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

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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 mat-
ter, 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 coun-
selor Thomas Wilson (1523/24–1581)—embarked on a tour of the contin-
ent, as prelude to an eventual career in the service of the Stuart kings.4
During his European travels, he passed time translating Jorge de Monte-
mayor’s midcentury Spanish prose romance Diana, “to keepe [his] English,
in iourneying with the vnpleasing proccaccios of Italy or the clumps Wag-
nors 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
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
.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29688. For The State of England see The National Archives (here-
after TNA), SP 12/280; it was first published as Thomas Wilson, “The State of England Anno

5. British Library (hereafter BL). Additional MS 18638, fol. 3. When transcribing manu-
scripts throughout, I have silently expanded abbreviations. A procaccio is a carrier of goods; see
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 Universi-
ties studies, I shold bestow soe many ydle howres, in transplanting vaine
amorous conceipts 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 Eliz-
abehan court. He prepared a manuscript of his translation for Henry
Wriothesley, “the Erle of Southampton,” who was at the time “vppon the
Spanish voyiage 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 ingratiates 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 theire 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

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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 Southam-
ton (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968); Park Honan, “Wriothesley, Henry, third earl of Southam-
Hammer, Polarisation; Alexandra Gajda, The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Political Cul-
ture (Oxford University Press, 2012); Janet Dickinson, Court Politics and the Earl of Essex, 1589–1601
Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester University Press, 2013).
10. BL. Additional MS 18638, fol. 2.
significance to Essex and his followers. For it is Montemayor’s pastoralism, Wilson reminds them, that directly inspired “that admirable & never enough praised booke of Sir Philip Sidneys 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. 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. (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 Young 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.) Through-out 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 unpleased 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. But this is only part of the

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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.”

Some two decades after offering his translation to Southampton, Wilson was as shrewd with this second dedication as he was with the first. Sir Fulke Greville, created Baron Brooke in 1621, had a variously fortuned 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. (In fact, Wilson’s dedication is one of the key pieces of independent evidence that establishes Greville’s editorial role.)

Just as Wilson’s first inscription engaged the Essex circle’s reverence for Sidney, his reimagined 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, whoe 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.

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

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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.


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 suite to Apollo as his beloved childe ren of Pernassus did to him to recover the lost bookes of Cornelius Tacitus. And I hope to haue a better answere from him then they had, whoe looking for grace & thanks for making that motion to recover the workes of that Father of humaine Prudence, and Inventor of moderne policie, in stead therof were answereed 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 Greeuil” mutually mourned “Sweete Sydne, fairest shepheard of our greene”; see George Peele, Polyhymnia describing, the honourable triumph at tylt, before her Maiestie, on the 17 of November (London, 1590), A2, A4v.
frowning countenance that they were ignorant men to make such a request, as though from that which was left of his writting, 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 sempre tacciuto [that Tacitus had always been silent].

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. 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. 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


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.


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 accìo 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). 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.

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.” For this crime, the injured princes request that Tacitus “for euer be expelled the society and conversation 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. 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 wisdome, the Oracle of perfect reason of State, the absolute Master of Politicians.” 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.”

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

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36. Boccalini, The New-found Politiche (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 tears bewailed the disastrous losse of the *Annales* and Histories of *Cornelius Tacitus*; the father of humane wisdome, and true inuentor of modern Policie”—implore Apollo to “repaire the damages, which the injury 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.”

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 vgy monsters of Nature committed.  

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

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. 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*. 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.  
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 “chiepest 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 “thantcs for the booke of Ragguagli you sent me,” while a year earlier Boccalini had praised Tacitus in a dispatch “Al re d’Inghliterra, 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

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.”


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).

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). 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 tymne 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 Vaughn.

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

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 towards Sir John Vaughns howse.” It was thus at “Sir John Vaughns 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.” 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 anie 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 Raggiagli 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

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60. CP 83/97.
61. CP 181/129; TNA, PC 2/26, 159–60; CP 181/129.
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.