

Chapter One

Introduction

When it comes to the two parts of *Henry IV*, the witty Falstaff and his irresistible humor are always the first things that spring to the reader's mind. Too, when it comes to the sequential *Henry V*, what the reader will recall at once is possibly the young King Henry V's remarkable achievement in the Battle of Agincourt and his romance with Princess Catherine. It is true that the hilarious tavern scenes are always the selling points of the two parts of *Henry IV*; such a mingling of the high and the low classes not only makes the history plays as enjoyable as comedies but also presents the vitality of Tudor society. It is also true that Henry V's military success in *Henry V* indeed satisfies Englishmen's national pride, echoing the summit of glory in the Elizabethan era. Nevertheless, while these plays surely bring the audience a great entertainment mainly for the joyful scenes in the two parts of *Henry IV* and the heroic plots in *Henry V*, they also contain some complex topics worthy of further investigations. One of these topics is power construction. Through the portrayal of Prince Hal/Henry V in the three plays, Shakespeare seems trying to consider the question about how a monarch's power is constructed, practiced, and eventually accepted; such a question is also what this thesis aims to explore. In this introductory chapter, I will map out what I will inspect in the following three chapters, briefly mentioning which methodology and which critics' studies that I will apply to my (re)reading of the three history plays as well as to other relative texts.

In many earlier readings analyzing power construction in the two parts of *Henry IV* and in *Henry V*, the three plays tend to be read in the light of Machiavellism or of Machiavelli's political theory. For instance, in his influential essay, "Invisible Bullets," Stephen Greenblatt suggests that "the Henry plays confirm the Machiavellian hypothesis that princely power originates in force and fraud even as they draw their audience toward an acceptance of the power" (65). Moreover, for many scholars, Prince Hal/Henry V can also be perceived as Shakespeare's depiction of the so-called "Machiavellian prince." According to Graham Holderness, for instance, in order to maintain

well his political authority and dominate society, King Henry V “must display the resolute authority of a strong monarch, the conciliatory diplomacy of a feudal king, the Machiavellian subtlety of a successful prince, and the martial heroism of a noble warrior” (102). In Greenblatt, as in Holderness, one can see that, Shakespeare is highly influenced by Machiavelli. No direct evidence showing that Shakespeare might have read Machiavelli; nevertheless, from some thematic resemblances between the playwright’s history plays and the political thinker’s treatises, one can infer that Shakespeare might have acquired some elementary understanding of Machiavelli’s political theory.

Although the connection between Shakespeare’s history plays and Machiavelli’s political theory has already been explored for many years and various interpretations have also been proposed, interestingly, the way many critics read and understand Machiavelli has not changed much. Since the 19th century, Machiavelli’s political thinking has been recognized by more and more scholars and he is thus considered as the father of contemporary political science. Machiavelli’s thought has been accepted and praised in respect to modern politics because the Florentine political thinker (re)defines politics as a practical affair independent of any concern of good and evil. Such a viewpoint indeed frees politics from the restriction of either moral or religious doctrines and further turns the practice of politics into a highly secular yet pragmatic business. That is, Machiavelli’s primary intention in his “political revolution” is to dismiss the church’s control over politics and return it back to the ruler or the prince’s hands. Machiavelli’s redefinition of politics surely is a vital breakthrough in the history of modern politics. Yet, it also seriously violates the Christian doctrines, which have been strictly followed as the only norm in every aspect of the Renaissance everyday life since the medieval period, and greatly shakes Renaissance men’s ideology of the essence of politics.

Certainly, Machiavelli is very subversive in the eyes of Renaissance people, but it is still undetermined nowadays how Machiavelli can be a threat for them. For scholars, such as Irving

Ribner, Felix Raab, and J. G. A. Pocock, the main cause of Machiavelli's subversiveness mainly lies in the ideological conflict between his political theory and traditional Christian doctrines.

Nevertheless, for some others, Victoria Kahn in particular, the Florentine political philosopher's subversiveness may exist somewhere else, say, in his rhetoric. Therefore, in the second chapter of this thesis, I attempt to inspect the debate between the two camps of the scholars, trying to figure out how the division between their readings of Machiavelli is caused. Also, I will further investigate why and how Machiavelli is such a controversial figure in the history. In this chapter, I will use Kahn's revisionary interpretation of Machiavelli—which mainly focuses on the political thinker's rhetorical politics—as the primary approach to my revisiting of *The Prince*. In so doing, I will seek to understand Machiavelli's political philosophy differently from Ribner, Raab, and Pocock.

According to Kahn, Machiavelli is regarded as a dangerous thinker or writer because he provides “a rhetoric of de facto political power—a rhetoric of theatrical violence, sembling and dissembling, whether in the service of the commonwealth (to use a Renaissance term that is not equivalent to our *republic*) or in the interests of the self-aggrandizing tyrant” (237). In other words, Machiavelli tends to reveal a kind of moral indeterminacy in his rhetorical politics when he is conveying his observation or interpretation of the *realpolitik*. In essence, as long as it works, he is perfectly fine with the use of skills such as sophistry and (mis)representation. For him, rhetoric is not only a technique that he uses to illustrate his idea but also a strategy that he employs to manipulate his readers' reception.

Unlike many Renaissance humanists who are apt to perceive rhetoric as a neutral skill of argument subordinated to ethics, Machiavelli is more willing to regard rhetoric as a crucial method of argument that should go beyond the restriction of ethics especially when it is applied to politics. In Kahn's opinion, Machiavelli's eloquence is “not ancillary but central to his understanding of politics” (237), saying that the political philosopher does not simply view rhetoric as a minor role in the exercise of political power. Instead, he believes that rhetoric in fact can be an extension of

political power itself, functioning as a mode of exercising power. Aside from rhetoric, Kahn also suggests that theatricality (or theatrical representation) is another indispensable element in Machiavelli's concept of power exercising. In brief, the political philosopher asserts that the primary mission that a prince is required to achieve is to "act" like a prince. As Machiavelli states in *The Prince*, people usually judge a prince by his appearance rather than by his deed. Hence, in order to win love and support from his people, a prince must know how to satisfy people's imagination and expectation of the image of an ideal prince.

Kahn's (re)interpretation of Machiavelli certainly shows us a new way to reconsider *The Prince*. It also gives us a handy access to reexamining the political image of Prince Hal (or the later King Henry V) in the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. Hence, in the third chapter, I will apply Kahn's theory to the reviewing of the three history plays, striving to have a further consideration of the intellectual link between Machiavelli and Shakespeare. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that what Machiavelli tries to deal with in his *The Prince*, in fact, is very identical to what Shakespeare endeavors to convey in his Henry plays: that is, the connection between politics and performance/rhetoric. As a matter of fact, from the parallel between the playwright's history plays and the political thinker's treatise, we can not only discover that the knowledge of presenting a theatrical performance is highly similar to that of maintaining a kingship, but also notice the inseparability of a prince's double identity as both a leader and an actor/rhetorician.

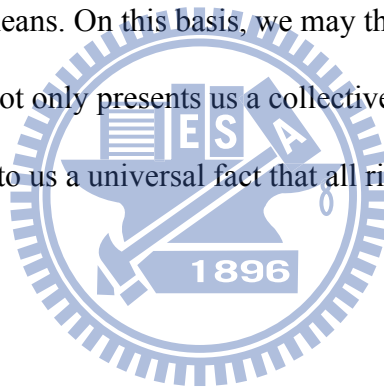
In some ways, Hal can be seen as an embodiment of Shakespeare's understanding of Machiavellism, which is, the know-how of manipulating image and language that a prince is required to possess. Also, the three history plays can be viewed as a trilogy of how Hal constructs his image in a planned way in order to reach his purposes. From his military victory at Shrewsbury in *Part 1*, his banishment of Faststaff in *Part 2*, and eventually to his glorious triumph in the Battle of Agincourt in *Henry V*, one can see how Hal, by skillfully operating his political image and rhetorical ability, effectively wins his people's love and respect and successfully persuades them to

sacrifice for his political goals. Apparently, Hal's tremendous success, either in politics or on battlefields, indicates that a king's achievement, to a great extent, depends on his popularity among his subjects. Without his subjects' obedience and support, hardly can Hal restore the social order of England soon after the civil war, nor can he defeat the French in the Battle of Agincourt. That is to say, because Hal well understands that his authority is mainly based on public support, he has been working very hard to present the image of an ideal prince to his people, hoping to win their respect and further free himself from his father's notoriety as a usurper. It is true that his being calculated and egoistic always causes him to be labeled as a typical Machiavellian prince. Let us not forget that, though, in order to survive in a fierce political struggle with Glyndŵr, the Percys, Mortimer, and the Archbishop of York, Hal has to be guileful and peremptory enough to defeat his enemies and maintain his political authority. Perhaps, such a principle of survival, or more precisely, an art of political theatricality, is also what Machiavelli endeavors to demonstrate in *The Prince*.

Due to the controversial political doctrines, Machiavelli and his *Prince* are doomed to be at the center of endless debates in the history of humanism when the author completes the little book. In certain respects, perhaps Shakespeare and his Prince Hal/King Henry V also undertake a similar predicament when the playwright creates the charismatic main characters for his Henry trilogy. Like many other earlier readings, this thesis cannot (and should not) provide a definitive conclusion to the debate on the relation between Shakespeare and Machiavelli. Nor can it come up with a specific solution to the quarrel about whether Hal or the plays themselves (re)present Shakespeare's confirmation of Machiavellism. Instead, what this thesis aims to do is to understand Shakespeare by reading Machiavelli in the first place and then going backward to the reading of Machiavelli with a more Shakespearean perspective. Namely, refusing to stick to the debate on whether Shakespeare (personally) approves Machiavelli's political thought or whether Shakespeare confirms Machiavelli's political doctrines in the three history plays, I make an effort to comprehend both Shakespeare and Machiavelli in the concept of "political theater." With such a way of

understanding, I attempt to blur the boundary between politics and theatricality a bit more, perceiving politics as a practice of “staging” the political figure in *The Prince* and viewing theatricality as a representation of the realpolitik in the three Henry plays.

With what I have found in the process of my research, in my last chapter, as well as my conclusion, I try to argue that: on a number of occasions, the distinction between historical texts and literary works is not always clear-cut. The same phenomenon can also be found in the relation between politics and theater. In most of the time, theatrical performance is often utilized as an essential mode in the practice of political power, and the various means used to practice political power have also been applied a handy source of the (re)presentation of theatrical performance. In the parallel between Shakespeare’s and Machiavelli’s works, we do witness how these two men reach the same goal by different means. On this basis, we may therefore suggest that the similarity between their concept of politics not only presents us a collective political orientation of Renaissance men, but also proves to us a universal fact that all rivers run into the sea.



Chapter Two

Staging the Political Figure: the Idea of “Political Theater” in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*

When most of Tudor Englishmen gradually became more familiar with Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* around the 1580s,¹ they were scandalized by its tremendous departure from the doctrines of Christianity. The primary reason for their fear of Machiavelli’s political doctrine was due to the Florentine philosopher’s viewpoint of politics as a practical affair which is “independent of any questions about good or evil” (Grafton xxiii). Machiavelli suggests that religion is nothing but a political device employed by the prince to maintain his own authority and to ensure social stability. To most of his English contemporaries, such a theory without a question is a serious blasphemy against God. Hence, since the Renaissance period, Machiavelli (or some other similar spellings such as “machevile,” “machevil,” or “Machiavel”) has become a common expression to describe someone or something as wicked. Until recently, these terms still contain negative connotations. Moreover, “Machiavelli” has also been dramatized as a figure of villain on stage in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean drama, as seen in Thomas Kyd’s *Lorenzo*, Christopher Marlowe’s *Barrabas*, and William Shakespeare’s *Iago* and *Richard III*. Take Shakespeare’s plays for instance: the term “Machiavel” appears three times in total and all of them carry negative meanings no matter in what kind of contexts.² The first time is in a long soliloquy of Richard of Gloucester in *3 Henry VI*: “And set the murderous Machiavel to school” (3.2.193); the second time is in the lines of Richard the Duke of York in *1 Henry VI*: “Alençon, that notorious

¹ *The Prince* was first published in 1532 in Italy, five years after Machiavelli’s death. But not until 1540 was the first manuscript brought to England by Thomas Cromwell, King Henry VIII’s chief minister. This happened almost one hundred years earlier than the first appearance of the English edition (translated by Edward Dacres) in 1640. Even though the printed English editions of *The Prince* and *The Discourses* did not appear in England until the middle of the 1600s, seven different manuscripts of *The Prince* and three of *The Discourses* were already available in England in the late 1580s (Raab 53).

² See *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. Here I am indebted to Tsung-wen Wu (吳宗雯) for the bibliography of her M. A. thesis, *Shakespeare’s Machiavellianism in Two Tetralogies: King Richard III and King Henry IV* (July 2001).

Machiavel?” (5.6.74); and the last time is the lines of the Host of the Garter Inn in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: “Am I subtle? Am I a Machiavel?” (3.2.85).³ The primary aim of this chapter is to explore why Machiavelli is generally regarded as a demonic figure in the Renaissance period and in what way he threatens the ideology of Renaissance men. Secondly, I will have a further investigation on why for many contemporary scholars, Machiavelli is no more a devilish man but a remarkable political thinker. On this basis, I attempt to find out the main cause of Machiavelli’s extreme reputation in history, trying to figure out how such a tremendous gap is produced. In the last, I would like to reconsider if there is any blind spot in those contemporary scholars’ reading or understanding of Machiavelli. Also, I will inspect if there is any way that the reader can revisit Machiavelli in a different angle, or with a different perspective.

While in the Renaissance period Machiavelli becomes a synonym for evil, in respect of modern politics, the Florentine has been considered the father of contemporary political science since the 19th century. According to Irving Ribner, one of Machiavelli’s greatest contributions to the world is that

he made of politics an empirical science governed by laws of cause and effect, and he made his basic thesis the fact that only through understanding of that science could the greatest of all social goods be accomplished, and that greatest good to him was the unification of Italy and the establishment therein of a sound orderly government. (155)

In other words, Machiavelli is the first man who attempts to estimate politics as a social science and to practice politics apart from morals because he well understands that only by doing so can a government run properly to benefit its people. Although most of his doctrines are essentially self-evident nowadays, in an age where ideology was predominantly theological, both the man himself and his thought were labeled as irreligious. In Ribner’s opinion, Machiavelli undoubtedly is a moral

³ The three passages are quoted from *The Norton Shakespeare* (1997). Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent quotations from Shakespeare’s plays in this thesis are taken from this edition.

man. His life goal is to urge the unification of Italy and to establish a well-functioning state in which the welfare of the people is the first consideration. He clearly realizes the fact that ethical standards and religious doctrines are always applied to politics and used to evaluate a politician. These standards and doctrines, in his eyes, not only will decrease the efficiency of a government but will endanger the survival of a nation. As a result, he endeavors to concentrate on the scientific analysis of the essence of politics, leaving the moral and religious issues to others. That is, the very gap between his political perspective and his contemporaries' is that he is more concerned about the "political must" while the Tudor English cares more about the "moral should." Therefore, it can be understood that Machiavelli was considered to embody immorality or evil because his contemporaries read his works "without the historical perspective which enables us to understand them today" (Ribner 155). Instead, they merely understand it with moral consideration. Also, they seem to fail to comprehend *The Prince* as a special case study which cannot (and should not) be applied to "conditions other than those of Italy in Machiavelli's day" (155). They tend to interpret it simply in light of Christianity, and, to their understanding Machiavelli's works are the best proofs of ungodliness. From the present perspective, Renaissance men's reaction to Machiavelli may be stale and inapposite. But one should always bear in mind that "we must look beyond the limits of what we regard as political, and reckon with much that we would now call 'religious' thought" (Raab 9; italics original) because politics had not yet been "recognized as an autonomous activity" (9) until Machiavelli started the revolution.

Aside from Ribner, Felix Raab also stands up for Machiavelli, trying to justify the Florentine's political philosophy. According to Raab, Machiavelli is surely a secular political thinker. Despite the fact that the Florentine horrifies the Tudors with his seemingly atheistic political thought, it is evident that to some extent the frightening thought is like a strong impact of ideology forcing the Englishmen to understand their society in a whole new political concept. Raab even compares Machiavelli's political idea to a storm, suggesting that "it rages more fiercely" while

the wider implication of his doctrines come “to be more clearly understood” (67). Sharing a similar aspect with Ribner, Raab also suggests that Machiavelli’s remarkable contribution to contemporary political thinking is his attempt to separate politics from the moral/religious standards of the Christian world-view and his proposal of the idea of “politick religion.” In Chapters 11-15 of the First Book of *The Discourses*, Machiavelli states that Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, employs religion as a political method to maintain the public order: “[i]t will also be seen by those who center on Roman history, how much religion helped in the control of armies, in encouraging the plebs, in producing good men, and in shaming the bad” (140). Apparently, Machiavelli does not simply assess religion as a belief. He tends to pay much attention to its “political practicality,” arguing that under the political circumstance religion merely functions as a “prime means by which the stability of a state is preserved, its power increased and the designs of its leaders fulfilled” (Raab 87). That is to say, in Machiavelli’s eyes, the power of religion is important not because it provides people spiritual wellness but because it provides the prince “the most potent weapon in the statesman’s armoury” (87). Nevertheless, Raab also admits that “the *direct* influence of Machiavelli on Tudor political thought was limited” (67; italics original). Even though different editions and translations—in print or manuscript—proliferated, the reading of Machiavelli’s works is only a preserve for a small minority in the sixteenth century. More importantly, to most people at that time, Machiavelli’s vision of politics is “fundamentally irreconcilable with the traditional theological view of the universe” (69). Due to these two reasons, hardly can Machiavelli’s political concept exert much influence on the Tudor society. Even so, though, Machiavelli is still an influential avant-garde of political thought in the Renaissance period for he “help[ed] to make Englishmen see that political technology, the sphere of political means, has its own dynamic and functions independently of moral sanctions” (262). Also, Machiavelli’s thought may be seen as “the criterion by which men tested their attitudes to the old hierarchy of values and the new, and it helped to sharpen the distinction between them” (263).

J. G. A. Pocock is another historian of political thoughts who shows sympathy with Machiavelli's political doctrine. According to Pocock, Machiavelli can be seen as one of the political thinkers in the history who endeavor to investigate the problem of the confrontation of "virtue" with "fortune" and "corruption" in politics and further to pursue "the intimations of these words" (viii). To Pocock, if one thinks of politics "as the art of dealing with the contingent event," then in a more Machiavellian way of thinking, politics can be understood as "the art of dealing with *fortuna*⁴ as the force which directs such events and thus symbolizes pure uncontrolled, and unlegitimated contingency" (156). In this aspect, *The Prince* can be therefore read as Machiavelli's treatise of the relation between the "new prince" (the ruler as innovator) with *fortuna*. In Pocock's opinion, the newness of the rule of the prince means that "he has performed an innovation, overthrowing or replacing some form of government which preceded him." It also means that the new prince "must have injured many people, who are not reconciled to his rule, while those who welcomed his arrival now expect more from him than he is able to provide" (160). Namely, while fulfilling his responsibility, a new prince may annoy some people by damaging their advantage; he may fail to satisfy those who support him in the beginning by breaking his promise for some practical consideration. What is more, he may even (be forced to) violate social norms or religious doctrines in order to cope with some irresistible or inevitable contingency (or *fortuna* in Machiavelli's word). Thus, for a new prince, there will always be a dilemma between how he practices his *virtù* and how he keeps his conscience. Yet, in order to maintain his power and achieve his goal, the prince has to learn to seek the balance between the two poles. As a matter of fact, the

⁴ *Fortuna* is usually being translated into *Fortune* in English, yet the meaning of Machiavellian *fortuna* is far from that of the accustomed understanding in English. In the Christian society, the notion of Fortune is inherited from the personification of luck in Roman religion. Fortune traditionally is portrayed as a goddess, veiled or blind, in charge of man's good or bad luck. Although the figure of Fortune is a representation of capriciousness, seldom is she being seen as a ruthless threat to man's fate. Nevertheless, the Machiavellian *fortuna* is presented in *The Prince* as a symbol of contingency, or as "the enemy of political order, the ultimate threat to the safety and security of the state" (*SEP*).

Italian word *virtù* is usually translated into English as “virtue,” which carries a more conventional denotation of the behavior showing high moral standards or noble qualities. Markedly, though, according to Russell Price, the translator of the Cambridge edition of *The Prince*, *virtù* at the same time also stands for many other senses which are combined together sometimes: “ability,” “skill,” “energy,” “determination,” “strength,” “spiritedness,” “courage,” or “prowess” (103). Generally, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli employs the concept of *virtù* mainly to imply “the range of personal qualities that the prince will find it necessary to acquire in order to ‘maintain his state’ and to ‘achieve great things,’ the two standard markers of power for him” (*SEP*). Put differently, in Machiavelli’s eyes, a person of *virtù* “can thus be summarized by his recommendation that the prince above all else must acquire a ‘flexible disposition.’” Hence, a prince of *virtù* is bound to be competent in the application of power; to possess *virtù* is indeed to have mastered all the rules connected with the effective application of power” (*SEP*).

In Pocock’s opinion, one of the issues that Machiavelli repeatedly ponders over in *The Prince* is the triangle between the new prince, *virtù*, and *fortuna*, and what the Florentine political thinker tries to do in his book is enquiring the following questions:

whether there is any *virtù* by which the innovator, self-isolated from moral society, can impose form upon his *fortuna* and whether there will be any moral quality in such a *virtù* or in the political consequences which can be imagined as flowing from its exercise. Since the problem only exists as the result of innovation, which is a political act, its exploration must be conducted in terms of further political action. (157)

Machiavelli is convinced that the prerequisite that a qualified new prince needs to acquire is the “exceptional and extraordinary qualities, standing outside the norm defined by the case of the *principe naturale*” (161), so that he is able to respond to the challenge of *fortuna*. However, the relation between a new prince’s *fortuna* and *virtù* can always be a “moral and a psychological, as

well as a simply strategic problem” (161) since in most cases *virtù* “is not merely that by which men control their fortunes in a delegitimized world, it may also be that by which men innovate and so delegitimize their worlds” (166). To wit, there always exists a moral ambiguity while the prince is to apply his *virtù* to make a reaction to the contingent event brought by *fortuna*—because from time to time the execution of *virtù* may not be a virtuous act. Instead, it may be an action simply out of the concern of political benefit, which often conflicts with the requirement of ethical standard. That is to say, the concept of Machiavellian *virtù* illustrated in *The Prince*, as a matter of fact, serves more like a political methodology teaching the prince how to execute his “political must” with any necessary means rather than functioning as a moral standard guiding the prince how to practice his “moral should” in order to follow the social norm or religious doctrine.

To sum up, in Pocock, as in Ribner and Raab, Machiavelli is valorized as a sophisticated political observer. The reason for it is that he articulates what Renaissance political leaders have always believed and done—that “straightforward effort to master and apply the tenets of traditional morality would not produce an effective ruler.” That is, in order to acquire better political efficiency, Machiavelli believes that “[p]olitics must have its own rules” (Grafton xxiv). Moreover, even though *The Prince* always seems to be immoral and irreligious, for these scholars, the book is surely “passionately driven forward by a sense of what must realistically be said and done if political success is to be achieved” (Skinner xxiv). It is evident that modern scholars’ interpretations of Machiavelli have reversed the accepted understanding (that Machiavelli’s political theory is a blasphemy of God) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, upgrading *The Prince* to a higher historical status and academic value. Such interpretations, undoubtedly, provide modern readers new approaches to read Machiavelli’s work(s) which the Renaissance men had not yet discovered. On the other hand, such interpretations may simultaneously cause blind spots, obscuring the contemporary reader’s vision to focus on some features that seem to be trifles nowadays but used to be significant details for the Renaissance reader. In other words, the interpretations of Ribner, Raab,

and Skinner perhaps can answer only one side of the question of why the Tudors were terribly shocked by the Florentine's writings.

The other side of the question, which is also where the blind spot persists in the reading of modern historians of political thought, is Machiavelli's rhetorical politics, or more specifically, Machiavelli's sophisticated skill at manipulating rhetoric. According to Victoria Kahn, the main cause of Tudor Englishmen's fear of Machiavelli is not that they are incapable of understanding the fact that religion and politics are two separated systems as Machiavelli suggests, nor that they are unable to comprehend the political philosopher's theory of *virtù* and *fortuna*. What really troubles them is Machiavelli's "technical or instrumental conception of rhetoric,"⁵ such as "its ethical indeterminacy, its concern with success, [and] its use for the purpose of force and fraud, violence and misrepresentation" (Kahn 9). They well understand the complicated relationship between Machiavelli's rhetorical "tricks" and his political theory. Also, they clearly see the political thinker's rhetorical politics engages "a constellation of topics that epitomized the tensions within humanist rhetoric: the relation of imitation to misrepresentation, persuasion to coercion, means to ends, intention to effect, demonic flexibility to allegorical stability, and virtue or *virtù* to success" (9). In Kahn's opinion, what Machiavelli offers in his writings is "a rhetoric for dealing with the realm of de facto political power, rather than a political theory with a coherent thematic content" (4). She also believes that Renaissance Machiavellism incorporates "a variety of rhetorically sophisticated appreciations and appropriations of Machiavelli's own rhetorical approach to politics" (4). Therefore, if carefully examining the rhetorical dimension of Renaissance Machiavellism, one will discover that what Machiavelli conveys in *The Prince*, to a great extent, is his own "rhetorical approach to politics, to the Renaissance association of rhetorical deception with the force and fraud of Machiavelli's prince, and to the rhetoric of Machiavellism that emerges in Renaissance debates

⁵ As Kahn argues in her book, the term "rhetoric" she employs here, in general, refers to "a repertoire of means of persuasion ranging from the figurative language and formal organization of a text to the ethos and pathos of the speaker" (5).

about the nature and limits of political and religious authority” (4-5). That is, if the reader warily analyzes Machiavelli’s rhetorical politics, rather than simply taking it as a tool applied in his writing, s/he would notice that what the author seeks to deal with in *The Prince* is to generalize the current political reality in a more plausible method rather than to conceptualize the current political reality into a more systematic theory.

Compared with Kahn’s interpretation of Machiavelli, the readings of Ribner, Raab, and Pocock are inclined to disparage the rhetorical dimension of Machiavelli’s political thought. Their readings tend to only focus on that how Machiavelli’s thought has been misunderstood by Renaissance men, and how it now can be comprehended in a “more correct” way. Kahn suggests that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historians or scholars of Renaissance political thought are apt to define Machiavelli and “the correct reception of his work in terms of secular political analysis or classical republicanism” (6). For those historians or scholars, Machiavelli is being condemned as immoral mainly because politics is still being dominated by theology in the sixteenth century, and due to this socio-cultural context, naturally, *The Prince*, as well as the *Discourses*, is depreciated as a book seriously blaspheming God. In Kahn’s opinion, even though Raab validly justifies the significance of Machiavelli as a secular thinker in the modern perspective, approving that the legitimacy of power as consisting of force and brutality, he seems to chart “a move away from the religious condemnation of Machiavelli to an appreciation of Machiavelli the republican thinker” (6). Namely, Kahn thinks that Raab does not really keep pursuing the question that if the condemnation of Machiavelli is all caused by religious factors. According to Raab, in the sixteenth century, English thinkers were unanimous that “ultimately political justification must be divine” (262). They seem to look for a “subservience of the secular to the spiritual, of the aspirations of men to the Will of God, of Earth to Heaven; in short, a religious politics” (262). But less than two hundred years later, in the seventeenth century, the crisis of sovereignty and the English Civil War (1642-1651) caused “the crisis of the theological justification of political

authority” and further allowed a broader reception of “more fully secular understanding of politics” (Kahn 6). Therefore, more and more people were able to accept “the Church as an instrument of the State, Scripture as irrelevant to politics and the political aims of men as inherently self-justifying” (Raab 262). Besides, the requirement of a religious politics was also replaced by a more open attitude toward political religion. Scilicet, people’s ideology of the subordinating relationship between politics and religions was shifted bit by bit. In the sixteenth century, politics was subordinated to religion, serving as a mode to demonstrate the power of the Church, or of God. In the seventeenth century, however, the relationship between politics and religion turned to be upside down. In this period, religion is gradually being determined by politics, functioning as a method to preserve social stability, or to maintain the prince’s own authority. Therefore, by the seventeenth century, a sympathetic reader was able to read Machiavelli in two opposing ways: viewing it either as a diabolic work from a more religious sixteenth century viewpoint, or as a plain political criticism from a more tolerant seventeenth century perspective. To Raab, nevertheless, a more proper way to read Machiavelli is to subordinate his rhetoric to his analysis and fully focus on his elaboration of how a (new) prince’s power is constructed, maintained, and practiced.

The attempt to separate rhetoric from politics, religious denunciation from political consideration can also be found in Pocock’s reading. “Like other historians of political thought,” Kahn states, “Pocock equates Machiavellism with the revival of secular” (6). Videlicet, in Kahn’s eyes, Pocock’s reading of Machiavelli’s analysis is also based on the concern about political practicality. In his interpretation of *The Prince*, Pocock notices that Machiavelli “conducts his analysis neither in the specific context of Florence nor with regard to the specific problem of citizenship; his concern is solely with the relations between the innovator and fortune” (160). That is to say, what intrigues Machiavelli the most when he observes the political phenomenon in Renaissance Europe is not the domestic political situation in Italy, but a more common and brutal reality of politics—that of power as a set of both force and fraud. Hence, when he is writing *The*

Prince, his major concern lies in the interaction between the innovator and fortune in the history. He attempts to investigate how a new prince acquires his political strength and how he applies such a strength to making a response to *fortuna* in any necessary means. From the interest and motivation of his research on power, one will discover that what Machiavelli aims to represent is the secularity of Renaissance political theory. Reading *The Prince* from this perspective, Pocock, like Raab, seems to downplay the rhetorical strategy Machiavelli employs in his writing and concentrates on the Florentine philosopher's discourse of *de facto* political power and secular republicanism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As we have seen, “[t]he reading of Machiavelli as rhetorician and Machiavel is equated with the theologically rooted misunderstanding of Machiavelli, whereas the modern recuperation of Machiavellism is defined in thematic terms as a set of ideas about sovereignty, agency, and the mixed constitution” (Kahn 7-8). From such a discrepancy between these two ways of interpretations, the reader may very well notice a problem as Kahn points out:

Attention to the lessons of humanist rhetoric suggests in contrast that a given language or idiom—such as Machiavellism—may serve competing interests at the same time . . . This in turn means that the language of Machiavellism cannot simply be equated with secular, classical republicanism since it was available and used for sectarian religious purposes as well. (8)

Namely, if one tries to figure out how that discrepancy is made, what s/he needs to explore is not that whether the historians of political thought, like Raab, Pocock, or Ribner, choose to concentrate on a single strain of Machiavelli's writing while ignoring another, but that such a choice seems to be “symptomatic of a methodology that locates ideological conflict between, rather than within, individual discourses” (8). The methodology used by those historians in their readings is mainly to analyze conflicting discourses such as Machiavelli's secular political theory versus the traditional Christian doctrine. But the problem is that it does not pay sufficient attention to “the fact that each

of these discourses is itself an object of competing, capable of serving a variety of rhetorical interests” (8). Therefore, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the humanist rhetoric and political theory, it is necessary in the first place to analyze the rhetoric of political theory.

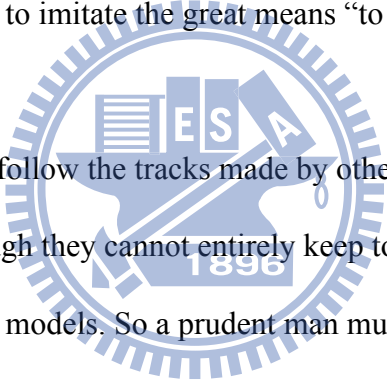
In contrast to the readings of Ribner, Raab and Pocock, Kahn argues that in *The Prince* “Machiavelli does not supplant rhetoric with a more realistic view of politics but rather makes politics more deeply rhetorical than it had been in the earlier humanist traditions” (8). Unlike a political theorist whose main concern is to theorize a more general and objective phenomenon in the world of politics, Machiavelli, for Kahn, is more like a political analyst who is more interested in analyzing a more particular and specific subject of the working of realpolitik. More importantly, rather than reporting his observation in plain words and leaving his readers much room for interpretation, Machiavelli tends to (re)present his analysis of realpolitik in a more plausible tone. By using some rhetorical skills such as mismatch and syllogism, he seems to compel his readers to accept his own viewpoint that power as consisting of force and fraud. In Kahn’s opinion, Machiavelli’s rhetorical politics has indeed “dramatized a tension between a technical and prudential conception of rhetoric that is at the heart of Renaissance humanist culture” (9). For Renaissance men, rhetoric is often regarded as an “ethically and ideologically neutral technique of argument” with which people present their thoughts or claims. Moreover, rhetoric is also conceived of as “the embodiment of a faculty of practical reasoning or prudential deliberation that is tied to ethical norms” (9). That is to say, in the Renaissance period, people not only valued the impartiality of the use of rhetoric, but also cared much about if rhetoric was applied in accordance with morality and justice. However, for Machiavelli, following the Renaissance humanist notion of that prudential rhetoric should be subordinated to ethics, in fact, is neither practical nor helpful for men to comprehend the essence of politics. Thus, in his political writings, Machiavelli seems to “make rhetoric and prudential deliberation generate a new set of priorities in the domain of politics” (9);

one of the examples is his constructing *virtù* as “a faculty of practical reasoning and action that is not constrained by ethical norms” (9). Because Machiavelli’s Renaissance readers well understand how skillfully he can manipulate rhetoric in his writings, they become anxious about that the good (such as the concept of virtue) may be sacrificed to the expedient while the art of rhetoric may be utilized as tool of misrepresentation and fraud (9).

Countering Ribner, Raab, and Pocock, Kahn emphasizes that the fear of Machiavelli in the sixteenth-century England does not arise from the fact that the Englishmen fail to understand Machiavelli properly, but that they perceive the dissolution of ethics from rhetoric and politics in Machiavelli’s analysis. In particular, when one focuses on how Machiavelli revises the original meaning of *virtù* and further specifies it as a concept of political imitation and prudential rhetoric, one will understand why Machiavelli is more like “a proponent of a rhetorical politics, one that proceeds topically and dialectically, and that can be used by tyrant and republican alike” rather than “a theorist of republicanism” (Kahn 11). Namely, Machiavelli is condemned as a wicked figure by his Renaissance readers not so much because he profanes Christian doctrine with his political theory as because he seems to provide an ethical instability—which approves the use of force and fraud in order to achieve a specific political goal—in his rhetoric while presenting his political theory. Kahn believes that “Machiavelli’s political thought is inseparable from his rhetorical or internal critique of humanism, and that we cannot understand his political thought without analyzing his rhetorical practice” (11). Scilicet, unlike other historians of political thought who emphasize their readings on the justification Machiavelli’s theory, Kahn chooses to directly attend to Machiavelli’s rhetorical politics, which, according to her, “can tell us much about the anxieties and concerns, as well as the conventions of interpretation, that were characteristic of Tudor-Stuart political, literary, and religious culture” (12). More importantly, by carefully examining Machiavelli’s rhetoric, Kahn provides her readers a new approach to understand Machiavelli in recent theoretical discussions, inasmuch as she points out that the basis of Machiavelli’s political

theory is rhetoric and representation, or more precisely, the know-how of staging the political figure.

Throughout *The Prince*, Machiavelli repeatedly emphasizes the consequence of emulating the lofty figures. His point is to educate his readers to follow the examples of those giants in the history, and to see how they make practical judgments and take effective actions according to the contingency brought by fortune. To wit, the main theme that Machiavelli wants to convey throughout his book is the idea of imitation, especially the imitation of the great. Imitation, as Machiavelli understands it, is not so much an “ethical practice” (Kahn 21) as a dramatic performance or a theatrical improvisation—a handy skill that a prince will be using in his practice of politics. Therefore, in Chapter 6, “New principalities acquired by one’s own arms and prowess,” Machiavelli directly expresses that to imitate the great means “to imitate imitation,” that is, to *pretend* to imitate (21):

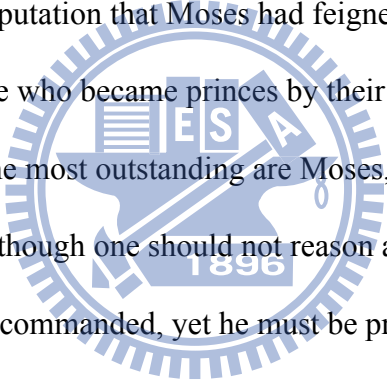


Men nearly always follow the tracks made by others and proceed in their affair by imitation, even though they cannot entirely keep to the tracks of others or emulate the prowess of their models. So a prudent man must always follow in the footsteps of great men and imitate those who have been outstanding. If his own prowess fails to compare with theirs, at least it has an air of greatness about it. He must behave like those archers who, if they are skilful, when the target seems too distant, know the capabilities of their bow and aim a good deal higher than their objective, not in order to shoot so high but so that by aiming high they can reach the target. (*Prince* 19)

Here it is clear that Machiavelli is convinced that a prudent prince must learn to act like a prudent prince. On that base, a prince’s practice to follow the footsteps of the great will only serve as a disguise of his “aiming high to reach the target.” According to Machiavelli’s viewpoint, political strategy and theatrical performance are inseparable. He has no problem at all with the use of hypocrisy, fraud, falsification, deception, and the so-called “immoral” tricks while practicing

politics, because in his experience this is how it exactly works in the real world. More importantly, he believes that these political means are no more than the “underside of the humanist notion of imitation” (Kahn 21). Put it another way, these means has already been a commonplace in the political world and are widely used by many great men in the history—they are just like a tacit agreement among the kings and politicians from one generation to another, an consensus that can only be executed but never be told. Therefore, for Machiavelli, the idea of “imitating the great” itself can be a ruse as well, because what it really means is not to imitate great figures themselves, but to imitate the skill of imitation from them.

Another thing that seriously troubles the Renaissance readers in this chapter is Machiavelli’s inclusion of Moses. As Kahn suggests, “they could not help noticing Machiavelli’s ironic deference to Moses’s ‘teacher’ and his sly imputation that Moses had feigned divine favor” (22):



But to come to those who became princes by their own abilities and not by good fortune, I say that the most outstanding are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and others like them. Although one should not reason about Moses, since he merely executed what God commanded, yet he must be praised for the grace which made him worthy of speaking with God. But let us consider Cyrus and the others who acquired and founded kingdoms: they were all praiseworthy, and their actions and institutions, when examined, do not seem to differ from those of Moses, who had such a mighty teacher. . . . Fortune, as it were, provided the matter but they gave it its form; without opportunity their prowess would have been extinguished, and without such prowess the opportunity would have come in vain.

Thus for the Israelites to be ready to follow Moses, in order to escape from servitude, it was necessary for him to find them, in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians. . . . Cyrus needed to find the Persians rebellions against the empire of the

Medes, and the Medes grown soft and effeminate through the long years of peace.

(20)

Here one can see that Machiavelli's first intention is to wipe off the difference between the Christian idea of Divine Will and his own idea of *virtù*, and further to mix these two concepts together. As mentioned previously, the meaning of Machiavellian *virtù* is far from that of the traditional Christian virtue; the former refers to the ability of a prince to immediately reciprocate *fortuna* with any necessary means while the latter refers to morality or nobility. But here Machiavelli attempts to weave his idea of princely *virtù* into the Christian concept of the Divine Will, making them look like the same sort of matter. That is to say, by listing Moses together with Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus, figures who acquired leaderships by their own abilities (*virtù*), Machiavelli skillfully and slyly changes the role of Moses from a prophet to a prince, thus blurring the distinction between the biblical story and his own.

Besides, what also disturbs Renaissance readers here is Machiavelli's imputation that Moses in fact is a juggler, and the Divine Will he shows to the Hebrews is but a political strategy. According to the political philosopher, the reason Moses must be admired by people is that "the grace which made him worthy of speaking with God." While this statement appears to be a recognition of Moses's virtue and a deference of Christianity, it can also be read as an understatement that Moses "had the wit—or grace—to feign grace" (Kahn 22). To wit, rather than regarding Moses's "grace" as a representation of the Divine Will, Machiavelli is more willingly to equate it with his concept of princely *virtù*, which Moses uses to react *fortuna* (the Egyptians' enslavement and oppression upon the Israelites) and to maintain his leadership among the Israelites. Hence, in the next paragraph, he further points out the similarity between Moses and Cyrus, arguing that both of them have acquired the ability to well use the opportunity to achieve their power with their *virtù*.

The third example that shows how masterfully Machiavelli manipulates rhetoric can be found in Chapter 18. In the beginning of the chapter, the philosopher aims to discuss the division between human law and bestial force. Soon, however, he seeks to blur the specific meaning of bestial force and then redefines it as a political technique of the use of fraud:

You must understand, therefore, that there are two ways of fighting: by law and by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate one must needs have recourse to the second. So a prince must understand how to make a nice use of the beast and the man. . . .

So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast, he must learn from the fox and the lion; because the lion is defenceless against traps and a fox is defenceless against wolves. Therefore one must be a fox in order to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves. Those who simply act like lions are stupid. So it follows that a prudent ruler cannot, and must not, honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist.

(56-7)

As we can see here, Machiavelli discusses the two contrasting situations of fighting. According to his analysis, the law is used to deal with men while the force with beasts. That is, in order to obtain the advantage during a war or a conflict, a prince has to acquire the knowledge of both how to negotiate with the enemy by law in a more civilized way, and how to defeat the enemy by force in a more beastly way. More importantly, he must understand when is the best time to make the best decision on either using law or force. Namely, the prince must efficiently use his *virtù* to decide the right policy, by law or by force, to respond to *fortuna* in the war. In the first stage of his analysis, the distinction between the two situations still remains clear. But when it comes to the next stage, the comparison between law and force seems to be mismatched with the other pair of comparison

between fraud and force. In the second paragraph quoted above, Machiavelli further explains that a prince has to learn from the fox and the lion if he wants to manipulate force. The fox and the lion are metaphors Machiavelli applies to symbolize insidious calculation and brute strength—two characteristics that a prudent prince should obtain. But in the political thinker’s eyes, to act like a fox will be more important than to act like a lion. A foxy prince, he explains, may be more capable of employing tricks or strategies to achieve what he looks for, whereas a lionlike king may simply rely on his political power or armed might, which can be overthrown or defeated by a stronger rival any time. Even so, it is for sure that if a prince is able to get hold of both qualities, he may have better odds to come off best. According to Machiavelli, a proper prince does not have to really keep his words, nor does he have to be a genuinely noble person—all he needs to know is how to “colour” his actions and to be “a great liar and deceiver” (57). Even though these behaviors may not fit the constraint of the moral standard, they are useful tips for a prince to retain his power and will help him get prepared for the tests of *fortuna*.

Interestingly, if one carefully compares the contrast between the law/men and the force/beast in the first paragraph with that between the fox/fraud and the lion/force in the second, one will notice that what Machiavelli has been contrasting are two different pairs of comparisons. But apparently, he seems trying to make them look like the same thing. Generally, Machiavelli’s rhetorical trick here can be divided into three steps. Firstly, he tackles the dissimilarity between law and force, but soon he attempts to make a specific discussion on force. Secondly, in order to persuade his readers the importance of managing force, Machiavelli provides the metaphors of the fox and the lion, which individually represents fraudulence and political power, suggesting that a prudent prince should be as cunning as a fox rather than simply rely on his political authority. In the last step, Machiavelli seems to neglect the comparison deliberately between the pair of the law/men and the force/beats, turning to focus on the pair of fox/fraud and lion/force. As a matter of fact, such a transition of focus may bring the reader a false impression that “the law” and “the fraud” may be a

similar subject because both of them have been compared with “the force” in the analysis. It should be noted, however, that the comparison of “force/beats” in the first paragraph mainly refers to the “military operation,” while the likening of “lion/force” to “fox/fraud” in the second paragraph functions more like a symbol of the prince’s “political power.” In other words, the two “forces” here actually do not refer to the same thing; nor are the two pairs of comparisons the same case. By carefully examining Machiavelli’s rhetorical game in this chapter, one would find it quite hard not to believe that he does not have any intention to misguide his readers. He deliberately mismatches the two pairs of comparisons quite possibly because he wants the reader’s last impression of this chapter to remain with the comparison between the fraud and the force—two significant political strategies that he aims to convey by the book. To wit, in these two paragraphs (as well as in the entire chapter), what Machiavelli tries to do is not to discuss “how princes should honour their words” as indicated by the title of this chapter. Rather, he seems to play an elaborate rhetorical game to dazzle his readers and inculcate them with something completely opposed to what he is supposed to convey in the chapter.

After carefully examining Machiavelli’s rhetorical strategy in *The Prince*, the reader can see how the Florentine political thinker manipulates rhetoric and representation to influence or dominate his readers’ reception of realpolitik. As a matter of fact, rhetoric and representation are not only the two basic concepts supporting Machiavelli’s political theory, they are also the two vital qualities, according to Machiavelli, that a prince should acquire. In the sixteenth century, Machiavelli’s political philosophy undoubtedly was a huge earthquake seriously shaking Renaissance men’s ideology of politics. Since the moment *The Prince* is circulated, the value of the book is doomed to be at the center of endless debate in the history of humanism. In Tudor England, even though there are few men who show appreciation of his political doctrine, in general, he is regarded as an embodiment of the demonic and seriously condemned for his “dissembling rhetoric of appearances and his protean indeterminacy” (Kahn 89). He is also being equated with Machiavel,

a figure associated with fraud, deceit, atheism, and hypocrisy. From his distorted double, one is able to see that Machiavel is typically portrayed as a “powerful rhetorician [who] not only registers the anxiety about the power of rhetoric or illusion to persuade to evil” (91). Simultaneously, the image of the villain on stage also signifies “Machiavelli’s deeply rhetorical view of sovereignty as something that must be staged” (91). Scilicet, the creation of Machiavel indeed reflects most Renaissance Englishmen’s deep anxiety about Machiavelli’s use of rhetoric as a tool to violate the political and religious standards that they inherit from their ancestors. Moreover, the Tudors are also frightened by the Florentine philosopher’s political view that politics is not only a practical affair that should be independent of any moral and religious norms, but also a theatrical performance of the prince whose primary duty is to act like an ideal prince or to show his people the representation of an ideal prince. Although in the Renaissance period Machiavelli is generally viewed as a diabolic figure, in the present time, he is highly esteemed. In the eyes of many contemporary historians of political thought, Machiavelli is the founder of Western political science. He is the first man in history who attempts to regard politics as an independent subject and further to investigate the advantages and the disadvantages of different systems of governments in different countries. He is also a noble politician whose life goal is to urge the unification of Italy and to establish an effective government therefore the people may have better welfare. All in all, for contemporary scholars, Machiavelli surely is a secular thinker and a sophisticated observer, and his being demonized as Mahciavel by the Tudors is more like a result of their misunderstanding. Aside from those scholars’ recognition of Machiavelli’s contribution to the modern politics, at the other side, there is a scholar who provides us a different aspect to reinterpret Machiavelli within the context of Renaissance rhetorical culture. Victoria Kahn comes up with a reading which approves of the Renaissance men’s condemnation of the Italian political thinker. She suggests the reason those contemporary scholars who regard the Renaissance reception as a misreading is that they tend to ignore the influence of the rhetorical culture at the time.

Compared with those accepted readings of Machiavelli, Kahn's reading gives her readers a "new" perspective on Machiavelli's political theory. By carefully analyzing Machiavelli's rhetorical politics in *The Prince*, Kahn demonstrates that Machiavelli's political thinking is built on rhetoric and representation. On this theatrical base, Machiavelli comes up with the idea of "political theater," suggesting that the practice of political power is highly connected to the presentation of theatrical performance. To put it another way, as he states in the end of Chapter 18 in *The Prince*, Machiavelli believes that most essential characteristic that a "proper" prince should acquire is the knowledge of how to "perform" like a proper prince:

To those seeing and hearing him, he should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and a religious man. And there is nothing so important as to seem to have this last quality. Men in general judge by their eyes rather than by their hands; because everyone is in a position to watch, few are in a position to come in close touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are. . . . (58)

That is to say, Machiavelli is convinced that the state of a prince's reign depends on the support of the people; no matter what kind of person the prince really is, he should always present himself as a great man in public to win respect from the people so that he can maintain his authority.

Nevertheless, as the political philosopher has mentioned, most people judge a prince by his appearance rather than by his deeds. Therefore, if a prince attempts to win support from his people, his major task is to win their hearts instead of their brains, and the best way to win people's hearts is to show them the "perfect" image of the prince in order to "satisfy" their imagination of an ideal prince. According to Kahn, by presenting the prince as an actor and claiming that such a (mis)representation is an effective means to acquire power, Machiavelli surely "exposes the hypocrisy, force, and fraud, that are the demonic underside of the humanist notion of imitation" (21). Moreover, he at the same time also "alters the meaning of prudence from the

humanists' practical reason, informed by moral considerations, to the calculating, potentially amoral faculty of judgment appropriate to the man of *virtù*" (21). Namely, Machiavelli seems to understand the practice of politics in a way of understanding the practice of theatrical performance, suggesting that there is no big difference between a prince and an actor—whenever the show is on, both of them are required to give their best performance to win respect and support from people in anyway they can.

Through examining Machiavelli's rhetorical politics in *The Prince*, Kahn establishes that rhetoric and representation are the two key components in Machiavelli's political thinking. She also shows that in *The Prince* Machiavelli proposes a straightforward yet complex way for his readers to comprehend politics as a theatrical performance of the prince. Or more precisely, the political thinker attempts to teach the prince how to demonstrate power in a more dramatic way in order to capture people's hearts. Apart from the accepted readings, it is true that Kahn offers her readers another approach to interpret Machiavelli, and such an approach can also be very helpful when applied to the interpretation of Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. In the next chapter, I will use Machiavelli's idea of political theater to read the three history plays, trying to explore how Prince Hal/King Henry V employs the representation of his reformation from a prodigal son to a promising King as a tool to manipulate his power. More importantly, I will further strive to figure out how Shakespeare thinks of the relation of power, rhetoric, and representation.

Chapter Three

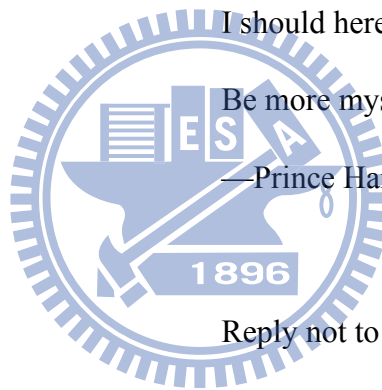
Playing the Role of an Ideal Prince:

The Representation of Hal's Political Image and Rhetorical Skill in

The Two Parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*

And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.

—Prince Harry (*IHIV* 1.3.190-93)



I should hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord,
Be more myself.

—Prince Harry (*IHIV* 3.2.91-92)

Reply not to me with a fool-born jest.
Presume not that I am the thing I was,
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
That I have turned away my former self;
So will I those that kept me company.

—King Henry V (*2HIV* 5.5.53-57)

In many accepted readings of Shakespeare's plays of the *Henriad*, Prince Hal is often perceived as a Machiavellian prince skilled in manipulating force and fraud. Also, the plays themselves are frequently regarded as Shakespeare's "relatively optimistic interpretation of Machiavellian politics" (Grady 48). One possible cause of such assumptions is that during the period between 1595 and 1660, the histories and tragedies written by Shakespeare (four plays of the

Henriad and *Hamlet*),⁶ as Hugh Grady suggests, all seem to (re)present a “positivity about political power” and “take for granted a secular, realpolitik understanding of political power as a force for both good and evil, a view that is widely identified with the discourse of Machiavelli’s 1513 *The Prince* and related writings” (26). In these plays, especially the *Henriad*, Shakespeare seems to explore how a prince’s political power is constructed, and how such power is further practiced and presented. From Shakespeare’s plotting the imposing reformation of Prince Hal, it may be plain enough to conjecture the playwright’s supposition that the most effective way for a prince to earn his political power (from the people), first of all, is to make a charismatic political image to win the hearts of the public in the first place. And secondly, the prince should take a further step by using the public support as a means (or an excuse) to achieve his political goal. To a certain degree, it can be said that what Shakespeare attempts to investigate and present, through the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, is the theatrical representation of the prince’s role. It is also the same substance that Machiavelli tries to discuss in *The Prince*. After carefully reading Kahn’s interpretation of Machiavelli’s rhetorical politics in the previous chapter, we can see that rhetoric and representation are the two core concepts in the Florentine thinker’s orientation. In this chapter I will draw on Kahn’s theory to interpret Shakespeare’s two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, striving to scrutinize how, in his depiction of Prince Hal, the playwright comprehends and (re)presents Machiavelli’s political doctrines discussed in *The Prince*. In my analysis of the three plays, I will focus on the main character, Prince Hal (or King Henry V), trying to illustrate how the Prince/King utilizes his skill of theatricality (or improvisation) and his talent of rhetoric to achieve his political purposes. Moreover, I will also demonstrate how the Prince/King’s manipulation of his political image and his

⁶ According to the chronology of *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, aside from *Richard II* (1595), *1 Henry IV* (1596-97), *2 Henry IV* (1597-98), *Henry V* (1598-99), and *Hamlet* (1600-01), other ten plays composed by Shakespeare during the same period are: *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1594-95), the now lost *Love’s Labour’s Won* (1595-96), *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595), *King John* (1596), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597-98), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *Julius Caesar* (1599), and *As You Like It* (1599-1600). (117-22).

eloquence serves as a vital means in his practice of power. In doing so, I attempt to argue that (theatrical) performance, rhetoric, and politics are always intertwined in the exercise of power. What is more, in most cases, a prince's practice of politics not only reveals his monarchic power or authority, but also displays his personal skills of theatricality and rhetoric.

As stated in the previous chapter, because Tudor Englishmen are getting familiar with Machiavelli in the late 1580s, it is reasonable to deduce that Shakespeare might have known one or two things about Machiavelli's political doctrines. Even though there is no direct evidence showing whether Shakespeare has read *The Prince*, *The Discourses*, or other works of Machiavelli, some of the playwright's friends in the Southampton circle such as Edmund Spencer and Sir Walter Raleigh might very likely have done so. Consequently, even though Shakespeare might not have read Machiavelli's works, he could still have acquired some preliminary knowledge of Machiavelli's philosophy from his friends: as E. M. W. Tillyard suggests, "it can hardly be doubted that the Southampton circle and with it Shakespeare knew Machiavelli too" (30). In fact, it matters little whether Shakespeare has directly read Machiavelli or how exactly Shakespeare looks at Machiavelli. Instead, what really matters is what kinds of similarities we can find among the works of the playwright and of the political thinker; and how we take one step ahead to comprehend such parallels "which [would] help us to read the plays in new (and sometimes old) ways and which help us to see the extent to which Shakespeare participated in the creation of intellectual modernity as he entertained and challenged his audiences" (Grady 30). In most cases, Shakespeare does not simply regard literature, or more specifically, dramatic plays as effects of society or history. Nor does he create his histories as "a mere reflection of a discourse which can claim greater authenticity by virtue of its proximity to the 'real' of history" (Holderness 13). Rather, he endeavors to revisit history or to reconsider some endless controversy in history through his writings of history plays.

For Shakespeare, his creation of history plays may not only function as his products to entertain his audiences, but also serve as his channel to engage society, to interpret history, and even

to convey his political viewpoints. In Graham Holderness's words, Shakespeare's history plays "are not just *reflections* of a cultural debate: they are *interventions* in that debate, *contributions* to the historiographical effort to reconstruct the past and discover the methods and principles of that reconstruction" (13; italics original). That is to say, Shakespeare's histories are not straightforward manifestations of historical facts, but more like Shakespeare's explanations of history. Accordingly, the reader should not plainly identify the ideological parallels lying both in the *Henry* plays and *The Prince* with the political image of Hal as a Machiavellian prince. Nor should the reader arbitrarily perceive the intellectual influence that Shakespeare receives from Machiavelli as a proof of the playwright's recognition of Machiavellian doctrines. Rather, to pursue the meaning of such a conceptual circulation and exchange between the authors (or the works) in a more productive way, we should consider how Machiavelli's *The Prince* helps us acquire a more profound understanding of the portrayal of Prince Hal in the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, and how Shakespeare's history plays provide us a different angle to reexamine the seemingly frightening doctrines (at least in the eyes of Tudor Englishmen) illustrated in *The Prince*.

In *1 Henry IV*, the first and also the most important factor that makes Hal appear as a cold-hearted figure or a shrewd Machiavellian prince is his well-known "I know you all" soliloquy in the end of Act 1, Scene 2:

I know you all, and will a while uphold
 The unyoked humour of your idleness. . . .
 So when this loose behavior I throw off
 And pay the debt I never promised,
 By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
 And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,

Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes

Than that which hath no foil to set it off.

I'll so offend to make offence a skill,

Redeeming time when men think least I will. (173-95)

In the soliloquy, the Prince compares himself to the sun and his tavern friends to the “contagious clouds” and “the foul and ugly mists” (1.2.176; 180) that have temporarily obscured his radiance. He claims that his fooling around with them in the bawdy world of the Boar’s Head is merely an act for the sake of expediency. He explains that he has behaved this way because he plans to disguise his “true” self as a prodigal son. On that account, he is able to “show more goodly and attract more eyes” (192) one day when he shows the world his immense reformation. In the earlier readings of this play, Hal’s plan on the show of self-reformation is frequently seen as his demonstration of “cold, calculating Machiavellism” (Grady 138). The main reason is that he does not seem to care much about his “friendship” or “brotherhood” with those drinking partners he meets in the tavern. In fact, Hal is “chillingly disdainful of those he elsewhere treats as boon companions, but he also finds their baseness *useful*, since it will set in high relief his own glory, once he has cast them off” (Howard 1150; italics original). In other words, it is generally agreed that Hal only regards his tavern companions as stepping-stones helping him attain his political purpose or as some minor actors supporting him to present a splendid political show. As soon as he gets what he longs for, he will immediately get rid of them all without much hesitation. For instance, he uses his banishment of Falstaff in *Part 2* as a public declaration of his determination to reform, either himself or the Kingdom, when he becomes the new king. In more recent interpretations, the Foucault-influenced New Historicist readings in particular, Hal’s calculation in this soliloquy is still understood as a political strategy out of Machiavellian consideration. According to Jean E. Howard, Hal’s sojourn outside the court milieu actually has its “profound instrumentality.” Learning “the language of others [people of the lower class] and rehearsing their tongues is, for Hal, one of the arts of power.

He can—and later he will—repudiate some of those whose language and customs he has imbibed, making the repudiation a justification for his own rule” (1151). That is, by lingering in the tavern and hanging out with people there, Hal is able to clandestinely acquire their culture and life style. As a consequence, he may understand how to effectively infiltrate, disintegrate, and even contain the subversion of the lower class when he is ruling the Kingdom.

Either in the earlier or the recent readings, it is apparent that Hal has often been viewed as an astute Machiavellian politician and everything he does is seemingly for a particular political consideration. Also, both ways of the readings tend to perceive the Prince as a mere pretender or a coldhearted betrayer who is not only hypocritical to people around him but also breaks his promises all the time. For example, according to Stephen Greenblatt, Hal’s claim that “By how much better than my word I am, / By so much shall I falsify men’s hopes” (188-89) in his soliloquy can be explained as the Prince’s intention “to deceive men, to turn hopes into fictions, to betray” (Greenblatt 41). Greenblatt seems to suggest that Hal has already been premeditating to cast off his tavern friends and falsify their expectations sooner or later. More importantly, the Prince well knows that he will be doing so in no time. But it should be noted that Greenblatt’s interpretation here may be problematic because none of Hal’s tavern partners, except for Falstaff, feels that their expectations are falsified or that they are betrayed by the Prince. To put it another way, among those whom Hal meets in the Boar’s Head, Falstaff is the only person “who pins his hopes on Hal’s kingly future” (McAlindon 425). He is also the only one who feels “betrayed” simply because he fails to exploit any profit when his “sweet wag” becomes the King. But the truth is that Hal has never promised Falstaff any specific benefit throughout the Henry trilogy. Rather, the only thing that Falstaff is assured to receive is his banishment (in *Part 2*), which is foreshadowed in Act 2, Scene 5, in *Part 1*, the scene of the play-within-the-play between Hal and Falstaff:

FALSTAFF: . . . Banish not him thy Harry’s company,

Banish not him thy Harry’s company,

Banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.

PRINCE HARRY: I do; I will. (*IHV* 2.5.436-9)

FALSTAFF: My king, my Jove, I speak to thee, my heart!

KING HARRY: I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.

How ill white hairs becomes a fool and jester! . . .

Till then I banish thee, on pain of death,

As I have done the rest of my misleaders,

Not to come near our person by ten mile. (*2HV* 5.5.44-63)

In Grenblatt, as in many other critics' eyes, Falstaff's banishment in *Part 2* indubitably proves that Hal is a cunning deceiver and a heartless betrayer as well. But as Brain Vickers suggests, Greenblatt's explanation of Hal's claim ("By how much better than my word I am, / By so much shall I falsify men's hopes") solely as "barefaced deception and betrayal" may be questionable because the New Historicist tends to ignore the "obvious sense of 'hopes'" (258) in the end of the second line. According to Vickers, the "men's hopes" here in fact refers to the expectations of Hal's enemies while the whole line should be understood as "'the expectations of my enemies and critics I [Hal] will turn out a ne'er-do-well'" (258). That is, what Hal really means by the two lines, I suggest, is: he is confident that he is far better than any words he can comment on himself, and he is not going to fulfill his enemies' wish by being a hopeless prince/king. Even though Hal's plan revealed in his soliloquy does sound like a Machiavellian calculation, it should be pointed out that the calculation is not mainly on how to betray his tavern friends but on how to overbear his political enemies.

It is true that, from Hal's (in)famous soliloquy, the reader is able to see a more subtle or even a more treacherous dimension of the Prince's characteristics. The reader, however, should be aware that the reason Shakespeare arranges such a soliloquy for Hal in this particular scene, is to

emphasize Hal's realpolitik precociousness and his sensitivity to social contest. Shakespeare appears to imply that the young Prince has already acquired the ability to be an extraordinary ruler, rather than to portray the Prince as a typical figure of the villain on the stage like Iago or Richard III. It is also true that Hal has always been judged as a hypocrite by the divergence between his appearance and his deed. But the reader ought to understand that, in certain aspects, the Prince is forced to behave in such a duplicitous way and to dissimulate his genuine emotion or thought so that he is able to survive in the severe political infighting mostly caused by his father's usurpation. After Henry Bolingbroke seized the scepter from his cousin, Richard II, and had himself crowned King Henry IV, he simultaneously brought endless turmoil to the entire kingdom during his reign. The main reason is that those who once helped him with the usurpation, such as the Percys, now have become his primary enemy attempting to overthrow his sovereignty. Henry IV spends years during his reign subduing the rebellions including Owain Glyndŵr, Henry Percy (known as Hotspur), Edmund Mortimer, and the Archbishop of York. Being in such a situation full of tension and turbulence, Prince Hal may have clearly perceived that the best thing he can do is not to have any direct conflict with those enemies. Rather, he needs to try to relax their guard over him by counterfeiting himself as a hopeless prodigal son in the first place, furtively getting himself well prepared in the next, and waiting for the right time to defeat them unexpectedly in the end. Consequently, it can be said that Prince Hal has already known that the most powerful weapon that will help him put his enemies to rout is not the armed forces but his skill of counterfeiting, or more specifically, of representing his image on the political stage. Moreover, if the reader tries to perceive the relationship between kingship and performance in a broader aspect, one may further notice that both in the tavern scene in Act 2, Scene 5, in *Part 1*, and in the rejection scene in Act 5, Scene 5, in *Part 2*, Shakespeare seems to "expose the workings of royal self-fashioning and to suggest that kingship, once regarded as sacramental, now amounts to no more than good acting" (Balman 164).

In Act 3, Scene 2, when Hal is asked to return to the court, Henry IV gives his son a long admonition in which he expresses his deep disappointment on the Prince's "inordinate and low desires" (12) and other "mean attempts" (13) unsuited to his royal blood. Sharply rebuked, Hal immediately admits his mistakes and seeks his father's forgiveness: "I may, for some things true wherein my youth / Hath faulty wandered and irregular, / Find pardon on my true submission" (26-28). But the old King still seems angry, continuing scolding his son that:

God pardon thee! Yet let me wonder, Harry,
 At thy affections, which do hold a wing
 Quite from the flight of all thy ancestors. . . .
 And in that very line, Harry, standest thou;
 For thou hast lost thy princely privilege
 With vile participation. Not an eye
 But is a-weary of thy common sight,
 Save mine, which hath desired to see thee more,
 Which now doth that I would not have it do—
 Make blind itself with foolish tenderness. (29-91)

Facing his father's sharp reproach for his prodigality, Hal again asks his father for mercy and further gives him a promise: "I should hereafter, my thrice-gracious lord, / Be more myself" (92-93). He even assures the old King that he will redeem everything he has once squandered "on Percy's head" (132). In the dialogue between Hal and his father, it should be noted that the Prince's declaration of "Be more myself" here means "to perform one's part in the scheme of power rather than to manifest one's natural disposition, or what we would normally designate as the very core of the self" (Greenblatt 46). As a matter of fact, both Hal and his father well understand that "political value, like commercial value, is a function of social desire. And that desire can be manipulated" (Kastan 66). The old King establishes his value by "letting Richard

serve as his ‘foil’ [1.3.193], as his son would term it, carefully withholding his own public appearances even as ‘the skipping King’ [3.2.60] made his regal presence ‘cheap,’ ‘common-hackneyed in the eyes of men’ [3.2.40-1]” (66-67). In fact, Hal establishes his prestige in the same way, too. The only difference is that “he uses his own apparently prodigal behavior as the foil to make his assumption of responsibility every bit as ‘wondered at’ [1.2.179; 3.2.47] as his father’s ‘seldom but sumptuous’ manifestations’ [3.2.58]” (67). According to David Scott Kastan, “[v]alue can be produced by manipulating appearances—and perhaps must be so produced when value is not natural or intrinsic” (67). In this scene, the reader may notice that both the old King and the young Prince already realize that either their political value or their kingship “does not magically reside in the person of the king but in the political relations that bind, even create, king and subject.” Moreover, they also discern that “kingship is a role that can—indeed that must—be acted” (32-33). To wit, both the father and the son have perfectly apprehended that if they want to maintain their authority, they have to ensure their political value. And the most effective way to do so is to know how to present different political images for different occasions and at different times in order to win people’s recognition. Greenblatt once argued that “Hal’s characteristic is playing or, more precisely, theatrical improvisation—his parts include his father, Hotspur, Hotspur’s wife, a thief in buckram, himself as prodigal, and himself as penitent—and he fully understands his own behavior through most of the play as a role that he is performing” (46). In fact, theatricality and power are always tightly connected; theatricality may even be “one of power’s essential modes” (46). It is for this reason that Hal’s theatrical improvisation of different roles throughout the play(s) can be seen as one of his political strategies to solidify his authority. He is like an actor who only shows people the represented image that he wants them to see; ergo, he may thus control people’s imagination or impression on him, making them believe what he needs them to believe.

In some respects, the state of a prince may depend on the skill with which the prince constructs his political image. In the end of Chapter 18 in *The Prince*, Machiavelli states that “[t]he

common people are always impressed by appearances and results. In this context, there are only common people, and there is no leeway for the few when the many are firmly sustained” (58). That is to say, if the prince knows how to manipulate his representation in front of people, it will be easier for him to acquire the recognition of the public. Once he wins most people’s support and respect, he surely can dominate the kingdom with fewer difficulties. Nevertheless, it should be indicated that, even though the manipulation of the prince’s political image plays an important role in the exercise of power, in the world of realpolitik, there are still many factors that will jeopardize the stability of the prince’s authority. If the prince is unable to maintain his power effectively, he will be defeated and replaced by other competitors in no time. In order to consolidate the core of his power, according to Machiavelli, the prince must act to win honor. In the beginning of Chapter 21, “How a prince must act to win honour,” in *The Prince*, Machiavelli proposes that “[n]othing brings a prince more prestige than great campaigns and striking demonstrations of his personal abilities” (71). He takes the Spanish King Ferdinand of Aragon as example, suggesting that Ferdinand establishes his authority at the start of reign in his attack of Granada. According to Machiavelli, “in order to be able to undertake even greater campaigns, still making use of religion” (71), Ferdinand successively assaults Africa, Italy, and France. Even though the Spanish King’s frequent military operations badly harass the people and drain the nation’s treasury, his triumphs and achievements surely impress his subjects, making them yield obedience to his authority willingly. It is fair to say, then, that the most effective act for a prince to win honor is manifesting his military heroism. Seen in this light, Prince Hal’s glorious victory at Shrewsbury may thus be a decisive turning point of his political image from a prodigal son to a promising prince, laying the foundation of his authority in the near future and earning him lasting veneration from his lieges as well. Like Ferdinand’s military success, Hal’s heroic action can be regarded as a well-planned political commercialization aiming to establish his political value. By paying “the debt” he never promises and exhibiting that he is “better than [his] word” (1.3.87-88) at

Shrewsbury, Hal surely “finds a way to turn his personal liabilities into strength (“to make offence a skill,” 1.2.194) and to free himself from his father’s debt to the Percys” (Kastan 68). In truth, the debt Hal attempts to pay here is neither simply what his father owes the Percys, nor what he owes his father (such as fame and honor). Instead, the “biggest” debt he is desperate to repay should be the time and honor he owes himself. But no matter what the exact debt is, according to Kastan, “[o]nly those who pay what they owe will thrive in a world where sovereignty is no longer a value that inheres unproblematically in the crown but must depend upon both credit and credibility” (68). Hal’s success on the battle field has frequently been perceived as his political calculation on the Percys, as well as an intention to build his prestige upon Hotspur’s failure: it should be noted, though, that the Prince, after all, wins his honor from Hotspur in a fair duel. More importantly, by successfully subjugating the rebellions, he brings peace back to the land of England so that the people can resume their everyday life again. Despite the fact that he seems to acquire his honor by sacrificing the Percys, it is undeniable that Prince Hal makes a remarkable contribution to the entire Kingdom by restoring its order and unity. Such a contribution, especially for those who have lived in a country full of turmoil for years, is good enough to surpass Hal’s disrepute of egocentricity or craftiness, winning their adoration and support of the Prince.

Apart from the example of Ferdinand, Machiavelli also mentions in the same chapter (Chapter 21):

It is also very profitable for a prince to give striking demonstrations of his capabilities in regard to government at home, similar to those which are attributed to messer Bernabò of Milan; in the event that some one accomplishes something exceptional, for good or evil, in civil life, he should be rewarded or punished in a way that sets everyone talking. Above all, in all his doings a prince must endeavour to win the reputation of being a great man of outstanding ability. (72)

That is to say, in addition to showing his military heroism, the prince needs to reveal his ability to manage domestic affairs as well. Machiavelli points out that it is very important for a prince to do some extraordinary undertakings or to make some unusual decisions from time to time in order to demonstrate his resolution or boldness. Such an idea may well explain Hal's banishment of Falstaff when the Prince officially becomes Henry V. In Act 5, Scene 3, in *Part 2*, as Pistol tells Falstaff that the old King is dead and "thy tender lambkin now is king" (109), the old Knight immediately gets extremely thrilled. He is convinced that he now is "fortune's steward" (120-21), claiming that "the laws of England are at my commandment" (125-26). Falstaff's reaction here apparently shows that he has been calculating to benefit from Hal since the very first moment he met the Prince, attempting to play up his "friendship" with Hal in circles of high power. In Act 5, Scene 5, when Falstaff hurries to meet the new King, he yells at the newly crowned Henry V on the celebration parade that: "God save the grace, King Hal, my royal Hal!" (39), "God save thee, my sweet boy" (41), and "My king, my Jove, I speak to thee, my heart!" (44). From the old Knight's cry, it is apparent that he is eager to let everyone know that he has an extraordinary relationship with the King. Yet, out of his expectation, what he really receives is but a cold reply that completely breaks his hearts. The new King Henry V, in calmness and solemnity, answers him:

I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers.

I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,

So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;

But being awake, I do despise my dream. . . .

Reply not to me with a fool-born jest.

Presume not that I am the thing I was,

For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,

That I have turned away my former self;

So will I those that kept me company.

When thou dost hear I am as I have been,
 Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast,
 The tutor and the feeder of my riots.
 Till then I banish thee, on pain of death,
 As I have done the rest of my misleaders,
 Not to come near our person by ten mile. . . . (45-69)

Undoubtedly, by declaring the banishment of Falstaff in public, the new King Henry V wants his subjects all to testify that he has broken off his relations with those tavern friends. He also endeavors to draw a line between his past as a prodigal and his present as a penitent. It is noteworthy that the rejection of Falstaff here should not be merely understood as an accidental breakup between the old Knight and the young King. Rather, it is more like the new King's impromptu political declaration or a "required public demonstration" (Humphreys lix), which has been repeatedly rehearsed in his mind but only given at this moment of truth, to show the world his determination to reform himself and be a responsible king. In this intense speech, Henry distances Falstaff "not only in spatial but also in temporal terms." For him, the old Knight now is but "a dream from a past deliberately placed outside memory" (Melchiori 28) because he has successfully fulfilled his promise made in *Part I*, redeeming time when men think least he will.

Henry's main purpose of such a declaration, on the surface, is to inform Falstaff that he is no longer who he was and he will never see him again unless the old Knight reforms himself. Nevertheless, such an announcement also reveals the fact that the tremendous change of his role will also bring a tremendous change to his life. From his statement as follows, the reader can see that the young King strives to immediately cut off his link with those drinking partners in the tavern: "For God doth know, so shall the world perceive, / That I have turned away my former self; / So will I those that kept me company" (55-57). As a King, Henry fairly realizes that he will be judged by his appearance rather than by his conduct. Hence, his primary duty is to perform like a

proper King to meet the people's expectation so that he can win their esteem and maintain his authority in the future. Also, in the next three lines, Henry seems to announce that his role-playing as a prodigal son has come to an end and he will never play it anymore: "When thou dost hear I am as I have been, / Approach me, and thou shalt be as thou wast, / The tutor and the feeder of my riots" (55-60). In the next "act" of his political performance, he will sever his relation with those "misleaders" and focus on playing a promising king. Although King Henry V's public declaration of Falstaff's banishment seemingly aims to present his determination to reform himself, it should be pointed out that Henry does not really turn over a new leaf in his life and "become" a different person through his reformation. That is to say, the true meaning of Henry's reformation here, should not be plainly regarded as a self-redemption in a more religious perspective. Instead, it should be understood in a more theatrical way as his transition from one role to another on the political stage. As mentioned previously, in the beginning of *Part 1*, Henry has manifested his outstanding comprehension of politics, realizing that the state of his authority will depend on the method he manipulates the representation of his political images. Accordingly, from his "I know you all" soliloquy in *Part 1* and his banishment of Falstaff in *Part 2*, the reader can see how Henry uses his role-playing to obtain his purpose and how he applies theatricality as an essential mode to his practice of power. In addition to his ability to take on different roles on the political stage, Henry's rhetorical skill is another powerful weapon that helps him conquer the hearts of the masses and acquire significant political achievements.

According to the Chorus's description in the beginning of Act 4, in *Henry V*, in the eve of the Battle of Agincourt, King Henry visits the campsite of the English army in disguise, inspiring the troops with confidence and bravery:

Walking from watch to watch, from tent to tent,

Let him cry, 'Praise and glory on his head!'

For forth he goes and visits all his host,

Bids them good morrow with a modest smile
 And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen. . . .
 A largess universal, like the sun,
 His liberal eye doth give to everyone,
 Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all
 Behold, as may unworthiness define,
 A little touch of Harry in the night. (4.0.30-47)

By portraying the King as a savior-like figure whose “sun-like eye thaw[s] as he cheer[s] his troops” (Craik 49), it can be seen that Henry has successfully earned respect and support from his people after showing his military heroism in Shrewsbury, and further bringing peace and unity back to England in the two parts of *Henry IV*. In his first invasion of France in *Henry V*,⁷ Henry demonstrates his ability to be a commander, leading the English army to defeat the more powerful French troops. It is apparent that the victory in the Battle of Agincourt wins Henry V ultimate glory and brings him permanent prestige. Nonetheless, in Act 4, Scene 1, of the play, Shakespeare arranges an episode in which the King is doubted mainly by two of his soldiers, John Bates and Michael Williams, whether he can really win the battle and whether he will be ransomed while defeated. Scilicet, on the eve of the battle, Henry is facing a crisis of authority. To win his soldiers’ faith, he is trying to persuade them that “the King is but a man . . . when he sees reason of fears, as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are. Yet, in reason, no man should possess him with any appearance of fear, lest he, by showing it, should dishearten his army” (99-108). In this passage, the King aims to convey the idea that though the King shares the same fear with his soldiers, he is determined to fight with them till the end. As a matter of fact, as Katharine Eisaman Maus states it,

⁷ After failing to negotiate with King Charles IV of France in the spring of 1414, in which he claims on the French throne, Henry V invaded France in 1415. He firstly conquered Harfleur on 23 September (see Act 3, Scene 1) and then won the Battle of Agincourt on 25 October.

Henry's unusual gifts as a leader render the uncertainty more pointed. Richard II disregarded common folk, and Henry IV deliberately avoided them; but Henry V inspires them by his capacity to immerse himself sympathetically in their lives. His insistence upon his ordinariness becomes a strategy of rule—part of what he is loved for during his lifetime and what becomes legendary after his death. (1450)

Namely, unlike Richard II and his father, who tend to distance themselves from commoners, Henry is more willing to present his amiability of access and is more inclined to get together with people of the lower class. Interestingly, when Henry “insists in seeing himself as a unique case nonetheless, he seems not merely to be asserting a king's usual prerogatives but to be inconsistently or hypocritically making special allowances for himself” (1450). Such ambivalence in fact can be found in many scenes in the play, and one of the obvious examples is his quarrel with Bates and Williams.

In the beginning of the quarrel, King Henry is trying to defend the legitimacy of his military action, saying that “his cause being just and his quarrel honourable” (121). Williams immediately controverts, however, that the King's claim is “more than we know” (123), and Bates further adds that “Ay, or more than we should seek after” (124). In fact, what they are really concerned about is not the King's legal argument of the war. Rather, they only claim that “like common soldiers in all ages, they must take the legitimacy of a war largely on trust, since even if explanations are offered they are ill-equipped to assess their validity” (Taylor 39). Therefore, in any case, these soldiers are only interested in “the justice of the King's cause insofar as it affects them, and it affects them only in respect to whether they ‘die . . . contented’ [120]” (39). This is why Bates claims that “[f]or we know enough if we know we are the King's subjects. If his cause be wrong, our obedience to the King wipes the crime of it out of us” (124-25); and that it is not his responsibility to deal with the problem whether the war is just, nor should he be responsible for the war even if it is unjust. All he can do (and all he needs to do), as a soldier, is simply follow the order that he is given and do his

best to accomplish his mission. But Williams soon proceeds to ask a deeper question about a much greater responsibility that the King is supposed to fulfilled in the war. That is: “[f]ew die well in a battle: not because of the justice or injustice of their king’s cause, but simply because they die fighting. As a result, the king is responsible for their damnation, simply by virtue of having ‘led them to it’ [137], regardless of the justice of his cause” (Taylor 39-40). To put it another way, Williams not only criticizes the King for leading so many soldiers to their death, but also condemns the King’s cause of those soldiers’ damnation because they die before they fulfill their responsibilities in their lives: “some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly left,” says Williams (132-34). In some aspects, Williams’s expression here is “not so much of a fear of death as a fear of damnation” (Taylor 20). He seems to suggest that the King is accountable for depriving those soldiers of their rights or obligations to satisfy their responsibility as husbands, obligors, and fathers. Moreover, Williams is also convinced that the King is to blame for the death of those in the battle.

To retort Williams’s accusation, Henry replies:

So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father, that sent him. Or if a servant, under his master’s command transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers, and die in many irreconciled iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant’s damnation. But this is not so. The King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant, for they purpose not their death when they propose their services. *Besides*, there is no king, be his cause never so spotless, if it come to the arbitrament of swords, can try it out with all unspotted soldiers. . . .

Every subject’s duty is the King’s, but every subject’s soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed: wash every mote

out of his conscience. And dying so, death is to him advantage; or not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained. And in him that escape, it were not sin to think that, making God so free an offer, he let him outlive that day to see his greatness and to teach others how they should prepare. (139-172; my italic)

The King's long speech, which "begins as a refutation ('by your rule') [and] ends as an informal sermon on readiness for death" (Craik 49), eventually proves to be convincing to the soldiers eventually. It is notable, though, that Henry's similes "have been dismissed as distortions" (Taylor 40) because he does not really directly answer Williams's question about whether the King should be responsible for the souls of those who die in the battle. Instead, with his similes, he only tries to shift the responsibility back onto the soldiers themselves arguing that the state of each individual's soul in fact depends on their own behavior rather than the King's deed. To the soldiers' fear of damnation, apparently, Henry does not provide any specific solution but replies that "the king does not purpose their deaths, and that, should they die, their salvation or damnation will depend on the state of their own souls, not the conduct of the king" (40). In his response to Williams's accusation, the King does not deny his responsibility "for the justice of his cause." Nor does he disclaim the fact that "some (or even many) of his soldiers will die." The only thing he has been trying to deny is his "responsibility for the state of their individual souls" (40). Compared with his self-justification ("I think the King is but a man"), Henry's resistance to accept "the extraordinary moral burden his followers would confer upon him" (Maus 1450) turns out to be quite ironic here. The King's refusal here "is based not on his earlier assertion of the shared humanity of King and subject, but on a conviction of the King's special position. He distinguishes sharply and problematically between the King's 'superior' violence—the violence of war—and the violence of individual subjects, which is merely criminal" (1450). Videlicet, Henry may not be as amicable and tolerant as he thought he will be in the first place; furthermore, nor does he really believe that he and his subjects are equal. In

reality, his ordinariness may just be one of his “disguises” (or acts) that he applies to win his followers’ recognition and trust.

Markedly, what makes the King’s long speech in this scene so tricky is not his denial of his responsibility for the soldiers’ individual souls, but the way he turns his speech from a refutation into a sermon which in the end induces his soldiers to be willing to die for him. If the reader pays enough attention to Henry’s speech, s/he will notice that it actually can be divided into two parts by the transition signal, “Besides.” In the first half of the speech, as mentioned before, the King comes up with two similes of the son and the servant in order to retort Williams’s imputation, endeavoring to evade his responsibility for the sacrificed soldiers’ damnation. In the second half of the speech, nevertheless, Henry seems to deliberately mismatch the topic of an individual’s responsibility for his own behavior/soul with his expectation of a soldier’s responsibility to die for the King. That is to say, in the first part, the focus of the speech still lies in the debate about whether the King should be responsible for the state of each sacrificed soldier’s soul—after all he is the one who strips those soldiers of their opportunities to “die well.” Yet, when the speech proceeds to its second part, the focus tends to be tactfully transferred onto the King’s personal calculation that “[e]very subject’s duty is the King’s” (164), implying that “the subject’s life is at the ruler’s disposal” (Maus 1449).

It is quite interesting here to see how Henry skillfully bases his own theory on Williams’s accusation and further bends both of the soldiers to his “distorted” argument. Certainly, what Henry is trying to illustrate here is not so much different from what Williams has said before. Both of them are talking about responsibility and death/damnation. Even so, just as what Machiavelli attempts to do in Chapter 18 in *The Prince*, King Henry here is also apt to play a rhetorical trick in his speech. He seems to suggest that even though “every subject’s soul is his own” (164-65) and the King should not (and cannot) be responsible for the state of each soul, he in fact gives those soldiers a chance to “wash every mote out of his conscience” (166-67). He also provides them an honor to fulfill their responsibilities as Christians—to make God “so free an offer” (170)—that is, to be

willing to die for God. Videlicet, Henry attempts to make his brutal invasion of France, which originally is out of his personal ambition, more like a holy war simply for the sake of religious/political justice. He seems to claim that every soldier's sacrifice in the battle not only will become a generous offer to God, but also will translate into an eternal salvation of their own souls. Given such a sermon on readiness for death, the soldiers seem to be convinced by the King. Bates directly replies Henry as follows: "'Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his one head. The King is not to answer it. I do not desire he should answer for me, and yet I determine to fight lustily for him" (173-76).⁸ Bates, so to speak, will thus take his responsibility both as a man and as a soldier here and now. More importantly, he also feels like he is ready to fight for the King.

After closely examining the King's long speech in Act 4, Scene 1, one can say that, apart from the talent of operating his political image, Henry is also very good at manipulate rhetorical tactics. By using his persuasiveness and wit, the King, in the eve of the battle, intellectually conquers Bates and Williams, successfully prevailing upon his soldiers to be willing to sacrifice for him and laying the foundation of his victory. This episode surely can be regarded as a one of the examples showing how King Henry uses rhetoric as a tool to achieve his political purpose. It also reflects the young King's knowledge of a Machiavellian way of power exercising. Another notable episode revealing Henry's outstanding rhetorical skill in *Henry V* can be found in Act 5, Scene 2, in which Henry tries to woo and propose to Princess Catherine.

⁸ In different editions of *Henry V*, Bates's lines here may either be given by Bates himself along or shared by both Williams and Bates. In both Norton and Oxford editions, Bates is the only character to reply King Henry's long speech by saying that, "'Tis certain . . . for him" (Norton ed. 173-76; Oxford ed. 178-181). By contrast, in Arden and Cambridge editions, both Williams and Bates give their responses to the King's speech. Williams firstly replies that, "'Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his one head. The King is not to answer it" (Arden ed. 185-86; Cambridge ed. 167-68), to which Bates further adds: "I do not desire he should answer for me, and yet I determine to fight lustily for him" (Arden ed. 187-88; Cambridge ed. 169-70).

Instead of being a “brisk and joyous wooing” (Walter xxxi), the entire Act 5, Scene 2, seems to be “infused with the cost of war and a fierce political imperative” (Mason 190).⁹ In his opening speech, Henry calls King Charles IV and Queen Isabel “brother France” and “sister” (2) in his greetings. He also terms Princess Catherine “cousin” (4) while giving his regards to her, attempting to “[appropriate] them to his ‘side’ of any dispute” (Mason 190). Apparently, the French King is not so happy with the result of the war, nor is he comfortable with such an intimacy with his “enemy.” Out of politeness, he briefly returns: “Right joyous are we to behold your face. / Most worthy brother England, fairly met. / So are you, princes England, every one” (9-11). Compared with her husband’s laconic response, Queen Isabel’s reply is longer in which she skillfully criticizes Henry’s bellicosity:

...

Your eyes which hitherto have borne in them,
 Against the French that met them in their bent,
 The fatal balls of murdering basilisks,
 The venom of such looks we fairly hope
 Have lost their quality, and that this day
 Shall change all griefs and quarrels into love. (12-20)

Despite the criticism of the English King’s ferocity, in the end of her lines, the Queen still asks Henry for his mercy to change “all griefs and quarrels into love,” returning tranquility back to France. Following the Queen’s demand, the Duke of Burgundy also requests Henry for giving a chance to the “naked, poor and mangled peace, / Dear nurse of arts” (34-5) to “put up her lovely visage” again in the “fertile France” (37). But the English King seems to merely regard peace either as “a cold and factual object” (190) or as a merchandise which the French royalty “must buy” (70)

⁹ After his military action in 1415, Henry invaded France twice more, respectively, in 1417 and 1420. When Henry again acquired his military success in 1420, he married Princess Catherine, daughter of Charles IV, and became the King of France after the death of his father-in-law. This piece of historical episode is also the source from which the plot of Act 5 is mainly derived.

with those “just demands” (70-1) that he has lately proposed. Furthermore, among all of the requirements, Catherine is particularly appointed as the “capital demand” (96) in the article of peace. As a matter of fact, for Henry, Catherine is more like a prize of his military success than a lover from whom he strives to win love. It is understandable, still, that “[f]or patriotic reasons the audience will not want him to be too humble a suitor, but (also for patriotic reasons) he must not too like a tyrant” (Craik 55). Hence, one may notice that there in fact exists an ambivalence in Henry’s courtship with Catherine: on the one hand, he tries to demonstrate his chivalry to her as a suitor; on the other hand, he also desires to present his superiority over her as a conqueror. Even though “the marriage is already arranged as part of the peace treaty,” Henry still “pretends that Catherine is free to reject him” (Maus 1452), assuming that he may not really face any resistance or challenge from the Princess. Nevertheless, out of his expectation, Catherine does give him a lesson, showing him the characteristic of both restraint and quick wit that a princess is required to possess.

After the assembly leave for some supplementary political negotiations, Catherine is left to stay with Henry, who is endeavoring to demonstrate his courtesy:

Fair Catherine, and most fair,
 Will you vouchsafe to teach a soldier terms
 Such as will enter at a lady’s ear
 And plead his love-suit to her gentle heart? (98-101)

However, with a short reply that “Your majesty shall mock at me. I cannot speak your England” (102-3), Catherine somehow “puts an immediate stop” (Craik 54) to Henry’s courtship. In order to break the stalemate and keep the interaction going, Henry immediately “takes up her statement in well-turned prose, with a reply that sums up the courtship to follow” (54): “O fair Catherine, if you will love me soundly with your French heart, I will be glad to hear you confess it brokenly with your English tongue” (105-6). Although Catherine’s imperfect English requires the King to play the main role actively in the dialogue “where they cannot meet on equal terms” (Craik

54), the Princess does not passively make herself a minor actor in this “show” despite her seeming innocence. In fact, she is critical of Henry. When the English King compares her to an angel: “An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel” (108-9), she does not seem to be flattered. On the contrary, she appears to be quite skeptical of the King’s praise: “*O bon Dieu! Les langues des hommes sont pleines de tromperies* [O good God! The tongues of men are full of deceits]” (115-6). Also, when Henry tries to take a further step in his wooing, asking her, “Canst thou love me?” (183), Catherine just gives a concise reply: “I cannot tell” (184). Forty-four lines later, as the King again asks the Princess, “wilt thou have me?” (228), she still refuses to reveal her own answer, telling Henry instead that only her father can make the decision on her marriage: “Dat is as it shall please de *roi mon père* [King my father]” (229). In general, throughout her talk with the King, Catherine tends to show Henry her reserve as a prince or her shyness as a woman, attempting *not* to play too much with her suitor in such a courting game. Yet, ironically, her resistance or refusal “can as easily be interpreted as coquettishness as real denial. Namely, even if she refuses to play Henry’s game, she necessarily plays it anyhow” (Maus 1452).

In addition, in the middle of the conversation, with the touchy question that “Is it possible dat I should love de *ennemi* of France?” (163; italics original), Catherine forces Henry “into a frank admission of the reality of his invasion and occupation of her country” (Mason 190). To respond to such a sharp inquiry, Henry once again presents his striking rhetorical skill, giving the Princess a repartee (although he does not deny what he has done):

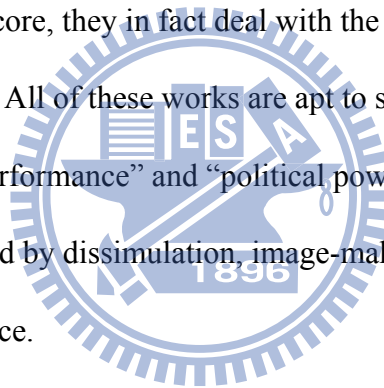
No, it is not possible you should love the enemy of France, Kate. But in loving me, you should love the friend of France, for I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it, I will have it all mine; and Kate, when France is mine, and I am yours, then yours is France, and you are mine. (164-68)

Without doubt, the King’s reply here will delight the Tudor audiences and arouses their patriotism. Surely, though, such a reply reveals both his arrogance as a conqueror and his phoniness as a

monarch in the perspectives of anti-imperialism and traditional Christianity. Henry's sophistry apparently is a word game, a similar mismatching rhetorical trick he once plays in the debate with Bates and Williams. He brazenly regards himself as a friend of France simply because he will not "part with a village of it" and will "have it all mine" (166-67). Moreover, the theory he uses to persuade Catherine—suggesting that "when France is mine, and I am yours, then yours is France, and you are mine" (167-68)—in fact sounds more like a sophistical excuse to rationalize his invasion of the country and usurpation of the throne. Essentially, the key point of this sentence lies in the first and the last clauses: "when France is mine" and "you are mine." These two clauses not only express Henry's ambition as a conqueror, but also reflect the essential meaning of the political marriage: the object whom Henry is really going to marry is not Catherine, but the Kingship of France. In certain aspects, in the marriage, the role Catherine plays is but a symbolic bridge connecting the English King and the throne of France. Even though officially she is the wife of Henry, politically, she is perhaps more like a dowry that Henry compulsively seizes from King Charles IV and Queen Isabel.

To sum up, *Henry V* is a play wholly dedicated to the brutal war between England and France. If such a bloody combat is a winner-take-it-all game, King Henry V unquestionably is the biggest winner. Even in the two parts of *Henry IV*, Henry is still the man who takes it all; in Maus's description, he is a man "who has, or wins, everything—whose life seems an unbroken series of successes" (1452). In *Part 1*, he successfully reforms himself from a prodigal son to an honorable warrior with his victory at Shrewsbury. In *Part 2*, he further redeems both his time and prestige with the banishment of Falstaff, acquiring the love and support from his subjects. And eventually in *Henry V*, Henry reaches the apex of his political life by winning the Battle of Agincourt against adverse odds, conquering both the land and the throne of France; besides, he also obtains Princess Catherine as his Queen. By closely reading the three plays, the reader can see that either as a prince or as a king, Henry can always attain what he wants with his excellent skills of theatricality and

rhetoric. To some extent, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* can be understood as Shakespeare's representation of Machiavelli's political doctrine, and Henry as the playwright's projection of the so-called "Machiavellian prince." But neither the plays nor the Prince/King should be simply perceived as Shakespeare's confirmation of Machiavellism. Instead, to a larger extent, they are more like Shakespeare's interpretation of Machiavellian power exercise in a more theatrical point of view. To wit, by refusing to merely read *The Prince* as a book teaching the prince how to practice power with force and fraud, Shakespeare tends to interpret it as a manual guiding the prince how to "act" like a proper prince with different political images and fluent rhetorical skill. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, we do discover some parallels between Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, and Machiavelli's *The Prince*. After carefully comparing these texts, we also find out that, in the core, they in fact deal with the same topic, that is, the connection between politics and performance. All of these works are apt to suggest that "kingship depends for its authority not on God, but on performance" and "political power is secured by theatrical illusion—a populace can best be controlled by dissimulation, image-making, and role-play" (Bulman 162) and, more importantly, by eloquence.



Chapter Four

Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis aims to revisit the intellectual parallel between Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*, attempting to have a further exploration of the relationship between (theatrical) performance and power. By carefully (re) examining the English playwright's three history plays and the Florentine thinker's political treatise, I have shown that the essence of theatricality is very similar to that of politics: both of them are based on the two key elements of rhetoric and representation.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, even though in the Renaissance period Machiavelli was generally regarded as a godless figure mainly for his highly secular political theory, he has gradually been recognized as one of the greatest political thinkers in the world since the 19th century. In the eyes of modern scholars, Machiavelli's major contribution to the development of modern politics is that he attempts to separate politics from the control of the Church, and redefines politics as a practical affair that is independent of any restriction of ethical norms or of religious doctrines. Machiavelli believes that a prince should not hesitate to use any necessary means to achieve his political goal as long as it works. According to the political thinker, in order to survive in the brutal world of realpolitik, a prince must make his decisions or take his actions out of the consideration of "political must" rather than of "moral should." That is to say, Machiavelli is convinced that a proper prince must acquire the ability as well as the bravery to practice the "necessary evil" to benefit either his people or himself. Furthermore, he also suggests that religion is but a device used by the prince to maintain his monarchic authority and manage the social order, implying that in the political point of views, God/god(s) is more like a "tool" that the prince utilizes to "tame" his subjects. Although Machiavelli's political views seem to be self-evident in the present time, in the 16th and 17th centuries, when Europe was still under the great influence (or the powerful control) of Christian doctrines, they did directly clash with Renaissance men's theological

view of the world. In many modern scholars' opinions, this is also the main reason that Machiavelli was generally perceived as a demonic figure.

Nevertheless, through Victoria Kahn's interpretation of Machiavelli's political thought in a broader perspective of the Renaissance rhetorical culture, we discover that the very cause of Renaissance men's fear of Machiavelli may not really be the political thinker's astounding political theory. Instead, what really makes them anxious is the way Machiavelli manipulates rhetoric. For most Renaissance men, rhetoric is not only seen as a neutral technique that people apply to express their thoughts or arguments, but also as a language skill that should be applied in accordance with ethical norms and justice. Yet such a notion that prudential rhetoric should be subordinated to morality, in Machiavelli's eyes, is neither practical nor helpful for men to comprehend the substance of politics. Rather, he attempts to free rhetoric from the restraint of morals and further make it a new set of priority in the domain of *realpolitik*. The famous example is his redefinition of *virtù* as a prince's ability to make practical decisions or take practical actions that is beyond the consideration of norms. From *The Prince* or *The Discourses*, Renaissance men discover that Machiavelli tends to represent his political observation or analysis in a more plausible tone rather than in plain descriptions. He even employs many rhetorical skills like mismatch and syllogism in order to impel his readers to accept his interpretation of power as consisting of force and fraud. For instance, in Chapter 6 of *The Prince*, by comparing (or mismatching) Moses with Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus, those who acquired leaderships by their *virtù*, Machiavelli skillfully changes the role of Moses from a prophet to a prince. Besides, he also suggests that like other three political figures, Moses well understands how to use force and fraud to dominant his people, implying that the Divine Will he presents to the Hebrews in fact is a political strategy.

With the help of Kahn's interpretation of Machiavelli, we can see that what Machiavelli tries to deal with in *The Prince*, as a matter of fact, is not the principle of how to "be" a prince but the strategy of how to "act" like a prince. According to Machiavelli, common people tend to judge a

prince simply by the prince's appearance rather than by his deed. That is, if a prince wants to win the support from his people to sustain his power, he has to try to win their hearts rather than their brains, and the most effective way to win people's hearts is to satisfy their expectation or imagination of a proper prince. Therefore, like an actor, the prince needs to (re)present himself as a promising ruler in the public to attain people's trust and respect so that he may have better odds to achieve his political goals. By warily analyzing Machiavelli's political doctrines illustrated in *The Prince*, we can notice that rhetoric and representation are not only the two main cores in the Florentine thinker's thinking system, but also the two key qualities that, in Machiavelli's eyes, a proper prince ought to possess. Fundamentally, the way Machiavelli ponders and practices politics is very close to the way an actor understands and acts a play. Despite the fact that he does not specifically demonstrate the connection between politics and theatrical performance in his political writings, we do detect—by close reading his rhetorical politics in *The Prince*—that, to certain degrees, Machiavelli tends to understand politics in a theatrical aspect. Furthermore, such a way of thinking politics, when applied to the reading of Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*, can also be helpful for us to understand the issue of power construction in the three history plays. In fact, Machiavelli's political theory certainly provides us a handy approach to revisit Shakespeare's history plays. More importantly, it also shows us a different angle to consider Shakespeare's orientation toward the relation of power, rhetoric, and representation.

In earlier readings of Shakespeare's Henry plays, Prince Hal/King Henry V is often seen as a cold-hearted Machiavellian prince who is apt to treat his tavern friends simply as stepping-stones helping him reach his political purpose. He is also regarded as a sly pretender who is not only hypocritical to people around him but also enjoys fooling them with his acting skill. Yet we need to understand that, in order to survive in the fierce power struggle, Hal is forced to learn to dissimulate his true emotion or thought to avoid being looked through by his political enemies. That is to say,

the Prince has to acquire the ability of how to play the right role on the right occasion and at the right time to disguise his genuine intention: therefore, he can surreptitiously solidify his authority.

Basically, the main themes of the two parts of *Henry IV* and the sequential *Henry V* are all about the link between theatricality and power. We can even say that Prince Hal's theatrical skill surely is his most powerful weapon that helps him defeat his enemies and acquire things he looks for. In *Part 1*, after cautiously planning and patiently preparing for his personal political show in the former part of the entire play, he successfully reforms himself from a prodigal son to a respectable prince/warrior with his victory at the battlefield of Shrewsbury in the end of it. Therefore, in *Part 2*, after inheriting the throne and becoming the new king, Henry employs the banishment of Falstaff as a metaphor of his redemption of time, a bitter farewell to his old friends as well as to his prodigal past. Such a decision, apparently, is not simply made out of the consideration of personal factors. Rather, it serves to be more like a public announcement of his personal/political reformation, aiming to tell his subjects that he not only turns over a new leaf in his life, but also in the history of England. And eventually in *Henry V*, by winning the Battle of Agincourt in France, the conceited English King surely achieves the summit of glory in his reign. In the play, we not only witness how King Henry, with his eloquence, persuades his soldiers to be willing to die for him in his invasion of France, but also how he conquers the heart of Princess Catherine with his personal charisma. Indeed, *Henry V* is the climax of Henry's political show in which he demonstrates us his extraordinary talents of both theatricality and rhetoric; moreover, he also reveals the tight connection between power, rhetoric, and theatrical representation.

Even though the exercise of power and the practice of theater seem to be two different matters, in our rereading of both Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Shakespeare's history plays, we discover that, essentially, they are highly similar to each other. The thematic parallel between the political thinker's treatise and the playwright's three plays should not be considered a mere coincidence. Instead, the similarity between their concepts of the politics certainly reflects

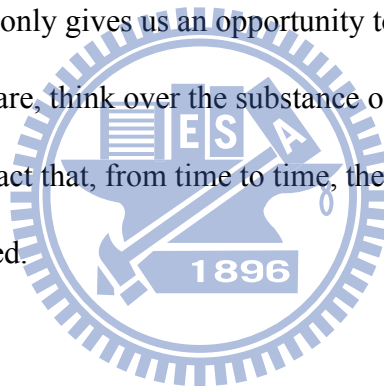
Renaissance men's reflection of the essence of kingship or leadership, trying to rethink the questions about where on earth a government or a monarch's power is from, and more importantly, how the power is constructed, practiced, and then accepted. Through the rereading and rethinking of Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* and Machiavelli's *The Prince* in this thesis, we discover that politics in fact is more than an art of dealing with *fortuna*. In most cases, it is also an art of dealing with people's emotion, expectation, and imagination of the ideal image of a ruler; more precisely, it is an art of how to win people's hearts. In Chapter 25 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli compares *fortuna* to one of the violent rivers, suggesting that

when they are enraged, flood the plains, tear down trees and buildings, wash soil from one place to deposit it in another. Everyone flees before them, everybody yields to their impetus, there is no possibility of resistance. Yet although such is their nature, it does not follow that when they are flowing quietly one cannot take precautions, constructing dykes and embankments so that when the river is in flood they would keep to one channel or their impetus be less wild and dangerous. (79)

Although what Machiavelli tries to illustrate here is the importance of how a prince prepares for the challenge of *fortuna*, in the perspective of modern politics, perhaps we can perceive the challenge of *fortuna* as a metaphor of the trend of public will. Indeed, Machiavelli knows very well that even in a monarchic country, despite the king's highest political authority, the trend of public will or desire can be way more influential on the state of the country. Namely, if the ruler is not able to realize and satisfy what his people really want, his authority may thus be overthrown by the trend of public will.

Accordingly, from our rereading of Shakespeare's three Henry plays and Machiavelli's *The Prince*, we find out that the primary challenge of a prince, in most cases, is how to observe and follow people's will and further win their hearts. It should be noted, though, that a proper prince may not blindly and simply follow the trend of public opinion because in most of the time, people

may be ignorant and shortsighted. Hence, in a long-term perspective, the prince must make extra efforts to construct “dykes and embankments” in advance to channel the trend of public opinion to a right direction, not only helping him achieve his political purpose but also helping the entire country acquire the best benefit. As a result, we can even suggest that, aside from dealing with the challenge of *fortuna* and dealing with people’s emotion, politics, too, is an art of negotiation. The prince always needs to face the challenge of negotiating with different objects on different matters, striving to reach an agreement or a consensus for the sake of the largest political interest. Even though the purpose of politics may vary according to different occasions, the two essential elements in the practice of it, in general, remain the same. To conclude, from this study, we clearly see that the exercise of power/politics is interwoven with the operation of rhetoric and theatrical representation. This discovery not only gives us an opportunity to reconsider how Renaissance men, such as Machiavelli and Shakespeare, think over the substance of power in a more secular perspective, but also reveals us a fact that, from time to time, the boundary between power/politics and theatricality can be very blurred.



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