy to poets."
3. "the laurel too. See Statius in the first *Achilleis*: you for whom the laurel, the honor of poets and captains, flourishes doubly." Both passages are quoted in Wilkins 161. The Statius reference is to *Achilleis* I. 15-16. See also Petrina, "With His Penne" 164-65.

4. “But since authority has a wax nose, that is to say, it can be bent into taking on different meanings, it needs to be reinforced by good reasons” (Alanus ab Insulis 333 A).
5. “The use of the book, not its reading makes you wise.”
6. The poem is also analyzed in Cormack and Mazzio: for Whitney, reading, one of the elements of book use, “means rereading, a laborious process in which one ‘dailie turnes, and gazeth on the same” (2). On the other hand, use “is positioned as the foundation of practice and experience, but also, more surprisingly, of memory and knowledge itself [...] reading by itself is so far from leading to wisdom as to be ineffectual even for remembering the words on the page” (2). Stephen Orgel has drawn our attention to the distinction between reading as use and reading as pleasure, suggesting that the early modern experience of reading may be as diverse, fragmented, and flexible as contemporary practices (4 and *passim*).
7. A paper manuscript in quarto, written by a slight but neat hand, AD 1591, owned by Henry Mordaunt, eldest son of Ludovick, Baron of Turvey, also father of John Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough. In this codex are contained: 1. A political treatise on the government of the state; 2. A general description of the times; 3. Political and rhetorical precepts.
8. I have drawn these details from Victor Stater’s biography of Henry Mordaunt, second Earl of Peterborough, this Henry’s grandson.
9. This list updates and corrects Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles* 51.
10. London, British Library, MS Harley 967, fol. 37v.
11. Machiavelli, *I Discorsi di Nicolo Machiavelli* 1584. The copy analyzed in this instance is in London, British Library, catalogue number 587.b.9(2). Queen Anne of Denmark died in 1619, which makes this note rather puzzling.
12. London, British Library, MS Harley 364.xx, fol. 108r. The translation is also present in British Library, MS Harley 2292; in this case, the same passage appears before the translation, on fol. 2r.
13. A useful comparison, in this context, may be instituted with the annotations Gabriel Harvey made to his copies of Livy’s *Histories* and of Machiavelli’s *Art of War*: both volumes are available at [www.annotatedbooksonline.com/](http://www.annotatedbooksonline.com/). On Harvey’s annotations, see Jardine and Grafton.
14. Unlike what is noted in Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles* 254, the word *needli* should not be interpreted as *poor*. Fol. 76 contains the passage in chapter XXI in which Machiavelli discusses the necessity of forging alliances with powerful states.
15. “Moreover, the Romans never accepted a maxim heard every day on the lips of our sages, to seek a benefit from temporizing. They preferred to enjoy the benefits that derived from their own strength and prudence; because time brings all things with it, and can produce benefits as well as evils, evils as well as benefits” (Machiavelli, *Prince* 1988, 11).
16. “When evening comes, I return home and enter my study; on the threshold I take off my workday clothes, covered with mud and dirt, and put on the garments of court and palace. Fitted out appropriately, I step inside the venerable courts of the ancients, where, solicitously received by them, I nourish myself on that food that *alone* is mine and for which I was born; where I am unashamed to converse with them and to question them about the motives for their actions, and they, out of their human kindness, answer me. And for four hours at a time I feel no boredom, I forget all my troubles, I do not dread poverty, and I am not terrified by death. I absorb myself into them completely. And because Dante says that no one understands anything unless he retains what he has understood, I have jotted down what I have profited from in their conversation and composed a short study, *De principatibus*, in which I delve as deeply as I can into the ideas concerning this topic, discussing the definition of a principedom, the categories of principedoms, how they are acquired, how they are retained, and why they are lost” (Machiavelli, *Correspondence* 264).

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