

“Free, equal lords of the triumphed world”

Cornelius Tacitus and George Buchanan in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*

Amira Aloui

University of Szeged, Hungary

Abstract: The argument of this paper is centred on early modern Tacitism and emergent political theory in Ben Jonson's England and his play *Sejanus His Fall*. Early modern political theory displayed a shift from a Christian humanist framework to what has been termed as Tacitean politics. In this paper, I will be discussing how Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* comments on current political affairs via contemporary Tacitism and particularly George Buchanan's political theory, especially his oeuvre *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*. Jonsonian scholarship has successfully discussed Ben Jonson's sources and focused mainly on the famous Flemish influence of Justus Lipsius's Tacitism but has overlooked George Buchanan's thought and his importance in the drama of Ben Jonson and his play *Sejanus His Fall*.

Key words: Sejanus, Tacitism, Buchanan, political philosophy, early modern politics, James I

The argument of this paper is centred on early modern Tacitism and emergent political theory in Ben Jonson's England and his play *Sejanus His Fall*. Early modern political theory displayed a shift from a Christian humanist framework to what later came to be known as Tacitean politics. Tacitean politics, being part of a changing political landscape, broke with the traditional political framework that relied mostly on a Ciceronian/Aristotelean paradigm along with a Christian background. Therefore, in what follows, I will be discussing how Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* comments on current political affairs via contemporary Tacitism and particularly George Buchanan's political theory, especially his oeuvre *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*.¹ My primary goal in this paper is to address the centrality of George Buchanan to Ben Jonson's reading of Jacobean politics—that has been dismissed. Jonsonian scholarship has successfully discussed Ben Jonson's sources and focused mainly on the famous Flemish influence of Justus Lipsius's Tacitism. The radical theories of George Buchanan have been overlooked. All the scholarly attention has been

¹ It is worth noting at the start of the paper that George Buchanan has been classified as one of the most radical political theorists of his time, especially in light of the political convulsion taking place in Scotland and England. His name came to be associated mostly with notions of Tyrannicide and regicide after his rebellion against Mary Queen of Scots. His political theory, however, was a popular one, calling for equity and justice, popular sovereignty. His theory came as a reaction to the permanent contemporary call for obeying tyrants and not rebelling against at any cost—including theorists like the Italian Francesco Guicciardini and the French Jean Bodin, who relied on the works of Cornelius Tacitus and fashioned themselves as Tacitists.

paid to the Flemish source of Ben Jonson's plays, *viz.* Justus Lipsius. Therefore, in this paper, I will be discussing the Scottish source of Ben Jonson's play and his importance in the understanding of his texts.

The political thought of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century continental Europe displayed an unprecedented revival of classical theories of the state, and particularly Greco-Roman political philosophies. The revival of classics was not merely part of the Renaissance project that sought to bring back the spectres of the ancients, or part of an antiquarian quest or an appreciation of ancient history. Rather, or most probably, a stifling dissatisfaction with the contemporary political affairs brought back the ghosts of the ancients including *inter alia* Cornelius Tacitus, Cicero, Seneca, and Livy.

Ancient philosophies started filtering through early modern political theories. History of the state, the city republics, and 'Roman monarchy' became familiar to contemporaries, students, courtiers, political philosophers, and commoners alike. Translations of ancient texts to different languages and the different editions provided an outline of their importance to contemporaries.² Political philosophy was the subject of contemporary drama as I will be showing later in this paper.

An extensive body of political literature negotiating contemporary politics started to emerge. Elizabethan *fin-de-siècle* and early Jacobean political theory departed from the earlier humanist Christian tradition that initially relied on the works and translations of Cicero. Cornelius Tacitus became the protagonist of early modern political philosophy, and hence the emergence of early modern Tacitism. Before the rise of Tacitism, the works of Cicero were the main guides of princes and political theorists. Ciceronian politics is chiefly based on equity and the rule of law. Ciceronian political theory, in this regard, is based on the notion of natural law:

As Cicero has taught us... law is the rational norm of human life. Though we say that law is a human creation, in fact true law comes from nature and as such its origin is ultimately divine. No human law can be called a true law if it violates the highest norm of equity, which is *the precept of eternal reason*. The task of political reason is that of introducing measure, proportion and justice into the human world - a task accomplished through law, which is the arrangement and the rule of political reason (*poliricae rationis institutio atque preceptio*). (Origins, Viroli 5)

Politics was, then, understood as the art of *preserving* the state without eclipsing the pursuit of virtues, justice, and equity. The Ciceronian tradition, or in other

² See Peter Burke's article "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State" where he talks about Tacitus and his importance: "The statistics of editions, translations, and commentaries provide a mere outline of his influence" (488). Andras Kiséry, also, comments, in *Hamlet's Moment*, on how politics and the political shift to Tacitism, to which reason of state is a central concept, became discussed not only in courts and private spheres, rather, it became a topic of discussion to nobles and commoners alike, signalling a transition in the understanding and practice of politics *per se*. Everyone became involved "in the culture of news, as a setting for an often raucous and scandalous discussion of the secrets of politics, of the reason of state" (13) in 'coffeehouses' and taverns.

words, the Christian humanist discourse can be merely defined as ‘ruling’ or governing “*selon raison et selon justice*.”³ It relies on a repertoire of maxims that ensure liberty and freedom of the subjects, as they have always been in the city republics. The rise of Tacitism, however, marked a shift from the Ciceronian traditional framework that started waning with the earlier Elizabethan republicanism and ended with Jacobean politics.

The transition from the Christian humanist discourse of politics to Tacitism can be read as an articulation of responses to the question of the contemporary context. In the age of absolute monarchs, Tacitism as an alternative to the Ciceronian traditional framework becomes, in fact, urgent and essential.⁴

Tacitism and Early Modern Political Thought

Early modern Tacitism does not merely refer to the works of Cornelius Tacitus. The majority of early modern political body of literature that emerged on how to rule and how to preserve a state can be grouped under the rubric term or concept Tacitism, or rather described as Tacitean. Early modern political thought, in the light of contemporary absolutism and monarchy, turned to the Tacitean alternative. Similarly, to early modern Tacitists, Tacitus’ writings are initially hard to classify:

The political opinions of Cornelius Tacitus are not easy to discern. As the greatest modern authority has remarked, ‘Tacitus gives little away’... His ironic manner reveals a contempt for flattery and other forms of servility and also a certain impatience with theory but leaves ambiguous his attitude to the Roman monarchy. Although he obviously disliked what went with it, Tacitus may well have regarded the institution as the lesser evil. As a result of his ambiguity he could be claimed as an ally by both the opponents and the supporters of monarchy in early modern Europe, the ‘red’ and the ‘black’ Tacitists, as they were called in an essay published in Italy not long after the First World War. (Burke 484)

Although many early modern theorists use Tacitean philosophy as a defence of authority, including Francesco Guicciardini or Jean Bodin, Tacitus’ theory was mainly used as an anti-absolutism argument, particularly onstage as I will be showing later. Francesco Guicciardini argues, or rather advises⁵ in his *Maxims and Reflections*: “If You want to know what the thoughts of tyrants are, read in Cornelius Tacitus the last conversations of the dying Augustus with Tiberius” and

³ Proverbial reference to ruling or governing *according to reason and justice*.

⁴ See Richard Tuck’s *Government and Philosophy* (1993). In “The Beginnings of Tacitism,” Tuck introduces the revival of Tacitism in early modern Europe (39). In fact, in the general continental context of tyranny and absolutism and English context with the fear and anxiety from the rule of James I, Ciceronian politics are no longer adequate. Reviving the works of Tacitus in this context become understanding and emergent. Drama has appropriated these topics and has equally become a topic of studying early modern political thought.

⁵ The generic term *advice for rulers* or *mirror for princes* (also the German *Furstenpiegel*) refers to books written and collected to rulers as ‘guidebooks’ on how to rule. See Herbert Grabes’ *The mutable glass: mirror-imagery in titles and texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance* (1982).

that Tacitus "teaches those who live under tyrants how to live and act prudently; just as he teaches tyrants ways to secure their tyranny" (44; 45). Other theorists, however, rejected it all at once and considered Tacitism as a political degeneration, as did Botero:

Among the things that I have observed, I have been greatly astonished to find reason of state a constant subject of discussion and to hear the opinions of Niccolò Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted: the former for his precepts relating to the rule and governments of peoples, the latter for his live description of the arts employed by the Emperor Tiberius in acquiring and retaining the imperial title of Rome... I was amazed that so impious an author and so wicked a tyrant should be held in such esteem that they are thought to provide ideal examples of the methods by which states be governed and administered; and I was moved to indignation rather amazement to find that this barbarous mode of government had won such acceptance. (Botero xiii)

In addition to the moderate voice of the Italian Giovanni Botero, master of *Raison d'État*,⁶ other theorists went more radical in spelling out the *vox populi*, including most importantly George Buchanan, who contrary to Tacitists, called for rebellion to the extent of tyrannicide, as I will be showing later in this paper. George Buchanan invested in the stage as well and wrote Tacitean plays including *Jephtes* and *Baptistes*. Buchanan's theories were, also, negotiated onstage as I will be showing in this paper.

In this regard, all these political views were articulated and negotiated onstage. Early modern plays brought to the stage figures like Tiberius, Sejanus, Caligula, Caesar, Nero, and the world's most famous tyrants.⁷ The text under

⁶ *Raison d'État* or Reason of State can be defined as *the preservation of the state*. Political philosophers writing on the theory include Niccolò Machiavelli, Justus Lipsius, Francesco Guicciardini, Jean Bodin, and George Buchanan. However, they did not write on Reason of State *ex nihilo*. They relied on writings of classical authors including mainly Cornelius Tacitus, inspiring, hence, the rise of early modern Tacitism. Reason of state can be defined as the means rulers employ so as to preserve the state, to put it in a very neutral way. The state, in this regard, becomes the highest of all goods.

For a thorough understanding of the concept the following texts can be checked: Ernest H. Kantorowicz's "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Mediaeval Origins," Peter Burke's "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State," Yves Charles Zarka's *Raison et déraison d'État : Théoriciens et théories de la Raison d'État aux xvi^e et xvii^e siècles*, Maurizio Viroli's *From Politics to Reason of State: the Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250-1600*, Richard Tuck's *Philosophy and Government*, and many others. The following volumes can, also, be checked : Botero's *Della Ragion di Stato* (1589), Machiavelli (*The Prince* 1532), Francesco Guicciardini (*Ricordi* 1530), Jean Bodin (*Six Books of the Commonwealth* 1576), and Justus Lipsius (*Politica : Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction* 1589).

⁷ Burke talks about the central themes of early modern drama and particularly tragedies by saying that "It was this sense of the political relevance of Tacitus to an age of powerful favourites, absolute monarchs and civil wars which accounts for the growing interest in his writings in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" and that "Both Jonson and Lohenstein acknowledged their debts in their notes, Lohenstein citing Tacitus more than 200 times altogether, while Jonson referred to him 59 times in the notes to the first act of *Sejanus*. It is scarcely an exaggeration to claim that the true subject of these plays is reason of state, a phrase which Jonson was one of the first Englishmen to use" (488).

study, Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*, hereafter *Sejanus*, retells the history of the world's most famous tyrants.

Before moving further, it is necessary to briefly define Tacitism. As mentioned earlier in the paper, Tacitism does not refer to the works of Cornelius Tacitus *per se*, but rather an early modern intellectual fashion. Ferenc Hörcher says:

The term Tacitism does not relate to the historical figure of a Roman author with that name, but refers to an early modern, late humanist intellectual "fashion", which had such a dominant influence, and the name of the concrete author was only used here as a label, as an argument of authority. . . this term referred to that political literature which appeared in the period after the Renaissance, "in which the forbidden name of Machiavelli was replaced by that of Tacitus, who was not at all problemless, but who was regarded acceptable according to contemporary court standards." (196)

Works of Cornelius Tacitus have been translated and widely circulated in early modern continental Europe, paving the way for the new political thought to be shaped. Peter Burke argues, in this regard, that the "interest in Tacitus as a political writer spread rapidly in the later sixteenth century. Between 1580 and 1700, more than 100 authors wrote commentaries on Tacitus, and the majority of these commentaries were political ones" (484).

The emergence of Tacitism can be read as part of the more general political context. Writings on the state became vogueish. The transition to Tacitism marked, also, a departure from the looming moralism of the Ciceronian political discourse. The new body of political literature on the state, ways to rule, and secrets of the state, or rather *arcana imperii*, freed itself from the ethical aspect that used to be dominant in political thought and praxis, to embrace instead new political dogmas including, for instance, the *uso dictum*, constancy, and prudence.

Early modern political theorists did not only rely on the works of the ancients, but rather developed their own early modern political episteme. Early modern drama, tragedies and Histories, in particular, directed their attention to the emerging political thought. It would be scarcely an exaggeration to claim the central theme of the plays, and particularly the play under study, *Sejanus*, is negotiating contemporary political thought. Ben Jonson, an ardent history reader, chooses history's most famous tyrants, and Tacitus' most celebrated tyrants in his *Annals* by contemporaries, as characters for his plays—Tiberius, Nero, Caligula, and Sejanus. Scholarly attention has been mainly paid to Ben Jonson's major sources, *viz.* Tacitus and Justus Lipsius. In the following part, I will be reading the play in the light of George Buchanan's political theory that has been generally dismissed as marginal.

However, I would like to address the importance of Ben Jonson's play in particular. Choosing the most famous character in early modern and Tacitist political thought, Tiberius in particular and Sejanus, Caligula, and Nero, should not go unnoticed.

Tacitism and the Loss of Liberties

The play opens with the Sabinus and Silius mourning the loss of liberties, setting, therefore, the Tacitean tone to the play:

We, that (within these foreshore years) were born
Free, equal lords of the triumphed world,
And knew no masters, but affections,
To which betraying our first liberties,
We since then became slaves to one man's lusts;
And now to many. Every minist'ring spy
That will accuse and swear is lord of you,
Of me, of all, our fortunes, and our lives.
Our looks are called to question, and our words,
How innocent soever, are made crimes;
We shall not shortly dare to tell our dreams,
Or think, but t'will be trason. (I. 1. 59-69)

Sabinus and Silius lament not only the loss of liberties, but also the claustrophobic ambience in court. The play opens with its characters describing the transition from the "lost liberties" in the republic to a present of tyranny, hypocrisy, spies, sycophants, and flatterers. The two characters, therefore, reject the Tacitean narrative that advises against rebellion against tyranny or tyrants and absolutism. Francesco Guicciardini, a Tacitist, also, advises subjects to read Tacitus and to behave in accordance to the tyrant's wishes in his *Ricordi*: "Cornelius Tacitus teaches those who live under tyrants how to live and act prudently; just as he teaches tyrants ways to secure their tyranny" (45). He adds:

The tyrant will make every effort to discover your views and to know whether you are content with his government. He will observe your movements, he will pump those who talk with you, he will discuss various things with you, proposing questions and asking your opinion. If you want to hide your thoughts, you must guard yourself with great care against the means he uses. You must not use terms that might arouse suspicion; you must watch what you say even to your close friends... If you are a man of rank who lives under a bloody and bestial tyrant, there is little good advice anyone can give you except to go into exile. But if the tyrant behaves decently, either out of prudence or necessity, or because of the circumstances of his position, you should strive to be highly respected and to be thought courageous but of a quiet nature, not anxious to change things unless forced. In that case, the tyrant will treat you gently and try not to give you any cause to think of making innovations. But he would not do that if he thought you were restless. In that case, knowing you would not keep still no matter what he did, he would be forced to look for an occasion to extinguish you. (115-116)

Sabinus and Silius seem to ignore the Tacitean dictum—of prudence and that of not opposing a tyrant. The play, therefore, opens with a political dialogue par excellence that criticizes a contemporary political trend/argument, that of not opposing tyrants and obeying them. The setting is already introduced as stifling and claustrophobic. Characters cannot freely express their political opinions, which aligns with Guicciardini's maxims on how to live under a tyrant. Arruntius, on the other hand, joins them and goes further by blaming himself and the other subjects for submitting to the tyrant's grip:

Times? The men,
 The men are not the same: 'tis we are base,
 Poor, and degenerate from th'exalted strain
 Of our great fathers. Where is now the soul
 Of god-like Cato?—he, that durst be good
 When Caesar durst be evil; and had power,
 As not to live his slave, to die his master. (I. 1. 87-92)

After Sabinus and Silius spell out their dissatisfaction with the current political affairs, Arruntius joins them and action starts to take place. The first act provides its readers/audience with the transition that took place in contemporary political thought, which the characters describe as a *degeneration*; from liberty to slavery; from the republic to the tyranny of one person; from a celebrated political moralism to utility; briefly from a Ciceronian to a Tacitean political framework. Read in its contemporary context, this transition or 'degeneration' can be understood in two ways. The degeneration can first refer to the very similar degeneration that took place in early modern England and continental Europe in general. Similar to the Roman past, early modern politics departed from its earlier traditional Christian framework adopted mainly by the quattrocento humanists to rather submit to a different political reality that necessitated breaking with political moralism and espousing a Tacitean framework. Whether it is a degeneration or a progressive transition is debatable.⁸

Sabinus, Silius, Arruntis, and Cordus, whose *Annals* in reference to Tacitus were burnt,⁹ in this regard, can be read as the voice of contemporaries who were dissatisfied with the current political affairs and regard it as a degeneration. Their opinions reverberate with contemporary ones including Botero who "have been greatly astonished to find... the opinions of Niccolô Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted... and I was moved to indignation rather amazement to find that this barbarous mode of government had won such acceptance" (Botero xiii). However, the characters evoke the more radical views of George Buchanan as I will be showing in the next part.

⁸ See Maurizio Viroli who problematizes the transition in light of the emergent political discourse of reason of state in his article "The Origin and Meaning of Reason of State" by saying: "If we go back to the question that I raised at the outset of this paper, namely why political philosophers constructed and put into use the locution 'ragione di state', we can answer that they did it because they needed a new concept of reason apt to excuse derogations from moral and civil law imposed by the necessity to preserve or expand states understood as dominions... It marked the beginnings of what has been aptly called 'the politics of the moderns' as opposed to 'the politics of the ancients', that is the view that politics is simply the art of pursuing, securing, expanding power, not, as the ancients and their naive humanist followers seemed (or pretended) to believe, the art of founding and preserving a republic. Whether the transition from the former to the latter conception of politics should be regarded as an intellectual progress or as a decay is a highly contested matter, but it cannot be denied that the transition, did indeed take place; and it began when those two words, reason and state were put together" (Viroli 73).

⁹ It can also be a reference to contemporary censorship. Dramatists always used a medium to negotiate contemporary politics, including the setting of the play.

George Buchanan and the Loss of Liberties

The characters' opinion on the current political affairs strongly reverberate with George Buchanan's political theory, particularly in his *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*. Buchanan comments on the legitimacy of the law and the king's power:

B.—The law then is paramount to the king, and serves to direct and moderate his passions and actions.

M.—That is a concession already made.

B.—Is not then the voice of the people and of the law the same?

M.—The same.

B.—Which is the more powerful, the people or the law?

M.—The whole people, I imagine.

B.—Why do you entertain that idea?

M.—Because the people is the parent, or at least the author of the law, and has the power of its enactment or repeal at pleasure. (67-68)

Similarly, Silius comments on the use of law under tyrants as a mere "form" (III. 250).

Ben Jonson starts the play with drawing parallels between the past and the present. Tacitus' portrayals of tyrants appealed to those who opposed James I's absolutism, including Ben Jonson who chooses Tiberius as a central character for his play. A parallel between Tiberius and James I is not surprising. Jacobeans feared the would-be-tyrant James I, and, hence, tyranny has been the subject of early modern theatre. As Peter Burke claims, for a better understanding of early modern politics and political thought, or rather "for the colouring" as he puts, one can turn to the dramas (488). Ben Jonson stages a play of history's most famous tyrant and displays political violence to the contemporary audience. The play shows that tyranny ends up by ending itself. The more violent it is, the more violent the tyrant's end would be. The mob's destruction of Sejanus' statue, despite the horrors that occurred throughout the play, presents a radical voice, similar to that of George Buchanan where he calls for tyrannicide:

Therefore, when you take refuge under the shelter of the obedience supposed to be due to all tyrants, because God, by his prophet, commanded his own people to obey a single tyrant, your ears will immediately ring with an opposite cant, that all tyrants ought to be slain by their own subjects, because Ahab was, by divine command, murdered by the general of his own forces. Therefore I advise you either to provide from Scripture some stronger bulwark for your tyrants, or to set it aside for the present, and to return to the schools of philosophers. (58)

At the start of the play, the characters express their dissatisfaction with the current political affairs as well as the emergent political thought they describe as decadent. The characters, and therefore the play, do allude to a lost republican past. The reference to Cato's death and Brutus throughout the play points to the corruption of present times under James I. Silius' last words before stabbing himself are the following:

The coward and the valiant man must fall;
Only the cause, and manner how, discerns them,
Which then are gladdest, when they cost us dearest.

Romans, if any be here in this Senate,
Would know to mock Tiberius' tyranny,
Look upon Silius, and so learn to die. (I. 334-339)

Silius, a stoic republican, in his imitation of Cato, invites Romans, if there be any, not to succumb to the tyrannies of the time. Before his death, he launches a diatribe on law under tyrants, evoking both the Ciceronian subtext and Buchanan's reflections on the law:

Silius.
What am I? speak.
Varro.
An enemy to the state.
Silius.
Because I am an enemy to thee,
And such corrupted ministers o' the state,
That here art made a present instrument
To gratify it with thine own disgrace. (III.234-237)

And,

I not know
Minion Sejanus hates me: and that all,
This boast of law, and law, is but a form,
A net of Vulcan's filing, a mere engine,
To take that life by a pretext of justice,
Which you pursue in malice. (III. 243-248)

Silius' commentary on the law as a tool used by tyrants only to further preserve their rule reverberates with Buchanan's criticism of the law. Ben Jonson, through Silius, almost quotes Buchanan verbatim when he depicts the law as "mere cobwebs, which entangle flies, and leave a free passage to large insects" (72). His death evokes a stoic subtext. Silius is portrayed as a noble Roman who accepts his verdict. His last words are a criticism of Tacitism and Tacitean politics that seek only the preservation of the state, tyranny, or one's rule at the expense of its subjects and their freedom. The law in such cases becomes a tool for tyranny. In voicing the theories of George Buchanan, both Silius and the play offer a reading of the law and its use in contemporary politics and contemporary political thought.

Early modern political philosophy pervades the play, particularly the radical theories opposing tyranny and corruption. In this paper, I have mainly addressed Ben Jonson's Scottish source that has been dismissed in Jonsonian scholarship. George Buchanan's political theories are key in reading the play in its Jacobean context. Silius, Sabinus, and Arruntius voice the more radical Tacitean theories spelled out by Buchanan. Their thoughts and acts are the driving force in the play, as they lead to the rebellion against the tyranny of Sejanus and, by way of a political allegory, that of James I.

Works Cited

Bodin, Jean. *Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Translated by J. M. Tooley, Basil Blackwell Oxford, 2000 (?).

- Botero, Giovanni. *The Reason of State*. Translated by Robert Bireley, Cambridge U P, 2007.
- Buchanan, George. *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos; A Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland*. Translated by Robert Macfarlan, Colorado: Portage Publications, 2016.
- Burke, Peter. "Tacitism, Scepticism, and Reason of State." *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700*, edited by J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie, 477-498. Cambridge U P.
- Grabes, Herbert. *The Mutable Glass: Mirror-imagery in Titles and Texts of the Middle Ages and English Renaissance*. Cambridge U P, 1982.
- Guicciardini, Francesco. *The Maxims of Francesco Guicciardini*. Translated by Emma Martin, Forgotten Books, 2016.
- Hörcher, Ferenc. "The renaissance of political realism in Early Modern Europe: Giovanni Botero and the discourse of 'Reason of State'". *Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa*, no.9: 187-210.
<https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/handle/item/151311>.
- Jonson, Ben. *Sejanus His Fall*. Manchester U P, 1990.
- Kantorowicz, Ernest H. "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and Its Late Mediaeval Origins." *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Jan. 1955), pp. 65-91. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1508452>.
- Kiséry, Andras. *Hamlet's Moment: Drama and Political Knowledge in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Lipsius, Justus. *Politica: Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*. Translated by Jan Waszink, Royal Van Gorcum, 2004.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Translated by George Bull, Penguin Books, 2003.
- Maurizo, Violi. *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition and Transformation of the Language of Politics 1250-1600*. Cambridge U P, 1992.
- . "The Origin and Meaning of Reason of State." *History of Concepts*: 67-73. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kdhv.9>.
- Skinner, Quentin. *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. Cambridge U P, 1978.
- Tuck, Richard. *Philosophy and Government 1572-1651*. Cambridge U P, 1993.
- Zarka, Yves Charles. *Raison et déraison d'État : Théoriciens et théories de la Raison d'État aux xvi^e et xvii^e siècles*. Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.