

Spectacular Tumults: Machiavelli's Florentine Histories and the Notion of *Tumulto*

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## ABSTRACT

Spectacular Tumults: Machiavelli's Florentine Histories and the Notion of Tumulto

Mauricio Suchowlansky

I propose that the notion of *tumulto* in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories should be recognized as having a representational character, meant to provide Machiavelli's readership, the Medici family, with the necessary perspective to build a solid political understanding of the 'movements' of the Florentine Republic. Machiavelli 'spotlights' three tumultuous events –the riots that led to the fall of the tyranny of Walter de Brienne, The *Ciampi* revolt, and the riots that followed the so-called Pazzi conspiracy- to present the parochial fact that Florence needed a new (Republican) government. Machiavelli employed this history writing as a political device, showing his task as a pedagogue to advise his patrons that political success involved a socially accommodating perspective, which encompasses a republican lesson of political accessibility rather than the elimination of opposition in the vain hope of social harmony and political domination. This 'perspective' of the various social discords of the city is particularly coherent with the context of Florence during the post-1512 Medici regime: the political disenfranchisement of the *Ottimatti* sectors, the co-optation of the merchant middle sectors, the lack of political leadership and political knowledge on the part of the remaining members of the clan.

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## 1-Introduction:

In this work, I propose that the notion of *tumulto* in Machiavelli's Florentine Histories should be recognized as having a representational character, meant to provide Machiavelli's readership, mainly the Medici family, with the necessary perspective to build a solid political understanding of the 'movements' of the republic.<sup>1</sup> Tumults are depicted, most of the time, as unexpected events or *accidenti*; the fact that 'accident' is most often the narrative motor of history makes it an ideal literary form for presenting to rulers the need to constantly make provision for the contingent variable and the unexpectedly exogenous event. These are acts that Machiavelli portrays as emblematic, filled with a detailed narrative of violence, aimed to appeal to the readers so as to convince them that a city's social divisions were both a permanent and a healthy aspect of the social and political life in Florence. I believe this approach to Machiavelli's main historical text should be recognized as relevant since the Florentine Histories have been long neglected as text of rhetorical and political significance.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in his *Introduction* to the Histories, Mansfield states that, "the Florentine Histories, as opposed to The Prince and the Discourses on Livy, makes so little of innovation and founding in

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<sup>1</sup> In the *Preface* to his Histories, Machiavelli states, "...if every example of a republic is moving, those which one reads concerning one's own are much more so and much more useful; and if in any other republic there were ever notable divisions, those of Florence are most notable." Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. Laura Banfield and Harvey Mansfield (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990): 6. Some authors have claimed that Machiavelli's major texts were dedicated to the Medici to illustrate the means to found a republic in Florence and perpetuate their ruling over the city. See, Mikael Hornqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 285. Ed King, "Rolling a Stone for the Medici: Machiavelli Pedagogical Service to the Medici Family" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2005) 214-220. Anthony Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) 185.

<sup>2</sup> Felix Gilbert, "Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*: An Essay in Interpretation," in *History: Choice and Commitment*, Ed Franklin Ford (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 1977): 132.

politics and does not dwell on the ‘new prince’ or ‘new modes and orders.’”<sup>3</sup> Mansfield, I believe, misses the main target of the text: a lesson of parochial pedagogy to Machiavelli’s Medici patrons. The new Medici rulers needed to be let in on the ‘secret’ that political success involved a socially accommodating perspective, which encompasses a republican lesson of political accessibility rather than an elimination of opposition in the vain hope of social harmony and political domination. This ‘perception’ of the various social discords of the city is particularly coherent with the problems of the post-1512 Medici regime: the political disenfranchisement of the *Ottimatti*, the co-optation of the merchant middle sectors, the lack of political leadership and political knowledge on the part of the remaining members of the clan.<sup>4</sup> In other words, *tumulto* takes on relevance once comprehended within a particular contextual framework in order to give a parochial lesson to his readership.

Whenever Machiavelli comes across a tumultuous event –the rebellion against Walter de Brienne, the *Ciampi* or the riots that followed the so-called Pazzi conspiracy against Giuliano and Lorenzo de’ Medici- he reframes it by adding his own perspective. For instance, in Chapter III, Machiavelli recounts in detail the events that followed the *Ciampi* with the appealing to both the character of the actors and those of the readers. “[Michele di Lando, the spokesperson of the *Ciampi*,] had gallows erected in the piazza...Ser Nuto was carried by the multitude to the piazza and hung on the gallows by one foot; and as whoever was around tore off a piece from him, at a stroke there was

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<sup>3</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: XII.

<sup>4</sup> *Ottimatti* or ‘Optimates’ were the members of the aristocratic sector of Florence in the Renaissance, who were banned of from the political scene of the Republic by the emerging *Mezzani* or merchant middle sectors during the fourteenth century. See, John Najemy, *A History of Florence: 1200-1575* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 5-6.

nothing left of him but his foot.”<sup>5</sup> This characterization of the tumults of the city on the part of Machiavelli comes to be much more salient once his account is compared to certain sources and contemporary historians. Machiavelli purposefully alters and inflates the details of previous historical narratives in what can be defined as a process of ‘reproduction and appropriation.’<sup>6</sup> To provide pieces of pedagogical value, Machiavelli purposefully re-structures these three historical events. He creates three tumults saturated with detail and reduced in scope –in a process of ‘historical foreshortening-, as if these events that lasted for long time should be perceived as short, rapid and concise. Harvey Mansfield states in his introduction to the Florentine Histories that Machiavelli fills out the gap between facts with opinion, “and it is the duty of the historian, in the absence of scribes and witnesses, to infer human intention and to make it explicit in speeches, adding sense to actions [...]”<sup>7</sup> This particular aspect of Machiavelli’s Histories, I believe, is evidence of a work much closer to that of a pedagogue than that of a historian. In a similar vein, I argue that part of the ‘pedagogical spectacle’ resides in the making and recreating of tumults into artistic representations, or objects of study that, much like a piece of art, are meant to aesthetically awaken certain senses. These acts, with the intended changes brought by Machiavelli’s own perspective, are meant to cause in the readers a mass (re)awakening of emotional aspects of the *ethos* or the spirit, for, tumults

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<sup>5</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128. See also, Mark Phillips, “Barefoot Boy Makes Good,” *Speculum* 59 (1984): 601-603. Similar representational acts are presented in Chapter II, where he recounts the events after the fall of the regime led by the Duke of Athens. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 97-100. See also, Sebastian de Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989): 84-85. In addition, the events that followed the Pazzi conspiracy emphasize on similar traits. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: X, 326. Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 137. De Grazia 326. Federico Chabod, *Machiavelli and the Renaissance*, trans. David Moore (New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965): 11.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine*: 135.

<sup>7</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: XI.

are meant to seek the transformation of the power structure and/or the political order of the body politic.<sup>8</sup>

The tumultuous events in the history of the city of Florence represent a pedagogical lesson that provides his readership, first, the political knowledge they lacked, and second, a means to transform this knowledge into political action.<sup>9</sup> *Tumulto* is employed in order to portray violent events that emerged in Florence to put an end to a particular regime, to regain the freedom previously lost, and/or change the city's 'modes and orders.' In other words, tumults are some type of 'check' on individual political ambitions, principally those of tyrants, and I suggest that Machiavelli makes use of these exemplars to let his readership -the *de facto* rulers of the city- know that their task is to maintain the three Florentine social classes in tension under the 'best possible' system, i.e. a Republic.<sup>10</sup>

## 2-Methodology:

I aim to employ the 'Cambridge School approach,' which is primarily associated with the works of Quentin Skinner. This historiographical method provides several tools

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<sup>8</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 601

<sup>9</sup> In a text written to the request of Giovanni de' Medici -Pope Leo X, though truly meant for Giulio, Machiavelli suggests that, though under Medici control, the government of Florence, in his suggested republican form, must take into account the various divisions of the city. Niccolò Machiavelli, "A Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence," in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert, Vol I (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989) 108, 113 and 114. For a concise account of the text, see de Grazia: 181. For a historical account of Machiavelli's relationship to the Medici see John Najemy, "Machiavelli and the Medici: The Lessons of Florentine History" *Renaissance Quarterly* 35:4 (1982):553-555. Gisela Bock, "Civil Discord in Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 200-201.

<sup>10</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield Jr. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 39.



that allow for the recreation, re-description and interpretation of past formulations.<sup>11</sup> According to Skinner, the main aim of a historian of ideas is to recover, “what the author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, the primary intellectual endeavour of a historian in this sense is to recover and explain the political intentions of political authors, which can only be fully comprehended by understanding the author’s point in producing that work, and this cannot be elucidated without including an understanding of the political community within which the author operates.

Skinner’s methodological works began as a criticism to previous approaches in the history of ideas. Having ruled out two ‘orthodox’ and conflicting methods -the socio-political and economic contextualization of a text and the idea of “the autonomy of the *text* itself as the sole necessary key to its own meaning”-, Skinner seeks to isolate what the agent was ‘doing in’ issuing a particular utterance.<sup>13</sup> This approach regarded with the necessary ‘seriousness’ and precaution, provides the opportunity to read ‘beyond’ the actual text so as to accurately recover the meaning of a particular historical utterance. That is, to understand the text one must aim to understand the ‘intention’ the author might have intended to his textual communication, which can only be recovered with a comprehension of the contextual political and social context in which the author lived.

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<sup>11</sup> For an account of the various criticisms of this approach, see Kenneth Minogue, “Method in Intellectual History,” in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988) 188-190. Also, Peter Steinberger, “Analysis and History of Political Thought,” *American Political Science Review* 103(1): 135.

<sup>12</sup> Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas” in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988): 63.

<sup>13</sup> Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*: 4. Quentin Skinner, “Motives, Intentions and Interpretations of Texts” in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988): 74.

Skinner considers four types of assumptions in the study of intellectual history that, according to the author, have pervaded the search for historical knowledge.<sup>14</sup> He labels them ‘myths,’ to denote the employment of a particular, “sloppy,” type of methodology: the myths of *doctrines*, *coherence*, *prolepsis* and *parochialism*.<sup>15</sup> He criticizes any method governed by “the claim that the text itself should form the self-sufficient object of inquiry and understanding.”<sup>16</sup> The problem is, according to Skinner, that such an approach presupposes that texts contain what could be defined as ‘perennial truths’ or authoritative universal ideas.<sup>17</sup> The implicit assumption presented by this method is that scholars need only to rely on what the text has to say about these ‘perennial questions.’<sup>18</sup> Skinner portrays the ‘myth of prolepsis’ as “statements or given actions [that have to] await a future action in order for them to attain the meaning claimed on their behalf.”<sup>19</sup> Another “historical absurdity” is what Skinner defines as the “myth of coherence.” It may be that “a given classic writer is not altogether consistent, or even that he fails altogether to give any systematic account of his beliefs,” and the historian may mistakenly conceive as his task “to supply or find in each of these texts the coherence which they may appear to lack.”<sup>20</sup> Sydney Anglo criticizes “the research industry which invests [Machiavelli’s] every utterance with significance, his every completed work as a masterpiece, his every saying as a subtlety, and his every literary mannerism as a stylistic

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<sup>14</sup> Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*: 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: 4-6. I believe these ‘four mythologies’ that Skinner suggests to avoid should not be regarded as a ‘dogma’ for students in the history of ideas but rather as a precondition so as to extrapolate, or perhaps expand, from them and make an interpretation that aims to go ‘beyond’ historicity.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid: 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid: 34-35.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid: 34-35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid: 35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid: 35.

felicity.”<sup>21</sup> This ‘myth’ attributes “significance in such a way that no place is left for the analysis of what the author himself meant to say.”<sup>22</sup> Skinner also refers to the mistaken attempts to overemphasize the ‘familiarity’ or closeness of an alien notion or subject of study as the ‘myth of parochialism.’ What results out of this is “that the observer may misdescribe, by a process of historical foreshortening, both the sense and the intended reference of a given work.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, Skinner highlights the mistaken comprehension of “Scattered or off-remarks being turned into a doctrine or mandatory theme,” which he labels as the ‘myth of doctrines.’<sup>24</sup> The characteristic point of this ‘historical absurdity’ is to set out a meaning to a text so as to make it into an almost intellectual monolithic entity.

To apply Skinner’s method to the study of political thought is, on the one hand, a means, among others, to avoid what could be defined as “doxography” or the “attempt to impose a problematic on a canon drawn up without reference to that problematic, or, conversely, to impose a canon on a problematic constructed without reference to that canon.”<sup>25</sup> Skinner’s approach helps the researcher to avoid the dilemma of putting too much emphasis on the relevance of a particular contemporary problematic upon classical texts.<sup>26</sup> Skinner’s analytical approach provides two “suggested rules” that stem out of the abovementioned ‘myths.’ The first is that in order to gain ‘uptake’ of the intentions of a given author performing an utterance one has to go ‘beyond’ the actual text.<sup>27</sup> One cannot

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<sup>21</sup> Anglo: 11.

<sup>22</sup> Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*: 52.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid: 54.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: 34.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Rorty, “The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres”, in *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, eds. Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 62.

<sup>26</sup> My thesis aims to present the question on the employment of the notion of *tumulto* in Machiavelli not as a ‘perennial question’ but rather to situate and comprehend how the author dealt with a problematic particularly inherent to his own time.

<sup>27</sup> Skinner, *Meaning, Intentions and Interpretations of Texts*: 77.

fully comprehend the meaning of a text without an understanding of the context during which the text was written. Skinner's second proposition is to concentrate "on the mental world" of the author.<sup>28</sup> That is, to get a grasp of an author's beliefs at the particular moment the utterance was made. The historian of ideas should attempt to recover the linguistic conventions of the time, and, if possible, the illocutionary intentions of the author. In other words, to pursue historical knowledge *à la Skinner*, one must try to become aware of the conventions that set the stage upon which a given utterance was performed.<sup>29</sup>

Skinner's proposed method of historiographical inquiry is a commitment to maintain the authoritative meaning a particular utterance, or in the case of my research a particular notion, might have had at the time the utterance was made. On the other hand, this method avoids isolating a given question within its particular historical context, which may be regarded as meaningless for the understanding of contemporary political issues.<sup>30</sup> That is, this type of historical endeavour may help us to have a different look at our inherited beliefs; it provides a critical tool with which to avoid a 'parochial' view of our own political understandings in order to broaden our sense of possibilities in political and social terms.<sup>31</sup> It "offer[s] us an additional means of reflecting on what we believe,

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<sup>28</sup> Skinner, *Meaning, Intentions and Interpretations of Texts*: 78.

<sup>29</sup> As a call to prudence, in a later work, Skinner acknowledges that his "earliest methodological essays...were avowedly polemical, with the result –which I now mildly regret- that were written in a tone of 'enthusiasm' for which I have recently been rebuked." Quentin Skinner, "Analysis of Political Thought and Action," in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988): 98.

<sup>30</sup> Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*: 49. Critics have argued that the value of such approach is "historical rather than philosophical," hence highlighting a sort of 'hyper-historicity' and 'hypo philosophical analysis' on the part of Skinner. Steinberger: 142.

<sup>31</sup> As Skinner claims, intellectual history enables us, "to acquire a perspective from which to view our own form of life in a more self-critical way, enlarging our present horizons instead of fortifying local prejudices." Quentin Skinner, "A Reply to my Critics", in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, eds. James Tully (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988): 287.

and thus strengthening our present beliefs by way of testing them against alternative possibilities, or else of improving them...”<sup>32</sup>

### 3-Literature Review:

In common with many critics, I believe that Machiavelli’s use of the notion of *tumulto* in the Florentine Histories should be regarded as a ‘pedagogical spectacle,’ since Machiavelli appears to consciously portray these historical and political acts as artistic tableaux. Hanna Pitkin acknowledges Machiavelli’s theatrical use of perspective and representation. Whereas “Most people see from a single point of view and have no perspective on themselves, no awareness of perspective...[Machiavelli] brought to his wide experience among the great an insatiable curiosity and a passion for observation as a way of appropriating their power.”<sup>33</sup> Pitkin recognizes that Machiavelli is able to comprehend the various vertices of human perception and the relationship between appearances and reality in political life; hence, he is capable of creating synthetic means of communicating his political lessons.<sup>34</sup> Scholars, such as Ankersmit, Von Vacano and Anglo present Machiavelli as an ‘artist,’ whose main resource for ‘painting the political landscape’ is the use of representation and imagery.<sup>35</sup> Ankersmit praises Machiavelli’s “perspectivist difference...an essentially aesthetic divide, that separates the prince and the people from each other, a separation as decisive as that of a painting and what is

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<sup>32</sup> Skinner, *A Reply to my Critics*: 288.

<sup>33</sup> Pitkin: 35.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid: 36.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Ankersmit, *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996) 120. Diego Von Vacano, *The Art of Power: Machiavelli, Nietzsche and the Making of Aesthetic Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007) 141-145. Anglo: 247.

represented by the painting.”<sup>36</sup> Anglo highlights the significance of Machiavelli’s love for tableau narratives that “arrest the attention and shake up all one’s preconceptions. He is always more the artist striving for effects rather than a serious political analyst...”<sup>37</sup>

Several authors have highlighted the relevance of Machiavelli’s take on theatricality for both rhetorical and educational purposes. Chabod, for instance, regards Machiavelli as dominated by an imaginative *pensée*, which allows him to go beyond the historical and systematic account of events. Though not explicitly, Chabod suggests that the Florentine secretary holds a theatrical perspective of the political world due to “the continual and progressive blending of the two worlds, the logical and the imaginative – these have their counterpart in the graphic, incisive, and intensely vivacious quality of the formal expression.”<sup>38</sup> Rebhorn understands Machiavelli’s use of rhetoric as a tool that extends beyond the actual employment of words; he sees a significant nonverbal element that fills Machiavelli’s texts with visual and emotional traits, all meant to persuade and somehow educate the reader.<sup>39</sup> “His princes are creators of shows, of *spettacoli* [...]”<sup>40</sup> Similarly, de Grazia presents Machiavelli as capable of “staging” events as part of his rhetorical style, which is meant to provide exemplars for political action and the rhetorical character needed to participate in politics.<sup>41</sup> More specific to our concern in this thesis, Phillips argues that Machiavelli’s contribution in his account of the rebellion of the wool-carders is to ‘spotlight’ and praise the individual qualities of Michele di Lando,

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<sup>36</sup> Ankersmit: 120.

<sup>37</sup> Anglo: 247-248.

<sup>38</sup> Chabod: 24.

<sup>39</sup> Wayne Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men’s Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) 55-56.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid: 88. Also, Wayne Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli’s Confidence Man* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press): 54.

<sup>41</sup> De Grazia: 333-334.

much in the sense of a theatrical *mis en scène*.<sup>42</sup> Phillips states, “It is precisely the heroic quality in Machiavelli’s re-creation of Michele” in which “His motives and actions so dominate that in the end the whole episode becomes the *theatre of virtù*.”<sup>43</sup>

I take the artistic analogies further by suggesting that Machiavelli’s historiographical method purposely reshapes the account of the events in order to construct what I have defined as ‘pedagogical spectacle.’ History was for Machiavelli “a framework onto which he hung, almost arbitrarily, his political message.”<sup>44</sup> Felix Gilbert stresses that Machiavelli’s Florentine Histories provides a selective and thorough series of accounted events, though the narrative does not comprise a connected history.<sup>45</sup> “Events which Machiavelli believed contained valuable historical lessons –such as the tyranny of the Duke of Athens and the revolt of the Ciompi- are recited in great detail, whereas the happenings of intervening decades are hardly mentioned.”<sup>46</sup> In his historiographical study of the *Ciompi* revolt and the character of its leader, Michele di Lando, Phillips states that, “[Machiavelli’s historical accounts] can be taken as a kind of instruction to the reader, who is told to give his attention to what is most characteristic of history, its detailed story.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Chabod claims, “The value of what he says does not lie in the exactness of the detail. It lies in his inexhaustible creativeness, which even overlooks known facts, because it strives above the all after continual self-development and self-renewal through an ever-widening experience.”<sup>48</sup> Ankersmit recognizes a similar historical perspective by recognizing “that we may well see the past from a different

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<sup>42</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 600-601.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid: 601. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>44</sup> Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965): 238.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid: 238.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid: 238-239.

<sup>47</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 587.

<sup>48</sup> Chabod: 11.

perspective than did the historical agent living in that past and that a wholly new historical world will be revealed to us as soon as we do.”<sup>49</sup> Ankersmit acknowledges the difference between historical fact and historical account; Machiavelli appears to consider history more as a literary convention, as a means to elaborate and theorize about the political problems of his time. As such, Machiavelli purposely re-produces the historical accounts of his sources as to fit the events into his own political and rhetorical messages for pedagogical purposes.

Many critics fail to emphasize the purpose of Machiavelli’s use of detailed accounts in the Florentine Histories to ‘spotlight’ events loaded with his political message. De Grazia comments that the civil discords of Machiavelli’s *patria* “are not to be mistaken for the tumults he praises in the *Discourses*,” which “seems to be indicating commotions of civil protest...Then, ‘tumults’ do not harm...They tune the laws more finely.”<sup>50</sup> Though de Grazia provides a significant account of *tumulto*, he places no emphasis on Machiavelli’s use of the notion in Machiavelli’s Histories. De Grazia disregards Machiavelli’s paratactic and judicious analysis of the various tumults in Florentine history, which makes his account less credible both analytically and historically. He does discuss Machiavelli’s account of the mob that gathered in the *Piazza della Signoria* demanding the fall of Walter, the Duke of Athens. He states that the event is recounted in such a way that shows the reader how the furor and cruelty of the event appear to have an aesthetic component.<sup>51</sup> Still, de Grazia neglects its importance and its pedagogical force, since Machiavelli does not praise this event as he does with tumults in

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<sup>49</sup> Ankersmit: 173.

<sup>50</sup> De Grazia: 185.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid: 84-86.



the Roman Republic.<sup>52</sup> Phillips' historiographical study of the *Ciampi* claims, "There is clearly an enormous contrast between the crowded spectacles presented by the chronicles and the powerfully concentrated heroic drama of Machiavelli."<sup>53</sup> Though Phillips does consider Machiavelli's paratactic use of the *Ciampi* event, I believe his interpretation does not fully consider its relevance in depth. Both de Grazia and Phillips unfortunately fail to recognize the symbolism of both the execution of Messer Nuto and the fall of Walter, examples which I suggest are mostly meant to show that tumults have the potential force of a *pharmakon*; that is, tumults can provide dissimilar results for the 'health' of the body politic. As Bock states civil discords are "...both the life and the death of a republic," as an allusion to the existence of various and contrasting interest in any republic, and that though they can become an active fundamental part of the system, discords can also bring about its end.<sup>54</sup>

I propose that the rhetorical force of the notion of *tumulto* highlights the skills required to become a leader of a city that is filled with various and dissimilar ambitions. De Grazia highlights the fact that Machiavelli's pedagogical aspect of his texts and his call for political action: "In each of his serious works, while specifying the qualifications for the one-man-alone, [Machiavelli] is recruiting and educating him at the same time."<sup>55</sup> Anglo states that, "The leading Florentine families of the fifteenth century, one is forced to assume, were not of the same calibre –having all the faults but none of the virtues of

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<sup>52</sup> De Grazia: 185.

<sup>53</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 598.

<sup>54</sup> Bock: 201.

<sup>55</sup> De Grazia: 333-334.

their predecessors: and this is a judgement which must, inferentially, also be applied to the Medici.”<sup>56</sup>

I suggest that, unlike other types of political violence that can put at stake the ‘health’ of the polity, *tumulto* infers a ‘teaching’ or political perspective of the social discords of Florence that Giulio de’ Medici needed so as to become Florence’s innovator and bring about a new balance of ‘modes and orders.’ In one of the most authoritative analysis of Machiavelli’s text, Gilbert comes to present Machiavelli’s historical account very much as a “steady process of decline” on the part of the politics of the city of Florence.<sup>57</sup> Gilbert depicts Machiavelli’s account of civil violence as part of the course of history that “moves in its own predestined direction which is beyond human control.”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Anglo claims, “the only sure thing is that no class, no party, and no form of government, emerges unscathed from his pessimistic scrutiny.”<sup>59</sup> French scholar Martine Leibovici states that “A republic that leaves the conflicts free to develop must know about this proximity and allow suitable institutions to give ‘an outlet’ for the discharge of those partisan hatreds.”<sup>60</sup> That is, it portrays civic violence as inevitable, as part of the ‘movements’ of any body politic, as if politics were about a cycle of decline and rise.

Gilbert is conscious of the fact that Machiavelli wants to show that the situation of Florence at the time of writing the text carried “the possibilities of a new ascent” though he is silent about the difference in scope between civic discords and the pedagogy that stems out of the notion of *tumulto*.<sup>61</sup> For Gilbert, “Italy expects its *redentore*.”<sup>62</sup> In a

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<sup>56</sup> Anglo: 179.

<sup>57</sup> Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 148.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid: 152.

<sup>59</sup> Anglo: 178.

<sup>60</sup> Martine Leibovici, “From Fight to Debate: Machiavelli and the Revolt of the Ciompi,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 2002 (28): 650.

<sup>61</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 150.

similar vein, Parel states, “The Florentine Histories...presents us with a picture of a body politic whose humours are malignant, and which is unlucky enough to be without an innovator –until, that is, Machiavelli himself was asked by Leo X to write a constitution for it.”<sup>63</sup> Gilbert’s quasi-apocalyptic claim, with its portrayal of a religious climax, fails to take into account that civic violence is, ironically “what threatens [the unity of the city]...conflict and political dissension... [That] is in fact the condition for their cohesion and existence.”<sup>64</sup>

#### **4-Tumulto in Context:**

In this section, I will attempt to isolate three ‘tumultuous’ historical events that Machiavelli highlights and show his use of theatricality as a device in his narrative style. Although this inquiry will be mainly restricted to a single aspect of Machiavelli’s historiographical work, it also seeks to stress the problem of how Machiavelli’s turn to study and writing of Florentine history marks a clear distinction from earlier and contemporary chronicles and historians. That is, Machiavelli’s perception of violent civic events suffers what could be defined as a process of ‘reproduction and appropriation.’<sup>65</sup> Certainly, he refers to and uses the available sources in his search for historical facts and raw data. In the Florentine Histories, for instance, the reader is reminded of the author’s diligent reading of “two of the most excellent historians” of the city of Florence, Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini, who also happened to be Niccolò’s predecessors

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<sup>62</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 151.

<sup>63</sup> Parel: 8.

<sup>64</sup> Ankersmit: 172.

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 135. Also, Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 554-555.

in the Florentine Chancery.<sup>66</sup> Still, Machiavelli does not feel in debt to his distinguished predecessors; he does not pay *hommage* to them.<sup>67</sup> “Machiavelli presents...a gloomy picture of the history of Florence, a city of which, a century earlier, Bruni had written not merely a glorifying history but even a *Laudatio* [...].”<sup>68</sup> As such, his approach vis-à-vis the material is almost rebellious: the Florentine secretary takes into account *their* perspectives on the history of Florence—that is, the account of those who had preserved the memory of the events prior to and during Machiavelli’s times. Yet, consciously and linguistically, Machiavelli reframes them in order to add up *his* personal and pedagogical account.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Preface* section to his text, Machiavelli tells his readership that Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini’s accounts of the history of Florence did a great deal to explain the events previous to Cosimo de’ Medici’s reign.<sup>70</sup> Still, Machiavelli claims,

I had read their writings diligently so as to see with what orders and modes they proceeded in writing, so that by imitating them our history might be better approved by readers. I found that in the descriptions of the wars waged by the Florentines with foreign princes and peoples they had been very diligent, but as regards civil discords and internal enmities, and *the effects arising from them*, they were altogether silent about the one and so brief about the other as to be of no use to readers or pleasure to anyone.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 6.

<sup>67</sup> De Grazia: 190 and 285.

<sup>68</sup> Bock: 182. Machiavelli writes to Guicciardini on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1525 criticizing Florence’s leadership, “I am just now beginning to write again, and I vent my feelings by accusing the princes who have all done everything they can to bring us to this situation.” James Atkinson and David Sices, *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996): 371.

<sup>69</sup> Moulakis claims, “Machiavelli himself, though much indebted to [the civic humanist] tradition, departs from it in such salient ways that he cannot be simply identified with it.” Athanasios Moulakis, *Republican Realism in Renaissance Florence: Francesco Guicciardini’s Discorso di Logrognò* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998) 41. Also, Gilbert: 139, 238-239. Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 586. Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 555.

<sup>70</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 6.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*: 6. Emphasis is mine.

Machiavelli makes the claim that both humanist historians, Bruni and Poggio, neglected the discords, the enmities ‘inside’ the city and their *effects*, or their consequences, as if these were unworthy of retelling. Machiavelli makes the case that although his text will be an account of the history of the city of Florence as much as the works of Bruni and Poggio, the main focus of his narrative will not be foreign wars and affairs ‘outside’ of Florence, but rather the internal divisions and the consequences that stem out of them.<sup>72</sup>

The Florentine secretary not only claims that their lack of interest at this civic violence is “unworthy of great men” but also that “nothing else delights or instructs in history” than “that which is described in detail.”<sup>73</sup> Machiavelli the historian employs a narrative, unlike those of previous historians of the city, which is purposefully meant to ‘spotlight’ and to describe in detail certain events that appear to be disconnected from the overall subject of the text, i.e. the history of the city of Florence.<sup>74</sup> Detailed retelling of specific events is a purposeful tool to appeal to the imagination of the reader: first, it portrays a perspective of a given historical event, and second it mobilizes the *ingegno* or imagination of the readership to provide, as Ascoli defines, a ‘gift of counsel.’<sup>75</sup> Much like the *Preface* section of his Prince, Machiavelli’s Histories propose a true utility to mass detail that leads to a pedagogical point, since this process becomes almost muscle shaping, as if appealing to sensuous cognition were directly linked to an almost physical reaction of the reader. It privileges that pedagogical point over any other considerations of narrative flow or historiographical veracity. Details that are of no use to readers or

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<sup>72</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 586. De Grazia: 182-183.

<sup>73</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 6.

<sup>74</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine*: 139. Similarly, Bock argues “...Machiavelli’s political views are implicit in his historical account...” Bock: 186.

<sup>75</sup> Albert Russell Ascoli, “Machiavelli’s Gift of Counsel,” in *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993): 219.

pleasure to anyone are not details worthy of note. In other words, the particular employment of the notion of *tumulto* and the recounting of civil protests on the part of Machiavelli provide a detailed political rhetoric that imply an understanding of particular historical events and the comprehension of a particular contemporary political problematic so as to provide counsel to the reader.<sup>76</sup> As an example, Najemy states, “A brief look at the anti-Medicean conspiracies of 1466 and 1478 should suffice to highlight the main features of a perspective that Machiavelli now held with evident assurance” [...] “Machiavelli views them both as the product of feuds, rivalries and jealousies within the Medici party, as a logical consequence, therefore, of the very same ‘modi privati’ that had raised the Medici to prominence in the first place.”<sup>77</sup> Machiavelli has devised a history text that has the intended impact of a political pamphlet: not merely meant to inform but also to act as a ‘wake-up call’ to its readership.

Rather than emphasizing the need for a causally connected history, Machiavelli regards history as a literary device, as a tool needed for his narrative in order to bring about the full account of pedagogical events or ‘pedagogical spectacles.’ Some scholars have argued that the powerful (and lengthy) literary exposition of certain historical episodes suggests that Machiavelli’s Histories “does not comprise a connected history.”<sup>78</sup> Anglo states that the Florentine Histories “is a highly selective, idiosyncratic, and often wilfully-inaccurate narrative serving as the raw material with which Machiavelli illustrates his politico-historical preconceptions.”<sup>79</sup> Najemy, on the other hand, stresses the lack of the necessary knowledge of the political past of Florence on the part of the

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<sup>76</sup> Von Vacano: 139. Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 100. De Grazia: 283 and 284.

<sup>77</sup> Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 572.

<sup>78</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 238.

<sup>79</sup> Anglo: 166.

younger Medici patrons, especially concerning their insufficient knowledge of the history of the city.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, whatever their political appreciations, the bare facts of the historical events should be assumed to be well known by Machiavelli's readers. Hence, the meticulous narrative of the Histories with its quasi-mythical portrayal of deeds and events should neither be disregarded nor misplaced. In order to recapture the Machiavelli's capacity for blending the imaginative and pedagogical perspective and the historical account one should return to the scenes drawn by previous and contemporary chronicles and historians. As Bock claims, "...no passage of the *Istorie Fiorentine* may be used to demonstrate the author's implicit or explicit political view without examining if it was taken over from one of the sources or if it was Machiavelli's original contribution."<sup>81</sup>

#### *4.1-Historical Method in Machiavelli's Histories*

This historiographical analysis is also relevant in methodological terms by reviewing the accounts of other historians and chroniclers and grasping their own perspectives we can attempt to interpret Machiavelli's writing and better comprehend, in part, his intention. "Machiavelli gives his fullest attention to the great episodes of civil disorder for which Florence was famous: the tyranny and expulsion of the Duke of Athens, the Ciompi revolt [and] the Pazzi conspiracy."<sup>82</sup> The central task of this part of my work is to show that Machiavelli adds a 'spectacular' and theatrical vision to the

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<sup>80</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 427.

<sup>81</sup> Bock: 186.

<sup>82</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 586. Similarly, Gilbert states, "Events which Machiavelli believed contained valuable historical lessons –such as the tyranny of the Duke of Athens and the revolt of the Ciompi- are recited in great detail, whereas the happenings of intervening decades are hardly mentioned." Gilbert, *Machiavelli's Istorie Fiorentine*: 238-239.

bloody executions that followed the fall of the Duke of Athens, the execution of Messer Nuto, and the killing of the Pazzi. The narratives about these three tumultuous discords happen to be graphically violent, blending the logical-historical world with that of the imaginative and political world of Machiavelli himself.<sup>83</sup>

I offer a variety of depictions of these three events by returning to the contemporary chronicles by Alamanno Acciaiuoli and the *Cronaca D'Anonimo* (Anonymous Chronicles, also known as *Cronaca dello Squittinatore*) for the case of the *Ciampi* example. The Florentine chronicles exhaustively cover the process and the events of the *Ciampi* particularly since they, as Phillips states, “do not speak with one voice.”<sup>84</sup> That is, they retell the events from dissimilar political perspectives and vary especially in comparison to Machiavelli’s *Histories*. Green argues that though the chronicles seem to anticipate Machiavelli in terms of “neutrality of observation and a suspension of moral judgement,” they remain historically framed, lacking the analytical and political quality of the work of the Florentine secretary.<sup>85</sup> They all bring about the various tensions and inter-relations inherent to the chronicles’ status and position as active participants of the events they retell. Yet, Machiavelli’s account is unique in terms of the appropriation of history into a political device. In addition to the chronicles, I will make use of the histories of Leonardo Bruni and Francesco Guicciardini.

Bruni’s *History of the Florentine People* is particularly significant in the sense that it provides a model of humanist history, “concerned with the inculcation of moral and spiritual values and the elegant inspiration of the reader to right conduct.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Chabod: 24.

<sup>84</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 592.

<sup>85</sup> Louis Green, *Chronicle Into History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972): 107.

<sup>86</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine*: 137, 139.



Guicciardini, whose History of Florence included an account of the events that followed the Pazzi conspiracy, was a personal acquaintance of Machiavelli, for which Machiavelli's epistolary exchange is a valuable proof.<sup>87</sup> Though both shared sympathy for the (re)foundation of the Florentine republican regime, Guicciardini was an active participant in Medicean politics and a proponent of an aristocratic republic.<sup>88</sup> Pocock refers to Guicciardini's *pensée* about contemporary Florentine political affairs as an "antithesis of what Machiavelli had to say."<sup>89</sup> The analysis of Guicciardini's History provides an account of a contemporary of Machiavelli who, as Gilbert stresses, was very much concerned with "the causal connections of political events" [...] "adding factual details on the political situation under discussion."<sup>90</sup>

#### *4.2-Tumulto and Tyranny: The Duke of Athens*

In the second chapter of the Florentine Histories, Machiavelli retells the story of Walter de Brienne, Duke of Athens, who became the governor of Florence in 1343. Machiavelli portrays Brienne literally as a "tyrant," who held the military and political leadership of the city with "arrogance and cruelty."<sup>91</sup> The author expresses that the outcome of the tyrannical rule of Brienne over Florence was a "tumult in the Mercato Vecchio" on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1343, and the execution of one of his close allies, Messer

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<sup>87</sup> In a letter written on April 16 1527 to Francesco Vettori, Machiavelli claims, "I love Francesco Guicciardini..." Atkinson and Sices: 416.

<sup>88</sup> J.G. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975) 154. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 244.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*: 240

<sup>90</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 245-246. Chabod states, "Machiavelli the historian is sometimes less circumstantial, less precise, and even less shrewd in his reconstruction of single incidents than Guicciardini; yet, it is this fact alone that enables him to write his masterpieces..." Chabod: 11.

<sup>91</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 94.

Guglielmo d'Assisi, and his under-aged son.<sup>92</sup> The vivid and detailed account of his rule and the consequent execution shows the *popolo* as a furious multitude, willing to take revenge on Brienne's deeds, though "The multitude having purged itself with the blood of these two..." let Brienne and his vicar to flee the city unharmed.<sup>93</sup> It should not be a surprise to anyone that the portrayal of both Brienne's personal traits and the bloody execution of his personal acquaintances can be seen to be largely a creation of the imaginative writing of Machiavelli.<sup>94</sup> If we return to Leonardo Bruni's History of the Florentine People as an authoritative account of the events, we may be able to perceive, and perhaps recapture, the extent to which the historical image evolved in the more than one hundred years that separated Machiavelli's Histories from his sources.

Prior to the ascent of Walter as governor "for life," Florence was dominated by a competition between two distinct though still overlapping political and social classes. The *grandi* or wealthy families organized in terms of "agnatic lineages" and a larger, though more economically modest, community of local merchants and traders organized into guilds.<sup>95</sup> Most of the first part of the thirteenth century was filled with political rivalries and violent clashes between these two sectors, highlighted in Dante's Paradiso as a contrast with the more 'tranquil' and 'simple' Florence of the previous century.<sup>96</sup> The new merchant elite that emerged as a political competitor by the mid-thirteenth century were an economically based ruling group, which did not have the military habits of the previous patrician leaders. Machiavelli perceives this aspect of the new elite in a negative

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<sup>92</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 98-99.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*: 99.

<sup>94</sup> In this case, it seems that Machiavelli is not to be blamed for the entire misreading of the events. Najemy says that after the expulsion of the tyrant, "the Florentines created the legend of the brutal and corrupt despot who tried to deprive them of their liberty." Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 135.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*: 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*: 7.

fashion. As he puts it elsewhere, the “civilian habits and manners” of the merchants became “effeminate,” hence breaking with the “harmony” between the “civilian life and military life.”<sup>97</sup> The Florentine merchants who came to dominate *lo stato* from the fourteenth century onwards were not a ‘warrior class;’ they were not fully prepared to take on the responsibility of military matters in Florence.<sup>98</sup> The new leading families principally followed either business or professional lives and lacked sufficient military expertise and ‘manpower.’ In fact, they were expressly denied the right to lead their *patria*’s armies. Florentine law prohibited its native sons from leading the city’s forces into battle.<sup>99</sup> This is a main reason that led Florence to rely on mercenary armies and *condottiere*, professional and foreign military leaders. In his Prince, Machiavelli advises, “a prince should have no other object, nor any other thought, nor take anything else of his art but that of war and its orders and discipline; for that is the only art which is of concern to one who commands.”<sup>100</sup> The shift from military to business matters on the part of the ruling sectors of the city of Florence (and Machiavelli’s lifelong attempt to return it as a central concern of the leadership of the *patria*) takes on relevance once the context in which Walter is given the *potestà* is taken into account.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, “The Art of War,” in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others Volume II*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989): 566. Najemy states, “The elite’s propensity for violence and *vendetta* was always the [emerging merchant class]’ first article for indictment...against these overmighty families.” Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 16.

<sup>98</sup> Chapter XII of his Prince is dedicated to denoting the employment of mercenary forces on the part of a republic and the catastrophic results of such enterprise. Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 48-53.

<sup>99</sup> Miles Unger, *Magnifico: The Brilliant Life and Violent Times of Lorenzo de’ Medici* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2009): 335.

<sup>100</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 58.

<sup>101</sup> In Paradiso 6, Dante presents his contempt for these so-called popular elite’s political ambition and new wealth. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 57. For an authoritative study of the social and class differences in Renaissance Florence, see, Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 5-11 and 33-39. Also, Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1980): 12-19.

Machiavelli recounts that the Florentines had attempted to take over the city of Lucca, which was under the protectorate of the lord of Parma, Mastino Della Scala.<sup>102</sup> This city had been an object of desire on the part of the ruling Florentine elite for quite a while, though they were unable to obtain it. Florence had fought several times with Lucca and suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the previous Lucchese lord, Castruccio Castracani.<sup>103</sup> This time, the Florentines thought they were going to be able to succeed, since, “the Florentines, being richer, were about to get [the city].”<sup>104</sup> In this case, Machiavelli emphasizes the fact that the Florentines, who were far wealthier than the Pisans, decided to purchase the city from Della Scala. That is, the Florentines did not intend to rely on force as a means to achieve their objective but rather on their financial power.<sup>105</sup> Still, the Pisans followed the military option and so the Florentines had to defend their interest the same way and lost. The Florentines not only failed to obtain a military victory over the Pisans but also had to repay to international moneylenders the money that had been paid to Della Scala. The end of the enterprise was catastrophic in both political and economic terms and the Florentine *grandi* sought a political solution to the economic crisis.

The failure to conquer Lucca influenced the status quo, making the popular sectors “indignant,” and the *grandi* decided to give the exercise of power to a foreigner, Walter de Brienne, a common act on the part of the Florentines during periods of internal

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<sup>102</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 89.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid: 37, 80-84. See also, Niccolò Machiavelli, “The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca,” in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others Volume II*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989): 550-552.

<sup>104</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 89.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid: 89. Najemy states that after the war with Pisa those who invested in the enterprise began to demand to be repaid, which caused an economic default on the part of the Florentine state. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 134-135. Trexler: 218.

crisis.<sup>106</sup> Machiavelli explains that the elite saw in this regime change a means to subdue the *popolo* and save their own private enterprises.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, the purpose of these pseudo-patricians was not to achieve the common good of the entire city, but rather to maintain their political position and save their private economic interests. This move appears to be an example of Machiavelli's characterization of the problem of Florentine civil discords: factional divisions are led by private enterprises.<sup>108</sup> The elite invited Walter de Brienne to take the political and military leadership of the city to enact the inevitably unpopular policies to be implemented to save the city from such financial (and inherently political) disaster.

Machiavelli's account of the arrival of Brienne follows Bruni's version but adds a much more vivid and theatrical account of the Duke: "Since the heavens willed that things prepare for future evil, [Brienne] arrived in Florence precisely at the time when the campaign at Lucca had been lost completely [and so] they elected him first as protector, then as captain of their men-at-arms."<sup>109</sup> That is, Machiavelli, much like Bruni, presents the reader with an anticipation of future deeds that must be read and comprehended carefully. This is particularly significant regarding what I have defined below as a process of 'reproduction and appropriation' of previous accounts on the part of Machiavelli. The author expresses a comparable perception of the event, though the *effects* or consequences of the deed in Machiavelli's text, as we will see below, are substantially different from those in Bruni's historical report.

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<sup>106</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 89. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 135.

<sup>107</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 90.

<sup>108</sup> Machiavelli stresses the fact that the *grandi's* nature as a social group is a 'will to oppress,' whereas the people's will is merely "not to be oppressed." Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 39.

<sup>109</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 90. Bruni states, "As though heaven's wrath sought to crush her, a tyrant was imposed on the city—something that had never happened before—who took away her liberty and lusted for the blood of her citizens." Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and trans. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975): 263.

Both Bruni and Machiavelli coincide on the fact that once Brienne took over the political leadership of Florence, he relied on violence and heavy economic policies that were popular with the citizens. Bruni writes, “This cruelty and savagery of [the Duke] in punishing citizens was received by the multitude with such happy hearts that they openly rejoiced. They described him as ‘that brave fellow’, ‘that fearless man’ ...”<sup>110</sup> Likewise, Machiavelli states that the “plebs” were “satisfied.”<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, Bruni writes, “As the man seemed intolerable and his evil acts grew worse every day, fear gave way to hatred and complaints, then conspiracies followed. Indeed there were many conspiracies at the same time each ignorant of the rest.”<sup>112</sup> Machiavelli goes beyond Bruni’s account by adding a direct speech on the part of a republican-minded citizen. This citizen, protesting against the tyrannical means employed by the Duke, claims, “You are seeking to enslave a city which has always lived free,” and then he adds, “the only lasting government is one based on people’s will.”<sup>113</sup> This speech in its totality is quite similar to Machiavelli’s own republican perspective; the citizen presents the case that since the Florentines have grown accustomed to freedom, they would not accept a forceful tyrannical director. Forceful policies represented by the image of the tyrant do not characterize a solution for social divisions; rather, they fuel and make them much explosive. Further, Machiavelli expresses the fact that the Duke’s political deeds were not meant to provide a ‘check’ on these so-called universal dissensions but rather to benefit the Duke himself. In an indirect speech, Machiavelli has his Duke claim: “only disunited

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<sup>110</sup> Bruni: 267.

<sup>111</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 91.

<sup>112</sup> Bruni: 275.

<sup>113</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 92. Bruni states, “It will become clear that citizens should fear nothing more than servitude, and lords will learn that nothing is more ruinous than immoderate and uncivil arrogance.” Bruni: 269

cities were enslaved and united ones free,” which is clearly at odds with what both the republican citizen and Machiavelli express.<sup>114</sup> Machiavelli’s view implies similar consequences to those presented in the Discourses: when “those humours that grow up in cities...do not have an outlet by which they may be vented ordinarily, they have recourse to extraordinary modes that bring the whole republic to ruin.”<sup>115</sup> In other words, social dissension results in an awakening of parties that rely on violent methods for the health of the polity, i.e. tumults.<sup>116</sup>

The end of the rule of the Duke and especially the detailed account of the execution that followed it are a major deviation from Bruni’s text. The major difference that appears in this particular recounting of the events is what Machiavelli himself had defined in a letter to Francesco Guicciardini as “exaggerating or understanding the facts.”<sup>117</sup> The fact that he employs both terms in a single sentence as if they were analogous or correspondent to each other, makes one presuppose that Machiavelli purposefully employs inflated terms to highlight the relevance of particular sections of the text and to bring about his pedagogical lesson to this act. That is, to (re)create certain acts to propose a particular perspectivism concerning political events.<sup>118</sup>

Machiavelli tells us that once the conspiracies were revealed, Brienne decided to exile rather than to arrest those that were involved. Machiavelli sees this decision as a poor one on the part of the Duke. He not only gave his enemies a chance to flee but also

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<sup>114</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 93. Bock: 187.

<sup>115</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 23.

<sup>116</sup> Elsewhere, Machiavelli argues that one of the main causes for civil violence is “being hated by the collectivity.” He then proposes that a prince avoid “private charges...in property, in blood, or in honour.” Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 218-219.

<sup>117</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 351.

<sup>118</sup> Pitkin rightly comprehends this particular aspect by stating, “The theorist, understanding the plurality of human perception and the complex relationship between appearance and reality in political life, may be able to provide perspective, a *synthetic overview of the whole*.” Pitkin: 36. Emphasis is mine.

to regroup and “take up arms, preferring to die like men, arms in hand, than to be led like cattle to the slaughterhouse,” and hence decided to “start a tumult in the Mercato Vecchio...and to call the people to freedom.”<sup>119</sup> From there, he states, “All the heads of the families, noble as well as popular...took the lead and attacked the [*piazza della Signoria*],” the city’s seat of government.<sup>120</sup> Here, Machiavelli’s account of the event begins to deviate from that of Bruni’s. Although Bruni refers to an “act of defiance” and rebellion on the part of the *grandi* and the people and argues, “The people took to arms, surrounded the citadel and started to besiege it in an orderly way,” he does not retell this act by defining it as a *tumulto*.<sup>121</sup>

From this passage on, Machiavelli’s text becomes more of a theatrical piece, a vivid spectacle of violence, composed in a quasi-mythical prose completely absent from Bruni’s account. Rehorn states that the detailed rhetoric of violence is a fundamental part of the *Histories*, employing what he defines as an “apocalyptic climax” to portray the violence naturally inherent to all men.<sup>122</sup> The Florentine secretary explains that Brienne, besieged in the palace, decided to negotiate with the people “but the people refused any discussion an accord unless first Messer Guglielmo d’Assisi and his son, together with Messer Cerrettieri Bisdomini, were put in their power.”<sup>123</sup> Guglielmo was one of the Duke’s lieutenants and Cerrettieri was the Duke’s vicar in the city of Florence.

The Duke did not want to grant this; yet, as he was being threatened by the men shut in with him, he let himself be coerced. Messer Guglielmo and his son were placed among thousands of their enemies, and the son was not yet eighteen years old; nonetheless, his age, his form, and his

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<sup>119</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 96-97.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*: 97.

<sup>121</sup> Bruni: 277-279.

<sup>122</sup> Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 92, 99.

<sup>123</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 98.



innocence, could not save him from the fury of the multitude. Those whom they could not wound living, they wounded when dead, and not satisfied with cutting them to pieces with their swords, they tore them apart with their hands and their teeth. And so that all their senses might be satisfied in revenge, having first heard their wails, seen their wounds, and handled their torn flesh, they still wanted their taste to relish them; so as all the parts outside were sated with them, they also sated the parts within.”<sup>124</sup>

The recounting of the event is filled with a language that portrays the anger and violence of the *tumulto* in a *crescendo* mode, meant to portray how the crowd acted to purge and vent its “fury.” Machiavelli depicts the crowd in an animalistic fashion. The savagery of the people reached such point that they tore the dead apart “with their hands and their teeth.”<sup>125</sup> Once the multitude satisfied its need for fury and revenge, Machiavelli tells, “Messer Cerrettieri,” Brienne’s vicar and right-hand, “was taken away safely...” Similarly, de Grazia claims that in Machiavelli’s *pensée*, people have a tendency to be cruel, and these types of acts appear to signify a means to purge such animosity and hatred.<sup>126</sup> “The multitude having purged itself with the blood of these two, an accord was concluded,” which allowed the Duke of Athens to leave the city with the rest of his men.<sup>127</sup> Machiavelli also reminds us of the character of a tumultuous crowd once its freedom is lost, “Without doubt, indignation appears greater and wounds are graver when liberty is being recovered than when it is being defended.”<sup>128</sup> Bruni’s account, though still filled with a ‘taste’ of violence and fury, lacks the spectacularly detailed account presented by Machiavelli. It appears to be that the multitude takes its fury on Guglielmo

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<sup>124</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 98-99. This recalls Dante’s depiction of the angry in the river of blood in *Inferno*; their angry souls rend each other’s flesh with their teeth, as does the treacherous Count Ugolino to Bishop Ruggieri, a cleric who double-crossed him. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 15.

<sup>125</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 99.

<sup>126</sup> De Grazia: 84. Still, de Grazia portrays the event mainly as an example of a human ‘vice,’ hence missing the representational and pedagogical character of the event.

<sup>127</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories* : 99.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*: 98.

and his “innocent” son as a representation of the tyrannical regime of the Duke. Whereas Machiavelli is highly descriptive about how Messer Guglielmo and his son were killed, Bruni almost skips it in its entirety. Machiavelli dedicates almost two entire pages to what Bruni describes in two short sentences.<sup>129</sup>

We get to see that, for the first time in Machiavelli’s retelling of the story the people becomes an active persona, capable of taking conscious or unconscious decisions on its own, disregarding the legal restraints placed upon them as citizens. Machiavelli tells us elsewhere that a prince must abstain “from the property of his citizens and his subjects, and from their women.”<sup>130</sup> In the *Histories*, Machiavelli explicitly blames Brienne for such deeds, “But above all else, what displeased was the violence that he and his men did, without any respect, to the women.”<sup>131</sup> These are the things that ‘hurt’ a people the most. In other words, he presents a process in which violence reinforces itself to the point where it reaches a peak of bestiality only to fade away on its own, once it has accomplished the task it could not accomplish under the regular framework of the rule of law. For instance, Machiavelli’s portrayal of the event presents a furious crowd, hungry for revenge, denying all consensual dealing with the Duke and their ferocity with Guglielmo and his son, quickly signing an accord to allow the Duke to flee unhurt.<sup>132</sup> Though there is no exact description of the duration of the event in terms of time, the prose of Machiavelli’s narration proceeds in such a way that makes the reader perceive the act as a rapid and concise event. The tumult in its entirety lasts just over a week, since it began on July 26 and ended on August 6, when the Duke stepped down and fled from

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<sup>129</sup> Bruni states, “Thrown on the swords of the inflamed people, these men were instantly torn limb from limb, earning a most fitting reward for their acts of cruelty.” Bruni: 281.

<sup>130</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 67.

<sup>131</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 95. Also, Rebborn, *Foxes and Lions*: 104.

<sup>132</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 99.

Florence although one gets the impression that the whole act happened in a matter of hours.

Brienne's violent regime drove the people to start a tumult against him and to publicly execute one of his rectors, and Machiavelli expresses that men can actually become *animali bruti* once their interests are not taken into account. Rehorn reminds us of this problematic, and of how the people "will support a prince or benefactor only so long as he does them good and danger is far off, and will abandon him as soon as the wind changes."<sup>133</sup> Though it may be at odds with this previous account, Machiavelli presents the participants of the tumult as having a 'short memory,' since their main goal was to put an end to the tyranny and to kill Walter de Brienne. They decided to sign an agreement with him and allow the Duke to escape from the palace.

Though Machiavelli situates the *tumulto* as a reaction on the part of the people to their will to become, once again, free, the violence that emanates out of this act is not just a symbol of the potential for destruction of civil discords. This *tumulto* as presented by Machiavelli appears to give a rapid response to the multitude to put an end to a past political regime. "Men are much more taken by present things than by past ones, and when they find good in the present, they enjoy it and do not seek elsewhere [...]."<sup>134</sup> In other words, tumults happen to be a process through which people forget the past to readjust to a new present. They need to channel their collective emotional state in order to be somehow prepared for 'new modes and orders.' The story of the Duke of Athens concludes with the rebellion of Florence's satellite cities "to get back their own freedom,"

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<sup>133</sup> Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 97.

<sup>134</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 96. Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 104.

and with the creation of a council of fourteen citizens who called for the formation of a new republican government.<sup>135</sup>

This act on the part of the people reminds the readers of the dormant capacity for destruction that lies in a socially disrupted polity. The possibility for disturbance and violence is inherent in any political system, though, if we can characterize this story as a typology, it appears to be the typical result of tyrannical rule. To some extent, this tumult presents Machiavelli's characterization of the polity at its most extreme. In other words, the cannibalistic savagery of the tumult happened to be a reaction against the unification of the polity under the tyrannical arm of the Duke of Athens. Dissention, opposition and discord cannot be overcome, although they can be tamed and channelled, something that, Machiavelli seems to argue, the Duke was unable to do.

#### *4.3-Tumulto and the Plebs: I Ciompi*

Chapter III of the Florentine Histories recounts the events of the rebellion led by the unskilled textile workers, the *Ciompi* or wool carders, who directed a revolutionary government in 1378 causing great changes in the mentality of Florentine republicans. This chapter significantly begins with an exhortation on the part of Machiavelli about the "natural enmities that exist between the nobility and the people, caused by the wish of the latter to command and the former not to obey [...]"<sup>136</sup> This preface follows quite literally the main purpose of the enterprise as presented in the *Preface* to the Histories, that is, that

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<sup>135</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 100-101.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. Further, this is the only chapter in which Machiavelli refers to the difference between ancient republican Rome and his contemporary republican Florence. One can draw a parallel between this *Preface* and perhaps Chapter III in its entirety, with the Discourses, in which Machiavelli presents the Roman republic as the model to be imitated and even expresses that the *grandi* want "to dominate" and the people want "not to be dominated." Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 18. Also, Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 39. Bock: 196-201.

is to tell his readership of the great episodes of civil disorder that happened ‘inside’ the city.

The main purpose of the wool carders, we are told, was to widen their representation in governmental decision-making, “since it did not appear to them that they had been satisfied for their labour as they believed they justly deserved.”<sup>137</sup> These wool workers and other “lesser people” began a series of tumults at various public locations within Florence that culminated with the plebs taking over the *Palazzo della Signoria* and the proclamation of Michele di Lando as Gonfalonier of Justice.<sup>138</sup> Machiavelli writes that di Lando, “to keep the people busy and to give himself some time to get in order,” commanded the people to seek out for Messer Nuto, the *Bargello* or police chief of Florence, and hang him on the gallows set at the *Piazza della Signoria*.<sup>139</sup> Much like in his account of the fall of Walter de Brienne, Machiavelli’s text deviates from his sources, especially concerning the execution of Nuto and Michele’s role in it. Neither chronicle of the *Ciompi* suggests a justification for the significant position Machiavelli gives to Michele di Lando in the Florentine Histories.<sup>140</sup>

Prior to the *Ciompi* revolt, the Florentine *popolo minuto*, the class of unskilled workers and the population of the city in general, suffered a series of deteriorating economic and political circumstances. The Black plague of 1348 had reduced the population, which, as some scholars argue, led to the fall of wool prices –the largest

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<sup>137</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 121. Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 588.

<sup>138</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 122, 124, 127. The Gonfalonier or Standardbearer of Justice was, mainly, a government position added in the thirteenth century as the nominal head of the republic.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*: 127-128.

<sup>140</sup> Most Machiavelli scholars have overlooked this particular and distinctive aspect of Machiavelli’s narration of the *Ciompi* revolt. See, for instance, Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 92. De Grazia: 185. Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 590. Leibovici: 648.

industry in Florence, hence threatening the life of the poor wool workers.<sup>141</sup> By the early 1370s, their salaries continued to decline, whereas taxes continued to increase to pay for the Florentine participation in the so-called Papal war.<sup>142</sup> The internal consequence of such a war against the Pontifical states was a sharp split between the patricians, intensifying the already existent factional divisions among the ruling families. As such, the first revolt happened to be led not by the unskilled workers but rather by the pro-papal *grandi*, or the elite Guelf sect. Once the most conservative Guelfs had been ruled out of power with the aid of a general “uproar,” a new *Signoria* was elected and Luigi Guicciardini was made Gonfalonier of Justice, with the intention of reinstating order in the city.<sup>143</sup> Here, it seems to be the case that Machiavelli avoids the use of the notion of *tumulto*, employing a synonym of it. Machiavelli, much like his sources, expresses the opinion that the new government assumed responsibilities “without observing any ceremony,” which symbolizes the state of civil disorder that reigned in the city.<sup>144</sup>

The Florentine republican system was largely based upon a constitutional order called *arte* or guild, which regrouped producers and workers by occupation. The guilds were a key political component for the representation of Florentine citizenship, each of which appointed its own magistrate or representative before the *Signoria*, the council of government that represented the neighbourhoods of the city.<sup>145</sup> The guilds were divided into “greater” and “lesser,” and as such, the guilds to which belonged the lower social

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<sup>141</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 160.

<sup>142</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 588. The conflict between Pope Gregory XI and a coalition of Italian city-states led by Florence finished with an accord signed in July 1378.

<sup>143</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 118.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid: 119. Acciaiuoli writes, “El primo dí di Iuglio e sopradetti priori entrorno in palazzo senza sonare campane secondo l’usanza...” [On July the first, the abovementioned priorates entered the palace without clanging the bells, as was done according to custom]. Alamanno Acciaiuoli, “Chroniche dei Tumulto di Ciompi,” In *Raccolta degli Storici Italiani: dal Cinquecento al Millecinquecento*, edited by L.A. Muratori (Bologna, IT: Nicola Zanichelli, 1934): 17. Translation is mine.

<sup>145</sup> Trexler: 14-15.

sectors of the Florentine society were dominated by the higher guilds. The bulk of the demands of the *Ciompi* or wool carders concerned, firstly, the demand for higher wages before the representative of the wool guild. Machiavelli states these ‘lesser’ sectors felt their demands were not properly satisfied according to what they believed to be just.<sup>146</sup> In addition, the *Ciompi* and the other lesser people demanded direct participation, that is, guilds of their own, since they were included and co-opted within the guilds dominated by their employers.<sup>147</sup>

By the end of July 1348, the *minuti* led by the *Ciompi* began a tumult resulting in “arson and robbery...” and, according to Machiavelli’s account, they were driven by indignation and fear to be punished for such deeds and for others committed by the *minuti* under the leadership of some *grassi*.<sup>148</sup> At this point, Machiavelli adds a creation of his own, a direct speech on the part of “one of the most daring and more experienced” plebeians.<sup>149</sup> The discourse is not only Machiavelli’s creation but also a direct speech similar to that presented by the republican citizen before the Duke of Athens. In other words, it appears to be an example of Machiavelli presenting his own political perspective through the mouth of the character of the *Ciomo*. The main aspect of the speech is the relevance of deception in the relation of power and politics; the *Ciomo* says, “Do not let their [the patricians’] antiquity of blood, with which they reproach us, dismay you; for all men, having the same beginning, are equally ancient and have been

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<sup>146</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 121.

<sup>147</sup> Machiavelli writes, “Added to this was the hatred that the lesser people had for the rich citizens and princes of the guilds.” Ibid: 121. Bock: 194. See, also, Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 588.

<sup>148</sup> This refers to the tumults against Messer Lapo di Castiglionchio, the leader of the Guelf party, which was believed to be the enemy of the plebeians. Machiavelli: *Florentine Histories*: 121-122. Acciaiolli’s *Chronicle* presents a similar understanding of the act. Acciaiolli: 15.

<sup>149</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 122.

made by nature in one mode. Strip all of us naked, you will see that we are all alike.”<sup>150</sup> Further, he insists on the fact that they should not fear to be punished for their acts, since the *great* have employed similar actions to obtain their power and wealth, and one “should use force whenever the occasion for it is given to us [...]”<sup>151</sup> The fact that Machiavelli’s thoughts are put in the mouth of a ‘daring’ and ‘experienced’ plebeian portrays how the author regarded the incapacity of the previous ‘princes’ to deal with the discords inside the city of Florence. Strauss explains that Machiavelli did not favour the rule of the multitude, as a simple regime of the rule of the many, though Machiavelli did argue in favour of the purposes of the people, since they appeared to be more “honest” than the purposes of the great, i.e. the common good of the republic versus the private interests of certain factional groups.<sup>152</sup> Strauss sees this speech not merely as “the most shocking or most ‘Machiavellian’ passage of the Florentine Histories,” but also how Machiavelli’s portrayal is to some extent inconsistent for a reason: whether a tyrant, a prince or a republic, they all should attempt to satisfy the *popolo* in general.<sup>153</sup> The result of the lack of support on the part of the people is the loss of power and the emergence of tumultuous events. The poor unknown man appreciates the capacities needed for a leader to put the people to action; his speech carries such emotive meaning that it “inflamed the spirits” of the audience.”<sup>154</sup> This anonymous man of humble origins is capable of persuading a crowd not merely to start a tumult but to swear an oath “to help one another.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 122.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid: 123. Bock and Rehorn provide a complete analysis of the speech. See, Bock: 195. Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 92

<sup>152</sup> Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978): 127.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid: 127-128.

<sup>154</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 124.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid: 124.



Here Machiavelli tells us that on July 21<sup>st</sup> 1378 the *Ciampi* started a new tumult and burnt the houses of many citizens, including those of Luigi Guicciardini, Gonfalonier of Justice. Shortly after, Machiavelli gives entrance to Michele di Lando,

When the plebs entered the palace [of the Signoria], one Michele di Lando, a wool carder, had in his hand the ensign of the Gonfalonier of Justice. This man, barefoot and scantily clothed, climbed up the stairs with the whole mob behind him, and as soon as he was in the audience chamber of the Signoria, he stopped; and, tuning around to the multitude he said, 'You see: this palace is yours and this city is in your hands. What do you think should be done now?' To which all replied that they wanted him to be Gonfalonier and lord, and to govern them and the city however seemed best to him.<sup>156</sup>

Machiavelli's portrayal of the event follows almost literally the chronicles of both Acciaiuoli and the *Squittinatore*. The only deviation from their accounts is the use, once again, of a short direct speech on the part of di Lando.<sup>157</sup> Machiavelli reproduces the scene by highlighting the personal virtues of di Lando: "Michele accepted [to be Gonfalonier of Justice], and because he was a *sagacious* and *prudent* man who owed more to nature than to fortune, he resolved to quiet the city and stop the tumults."<sup>158</sup> The Florentine author calls once again for a careful and diligent perspective on the part of his readership. The character presented as Michele di Lando is quite reminiscent of Machiavelli's hero of *virtù*, Cesare Borgia. In his Prince, he praises Borgia for correcting

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<sup>156</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 127.

<sup>157</sup> Acciaiuoli states, "Uno Michele di Lando, pettinatore ovvero che fusse sopra I pettinatori e sopra li scardassieri, fattore di bottega di lana, avea il gonfalone del popolo minuto in mano, cioè quello che si cavò di casa lo executore, ed era in inscarpette senza calze, con questo gonfalone in mano entrò in palazzo con tutto il popolo che 'l volle seguitare, e su per le scale n'andò infino nella udienza de' priori, e quivi si fermò ritto. E a voce di popolo gli dierono la signoria, e vollono che fusse gonfaloniere di iustizia e signore." Acciaiuoli: 33. On the other hand the *Squittinatore* claims, "Allora si giunse uno Michele di Lando pettinatore...sanza pezzo d'arme a lato o indosso e si fu preso e postogli in mano il confalone della giostizia ed e' lo prese per la mani, e per salvallo per lo popolo minuto." "Cronaca Prima D'Anonimo," In *Racolta degli Istorici Italiani: dal Cinquecento al Millecinquecento*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Bologna, IT: Nicola Zanichelli, 1934): 75.

<sup>158</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 127. Emphasis is mine.

his path, since though he obtained power over the Romagna “by fortune of his father [Pope Alexander VI],” he was a “prudent and virtuous man.”<sup>159</sup> The main difference resides, perhaps, in the way Machiavelli’s heroes obtain such virtuosity; whereas Michele is virtuous ‘by nature,’ Borgia learnt how to make his way to become an exemplar of *virtù*.

Michele becomes the leader of the *Ciompi* through his own sagacity and prudence; it is he who first claims that it is up to them, the *minuti*, to make a decision about *their* palace and *their* city. They answer Michele by acclaiming him as the lord of Florence. That is, Michele is not just as an example of what a *Ciampo* may have looked like, but rather he is a distinctive character, different from the rest of the tumultuous plebeians. Michele becomes the exemplar of political leadership that the Florentines lacked in a general sense. It is remarkable that Machiavelli highlights the importance of di Lando in a text that dismisses most of Florence’s heroes.<sup>160</sup> The barefoot man of humble origins, Machiavelli appears to say, belongs to a special social grouping, which goes beyond social origin: he holds the character of a *prince*. He is a ‘prince’ though in terms of blood or origin as presented by the anonymous speaker, but a ‘prince’ in terms

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<sup>159</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 26-27. Elsewhere, Machiavelli praises Borgia’s prudence with the inexhaustive creativeness typical of his writings, “He who waits for time when he has it is hunting for better bread than is made of wheat, and one doesn’t always find an opportunity prepared.” Niccolò Machiavelli, “The Legations,” in *Machiavelli: the Chief Works and Others*, ed. Allan Gilbert (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989): 133. Phillips argues that the difference of ‘nature’ between these two ‘Machiavellian’ heroic figures is meant to highlight the struggle between *virtù* and *Fortuna*. Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 606.

<sup>160</sup> Chapter IV is almost in its entirety dedicated to the life of Cosimo de’ Medici, the so-called *Pater Patriae* of the Florentines, though Machiavelli is quite critical of his *modus operandi* once he returned from exile and became the lord of Florence. Especially, he criticizes Cosimo’s rulership as based on the division of the social groups of Florence, hence not being capable of putting an end to the factional struggles that had hurt the development of Florence. For instance, the Florentine secretary states, “[Cosimo] never attempted anything against either the Party or the state but took care to benefit everyone and with his liberality to make many citizens into his *partisans*.” Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 173. Emphasis is mine. Bock: 196.

of character and capacities to become the leader, and perhaps founder, of a new republic.<sup>161</sup>

Michele appears as a leading figure after a moment of political crisis in the republic, which is reminiscent of the events that preceded the tyranny of the Duke of Athens.<sup>162</sup> The republic invited the Duke to take over the political and military responsibilities for a particular period, to which a jubilant mob demands the Duke become the lord of the city for life. Still, Walter the Duke of Athens pursued his own political power and interest to the detriment of the good of the entire republic. The outcome of his stay in power results in the drama of conspiracies, tumults, executions and exile. Compared to this, Michele, the princely *Ciomo* decides to “quiet the tumults;” that is, he places the common good of the city ahead of any private or partisan interest.<sup>163</sup> Hence, Machiavelli’s mythical portrayal of the narrative comes to be not merely a touch of colour to the actual depiction of events, but rather a quite explicit political lesson, which also denotes the difference between the almost ‘static’ and factual account on the part of the chronicles and the theatrical vision offered by Machiavelli.<sup>164</sup>

The following passage in Machiavelli’s text also departs from the chronicles, though in this case, it does not concern the addition of a fictional speech, but rather the employment of a narrative of violence, which exaggerates certain aspects of the event to appeal to the reader’s senses. Added to it is the elevated position Machiavelli gives to the newly elected Gonfalonier of Justice, di Lando. In this case, Machiavelli proposes what

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<sup>161</sup> This is similar to Machiavelli’s description of the dedicatees of the *Discourses on Livy*, “I have chose not those who are princes but those who for their infinite good deserve to be...for men wishing to judge rightly have to esteem those who are liberal, not those who can be; and likewise those who know, not those who can govern a kingdom without knowing.” Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 3-4.

<sup>162</sup> Leibovici: 656.

<sup>163</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 127. See, also, Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 590. Reborn, *Foxes and Lions*: 92-93. Leibovici: 658.

<sup>164</sup> Green: 107.

Phillips defines as a “theatre of virtù.”<sup>165</sup> That is, Machiavelli gives di Lando the character of an effective leader, or innovator, necessary for any political system during a moment of crisis. Machiavelli tells us that the humble yet ‘princely’ di Lando,

...the greater number of those around him went off on this errand. And so as to begin with justice the empire he had acquired by grace, he had it publicly commanded that no one burn or steal anything; and to frighten everyone, he had a gallows erected in the piazza...Ser Nuto was carried by the multitude to the piazza and hung on the gallows by one foot; and as whoever was around tore off a piece from him, at a stroke there was nothing left of him but his foot.<sup>166</sup>

We come to see, first, that Michele is given a fundamental position on this event; he is the commander of the people, the leading figure of the act. The author explicitly portrays the poor wool comber as a man of talent, capable of mobilizing “the greater number of those around him,” so as to take on the command of the city. The *Squittinatore’s* chronicle is silent on the role of Michele as the executioner of Nuto,

Uno Bargello, ch’era chiamato ser Nuto dalla Città di Castello, si era venuto a proferere al popolo grasso, che regieva prima, che e’ governebbe la terra, d’impicare i poveri uomini di Firenze. Non piacque a Dio che sua volontà fosse; e’ fu preso dal popolo minuto e fu tutto tagliato per pezzi; il minore non fu oncie sei.<sup>167</sup>

The *Squittinatore’s* account of the story is retold with a particular emphasis on Nuto himself, his origins and purposes in the city, not on the relevance of the execution and Michele’s deeds. In addition, Acciaioli’s *Cronaca* does not retell the event, it merely portrays Nuto as the *grassi’s* vicar, who had been brought from Città di Castello and

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<sup>165</sup> Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 601.

<sup>166</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 127-128.

<sup>167</sup> “One of the sheriffs of Florence, named Ser Nuto dalla Città di Castello, came to utter the word of the *fat people* [elite] -who had previously dominated and governed the land [the city]-, and to hang the poor men of Florence. His will did not please God, and he was taken prisoner by the *popolo minuto* and had his body cut in pieces; the smallest piece measured no more than six ounces.” *Cronaca Prima D’Anonimo*: 76. Translation is mine.

made sheriff of Florence "...per impiccarci tutti per la gola."<sup>168</sup> Machiavelli has his arrest occasioned by di Lando, whereas the others have him arriving at the *piazza* of his own volition.

This spectacle of ferocity seems to be praised by Machiavelli, though not in the sense of man's natural capacity for destruction that was discussed above. Rather, Machiavelli seems to highlight di Lando's capacities as a prudent and ingenuous man, able to produce a spectacle as a means to establish discipline and order in the city. Di Lando is said to be interested in establishing justice in the polity, hence he ordered a stop to the riots and the sacking. For Machiavelli, the main goal of di Lando was to quiet the tumults and order the city. The gallows were placed in the *piazza* as to "frighten everyone."<sup>169</sup> Michele's ascent to power and the execution of Nuto appear to happen rapidly; the entire event is recounted in just a few sentences, as if the entirety of the event were a matter of hours. This is a significant aspect of the event, since, as Machiavelli states in his *Prince*, violence should be employed "at one stroke."<sup>170</sup> As Rehorn suggests with the killing of Remirro d'Orco this spectacle of violence on the part of Cesare Borgia, shows that Machiavelli wants more than to portray di Lando as a frightening governor.<sup>171</sup> In both Acciaiuoli's and the *Squittinatore's* chronicles, we get to see that the *grassi* brought Nuto to the city to get rid of the tumultuous plebeians; hence, it can be stated that Machiavelli portrays how di Lando employs Nuto as the symbol of the *ancien regime* of

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<sup>168</sup> "... To hang them all from the throat." Acciaiuoli: 20. Translation is mine.

<sup>169</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128.

<sup>170</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 37. Machiavelli calls Borgia "great" for he was able to "recognize the right time and know how to use [violence] very well." Niccolò Machiavelli, "On the Methods of Dealing with the Rebellious Peoples of the Valdichiana," in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others, Volume I* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989): 162.

<sup>171</sup> Rehorn defines such characters in Machiavelli's texts as 'confidence men,' or individuals capable of staging such spectacles of violence as to 'shock' and 'awe' the generality of the population. Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 117.

the Florentine elite. The *Bargello* fills the collective imagination of the people, as representative of the hatred the people felt toward the previous political order in Florence. Di Lando is well aware of this, since Ser Nuto is the only one to be executed. Machiavelli suggests that exemplary executions should involve the fewest number of people possible.<sup>172</sup>

As any theatrical representation (and mimicking the execution of Remirro D'Orco in Cesena) the execution happens in a public space, in this case the most symbolic *piazza* in Florence, the *piazza della Signoria*, next to the main governmental headquarters. The *piazza* played a fundamental role in Italian Renaissance societies; most great events, and especially those that were meant to be presented to the general public, were staged in these public and open scenarios.<sup>173</sup> Whether for religious processions, protests, political meetings or executions, the *piazza* was the centre of public life. Unlike conspiracy acts, which are to be kept secret, Machiavelli emphasizes to his readers that tumults and the outcome of them always happen before the eyes of the public. The audience is the central component of the event required to make of it a meaningful carrier of symbolism. The fact that the gallows were placed in the *piazza della Signoria* present the case that, on the one hand, it is a public official, Michele the Gonfalonier of Justice, that ordered such an act, and that it was meant to be seen by the general public of the city. Renaissance people, Reborn states, were “used to reading allegorical meanings in public spectacles, and those who staged them usually took pains to invite symbolic representations.”<sup>174</sup> As such, the execution appears to show the end of a particular regime in Florence, and the ascent of a new popular leadership exemplified by Michele di Lando.

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<sup>172</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128.

<sup>173</sup> Trexler: 12-15.

<sup>174</sup> Reborn, *Foxes and Lions*: 121.

Though several scholars have made reference to the relevance of the execution of Nuto and the position of Michele, most have failed to recognize that Machiavelli seems to go beyond the mere portrayal of ‘the good ruler.’ In other words, Machiavelli proposes a further account of the execution through the process of ‘reproduction and appropriation’ of previous accounts. Besides the fact that Michele is presented as a figure of princely characteristics, as shrewd as a fox and even as strong as a lion, the very language that is employed in the recounting of the event portrays di Lando much more as a ‘sacred executioner’ than as a mere human with political capabilities.

In his Prince, Machiavelli states that Remirro d’Orco’s killing in Cesena was a spectacle of ferocity and violence, which “left the people at once satisfied and stupefied.”<sup>175</sup> Rehorn states that the particular narrative employed in the account of this act shows that Machiavelli wants to present more than a means of intimidation. “Borgia’s spectacle, albeit viscerally frightening, aims to have –and does have- an effect on the citizens of Cesena which looks more like ritual purification and religious conversion than sheer terror.”<sup>176</sup> That is, the image of the execution surpasses all the expected events for a public execution –due to the fact there were no traces of the actual executioner- the act itself becomes almost a performance of a ‘supernatural force.’<sup>177</sup> The killing of d’Orco was meant to “purge the spirits of that people and to gain them entirely to himself,” which is quite reminiscent of di Lando’s main goal as Gonfalonier.<sup>178</sup> Di Lando, much like Borgia, meant to ‘purge’ the city and to ‘entertain’ the people with a spectacle of violence.

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<sup>175</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 30.

<sup>176</sup> Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 117.

<sup>177</sup> Several authors have discussed the symbolism of the various aspects of the execution. See, de Grazia: 327-328. Von Vacano: 47-53. Anglo: 37-39. Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 117-122.

<sup>178</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 30. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128.

Much like *Squittinatore*'s account of the killing, Machiavelli tells us that Ser Nuto was "hung on the gallows by one foot."<sup>179</sup> This method of execution was well known at the time for having a symbolic component, that of purging the physical existence of the executed.<sup>180</sup> It was meant to recognize the individual guilt of the executed toward society, and in this case it could be argued that Nuto was a traitor to the cause of the *Ciompi*. As the henchman of the *popolo grasso*, and keeping in mind Machiavelli's words on the hatred the *minuti* had toward this social sector, Ser Nuto comes to be regarded as a public enemy for the newly formed government of the *Ciompi*. The upside-down type of execution had a parochial relevance for Renaissance Florentines.

This image is typologically reminiscent of a particular type of Renaissance painting called *pittura infamante* or 'defamatory portrait,' commonly employed in Italy, and especially in Florence, at the time.<sup>181</sup> These paintings presented drawings of wanted people who had avoided and escaped capital punishment. Several of these paintings were commissioned to well known artists of the day, such as Sandro Botticelli.<sup>182</sup> They were typically placed outside the *Bargello*, the so-called police headquarters next to the *Signoria*, so as to portray an instant image of punishment and humiliation for those who infringed the law and as a warning sign for the rest of the citizens.<sup>183</sup> Usually, these fugitives from the law of the city were painted upside down, hanging from the gallows, much like Nuto, by one foot. The power of the painting was to present a shameful

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<sup>179</sup> *Cronaca Prima d'Anonimo*: 76. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128

<sup>180</sup> Norbert Schnitzler, "Picturing the Law: Introductory Remarks on the Medieval Iconography of Judgement and Punishment," in *The Medieval History Journal* 3:1 (2001): 6. In fact, as Trexler and Rebhorn argue, Renaissance Italians were quite habituated to public and symbolic representations, and executions were not the exception. Trexler: 198-199. Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 120-121.

<sup>181</sup> Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2005): 39. Some Machiavelli scholars highlight the relevance of the defamatory portrait, though they fail to acknowledge its allegorical importance in the execution of Ser Nuto. De Grazia: 11.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*: 11.

<sup>183</sup> Schnitzler: 7.



account of the accused, and as an example of an “effective ritual of collective sanctions, a so-called ‘theatre of horrors.’”<sup>184</sup> In other words, paintings were meant to produce a symbolic perspective of the reality of punishment, for which the shame of being hung from one foot and upside down were a visual synthesis.

In this case, Ser Nuto’s execution appears to be not merely an act of punishment on the part of the plebs, as it is described in the *Squittinatore’s Cronaca*. The act and the transformation of Michele into an active participant in the deed, shows a leader consciously wielding such spectacles of violence for specific political ends. It is a particular trait that distinguishes ‘princes’ from the rest of the people, and underlines the awareness of the amorality with which di Lando accepted the necessity of a carefully planned employment of political violence as the leader of Florence. Unlike the purpose of the defamatory paintings, the event is not a drawing of a fugitive, but an actual execution of a man already captured by the *Ciompi*. Still, the imaginative component added by Machiavelli makes di Lando, much like Cesare Borgia, able to “manipulate the traditional rituals of execution.”<sup>185</sup> Michele becomes a ‘sacred executioner,’ someone capable of staging a spectacle of overwhelming force, which, much like the *pittura infamante* could be regarded as a deed meant to shape its audience. The act as presented in Machiavelli’s Histories makes of di Lando a ‘true prince;’ he becomes capable of creating an image of his own persona that stands beyond the character of the people. He is then the combination of various capacities that seem to make of his image look as almost ‘divine.’

The tumults that followed the political and economic crisis ‘inside’ the city seem to represent the particular malfunctioning of the regime due to the sectarian politics that

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<sup>184</sup> Schnitzler: 7.

<sup>185</sup> Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 123.

led the city to a war and a deep economic crisis. Machiavelli is well aware of this, and the fact that di Lando is praised and mythologized in such a way that he personifies the characteristics of a ‘Machiavellian’ prince, makes of the *Ciampi* tumults more of a fable than a historical event. As a mythological text, one with plenty of allegorical and perhaps mysterious meanings to be decoded, Machiavelli forces his readership to seek through the symbolism of the event and engage in it. The reader himself must become a fundamental part of the text, not merely as a reader but almost as a character of it. In this case, the execution of Nuto appears to be the “extraordinary means” that princes or (re) founders should, sometimes, implement so as to bring about ‘new modes and orders’ for a given polity.<sup>186</sup> Michele does not take much time to make such ‘extraordinary’ decision; in fact, according to Machiavelli’s account, it is his very first order as Gonfalonier of Justice.

Following the execution of Nuto, the heroic wool comber, now Gonfalonier of Justice, comes to be challenged by the Eight of War, the leaders of the Florentine army during the papal war. Whilst the Eight thought themselves the rulers of the city, Machiavelli tells us that Michele “sent word to them to leave the palace at once, for he wanted to show everyone that he knew how to govern Florence without their advice.”<sup>187</sup> Acciaiuoli comments that the Eight of War felt “ingannati [deceived],” since they thought they were to be the rulers.<sup>188</sup> Michele called a council and, “created the Signoria,” adding a part for the new ‘lesser’ guilds.<sup>189</sup> In the end, the plebs perceived that Michele’s ‘new modes and orders’ “had been too partisan toward the people,” and they took up arms once

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<sup>186</sup> De Grazia: 237.

<sup>187</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128.

<sup>188</sup> Acciaiuoli: 33.

<sup>189</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128. Acciaiuoli gives Michele no personal merit for forming the new *Signoria*. Acciaiuoli: 34.

again “with their usual boldness” and “presumption” after all the “dignity they had given him and the honour they had done him.”<sup>190</sup>

Michele’s response exemplifies those characteristics Machiavelli praised before, “mindful more of the rank he held than of his low condition, it appeared to him that he must check this extraordinary insolence with an extraordinary mode [...]”<sup>191</sup> Again, Machiavelli remarks on the difference between the poor origins of di Lando and his capacity as the reformer of the republic. It shows the problematic presented before by the anonymous speaker, all men are equal in nature, since they are also equal in their ambition to rule. Di Lando employs extraordinary ‘checks’ on the envoys of the plebs, “drawing the weapon he had at his waist, he first wounded them gravely and then had them bound and imprisoned.”<sup>192</sup> Acciaiuoli’s account, on the other hand, lacks the theatricality employed by Machiavelli.<sup>193</sup> The confrontation in Machiavelli’s account presents a man that holds the qualities of a founder, in the sense that di Lando holds neither the ‘will to power’ of those that ‘want to oppress’ nor the boldness and arrogance of those that ‘want not to be oppressed.’ Michele, in Machiavelli’s view, is not merely a positive or moral portrayal, but the characterization of a man of state, whose deeds, the common good of the republic, lie ahead of any partisan or private interest, yet capable of employing the ‘sword’ or violence.<sup>194</sup>

Then, we are told, the plebs decided to take up arms and start a new tumult and di Lando successfully ended it: “The campaign having succeeded, the tumults were settled

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<sup>190</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128-129.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*: 129. De Grazia: 326.

<sup>192</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 129. Phillips, *Barefoot Boy Makes Good*: 601.

<sup>193</sup> “Il gonfaloniere, uomo animoso con lo coltello che aveva a canto dette loro delle ferrite; poi gli fece anco mettere in prigione.” [The Gonfalonier, a spirited man, wounded them with the sword he had at hand; then, he ordered to send both men to prison]. Acciaiuoli: 38-39. Translation is mine.

<sup>194</sup> Perhaps, Machiavelli is praising here his *own* character as a man of state; as he wrote in a famous letter to Vettori, “I love my native city more than my soul.” Atkinson and Sices: 416.

solely by the virtue of the Gonfalonier.”<sup>195</sup> He expresses that di Lando “deserves to be numbered among the few who have benefited their fatherland, for had his spirit been malign or ambitious, the republic would have lost its freedom altogether and fallen under a greater tyranny than that of the duke of Athens.”<sup>196</sup> Here is the second time we have a tumult enacted to end a perceived tyranny: when correct, the tumult removes the tyrant; when incorrect, as with the case of di Lando, the leader is able to put the tumult down. Machiavelli presents here gratitude to di Lando as both a man of *virtù* and as someone who comprehended the divisions of the city.<sup>197</sup> He is, much like the heroic Borgia, able to stage spectacles of violence that present his personification as leader of the city ‘beyond’ the rest of the population. The fact that Machiavelli insists on presenting the duality of his poor origins and his capacities as a ‘fox and a lion’ is a much stronger lesson once the ‘spectacular experience’ of Nuto’s execution is taken into account.

Still, the end of Michele is one of exile and oblivion. After a series of tumults and a so-called counterrevolution on the part of the *grassi*, several men were banished, “among whom was Michele di Lando.”<sup>198</sup> We are also told by the *Squittinatore* that di Lando came to be seen by the newly in charge *grandi* government as a “traditore [traitor].”<sup>199</sup> Machiavelli is quite certain that the wool comber should be recognized as a hero of his *patria*, for his quality as a prince capable of displaying and employing the

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<sup>195</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 129.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid: 130. Acciaiuoli also acknowledges the good qualities of di Lando. He states that he ruled, “con fortezza d’animo e di corpo e senza ambizione alcuna.” [with strength of body and spirit and with no personal ambition]. Acciaiuoli: 41. Translation is mine.

<sup>197</sup> I do not mean to discuss or analyze the relevance and meaning of the notion of *virtù*, since it is beyond the scope of this particular endeavour. I employ it merely as a nominal analogy to what Machiavelli would consider as the characteristics of a ‘prince.’ For a thorough discussion on the notion, see, Victoria Kahn, “Virtù and the Example of Agathocles in Machiavelli’s *Prince*,” in *Machiavelli and the Discourse of Literature*, edited by Albert Russell Ascoli and Victoria Kahn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993): 206-207. Also, Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990): 65-66.

<sup>198</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 135.

<sup>199</sup> *Cronaca Prima D’Anonimo*: 90.

necessary devices for putting a ‘check’ on the ‘movements’ and discords of the republic. Michele is in fact the result of the *Ciampi* tumults, and he rightly comprehended how the spectacles of tumultuous deeds play a fundamental role in the politics of his city. In his commentary on Machiavelli’s Discourses, Mansfield stresses the significance of what he defines as “the negative exchange of accusations that entertains the people,” or the relevance of theatrical performances, such as the execution of Ser Nuto, as to appease the ambitions of partisan groups.<sup>200</sup> Di Lando is the man of poor origins and spectacular princely capacities, though at the same time, he presents his readership with a lesson on human nature: even the most virtuous man is a mortal being. In other words, republics cannot be maintained on the shoulders of a single man.<sup>201</sup> The *virtù* of one man (perhaps one family?) is not enough to make of Florence a virtual new Rome.

#### *4.4-Tumulto and the Grandi: the Pazzi Conspiracy*

The preface to chapter VIII of the Florentine Histories begins with an exhortation on the part of Machiavelli to “reason on the qualities of conspiracies and their importance.”<sup>202</sup> Machiavelli is somewhat reluctant, since he had spoken of the nature of conspiracies elsewhere, i.e. the third book of the Discourses and The Prince. After a note of caution to the reader, he moves on and begins to retell “the state of the Medici after it had conquered all the enmities that had come against it openly.”<sup>203</sup> Machiavelli’s rhetorical shift is merely a move from an abstract discussion on conspiracies to a more

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<sup>200</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: xxix.

<sup>201</sup> On this matter, Hampton stresses, “life on the political stage, [Machiavelli] has shown, is dominated by the urgency of time. The principal task of a prince is survival, the transformation of *fondare* into *conservare*, the extension of his power from moment to moment.” Hampton: 69.

<sup>202</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 317.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*: 317.

concrete historical analysis of the events suffered by the former leaders of the reader's family. The Medici ruled the political affairs of Florence for over forty years. Other factions and families who aimed at gaining power for themselves, or at diminishing the Medici empire, had "either to endure that mode of living with patience, or, if indeed they wanted to eliminate it, attempt to do so by way of conspiracy and secretly."<sup>204</sup> Machiavelli seems to keep a critical eye on the civil discords that arose in Florence due to the rule of the Medici; conspiracies do not merely arise from the interest of the opposing sectors, but also from the political methods employed by the patrons of Florence, the Medici. The conspiracy that Machiavelli fully recounts is meant to provide an example of the 'accidents' that the Medici *stato* caused. The political disenfranchisement of the *Ottimatti* families and the co-optation of the popular sectors were the characteristic of the Medici regime.<sup>205</sup> Still, Machiavelli argues, these 'accidents' or plots "because they succeed only with difficulty, most often bring ruin to whoever moves them and greatness to the one against whom they are moved."<sup>206</sup> It was thanks to the ill fate of the conspiracy led by the Pazzi –and of conspiracies in general- that Lorenzo was able to solidify his status as leader of Florence. Machiavelli's account of the event suggests that had the Pazzi not intervened and made a national hero out of the accidental survival of Lorenzo, the Medici could have suffered the same fate as Walter de Brienne.

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<sup>204</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 317. This is an important aspect, since the Pazzi were not the only ones to hate the Medici rule. In fact, most great families, even some of those that helped to bring Cosimo back from exile, disliked the regime for the practical reason of being unable to have a say in the politics of the city. The official ban of parties during the crisis of 1465-66 drove the anti-Mediceans to transform their political activities into conspiracies. Unger: 61.

<sup>205</sup> The Medici rule encouraged social mobility as the regime employed members of the artisan sectors so as to serve "as a counterweight to the older families, who were their most intractable enemies." Ibid: 183.

<sup>206</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 129. Similarly, in his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli stresses, "It arises that many of them are attempted, and very few have the desired end." Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 218.

Machiavelli recounts in detail both the assassination of Giuliano de' Medici in the hands of Francesco de' Pazzi and the savagery of the *tumulto* started by the people of the city. Machiavelli covers the bestial execution of the plotters with a distinct emphasis, which is not found in the account of the event by his contemporary Francesco Guicciardini.<sup>207</sup> Gilbert argues that Guicciardini focuses mainly on “factual information” and “causal connections of political events.”<sup>208</sup> Machiavelli deviates from this so-called ‘dispassionate’ and factual historical account in order to add his spectacularly detailed account. Besides the fact Guicciardini was a close acquaintance of Machiavelli, especially after 1521 –that is, once Machiavelli began to work under the commission of the Medici as both diplomat and writer-, they certainly regarded history and its use from very different perspectives.<sup>209</sup>

In the *Histories*, Machiavelli tells us that the Pazzi was one of, if not the, wealthiest and noblest family in Florence.<sup>210</sup> Still, they were full of “indignation,” since they believed their house was not “granted those ranks of honour that it appeared to the other citizens they merited.”<sup>211</sup> Lorenzo *il Magnifico*, the *de facto* ruler of the city and the

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<sup>207</sup> Guicciardini “was conscious of the derivative nature of Machiavelli’s *Florentine History*; he doubted of the veracity of its facts, and therefore he did not use it much.” Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 246.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid: 245.

<sup>209</sup> Gilbert and Pocock argue that this relative closeness and professional respect was, to some extent, not an agreement in thought because of certain differences in terms of their perception of Florentine republicanism. Guicciardini’s political thought was, in essence, “formally aristocratic,” in the sense that he regarded the “few” as carriers of the political *virtù* of seeking office as “ambition and thirst for glory.” In this case, I believe the radical difference between Guicciardini and Machiavelli resides in the fact that Guicciardini identified this ‘aristocratic’ *ethos* for greatness with the *Ottimatti*, whereas Machiavelli seems to perceive it in a more contingent and personal fashion, as it is the case with his characterization of Michele di Lando. Guicciardini belonged to one of the most renowned *Ottimatti* families, who supported the return of Cosimo *il Vecchio* in 1434. In addition, dissimilar effects framed their lives: whereas Machiavelli’s re-entrance to the politics of Florence was long and exhibited plenty of sacrifices, Guicciardini was a public figure close to Medicean politics, particularly as an ambassador to the Pope. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 241. Pocock: 133. Also, Athanasios Moulakis, *Republican Realism in Renaissance Florence: Francesco Guicciardini’s Discorso di Logrognò* (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998): 52

<sup>210</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 318.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid: 318.

head of the Medici house, perceived the fact the Pazzi were rich and noble as enough to provide a threat to the rule of his family over the republic.<sup>212</sup> A financial dispute on the part of one of the Pazzi members, which resulted in the loss of a large sum of money for the family, appeared to be sufficient for Francesco de' Pazzi to plot against the head of the city, Lorenzo, and his brother, Giuliano.<sup>213</sup> Still, this does not seem to be a rational and contingent reason to conspire against the Medici, since the Pazzi, with the aid of Pope Sixtus IV, had already destroyed the reputation of the Medici as bankers and certainly were the leaders of the banking sector in the region.<sup>214</sup> "Lorenzo's business dealings were in such disorder that he must necessarily fail within a very few years. Once he had lost his wealth and his reputation, he would lose power."<sup>215</sup>

The mercantile-minded Florentine elite regarded Lorenzo's patronage over the republic with doubt and resentment. The Medici had ruled over Florence through a dual capacity of co-opting and mobilizing the sympathies of some of the 'Optimate' families and the merchant sectors of the city. On the one hand, they benefited this sector, particularly through tax exceptions to some of the main sources of wealth, i.e. textile

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<sup>212</sup> The Laurentian Florentine republic had Pope Sixtus IV as one of its rivals, since Lorenzo had as one of his objectives the acquisition of some of the autonomous cities and principalities near or under the dominion of the papal state. The Pazzi were one of the leading financiers of the papal enterprises. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 352-354. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 318.

<sup>213</sup> Francesco Salviati, archbishop of Pisa, "agreed willingly" to be part of the plot, since he also "had been offended by the Medici." Ibid. Added to this was Giovanni de' Pazzi's failure to obtain the properties of Giovanni Buonromei, his wife's father. Machiavelli states that, though the properties should have gone to Giovanni's wife -Buonromei had no other children-, one of his nephews sized part of the goods. In 1476, under the order of Lorenzo, a law was passed, which stipulated that in absence of male children, other male relatives had priority over daughters. Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Florence*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1970): 31. See also, de Grazia: 12. Also, Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 356.

<sup>214</sup> Unger argues that it is uncertain to what extent the growth of the Pazzi bank happened at the expense of the Medici enterprises, "but it is perhaps no coincidence that in the very years that the Medici branch began its steep decline the Pazzi branch was moving in the opposite direction." "Many decisions Lorenzo made regarding the bank were in fact driven by political necessity...for instance the Medici bank in Milan...Lorenzo felt he could not shut it down for fear of alienating his friend and political ally [the Duke of Milan]." Unger: 264-265.

<sup>215</sup> Guicciardini: 35.



production outside the city walls, long-distance trade and banking.<sup>216</sup> On the other, the Medici generally attempted, as a policy implemented since Cosimo, to maintain the *great* families, especially wealthy ones like the Pazzi, outside of the political arena, and especially outside of the most important and influential offices in Florence.<sup>217</sup> This particular system, with the added element of Lorenzo's will to personalize the political leadership over the city, led certain sectors of the *Ottimatti* to search for a solution.<sup>218</sup> Machiavelli, focusing on Lorenzo's personal characteristics, states, "Lorenzo, hot with youth and power, wanted to take thought for everything and wanted everyone to recognize everything as from him."<sup>219</sup> Similarly, Francesco de' Pazzi, who is depicted by Machiavelli as "more spirited and more sensitive" than the rest of the members of the family, was the one who began to plan the plot against both Lorenzo and Giuliano.<sup>220</sup> This is, perhaps, one of Machiavelli's main understandings of human nature: young men are prone to follow their instincts, hence lacking one of the so-called Machiavellian *virtù*, prudence.<sup>221</sup> The way in which the plot is described and as Francesco's name suggests – *Pazzo* in Italian means 'lunatic' -, seems to state that the assault was predicated on an irrational principle not accommodated to reason. Machiavelli's portrait of Lorenzo presents the Medicean system as unable to manage the various interests of the different sectors of Florentine society, especially those of the *Ottimatti*.

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<sup>216</sup> Moulakis: 61.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid: 51-52. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 353. Guicciardini writes, "It seemed to Lorenzo that the Pazzi were too powerful, and that any favour shown them might increase their power enough to endanger his position. For this reason he kept them out of the high offices and magistracies of the city [...]" Guicciardini: 30.

<sup>218</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 318-319.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid: 319. Further, this comment on Lorenzo's personal traits is absent in Guicciardini's account.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid: 319. Both Machiavelli and Guicciardini argue that Jacopo, the head of the Pazzi house, was reluctant of pursuing such enterprise.

<sup>221</sup> In chapter VII, Machiavelli recounts another conspiracy in Milan, the so-called Cola Montano, led by "a lettered an ambitious man," teacher of the young elite and ambitious in Milan. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 312-313.

After a number of attempts to bring Giuliano and Lorenzo to their trap, Machiavelli tells us, the conspirators “decided to kill the Medici in the cathedral church of Santa Reparata [...]”<sup>222</sup> The plot, once planned to be executed in the intimacy of the Medici palace at Fiesole, was moved to the largest church in Florence, where a large audience would be present to see the death of the patron of Florence and attempt on the part of the conspirators take the authority of the *stato* before the eyes of God. The prose and style Machiavelli employs in this account of the assassination of Giuliano presents the reader with a man whose passion and desire for killing has gone so far that he ‘gravely’ wounded himself.<sup>223</sup> Francesco’s ferocity, ambition and lack prudence caused him, as an ‘effect’, a serious wound. On the other hand, Guicciardini’s report lacks this emotional and vivid emphasis. He writes that once Francesco and Giuliano entered the church “arm in arm,” the Pazzi “attacked Giuliano.”<sup>224</sup> Guicciardini’s version is almost passive in comparison to Machiavelli’s intimate account, which emphasizes the traits and feelings of Francesco at the time of the killing. Reborn accurately states that, in Machiavelli’s eyes, the incapacity to control “their desires and passions make humans pathetic and ridiculous...”<sup>225</sup> It is almost a tragic account of human capacities to deceive themselves when blinded by overwhelming desires. Machiavelli continues his report by

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<sup>222</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 322. Similarly, Guicciardini says, “So they decided to do it that morning in Santa Reparata, where a solemn high mass was to be sung.” Guicciardini: 33. Some historians argue that Giuliano “was kept at home by a painful attack of sciatica.” Harold Acton, *The Pazzi Conspiracy: The Plot Against the Medici* (London, UK: Thames and Hudson, 1979): 67. Guicciardini’s account is similar, “Giuliano was indisposed and could not attend...” Guicciardini: 33. Unlike Guicciardini’s precise account of the event, Machiavelli claims that Giuliano did not go “either *by chance* or *on purpose*...” Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 322. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>223</sup> “The appointed hour came; Bernardo Bandini, with a short weapon prepared to this effect, pierced the breast of Giuliano, who after a few steps fell to the ground; Francesco de’ Pazzi, threw himself on him, filled him with wounds, and struck him with such zeal, that, *blinded by the fury that transported him*, he wounded himself gravely in the leg. Machiavelli,” *Ibid*: 324. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>224</sup> Guicciardini: 33. Acton states that once Bernardo Bandini stabbed Giuliano on the chest, Francesco “continue to strike him repeatedly after he had fallen: nineteen wounds were counted...” Acton: 70.

<sup>225</sup> Reborn, *Foxes and Lions*: 103.

adding, “Messer Antonio and Stefano...attacked Lorenzo...” and slightly wounded him on the throat; and Lorenzo “defended himself with his arms” and hid himself with the aid of some followers in the sacristy of the church.<sup>226</sup> At this climax, Machiavelli appears to criticize not merely conspiracies as a method to attain power but also the social discords that existed under Lorenzo’s rule, which generated such factional violence.<sup>227</sup> In other words, besides the fact a *Pazzo* –lunatic- led the plot, it was Lorenzo’s mode of ruling and the inability of the *great* citizens to participate in the decision making of Florentine affairs that ultimately triggered such extreme and ‘unforeseen’ reaction.

The plot to kill the Medici and to take on the Florentine state led, in Machiavelli’s writing, to a series of “tumultuous accidents.”<sup>228</sup> Here, Guicciardini’s account of the tumult lacks the intensity of Machiavelli’s narration. It is, comparing to Machiavelli’s, almost cold and dispassionate. Machiavelli’s account becomes vivid and detailed, filled with his characteristic ‘taste’ of violence. One of the events occurred in the *Signoria*, where some of the plotters attempted to take over the palace and failed.<sup>229</sup> This event ended with the defenestration of the three conspirators –they were thrown alive through the windows of the palace and then hanged.<sup>230</sup> Francesco, who had left the church harmed, unsuccessfully attempted to “call the people to liberty and arms;” it is said that

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<sup>226</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 324. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli discusses the dangers of plotting against “two heads” and the problem of “leaving alive part of those who were planned to be killed...” since it produces “disorders” that cannot be controlled. Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 227-229.

<sup>227</sup> Earlier in Book II, Machiavelli describes the struggles between the people and the nobles and the abolition of the old feudal nobility, which in the end was also the beginning of a new system of government that banished all aristocratic privileges and excluded the aristocracy entirely from government. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 104.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*: 324. Guicciardini certainly does not call this event ‘*tumulto*.’ He employs the notion only once at the very end of the chapter dedicated to the Pazzi plot. Guicciardini: 36.

<sup>229</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 325. On this particular report, de Grazia claims that Machiavelli “narrates [it] not as an eyewitness but as a mature historian with a sure knowledge of intimate detail. When he comes to describe what is happening [inside the palace], we should note this place was...his headquarters for the many years he served as Florentine Secretary.” De Grazia: 10.

<sup>230</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 325.

no one took up arms for them, and Francesco then returned to his houses, where “he threw himself naked upon his bed and begged Messer Jacopo” to call the people of Florence to their aid.<sup>231</sup> Both Guicciardini and Machiavelli write that most people felt “the murder of the popular Giuliano a brutal and uncivilized act, especially as it was committed in church on a holy day.”<sup>232</sup> In this case, we come to see that Lorenzo did not call the people to arms, but rather the Florentine themselves spontaneously decided to do so. “The whole city was in arms and Lorenzo de’ Medici...had withdrawn to his houses.”<sup>233</sup> This portrays the ‘accidental’ beginning of the tumults, and Lorenzo is presented as a secondary figure, who, wounded on the throat, had to flee to his house. The tumult, as in the other two cases, takes on relevance and becomes the main figure of Machiavelli’s tableau. Whereas Lorenzo leaves the scene almost passively, the fortuitous tumult becomes an active political persona and the participants decide to take justice in their own hands. “[Lorenzo] made little attempt to intervene in one way or another.”<sup>234</sup>

After this portrayal of the beginning the tumults, Machiavelli’s narrative comes to be filled with a detailed description of the murder and the barbarous mutilation of the bodies of the plotters, in and around the cathedral. He states, “the limbs of the dead were seen fixed on the points of weapons or being dragged about the city, and everyone pursued the Pazzi with words full of anger and deeds full of cruelty.”<sup>235</sup> Again, Machiavelli’s depiction of the deeds drastically digresses from Guicciardini’s report. He

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<sup>231</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 325. Again, Guicciardini’s report appears to be much more passive or less theatrical in comparison to Machiavelli’s *Histories*, “[Francesco] having wounded himself in the heel during the fight, was unable to flee and had to take refuge in his house.” Guicciardini: 34.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid: 34. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 326.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid: 326.

<sup>234</sup> Only after the tumults and with the case of “his brother-in-law Guglielmo de’ Pazzi...did he take a stand...” Moreover, he apparently did so because his sister, Bianca –Guglielmo’s wife- pleaded Lorenzo to save his life. Unger: 322.

<sup>235</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 326. De Grazia connects these executions to the abovementioned ‘defamatory portraits.’ See, de Grazia: 10-11.

presents the ‘defenders of Lorenzo’ as a savage and angry crowd, similar to the mobs that killed Messer Guglielmo, Walter de Brienne’s lieutenant. Rehorn states that the account of the tumult, especially the mutilation of the bodies of the plotters, “vividly documents Machiavelli’s conviction that man is a creature who desires –and who kills.”<sup>236</sup> Nevertheless, these events have completely dissimilar effects. The tumult led against the Duke and his henchmen was meant to put an end to the tyranny of the Duke and to regain freedom for the city. The one led against the Pazzi, on the other hand, was caused by the accidental survival of Lorenzo from an ill-prepared plot, which eventually aided Lorenzo to solidify his position in power. The effects of the plot were more the result of, as Machiavelli puts it, Lorenzo’s “great fortune and grace” than Lorenzo’s *virtù*.<sup>237</sup>

Added to this spectacle of cruelty, Machiavelli states that the people seized the houses of the Pazzi and “Francesco, naked as he was, was dragged from his house, led to the palace, and hanged beside the archbishop and the others.”<sup>238</sup> Machiavelli, unlike Guicciardini, emphasizes the physical appearance of Francesco, his nudity, and the method implemented to execute him. Again, the event leads to an execution that takes place in a public space before, presumably, a large audience. The executions led by the ferocious crowd happen in a public scenario and at the very centre of the city: from Santa Reparata to the *Palazzo della Signoria* to the Medici Palace there are just a few minutes of distance and represent the ‘heart’ of Florence. In other words, the execution is not only staged in public –before the eyes of the entire city-, but also brought from the ‘inside’ to

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<sup>236</sup> Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 100.

<sup>237</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 326.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*: 326. On the other hand, Guicciardini writes, “[Francesco] was taken from [his house] to the palace, where he was immediately hanged with the others.” Guicciardini: 34.

the 'outside' of the main governmental offices, the main religious building, and the house of the most important figures of the city.<sup>239</sup>

At this point, Machiavelli's account of the *tumulto* reaches its climax, which recalls the people's need to channel their collective emotional state. Francesco's execution occurs almost as a religious procession, a sign of what Rebhorn has defined as a need to 'purge' the state of the people, since the naked body of Francesco was dragged around the city to then be led into the palace.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, Francesco was originally buried in the family cemetery in Santa Croce but a succession of devastating rainstorms threatened to rot the crops in the fields –it was spring when the murders were enacted, and May is month of the dry season in Tuscany. Therefore, the superstitious Florentines assumed that allowing a traitor to be buried in consecrated ground was an affront to God.<sup>241</sup> Machiavelli shows in a quasi-mystical fashion how the multitude attempted to 'purge' the city from the malignity brought about by the plotters, something that Guicciardini skips entirely.<sup>242</sup> This act obviously recalls the savagery of the abovementioned tumult members eating at the attendants of Walter of Brienne. Machiavelli portrays the archbishop Salviati, one of the main plotters, twisted and struggled in his noose beside the body of Francesco de' Pazzi; Archbishop Salviati sunk his teeth into the chest of his co-conspirator and clung there even after death –a surreal and macabre act of a desperate dying man that was talked about in Florence for years

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<sup>239</sup> Recall the ending of the attempt to take over the *Palazzo della Signoria*, with the plotters hanged from the windows of the Palace and the bodies being piled up right at the *Piazza*. De Grazia: 11. Unger: 323.

<sup>240</sup> De Grazia: 10-11. Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 122. This typologically recalls the death of Hector, with Achilles dragging the dead body around the walls of Troy until the body was unrecognizable. Virgil's *Aeneid* borrows this typology to recount the death of Turnus. See, David West, "The Deaths of Hector and Turnus," *Greece and Rome*, Second Series 21(1): 21-22.

<sup>241</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 327. Also, Trexler: 127. Unger: 326.

<sup>242</sup> Guicciardini: 34-35.

afterward.<sup>243</sup> His account of the tumult, once again, deflects from Guicciardini, for Machiavelli's account of the tumult gives the impression to the reader that the ferocity of the people happened and lasted a few days.<sup>244</sup> Though Machiavelli's account does not specify any dates, the narrative certainly gives the idea that the entire *tumulto* was a concise and rapid one.<sup>245</sup> Guicciardini's report is much shorter than that in the Histories; still, Machiavelli's portrayal makes one think that the entire event was a matter of a few hours.<sup>246</sup>

The way Machiavelli portrays the tumult that followed the failed conspiracy against the Medici presents a process in which violence reinforces itself to the point where it reaches a peak of bestiality only to fade away on its own. It seems to be almost a reflex on the part of the general population, as a 'natural' instinct of rage that has to be released in this case against a family that symbolized the class that aimed 'to oppress.' Once the participants accomplished the task of purging this need for violence outside of the rule of law, they regain a state in which they become once again 'citizens.'<sup>247</sup> That is, once the crowd released its need for violence, with the execution of over fifty people,

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<sup>243</sup> Angelo Poliziano, *The Pazzi Conspiracy, Humanism and Liberty: Writings on Freedom from Fifteenth Century Florence*, trans Rene Neu Watkins and David Marsh (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1978): 178. Also, Unger: 322. This also recalls the abovementioned 'Dantesque' depiction of the angry in the river of blood in Inferno; their angry souls rend each other's flesh with their teeth. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 15.

<sup>244</sup> One of the plotters, Bernardo Bandini, escaped from Florence and was found in nowadays Turkey by the Grand Turk a year after the events at Santa Reparata. He was then repatriated and executed. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 327 and 362. Sandro Botticelli painted a *pittura infamante* of the condemned man in which Bandini appears painted hanging by a foot, and Lorenzo appended some inscriptions in which he calls Bandini "a new Judas" and traitor of the city. Unger: 325. Also, de Grazia: 11.

<sup>245</sup> Guicciardini does not retell the dates of the event either. Still, his 'factual' account is almost 'static', in the sense that it forcefully makes the reader concentrate on the historical actions. Guicciardini: 34-35.

<sup>246</sup> For instance, Jacopo was executed four days after Francesco, fact that Machiavelli leaves untouched. Unger: 324.

<sup>247</sup> This also seems to be in great part Machiavelli's invention, since the records of Landino Landucci present the case that "the violent reprisals continued even after it was clear that the Medici were no longer in imminent danger." Unger: 322.

they once again came to be ruled as citizens of the Medicean republic.<sup>248</sup> The tumults appear to have started as an ‘effect’ of such a fortuitous and still atrocious killing of Giuliano, who was well considered by the population in general –he was considered a man of “liberality and humanity.”<sup>249</sup> The deeds on the part of the people seem to be a call by Machiavelli concerning the people’s violent nature and their desire for cruelty, which is a constant threat for any political regime, including Lorenzo’s one. The fact that the people remained faithful to Lorenzo is almost secondary in Machiavelli’s account. Certainly, after such a release of emotional violence –the type of event that ‘satisfies’ the crowd-, the Florentines would have followed the Medici or any other political figure.<sup>250</sup> This, again, recalls the readers of the particular problem of the event: it is not merely the plot that was ill designed but the system of government that prompted such enterprise. Still, it is worth noting that the people revolted and executed the participants of a plot whose aim was not the ‘common good’ of the republic, but rather they acquisition of power for their own private interest.

At this point, Lorenzo regains active participation in the narrative and the *tumulto* leaves the scene. Machiavelli makes Lorenzo give a pretty effective speech, from his window of his palace in *Via Larga*, with his throat bandaged, in order to bring some calm to the city.<sup>251</sup> Lorenzo appeals to the audience, “all qualified citizens,” arguing that his house had benefited them with “liberality and favours.”<sup>252</sup> This does not show Lorenzo as an established and legitimate leader, since he has to request the support of the

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<sup>248</sup> The same Landucci writes that between April 26 and April 28 he recorded “more than seventy summary executions and lynching by angry mobs. Among the victims were some completely innocent as well as many who were only distantly implicated.” Unger: 322.

<sup>249</sup> Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 105.

<sup>250</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 327-328. Guicciardini pragmatically states, “Lorenzo gained so much reputation and profit from it that the day may be called a *lucky* one for him.” Guicciardini: 36.

<sup>251</sup> Unger: 321.

<sup>252</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 130.



Florentines. One may argue, then, that Lorenzo was less in control of the city than what it might have been expected. Indeed, it shows the character of a stubborn leader, as not fully conscious of the acts and the accidental effects they had on his rule.<sup>253</sup> Lorenzo reminds the Florentines of two particular characteristics of his regime –liberality and favours- which were especially meant to co-opt the merchant middle sectors. These two features represent the main problematic of the Medicean *stato*. Lorenzo is not able to put an end to the factions in the city; rather, he relies on them to maintain his power. It is so because of the Medici's refusal to accord the *Ottimatti* families a portion of the glory and honour of public office.

As presented above, the result of denying the plebeian *Ciompi* political access was a popular tumult whereas the consequence of the Pazzi murder was a conspiracy. The tumult that followed was a spontaneous outburst of popular tension, as all tumults are, but the fundamental point was not the tumult itself but the “Pazzo-madness” that resulted from denying the elite an honourable role in government. The tumult that arose as a consequence of such ‘accidental’ conspiracy certainly helped cement Lorenzo's rule in the short term. The irrationally planned plot against the Medici and the following tumultuous execution of the plotters came to be a more than sufficient lesson for Lorenzo to ‘shift gears’ and attempt to bring about political changes to his *patria*. In other words, the events gave the Medici rulers the ‘perspective’ needed to provide means to secure their position in Florence.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Lorenzo was not only hardheaded but also spirited and revengeful. “In the months following the attack, the Pazzi family's assets and properties were liquidated and laws passed penalizing anyone who married into the disgraced clan.” Unger: 323.

<sup>254</sup> One may argue that this is exactly what Lorenzo learned, as exemplified by his mission to Naples. After the failure of the conspiracy the Pope and the King of Naples had supported and financed, they decided to get rid of Lorenzo and the Medici through a war. Facing such danger Lorenzo gave an appealing speech before the assembled dignitaries at the *Palazzo* of Florence and praised the Florentines to, “with the

## 5-Pedagogical Spectacles and the Medici Patrons

*“I should like to make friends for your house, not enemies.”*<sup>255</sup>

After the contextual analysis of the tumults that Machiavelli ‘spotlights,’ we come to the relevance and the role of the audience for Machiavelli. I want add evidence to the argument that a great part of the rhetorical and aesthetic significance of the notion of *tumulto* is lost once it is perceived as a historical piece meant for a general audience.<sup>256</sup> It was not intended for a general readership but rather for the remaining leaders of the Medici clan. Several scholars present the case that some of Machiavelli’s major texts were not merely dedicated to members of the most powerful family in Florence but were also planned as a parochial political lesson for them to refound the republic and maintain *lo stato*.<sup>257</sup> However, some of these argumentations fail to accurately portray Machiavelli’s intended emphasis. For instance, Najemy states, “In the Florentine Histories Machiavelli completed the process of self-liberation from the myths of the Prince. In the first place, the image of the *principe* was transformed from that of the lawgiver-redeemer, existing above or at least outside, the body politic...to little more

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readiness with which they had avenged the death of his brother and saved his life” they would defend Florence against foreign enemies. After a recount of the bellicose events the conspiracy had triggered, Machiavelli comes to retell Lorenzo’s mission to Naples to put an end to the conflict, which appeared to put his life and his reputation at stake. Lorenzo, we are told, “marvelled” the king with “the greatness of his spirit, the dexterity of his genius and the gravity of his judgement.” The King of Naples and Lorenzo signed an accord “by which each was obliged to the preservation of their common states,” and peace was restored. It may be said that this dangerous mission on the part of Lorenzo presents him as a man who learned his lesson and hence secured his rule on the long term. That is, the tumult could be interpreted to be what Lorenzo needed to shift his focus away of his own family towards the common good of Florence, and perhaps Italy. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 328-341. Unger: 340-351.

<sup>255</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 424.

<sup>256</sup> Ascoli presents a similar criticism concerning the reading of the Prince’s “theoretically generalizable content,” that misses the “performative” utility that emerges from the text. Ascoli: 221.

<sup>257</sup> Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 552-554. King: 214-218. Parel: 185. Ascoli: 220. Hornqvist: 255

than the ambitious, often insecure, head of a party or faction.”<sup>258</sup> Najemy also stresses that “[Machiavelli’s] search had lost something of its earlier urgency and desperation, it had gained in exchange greater clarity, some ironic distance, and a new perspective that Machiavelli had not made use at the beginning.”<sup>259</sup> This perspective fails to acknowledge that Machiavelli’s call for a Medicean *redentore* expresses a line of thought that is consistent with the historical contingency of his *patria*.<sup>260</sup> That is, Machiavelli’s account of the three tumultuous events pertained directly to the circumstances of the post-1512 Medici regime. The abovementioned tumults that Machiavelli ‘spotlights’ present the Medici with the threats and potentials of their status in Florence. Machiavelli considers Florence post-1512 as “neither a principedom nor a republic;” yet, the young Medici leaders behaved as the ‘old’ established leaders of a principality.<sup>261</sup> Certainly, the position of the leading family of Florence was not determined by birth, as was the case of the old patrician Florentine families. The ruling of the Medici and the threats this leadership embodied should be considered, from which stems Machiavelli’s appeal to the leading family and his call for a new Florentine republic. They had to provide major political access to satisfy both the nobility and the people, which would allow them to become the ‘directors’ of this new republic.

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<sup>258</sup> This line of thought focuses on Machiavelli’s major texts, hence leaving in *limbo* his first historical writings, the first and second *Decennale* of 1503. Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 574.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*: 554.

<sup>260</sup> Certainly, the *Discourses* are a ‘book on republics,’ vis-à-vis the pseudo-characterization of the *Prince* as a ‘book of princes.’ Nevertheless, Machiavelli’s portrayal of the founder, especially characterized by Romulus throughout the first book of his *Discourses*, is quite reminiscent of the character of *virtù* Machiavelli presents in the *Prince*. Hence, I believe Najemy misrepresents, or purposefully de-emphasizes the relevance of the so-called *Principe* character in both the *Discourses* and the *Florentine Histories*.

<sup>261</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 105.

Machiavelli tells Francesco Guicciardini on August 1524 of his concerns about writing the events of the late part of the fifteenth-century, that of the old Medici rule in Florence:

Here in the country, I have been applying myself, and continue to do so, to writing the history, and I would pay ten soldi –but no more- to have you by my side so that I might show you where I am, because I am about to come to certain details, I would need to learn from you whether or not I am being too offensive in my exaggerating or understanding of the facts. Nevertheless, I shall continue to seek advice from myself, and I shall try to do my best to arrange it so that –still telling the truth- no one will have anything to complain about.<sup>262</sup>

As a newly hired employee of the *Florentine Studio* –the Medicean ‘university’ in the city-, he could not wilfully and overtly criticize the direct relatives of his commissioner. Gilbert states that, “because his political ideas and laws were bound to particular historical situations, they appear more massive and much less subtle and convincing than in the works [the Prince and the Discourses] in which he could freely concentrate on assembling all possible arguments for practical recommendations.”<sup>263</sup> Gilbert’s argument, I believe, fails to acknowledge this particular necessity on the part of Machiavelli to employ history as a literary device meant to provide political counsel. First, he did not choose to write a history of the city but rather his commissioner enjoined Machiavelli to use history to provide a political message to his readership.<sup>264</sup> Second, Gilbert gets half of the answer because the relationship between Giulio’s needs and what Machiavelli provides as counsel is much clearer in the Florentine Histories than in other

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<sup>262</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 351. Also, Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 239-240.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid: 239. Still, Gilbert focuses on the distinction between the ‘form’ of the historical Machiavelli and that of the humanist scholars.

<sup>264</sup> Gilbert himself acknowledges this aspect, “Machiavelli undertook the Florentine History not because he especially wanted to write history, but rather because it had been commissioned by Cardinal Giulio Medici, the head of the Florentine Studio.” Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 237.

of his major texts, i.e. The Prince. The very contingent qualities of the Medici patrons and their incapacity to provide a stable form of government provide Machiavelli the opportunity to show his qualities to become the educator of the family in terms of the political knowledge they needed to rule over Florence. To achieve this task he cannot take the direction of open criticism, which in any case could not be seen as a 'pedagogical lesson.' Machiavelli was willing to obtain a commission from the Medici in order to regain a place in the political scene of Florence.<sup>265</sup> His exile from the political affairs of Florence was a factor that 'forced' him to become a writer of politics; the bulk of his political writings is produced during this time of *ozio*, as one of his famous 1513 letters to Vettori presents.<sup>266</sup> Machiavelli directly offers his services to the Medici patrons in two texts. In a letter Machiavelli wrote to Giovanni de' Medici in 1512, he explicitly presents his interest to become the pedagogue of the family. "I therefore believe that it is necessary for your house to win friends over to your side and not to turn them away –and this is not the way...Hence I repeat that I should like to make friends for your house, not enemies."<sup>267</sup> Machiavelli's words, written a few months before being forced to leave office, truly evidence his willingness to 'show' the family how to make 'friends' and avoid 'enemies' hence proposing the Medici needed to be aware of the potential dangers of factional divisiveness and enmities. Machiavelli's letter, in other words, addresses, much like the counsels that arrive from the Histories, the Medici as 'students,' who lacked the necessary skills to govern Florence and a teacher to advise them on political

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<sup>265</sup> In 1520, Lorenzo Strozzi and some other Machiavelli's acquaintances from the *Orti Oricellari* society introduced Machiavelli to Giulio de' Medici. Later that year he was appointed as envoy to Lucca, where he represented the interests of some Florentine merchants in the region. Atkinson and Sices: 322.

<sup>266</sup> He writes, "...if I could talk to you, I could not help but fill your head with castles in air, because Fortune has seen to it that since I do not know how to talk about either the silk or the wool trade, or profits or losses, I have to talk about politics." Ibid: 225. This statement shows Machiavelli's lack of confidence post-1512, though it also refers to Machiavelli's main motive in life, political action.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid: 424.

circumstances. Machiavelli's Ricordo a' Paleschi, also written in 1512, presents an advice to the Medici family and their supporters –the *Paleschi*- with a clear opening: “Notate bene questo scripto [Note well this writing].”<sup>268</sup> In this *Ricordo*, Machiavelli portrays the threat the great families of Florence played for the new Medici. He advises the Medici that these *Ottimatti* wanted to deprive Piero Soderini of his “reputazione nel populo [sic]” and side the people with the Medici only to achieve their own private interests.<sup>269</sup> Machiavelli states that this faction “non gli muove el fare bene ad questo Stato, ma sì bene dare reputazione a loro proprii... [They are not moved by the good of this State, but by their own reputation].”<sup>270</sup> Thus, Machiavelli warns the Medici and their true followers not to trust the great, who “puttaneggiono fra el populo et e Medici [‘whore’ between the people and the Medici].”<sup>271</sup> In Machiavelli’s terms, the Medici had to weaken the *Ottimatti*, side with the people and pursue the ‘common good’ of Florence.<sup>272</sup> This writing presents Machiavelli in the role of a political counsellor, willing to ingratiate himself with the Medici while promoting the ‘good’ of the city.

I will offer a historical portrayal of the context in which Machiavelli writes his commissioned historical text. My interest is to imagine how the text must have read to Giuliano given the historical and familial context he was embedded within. The use of this particular notion as a rhetorical tool - to shape and educate his readership, allows Machiavelli to speak directly to the Medici. Machiavelli provides ‘counsel’ by employing

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<sup>268</sup> The Medici coat of arms presents six balls or *palle* at the centre; hence, the Medici followers were identified as *Paleschi*. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Ricordo di Niccolò Machiavelli a' Paleschi di 1512* (Prato, IT: Tipografia Guasti, 1868): 7. Also, de Grazia: 161.

<sup>269</sup> “Di nuovo lo dico, che trovare e difecti di Piero non dà reputazione ad lo Stato de' Medici, ma ad particolari cittadini [I say it again, to find the defects of Piero[’s regime] does not give [better] reputation to the Medici regime, but to particular citizens].” Machiavelli, *Ricordo a' Paleschi*: 7-8.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid: 7.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid: 9. Also, de Grazia: 162.

<sup>272</sup> Machiavelli, *Ricordo a' Paleschi*: 8-9.

an exaggerated and detailed account of events that were known by the Medici. That is, far from being a text purely meant to recount the history of the city, it has a more specific and contingent goal: to educate the remaining leaders of the Medici on the political skills needed to rule Florence and to re-establish the Florentine republic. Machiavelli appeals to the Medici in terms of what he thought of as the main problems their leadership and the city suffered: their lack of sufficient expertise in the political affairs of the city; the social fragmentation and the political relevance of the *Ottimatti* families; and their own political position as leaders of the city.

### ***5.1-The Medici Post-1512: Who Stands at the Tiller?***

The year 1512 was a particularly significant one for both Florence and Machiavelli. First, it celebrated the return of the Medici family to Florence after almost fifteen years of republican rule, and it marks the end of Machiavelli's work as the secretary or chancellor of the city under Piero Soderini, the Gonfalonier 'for life' of the republic. A short time after his removal from office, Machiavelli was arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and accused of being a member of a plot to assassinate Giuliano de' Medici.<sup>273</sup> Machiavelli's fate was caused more by his perception of the new regime than by any actual and active participation in the event. A confession on the part of one of the conspirators, Giovanni Folchi, confirms Machiavelli's incautious scepticism about this younger generation of Medici leaders, "it appeared to him that this regime would not be governed without difficulty, because it lacked someone to stand at the tiller, as Lorenzo

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<sup>273</sup> Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 552.

[*il Magnifico*] had properly done so.”<sup>274</sup> No doubt, this perception of the regime was the cause that got him in trouble, though it also portrays a particular characteristic of the Medici; they lacked the leadership and the particular knowledge to rule over the city as their predecessors had. Still, in his letter to Giovanni de’ Medici on September 1512, Machiavelli writes on the Medici’s willingness to call a *Balia* through which they would ask the Commune of Florence “four or five thousand ducats per year as an imbursement to [the Medici] house.”<sup>275</sup> Machiavelli’s letter appears to show a man who is not only ready to work for the family but also to warn and advice them in terms of certain irresponsible behaviours they should avoid. Machiavelli positions himself as a ‘middle man’ before the Medici, willing to counsel them, hence making them understand that they were in need of someone like him in order to maintain power over Florence. This is further evidence that Machiavelli felt not only that there was a need to educate the new Medici leaders but also that he was willing to carry the burden of such enterprise.

Between 1512 and 1527, the house of the Medici never satisfactorily came to terms with the question of who should lead the regime and how this task should be achieved. For the first time in their family history, the Medici came to dominate both their city and the Papal States. This was a unique opportunity to attempt to reinforce their status as leaders of Florence and to, perhaps, extend their leadership over the rest of Italy. There were four leading figures in the family: Lorenzo and Giuliano, who spent much of their childhood in Rome, Giulio, cardinal and papal envoy to the Romagna, and

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<sup>274</sup> J.N. Stephens and H.C. Butters, “New Light on Machiavelli,” *The English Historical Review* 97(382): 58-59. Machiavelli dedicated his *Tercets on Ingratitude or Envy* to Folchi.

<sup>275</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 196, 424.



Giovanni, who became Pope Leo X in 1513.<sup>276</sup> None of them actually resided in Florence but in Rome, meaning that from 1512 onwards decisions on Florentine political affairs were taken from the centre of the ancient Roman republic. Neither Pope Leo X nor the other Medici figures seemed to be interested in Florentine politics. In a letter to Machiavelli, Francesco Vettori -Florentine ambassador to the Pope and close advisor to the Medici- wrote, “on occasion, I speak twenty words with the Pope, ten with Cardinal de’ Medici, six with Giuliano the Magnificent [...]”<sup>277</sup> It appears, from the Medici perspective, that twenty words were sufficient to discuss the matters of an entire city and its interests.

During the first years of the regime, and especially after Giovanni’s designation as Pope, the leadership over the city was given first to Giuliano then, after his death, passed on to Lorenzo *il Giovanne*. Giuliano and Lorenzo barely understood the political affairs of Florence, though it appeared to be a general problematic on the part of all the young patrons of the House.<sup>278</sup> As Najemy argues, “If Giuliano had difficulty understanding Florentine politics, Lorenzo was even less capable of doing so. Whereas Giovanni and Giuliano had grown up in Florence and were, respectively, nineteen and sixteen years of age when exiled in 1494, Lorenzo, born in 1492, was literally and culturally of another generation and had no experience of life in republican politics.”<sup>279</sup> Neither of the leading figures of the family had the capacity nor the inclination to become a new Lorenzo *il Magnifico* so as to recreate Cosimo’s take on Florentine republican politics. These failures of leadership provided Machiavelli with the opportunity he

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<sup>276</sup> H.C. Butters, *Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence 1502-1519* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1985): 204-209.

<sup>277</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 261.

<sup>278</sup> Butters: 223.

<sup>279</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 427.

needed to show off his qualities as educator before the 'elders,' Giulio and Pope Leo X.<sup>280</sup>

The newly in-place leader of *lo stato* was given specific instructions by his uncle, the Pope, in order to reinforce the old loyalties and acquire new ones.<sup>281</sup> Leo, the oldest of the three, requested Lorenzo place trusted allies in central offices of government, to respect the prestigious *grandi* clans and to cooperate with them.<sup>282</sup> The fact that Lorenzo needed to be given such counsel to rule illustrates the lack of knowledge he had of the old Medici system of government and presents how leadership was exercised by the Pope from Rome. Lorenzo barely took care of the regime himself. He had appointed a group of eight counsellors -among who was Lorenzo's secretary and right-hand, Goro Gheri- that took care most of the time of the affairs of the city.<sup>283</sup> Lorenzo symbolized what Machiavelli perceived as the main problem of the regime; he was not well liked by the *Ottimatti* and he had no respect for the customs and *ordini* of the city.

Trexler argues that the Medici attempted to re-create certain religious and civic festivities to weaken the city's ties to the previous republican order and to "strengthen the contractual and emotive ties of city dwellers" to the first family of Florence.<sup>284</sup> For instance, Trexler states that the San Giovanni feast, which represented the Florentines' tribute of obligation to the city, came to represent "a Medicean Resurrection...pervaded

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<sup>280</sup> "If he could show a way to incorporate the prudence of Cosimo, the noble vision and sense of national responsibility of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and the common touch of Salvestro de Medici, in his curriculum for the pope's nephew, he had every reason to expect that the pontiff and his cousin would be grateful to him." King: 215. Once Machiavelli met Giulio on early March 1520, Filippo Strozzi made this comment to his brother, Lorenzo: "I am quite pleased that you introduced Machiavelli to the Medici because, should he gain the confidence of the masters, he is a person on the rise." Atkinson and Sices: 322.

<sup>281</sup> Butters: 205.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid: 205. Also, Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 427.

<sup>283</sup> Three out of the five years of Lorenzo's unofficial rulership over Florence were spent outside of the city, especially in Rome. Ibid: 429.

<sup>284</sup> Trexler: 506.

by direct and highly literary and ideological communications that equated the Medici with divinities and divine histories.”<sup>285</sup> “It was said that Florence was protected by two lions now –Pope Leo and the Florentine Marzocco- as we are by two Johns –the Baptist and Giovanni de’ Medici.”<sup>286</sup> These conceptions annoyed the anti-Mediceans –principally members of great families- who saw this theatre as a means to link Florentine history to the Medici and to emphasize the “ridiculousness of republican life.”<sup>287</sup>

Lorenzo’s particular ambition was to acquire a territorial state, and Florence was merely a springboard to such ends. Lorenzo called Florence “my support and estate” that nourished his ambitions to become a prince elsewhere in Italy.<sup>288</sup> This illustrates Lorenzo’s provocative method of governing and that his main intention resided beyond the *stato* of Florence.<sup>289</sup> Pope Leo illustrates this little expectation concerning the qualities of the young Medici. “I have appointed two inexperienced captains; if they encounter any great difficulty, I don’t know how they will manage.”<sup>290</sup> Pope Leo called a *Balia*, which elected twenty *Accoppiatori* that then nominated the Gonfalonier and other members of the *Signoria*. Gilbert tells us, “from these lists of candidates for offices, the names of all those who might be unfriendly to the new regime were removed.”<sup>291</sup> Widespread and persistent discontent arose concerning the ruling of the family with the implementation of such policies. The result of such unhappiness was not a change in the *ordini* on the part of the Medici –to provide wider political access- but rather a reduction of the number of participants in some of the key political institutions of the Florentine

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<sup>285</sup> Trexler: 506-507.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid: 507.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid: 509.

<sup>288</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 426.

<sup>289</sup> In fact, his main desire was to acquire a principality in the Romagna. Ibid: 429. Also, Moulakis: 67.

<sup>290</sup> J. Lucas-Dubreton, *Daily Life in Florence in the Time of the Medici*, Trans. A Lytton Sells. (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1961): 181. King: 214.

<sup>291</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 134.

government, which, as expected, were entrusted to loyal *compare* of the family.<sup>292</sup> The resurrection of certain Medicean institutions, such as the *acoppiatori*, the *Cento* and the Seventy shows that the new patrons had a different political aim, the appropriation of power on the part of Lorenzo.<sup>293</sup> Lorenzo, through his right-hand counsellor, Goro Gheri, implemented certain reforms that aimed at controlling potentially dangerous political factions -the *Ottimatti* and certain republican-minded *Mezzani*.<sup>294</sup> He managed to offend the *Ottimatti* with his intervention in the marriage market and by appointing new *Monte* officials -similar to a trust fund employed by wealthy citizens to save money for the dowry of their daughters.<sup>295</sup> Lorenzo's inability to act and maintain a position as 'behind the scenes' was further evidence of his lack of prudence, dedication and shrewdness that characterized Cosimo and Lorenzo.<sup>296</sup> The constant threat of conspiracies, first against Giuliano in 1513 and then against Giulio in 1522, shows that the young Medici fomented great discontent among the upper sectors in Florence.<sup>297</sup> The popular base that Lorenzo *il Magnifico* had erected for his policies post-1478 -represented by the overwhelming tumultuous support on the part of the *popolo* and the incapacity of the *Ottimatti* to

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<sup>292</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 247

<sup>293</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 426. The *Accoppiatori*, a group of decision-makers created by Cosimo, were in charge of choosing the names of candidates to be elected to office, mostly those who were reliable friends of the regime. The system of election was denominated *a la mano* -by hand. The *Cento* included the most influential men in the regime -Medici *compari*, who took over the responsibilities previously given to the Council of the People and the *Commune*. The *Seventy*, a committee created by Lorenzo *il Magnifico*, was a pseudo executive council, which had to approve the legislation discussed and proposed by the *Signoria*. Unger: 455-456.

<sup>294</sup> Najemy states that, "not fully trusting his friends among the *Ottimatti*, he assigned responsibilities of governance to a distant and young relation, Galeotto de' Medici," Gheri, Lorenzo's right-hand, was considered to be "notoriously more Medicean than the Medici." Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 429.

<sup>295</sup> Butters: 288-289.

<sup>296</sup> "[The Old] Medici power was often most effective when least visible," which is at odds with the public pomposity of the young Lorenzo's method of ruling. Unger: 78.

<sup>297</sup> The 1522 conspiracy was led by certain acquaintances of Machiavelli at the *Orti Oricellari* literary circle- Zanobi Buondelmonti, Luigi Alamanni and Jacopo da Diacceto-, all members of some of the most important Florentine families. Machiavelli dedicated his Discourses on Livy to Zanobi Buondelmonti and the owner of the Orti gardens, Cosimo Rucellai.

diminish Lorenzo's power- became part of a distant past. The incapacity of the young Medici to attend to the interests of the *Ottimatti* families resulted in great discontent with the regime. The Medici –especially Giuliano and then Lorenzo-, were truly in need of a means through which they could obtain the requisite political knowledge so as to manage the interests of their family and their city.

The rule of the family over Florence and the Papacy came to be filled with disagreements and indecisions and the Pope's main preoccupation, we are told by Machiavelli in a letter to Vettori, was to secure his own position and to install his relatives in several Italian states. Machiavelli states that if the Pope and the Medici were to “change the Italian situation so that his own security is greatest... [They] must figure out ways to change” the *stato* or regime in Florence.<sup>298</sup>

Lorenzo fell ill and died suddenly in 1519, and because Giuliano had died three years before, the Medici now faced the city with no clear head to lead the regime. Giulio di Giuliano, then cardinal, came to fill in the gap left by Lorenzo. The dynastic chronology of the relatives of Cosimo's line was now about to disappear.<sup>299</sup> Unlike his predecessor, Giulio was open to constitutional reform and expand the offices that had been previously reduced by Lorenzo. Giulio continued with certain policies initiated by Lorenzo, which forcefully kept the *Ottimatti* out of Florentine public affairs and trusted

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<sup>298</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 284. Vettori's reply is quite similar to Machiavelli's critical perspective, “I approve completely a few of the conjectures... [The Pope] has no [political] experience [and] he has no soldiers of his own...” Ibid: 286.

<sup>299</sup> One of Machiavelli's logical and ironic conclusions in his Discourse on the Remodelling the Government of Florence is that both Leo and Giulio “will cease to be,” they will eventually die, and that salvation only occurs through ‘historical memory.’ Machiavelli, *A Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 111, 114. Machiavelli wrote A Discourse on the Remodelling the Government of Florence in 1520 commissioned by Leo X, although Giulio was the *de facto* ruler of the city. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 433.

central functions to some 'Medici creatures' that were not even Florentine by birth.<sup>300</sup> Najemy states that, "for Florentines, who still thought of the inhabitants of the territories as their subjects, seeing the republic, or what was left of it, in the hands of Medici clients was intolerable, and their accumulating resentment now waited for an opportunity to erupt."<sup>301</sup> Giulio did not intend to provide a truly republican regime to Florence that would allow political access to a larger cohort of Florentine inhabitants. Rather, he continued to restrain access to government, which occasioned a greater factional differentiation between those individuals who were loyal to the Medici and those who were not.

By 1524, Giulio was designated Pope Clement VII and he came to hold both the Papacy in Rome and the secular government of Florence. As Machiavelli ironically emphasizes in his Histories, the fate of the family came to be in the hands of a bastard child of an assassinated member of the family raised by his uncle. The most important aspect was his inability to comprehend that Florence was in need of a new, and radically different, political system.<sup>302</sup> Florence, then, was left with a government that, as Machiavelli might put it, was "neither a principedom nor a republic."<sup>303</sup> Florence was under the rule of a single man, Clement VII, though without the support of the great. The Medici post-1512 were unable to keep Florence under tight hold, making them closer to a 'tyranny,' as several citizens perceived it, than the patronage of the elder Medici under a republican system. None of the young Medici was capable of dealing with the *Ottimatti* in the way their elders had done, in the sense that they prompted republican politics

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<sup>300</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 434.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*: 434.

<sup>302</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 327.

<sup>303</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 101, 106.

through a system of patronage.<sup>304</sup> The discords that had been silenced during the elders' regime were now uncontrollable due to the political inefficacy of the new generation of Medici leaders.

Clement was neither a true prince nor a patron *à la* Cosimo. The young Medici were not capable of mirroring the passions the popular sectors had felt for Lorenzo *il Magnifico*. On the other hand, the remaining Medici leaders had eliminated the institutions through which the *Ottimatti* could have participated, and threatened, Medici power. In other words, the young Medici were unable to transform factional fights into political debates. Nevertheless, Florence had grown used to strong leaderships -and Medicean Florence certainly did not have a true *capo*. Since 1434, all regimes of Cosimo, Piero, Lorenzo, and even Savonarola and Soderini, had the particularity of being under the rule of a leading citizen of the polity, a pseudo *primus inter pares*.<sup>305</sup> Indeed, since Florence "has to have [a director], it is much better that he be of the house the people are accustomed to bow down to than that either, not having a director, they should live in confusion or, having one, should get him elsewhere – which would bring less prestige and less satisfaction to everybody."<sup>306</sup> With the malfunctioning Medicean rule, the disenfranchisement of the *Ottimatti* sectors, the slow but steady corruption of the system, so as to become 'neither a republic nor a principedom,' and the lack of support on the part of the *Mezzani*, Florence was in the need of 'drastic measures.' That inferred the implementation of 'new modes and orders' though in order to do that, as Machiavelli

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<sup>304</sup> Still, the method implemented by Cosimo, of *amicizia* and closeness to the middle merchant sectors and the plebs, was not capable of eroding factionalism from the city. Cosimo's, as much as Lorenzo's, ruling brought the factions of previous decades to a 'level' or stage from it was possible to maintain a 'peaceful' co-optation of the republican system. As Machiavelli presents it both in his *Histories* and in his *Discourse*, this *modo privato* of politics did not permit a long-term republican polity. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 183. Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 102-103.

<sup>305</sup> Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 564.

<sup>306</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 104.

argued, Florence needed a lawgiver and *redentore*, capable of stabilizing and putting a ‘check’ on the discords of the *patria*. Machiavelli seems to have made the very pragmatic decision of choosing the Medici, the family to which the city had grown accustomed, to lead the new ‘modes and orders’ that Florence was in desperate need of.

### 5.2-Pedagogical Spectacles: Lessons to Giulio de’ Medici

It is important to recognize the fact that Machiavelli’s history of the city showed, on the one hand, his capacity as a political pedagogue and the necessity of the new Medici to be educated in political qualities.<sup>307</sup> The *tempo* during which Machiavelli writes this text, suggests that an opportunity opened before him in order to revive his duties as man of service, though in this case -and after his time of *ozio* and writing-, he sought to achieve so as a teacher of the remaining Medici ‘princes.’ Machiavelli was now in the position of teaching his view of politics the few members of the family “the people are accustomed to bow down to.”<sup>308</sup> His teaching was meant to provide a solid basis of political qualities and political ideas that would allow the new Medici to renew their covenant with the Florence as their leaders.<sup>309</sup>

In this historical context, the lesson that emerges from Machiavelli’s theatrical portrayal of the tumultuous events in his Florentine Histories is twofold. First, Machiavelli shows that the employment of this ‘irrational noisiness’ on the part of the

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<sup>307</sup> King provides a clear and succinct example of this particular pedagogical issue by stating that “Machiavelli would never have written the Prince had the young kinsmen of the Pope been able and confident characters. He was seeking to prove his abilities as a teacher not his abilities as a political pundit, which were well known if still somewhat underappreciated by the Medici.” King: 215.

<sup>308</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 104.

<sup>309</sup> King: 214.



people of Florence, can be interpreted as a medicine or a *pharmakon*. The notion of *tumulto* refers to violent events that emerged in Florence to put an end to a particular type of regime, tyranny, and change the city's 'modes and orders.' Gilbert states that in Machiavelli's account "after every tumult some old laws are abolished and some new ones are decreed."<sup>310</sup> Still, the result or the emergence of a new regime within the so-called cycle of regime change does not necessarily mean a renewal or improvement of the 'health' of the body politic. Consequently, Machiavelli 'interpreted' the contingencies of Florence and employed the writing of a history of the violence and discords of the past of their city as a means for political instruction.

### ***5.2.1-Tumulto as a Pharmakon***

The fall of the Duke of Athens and the 'theatrical performance' of the people's killing of Guglielmo and his son, represent a 'healthy' and perhaps 'positive' use of *tumulto* as a drastic means for political innovation. On the other hand, I suggest, the *Ciampi* revolt represents the 'negative' aspect of tumults: people's ambitions need to be tamed. Machiavelli seems to endorse the conventional wisdom that considers social conflict to be the result of civil discord or disagreement between social groups in terms of their particular goals. This seems to be linked to the malfunctioning of the regime vis-à-vis Machiavelli's perception of a threefold social division of the city.<sup>311</sup> Still, civic violence in Machiavelli's portrayal is differentiated into two distinctive types: 'vertical' factionalism –the fight between factions or sects led by great families that usually involved the employment of lower sectors for their own *modo privato*. Second, the

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<sup>310</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli's Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 150.

<sup>311</sup> De Grazia: 185.

violent ‘horizontal’ discords, which refer to an almost class-based type of violence, usually equated with public modes of expression and interest, i.e. *tumulto*.<sup>312</sup>

Tumults arise and open the opportunity for ‘new modes and orders’ if the interest for revolt is to regain the freedom that had been previously lost.<sup>313</sup> This is the case of the tumults that arose against the tyranny of Walter de Brienne, whose harsh and violent measures ended with the entire threefold social structure uprising. Machiavelli comments that tumults do not engender “exile or violence unfavourable to the common good but laws and orders.”<sup>314</sup> Indeed, this particular *tumulto* did not harm Florence; rather, it did great benefit to the republic. It is seen as ‘healthy’ first by allowing the population to ‘vent out’ its ferocity against whomsoever was regarded as a primary symbol of the repressive regime of Brienne, and second, by re-establishing the tension between the contrasting interests of the various social sectors.

Machiavelli presents two speeches, the direct speech in the mouth of a republican-minded citizen and an indirect one on the part of the Duke as two opposite versions of how discords can be comprehended, and to present the case that the city was not to be considered simply as one coherent whole.<sup>315</sup> This view resembles a norm found in various ancient authors, but most significantly in Aristotle. Pocock considers Renaissance republican views as shaped by Aristotle -and they certainly were. He states that citizens were perceived as participants of the public affairs of the polis and hence they were the core of *politics*. Machiavelli on the other hand highlighted not the existence of citizen

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<sup>312</sup> Bock : 189.

<sup>313</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 91-92.

<sup>314</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 16.

<sup>315</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 91-93.

participation but the difference between the various interests within the polity.<sup>316</sup> That is, Machiavelli seems to understand political agency as the capacity to deal not only with the ‘three cities’ –the existence of citizen participation- within the polity but also with particular and changing problems, or ‘movements’ that stem out of these three dissimilar perspectives, and as such political action was to be framed upon historical change and adaptation.<sup>317</sup> Besides the fact Brienne was brought to the city by the *grandi* to maintain their “desire to dominate” and to put a ‘check’ on the ambitions of the merchant sectors, Brienne was unable to comprehend the necessary (political) tension there is to be in any city. A ruler should acknowledge the ‘horizontal divisions’ –the discords between the *Ottimatti*, the *popolo* of merchants and *la plebe*- that arise in a particular political regime in order to transform factional fights into diversity and debate.<sup>318</sup>

Hence, the prince’s task as a ruler is to maintain the threefold social structure in tension. Tension, due to the different interests that exist concerning different positions in society, can be instituted in different ways. Tension could be established ‘openly,’ as Machiavelli exemplifies in his Discourses with the case of the Roman Tribunes. Here, in the section entitled “That the disunion of the Plebs and the Roman Senate Made That Republic Free and Powerful,” Machiavelli states that tumults in Rome generated laws for “the benefit of public freedom.”<sup>319</sup> That is, the desire of the people placed a ‘check’ on the ambition of the noblemen of Rome, to improve the ‘common good’ of the entire republic.

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<sup>316</sup> Pocock: 329.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid: 329-330.

<sup>318</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 105.

<sup>319</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 17.

In this case, the common good of the city refers to the preservation of order or avoidance of anarchy -which Machiavelli defines as *licenza* or licence-, and the maintenance of independence or self-preservation.<sup>320</sup> The common good, something that Machiavelli hardly defined himself, appears to benefit all citizens in some way. It also implies a difference between public and private ends, for a state ruled for private gain loses its independence or capacity for self-preservation. *Tumulto* envisions that particular common good Machiavelli seems to have in mind: preservation and order have to be maintained over the discussion and conflict among all social sectors. On the other hand, a tyrannical regime appears to be not merely one that employs harsh and violent methods to govern but one that is meant to benefit the private interests of a particular class or individual. The Duke's indirect speech presents the case that "only united cities are free," and this position is directly opposed to that of a republican citizen -and Machiavelli's viewpoint, as well; Machiavelli writes these two speeches in order to present a lesson on civil discords.<sup>321</sup> In the preface to Book VII, Machiavelli repeats with exactitude the outcome of the two speeches: "Those who hope that a republic can be united are very much deceived in this hope."<sup>322</sup>

This distinction between unity and discords also divides (political) discords from anarchy or license. *Tumulto*, in this case, seems to be the 'mirror' that Machiavelli employs for the treatment of the complexity of political accessibility and his particular position concerning representation. Hence, one can argue that the various tumults that Machiavelli highlights are meant to illustrate that the struggles were in part to widen political access -as in the case of the fall of the Duke of Athens and the *Ciompi* revolt-, or

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<sup>320</sup> De Grazia : 175. Pocock: 333. On Machiavelli's use of *Licenza*, see Parel: 140-143.

<sup>321</sup> Bock: 187.

<sup>322</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories* : 276.

to reduce it -as in the case of the tumults that followed the Pazzi conspiracy. *Tumulto* does not merely present Machiavelli's notion of 'representation;' it also signifies the radical difference between 'representation' of the *grandi* with respect to that of the other two social sectors -the *Mezzani* and *la plebe*. That is, accessibility to political debate did not mean for Machiavelli political 'equality' in the (Western-liberal) contemporary sense. Representation is to be comprehended according to these dissimilar interests, and as such, Machiavelli's republicanism, Mansfield argues, "Accepts both the 'tyrannical' desire to dominate and the 'republican' desire not to be dominated and shows how they can be made to cooperate."<sup>323</sup>

Tumults do not merely represent human nature and its proclivity to violence, but also the call for a diligent lecture on the 'natures' of the various social sectors. Participation and access to public and political affairs appear to be the focal point to all three sectors. Still, their 'ambitions,' as Machiavelli highlights, are quite dissimilar. Rehorn stresses that in Machiavelli's view all men tend to have an "appetite for political power," which he labels as "*ambizione*."<sup>324</sup> "When men were living naked and destitute of all riches, and when as yet there were no examples of poverty and of wealth. Oh human spirit insatiable, arrogant, crafty, and shifting, and above all else malignant, iniquitous, violent and savage."<sup>325</sup> In the account of the events of the *Ciompi*, Machiavelli puts in the mouth of an 'experienced' poor man that, in fact, all men are equal once they

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<sup>323</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: XXVIII. This also shows the reason of Soderini republic's failure. In a letter to Agnolo Tucci, Machiavelli illustrates the problem of the ruthless 'equality' established by this particular system. "A man of low birth [who] asked to be personally informed on the Pope's policy in the Romagna, and made a fuss because he did not get a quick reply," states an offended Machiavelli. King: 215. Atkinson and Sices: 92. Machiavelli portrays this particular perception of 'equality' in the preface to Book III. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 105.

<sup>324</sup> Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 95.

<sup>325</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, "Tercets on Ambition," in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others Volume II* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989): 736.

are stripped of their clothes.<sup>326</sup> Nevertheless, Machiavelli is quite explicit about this distinction between the ambitions of the *grandi* and those of the people. Whereas the *Ottimatti*'s desire is "to oppress," the desire or ambition of the merchants is not to follow the directives of these noblemen, and the plebs struggle for liberty; these dissimilar ambitions represent Machiavelli's view of how a republican system comes to be, and must be, in tension.

The dissimilar political desires that Machiavelli speaks of -whether the ambition to oppress or the characteristic 'boldness' of the people to be free-, are unavoidable forces that need to be 'released.'<sup>327</sup> Machiavelli's account of the government of Michele di Lando shows this particular problematic. Machiavelli writes, "It appeared to the plebs that Michele in reforming the state had been too partisan toward the greater people, nor did it appear to them that they had as great a part in government as was necessary to enable them to maintain and defend themselves in it [...]."<sup>328</sup> Once Michele granted political access to the *Ciompi*, they still were not satisfied. Machiavelli argues that discontent and desire are continuously renewed; this suggests how tumults, due to people's ambition, can indeed change a regime and still lead to license and anarchy, as well.<sup>329</sup> Further, it portrays the necessity to gain a broad vision about political participation on the part of the people. De Grazia states that Machiavelli's republican thinking accounts for a government led by 'more than a few,' though this does not mean

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<sup>326</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 122-123.

<sup>327</sup> Rebhorn's argument is based on a twofold Florentine social hierarchy that, I believe, misses the relevance of the tripartite social division, that portrays a much more complex account of civil discords represented by Machiavelli's use of *tumulto*. Rebhorn: *Foxes and Lions*: 96.

<sup>328</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 128.

<sup>329</sup> De Grazia: 185. In the *preface* of Book IV, Machiavelli states, "Cities, and especially those not well ordered that are administered under the name of republic, frequently change their governments and their states not between liberty and servitude, as many believe, but between servitude and license." Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 146.

that Machiavelli praises open participation for all citizens.<sup>330</sup> This sense of *openness* indicates that the creation of ‘modes and orders’ in the city are meant to ensure that no citizen or social sector oppresses another.<sup>331</sup> It is worth noting that ‘tension’ does not refer to ‘oppression;’ this is why in several passages in both the Florentine Histories and the Discourses, Machiavelli speaks of tumults as a ‘check’ so as to present his republican perspective as based on a so-called ‘balance of ambitions.’ “There is nothing that makes a republic so stable and steady as to order it in a mode so that those alternating humours that agitate it can be vented in a way ordered by the laws.”<sup>332</sup> The direct speech on the part of the anonymous republican-minded citizen to Walter de Brienne shows a similar position. The plebeians are cruel and change their mind rapidly, whereas the great hate being oppressed, which leads them to seek revenge.<sup>333</sup> The citizen reminds the Duke that the only lasting dominion is one that avoids the hatred of either social sector, and adds that this “lasting dominion” is one that is not “blinded by ambition.”<sup>334</sup> No type of ambition is to be given advantage over others, but rather all are to be tamed through the implementation of new republican ‘modes and orders.’ This task, has to be put forward by a founder, a man capable of stripping himself of his private interests, and, as Machiavelli himself, is able “to love [his] patria more than [his] soul.”

Machiavelli’s portrayal of civil and social discords presents this lesson. Michele di Lando, who “deserves to be numbered among the few who have benefited the fatherland,” appeals to the necessity of a ‘heroic’ prince, capable of reading the ambitious

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<sup>330</sup> De Grazia: 183.

<sup>331</sup> Bock: 191.

<sup>332</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 24.

<sup>333</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 92.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*: 93.

qualities of all men.<sup>335</sup> Whereas most human beings, blinded by their overwhelming ambitions, are either ‘bold’ or ‘arrogant,’ the innovator is capable of mastering his passions. Machiavelli explicitly places Michele’s deeds in contrast to those of the Duke of Athens to illuminate the stature and the necessary grandeur based on merit that the new Medici needed to acquire. “Had [Michele’s] spirit been either malign or *ambitious*, the republic would have lost its freedom altogether and fallen under a greater tyranny than that of the duke of Athens.”<sup>336</sup> Brienne was not willing to provide this freedom and fell before a ferocious crowd. Contrary to the Duke, Di Lando was able to stop the tumults, showing his capacity for ‘reading’ the social discords in the city. Michele’s capacities were not blinded by the usual ambition of men; otherwise, he could have put Florence on its knees and become a ruler closer to the despicable Agathocles than the hero of *virtù* and innovation, Cesare Borgia.

In sketching a new Florentine constitution, Machiavelli offers Giulio a view on the “Great Council,” which was considered the most ‘democratic’ institution of Florence.<sup>337</sup> Machiavelli, speaking in the first person, claims, “I judge it necessary to reopen the hall of the Council to one thousand or at least of six hundred citizens...”<sup>338</sup> Machiavelli did so during the time the Medici were reticent to open and widen political participation due to their fear to social uprising. Machiavelli’s appeal looks even stronger if one takes into account that decisions during the new regime were taken merely by the *Seventy*, a council of Medici allies. This Assembly Machiavelli designs for Giulio is strikingly similar to the Roman Tribunes that he depicts in the Discourses, created to

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<sup>335</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 130.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid: 130. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>337</sup> De Grazia: 181.

<sup>338</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 110.



provide political access to the plebs and to “prevent the insolence of the nobles” of Rome.<sup>339</sup> Machiavelli presents directly to Giulio that the new Medici needed to provide political access to a larger cohort of Florentines. By doing so, the political regime established by the new generation of Medici would grant freedom to the people and political power to the Florentine patricians. Najemy states part of the second half of the Histories deals with “the corrosive effect of Medici wealth, patronage and private power;” still, they were the leading family in the city and Rome, hence the only ones capable of providing Florence with new *ordini*.<sup>340</sup> Besides the fact that the Medici were in part responsible for the state of Florence, they were also the only ‘*medici*’ or doctors capable of ‘healing’ the malign factions of the city. As King argues, Machiavelli saw “no other realistic choice available to him.”<sup>341</sup> The republic calls for a *redentore*, a political leader with the sufficient political knowledge and ‘perspective’ to control the Florentines’ ambitions and to make the necessary reforms to the political leadership. This ‘director,’ Machiavelli seems to say, had to come from the Medici, not because of their political qualities, but rather as a result of the common parochial understanding of Florentine politics: they were the strongest family in the city, hence the only capable ones to pursue such task.

This ‘republican tension’ could also be maintained through the so-called old Medicean system of patronage. Throughout the Histories, Machiavelli recounts the development of the Medicean regime, as one that was able to put an end to violent disputes. Cosimo forged a system that provided some type of openness and political deliberation by establishing links with popular sectors, co-opting the *Ottimatti* and

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<sup>339</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 15.

<sup>340</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 437.

<sup>341</sup> King: 216.

placing in various governmental institutions those that were favourable to the cause of the Medici.<sup>342</sup> The tumults that followed the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478 show how this ‘Cosimean’ system displeased the great families of Florence and was only able to survive thanks to the ‘accidental’ support of a *tumulto* caused by the Pazzi irrationality.<sup>343</sup>

Machiavelli explains that the old system of patronage survived because “it was established with the people’s aid,” which is very similar to the argument presented in The Prince.<sup>344</sup> Cosimo and Lorenzo’s regime survived not solely because of the people’s willingness to obey, but also because of their personal qualities, through which they were able to maintain the republican system as a means of deliberation and/or to ‘vent’ people’s ambitions. Though Machiavelli compliments Cosimo and Lorenzo’s personal qualities as political actors, he argues that this system generated “frequent parliaments and frequent exiles” and, ultimately, the fall of the Medici regime.<sup>345</sup> That is, the system of patronage is not to be praised at length, since it was unable, much like Soderini’s republic, “to satisfy all the parties among citizens.”<sup>346</sup> The Medicean ‘republic’ was unable to ‘fine tune’ the laws through such ‘vision’ of civil discords. The occurrence of violent deaths and exile, especially during Cosimo, Piero and Lorenzo’s times is indicative of an inherently violent ‘vertical’ division –as exemplified by emergence of the Pazzi conspiracy.<sup>347</sup> The means through which people ‘released’ their anger towards other social groups and their ambition to obtain more power led to several cycles of

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<sup>342</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 280-286.

<sup>343</sup> A member of the Strozzi family –the leading banking company in Florence and competitors of the Medici- complained about the methods employed by Lorenzo *il Magnifico*, which, he argues, favoured more those who “ha[d] a pretty wife” than those who had “the prayers of a king [of Naples]. Unger: 79.

<sup>344</sup> “...he who arrives in the principality with popular support finds himself alone there, and around him as either no one or very few who are not ready to obey.” Machiavelli, *The Prince*: 39.

<sup>345</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 103.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid*: 103.

<sup>347</sup> De Grazia: 185.

death. The problem, as Machiavelli presents it, is the *modo privato* implemented during this first Medicean *stato*.<sup>348</sup> Gilbert argues that the incapacity of the *grandi* to be granted the role of political actors during the Medici regime, which was regarded by some *grandi* as a “tyranny,” led to the overthrow of the regime and the consequent call of the great to take their due position in the newly established republic.<sup>349</sup> In Book VII, Machiavelli directly and overtly attacks Cosimo’s *modo*. His definition of such ‘private enmities’ literally defines the Cosimean regime. “One acquires [reputation] in private modes by benefiting this or that other citizen, defending him from the magistrates, helping him with money, getting him unmerited honours, and ingratiating oneself with the plebs with games and public gifts. From this...mode of proceeding, sects and partisans arise, and the reputation thus earned offends as much as reputation helps when it is not mixed with sects, because that reputation is founded on a common good, *not on a private good*.”<sup>350</sup>

The Medicean republic came to be dominated by middle-class merchant representatives, hence putting a ‘check’ on the *Ottimatti*’s desire to dominate. This particular conflict had been the main political struggle since the arousal of the merchant class as a political actor with interests of its own. Whereas Machiavelli’s Roman republican measures allowed men of the people access to government, causing them to become similar to the nobility -in the sense that they acquired a sense of political *virtù*, including military commitment to the city-, the Medicean system of patronage produced an opposite effect, “so that nobles, in order to be readmitted to government, had to

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<sup>348</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 232.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid: 115. In fact, several of the members of the anti-Medicean faction were former *amici* of the Medici, who grew tired of Cosimo and Lorenzo’s appropriation of power. Unger: 61.

<sup>350</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 277. Emphasis is mine.

become like men of the people.”<sup>351</sup> Hence, the Pazzi, who were not “granted those ranks of honour that it appeared they merited,” were “not well regarded by their magistrates.”<sup>352</sup> In other words, Machiavelli regards this system as defective since it “[has] been made not for the fulfillment of the common good, but for the strengthening and security of the party.”<sup>353</sup> Throughout the Histories, Machiavelli presents Giulio with these ‘perspectives’ of political discords in order to show him that though the system implemented by his predecessors successfully checked the desire for domination on the part of the higher sectors of Florentine society they were still unable to create a ‘new Rome.’

### *5.2.2-Parochial Lessons to Giulio*

Najemy argues that the Florentine Histories were based “on conceptual terms borrowed from the *Discourses*...elaborated with direct reference to them.”<sup>354</sup> This provides evidence to argue that Machiavelli theorized his counsel and then sought out the historical vertices -the violent concise and ‘detailed’ accounts- that would allow him to make his pedagogical lesson appropriate in the eyes of his readership. The fact that Machiavelli’s history, as we have shown, deviates from previous and contemporary sources implies a lesson ‘beyond’ historical fidelity to the facts. It shows that any particular theoretical assumption that can be made concerning his own political thought cannot be separated from the historical narrative.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Bock: 190.

<sup>352</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 318.

<sup>353</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 103.

<sup>354</sup> Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 437.

<sup>355</sup> Bock argues that a thorough study of Machiavelli’s narrative must trace his political thinking within his historical thinking and trace his historical thinking within his political thinking, as well. Bock: 188.

The policies implemented by the new Medici patrons had long neglected the use of the system of patronage; they barely implemented such methods, as they claimed the ‘right’ to rule over Florence.<sup>356</sup> Both the old and the new Medici regimes neglected certain aspects that would have allowed the regime to be perceived as a republican system. Machiavelli’s Discourse on the Remodelling the Government of Florence, written months before he began to work on the Florentine Histories in 1520, presents this problematic in terms of both Florentine history and the Medici regime,

The reason why Florence throughout her history has frequently varied her methods of government is that she has never been either a republic or a principedom having the qualities each requires, because we cannot call that republic well-established in which things are done according to the will of one man yet are decided with the approval of many; nor can we believe a republic fitted to last, in which there is no content for those elements that must be contented if republic are not to fall.<sup>357</sup>

Machiavelli’s exemplars provide Giulio a parochial vision for the steps to be followed, that is, to gain the qualities needed in order to become a ‘princely’ innovator of a new republic or to become the *à l’ancienne* patron of Florence. Machiavelli dismisses the patron route for a very logical reason: after Lorenzo’s death, there was no Medici around whom to build such power and Florence lacked the nobility necessary for such enterprise.<sup>358</sup> Still, the Medici were certainly not part of the ‘people’ or a mere merchant family; indeed, they were the most powerful family in Florence. Machiavelli hence indicates that they were somewhere in the ‘middle:’ the Medici were neither princes nor mere citizens. In other words, Machiavelli claims that there was no reason for remodelling the regime into a principedom, since the city was not accustomed to such

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<sup>356</sup> Najemy, *Machiavelli and the Medici*: 557.

<sup>357</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 101.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid*: 103. Also, Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 438.

nobility and the leading family lacked the necessary 'prince' to 'stand at the tiller.' The particular mode of governing of the new generation of Medici was very much a tyrannical regime, analogous to Walter de Brienne in his *Histories*.<sup>359</sup> As abovementioned, Machiavelli appeals to Giulio to choose between the hopelessly 'arthritic' patronage system of the elder Medici and the possibility of becoming the leader who would lay the bases for a new Florentine republic.<sup>360</sup> Machiavelli seems to disregard the possibility of a new Laurentian regime, since this particular system continued the cycle of 'vertical' violence. Machiavelli states that the desire of the Florentine people to rule over the *grandi* was "injurious and unjust, so that the nobility readied greater forces for its own defense; and that is why it came to the blood and exiles of citizens, and the laws that were made afterwards were not for the common utility but were ordered in favour of the conqueror."<sup>361</sup> That is, the outcome of the pseudo-republicanism that exemplifies the system of patronage of Cosimo, Piero and Lorenzo, inherently generated private violence, i.e. conspiracies, and an endless cycle of civil violence.

In the introductory section to chapter IV, which deals with Cosimo's methods of achieving power, Machiavelli reverses the terms of the discussion of the Florentine civil discords when he compares them to those of the ancient republic of Rome. The equality that he has highlighted throughout the text as the particular characteristic of the Florentine republican system is regarded not merely as 'corrosive,' which is his

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<sup>359</sup> Both Gilbert and Najemy stress the fact that certain sectors of the city perceived the Medici regime as a tyranny. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 134. Najemy, *A History of Florence*: 436.

<sup>360</sup> King argues that, "Machiavelli maintained this sickness motif throughout the short life of his son, Piero who, "because of the weakness of his body" was declared 'little fit for public and private affairs.' [...] The rhetorical effect of this allegorical framing of the later Medici through the illness of their forefathers was to interpret the leadership as diseased; for just as Cosimo bequeathed poor health through his flawed genes, he also bequeathed his heirs a deeply flawed political framework of his own design." Ed King, "Quinquennial Terror: Machiavelli's Understanding of the Political Sublime" (forthcoming).

<sup>361</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 105.

perception in the Discourses, but rather as a “precondition for a true republic,” though it is a so-called ‘formal’ equality in terms of political accessibility based on the necessity of a ‘political tension’ among the various political actors.<sup>362</sup> That is, equality defined as access to political debates comes to be a fundamental aspect of Machiavelli’s parochial lesson to Giulio. It is this particular sense of equality that Machiavelli puts forward as the ‘common good’ Giulio must pursue.

Machiavelli’s call for a new Florentine republic also presents Giulio with the necessity of a ‘Florentine founder.’ In the introductory section to Book III, in which he discusses ‘in detail’ one of the relevant tumults in the history of the city, Machiavelli presents Giulio with an understanding of Florentine politics that contradicts that of the Discourses. He states, “Whereas Rome, when its virtue was converted into arrogance, was reduced to such straits that it could not maintain itself without a prince, Florence arrived at the point that it could easily have been reordered in any form of government by a wise lawgiver.”<sup>363</sup> Republican Rome led to the rise of Caesar, which seems to be, at least in part, a revision of his argument on the “perfect republican system” based on the example of the ancients: all political systems decline, though some last more than others.<sup>364</sup> On the other hand, Machiavelli seems to argue that Florentine historical conditions, the historical *tempo* in which he is writing, were given so as to call for new ‘modes and orders,’ or to reorder the government under a new system of law. The fact that Florence could be reordered, if and only if, a ‘wise lawgiver’ arises, is an undisputed

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<sup>362</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 7 and 106. Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 27. Also, Bock: 190.

<sup>363</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 106.

<sup>364</sup> Gilbert, *Machiavelli’s Istorie Fiorentine: An Essay in Interpretation*: 148. The allegory of Caesar was a common one in Italian Renaissance culture. In fact, several anti-Medicans regarded Cosimo and Lorenzo as the Florentine Caesars, and advocated for the appearance of a would-be Brutus, who was regarded by many more as a political martyr than a mere conspirator. Unger: 80-81.

call for Giulio to become such ‘innovator.’<sup>365</sup> Indeed, the Medici rule was ‘neither a republic nor a principedom,’ which allowed the leading Florentine family to lead Florence in different directions.

It should not be a surprise that Machiavelli presents this lesson in the introductory section of Book III, which not only recounts the events of the *Ciampi* tumults but also the rise of Michele di Lando as a leader ‘to be praised and remembered.’ It is worth remembering that Machiavelli employs a similar call, though a much more explicit one, in his Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence, also addressed to the ruler of Florence, Giulio di Giuliano. “It is true that Florence cannot exist without a director,” appealing for an ‘informal prince’ to maintain order in the city and keep the house of the reader in power.<sup>366</sup>

This appeal to the individual ‘director’ is reminiscent of Book I, chapter 9 of his Discourses on Livy, which calls for a revision of the deeds of the founders of Rome.<sup>367</sup> In this section, Machiavelli states, “It never or rarely happens that any republic or kingdom is ordered well from the beginning or reformed altogether anew outside its old orders unless it is ordered by one individual.”<sup>368</sup> Further, he argues, “many will perhaps judge it a bad example that a founder of a civil way of life, as was Romulus, should first have killed his brother...”<sup>369</sup> Nevertheless, he states that, “opinion would be true if one did not consider what end had induced him to commit such a homicide.”<sup>370</sup> Machiavelli appeals here to the emergence of a powerful individual capable of staging spectacles of violence

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<sup>365</sup> Bock: 190.

<sup>366</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 105.

<sup>367</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*: 28.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid*: 29.

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid*: 29.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid*: 29.



-scenes that awe and stupefy- for the sake of reforming a corrupt system.<sup>371</sup> In other words, Machiavelli calls for an individual capable of acquiring a sense of freedom from customs and morality in order to reform a state, something a people cannot do on its own.<sup>372</sup>

Much like Romulus, the *Ciomo* Michele di Lando “deserves to be numbered among the few who have benefited their fatherland” because of his “prudence” and his capacity to employ “extraordinary modes” in order to reform the Florentine state.<sup>373</sup> The example of Michele, whose poor origins were not an impediment to carry the ‘common good’ of the city, portrays the qualities to be learnt by his readership. The fact that Machiavelli underscores Michele’s origins in comparison to his political skills is at odds with the deeds and beliefs of the *nuovi* Medici.<sup>374</sup> In his *Discourse*, he reminds his readership that though “they have grown so great” -they believed themselves to be ‘noblemen’- they were neither part of the old Florentine nobility nor holders of ‘noble’ qualities so as to become the founders of a new government.<sup>375</sup> They were members of a family that just a few generations ago were poor landless workers. Machiavelli states that a Medici *redentore* would be regarded as a ‘prince’ while still alive, to then be praised as a new Romulus.<sup>376</sup> “No man is so much exalted by any act of his as are those men who have with laws and with institutions remodelled republics and kingdoms; these are, after

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<sup>371</sup> De Grazia: 328.

<sup>372</sup> Rehorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 108.

<sup>373</sup> Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*: 130.

<sup>374</sup> According to Gilbert, Lorenzo *il Giovanne* symbolizes this belief, since he “wore Spanish dress and [...] kept his Spanish beard to emphasize his superior [noble] rank.” Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*: 135.

<sup>375</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 105. Machiavelli seems to argue the Medici were closer to the portrayal of the Caesar as the man who stole freedom from republican Rome than the Caesar that maintained the Roman Empire. As such, they had several things to learn about republican politics and political efficacy.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid*: 113-114.

those who have been gods, the first to be praised.”<sup>377</sup> Hence, Giulio, if willing to be ‘remembered,’ had to make a change in the history of the city –a history focused on discords of exile and violence. In creating a new political order, he would reveal himself as a ‘prince,’ “prepared to change absolutely everything.”<sup>378</sup> He was to become Florence’s holder of ‘extraordinary modes’ that only historical heroes could obtain, and reorder the government into a new, and true, republic. Honour and grandeur are obtained through great deeds, not through nobility and religiosity.

Machiavelli’s portrayal of Michele as a quasi-divine figure was a particular example to be kept in mind. Giulio was not only to become the innovator of ‘modes and orders’ and the peacemaker of Florence, but also the hero to be praised. Giulio, God’s ambassador on earth, would become immortal in history and only for his usefulness to his *patria*, not through divine connection or family lineage. That is, Machiavelli reminds the Medici that they were once family of peasants that migrated from the Mugello and, as the humble Michele, should attempt found a republic, not a principedom.<sup>379</sup>

## **6-Conclusion: Republican Tumulto**

Throughout this thesis, I have tried to support the argument that Machiavelli employs the notion of *tumulto* in his Florentine Histories to provide a parochial political lesson to his readership, the Medici family. Tumults in Machiavelli’s portrayal are a means to offer political lessons and teach the particular understanding for political efficacy that the new generation of Medici patrons lacked. That is, Machiavelli

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<sup>377</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 114.

<sup>378</sup> Rebhorn, *Foxes and Lions*: 109.

<sup>379</sup> Unger: 27.

'spotlights' these historical tumults as representative figures of the 'movements' of the city of Florence so as to present the parochial fact that the city needed a new (republican) political system that would allow political access to a larger cohort of Florentines.<sup>380</sup> This is not to be mistaken, however, for an anachronistic view of Machiavelli as a would-be 'democrat.' Much to the contrary, Machiavelli aimed at providing the Medici a 'counsel' on the necessary changes to be made so as to save his *patria* and, *eo ipso*, to maintain the leadership of the Medici over Florence. His republican counsel is very much shaped by the contingent, and historical, problematic of Florence: political exclusion and co-optation were the main causes of factional violence and political instability. The Medici were in part the cause of this political crossroad –their regime was mainly based on factionalism, but Machiavelli also sees this family as the only solution for the survival of Florence. He pleaded to them pragmatically and according to the historical times: they were the most powerful family in Florence and they belonged 'neither to the nobility nor to the people.' As such, they had the possibility before their eyes to transform an old-fashioned patronage system into a republican regime that would bring the family to the *summum* of grandeur and honour.<sup>381</sup> Machiavelli's 'pedagogical spectacles' to the Medici presents him as mainly concerned with the 'health' of the city, not in search for a universal answer to questions on regime change and political cycles. This would be, I truly believe, to place Machiavelli on an erroneous pedestal at the Mount Olympus of political philosophy. The rhetorical force of *tumulto* in the Florentine Histories should be

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<sup>380</sup> "Those who organize a republic ought to provide for the three different sorts of men who exist in all cities, namely, the most important, those in the middle, and the lowest." Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 107.

<sup>381</sup> In his Discourse, Machiavelli tells Giulio, "I believe that the greatest possible for men to have is that willingly given them by their natives cities; I believe the greatest good to be done and the most pleasing to God is that which one does to one's native city." Machiavelli, *Discourse on Remodelling the Government of Florence*: 107.

comprehended as to offer his readers a ‘gift’ on how to provide for the political contingencies and the ‘unforeseen’ events bounded to the eventualities of his (their) time. This understanding of *tumulto*, I believe, brings new light to Machiavellian scholarship. Once we come to comprehend both his work as a pedagogue and his commitment to the refoundation of the Florentine republic, the interpretation of Machiavelli as either the ‘teacher of evil’ or the writer of a history that does not speak of ‘princes and modes and orders,’ leaves the scene. In fact, Machiavelli the pedagogue, as he writes in his letter to Giovanni de’ Medici and in his *Ricordo*, illustrates his readiness to ‘teach,’ not only how to acquire and maintain power, but rather how political *ambizione* must take into account the interest of the *patria*, i.e. the ‘common good.’<sup>382</sup> I believe that part of this ‘pedagogical message’ on the part of Machiavelli gets lost due to the inability of some Machiavelli scholars to search within ‘Machiavelli’s world.’

This emphasis on Machiavelli’s context is closely tied to the main methodological premise of my endeavour: to search for the political relevance of Machiavelli’s main historical text ‘beyond’ the confines of the text itself. I believe that one of the main problems that students of the history of ideas encounter, especially those whose analyses are based on a textual approach, is that, sometimes, a great amount of contextual elements are neglected for the sake of providing a ‘coherent’ interpretation.<sup>383</sup> This is why the contextual analysis I pursued is particularly relevant, since it allowed me, at least to some extent, to get a grasp of ‘Machiavelli’s world’ or his “mental world” at the time

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<sup>382</sup> Atkinson and Sices: 424.

<sup>383</sup> Skinner criticizes John Plamenatz’s textual approach to classic writings, which he ironically sees as “reading the text ‘over and over again.’” Skinner, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*: 51-52.

of writing the Histories.<sup>384</sup> I showed how Machiavelli's accounts deviate from previous and contemporary sources, and how his 'foreshortening' of historical events unveils a different world from that of 'historical fact.' That is, the approach that I purposefully employed permitted me to avoid the so-called 'historical absurdities' criticized by Skinner, which somehow 'distract' the historian of ideas.

From this standpoint, I come to a particular number of conclusions concerning both the Florentine Histories and *tumulto*: first, it is a parochial lesson meant to be 'given' to a very restricted audience, i.e. the remaining Medici patrons. Machiavelli 'spotlights,' certain circumstances that concerned precisely to the post-1512 Medici regime. The *tumulto* against the Walter de Brienne illustrates the necessity of the Florentine people to 'vent out' their ambitions in order to put an end to the unrestrained tyranny of the Duke. This goes hand to hand with the new Medici's incapacity to cope with forging a regime that could provide broader political participation and still maintain the Medici's political position intact. The end of the Duke and his henchmen symbolizes what a people can do before a perceived tyrannical regime. The *Ciampi* tumult and the emergence of Michele di Lando forge the idea that once the people obtained political access, their ambitions must be tamed. Michele arises as the 'prince' the Medici should aim for: a virtuous politician whose main goal is the common good of the city, who is able to tame the ambitions of the people. The Pazzi conspiracy is another 'accident' that led the people to 'release' their ambitions. In this case, violence was meant to put an end to the nobles' ambition to dominate, which allowed Lorenzo, at least in the short term, to govern the *stato*. Still, this also illustrates the necessity to comprehend the discords and search out for the 'common good' of the *patria*. Overall, Machiavelli believed that the

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<sup>384</sup> Skinner, *Meaning, Intentions and Interpretations of Texts*: 77-78.

new Medici lacked the necessary political knowledge to rule over Florence. As such, he had the opportunity to ‘show off’ his skills as rhetorician –to persuade them to take his counsel- and political analyst –to show them *his* way to save the city from the historical contingencies that occurred by the time, and maintain their vantage point over the city.

Second, the main task of Machiavelli was to persuade the Medici to re-found the republic of Florence. Machiavelli found himself facing the mission of writing a history of Florence under the tutelage of the *capo* of the Medici, and as such, he took the opportunity to provide counsel and did so by applying his political perceptions to the history of the city. Machiavelli hence engages in a process of what I have defined as ‘reproduction and appropriation’ that purposefully deflects from previous accounts and adds his political lesson. History, then, comes to be seen in Machiavelli’s view as a literary device, purely meant to hold the political lessons he desired to put forward. Machiavelli’s tumults are not fact-bounded, but rather filled with a narrative of violence and perspicacity that are a creation of his own imaginative *pensée*. His history departs from other sources mostly in terms of his consistently detailed account of violent events, which properly fit his own purpose as presented in the *Preface* section to the text –to recount the discords ‘inside’ Florence.

The third conclusion is that Machiavelli employs the notion of *tumulto* as a rhetorical ‘stepping stone’ for the construction of his republican argument. This notion provides the reader with an understanding of the social ‘movements’ of the city, which is directly connected to the inability of both the old and the new Medici patrons to build up a solid political system. The old Medici system restricted the access of the *Ottimatti* to the political arena and co-opted a large part of the middle sectors, hence feeding the cycle

of 'vertical' 'violence and exile' that characterized Florentine politics since 1363. Machiavelli's patrons did not do any better, since they not only restricted access to public affairs but also intended to rule Florence as a principedom. Machiavelli's lesson of the three 'spotlighted' tumults illustrates the new generation of Medici patrons as having the opportunity of establishing stronger foundations for their regime at the expense of giving up their dream of becoming 'princes' of Florence.

This is why Machiavelli's use of *tumulto* is relevant. Machiavelli perceived and studied the 'movements' of republics, and realized there were contrasting and clashing interests and ambitions.<sup>385</sup> In other words, Florence, and perhaps societies in general, was not one coherent whole but an amalgam of dissimilar sectors with different and clashing concerns, which had to be included as part of the Florentine political arena. This tells us that Machiavelli did not accomplish the task of writing the Histories with a naive ideal of republicanism in mind; rather, he searched for the best pragmatically attainable mode that would allow his *patria* to grow unrestrained by the **straightjacket** of political factionalism. Machiavelli hence needed to let the Medici *de facto* rulers know of this political 'secret,' which he pursue not as a political theorist but as a pedagogue.

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<sup>385</sup> Bock: 200.

## 7-Bibliography

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