The Dialogical Element in Machiavelli’s Works

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This dissertation will examine the dialogical element in Niccolò Machiavelli’s works including his two dialogues Arte della guerra and Discorso intorno alla lingua, as well as those which do not belong to the dialogic genre, namely Il principe and Mandragola, but which display many of the key elements of the genre. This will be accomplished using contemporary theories, with the addition of Marshall McLuhan’s work on the medium. By treating the dialogue not only as a genre, but also as a medium, this opens up a new avenue of study with which to analyze and evaluate not only some of Machiavelli’s most celebrated works, but also how his legacy is tied to modernity.
Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the dialogical element in Niccolò Machiavelli’s work. To engage and dialogue with his reader was one of Machiavelli’s greatest talents, yet today he is not immediately thought of when we discuss the masters of the dialogic genre. The dialogic legacy itself has also suffered a similar fate; often classified as a hybrid genre it has struggled to find a singular, cohesive definition.

Chapter 1 will trace the origins of this literary genre, and its popularity during the Renaissance, as well as consider it not only as a genre, but as a medium. The chapter begins by outlining the reasons the dialogue was the genre employed by many of the great Renaissance writers, which includes a demonstrable preference for discourse which unites the two great philosophies of the time: a recapturing of former human greatness, and a burgeoning central position for the individual (cfr. Pugliese, *Il discorso labirintico* 10). As a new method, or vehicle for the communication of information, it can also be viewed as a container or vessel. To this end the media theory of world-renowned Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan will be applied even before continuing with a more traditional tracing of dialogue from its origins in Plato and Cicero, in order that the history of dialogue is examined not only through the lens of the literary genre, but also through that of the medium.

In choosing any literary genre, the author is placing this tool between himself and the external world, and it becomes the vehicle by which he expresses his intentions and perceptions. What makes dialogue so amenable to an analysis as medium, is that, unlike any other literary genre, this function of ‘intermediary’ is very pronounced. It is often an important element of its
definition, whether critics have chosen to classify it as a ‘hybrid genre’ or insisting on its occupying a liminal space, the dialogue is the literary genre of medium *par excellence*.

From the Platonic and Ciceronian examples, Renaissance writers would have seen a depiction of the human intellect and spirit that very much appealed to their emerging sensibilities of individualism. Two theorists from the Renaissance are highlighted in Chapter 1, namely Sperone Speroni and Torquato Tasso. Their respective works on the dialogue, *Apologia dei Dialoghi* (1575) and *Discorso dell’arte del dialogo* (1585), are among the most conflicted treatises on the genre, and in this thesis, are prized for their ability to discern dialogue’s inherent liminal nature. The issues raised by these writers continue to reverberate in the theories espoused by contemporary critics (Olga Pugliese, Eva Kushner, Virginia Cox etc.), and therefore while focussing on some of the more crucial aspects of Speroni and Tasso’s theories, the chapter will also interact with the current criticism on some of these very same aspects.

A structural analysis of the genre has also been included. The scene or space within which the dialogue purportedly takes place is the primary surface element, and this study chooses to highlight the ways in which it is used by the dialogic author in order to add meaning to his text. As the key element in any dialogue, the characters or interlocutors provide the defining element of the genre, namely a conversation constituting at least two individuals. Here Eva Kushner’s theories on dialogue and subjectivity are used to determine the importance of the fragmentation of the authorial voice, along with Olga Pugliese’s conception of the dialogue as a labyrinth. We also consider Mikhail Bakhtin’s comments on the “direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (*The Dialogic Imagination* 324). Structural classifications of the dialogue are also discussed, in particular those created by Chaim Perelman and Michel Le Guern. Lastly, we consider the movement of the genre from ‘open’
dialogues to ‘closed’ dialogues whereby in the former a synthesis is achieved versus the latter in which all artificial agreements are avoided in favour of a prevailing of a multitude of voices representing diverse viewpoints (cfr. Pugliese, Il discorso labirintico 22-23). Virginia Cox identifies the dialogue’s movement from ‘open’ to ‘closed’ during the Renaissance, and this reversal is one that inherently meant a movement from the polyphonic to the monologic; from the Ciceronian to the Platonic can be viewed as the final stage in the life-cycle of the medium as identified by Marshall McLuhan. This *irrigidimento* can be viewed as an element of the modernity that was being inaugurated and explored due, in large part, to Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press.

Using the works of Marshall McLuhan and Francesco Guardiani, a theoretical framework was provided of the enormity of Gutenberg’s invention against which the theory of dialogue is discussed. The printing press, while providing an expansion of human horizons very much consistent with the ideals of the Renaissance, simultaneously triggered a rigidity and inflexibility, in its desire to disseminate knowledge. This mirrors the movement of the Renaissance dialogue from an ‘open’ to a ‘closed’ model, which would have fared better in that it would provide a definitive, conclusive finality that is transmittable via the printing press. Both the printing press and the Renaissance dialogue are mediums which reflect the changing nature of their time, and as such, the analysis of the dialogic genre as medium, need not be limited to its being an object of perception between man and the outside world. This definition can be extended to include other aspects of media evaluation according to the media theories espoused by Marshall McLuhan.

As a medium, the dialogue is an extension of the mind’s ability to perceive speech, or better, to perceive a disputation among interlocutors. Just as we can observe and understand a
conversation that takes place in front of us, so the dialogue can recreate that experience, and we are able to observe and understand a conversation in print whether it be represented diegetically or mimetically. By way of McLuhan’s theory that the ‘medium is the message’, the message of a dialogue is found in its interactions, in the conversations of its fictional interlocutors. It cannot be found in an external, authorial voice, but in the voice that the author bestows to its speakers. That the author chooses another, or a series of others, to disseminate a message is a choice of crucial importance. This choice would necessarily confound or distort this message. To choose dialogue is a message that the author sends us, his reader, and is an interpretive key we cannot ignore, and thus ‘the medium is the message’ can offer new connotations for the study of dialogue.

The level of participation that a user brings to a medium led McLuhan to identify it as either ‘hot’ or ‘cold’: a hot medium implies a substantial amount of participation, while a cool medium implies minimal participation. McLuhan cautions that these are always to be interpreted as relative terms, and one of the pairings he uses to illustrate this example is the photograph versus the cartoon drawing. As an exact representation of what the human eye can see at any given moment, the photograph requires little interpretation from the user in order to perceive it, and is therefore ‘hot’. The cartoon, however, relies on the tendency of the mind to complete what the artist has suggested through lines and curves, and is consequently ‘cool’ in comparison to the photograph. When this is applied to the theory of dialogue, we can start to classify dialogues as either ‘hot’ or ‘cold’ depending on the amount of interpretation that is required by the reader in order to glean its message. An ‘open’ dialogue, for example, would be considered ‘cool’ when compared to a ‘closed’ dialogue, which would be considered ‘hot’. To classify dialogues in this manner will provide a new avenue of analysis, especially for those writers of
dialogue who understood these subtleties, and how they might be exploited to add meaning to their works.

The relevance of this will be especially evident as we begin to discuss how Machiavelli plays with this level of user participation, or to borrow a modern term, interface with the reader. On this point, Leo Strauss identified in Machiavelli a path or part of his work which must be completed by the reader in order to obtain the author’s full meaning: “Machiavelli does not go to the end of the road; the last part of the road must be travelled by the reader who understands what is omitted by the writer. Machiavelli does not go to the end; he does not reveal the end; he does not fully reveal his intention. But he intimates it” (34-35). The latter part of Strauss’ statement will be of particular importance to us as we begin to evaluate the dialogical element in Machiavelli’s work.

In undertaking this study, we recognize that only a small number of critics have analyzed Machiavelli’s work in terms of its form, and not (as the majority of critics have done) its content. The notable exceptions are Salvatore Di Maria, Frédérique Verrier and Michela Sacco Messineo. In analyzing Machiavelli’s works, both dialogues proper and those dialogic in nature, this dissertation will begin by evaluating the emergence of the voice of another interlocutor and the role that this voice is given. Furthermore, we observe how balance is created in his works; a balance which tries to reveal his theories while simultaneously observing the decorums outlined by the dialogic genre. His success, or lack thereof, in achieving this balance will reveal much about the urgency of the message, and his desire to not have it (or his opinions and point of view) distorted by way of his interlocutors. All of this will be informed by a conception of dialogue as medium, as an extension of the mind’s ability to perceive a disputation.
Chapter 2 analyzes Machiavelli’s only two known dialogues, namely *Arte della guerra* and *Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua*. The former is the more well-known of the two and as a work of Renaissance dialogue it has been conferred very little praise. The reason for this lies in Machiavelli’s unwillingness to sacrifice content in favour of form. For this reason, Fabrizio Colonna’s voice is the one that reigns over the other interlocutors, and is easily that which more closely resembles Machiavelli’s known political thoughts. Therefore, while adhering, in principle, to some of the dialogic conventions from both the Platonic and Ciceronian tradition, *Arte della guerra* did not capture the exchange of opposing viewpoints essential to either model. This does not imply that the work is totally devoid of any dialogic virtue, as it does contain elements which will engage and delight the reader, and keep it from being an overly-technical treatise on warfare.

One of the ways Machiavelli accomplishes this, is in his choice of interlocutor. Verrier ("*Il polemologo sdoppiato*") contemplates the implications of having the historical figure Fabrizio Colonna as his mouthpiece in matters military, as he was someone whose thoughts were radically different from Machiavelli’s. This necessarily increases the reader’s participation in the text as the contradictions between these two political thoughts would have had to be contemplated and categorized by the reader. What also increased the reader’s participation in the text, is the hybrid nature of the dialogue. Verrier ("*Un felice ibrido retorico*") examines the relationship between the genres that peacefully co-exist, namely the treatise and the dialogue, and how the structure of the latter contributes and/or impedes the work as a whole. The clarity of the treatise genre is somewhat sacrificed, in favour of a more lively and exchanging presentation of the material which is supplied by the dialogic genre. This does not mean that the text is unclear, only that its expositions are not accomplished in the direct or linear approach of the
classical treatise. It is the character of Cosimo Rucellai who provides the most significant
dialogic contribution; however, not even this contribution will rescue the dialogue entirely.
While it certainly allowed Arte della guerra to escape from simply being a didactic military
treatise, it also served to make it too self-conscious and awkward as a dialogue. In order to
determine its value as a dialogue, it was compared and contrasted with a paragon of the genre,
namely Baldassar Castiglione’s Il libro del cortegiano.

By choosing dialogue, Castiglione meant to, in the manner of the ancients, relive or
renew a pleasant and agreeable memory by way of the repetition of reasonings made among
excellent men, as his text tells us. As such, he was undeterred by the indirect path that dialogue
can take. The naturalness or sprezzatura attained in Castiglione’s work is denied in
Machiavelli’s, due largely to the fact that Machiavelli makes his reader painfully aware of the
genre rather than expertly employing its most prized elements. This effect is even more
pronounced in Discorso intorno alla lingua, in which the illustrious personage of Dante Alighieri
is reduced to a mere conventionality, who is last heard meekly conceding to the dominant
character of ‘Niccolò’.

Machiavelli successfully ‘cools’ down the treatise genre with his dialogue on military
matters, as he asks his reader to play a more involved role in the text in order to glean the final
message. When placed alongside a classical Renaissance dialogue such as Il libro del
cortegiano, however, the Arte della guerra registers as a much hotter medium due to its
insistence on carving out a clear linear path for the reader to follow, as Chapter 2 highlights.

It is with Chapter 3 and its analysis of Il principe that Machiavelli will achieve the
‘coolness’ of the great Renaissance dialogues. The Dedicatory Letter is re-envisioned as the
narrative frame to a dialogue which introduces two principal interlocutors, namely Machiavelli
(as a character) and the Prince. Although silent, as the recipient of the work, the Prince will play an important role in the unfolding of the information which Machiavelli-author has chosen to communicate. This ‘voice’ that is heard and not seen requires a more attentive reading, one that must interpolate and extrapolate in a manner which will require a filling in of the lacuna prior to achieving understanding and comprehension of the text.

This process of interpretation makes Il principe a much cooler medium. By keeping the objections, interjections or rejoinders in the background, instead of choosing to bring them into the foreground, Machiavelli has, in part has delegated the responsibility of fleshing out these potential interlocutors to his reader, and in doing so, has increased their level of participation in the text. This level of involvement by the reader is consistent with Umberto Eco’s reader-reception theory as outlined in Opera aperta. Machiavelli’s work definitely ‘suggests’, and in doing so we can agree with Eco that “L’opera che ‘suggerisce’ si realizza ogni volta carica degli apporti emotivi ed immaginativi dell’interprete” (Eco 41). The reader is imperative in this paradigm and, as author, Machiavelli invited him to make sense of the world he sought to create inside the text. This new amplified role for the reader conditions how Machiavelli structures the text.

Our author acclimatizes his reader to an environment in which it is not enough to simply read what is on the page, but also to supply the subtext. Machiavelli accomplishes this by employing subversive dialogical elements in the form of questions or concerns which are not explicitly-voiced, but deftly and plainly alluded to. Machiavelli must now seek to maintain his supremacy, not in suppressing the other interlocutors (as he did in his dialogues), but in reinforcing his position as creator and arbiter of the text. Salvatore Di Maria has identified one of the ways in which Machiavelli does this, namely in his use of the pronouns IO, TU and VOI,
whereby they allow Machiavelli to interact with his Prince (TU), instead of when he wishes to engage his reader (VOI). Di Maria states that VOI is the true recipient as he is constantly called upon to consider and evaluate the judgments set out by the IO (cfr. Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 70). As such the reader becomes not merely a participant, but an accomplice, and as an accomplice, Machiavelli is able to communicate not only a greater amount of information, but also ones that might go against the conventionalities of his day. Machiavelli is able to achieve this, the cooling of his medium, in order to draw the reader in just far enough to Machiavelli’s created world, so that the notions on human nature and its governance are not branded as novel, absurd, or even cruel, but rather praised for their innovation and utilitarianism.

Machiavelli infused his treatise with dialogical elements at a time when treatises on these subjects were completely devoid of them. The high level of reader participation which this elicited allowed the writer to present his message in a more palatable, and ultimately more convincing way, as he is not overwhelming the reader with information, but providing just enough in order to engage the reader further into his narrative. Once inside, the reader is compelled to ‘fill in the blanks’ left out by our author, and in doing so the reader becomes complicit in the plot, increasing greatly the chance of the message, not only to be received, but also to be accepted and internalized. The dialogical elements that have contributed to this ‘cooling’ process require someone to furnish their completeness, and this is essentially the difference between hot and cold prose. The chapter concludes by highlighting the aphorisms in _Il principe_ which provide excellent examples of this ‘cold’ prose, where no tidy answers are offered, instead they invite further reflection, speculation objection and a desire to provide meaning, in order to reconcile any apparent contradictions; in short to participate in the discussion that Machiavelli has rendered irresistible.
An obligation is created for the reader to participate, and the effectiveness of this method can be attested by the popularity of Machiavelli’s text the world over, which has continued virtually unabated for centuries. The content becomes almost irrelevant, and the manner in which it is presented permits a large variety of interpretations to be sustained. While the content has certainly fascinated, it is also the method in which the content was communicated or (to say it with Di Maria) dramatized that has enhanced this effect. Dionisotti identifies a movement from Machiavelli being the sole actor on stage to now residing behind the stage:

Anche è a prima vista notevole il trapasso da un discorso personale, come nel Principe e nei Discorsi, in cui l’autore è attore, solo personaggio in scena, a una rappresentazione di idee e di fatti che l’autore promuove e dirige stando dietro le quinte, intervenendo sulla scena eccezionalmente, fra un atto e l’altro…” (Dionisotti 107)

We can observe this process already beginning in Il principe, whereby while we do not have the sharply-defined characters of a play, we have their shadowy allusions which Machiavelli has used to full advantage to advance the narrative of this text. The characters, scenes and the latent dialogue in this ‘princely’ drama captivate and inform the reader as Machiavelli blurs the lines between expert dialogician and skillful playwright. These lines are blurred again by Machiavelli in 1518 when he writes his celebrated comedy Mandragola.

Chapter 4 begins with describing the historical affinity between the dialogic genre and that of the play. The play, at its core, is also a dialogue, and as such, possesses all the cooling characteristics of the dialogic genre. To this, the theatrical performance also adds the visual element which needs to be interpreted and processed by the reader, therefore for this reason, the audience member provides more input to the theatrical performance, than the reader would provide to the written dialogue, thus making the play cooler than the dialogue.
Not only can we speak in terms of the coolness of the medium, and how Machiavelli employs it to further engage his audience in this clever and entertaining play, he also plays with the audience’s expectations with the characters he chooses to employ. Callimaco, Ligurio and Fra’ Timoteo are the ‘cool’ characters in the way they are able to adapt and interact with their environment, and essentially create a new world order at the end of the play, in which a relative morality will now be the law as extramarital affairs and illegitimate heirs become the vehicles by which society is sustained. The challenge *Mandragola* presents is that it is not a linear exposition of ideas, but rather a kaleidoscope, not only of phrases and maxims, but of actions as well. This has yielded to a great variety of interpretations to the play, especially when it is juxtaposed with Machiavelli’s political writings. Machiavelli provides enough information to substantially support these, and other interpretations of *Mandragola*, and one can readily validate its coolness of medium due to the number and variety of interpretations it can sustain.

More pointed than even in *Il principe*, *Mandragola* suggests to the importance of the individual to adapt to his environment. The relativity, which is a hallmark of *Il principe*, is even more successfully demonstrated in his celebrated play, and places Machiavelli on the cusp of modernity as outlined in the concluding remarks of this thesis.
Chapter 1: The Renaissance Dialogue: Instrument of Antiquity or Modernity?

1.1 The Renaissance Dialogue during Machiavelli’s Time: a Theoretical Analysis

The dialogic form was the medium employed by many of the great writers of the Renaissance (Baldassar Castiglione, Lorenzo Valla, Leonardo Bruni, Marsilio Ficino etc.), and the reason for the genre’s popularity can certainly be attributed to its affinity with the ideals of the Renaissance itself:

non solo per il suo valore storico-documentario come un rispecchiarsi del culto della conversazione e della comunicazione che era tipico dell’epoca, ma anche per le implicanze ideologiche in quanto manifestazione di quell’esaltazione dell’uomo e della sua facoltà distintiva del discorso che costituiva uno dei tratti salienti della vita culturale di allora (Pugliese, Il discorso labirintico 10).

This demonstrable preference for discourse is one that easily encapsulates the entire Renaissance movement for it unites the two great philosophies of the time: a recapturing of former human greatness, and a new central, or, dominant position for the individual. To observe and give weight to the unfolding of a conversation was a very different way of gleaning information than simply to absorb it from the oracular version, as affirmed by Jean-Pierre Vernant in his writing on the spiritual universe of the polis. Vernant identified the importance of writing things down: “Individuals who decided to make their knowledge public by means of writing” hoped to make it
accessible to all in a way that “their wisdom would take on a new consistency and objectivity: it would become the truth”\(^1\) (53-54).

Here Vernant is pointing to a new method of perceiving: a new medium by which the perception and understanding of the outside world is achieved. We therefore need to consider dialogue not only as a literary genre (as has been done), but also as a medium, and explore the depths that this newly-introduced connotation would entail. To this end, the studies of Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan (in particular those that involve media theory) need to be addressed, even before we proceed with the more traditional tracing of dialogue from its origins in Plato and Cicero, so that in the end, we can review the history of dialogue not only through the lens of literary genre, but also, through that of medium.

“The medium is an object of various natures that is placed in the middle, between our senses and the external world and functions as a tool or instrument of perception”\(^2\) (SMC 5).

The object becomes a medium by way of human involvement, and the dialogic genre’s activation as medium occurs when the author makes the conscious effort to employ it. That a literary genre is eligible for the status of medium is confirmed by the inclusion of the term ‘various natures’, which allows for more than just any inanimate physical object to be considered, such as a stick or a straw, but anything that is employed by a person to achieve a particular purpose. Since a sonnet can be used as a medium to express love, we can therefore, say, as Francesco Guardiani does, that “Our definition of medium, then comfortably includes a straw, a stick, and a sonnet” (SMC 4). As a medium then, dialogue’s place is in the middle between the author’s senses and his external world. We shall see that this middle or liminal space will be especially

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\(^1\) Claire McManus identifies ‘self’, ‘identity’, and ‘subjectivity’ “among the most important concerns animating current critical interventions into the Renaissance” (211).

\(^2\) Taken from Francesco Guardiani’s course material publication for SMC219Y. Any reference to it hereafter will be denoted using ‘SMC’.
powerful and pertinent to dialogue. The reasoning for this placement is that it functions as a tool, or better an instrument, “extending or intensifying some human capabilities” (SMC 5). The human capability here is the capability to discourse, reason, or rationalize, on a topic or subject with the intention of understanding it better. There exist references to the middle ground in this context as well, where you have the author who is employing the dialogue on the one side, and on the other, the topic or argument that is to be humanized. The dialogue functions as the intermediary, the tool used by the author to understand a certain subject. To cite an example, one of the quintessential dialogues of the Renaissance was Baldassar Castiglione’s *Il libro del cortegiano*, in which the author illuminates the reader on the subject of the perfect courtier. The method he chooses to employ is the dialogue, and the genre, with its variety of interlocutors who espouse varying or even contradictory opinions, Castiglione undertakes this task. This, of course, can be said of any literary genre, whether it be the treatise, the epistle, the drama, the novel etc. However, what makes dialogue so amenable to an analysis based on its function as a medium is that, unlike any other literary genre, the function of intermediary is one that is already a facet of its definition. Whether it be in its classification as a ‘hybrid’ genre, or in the insistence of it occupying a liminal space, dialogue is the literary genre of medium *par excellence*. This liminality can be identified in the classic Ancient examples of Plato and Cicero, and the scope of the subsequent section will be to outline those key elements from the Platonic

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3 Examples from some of the authors examined in this dissertation: for Carlo Sigonio, the dialogue involved the three arts of poetry, rhetoric and dialectic; for Sperone Speroni and Torquato Tasso there were only two arts involved, namely prose and poetry for the former and poetry and philosophy for the latter (Pugliese, *Il discorso labirintico* 15). Among contemporary critics, Giovanna Wyss Morigi claims it resembles a treatise in its theme, and a drama/play in its structure, (Pugliese *Il discorso labirintico* 16) and for Eva Kushner, there are no less than four genres involved: theatre, narrative, treatise writing and epistolography (“Le dialogue de 1580 a 1630” 153). Suzanne Gueloz in her 1992 monograph on dialogue (*Le dialogue*) entitles one of her chapters “Aux frontières du genre” in which she identifies eight genres as infringing on that of dialogue: la négociation (53); l’interview (55); la table ronde (58); le théâtre (59); la lettre (66); le discours (69); le traité (71); l’essai (72).

4 A modern example comes from C. Jan Swearingen’s assessment of the dialogue which speaks directly to this liminality: “from its inception in Plato, dialogue has always been and continues to be programmatically liminal: interstructural, between two states or conditions” (Swearingen 47).
and Ciceronian\textsuperscript{5} dialogues that shaped the fortunes of the Renaissance dialogue,\textsuperscript{6} with the aid of both Renaissance and contemporary critics.

1.2 Plato and Cicero

With Plato, we begin with his break with the oracular tradition and the movement towards the plurality of voices, which is intrinsic to an analysis of Renaissance dialogues. To continue with Jean-Pierre Vernant: “We are no longer dealing with a religious secret, reserved for some few elect who had been favored by divine grace” (54). Instead:

Platonic dialogue seeks its legitimation in the (re)presentation of an exchange of points of view between partners in dialogue. This exchange offers the possibility of arriving through a process of dialogue–with its dialectical spirit–at a discovery, whether that takes the form of an \textit{aporia} or a position that is generally accepted by all (Snyder 24).

Virginia Cox corroborates Plato’s concern with the opposition of doctrines (Cox 12), but among these opposing views there always appears a central voice, one that, according to Eva Kushner, “will, very gradually, silence others and emerge as the dominant voice despite the maieutic illusion\textsuperscript{7} according to which innate ideas are drawn from the participants” (“Zero-Degree Fictionality” 171). With Plato we have a prizing of the type of oppositional discourse unique to

\textsuperscript{5} The Platonic and Ciceronian traditions also represent the first stage of the life-cycle of the medium (\textit{Retrieval}), outlined by McLuhan which is followed by: \textit{Enhancement}, \textit{Obsolescence}, and \textit{Reversal} (McLuhan and McLuhan, \textit{Laws of Media}, ?).

\textsuperscript{6} Detailed histories of the influence of Platonic and Ciceronian dialogue have been conducted in the following resources: Francesco Tateo’s chapter “La tradizione classica e le forme del dialogo umanistico” (pp. 223-277) in \textit{Tradizione e realtà nell’Umanesimo italiano} (1967); Virginia Cox’s chapter “History and invention in the dialogue” (pp. 9-21) in \textit{The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary dialogue in its social and political contexts}, Castiglione to Galileo (1992); Carla Forno’s chapter “Il rapporto con gli archetipi classici” (pp.91-214) in “Il ‘Libro Animato: Teoria e Scrittura Del Dialogo Nel Cinquecento” (1992).

\textsuperscript{7} In identifying the maieutic method as an ‘illusion,’ Kushner favours the view that the dominant voice is always in control, even when it is the interlocutors who ask the questions, and from whom new ideas are elicited. This would be a pretense on the part of the author (Plato), who always remains in ultimate control of the dialogue.
man as a legitimate vehicle for truth. Kushner goes so far as to say that “the structure of Platonic thought is bound up with the dialogical form” and that “Platonic thought could hardly be separated from the dialogue form, remote as it is from dogmatic affirmation, and committed as it is to seeking truth amidst contradiction, in dramatic exchange” (“Work of Art” 28-29).

The author’s viewpoint was always readily accessible in a Platonic dialogue. Cox reminds us that in post-humanistic vernacular dialogue, Plato was preferred to Cicero for the very reason that the voice of authority was more recognizable in the former than in the latter: “In a culture which was turning, increasingly towards ‘monological’ modes of argumentation, Plato supplied a stylishly oblique but still markedly hierarchical model for the dialogue, more in keeping with the spirit of the times than a Ciceronian debate among equals” (Cox 68). The nature of the post-humanistic environment was indeed changing, and according to McLuhan, this was one of the many effects of the printing press: “a fundamental tenet of the typographic revolution is a change in perception, from a comprehensive sense of reality to linear, and yet segmented vision of it” (Guardiani, “Modernity of the first Jesuits” 3). As we shall see in a subsequent section, it is this specialization (which requires a more linear vision) which helps to make of the printing press, a medium which ushers in the advent of modernity. For now, we note that the singular voice, favoured by the Platonic dialogue, was preferable in this environment. Furthermore the distribution of the author’s voice into various roles or to “personae whose views introduce variations to his, be they ever so slight,” are done “so in an effort to forestall the

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8 Giulio Ferroni also cites the new horizons provided by the Socratic dialogue despite any perceived limitations: “Con tutti i suoi limiti «metafisici», il modello socratico-platonico ha rappresentato, nella tradizione umanistica occidentale, una ipotesi, certo in molti casi equivoca e mistificata, di confronto, di apertura, di ironia; ha reso possibili alcuni essenziali rovesciamenti e contestazioni, si è affacciato verso la varietà e la pluralità del reale, verso nuove possibilità razionali in conflitto col plumbeo e violento orizzonte delle singole situazioni storiche” (Ferroni, Scambi e passaggi 14).

9 What is more, in her explanation of the popularity of Ciceronian dialogues in the Cinquecento, Cox states, how for the aristocrat, it was reassuring for the dialogic lessons to emanate from a peer, and the would-be aristocrat felt that the reading of the dialogue vicariously elevated them into the circle of those speaking (cfr. 14).
reader’s objection” (Kushner, “Work of Art” 28). In terms of a medium, then, the Platonic
dialogue serves as intermediary between the author’s thoughts and his own (or his reader’s)
objections, in a relationship which Stefano Prandi describes as conditioning both the birth and
history of the genre: “Non sarà senza conseguenze per la storia del genere il fatto che la nascita
del dialogo sia legata all’enigma della risonanza di una voce, quella socratica, all’interno di
un’altra - la platonica -” (18-19). In Kushner’s view, this “sanctions the reality of the “other” in
the dialogue” as a “mental confrontation has taken place between the author and another, and the
dialogue embodies this confrontation” (“Work of Art” 29). The ‘confrontation’ is only a mimed
one in the Platonic dialogue, and the choice of the dialogic genre here functions as a medium to
enhance the delight and creativity of an otherwise monologic exposition. It never wavers too far
from its intended goal of communicating a truth which is the sole possession of Socrates. The
Ciceronian model will not ‘play’ at this opposition of truths, but apply it in a more realistic
manner, so that the truth is certainly not in the possession of a sole interlocutor.

The voices heard in Cicero’s dialogues belong to those in possession of high social
standing.10 Carlo Sigonio, in his Del dialogo, makes an important observation regarding the
Platonic interlocutors:

Io non nego che tutto ciò sia descritto con una singolare leggiadria, ma lo consente il
rango dei personaggi, che non sono ornati da nobiltà di censo, ma da quella che deriva
loro dalla vita che conducono, non dalle imprese compiute, ma dalla loro dottrina: di
modo che quanta più piacevolezza possiedono, tanta meno solennità dimostrano. (205)

Cox rightly concludes from this that “Plato characterizes his speakers by their ‘life’ and

10 This is crucial for it would be Cicero’s dialogues which would suffer the greater impoverishment by a loss of the
characters’ names, namely their ‘authority’ (cfr. Cox 13).
‘learning’” while “Cicero is far more likely to do so by their ‘breeding’ and ‘career’” (Cox 13).11 This is due to a change in the dialogue’s focus: the opposition of doctrines, which was so essential to Plato’s dialogues, is replaced by the opposition of the interlocutors themselves and all that they would have represented in their actual lives (Cox 12).12 Not only are the interlocutors different in a Ciceronian dialogue, but so too are the goals. Charles Sears Baldwin states that it is “[...]less conversation than a debate with definite argument, rebuttal, and process to a conclusion. Cicero’s dialogue is not a quest; it is an exposition of something already determined, and it unfolds in that by logical stages” (43).13 While even an impasse or aporia, as noted above, would have been a successful conclusion to a Platonic dialogue, this could not be acceptable in a Ciceronian one. It is the Ciceronian tradition that “has fostered a far more balanced type of examination of arguments because of Cicero’s encouragement to in untramque partem disserere” (Kushner, “Zero-Degree Fictionality” 171). Therefore, while the conclusion will still reflect the author’s position, it will not be done until all the alternatives have been properly heard.

It was this Ciceronian model that was most imitated in the Renaissance14 and while argument for argument’s sake was acceptable in Plato, here it had to be molded or shaped to fit

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11 The Platonic binomial echoes Niccolò Machiavelli’s famous bipartite foundation of his knowledge, hoping to impress the Medici with his credentials as adviser: “esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antique” (Il principe Lettera dedicatoria) which will undoubtedly be of interest to this study as we move towards an evaluation of Machiavelli’s use of the dialogic genre.

12 Cox highlights a change to the focus of the dialogue from Plato to Cicero with the help of Pierre Grimal’s succinct analysis: “‘l’opposition des doctrines’ - the lifeblood of Plato’s dialogues - ‘est certainement moins importante [in Cicero] que l’opposition des hommes, de leurs humeurs, de leurs tempéraments, de leurs préjugés’. The interlocutors of Cicero’s dialogues, far more tangibly than Plato’s appear to be “accompagnés du cortège invisible, mais sensible, des actions qu’ils ont réellement accomplies’ ” (Cox 12).

13 On the subject of the pre-determined outcome in Ciceronian dialogues, Pugliese cites Cicero’s De Oratore as the best example of this since the work “mette a confronto dei pensieri già interamente formati in precedenza. Il dibattito fra essi tende a risolversi in un accordo eclettico dei punti di vista divergenti” (Il discorso labirintico 13).

14 Francesco Tateo highlights the link between the popular Ciceronian model and the Socratic method of Plato: “Era pur sempre il metodo socratico della discussione, ma arricchito, o ammorbidito, dal gusto dell’agone oratorio e della conversazione” (Tateo 236).
into a predetermined outcome. It is not surprising then that Cox identifies the Ciceronian
dialogue as “uniquely well suited to the cultivation of consensus” (31) and claims it as one of the
primary reasons for its success. Cox outlines the reasons for the popularity of the neo-
Ciceronian dialogue in Renaissance Italy stating that: “The neo-Ciceronian dialogue of the late-
Cinquecento Italy was ideally suited to its age and its birthplace in being rather a vehicle of
conventional wisdom than a forum for the discovery of new truths” (32). In other words, it was
not suited to dramatize real conflict or opinion, only to have it appear so. The goal of the
dialogue, as Cicero tells us, was “instructing rather than captivating” (Snyder 36).15 In terms of a
medium then, the Ciceronian dialogue still seeks to disseminate a pre-determined outcome,
however, instead of adhering to a method in which a singular voice prevails, we hear the
argument debated from many sides, espousing many points of view. The space of true discourse
is thus widened and given a greater presence, allowing for the liminality to take center stage.
The suspension of reality in which the fiction resides is given a wider berth permitting a true
exchange to occur.

From the Platonic and Ciceronian examples, Renaissance writers would have seen a
depiction of the human intellect and spirit that very much appealed to their emerging sensibilities
of individualism.16 It is no accident, then, that the dialogue enjoyed such a resurgence during the

15 In that way, it was never designed to appeal to emotions, but rather to the intellect and, thus, it was not effective at
persuading the crowd (cfr. Snyder 35). Pugliese notes that the Ciceronian dialogue, however, is not completely void
of rhetorical elements: “Più narrativo, adoperante una cornice, e sorretto dalle tecniche della persuasione retorica
codisquisizioni o esposizioni pronunciate dagli interlocutori oratoriamente ed in sequenza,...” (Il discorso
labirintico 13). This is not surprising as Peter Dixon reminds us “during the Renaissance, Cicero and rhetoric were
synonymous” (16). Peter Burke cites rhetoric as one of the reasons for the popularity of the dialogic genre in the
Renaissance: “The rise of rhetoric during the Renaissance was another stimulus to the dialogue, which offered a
dramatic presentation of arguments pro and contra; and in this period the two principal kinds of rhetoric, the rhetoric
of speaking and the rhetoric of writing, were in relative equilibrium” (Burke 7-8).

16 Here, we must also heed Burke’s warning on oversimplifying the resurgence of dialogue in the Renaissance: “It
would be too facile to explain the rebirth of the dialogue in terms of the revival of antiquity and the cult of Plato and
Cicero. The admiration for these writers did extend to their dialogues and these dialogues were treated as a
challenge to creative imitation” (Burke 6).
height of the Renaissance, and that its decline coincides with the end of the movement and its most treasured ideals, and eventual descent into the Counter-Reformation.

One of the reasons that Peter Burke offers as an explanation for the popularity of the dialogue during the Renaissance is its immediacy as it “made the dialogue an appropriate medium for the presentation of controversial issues; issues which were certainly far from lacking in the sixteenth century, from the *questione della lingua* to the Reformation” (8). Burke goes on to explain how “[..] these issues often lacked parallels in classical antiquity, thus producing a creative tension between the classical form of dialogue, as exemplified in Plato and Cicero, and the new controversial content” (8). It is because of the introduction of this “controversial content” that Renaissance dialogue-theorists had trouble explaining, defending or exalting the genre, or abolishing it altogether.  

17 It is towards this movement that we now turn our attention – to the great Renaissance theorists on dialogue, and their attempts to provide a definition of the genre.

### 1.3 Sperone Speroni (1500-1588): “sempre intra due”

Two theorists who struggled mightily with carving out a definition for the genre, and consequently, making a case for its validity, are Sperone Speroni (1500-1588) and Torquato Tasso (1544-1595). Their respective works on the dialogue, namely *Apologia dei Dialoghi* (1575) and *Discorso dell’arte del dialogo* (1585), are among the most conflicted treatises on the genre. Here, they are prized for their ability to discern dialogue’s inherently liminal nature. These Renaissance theorists, and writers of dialogues themselves, were able to identify those

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17 These notions are based on Jon Snyder’s succinct explanation of the various aims of the more famous dialogue theorists: “Sigonio sought to regulate dialogue, Castelvetro to abolish it, Speroni to defend it, and Tasso to exalt it” (3).
aspects of the genre that continue to plague contemporary critics. The issues raised by the Renaissance authors continue to reverberate in the theories espoused by contemporary critics. Therefore while highlighting some of the more crucial aspects of Speroni and Tasso’s theories, the study will also interact with the current criticism on these very same aspects.

Speroni embraced the complexities and difficulties inherent in a genre that many critics have essentially declared as undefinable, in large part due to its hybridity. The hybridity of dialogue has been observed on many levels. Structurally Kushner has identified dialogue as “fill[ing] a gap in the spectrum of literary genres” (Work of Art 15), and thematically Nuccio Ordine declares: “Sospeso tra filosofia e letteratura, tra docere e delectare, tra rigida precettistica e ribellione «antiregolista», tra violenta polemica e riflessiva meditazione...” (155).

Speroni did not try to reconcile the hybridity, instead he chose to make it one of the cornerstones of his

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18 Observations originally made in the foremost dialogic theories of the Renaissance are echoed even in the seemingly benign statement that “dialogue is a field without edges” (Levarie Smarr 1) to the assertions that dialogue “costituisce uno dei problemi più complessi di teoria e storia letteraria dell’epoca umanistico-rinascimentale” (Prandi 12), to some of the more extreme positions, such as calling dialogue a “…codice onnivoro e sfuggente nei suoi ambigui confini strutturali, regolata dalla retorica della pluralità...” (Vianello 8).

19 In agreement with Jon R. Snyder’s assessment of Sigonio’s work, “[t]he dialogist uses the fiction of speakers engaged in dialogue, in short, as a means of disguising the fundamentally monological nature of the doctrine (or authorial intention) being presented, for in dialogue “the author undergoes the task of disputation of his own doctrine,’ and not that of someone else” (49). Sigonio is overly concerned with the notion of decorum. Bernard Weinberg goes so far as to say “his [Sigonio’s] total theory of dialogue is really a theory of decorum” (1: 484), and for the purposes of this study, such a limited and rigid definition would not advance the use of the dialogue as a flexible medium, which we can apply as an analytical tool. This is certainly not to suggest that Sigonio’s contribution is negligible, simply that as digested and interpreted from Speroni and Tasso, will best serve the parameters of this thesis. This is particularly evident in Tasso’s treatise on the genre which very much inserts itself “in the ongoing dialogue on dialogue in Italy” (Snyder 151). This is not surprising since Tasso was a student of Sigonio’s and was well-acquainted with De dialogo liber; he knew Speroni personally, but likely did not read Apologia dei dialoghi, and was both “irritated and intrigued” by Castelvetro’s La “Poetica” d’Aristotele vulgarizzata et stposta (Snyder 150-151). In regards to the latter theorist, Castelvetro had “little patience for the paradoxes of dialogue, and no interest whatsoever in exploring the ambiguities of its position at the crossroads of fiction and dialectic. The notion of a philosophical fiction is just as monstrous, and just as impossible, he contends, as a centaur or a minotaur in nature” (Snyder 146). It is precisely this liminal space which dialogue occupies, which will be of vital importance to this study. We must consider the paradoxes and contradictions that seem to plague the genre, for it is here that we can hope to find a new avenue of study and application for the dialogue.

20 Valerio Vianello writes: “con l’innegabile difficoltà di una definizione comprensiva del genere per il suo ibridismo e la sua interferenza con altre forme testuali” (11)

21 Pugliese has highlighted the various other methods in which contemporary and Renaissance critics have treated the hybridity of dialogue in pp. 15-17 of Il discorso labirintico.
treatise on the subject. He recognized and validated this structure: “according to Speroni, dialogue is a mixed genre, either mimetic or diegetic, lying midway between prose and poetry and sharing a number of structural features with comedy” (Pugliese, “Speroni and Renaissance Dialogue” 59). This identified affinity with the comedy,23 will allow Speroni to set up several of the key elements of his defense; the first being the use of dialogue’s ‘inferior’ characters.

Speroni states “ogni dialogo sente non poco della commedia...così il dialogo ben formato, siccome è quel di Platone, ha molti e vari interlocutori, che tal ragionano, quale è il costume e la vita, che ciascun d’essi ci rappresenta” (Apologia 267). In this way, Speroni absolves the author of dialogue of the responsibility for anything that might be said by one of his interlocutors. Of vital consequence to this rule is also “that not every statement uttered in dialogue can possibly be free from falsehoods and errors to which inferior characters are prone” (Snyder 97). To search for truth in dialogue, therefore, is to no avail for it is not the scope of the genre to do so. The best you can do is achieve a type of relativized truth; one that is only pertinent inside the dialogue (cfr. Snyder 100). The notion of of a “relativized” truth is one that has been echoed by many contemporary critics. Hans-Georg Gadamer and Kushner choose to highlight the importance of the process of interrogation over that of the arrival at an irrefutable truth. Kushner speaks of dialogue as a process “rather than an affirmation of elusive truths” (“Renaissance Dialogue and Subjectivity” 240-241), while Gadamer believed that dialogue, like all historical knowledge, does not mean to uncover an irrefutable truth, but instead traces the movements of

22 He would have agreed with C. Jan Swearingen’s assessment that: “from its inception in Plato, dialogue has always been and continues to be programmatically liminal: interstructural, between two states or conditions, essentially unstructured rather than structured by contradictions. Furthermore because of dialogue’s deliberate avoidance of closure and finality, it serves perpetually as a vehicle for reformulating old elements into new patterns” (Swearingen 47).

23 The importance of the dialogue’s relationship with comedy has been noted by several critics; however it is Rémond de Saint-Mard who might have best approximated Speroni’s opinion: “La Comédie est une espece de Dialogue, où les Règles, à mon gré, ont été le mieux observées” (35).
understanding, and interrogates the experiences manifested in the text which are asking to be interpreted (cfr. Ferroni, “Scambi e passaggi” 16). Nuccio Ordine claims that eternal truths are impossible in an infinite and pluricentric universe (cfr. 174). If truth is not to be sought in what the characters are saying, the meaning of the text can be found can be sought in the space between what is being said, in the interstices of communication. In constructing his defense of dialogues, Speroni was creating a safe space in which dialogue could operate without being condemned for those elements which were considered less than dignified, whether that consisted in the adoption of a “not polished language,” by an inferior character, or the non-linear path that dialogue followed for the purpose of delight, and not for the attainment of an absolute truth. What Speroni was able to intimate, was that in its function as medium, the dialogue was not to be blamed for its purpose of re-creating the scene of conversation. The methods necessary for this re-creation were ones that did involve embodying those elements which could be perceived as less than dignified, in its attempt to capture the depiction of reality. As an instrument of perception, the dialogic author used the genre to humanize the matter or content he was trying to communicate. Again, this process of humanization inherent to any medium, may (in the case of dialogue) lead to error or errant wandering however, it was not to be condemned, as Speroni will continue to advocate, rather it was to be commended as the author carves out and navigates this liminal space.

For Speroni, the true opinion of the dialogist, is also suspended between two entities: “però lo autore del dialogo dette e provare le opinioni delle persone introdotte, rade volte sopra esse vuol dar sentenzia finale; ma resta sempre intra due...” (Apologia 275). Speroni’s quasi-

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24 In a contrasting opinion, Michel Le Guern uses truth as a way to distinguish between dialogue and theater: “dans l’œuvre de théâtre, les propos échangés prennent leur valeur de vérité--au sens des logiciens--sur l’univers fictif défini par les personages, le dialogue se distingue par le fait que les propos échangés prennent leur vérité sur l’univers réel” (142).
iconic phrase “sempre intra due” has invited scholarly reflection on the true nature and depth of its meaning in the treatise. Snyder affirms that the writer’s true position is not revealed in dialogue as it remains “suspended in the interstices between the opinions of the characters” (113-114). This would also seem to affirm Kushner’s assertion that “broken truth” is the only type to be found in dialogue as no character is in complete possession of a pristine variety of it (“Work of Art” 123). The most revealing analysis comes to us from Pugliese who suggests that Speroni’s statement recalls the etymology of the term itself: where ‘dia’- which means ‘separate’ or ‘through’ is suggestive of a lacuna “which exists between the views expressed or that the ultimate meaning of dialogue is the sum total of those views (Pugliese “Speroni and Renaissance Dialogue” 63). As a result, the ultimate meaning of dialogue cannot be found in the words themselves–a fact that Speroni himself points out when he diminishes their value by indicating that they are “segni, spettri, ed imagini, e similitudini delle cose” (Apologia 381). Divorced of their surface meaning, words are now free to delight and entertain in the construction of a “piacevole labirinto” (Speroni, Apologia 286). Speroni likens this to a walk in “un giardin dilettevole” (274), where one would find both “rose” and “spine”. For Pugliese this “represents different opinions, not all of which may be readily acceptable to the audience, unless one penetrates their inner significance” and ultimately “underscores a preference for the polyphonic nature of dialogue over the monologic stamp of philosophy” (“Speroni and Renaissance Dialogue” 65). Again, all of this takes us progressively further away from any

25 C. Jan Swearingen echoes these statements: “No single person or argument expresses the truth, the “correct” view, or the “final” point. No one has the last word because there is no last word” (64).

26 Snyder comments on Speroni’s use of the “speaking painting” as a metaphor “for the insurmountable distance between signifier and signified in the dialogical text” (Snyder 123).

27 On Speroni’s use of the labyrinth in his Apologia see Olga Zorzi Pugliese’s “Sperone Speroni and the Labyrinthine Discourse of Renaissance Dialogue” and Il discorso labirintico del dialogo rinascimentale.
discernible surface or superficial meaning of dialogue, which would not have endeared Speroni’s works to the growing criticism against them. Snyder uses the term “degraded image” (127), and references Luisa Mulas’ use of the term ‘parody’: “in sostanza, retorica, dialettica e logica, più che tre gradi di approssimazione alla conoscenza, sarebbero l’una parodia dell’altra” (Mulas 258). To unravel a meaning, therefore, would take a more astute and trained evaluation.

Snyder advocates for a reading of dialogue where any notion of defining the position of the dialogist is abandoned, as this cannot be achieved through any rational interpretation; the reader must consider that at the heart of every dialogue lies this very question (cfr. 116). Let us consider Monroe Beardsley’s assessment of this relationship:

the speaker of a literary work cannot be identified with the author--and therefore the character and condition of the speaker can be known by internal evidence alone--unless the author has provided a pragmatic context, or a claim of one, that connects the speaker with himself. (240)

It is not goal to discover the position of the dialogist; for this reason Speroni tells us it cannot be found in any specific alter ego and that essentially “truth” is not the ultimate goal of the dialogue. Speroni’s references to delight, games or play are indicative of “the flexible structure characteristic of dialogue” (“Speroni and Renaissance Dialogue” 70), which on their surface

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28 Referencing Plato, Snyder speaks of “the discourse of dialogue [being] three degrees removed from the truth of things themselves” (126).

29 While providing a justification of Speroni’s use of the term labyrinth, Pugliese echoes this sentiment: “[t]he presence of multiple interlocutors expounding different views often makes it difficult to identify one unmistakable authorial spokesperson, to assess with absolute accuracy the relative weight to be assigned to the dissenting minority voices and the varying degree of resistance they offer their opponents in the debate, and consequently to determine the overall meaning of the dialogical texts” (“Speroni and Renaissance Dialogue” 57).

30 This might tempt one to consider that dialogue is not a worthy or serious genre. We might also wonder whether Speroni’s more authentic views on the genre are not on display here. Pugliese reminds us, however, that “views presented on the subject in the Apologia are entirely consistent with statements made at earlier dates, in the dialogue on action and contemplation...” (“Speroni and Renaissance Dialogue” 68).
appear to simply delight or entertain, and not be vehicles towards greater truths. Speroni’s analysis reminds us that in search of these greater truths, we must not limit ourselves to solely consider that which is being said by the interlocutors, but also what is being ‘said’ between these interactions. The approach Speroni has outlined betrays a consciousness of the times in which he lived; ‘sempre intra due’ is the description of a state of transition or flux, one that also could aptly describe the Renaissance. A time-period in which not only were all things ancient re-appropriated and praised as model exemplars, but there also existed a burgeoning concept of the individual faculties and of the freedoms to which this entitled him. This latter concept would come to be magnified and exemplified by the advent of the printing press, and is one that Tasso will also continue as his treatise on dialogue is “both a summary of all that came before it and a step beyond the ancients and all other moderns” (Snyder 150). Tasso will also identify a liminal or temporary space; this time with respect to the place in which the author of dialogue must operate.

1.4 Torquato Tasso (1544-1595): “mezzo tra ’l poeta e ’l dialettico”

Ma perché, come abbiam detto, il dialogo è imitazione del ragionamento, e ’l dialogo dialettico imitazione della disputa, è necessario ch’i ragionanti e disputanti abbiaon qualche opinione delle cose dispuitate e qualche costume, il qual si maifesta alcuna volta nel disputare; e quindi derivano l’altre due parti nel dialogo, io dico la sentenza e ’l costume; e lo scrittore del dialogo deve imitarlo non altramente che faccia il poeta;

31 Or, as Pugliese has recommended, the “sum total” of the dialogue.
perch’egli è quasi mezzo fra ’l poeta e ’l dialettico. (Tasso, Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 54)

Tasso’s statement appears more than midway into his treatise, Discorso dell’arte del dialogo; however, the idea of trying to create a place for dialogue that stands in between more established parameters is a notion that not only informs his entire treatise, but also his literary production. It is not until several centuries later that acceptance of a genre which contains mixed traits or elements was permitted.32

As mentioned above, the notion of dialogue’s liminality will be crucial to the analysis being brought forth in these pages, and no one better exemplifies this struggle than Tasso. In his epic, Gerusalemme Liberata, Tasso also carves out for himself a space in which he can exercise his role as poeta creatore, and in his Discorsi dell’arte poetica we find a very unique and balanced solution to the problem of introducing credible meraviglie into the Christian epic, as the source for all the meraviglia is drawn from the Christian faith. In tracing out this process, we will observe how Tasso employs a parallel procedure for the dialogue in his Discorso dell’arte del dialogo, and how he uses some of the same terms (meraviglia) to justify the presence and legitimacy of both his grand epic and the dialogic genre.

Benedetto Croce excludes the possibility of dialogue’s legitimacy by the use of the word ‘mezzo’: “La legittimazione è, in verità, esclusa dalla parola stessa a cui si è fatto ricorso, da quel «mezzo» tra due cose intrisecamente distinte e diverse, la poesia e la dialettica, dall’ibridismo che così si produce o dalla falsa adeguauzione del drammatico col didascalico e col

32 Seymour Chatman defined genres as simply “constructs or composites of features” (18), and advised that “[w]e should not be disconcerted by the fact that texts are inevitably mixed; in that respect they resemble most organic objects” (18). Tasso anticipated this statement in his own theory of poetics.
polemico” (Croce 120). Tasso simply sought solutions to the creation of balance between the celestial and diabolical forces that seek to destroy each other in Gerusalemme Liberata, in the same way he sought middle ground for the writer of dialogue as both poet and dialectician.

Tasso could not deprive his epic poem of the meraviglie that had so delighted Ludovico Ariosto’s readers, in his epic Orlando Furioso, and he recognized the pleasure that those episodes injected into the stanzas for both the common and the erudite reader:

Poco dilettevole è veramente quel poema che non ha seco quelle meraviglie che tanto movono non solo l’animo de gli ignoranti, ma de’ giudiziosi ancora: parlo di quelli anelli, di quelli scudi incantati, di que’ corsieri volanti, di quelle navi converse in ninfe, di quelle larve che fra’ combattenti si tramettono, e d’altre cose si fatte. (Discorsi dell’arte poetica 6)

These ‘meraviglie’ are also needed when writing dialogues, since dialogues imitate disputations.

“è necessario ch’i ragionanti e disputanti abbiano qualche opinione delle cose disputate e qualche costume, il qual si manifesta alcuna volta nel disputare e quindi derivano l’altre due parti nel dialogo, io dico la sentenza e ’l costume” (Tasso, Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 54). For Tasso, no one expresses the art of dialogue better than Plato. His examples are the ones that occupy the centre of Tasso’s discussion on the importance of opinions and character (sentenza and costume). Tasso goes on to declare that in style (l’elocuzione) in agreement with Plato and Cicero “perché ne’ dialogi l’elocuzione dell’uno e dell’altro non è meno ornata che quella dell’epistole” (Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 57). Included in this idea of ornamentation is also Tasso’s preference for the more artful beginning of eliciting a false opinion to be refuted: “...e

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33 These types of judgements seem to follow Tasso to the present day. Tobias Gregory sees a tension that characterizes the episodes in which meraviglia is employed: “Strange the divine action certainly is, but its strangeness results not from lack of inspiration but from deep tensions between the requirements of epic narrative and Christian theology” (561).
nella nostra lingua coloro c’hanno scritto dialogi per la maggior parte hanno seguita la maniera
men artificiosa, nella qual dimanda quel che vuole imparare, non quel che ripruova” (Discorso
dell’arte del dialogo 54). To simply ask for instruction would undoubtedly be the more linear
approach; however, Tasso deliberately prizes the more artful and errant manner as mentioned
above.\textsuperscript{34}

Since in Plato and Cicero’s dialogues we have “imitazione de’ migliori; e nell’imitazioni
si fatte le cose imitate debbono più tosto accrescere che diminuire, come ci insegna Demetrio
medesimo, il qual vuol che la magnificenza sia nelle cose, s’il parlare è del cielo o della
terra” (Tasso, Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 57-58). This magnificence however, must be
tempered with a

[...] purità e semplicità dell’elocuzione, e ’l soverchio ornamento par che’impedisca gli
argomenti, e chi rintuzzi, per così dire l’acume e la sottilità. Ma l’altre parti debbono
esser ornate con maggiore diligenza; e dovendo lo scrittore del dialogo assomigliare i
poeti nell’espressione e nel por le cose inanzi a gli occhi... (Tasso, Discorso dell’arte
del dialogo 59)

Just as it had occurred in Gerusalemme Liberata, the ornamentation must be used judiciously.
While recognizing the need to elicit delight, one must be careful to indicate that such pleasures
are best enjoyed in moderation as a ‘seasoning’ to the main plot of the poem. Care has to be
taken not to be intrusive and to, again, appeal to both the common and elevated appetite: “deve
giudizioso scrittore condire il suo poema, perché con essa invita e alletta il gusto de gli uomini
vulgari, non solo senza fastidio, ma con sodisfazione ancora de’ più intendenti” (Discorsi
dell’arte poetica 6). Magic will not be employed to easily explain away any point of the story,

\textsuperscript{34} Echoes of Speroni’s justification of the labyrinth in Tasso’s defense of “la maniera artificiosa” are evident. This
is not perceived as a negative, but only as a way to augment the style and thus the diletto of the dialogue.
as it must be done in *Orlando Furioso* to alternately delay or advance the plot which often became ensnared owing to the ponderous length of Ariosto’s work. The ‘magic’ in Tasso’s epic will reside in the miracles. While it will employ magic shields and enchanted gardens, it will do so in a manner that is not oppressive to the reader or protagonist, allowing for a definitive amount of free will to be felt by both while, simultaneously, the destiny of the poem is realized, namely the liberation of Jerusalem. Placing this ‘seasoning’ as second, or as servicing the plot, is also what Tasso did in describing his theory of dialogue.

Central to any dialogue, regardless of its type, was the *quistione* or subject of the debate: “[...] e quale è la favola nel poema, tale è nel dialogo la quistione; e dico la sua forma e quasi l’anima” (Tasso, *Discorso dell’arte del dialogo* 45). This *quistione* must exhibit unity in its exploration, thus

l’interrogazione dialettica è una dimanda della risposta, o vero della proposizione, o vero dell’altraparte della contradizione; e la proposizione è una parte della contradizione; a queste conse non sarà un risposta nè una dimanda. (Tasso, *Discorso dell’arte del dialogo* 46)

Tasso insists upon the skill of the author in both “logical demonstrations” and “in asking questions”. He cites Aristotle when he claims “[...]s’è il medesimo l’interrogazione sillogistica e la proposizione, e le preposizioni si fanno in ciascuna scienza, in ciascuna scienza ancora si posson fare le dimande” (*Discorso dell’arte del dialogo* 47).

Tasso liberates the dialogue from the burden of either espousing explicit or even relative truths. For Tasso, the dialogic genre was meant to be a tool of evaluation of any given topic, and in this it does not identify itself with the Platonic tradition. Thus Tasso is able to assign to it a very broad, if not infinite, variety of subject matters that it can treat. He has created a veritable
space in which the dialogist can operate, free from persecution and repercussion. This should not surprise, for this is precisely what Tasso was able to do in his epic. Guido Baldassarri identifies a space that Tasso creates:

 [...]individuando quale unico spazio praticabile per il poeta moderno il meraviglioso cristiano, nella sua duplice matrice celeste e diabolica, e puntando con decisione, ai fini della verosimiglianza ma anche all’ortodossia ideologica, sulla chiara individuazione delle cause soprannaturali degli «incanti» e dei «miracoli». (28)

Gregory sees the plot of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* as “...transpiring within this space of postponement” (573) as Tasso “...frames the epic action of the *Liberata* as a chapter in the ongoing contest between heaven and hell. His tactic is to show heaven conceding certain limited powers of disturbance to the devils, enough to prolong the mortal conflict but not so much that God’s omnipotence ever comes in question” (575). One does not need to recur, however, to viewing *Gerusalemme Liberata* as a simple rehearsal of the contradictions that existed in Tasso’s own psyche. Tasso’s *Discorsi* ends with the enigmatic conclusion to his discussion of the newly christened *meraviglioso verosimile*:

 [...]dunque una medesma azione e meravigliosa e verosimile: meravigliosa riguardandolo in se stessa e circonscritta dentro a i termini naturali, verosimile considerandola divisa da questi termini, nella sua cagione, la quale è una virtù soprannaturale, potente e avezza ad operar simili meraviglie. (*Discorsi dell’Arte Poetica* 8)

As we have seen, for Tasso this definition of a ‘middle ground’ in which his works operate is not unique, as he will employ it again to describe the writer of dialogue as operating a similar middle ground. Nor is the above-mentioned ‘enigmatic’ conclusion unique in the way
one action can be both meraviglioso and verosimile. The dialogue has also been given this distinction: it can also be either tragic or comic depending on the actions it chooses to imitate:

[...] nondimeno i dialoghi sono stati detti tragici e comici per similitudine, perchè le tragedie e le comedie propriamente sono l’imitazioni dell’azioni; ma ’l dialogo è imitazione di ragionamento, e tanto partecipa del tragico e del comico quanto in lui si scrive dell’azione...” (Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 41-42)

The continuous modulation and definition to which Tasso subjects his theoretical discourses are an attempt to achieve balance and a certain form of perfection in the works he would write. Tasso lived during a time of transition where the ideals of the Renaissance were slowly beginning to give way to the artificiality that would define the Baroque period. This did not preclude him, however, in synthesizing his thoughts on the genre. These thoughts, at first glance, appear deceptively simple, yet contain a great amount of complexity as they also dialogue with the work done by Sigonio, Ludovico Castelvetro, and Speroni. Tasso concludes his slim treatise providing an ingenious summary:

Abbiamo dunque che ’l dialogo sia imitazione di ragionamento fatto in prosa per giovamento degli uomini civili e speculativi, per la qual cagione egli non ha bisogno di scena o di palco; e che due sian le specie; l’una, nel soggetto della quale sono i problemi che risguardano l’elezione e la fuga; l’altra speculativa, la qual prende per subietto quistione ch’appertiene alla verità ed alla scienza; e nell’una e nell’altra non imita solamente la disputa, ma il costume di coloro che disputano, con elocuzioni in alcune parti piene di ornamento, in altre di purità, come par che si convenga alla materia. (Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 61-62)
Tasso does not ensnare dialogue into any particular structure, or subject-matter. Imitation is the technique dialogue employs to its fullest, and he justifies its employment by stressing that it is, first and foremost, the imitation of a discussion and that, consequently, disputation and characters must be drawn as vividly as they would have appeared in real-life. Ornamentation is used to achieve this, and it is not an evil, when employed judiciously wherever needed, and balanced by purity of style. The relativity of the term “as befits/si convenga” exhibits how Tasso architects these “middle grounds” or liminal spaces quite expertly and painstakingly, and envisions them as real and credible loci within which great works can be built.

Here Tasso can be seen again, as widening the space within which this medium can operate. He gives it a greater scope and definition, and permits it to operate based on its own rules, and more importantly, to continue Speroni’s work, of extricating it from following the rules of the outside world. In choosing to highlight the aspect of dialogue which requires the writer to approximate the tone, style and address pertinent to his characters, Speroni and Tasso have intuitively understood one of the crucial aspects of the medium which states that they “extend the human ability to perceive the external world” (SMC 100). This external world need not be one that leads to absolute truths (as Speroni tells us), or even one that imitates the actions of men (as Tasso tells us) because this “external world will not be the totally naturally world, but the partially artificial world we have inherited from our fathers and forefathers” (SMC 10). As such,

35 And in doing so, both Speroni and Tasso have realized the stages of Enhancement and Obsolescence in the life-cycle of the medium. They have widened the middle ground to its furthest capacity to the extent that perception is almost obscured in their dialogic theories. This will trigger the eventual Reversal which we shall observe in the movement from an ‘open’ to a ‘closed’ dialogue.

36 Tasso instead prefers that the dialogue be seen as imitating discussions, not the actions of men, leaving the latter to be the more appropriate domain of tragedy and comedy. He does leave a space for dialogues to be considered either ‘tragic’ or ‘comic’, but only by analogy, and only to the extent that they deal with actions: “nondimeno i dialoghi sono stati detti tragici e comici per similitudine, perché le tragedie e le comedie propriamente sono l’imitazioni dell’azioni; ma ‘l dialogo è imitazione di ragionamento, e tanto partecipa del tragico e del comico quanto in lui si scrive dell’azione...” (Discorso dell’arte del dialogo 41-24). Kushner comments on this by stating: “There is no action, yet something does happen. The function of action is replaced by that of argumentation” (“The Dialogue of the French Renaissance” 33).
as a medium, the dialogic genre is justified in its methods of approximating human discussions, even at the expense of clarity, linearity or morality. Furthermore, as a medium, it employs the art of human conversation in order to interface with the outside world on a particular topic or issue.

1.5 A Structural analysis: Scene, Characters and Classifications of the Renaissance Dialogue

Dialogue has often been considered a sum of its parts: scene, characters, approaches etc. This method will also be employed in the current analysis. To it we will add the question of how these elements aid in the creation of a stable liminal space which, as demonstrated above, is the true key element of the genre. The scene, or space within which the dialogue purportedly takes place is the primary surface element. Many factors can be considered when studying the scene, and it is our intention to highlight those which the author employs to add meaning to his text. Therefore, regardless of whether it takes place in a real or imagined space, or occurs during a period of festivity or not, we will perceive, the setting as a clue to the general question of the relationship between the author and contemporary society (cfr. Pugliese 17). Whether it appears as an overly-detailed element, or one that is sparsely alluded to, the question is what does that mean to our author and, consequently, what can that tell us about the dialogue itself? In some cases, the choice of setting will add very little to our understanding of a dialogic work, however in others, it may be not only our first key to an interpretive analysis, but also the best way to ascertain an overall meaning or message from the author. Within the time and space created by the dialogic author, dwells the most important element of the dialogue: the characters.

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37 Pugliese credits this conclusion to Piero Floriani: “Floriani vede la scena testuale non come semplice pittura del quadro culturale in cui si praticava la conversazione dotta, bensì come indizio della questione generale del rapporto dell’autore con la società contemporanea” (Il discorso labirintico 17).
Pugliese identifies the characters as “il vero cardine” (*Il discorso labirintico* 19) of the dialogic genre. It is through them, specifically through their interactions with one another, that the dialogue truly negotiates the liminal spaces and is animated into being. Their very existence provides the defining element of the genre: a conversation constituting at least two individuals.

For Kushner, the choice to employ dialogue is already indicative of something larger: “The choice of the dialogue form, the gesture of the scriptor reaching for a genre in which varied points of view will be given if not equal at least partial representation, seems significant in itself...” (“Work of Art” 24). The fragmentation of the authorial voice is paramount in the discussion of dialogue, for we often try to find the “meaning” by way of a reconstituting of this fragmentation.  

Who speaks for the author? Who exemplifies his doubts? his certainties? In order to properly delineate this importance, we begin in the Middle Ages, with arguably, the first “fragmented” authorial voice: Petrarca in his *Secretum.*

In the “Emergence of the Paradoxical Self,” Kushner discusses the validity of equating the “advent of subjectivity with the advent of modernity” (42). Kushner argues that in the simple identification of the other, identity of the self is enhanced “if only because identity can only comprehend itself by differentiation” (“Paradoxical Self” 47). In other words, for an individual to exist –“me”–, there must be the presence of others who are “not me.” In her final thoughts, she cites dialogue as a means by which this identity can occur including Francesco Petrarca’s

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38 Kushner cites this as one of the main characteristics of dialogue: “One of the main characteristics of dialogue, so obvious that it has seldom been discussed, at least in theoretical terms, is the author’s initial self-projection into two voices, preceding more complex fragmentation to come” (*Renaissance Dialogue and Subjectivity* 229).

39 Charles Sanders Peirce also noted how the identity of the self is inextricably tied to the other: “The recognition by one person of another’s personality takes place by means to some extent identical with the means by which he is conscious of his own personality. The idea of the second personality, which is as much as to say that second personality itself, enters within the field of direct consciousness of the first person, and is as immediately perceived as his ego, though less strongly. At the same time, the opposition between the two persons is perceived, so that the externality of the second is recognized” (112; 6.160).
Secretum as an example, claiming dialogue helps in the “unconcealment of the subject to itself and others when it unveils inner conflict” (55).

The inner conflict dramatized by Petrarca took place between Franciscus and Augustinus; the former represented the desires of the self, and the latter represented the divine call to renounce earthly desires and devote himself to spiritual salvation. It has been said that Petrarca “intuisce le possibilità del dialogo nel Secretum” (Paolini 48), and this is indeed an excellent approach in understanding the role Secretum played in the unfolding of the Renaissance dialogue. The two speakers are given an equal amount of time to speak, and the key is the representation of Petrarca’s inner dialogue. Petrarca himself admits that he wrote the dialogue not to have it classed among his other works, or that he desire credit from it instead “[...] l’ho scritto perché dalla sua lettura io possa ancora gustare, quando lo voglia, lo stesso dolcezza che gustai, un giorno, dal vivo colloquio” (Il mio segreto 57-58). The pleasure of which Petrarca speaks could only have been derived from a splitting or fragmenting of his thoughts into the embodiment of two separate and distinct persons. Without this, no true discussion could have been said to take place, and it would have been nothing more than a series of conclusions or ‘truths’ on the subject presented. By giving a voice to the ‘objections’ as expressed by Franciscus, the author and reader is able to delight in the process or journey of the debate, not unlike Speroni’s vision for his treatise on dialogue when he recalls the “giardin dilettevole” (Apologia 274). In order to maximize the delight of the discourse, the author will

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40 Kushner also cites Marguerite de Navarre’s Dialogue en forme de vision nocturne. Along with Kushner’s works on this dialogue, and its inherent dialogicity, Reinier Leushuis’ 2004 article “Dialogue, Self, and Free Will: Marguerite de Navarre’s Dialogue en Forme de Vision Nocturne and Petrarch’s Secretum” also explores the work not on the basis of its content, but also the importance of the choice of dialogue for a discussion of free will, and inner conflict. Leushuis “will attempt to show that a possible answer lies in the ability of the dialogue, which as a genre can only exist and operate by virtue of an exchange of two or more idiosyncratic and individual ‘voices’, to resist dissolving of the self and to preserve to some extent the notion of a Christian self free to question its own identity” (70).
undoubtedly embellish his own opinions as told through the arguments on both sides of the
debate, therefore making the author’s ‘true’ position located somewhere in-between. Only the
author can unlock this embedded truth, and as a reader, the best we can do is approximate the
role of locksmith based on what the author is willing to tell us. The true scope of dialogue is
“process, rather than affirmation of elusive truths” (Kushner, “Renaissance Dialogue and
Subjectivity” 240-241).

As readers, by way of the written dialogue we are privy to Petrarca’s internal struggles,
but not to the conclusions. Seen in this light, dialogue becomes the perfect refuge for the author,
whose secrets can only be revealed to him. Pugliese attributes this refuge to the labyrinthine
structure of dialogue: “Come il labirinto, il dialogo, con la sua struttura indiretta, non rivela
esplicitamente il suo messaggio, ma lo nasconde negli intrichi del suo interno” (Il discorso
labirintico 47). Petrarca articulates this very clearly: “Tu dunque, libretto, fuggendo i ritrovi
degli uomini, sii pago di rimanere con me e non smentire il tuo nome. Tu sei infatti il “mio
Segreto” e tale sarai chiamato: e quando io sarò immerso in più alte occupazioni, come conservi
tutto quel che fu detto in segreto, in segreto me lo ricorderai (Il mio segreto 58).

Contemporary critics have also seen this refuge of the author of dialogue in the
polyphony he creates. The Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin saw this polyphony or the presence of
a variety of voices, and he identified a marked difference between “the direct intention of the
character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (The Dialogic Imagination
324). Bakhtin’s use of the adjective ‘refracted’ is of particular interest for it is essentially
unintelligible to readers because it does not come to them directly, but by way of a distorted
image viewed through a medium. In this case, the medium is dialogue, and the distortion is
accomplished through the fragmentation of the singular authorial voice into the many voices of
the protagonists. This is, of course, the intention. As Stefano Prandi remarks:

[...]attraverso la modalità dialogica, insomma, l’autore non intende tanto “prendere
posizione” quanto rendere conto di una pluralità di percorsi cognitivi, alcuni dei quali
conducono manifestamente all’errore, nessuno dei quali è completamente esplorato nel
momento in cui il testo si conclude.” (Prandi 25)

Again, we have the process highlighted as the central aspect, as opposed to the discovery
of any truths. Nuccio Ordine interprets the plurality, or multiplicity of voices as leading to a
multiplicity of methods in terms of how dialogue can be structured or executed: “[...]non una
forma canonica, quindi, ma una pluralità di moduli espressivi; non uno spazio tematico, ma un
vasto orizzonte dove trovano posto gli argomenti più vari” (Ordine 155).

This ‘scene of conversation’ is what the author intends to create, and this could not be
accomplished without the existence of the other; therefore, his creation is not a haphazard one.
Moreover, the character(s) with which the author chooses to populate this scene “sono degli
attanti che svolgono ruoli specifici nelle interazioni con gli altri locutori (cfr. Pugliese, Il
discorso labirintico 19). Structurally, we can evaluate their role in terms of the type of
relationship that exists among them, whether it be hierarchic or as equals (cfr. Pugliese, Il
discorso labirintico 20). In order to determine this relationship, we will apply Sorin Stati’s
method based on the hierarchical relationships between the interlocutors:

Ordine provides a list of reasons an author may choose the dialogue, finally concluding that it is most often
viewed as an open container: “Per la stessa ragione chi scrive dialoghi può farlo con teleologie totalmente opposte:
c’è chi vuole offrire l’estenuante rappresentazione della ricerca di una verità che sfugge, e c’è chi, al contrario, vuole
mascherare le sue irremovibili certezze, per renderle più persuasive, attraverso apparenti percorsi dialettici; chi
approda a risultati definitivi e chi lascia frammenti di senso; chi costruisce all’interno il personaggio a cui spetta la
sentenza finale e chi delega al lettore («giudice esterno») la responsabilità della scelta. Ma molto spesso accade che
il dialogo possa rivelarsi come vuoto contenitore, pura cornice in cui il che cosa si dice passa sullo sfondo, per
lasciare assoluta preminenza alla scena della conversazione” (155)
i riflessi del rapporto gerarchico nella lunghezza delle battute, nella loro struttura sintattica, nel diritto degli interlocutori di cambiare o meno l’argomento della conversazione, nella frequenza delle frasi interrogative. (Stati 47)

Here we can also consider, as Pugliese does, the role of the narrator, especially in diegetic dialogues; are they objective, omniscient, absent? (cfr. Pugliese, Il discorso labirintico 20). The answers to these questions can help us to assign a role to the narrator that can also be a helpful tool of analysis.

Secondary to the characters and the roles that they play is the structure in which these roles are permitted to operate. Chaïm Perelman’s tripartite classification resonates with critics. The critical dialogue compares various theses with the serious intention of finding the nucleus of truth and coherence (Pugliese, Il discorso labirintico 21), while in the eristic dialogue the interlocutors are moved solely by their desire to win over their adversaries, and consequently prove themselves indifferent to the truth (Perelman 164). It is only in the dialectic dialogue that we find an acceptable place for ‘truth’ as what is sought is a consensus of the most reasonable ideas:

The point of departure for a dialectical argumentation does not consist in necessary propositions, valid everywhere and for all time, but in propositions effectively admitted in a given milieu; in a different setting, in a different historical and social context, these propositions may no longer meet with approval. (Perelman 166)

It is for this reason that Perelman designates the dialectical method as the “method par excellence of any philosophy which realises the social, imperfect and incomplete aspect of philosophical knowledge, instead relying upon intuitions and self evident truths considered as irrefragable” (Perelman 167). In agreement with Pugliese, Le Guern’s classification, also
tripartite, offers more detail, and consequently lends itself better to textual analysis (cfr. *Il discorso labirintico* 21). It also provides a place for all the receivers of the text, as well as the author and reader: in the didactic dialogue, we have the interlocutor who acts as teacher and represents the author, while the other is the student and the one with whom the reader identifies (Le Guern 143); the polemic dialogue occurs among adversaries, where the reader is initially simply a witness or referee, but also becomes an accomplice of the dominant figure (Le Guern 144); the dialectic dialogue, again championed as the best, is one where knowledge is not the monopoly of any one person, but shared among all the interlocutors (Le Guern 144). With both classifications, we have a dialectic dialogue that stands as the best due to its reliance on collaboration among the interlocutors. Both Perelman and Le Guern discount those dialogues which only play at displaying a true exchange of ideas in favour of a pre-determined conclusion that the reader must reach. It is for this reason that the author’s voice must be cleverly disguised in order to avoid any definitive associations which would disrupt the veracity of the disputation.

1.6 Scope of the Renaissance Dialogue

Just as the entirety of the communications transmitted by the text (and not just the discourse of the protagonist), indicates the true message of dialogue, so too the whole work has a singular design, which is separate from the way in which the interlocutors choose to argue their case (cfr. Pugliese *Il discorso labirintico* 23). Cox speaks of an “act of persuasion” that is being played out for the reader and “we cannot simply absorb the message without reflecting on the way in

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42 A holistic approach is also one that Cox took in *The Renaissance Dialogue*. Her aim was to examine dialogue as “an act of communication: to restore this most sociable of literary genres to the social matrix within which it was produced” (xii). She concentrated on the function of dialogue rather than the form, and focused on its ability to represent the communicative process, claiming not only did it present information or opinion, but it also represented the transmission process (4-5).
which it is being sent and received” (5-6). Cox goes on to remark that all dialogues, whether they be truly ‘dialogical’ or those masquerading as ones (‘monological’), all contain a type of self-awareness that they are vehicles of communication, and that they “have at least something to say on the subject of communication; and it is here that we should seek for the defining characteristic of the genre, rather than in any tendency to privilege dialectical modes of thought” (6). Here, we favour the term medium, as opposed to simply a vehicle of communication, as the former allows us to consider the crucial middle ground which dialogue occupies.

We can speak of two types of conclusions to the Renaissance dialogue: one that is ‘closed’ where a synthesis is achieved versus one that is ‘open’ in which all artificial agreements are avoided in favour of a prevailing of a multitude of voices representing diverse viewpoints (cfr. Pugliese, Il discorso labirintico 22-23). The ‘open’ dialogue proved problematic for a society that was beginning to move towards specialization. Castiglione’s Il cortegiano is a prime example of the unease demonstrated by the open dialogue as progressive editions featured a ‘guide’ for how it was to be read, where to find ‘truths’ “insinuating the possibility of a ‘correct’ reading of a dialogue which had originally been carefully structured to permit any number of readings” (cfr. Cox 107). This possibility of a variety of readings, characteristic of the open dialogue, made it a dangerous entity, where the reader’s role was given far too much importance due to the annihilation of the author (cfr. Cox 102). In ‘closing’ the dialogue, the message was safeguarded from any ‘incorrect’ interpretation on the part of the reader reducing their role to the passive one of the reader of a treatise” (Cox 102). This reversal of the medium from ‘open’ to ‘closed’; from polyphonic to monologic; from Ciceronian to Platonic can be viewed as the final

43 Kushner concludes that “far from being a mere vehicle, the dialogue form adds to the subject, the signifier itself assumes signification and adds something to the signified” (“Work of Art” 26)
stage in the life-cycle of the medium referenced throughout this chapter. Cox identifies the advent of print as a possible source for the decline of the open dialogue: “The open dialogue rests on a fragile pact between author and reader, held together by mutual fictions, which cannot survive the more rigid role-divisions enforced by the advent of print” (106). Cox paints a bleak picture for the demise of dialogue; no longer the vital, malleable tool of communication, it was now “simply a literary equivalent of a lecture” whose “last remaining function...was to convey truths elaborated in the silent reaches of the mind” (113).

This rather lack-lustre ending is one that does not befit a genre that sought to accomplish the very opposite. It is not surprising that it did meet its end with the assertion of the Counter-Reformation, for its ability to dodge and disguise authorial intention made it an unwelcome medium to a society which was seeking to condemn any, and all, perverse or subversive elements. For its inherent ability to alternatively reveal and mask its true intentions, the dialogue is an excellent tool by which we may attempt to pursue new avenues of research of Renaissance authors; even of those whose research seems currently exhaustive. We will briefly consider this *irrigidimento* as an element of the modernity that was being inaugurated and explored, in large part due to Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press.

### 1.7 Modernity and the Printing Press

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44 An excellent example of this process is Giovanni Della Casa’s *Galateo*. An unassuming dialogue that examines the rules that govern the minutiae of everyday living, which included good manners and a certain level of behavioural comportment, could also be seen as a work that not only held up a mirror to Della Casa’s life, but it also reflected the age and society in which he lived; a society that had witnessed the invasion from foreign enemies and the Counter-Reformation. Under the weight of these two powerful forces, Della Casa understood that his ability to change the world that surrounded him had been greatly diminished, however, the sphere in which one lived everyday reality, could still be altered if needed. All true dialogicity is lost, however, as Pugliese points out: “[i]n fondo si ha non un vero dialogo fra un vecchio e un giovane, bensi un monologo dogmatico pronunciato dal più anziano, il quale costituisce l’unico parlante” (Pugliese *Il discorso labirintico* 118-119).
The advent of modernity has been linked to Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press in 1450. With the assistance of Marshall McLuhan’s seminal works on the topic, as well as contributions from his most dedicated and astute critics, among them Francesco Guardiani, this section will provide a theoretical framework of the enormity of Gutenberg’s invention against which we may discuss dialogue. To begin, McLuhan considered the printing press a medium, which, as we have seen, is not a haphazard word choice. Merriam Webster defines it as “a substance regarded as the means of transmission of a force or effect.” The force or effect which the printing press transmitted was indeed the birth of modernity. Not even Gutenberg was aware “di aver dato inizio alla civiltà moderna” (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 90).

Guardiani explains the justification of this statement by laying out a series of effects it triggered in European society “prima subliminale poi sempre più consciamente percepiti” (*In Prospettiva* 90).

The first effect Guardiani cites is the (1) “Democraticizzazione del sapere” in which he explains how culture became affordable, and thus available to the masses in unprecedented levels (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 90). Where the copying of manuscripts were expensive affairs, the printed book was relatively cheap, thus ensuring widespread access (*In Prospettiva* 90). This, in turn led to the second and third effects, namely (2) “La disponibilità dei libri riduce l’analfabetismo... (3) e la diminuzione dell’analfabetismo moltiplica la domanda di “nuovi” libri” (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 90). More books are produced from 1450-1500 than in all the millennia which precede Gutenberg’s invention;\(^{45}\) this can be attributed to the fact that all

\(^{45}\) The books produced by the printing press during this period (1450-1500) are known as the *incunaboli*; a term derived from the Latin *incunabula* meaning ‘fasce dei neonati’ denoting a figural meaning of ‘birth’ or ‘origin’ (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 493). They bear a greater resemblance to manuscripts than books with their use of type-face and abbreviations (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 493). As they often reproduced ancient manuscripts which were subsequently lost, these first editions, or *editiones princeps*, philologically, are of greater importance, than a manuscript of the same work, even if produced afterwards (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 493).
existing manuscripts were now being translated into the new form by becoming books produced by the printing press (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 91).46 This is the fourth effect of the printing press: (4) “Tutto ciò che è manoscritto viene stampato”; Guardiani explains that when a new medium, or more precisely a new means of communication, is able to dominate its predecessor, it takes full ownership of all that was produced by its predecessor thus all manuscripts are translated into the printed form (*In Prospettiva* 91). This wide-scale production necessitates the fifth effect: (5) “Uniformità linguistica” (*In Prospettiva* 91). Suddenly a need to standardize language and grammar becomes essential; Guardiani describes the urgency as “la necessità di una lingua uniformata che permette uno sfruttamento sistematico, coerente e armonico del nuovo medium della stampa (*In Prospettiva* 91).47 Romano Luperini and Piero Cataldi speak of a normalizing effect which was accelerated by the advent of the press: “[l]’uso della stampa ebbe una funzione normativa contribuendo in modo decisivo ad accelerare questo processo di stabilizzazione” (507). Before looking at the details and results of this fifth effect, let us first consider the sixth.

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46 There was no legal complication to prevent this, for the author’s rights or copyright did not come into existence until the 1700s (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 91).

47 This citation appears in Guardiani’s subsequent section outlining, among other things, Pietro Bembo’s contribution to *La questione della lingua*. Referring to Bembo’s *Le prose della volgar lingua*, Guardiani claims it as the “testo di riferimento più sicuro, utile e funzionale per il rinnovato uso della lingua italiana” (*In Prospettiva* 103). Written in the dialogue form, it imagines a discussion that took place in Venice in 1502 at the home of Carlo Bembo—the author’s brother and one of the interlocutors featured in the dialogue—and Giuliano de’ Medici, Monsignor Ercole Strozza of Ferrara, and Monsignor Federigo Fregoso (*In Prospettiva* 103). In it Pietro Bembo champions the use of the *volgare* by demonstrating its “forza espressiva e l’eleganza” (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 103). He also advocates for the choice of the written language, choosing the one that was written by the great Tuscan writers of the 1300s; in particular favouring Petrarch’s example for poetry, and Boccaccio for prose (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 103). It was, of course, this position that eventually “won” this linguistic debate. It is worth mentioning that there were two others: one which, like Bembo’s position, championed the use of the Tuscan language, however not the version spoken in the 1300s, instead that which was spoken at the time, namely the 1500s; Machiavelli was one of the supporters of this position (Guardiani *In Prospettiva* 105). The other (supported by Baldassar Castiglione) was the choice of a courtly language “lingua nobile, alta, aulica parlata nelle corti” (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 105). The former was dismissed for the simple reason that nothing distinguished the contemporary Tuscan language over its other regional rivals, and the latter was dismissed for a similar reason, as again, from which courtly language would they choose? (Guardiani *In Prospettiva* 105).
In its desire to standardize language, and be more economically profitable, we can speak of the sixth effect (6) of the printing press, namely “Dal manoscritto alla stampa, dal latino all’italiano” (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 103). Guardiani reminds us that during this time, Italian not Latin, was the culturally dominant language (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 92). The ‘democratization’ of knowledge, or effect (1), gives a significant impetus for the use of the *volgare*, which in a few decades from the end of the 1400’s to the beginning of the 1500’s definitively establishes itself “non solo come lingua del popolo, ma anche come lingua di cultura” (Guardiani *In Prospettiva* 103). It is for this reason, that the sixth effect is born, and is of tremendous importance to the history of the Italian language (Guardiani *In Prospettiva* 103).

Returning now to our fifth effect, in economic terms, in order for the printed book to be commercially successful, it needed to appeal to the widest audience possible, and one of the ways in which to achieve or generate the greatest amount of appeal was to be linguistically accessible to the masses. Guardiani called for a need “[del] libro più leggibile” (*In Prospettiva* 91) and cites the following five characteristics that make a book more readable: a detailed index; a careful partitioning of the chapters; a clear and linear syntax; a precise grammar free from morphological oscillations; a standard lexicon or vocabulary, free from dialectal interferences (*In Prospettiva* 91). As a result of these characteristics, Guardiani speaks of “una tendenza alla ripartizione e alla indicizzazione della materia (libresco e non) che corrisponda a una vera e propria [(7)] Parcellizzazione della Cultura” (*In Prospettiva* 91-92).

With this category, or seventh effect of the printing press, Guardiani ushers in the eighth and ninth effects which will have significant implications on our study of the dialogue not only

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48 This appears chronologically as the ninth and final effect of the printing press as outlined in *In Prospettiva*, however, in his introduction to the explanation of the effect, Guardiani asks his reader to “torn[are] indietro perché c’è un punto fondamentale da chiarire”, and I have taken this liberty to collocate it as the sixth effect, as it is thematically more fitting. (92)
as genre, but also as medium. As a parcelling out of culture is occurring, prescribed by the prescriptive norms of the printing press, we are left with a (8) “Rivalutazione dei generi letterari” (specifically those as defined by Aristotle) which led to (9) “Un processo di specializzazione” (Guardiani In Prospettiva 92). These re-evaluations (first written in Latin, then in Italian), were followed by long and fierce discussions which were destined to have far-reaching consequences beyond the realm of the arts, but to human activity (Guardiani, In Prospettiva 92).

It is this environment in which the treatises on dialogues, outlined above, were written, and it becomes clear how dialogue’s liminal, ambiguous nature, its preference for polyphony, and open-endings, could not have been an easy client to defend. The printing press, while providing an expansion of human horizons very much inline with the ideals of the Renaissance, simultaneously triggered a rigidity and flexibility, in its desire to disseminate this knowledge.49 A dialogue had no index or partitioning of chapters, it gave no clear indication as to its intent, which, as we saw, is of paramount importance to making the new technology successful. The dialogue could never have fared well as a genre in these circumstances. While it was an excellent tool for conveying the particulars of the discussions that took place in the day, it failed to provide a definitive, conclusive answer or finality that would be transmittable via the printing press. The time of discussion was over, and the need for codification had come. No matter how transparent the dialogue tried to be, either by way of a clearly dominant authorial interlocutor, or even a detailed diegetic frame or preface that often introduced a mimetic dialogue, which may attempt to provide an index or ‘correct’ way of reading the text, it was to no avail. Even its most blatant attempts to be monological could not disguise the fact that at the moment a second

49 Recall Cox’s assertion of the “rigid role-divisions enforced by the advent of print” (106).
speaker is introduced, no matter how seemingly weak or incompetent they might seem, the simple introduction of the “other” carries with it ramifications that could not be fully understood in this cultural environment. Let us consider that, as we have seen above, a dialogue is more than just a sum of its parts, and needs to considered not only in its particulars or details, but also in a more general, holistic way. This would be in direct contradiction to the trend of the time as it was “il trionfo tipografico del particolare sul generale[,] del dettaglio sulla figura intera...” (Guardiani, *In Prospettiva* 93). Seen in this light, we can begin to evaluate the dialogue in its more convincing definition, that of medium.

1.8 A New Avenue of Analysis: Dialogue as Medium

Dialogue as a medium has provided a lens through which we have been able to analyze the birth, and development of the Renaissance dialogue. We have seen how it functions as an intermediary between the author and his audience in a manner that is more unique and distinct than any other literary genre. The mere presence of an other (or a series of others) who may or may not speak for the author, has caused theorists such as Speroni and Tasso to outline boundaries for the genre, and to create liminal spaces within which the medium may safely operate outside of persecution. Their insistence on ‘imitazione’ (Speroni) and ‘magnificenza’ (Tasso) as key elements of the medium make the genre a work of art whose goals can be as varied as the topics they treat. The analysis of the dialogic genre as medium is not limited to this definition as an object of perception between man and the outside world; it can be further developed as a tool to analyze specific dialogues in terms of how they rate in the evaluation as a medium according to the media theories espoused by Marshall McLuhan.
As a medium, the dialogue is an extension of the mind’s ability to perceive speech, or better, to perceive a disputation among interlocutors. Just as we can observe and understand a conversation that takes place in front of us, so the dialogue can recreate that experience, and we are able to observe and understand a conversation in print whether it be diegetic or mimetic in form. It is essential to remember that in this sequence that language itself is a medium, as it too was invented by man, and does not naturally occur in nature (cfr. SMC 17). This brings us to one of the essential dicta of McLuhan, namely that generally media come in pairs with one containing the other; this is best illustrated by an example: “[...] the “content” of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph.” (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 19). It is in this way that McLuhan arrives at “the medium is the message” (*Understanding Media* 19).

Terrence Gordon’s summary may prove helpful:

> The contained medium is the message of the containing one, but the effects of the latter are obscured for the user, who focuses on the former. Because those effects are so powerful, any message, in the ordinary sense of “content” or “information”, has far less impact than the medium itself. Thus, “the medium is the message” (Gordon xiv-xv).

Let us consider another example: as TV’s predecessor, the movie is the old or “contained” medium, while the new technology (TV) is the “containing” medium (*Understanding Media* 13). As a user, therefore, we can only perceive the content of the TV, which is the movie, and not the environment that houses it (*Understanding Media* 13). McLuhan provides further explanation with his “rear-view mirror” theory:

> Most people...still cling to what I call the rearview-mirror view of their world. By this I mean to say that because of the invisibility of the environment during the period of its
innovation, man is only consciously aware of the environment that has *preceded* it; in other words, an environment becomes fully visible only when it has been superseded by a new environment; thus we are always one step behind in our view of the world (*Playboy Interview*).

In perceiving only the previous environment, we are reminded of another of McLuhan’s ubiquitous axioms “the effects precede the cause”; Guardiani adds an important quantifier in “«gli effetti precedono sempre [la coscienza del]le cause»” (Guardiani, “Aretino e Rabelais” 1011). As we initially only perceive the effects, and are unable to articulate the causes, we are often unaware as to the true potentiality of a new medium. Let us consider Guardiani’s thoughts on the creation of a new environment:

Ogni nuovo *medium* crea un nuovo *ground*, un nuovo contesto che impone una grammatica d’uso, per così dire, diversa da quella impiegata per il *medium* precedente; il potere viene dunque non dal semplice possesso di un nuovo *medium*, ma dall’impiego adeguato alla nuova realtà che esso genera. (“Aretino e Rabelais” 1011)

What implications does this have for our study of dialogue as a medium? To answer this we must understand McLuhan’s observation concerning radio: “Radio is not speech (because we only listen), but it creates the illusion, like writing, of containing speech” (Gordon xvi).

Therefore writing is not speech, but it creates the illusion of speech. The writing in question here

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50 In this same article, Guardiani explains how it would be necessary for Amedeo Quondam to recur to Francis Bacon to describe the passage from manuscript to print, “per trovare una compiuta percezione del nuovo fenomeno” (“Aretino e Rabelais” 1011). There exists a gap of over 100 years between Gutenberg and Bacon, “un gap giustamente problematizzato e spiegato da McLuhan, che ci offre oggi la possibilità di riconoscere un valore addirittura profetico nell’opera dei due autori che stiamo considerando” (Guardiani, “Aretino e Rabelais” 1011). The two authors referenced here are the eponymous Pietro Aretino and François Rabelais. Guardiani explores the *gap* phenomenon with the author Giovan Battista Marino in his 2004 article “Anatomia di un *gap*: fra tramonto del Rinascimento e alba della modernità”: “Marino si colloca al centro del *gap* e difende l’indeterminazione epistemologica della sua poesia come la sua dote maggiore. Ciò che egli, come poeta epico, rivela, ...per il conscio proposito di aumentare la tensione energetica e vitale emanata dalla opposizione irrisolta del nuovo e del vecchio mondo, ovvero del Rinascimento e della Modernità” (120).
is the dialogic genre, and it too creates the illusion of containing speech, or a reported conversation. Understood in these terms, “the medium is the message” can be interpreted as the message of dialogue is found in its interactions, in the conversations of its fictional interlocutors. It cannot be found in an external, authorial voice, but in the voice that the author bestows to its speakers. That the author chose another, or a series of others, to disseminate a message is a choice of crucial importance. This choice would necessarily confound or distort this message. To employ dialogue, or even dialogic elements would imply some type of desire to avoid conclusions or codifications so prized by both the printing press and Counter-Reformation. To choose dialogue is a message that the author sends us, his reader, and is an interpretive key we cannot ignore, and thus “the medium is the message” can offer new connotations for the study of dialogue.

Now that we have established dialogue’s credentials as a medium, we are able to investigate further characteristics of the latter which we will be able to attribute to the former. The transmission of information by a medium, as McLuhan saw it, was not a transmission of facts or knowledge, but involved the “response of our physical senses to the medium” (Gordon xvi). He makes a distinction between high and low definition media based on the amount of information provided by the medium, and the resulting participation required by the user:

A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in “high definition.” High definition is the state of being well filled with data [...] Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience.

(McLuhan, Understanding Media 39)

51Polyphony or intertextuality and echoes of modernity are not yet part of the period in question. Though we do have Bakhtin’s reversal of F.W. Schlegel’s aphorism (“Novels are the Socratic dialogues of our time”): “Socratic dialogues were the novels of their time” (Snyder 121).
McLuhan classifies speech, cartoons and television as ‘cool’ media while their counterparts (or as McLuhan would see it, their ‘pairs’), print, photographs and movies are ‘hot’ media (Understanding Media 39). It is important to note that this classification does not exist in isolation, but only in relation to another medium. They are relative terms only, which can only be applied in a comparative analysis.

If we consider the visual binomial first, cartoons versus photographs, we are able to readily perceive that as a ‘hot’ medium, the photograph requires very little of the user’s involvement. It is an exact representation of what the human eye sees at any given moment, and through the technology of the camera, it captures an instant or snap-shot of that split-second interval. In comparing a photograph to a narrative, Seymour Chatman comments on the photograph’s capacity for being “complete”(29).52 Even in a highly realistic painting, we are still being subjected to what was visible to the painter, and “that is a function of his distance from the depicted scene” (Chatman 29). The photograph represents the completeness of the photographic medium Chatman referenced above. Very little interpretation is required from the user, as opposed to a cartoon rendering which asks much more. In its attempt to portray the visual, the cartoonist relies on the tendency of the mind to complete what the artist has suggested through lines and curves. Shading and contrast provide depth perception, as well as many other visual cues used to trick the eye. Clearly, a variety of senses need to be engaged in order to approximate the “completeness” of the photograph. This is what McLuhan intended by user participation, namely the level of involvement the user needs to bring to any given medium, and

52 “But a narrative, as the product of a fixed number of statements, can never be totally “complete,” in the way that a photographic reproduction is, since the number of plausible intermediate actions or properties is virtually infinite” (Chatman 29).
acknowledged that, as a result, this would have different effects on the users.\textsuperscript{53} Let us turn to making some relevant comparisons with dialogue.

Recall that Le Guern’s tripartite classification of dialogue, which in spirit, greatly resembled Perelman except for identifying the role of the reader in its definitions. In the didactic dialogue where the reader simply identifies themselves in the student role, we can now speak of the dialogue being a ‘hot’ or high-definition medium, which gets progressively cooler as we move to the polemic dialogue where the reader is now either witness or referee, but eventually becomes an accomplice of the dominant figure. It is the dialectic dialogue which can be classified as the ‘coolest’ and consequently best for both Le Guern and Perelman as it stood out due to its reliance on collaboration among the interlocutors. This would result in the reader’s involvement or participation being higher than in either of the two classifications because knowledge is not the monopoly of one person, therefore the reader must fill in many blanks, and interpret the interstices, as we have been suggesting as almost a participant in the dialogue. It will be the intentionally ambivalent, or the open-ended dialogues which will prove to be the ‘coolest’ or of low-definition, whereas the more blatant and obvious dialogues will be the ‘hottest’, or of ‘high-definition’. With this, we can conclude that it is the Ciceronian dialogue with its multiplicity of interlocutors and viewpoints, which will be cooler, in comparison with its Platonic counterpart. In this category, we can also subsume the ideas of the dialogists’ alter ego or mask, their level of neutrality, the multiplicity of the masks the author wears etc; as well as notions of the speakers as “shadowy person-ideas compared with the fully embodied figures that characters may become in novels” (Snyder 121). To classify dialogues in this manner will provide a new avenue of analysis, especially for those writers of dialogue who understood these

\textsuperscript{53} “Naturally, therefore, a hot medium like radio has very different effects on the user from a cool medium like the telephone” (McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media} 39).
subtleties, and how they might be exploited to add meaning to their works. The relevance of this will be especially evident as we begin to discuss how Machiavelli plays with this level of user participation, or to borrow a modern term, interface with the reader. On this point, Leo Strauss identified in Machiavelli a path or part of his work which must be completed by the reader in order to obtain the author’s full meaning: “Machiavelli does not go to the end of the road; the last part of the road must be travelled by the reader who understands what is omitted by the writer. Machiavelli does not go to the end; he does not reveal the end; he does not fully reveal his intention. But he intimates it” (34-35). The latter part of Strauss’ statement will be of particular importance to us as we begin to evaluate the dialogical element in Machiavelli’s work. Niccolò Machiavelli is an author and personage of whom a vast amount of works have been written. To attempt to say something ‘new’ or ‘innovative’ about him or his celebrated works, is indeed an arduous task. He has been appropriated by virtually every academic discipline, and as such his works have been approached from every possible angle. This study will carve out a space in the vast literature, to house an analysis of Machiavelli and his works through not only his use of the quintessential Renaissance genre, the dialogue, but primarily of the dialogic elements.

1.9 Machiavelli and Renaissance Dialogue

In undertaking this study we are recognizing not only elements of Machiavellian scholarship which have already alluded to the dialogical element in Machiavelli’s writings, but instances acknowledged by Machiavelli himself. John M. Najemy attributes a part of the
public’s enduring fascination with Machiavelli to his ability to offer discourse over dogma when commenting on the contentious issues of his day:

He refused, moreover, to resolve such questions with straightforward dogmatic pronouncements or doctrinal declarations, preferring instead a discursive, dialectical style of analysis that enters into terms of debates...ponders contrasts, measures the different sides and aspects of the controversies, subverts received solutions, and proposes new and unsettling perspectives” (Najemy Cambridge Companion 8-9).

This process is the very description of the dialectic dialogues prized by both Perelman and Le Guern as noted above; of the true and frank exchange of ideas that Speroni envisioned as well. Machiavelli himself understood the utility of dialogue; in a famous letter of Donato Giannotti in 1533, he claims Machiavelli acknowledged to him how he circumvents the difficulties in writing of the undesirable events of his Istorie Fiorentine:

«Donato, io non posso scrivere questa Istoria da che Cosimo prese lo stato sino alla morte di Lorenzo come la scriverei se fossi libero da tutti i rispetti. Le azioni saranno vere e non tralascerò cosa alcuna, e solo lascerò di discorrere le cause universali delle cose. Così io dirò i casi che successero quando Cosimo prese lo stato; ma non dirò in che modo e con che mezzi uno pervenga a tanta altezza. E chi vorrà anco intendere questo, noti molto bene quello ch’io farò dire ai suoi avversari, perché quello che non vorrò dire io, come da me, lo farò dire ai suoi avversari». (Ridolfi 310)

54 The letter was written to Marcantonio Micheli and dated 30 June 1533 (cfr. Ridolfi 556).

55 Translation from Allen Gilbert Works vol. 3 1028. In their encyclopedic volumes La scrittura e l’interpretazione, in their section of the Istorie Fiorentine, Luperini and Cataldi speak of Machiavelli employing “l’artificio dei “discorsi” messi in bocca ai protagonisti, per esporre il proprio punto di vista” (Vol. I 655). They go on to explain how Machiavelli, through the use of Florence’s “adversaries”, can advance his own interpretations without being accused of partiality (Vol. I 655). This “artificio” was already employed by Ancient and Humanist historians, but now on a grander scale, and with more militant intentions (Vol. I 655).
This echoes the sentiments Petrarca expressed concerning allowing the dialogue to ‘conceal’ his true meaning, and leave only the exposition of the struggle. Machiavelli leaves it to his reader to decipher his understanding by way of what he shall have Cosimo’s opponents voice. In doing so, he understands that the full meaning may be lost on the naive reader, but this is a risk he must take, to ensure he, as author, is not censured for the comments.

It is again Najemy who identified the importance Machiavelli placed on the process of dialogue as a method of achieving a clearer understanding of his own thoughts. In his introduction to Between Friends, he cites the importance of the letters exchanged between Francesco Vettori and Machiavelli, calling the latter a “punto di riferimento” for Machiavelli, personally, politically, and intellectually” (Najemy Between Friends 8-9). Najemy depicts a relationship in which the ideas of both men were exchanged, heard, commented-upon, and exchanged yet again. Najemy describes a process of “mimetic rivalry, a complex process of appropriation, resistance, and absorption through which Machiavelli finally came to terms with doubts and tensions that he had not been able to acknowledge as his own. In a word, he needed an interlocutor in order to hear himself” (Between Friends 9).

If indeed “he needed an interlocutor in order to hear himself”, why did Machiavelli so seldom formally employ the dialogue? Only two known dialogues Arte della Guerra and Discorso intorno alla lingua have been attributed to Machiavelli, and here we turn to Paolo Paolini’s article for the beginnings of an explanation. The title of his article is a telling one: “Machiavelli di fronte a una scelta: scrivere in forma di trattato o di dialogo?” Paolini poses it as a choosing of one over the other, when in reality it is more complex than that, which he himself acknowledges throughout his paper. He sees Leonardo Bruni’s Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum as inaugurating a long series of works in which truth is achieved by way of a free
exchange of ideas, and not simply a citing of the auctoritates as was done in the Middle Ages (cfr. 49). In the end, the accepted opinion will belong to he who was best able to persuade the interlocutors, “dimostrando la propria tesi con migliore capacità dialettica e retorica” (Paolini 49). Paolini begins with the assertion that “Machiavelli ama il dialogo come occasione di scambio culturale e di arricchimento di informazioni” (50). Paolini claims it is out of this conversation with the Ancients (as discussed in the celebrated Vettori letter of 10 December 1513) that Il principe was born (51). As to why he did not choose to retain the genre out of which it was originally born, Paolini cites the rapidity of its drafting as the cause, for the dialogic form would have taken longer “e una maggiore distensione mentale nell’ambientare la conversazione, nel distribuire gli argomenti tra i vari interlocutori ecc.” (51). Though Machiavelli did not explicitly choose this method, as we know, Il principe was written as a treatise, not a dialogue, we do know that it contained many dialogical elements, which many critics have analyzed.

Salvatore Di Maria’s 1994 article “La struttura dialogica nel Principe di Machiavelli” outlined how Machiavelli employed the pronouns in his work (IO, TU, VOI, NOI) to identify distinct characters, and what the resultant interplay among them reveals. Di Maria convincingly described an expert dialogician at work, in what appears to be a monological text. Is he unable to assume the fundamental role of the dialogical author, which according to Sperone is the “cortese “oste” dei suoi personaggi, da condurre narrativamente per mano, o esterno allo svolgimento della conversazione, che imita, senza mediazioni registiche, i “nostri alterni ragionamenti” ” (Apologia 524)? It would be more accurate to say that Machiavelli’s limited success as a dialogue writer proper can be found in the restrictive nature of the Italian sixteenth-

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56 Di Maria’s contribution will be discussed in Chapter 3.
century dialogue. On this point, Paolini’s conclusion comments that he does not see Machiavelli making a definitive choice between dialogue and treatise, but rather stating that Machiavelli can move with relative liberty among the two genres because he is living in an historical moment where, as genres, both remain open (cfr. 57). With the generations that follow, those of Sigonio, Speroni and Tasso “si avrà un progressivo irrigidimento, dovuto a una più attenta e severa codificazione dei generi letterarî e quindi anche dello statuto epistemologico e retorico del dialogo” (Paolini 57).

In analyzing Machiavelli’s works, both dialogues proper and those dialogic in nature, this dissertation will begin by evaluating the emergence of the voice of the ‘other,’ and the role that this voice is given. This will help to determine whether the dialogue is didactic, polemic or dialectic (according to Le Guern’s classifications), and allow us to assign the roles that have been attributed not only to the interlocutors, but to the reader and to the role that Machiavelli as author has assigned himself. In identifying the role of the author, we can proceed to analyze the speakers’ interactions, to reveal how they contribute, or conspire, to carry out the author’s intentions. In doing so, we will keep in mind the inherent liminality of dialogue, as has been outlined by Speroni and Tasso, and determine what is being said in the interstices of the conversation. Furthermore, we observe how balance is created in his works; a balance which tries to reveal his theories while simultaneously observing the decorums outlined by the dialogic genre. His success, or lack thereof, in achieving this balance will reveal much about the urgency of the message, and his desire to not have it (or his opinions and point of view) distorted by way of his interlocutors.

All of this will be informed by a conception of dialogue as medium, as an extension of the mind’s ability to perceive disputation. How does the dialogue (container of speech)
appropriate the speech in the form of disputation? Is it a ‘high’ or ‘low’ definition, according to McLuhan’s classification? How much is the reader required to contribute in order to complete the picture, and how does this level of involvement effect the final picture that is presented?

Guardiani convincingly presents to us Rabelais and Aretino as figures on the cusp of modernity for their ability to conceive the effects of the printing press on society, hitherto unconceivable. He praised them both for this ability to understand the new ground and context that the medium created and for possessing a prophetic knowledge of the new grammar that accompanied it (“Aretino e Rabelais” 1010). It will be our intention to add Machiavelli alongside Aretino and Rabelais, proving his instincts were just as sharp, just as biting in his ability to discern the modernity in medium of dialogue long before it was conceived of in the eighteenth century.
Chapter 2: *Arte della guerra*

As an example of a Renaissance dialogue, very little praise has been conferred upon Machiavelli’s *Arte della guerra*. Wayne Rebhorn claims it “offers an eloquent example of just how undialogic his works are” (213), a sentiment echoed by H. Fenichel Pitkin: “Though in form dialogical, the book is in no sense a true dialogue, but a mannered monologue, a courtly dance of deference and decorum” (69). This ‘censure’ is well-deserved, for even a cursory look at *Arte della guerra*, confirms that as a work of art, it is far from exceptional. The question that needs to be answered in this study is how (and perhaps even why) does an accomplished writer, such as Machiavelli, not fully engage the dialogical elements in this piece of work? The answer lies in his unwillingness to navigate the dialogic genre as successfully as some of his contemporaries. This does not imply that the work is totally devoid of any artistic virtue, as we will have occasion to praise those elements and passages which do delight the reader, and keep it from being an overly-technical treatise on warfare.

2.1 A case for a Platonic dialogue

Written between 1519 and 1520, and published during Machiavelli’s lifetime (1521), *L’arte della guerra* enjoyed an immediate success. Divided into seven books, it includes a preface in which the work is dedicated to Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi. Of the five characters, Fabrizio Colonna (the famed military captain and *condottiere*) is the main interlocutor. To him is

57 Luperini and Cataldi write that it was “composto fra il 1519 e il 1520” (*Vol. I 653*), while Najemy’s chronology cites 1519 as “possibly in this year Machiavelli finishes writing the *Art of War*” (xvi).

58 Luperini and Cataldi attribute this success to its early circulation: “che ebbe grande e immediato successo, anche perché circolò subito (dal 1521) a stampa, a differenze dell’altre opere di Machiavelli, che furono stampate solo postume” (*Vol. I 653*).
assigned “la parte espositiva” (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 405) of the work, as his voice will be the dominant one throughout the dialogue. To the other interlocutors—Cosimo Rucellai, Zanobi Buondelmonti, Battista Della Palla, and Luigi Alamanni—has been assigned “la parte critica” (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 405). To a certain extent, they ask questions, request clarifications, and, at times, even offer objections, however, the singular thesis is the possession of the dominant character (Fabrizio), and his emergence as the central voice, as well as his superiority over his colleagues in military matters, are common Platonic elements of dialogue.\(^\text{59}\) While it was Colonna who is most readily identifiable as the *portavoce* for the author, there is also a distribution of the author’s voice, which the Platonic dialogue advocates.\(^\text{60}\) In the dialogue itself, Fabrizio, at the very beginning, offers praise to his interlocutors, and invites their participation in order to enhance the advancement of his thesis:

> E mi sarà grato mi domandiate; perché io sono di imparare così da voi nel domandarmi, come voi da me nel rispondervi; perché molte volte uno savio domandatore fa a uno

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\(^{59}\) This relationship between the dominant interlocutor and his listeners, is one that Verrier points to in an attempt to identify *Arte della guerra*’s affinity with Platonic dialogue, as there exists a method of presenting a singular thesis, subjected to the scrutiny of vigilant listeners (cfr. *Un felice ibrido retorico* 408). Michela Sacco Messineo also recognizes this potential for a maieutic dialogue: “Nelle discussioni che vi fioriscono, sollecitate da Cosimo Rucellai, parrebbe affidata alla maieutica del dialogo la possibilità diare nascere--dalle diverse opinioni--una riflessione ricca di rapporti e collegamenti, i piú vari e complessi, in una trama dialettica destinata a esiti fecondi” (Messineo 599).

\(^{60}\) Verrier goes so far as to identify Colonna’s interlocutors as mouthpieces for Machiavelli himself, not unlike Colonna: “Più che interlocutori, Cosimo, Zanobi, Battista, Luigi fanno da ausiliari, ma non sono meno portavoci del Machiavelli di quanto lo sia Fabrizio Colonna. Essi sono portatori d’obiezioni che il Machiavelli faceva a se stesso. In questo senso, il dialogo mette platonicamente in scena un dialogo tra sé e sé” (*Un felice ibrido retorico* 408).
considerare molte cose e conoscerne molte altre, le quali, sanza esserne domandato, non
arebbero mai conosciute. (*Arte della guerra* I, 303)\(^{61}\)

Fabrizio reiterates this sentiment later in the dialogue when he claims that through their
interruptions, his interlocutors are doing “[...] cosa gratissima; perché questo vostro
interrompermi non mi toglie fantasia, anzi me la rinfresca” (*Arte della guerra* VI, 363).

Fabrizio continues to encourage this process throughout the dialogue at various intervals,
especially in response to claims by his interlocutors of their questions being an annoyance to
him:

Zanobi: [...] Ma io credo che sia bene, signore, che voi avanziate tempo e
abbiate pazienza, se con queste nostre cerimonie vi infastidissimo.

Fabrizio: Anzi mi date piacere, perché questa variazione de’ domandatori mi fa
conoscere i vari ingegni e i vari appetiti vostri. Ma restavi cosa alcuna
che vi paia da aggiungere alla materia ragionata? (*Arte della guerra* IV,
347).\(^{62}\)

While Fabrizio claims that their objections offer stimulation to his arguments, the work
demonstrates otherwise as what is lacking (from the perspective of the Platonic dialogue) is a
true opposition of doctrines. Clearly it was the Platonic ideal of a master teaching his students

\(^{61}\) Paolini sees this as containing “un germe di teoria del dialogo in cui non è meno importante il modo di porre le
domande che il contenuto delle risposte, anzi questo è legato a quello in un nesso dialettico” (53). He claims it
accomplishes several tasks, among them to rouse anticipation on the part of the reader that they will be participating
in something pleasurable, “così come non ci si annoia a una commedia recitata da attori che sanno il loro
mestiere” (53). Michela Sacco Messineo cites this as one of the reasons Machiavelli chose the dialogic genre:
“Parrebbe, dunque, una verità cercata collaborativamente quella di cui si parla, che ci farebbe pensare al
concepimento del dialogo come di un luogo letterario in cui si pongono i dubbi per superarli, per approfondire, con
l’apporto altrui, la meditazione di ognuno...in una sorte di visione socratica in cui la domanda si pone come
stimolatrice di riflessione, e quindi, di conoscenza” (Messineo 605).

\(^{62}\) Interestingly, one of the motives Paolini sees for Fabrizio’s claim to be able to learn via the series of questions he
invites his interlocutors to ask, is to place “sullo stesso piano di dignità e d’importanza l’esperto militare e i civili
che lo attorniano (il che poi non si verificherà affatto, ma intanto gli interlocutori si sentono gratificati)” (53).
Again, another example of the difference between the dialogic theory which is espoused and that which is put into
practice by Machiavelli.
which Machiavelli was trying to emulate with the inhabiting of the illustrious military captain
Fabrizio Colonna, however, as we shall see, the objections and interjections offered by his fellow
interlocutors lacked the frequency and impact to render this a lively and engaging work in the
manner of Plato’s dialogues.

2.2 A case for a Ciceronian dialogue

Fabrizio is in almost complete possession of the knowledge provided to the reader. In
their roles of offering objections and clarifications, the rest of the interlocutors offer little to no
opposition to Fabrizio’s theories. As Virginia Cox notes “discussion is abandoned in favour of a
series of interminable technical speeches” (21) by Fabrizio.\(^63\) This lack of opposition is also one
of the fundamental reasons *Arte della guerra* is not easily classified as a Ciceronian dialogue.
With no opposition, we certainly cannot achieve a balanced examination of arguments *in
untramque partem*; a key element of the Ciceronian dialogue. This can be surprising for on its
surface, as Cox explains, it seems to bear the Ciceronian stamp: “serious subject; it is set in an
identified *locus amoenus*--the Orti Oricellari--and it has a cast-list of dignitaries, introduced to us
in a reverential narrative preface” (20). In fact, the whole authority of the dialogue rests squarely
with Fabrizio, without whom there would be no dialogue. Furthermore, the *locus amoenus* is
described in the Ciceronian tradition where the opening narrates the time and place of the
discussion, and quickly passes to the direct mimetic discourse according to the usual Ciceronian
model (cfr. Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 52), with an invitation from Cosimo: “Ma per
fuggire i fastidi d’avere a repetere tante volte «quel disse e quello altro soggiunse», si noteranno

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\(^63\) Messineo sees the density of Fabrizio’s monologues as the ultimate undoing of the dialogic form: “Il genere
letterato viene, così, svuotato dall’interno: il dialogo si deforma nel trattato sistematico, in cui l’andamento è quello
del sillogismo, in una tessitura retorica, funzionale al teorico di strategie militari” (Messineo 619).
solamente i nomi di chi parli, sanza replicarne altro...” (Arte della guerra I; 303). While Arte della guerra possessed certain elements of both the Ciceronian and Platonic dialogic traditions, as explained above, it did not capture the exchange of ideas necessary to either model. The tendency of Machiavelli’s text to devolve into a monologue prevented it from representing any true exchange of ideas, whether in the Socratic model of a master teaching students, or the Ciceronian one of a debate among equals. As we shall see, Machiavelli’s text lacks even the minimum of dialogic touchstones necessary to elevate it beyond a thinly-veiled treatise. We turn to Frédérique Verrier’s scholarship on the subject, before proceeding with a textual examination and analysis of the text.

2.3 Colonna: Historical figure vs. Literary figure

In his 1995 contribution “Machiavelli e Fabrizio Colonna Nell’Arte della guerra: il polemologo sdoppiato”, Verrier analyzes Machiavelli’s choices for his interlocutors and the effect this had on the dialogue. Specifically, Verrier contemplates the implications of having Fabrizio Colonna as his mouthpiece in matters military, as he was someone whose thoughts were radically different from Machiavelli’s. Mikael Hörnqvist attributes this apparent contradiction to Machiavelli indulging in something pleasurable, and confirms that these two men possess divergent military philosophies: “Machiavelli evidently took pleasure in putting his exaggerated and often rather spurious criticism of condottieri and his arguments in favor of “arme proprie” in

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64 Verrier saw this choice as the ‘sdoppiamento’ referenced in the chapter’s title, and dismisses the choice as being simply attributable to a literary trick: “Lo sdoppiamento non è neppure riducibile a mero trucco letterario, a convenzione dialogica. Esso va letto all’ingenna di una ambivalenza insieme strutturale e sfuggente del pensiero machiavelliano tra actio e contemplatio, teorizzazione impersonale e apologia personale (nel caso specifico dell’Arte della guerra), ambita codificazione ab aeterno e impegno attualizzante hic et nunc. Tale ambivalenza non è quindi specifica dell’Arte della guerra, ma assume nel trattato militare e nello sdoppiamento Machiavelli-Colonna un’evidenza spettacolare” (Verrier, “Il polemologo sdoppiato” 175).
the mouth of Fabrizio, a hired gun whose professional military career contradicted the ideals of the citizen army he lauds” (122). Verrier, however, attributes a more nuanced and deliberate meaning to this choice.

According to Verrier, Machiavelli welcomes the contradiction in their incompatible historical positions, “giacché il chiarimento è la condizione preliminare ad un’impostazione della discussione non inficiata da pregiudizi o fraintendimenti” (Il polemologo sdoppiato 176). The difference between theory and action, or “dire e fare” is one that permeates Arte della guerra, as Verrier tells us, and it begins with the embodiment of the contradiction between Colonna and Machiavelli. At a certain point in the text, the false self-portrait Fabrizio paints would have been recognized by his interlocutors who not only would have realized this was not the real Fabrizio, but that they had admired him in error, being not a condottiere rather a prince or advisor to the king (cfr. Verrier, Il polemologo sdoppiato 176). This would have had a significant implication as a prince or advisor to the king “il cui orrrizonte non sarebbe la guerra bensì la pace e la cui competenza sarebbe non già la polemologia bensì la politica” (Il polemologo sdoppiato 177-178). In this way, to paraphrase Verrier, Colonna’s character undergoes a metamorphosis from historical personage to fictional one, from leader of mercenary armies to Machiavellian prince, from non-exemplar to a perfect paragon (Il polemologo sdoppiato 178). Despite this admirable and able transformation, it would have been more dialogically sound to

65 Colonna denies evidence to the contrary, and declares “di non aver mai «usato la guerra per arte» (Il polemologo sdoppiato 177). This is historically false, as Colonna himself will admit in Book 7 when he confesses to have commanded only an army of other people’s subjects, or of mercenary soldiers (Il polemologo sdoppiato 177).
maintain Colonna’s actual historical character and have him debate with Machiavelli-author in a more combative and contrastive manner to elicit an actual discussion or battle.66

2.4 Colonna and Machiavelli

In some passages, as Verrier notes, Machiavelli’s influence is so ponderous and obvious it gives the impression that Colonna is merely a man of straw (cfr. Il polemologo sdoppiato 178).67 That Fabrizio is not only conditioned, but supplanted by Machiavelli reaches its apex in the text’s digressions; in those instances where Machiavelli’s knowledge of a situation is clearly the being put on display, such as the vigorous defense of the ordinanza fiorentina or the vehemence with which Colonna nullifies the objection of those who are not his adversaries, but Machiavelli’s (Verrier, Il polemologo sdoppiato 180). Verrier sees this as a veritable distribution of parts which occur, where Colonna is the guide of the treatise, while the digressions are attributed to and “sono la colpa di Machiavelli” (Il polemologo sdoppiato 180). When Machiavelli-author betrays himself that clearly, or to put it as Verrier does “esce dalle quinte, il trattato esce dal seminato” (Il polemologo sdoppiato 180).

The reasoning behind Machiavelli’s choice of Colonna, is one that Verrier addresses in his chapter. Of interest is the distinction Machiavelli makes between himself and Colonna in

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66 This original contradiction between the philosophies held by the historical Colonna and the character Fabrizio, also involves the other interlocutors as well as they too are “coinvolti in quel gioco di specchi e indotti a paradossali inversioni di posizione...[c]osi a tessere le lodi della milizia è un civile, mentre a “svilirla” è il militare di mestiere (Il polemologo sdoppiato 178). They are also characters of the Machiavellian thought. Verrier goes so far as to stay there is not merely a sdoppiamento function which takes place but “converrebbe parlare di ubiquità, di polifonia, addirittura di ‘ventriloquismo’ ” (Il polemologo sdoppiato 181).

67 Among these passages, Verrier cites the fact that the most ‘recent’ example of a battle is the one that took place in Ravenna in 1512 (Il polemologo sdoppiato 179). This is strange since the conversation is purported to have taken place in 1519 and to not mention the third phase of the Italian wars, namely the descent of Francesco I, or the important battles of Novara and Marignano indicates that 1512, while a politically important date, was certainly not of military importance (Il polemologo sdoppiato 179). Verrier concludes that it is “una data piú machiavelliana che colonniana” (Il polemologo sdoppiato 179).
terms of their expertise. Colonna is the expert, while Machiavelli is the amateur. Verrier surmises that the purpose behind this might analogously correspond to the advantage Machiavelli had over his Prince in being able to «conoscere bene quella de’ principi bisogna essere populare»; the civil position might be the most ideal one to recognize what is necessary in the military one (Verrier, *Il polemologo sdoppiato* 183). Therefore, as a mask, Colonna was needed by Machiavelli “come garante tecnico, un professionista con tutti i crismi che avrebbe conferito credibilità e autorevolezza alle sue proposte militari” (Verrier, *Il polemologo sdoppiato* 184).

In choosing Colonna, Machiavelli may have also desired to render his treatise more globally and eternally relevant, rather than only applicable in a local context confined to the present (cfr. Verrier, *Il polemologo sdoppiato* 186). To this end, he chose a *condottiere* of international fame in Colonna who was not Florentine, and who had “European” experience thus preventing the treatise from devolving into a discussion of the advantages or not of the militia (cfr. Verrier, *Il polemologo sdoppiato* 186). Nonetheless, he makes this character a complete one, as Paolini tells us, one that is lacking in the other interlocutors: “fa di lui [Fabrizio] un uomo affascinante e completo, nel senso della pienezza rinascimentale, gli altri interlocutori del dialogo («i domandatori») rivelano una certa carenza di approfondimento da parte dell’autore” (54). Machiavelli would have been drawn to the instant recognition and authority that a personage such as Colonna would have brought to his work. Machiavelli would have also been aware that Colonna’s presence would cause contradictions with his own thoughts on military matters, and instead of trying to reconcile these contradictions, he permitted them to remain in plain sight.

Michela Sacco Messineo advances another theory, in which the dialogic genre assumes a metaphorical dimension: the choice of Colonna and the other interlocutors was done as a protest to the current Medici rulers: “[...] la presenza di una personalità non particolarmente gradita alla
signoria fiorentina, come Fabrizio Colonna, ci fanno pensare a un gioco provocatorio da parte
dello scrittore, che--nonostante ogni precauzione--abbia voluto esplicitamente prender le distanze
da una realtà politica quale quella di Firenze e degli altri stati italiani” (Messineo 620). In either
case, the ‘contradictions’ are intentional and for Verrier, it was never Machiavelli’s intention to
hide these contradictions and thus for them to believe that “a parlare sia Fabrizio Colonna ma
solo di far finta di credervi” (Verrier, “Il polemologo sdoppiato” 186). In doing so, Machiavelli
sets up significant implications when we try to classify the genre of his work, specifically how
both the dialogue and treatise seem to operate within Arte della guerra.

2.5 Arte della guerra: dialogue or treatise?

Presently, the scholarship on Machiavelli’s dialogue has focused on its content and not its form,
with the notable exception of Verrier’s 1999 article “L’Arte della guerra, trattato militare
dialogato del Machivaelli: un felice ibrido retorico.” Verrier examines the relationship between
the genres that peacefully co-exist, namely treatise and dialogue, and how the structure of the
latter contributes and/or impedes the work as a whole. Verrier sees the two genres as being
imposed on one another: “[l’]innesto del dialogo sul trattato” (Un felice ibrido retorico
405-406).68 The result was a hybrid which was born “dal confluire tra un percorso individuale e
un fenomeno collettivo ovvero culturale: il successo del dialogo come genere emblematico
dell’Umanesimo” (Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 408). This hybridity would prove
problematic, in particular the dialogic contribution to the hybrid. The various translations,
adaptations and plagiarisms of the Arte della guerra see their respective writers stumble on

68 This was not that novel of an idea, as Verrier points to other examples of dialogued military treatises in order to
conclude that the idea of such a genre was in the air, and was tapped by Machiavelli rather than merely conjured out
of nothing (Un felice ibrido retorico 407)
account of the hybridity of the work (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 410). According to Verrier, the ‘defects’ of the work, as perceived by these writers, are due to the mingling of two genres which have “ascendenza e connotazione diverse” (*Un felice ibrido retorico* 410). Where the military treatise is a technical genre, whose proper audience are experts, the dialogue is a civic, literary genre addressed to non-experts, and a public at large who, while educated, is not necessarily an expert on the subject-matter being discussed (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 410). Certainly, if the lone goal were to disseminate information, the confluence of dialogue and treatise might be considered ‘defective’, however as a hybrid genre, we an agree with Verrier that indeed these two genres do serve and execute diverse purposes. As a result, they will impinge upon the style and structure of the text in, sometimes, divergent manners.69 Clarity here is sacrificed somewhat in exchange for a more lively and engaging presentation of the material. This does not mean that the text is unclear, only that, if compared to a manual, it does not take the most direct or linear approach in espousing an idea. As Verrier noted, the intended recipient may not be an expert on military matters, therefore the form, at times, needs to compensate for the content. These variations or deviations provided by the dialogue genre need not be considered ‘defects’, but simply characteristics inherent of the genre.70 The translations or adaptions, however, sought to modify this form in order to render their perception of the content more clearly.

69 Carlo Forno attributes this difference to the ‘spinte diverse’ of the two genres: “In questo caso, le opposte spinte al dialogo e al monologo coincidono con le opposte valenze della forma e del contenuto, in rapporto, ovviamente, alla fruizione del testo, all’interno cioè di quel circuito della comunicazione che condiziona le scelte strutturali e stilistiche” (Forno 261).

70 It was indeed these ‘defects’ that permitted Machiavelli to present a more complete argument to his reader, as Messineo argues, one that made room for his objections and pet themes, but all the while showcasing the nucleus of his argument in the long dialogues of his protagonist: “Nella densità argomentativa che la dialogicità del testo consente di proporre, assieme ai lunghi monologhi che sistematizzano il mondo frammentato dal dialogo, si ripresentano i temi cari allo scrittore, che avevano alimentato le precedenti opere, le ragioni e i furori di cui era tramata la sua prosa, sempre nutrita di umori personali” (Messineo 622).
Verrier cites two such translations--*Instructions sur le faict de la guerre*--written by Guillaume du Bellay\(^1\), in which the dialogue is completely suppressed and thus turned into a monologue and reduced from seven books to three (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 410-411). The other is his Spanish counterpart Diego de Salazar who in his *Tratado de re militari hecho a manera de dialogo* \(^2\) changes the identity of the main character, and Machiavelli’s four other interlocutors are collapsed into a single one (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 411). This reduction in the number of characters which voice the opposition in this translation is particularly justified. In the original, Cosimo, Zanobi, Battista and Luigi do little more than provide feeble rejoinders to Fabrizio’s thesis. With the exception of Book 1, in which Cosimo’s contributions are slightly more eloquent and frequent, Zanobi, Battista and Luigi’s responses generally fall into two categories: (1) those that indicate satisfaction and understanding with what has been said by Fabrizio, and a willingness to hear more:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Luigi:} & \quad \text{Noi aspettiamo ora con disiderio di intendere come voi ordineresti l’esercito a giornata con queste armi e con questi ordini (Arte della guerra III, 336).} \\
\text{Luigi:} & \quad \text{Voi avete con tanta furia vinta questa giornata, che io ne resto tutto ammirato e in tanto stupefatto, che io non credo potere bene esplainre se alcuno dubbio mi resta nell’animo. (Arte della guerra III, 339).} \\
\text{Luigi:} & \quad \text{E’ mi piace quello che voi avete detto... (Arte della guerra III, 344).} \\
\text{Battista:} & \quad \text{Io mi sono lasciato governare infino a qui; così sono per lasciarmi per lo avvenire. Pertanto, signore, siate contento di seguitare i ragionamenti}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^1\) Published in 1553 in Paris, under the pseudonym Raymond de Fourquevaux (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 410).

\(^2\) Published in 1539 in Alcalà (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 411).
vostrì e, se noi v’interrompiamo con queste pratiche, abbiateci per escusati (Arte della guerra VI, 363).

Battista: Piacemi... (Arte della guerra VI, 370).

and (2) those that desire clarification, usually preceded by a pretense of excuse or pardon:

Luigi: Io vi priego che non vi sia grave dichiararmi un’altra cosa...(Arte della guerra III, 346).

Zanobi: Io sono per stare dove voi mi metterete, ancora che io stessi più volentieri ad ascoltare; perché, infino a qui, mi sono più sodisfatte le domande vostre che non mi sarieno piaciute quelle che sia bene, signore, che voi avanziate tempo e abbiate pazienza, se con queste nostre cerimonie vi infastidissimo (Arte della guerra IV, 347).

Battista: Io confesso non me ne intendere; né credo anche che a dire così mi sia vergogna, non sendo questo mio esercizio. Nondimanco, questo ordine mi piace assai; solo vorrei che voi mi solvesi questi dubbi... (Arte della guerra VI, 368).

Neither of these remaining interlocutors distinguish themselves one from the other. They are easily interchangeable by the quality and nature of their responses, and again appear so infrequently, and are usually so brief in nature\(^\text{73}\) that it does not greatly disadvantage the content of the message to collapse their number into a single voice as de Salazar has done.\(^\text{74}\)

\(^{73}\) By using a simple word processing tool of an online version of the text (http://www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/V oloume_4/t92.pdf), yielded that Luigi’s contribution in Book 3 consisted of less than 10% of the words spoken. In Book 7, this already minuscule contribution is further reduced as Battista’s contributions account for less than 2% of the words spoken in that book.

\(^{74}\) Paolini makes an apt observation in saying “non rivelano una personalità particolarmente rilevata e si limitano a lubrificare il discorso per farlo andare avanti meglio” (54).
To highlight another example, Syndey Anglo brings to our attention Fra Matteo Baccellini’s compilation *Aforismi politici e militari*\(^75\), in which the priest reduced Machiavelli’s work into a series of aphorisms and propositions, “all of which were contained in a tedious dialogue of seven books” (Anglo 479). That he calls the dialogue tedious, is certainly not surprising, as we have seen the contributions of the interlocutors do little to enhance or improve the knowledge being imparted by Fabrizio, despite his saying to the contrary, as noted above.

Anglo describes Baccellini’s process as being a simple one: his aphorisms are drawn from a nearly sequential reading of Fabrizio’s contributions, while ignoring everyone else (cfr. 483). Anglo claims “This is reasonable enough since these other characters are mere stooges” (483). While this is certainly true in some aspects, Fabrizio’s interlocutors and their contributions should not be dismissed so handily. Their mere presence does provide an energizing of the work which we will examine in the following section.

That all these various interpretations exist, and that the changes they introduced can be to a certain extent, justified, points to the problematic and essentially ambiguous nature that could only have been introduced by the dialogic side of this dialogued treatise. Verrier correctly identified the grafting of these two genres as a double-edged sword, beneficial in some passages, yet harmful in others (cfr. *Un felice ibrido retorico* 411).\(^76\) The benefits that Verrier attributes to dialogue, I see as being more confined to Book 1, and to a certain extent Book 2. It is here that Cosimo Rucellai is Fabrizio’s interlocutor, and proves to be a more dynamic and interesting adversary than the other interlocutors.

\(^75\) Published in 1610 in Paris (Anglo 478).

\(^76\) The benefits introduced by dialogue, and the success that *Arte della guerra* enjoyed was undoubtedly due to the dialogue’s ability to present in the guise of a dynamic form, the rather static material of the treatise (cfr. Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 411). Furthermore, it presented in a pleasing and pleasant form, a rather difficult argument (cfr. Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 411). The harm that the dialogic element conferred on the work was its literary and civic connotations which discredited it in the eyes of the professional (cfr. Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 411).
2.6 The importance of Cosimo Rucellai to the dialogic element

Following the preface in which Machiavelli dedicates his work to Lorenzo di Filippo Strozzi, Book 1 begins with an effusive eulogy of Cosimo Rucellai, which includes a call to make the present work a tribute to his late friend:

Avendone pertanto privati la fortuna dello uso d’uno tanto amico, mi pare che non si possa farne altri rimedi che, il più che a noi è possibile cercare, di godersi la memoria di quello e repetere se da lui alcuna cosa stata o acutamente detta o saviamente disputata (Arte della guerra I, 302).

The praise is continued when Machiavelli claims Cosimo as a worthy interlocutor for Fabrizio:

E perché non è cosa di lui più fresca, che il ragionamento il quale ne’ prossimi tempi il signore Fabrizio Colonna dentro a’ suoi orti ebbe con seco (dove largamente fu da quel signore delle cose della guerra disputato, e acutamente e prudentemente in buona parte da Cosimo domandato) (Arte della guerra I, 302).

In characterizing the nature of Cosimo’s contribution, we can address the latter words of Fabrizio’s as to the number and nature of the questions Cosimo asked. In Book 1, Cosimo occupies approximately 13.7% of the conversation, and in this, he has fared much better than his fellow interlocutors as this study has shown. He interjects a total of 32 times, and his contributions are not limited to those which simply indicate praise or the need for further information. Cosimo’s very first statement after Machiavelli dispenses with the narrative form and moves to the mimetic is to succinctly and accurately describe the scope of dialogue:
Cosimo: Voi avete aperto la via a uno ragionamento quale io desiderava, e vi priegeo che voi parliate sanza rispetto, perché io sanza rispetto vi domanderò; e se io, domandando o replicando, scuserò o accuserò alcuno, non sarà per scusare o per accusare, ma per intendere da voi la verità (Arte della guerra I, 303).

Fabrizio compliments this statement, and places the final judgment of his theories in the hands of his able friend:

Fabrizio: E io sarò molto contento di dirvi quel che io intenderò di tutto quello mi domanderete; il che se sarà vero o no, me ne rapporterò al vostro giudicio (Arte della guerra I, 303).

The two interlocutors appear on par with one another as the dialogue continues. Following Cosimo’s longest interjection in Book 1, in which he defends his grandfather for not slavishly imitating the ancients, Fabrizio praises his response: “Voi lo avete scusato in questa parte gagliardamente, e certo voi dite il vero;...” (Arte della guerra I, 304). Fabrizio’s praise of Cosimo is punctuated throughout the book:

Fabrizio: Voi siete capitato appunto dove io vi aspettava, perché il parlare mio non meritava altra domanda, né io altra ne desiderava (Arte della guerra I, 304).

Cosimo’s presence continues to be felt as he also offers objections through expressions of doubt:

Cosimo: Veramente questo vostro ragionamento mi pare bene considerato; nondimeno, sendo quasi che contrario a quello che io insino ora ne ho pensato, non mi resta ancora l’animo purgato d’ogni dubbio; perché io veggo assai signori e gentili uomini nutrirsi a tempo di pace mediante gli
studii della guerra, come sono i pari vostri che hanno provvisioni dai principi e dalle comunità. Veggo ancora quasi tutti gli uomini d’arme rimanere con le provvisioni loro; veggo assai fanti restare nelle guardie delle città e delle fortezze; tale che mi pare che ci sia luogo, a tempo di pace, per ciascuno. (*Arte della guerra* I, 308)

This differs greatly from the objections offered by the other interlocutors for they are followed by detailed reasons and explanations as in the above citation. Fabrizio’s treatment of these objections also betrays a familiarity with them that is not observed with the others. In particular, we bring Fabrizio’s response to the above citation:

   Fabrizio: Io non credo che voi crediate questo, che a tempo di pace ciascheduno abbia luogo; perché posto che non se ne potesse addurre altra ragione, il poco numero che fanno tutti coloro che rimangono ne’ luoghi allegati da voi, vi risponderebbe... (*Arte della guerra* I, 308)

Through the character of Fabrizio, Machiavelli passes judgment on his own objections which is more akin to the inner dialogue displayed by Petrarch’s *Secretum* between Augustus and Franciscus.\(^{77}\) Again, this is only done with Cosimo, and Fabrizio also dismisses any notions that his interruptions are anything other than beneficial to him: “Non vi dia noia questo; perché tutto questo ragionamento era necessario volendo ragionare della ordinanza...” (*Arte della guerra* I, 316). Despite all this, as was the case for Zanobi, Battista and Luigi, Cosimo’s role is relegated to that of echo of Fabrizio’s thesis, as his contribution in Book 2 accounts for a paltry 3.5% of the

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\(^{77}\) Another example of this is the beginning of Fabrizio’s response to Cosimo (“Ben sapete che si...” (*Arte della guerra* I, 310), which again implies that Fabrizio has the privilege of knowing Cosimo’s innermost thoughts.
It is not surprising that Cosimo was granted a privileged role, considering Machiavelli’s eulogy at the beginning, however, Cosimo is still a distant second to the sound of the voice of the main interlocutor, Fabrizio in whom Machiavelli has entrusted nearly the entirety of his message, and it is through the genre of the treatise, not the dialogue, that this is accomplished.

2.7 The importance of the transitions to the dialogic element

Machiavelli is modifying the military treatise as set out by Vegetius in his De re militari, and Verrier asks what remains of this source other than its title (Un felice ibrido retorico 412). Machiavelli follows Vegetius’ division of his treatise in books, even though the latter’s number four in total, while Machiavelli’s work contains seven books (cfr. Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 412). From here Machiavelli takes liberties with the Vegetius model and substitutes the descriptive logic of the treatise with narrative logic in telling the story of an army from beginning to end (cfr. Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 412). To this he also added his personal experiences as ex-Segretario of the Nine (cfr. Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 413). The most important element Machiavelli added to this Roman treatise was undoubtedly the dialogue, which Verrier describes “un genere di tutt’altra matrice e levatura” (Un felice ibrido retorico 413). The

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78 Paolini echoes this sentiment when he says that Cosimo “finisce poi per assumere una funzione subalterna, il ruolo che noi potremmo dire di attore-spalla, quello che ha solo il compito di provocare le battute dell’attore principale” (54).

79 Maria Serena Sapegno goes so far as to class Arte della guerra as a ‘pseudodialogo’ in which Colonna is entrusted with the communication of the message: “Si tratta in realtà di un altro di quegli pseudodialoghi...i giovani, soprattutto Cosimo, interloquiscono e domandano, ma l’omogeneità del discorso è garantita dal Colonna, in quello che in effetti un lungo monologo” (Sapegno 983).

80 Vegetius’ treatise was considered the “massima auctoritas non solo militare, bensì anche retorica” (Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 412).

81 “De re militari, tradotto poi dagli editori in Arte della guerra” (Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 412).
affinities that *Arte della guerra* shares with Renaissance dialogue include the protocol which regulates the interlocutor’s exchanges as each book is the dual responsibility of Fabrizio and his interlocutor (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 413). According to Verrier, there is a play of the assumption and surrender of power among them (*Un felice ibrido retorico* 413). This is perhaps most readily observable in the various handoffs that occur at the beginning of a book as it transitions to a new interlocutor. The first occurs at the beginning of Book 3 in which it is decided that Cosimo’s successor is to be Luigi.\(^{82}\) Cosimo triggers the change in interlocutors due to a change in discussion and says the following:

Cosimo: Poiché noi mutiamo ragionamento, io voglio che si muti domandatore, perché io non vorrei essere tenuto presuntuoso; il che sempre ho biasimato negli altri. Però io depongo la dittatura, e do questa autorità a chi la vuole di questi altri miei amici. (*Arte della guerra* III, 334)

Cosimo’s desire to not appear presumptuous is in-line with the Renaissance dialogue’s characteristic of decorum and dignity. His classifying his role as that of ‘dictator’ and that he was in possession of ‘authority’ is a curious one. Cosimo certainly had a more significant role to play in comparison to his fellow interlocutors, however to intimate that at any point he was in a position to direct or dictate the conversation, is inaccurate. The dictator and authority-figure was Fabrizio, and this role will only be cemented in the books that follow. One might even wonder if Machiavelli was being ironic or better sarcastic in his use of the terms. We have the opportunity to ask these questions again at the beginning of Book 4 where Luigi hands the reigns to Zanobi, the next interlocutor:

\(^{82}\) This is in response to Fabrizio’s advice that they adhere to the Venetian custom where the youngest speaks first: “e voglio che noi seguiamo il costume vinziano: che il più giovane parli prima...” (*Arte della guerra* III, 334).
Luigi:

Poiché sotto l’imperio mio si è vinto una giornata si onorevolmente, io penso che sia bene che io non tenti più la fortuna, sappiendo quanto quella è varia e instabile. E però io desidero deporre la dittatura che a Zanobi faccia ora questo ufficio del domandare, volendo seguire l’ordine che tocchi al più giovane. E io so che non ricuserà questo onore, o, vogliamo dire, questa fatica, sì per compiacermi, sì ancora per essere naturalmente più animoso di me; né gli recherà paura avere a entrare in questi travagli, dove egli potesse così essere vinto, come vincere. (Arte della guerra IV, 347)

Here we have several points of interest to consider. Firstly, the notion of a battle having been waged, again appears somewhat facetious. At best, Luigi provided suggestions for further discussions. He is routed at every turn by Fabrizio, as his doubts are promptly silenced and/or explained away. The singular praise comes to him when Fabrizio claims: “Voi dubitate prudentissimamente, e io mi ingegnerò o di risolvervi il dubbio o di porvi il rimedio” (Arte della guerra III, 342); however it is clear that Fabrizio is in complete control of the discussion.

The mention of Fortune in Machiavelli’s work cannot be ignored. He again employs the familiar personification of Fortune as a woman and highlights her fickleness (“variable and unstable”). Here it insinuates that perhaps the author is not in complete control of the conversation that is unfolding and lends credence to his initial statement that he is simply

83 Perhaps the most famous characterization comes to us by way of Chapter 25 of Il principe, in which we are told she accounts for half of our fate: “Nondimanco, il nostro libero arbitrio non sia spento, iudico potere essere vero che la fortuna sia arbitra della metà delle azioni nostre, ma che etiam lei ne lasci governare l’altra metà, o presso, a noi” (Il principe 295). And that she is like a ruinous river, destroying all in her path: “E assomiglio quella a uno di questi fiumi rovinosi, che quando s’adirano, allagano e’ piani, ruinano gli alberi e gli edifizii, lievono da questa parte terreno, pongono da quell’altra; ciascuno fugge loro dinanzi, ognuno cede allo impeto loro, sanza potervi in alcuna parte obstare” (II principe 295). To navigate her instability, you need to adapt: “Credo, ancora, che sia felice quello che riscontra el modo del procedere suo con le qualità dei tempi, e similmente sia infelice quello che con il procedere suo si discordano e’ tempi” (II principe 295-296).
transcribing events that take place at which he was a silent participant: “[..]essendo con alcuni altri nostri amici stato presente, ridurlo alla memoria…” (*Arte della guerra* I, 302). It momentarily elevates the work to that of a great Renaissance dialogue in that it aids in the suspension of disbelief that what is being read is not the work of the author’s imagination. This, of course, is a temporary state as quickly it will again devolve into a series of monologues by Fabrizio.

Lastly, the interjection of Luigi’s which indicates that his successor, Zanobi, is willing to play both the role of “conquered as well as conqueror” does not reflect the reality of the situation. Machiavelli is describing the characteristics of an ideal dialogue, but one that is not present in his dialogue. Fabrizio conquers in each exchange, and his interlocutors must settle always for the role of the one vanquished.

The last handoff occurs in Book 6, in which Zanobi allows Battista his turn:

Zanobi: Io credo che sia bene, poiché si debbe mutare ragionamento, che Batista pigli l’ufficio suo e io deponga il mio; e verreno in questo caso ad imitare i buoni capitani, secondo che io intesi già qui dal signore; i quali pongono i migliori soldati dinanzi e di dietro all’esercito, parendo loro necessario avere davanti chi gagliardamente appicchi la zuffa e chi, di dietro, gagliardamente la sostenga. Cosimo, pertanto, cominciò questo

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84 Michele Sacco Messineo sees this declaration as “una motivazione precisa sull’opzione per il dialogo, cioè che l’argomento sulla questione militare era stato dibattuto fra alcuni suoi amici; ed egli non si accingeva ad altro che a riprodurlo fedelmente, nella forma in cui era svolto” (Messineo 597). According to Messineo: “La preferenza dialogica era, dunque, motivata da un forte agancio al fatto avvenuto, all’esperienza, sempre fonte di attrazione irresistibile per Machiavelli” (Messineo 597).

85 Forno mentions *Arte della guerra* when she reflects on “La tendenza al monologo, all’aprirsi di spazi soggettivi di indagine, di estese pause di riflessione all’interno del dialogo, in realtà costantemente sottesa alla scrittura dialogica: ne è il contraltare, non la negazione, costituita, piuttosto, dal silenzio. Si pensi...al dialogo Dell’Arte della guerra di Machiavelli, con la sua struttura apparentemente dialogica, rispetto allo sviluppo monologico del contenuto” (Forno 261).
Again, we have allusions to a battle being waged with Zanobi taking the opportunity to highlight one of Fabrizio’s military strategies, namely to place its best soldiers at the front and the rear. Here he is complimenting Cosimo and Battista, however, as Books 6 and 7 unfold, we see that the latter fared no better than Zanobi and Luigi and therefore the praise is more justly applied to Cosimo alone. In these series of exchanges, the dialogic genre is described to us as a battle where each side has its turn to be on the offensive. This is a very apt metaphor for dialogue, but one, however, that is not put into practice in the pages of Arte della guerra. There is but one general in this dialogic battle, and it is Fabrizio. In his attempt to give his other interlocutors a voice, Machiavelli only marginally succeeds. They do ask questions and raise doubts, but their roles are largely relegated to that of obsequious agreement and ‘satisfaction’ with Fabrizio.86 For Verrier, the interlocutors achieve a more significant role in the dialogue. Through their interventions we see a continuous recapitulations or summary of the theories expressed by Fabrizio as the nature of the dialogue causes them to “perdere il filo del trattato che va riallacciato periodicamente” (Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 415). These summaries permit not only to remind and reaffirm the logic that has been applied, but also affords an opportunity

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86 In Michela Sacco Messineo’s 1997 contribution “La funzione del dialogo nell’Arte della guerra”, she discusses the theory that Machiavelli’s dialogue more closely resembles the dialogues of the quattrocento, specifically that of Cristoforo Landino and his Disputationes camaldulenses. She parallels the roles of the characters Leon Battista Alberti (in Landino’s work) with that of Fabrizio Colonna, stating that in both, the minor characters offer only a supportive role in relation to that of the true portavoci: “Rispettivamente, a Leon Battista Alberti e a Fabrizio Colonna è affidato, infatti, l’incarico di svolgere il tema centrale, mentre ai personaggi minori è riservato un ruolo di spalla, lo spazio di intervenire brevemente e non come portavoce di posizioni diverse, ma solo per contribuire, con le loro osservazioni e domande, all’articolarsi e allo svilupparsi del ragionamento, interamente svolti dai due protagonisti” (Messineo 602-603).
for it to be updated, corrected and tightened (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 415). In doing so, Verrier sees that it appears far from being a pre-determined thesis, instead a work *in fieri*, or in progress, and cites this as “uno degli impatti più sensibili e apprezzabili del dialogo sul trattato (*Un felice ibrido retorico* 415). Verrier prizes the digressions of the work as well, and while they are the price paid by the treatise to the dialogue, they also constitute the moments of maximum and privileged interest (*Un felice ibrido retorico* 415). In mastering these moments of digression, Machiavelli demonstrates an ability to manipulate the form of the dialogic genre, so that in content, or in its ability to disseminate information, it more greatly resembles the treatise.

Verrier concludes by declaring that the rearrangements, recapitulations and digressions which the dialogue has introduced to the military treatise are far from damaging. They substitute the systematic, prearranged and didactic orders of the typical knowledge contained in the military treatise, with an exposition that renders the work more dynamic, and inventive by way of the dialogic ornamentation which he added (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 416). This results in a work which cannot be read piecemeal, but as a whole, and from this perspective “la logica dialogica ha «vinto» su quella del trattato” (Verrier, *Un felice ibrido retorico* 416). In the end, “oltre a strappare il trattato alla sua originaria staticità, il dialogo lo salva anche

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87 Michela Sacco Messineo takes an opposing viewpoint, in that the interjections of the minor characters do little more than to clear up any doubts by those who are not as knowledgable as Fabrizio; and the dialogic structure serves only to contain an idea that is already fully-formed: “Insomma, l’opera non assume la forma del dubbio, il dialogo non serve a produrre novità di pensiero ma a contenere, con la sua struttura dialetticamente viva, un’idea già tutta svolta e sistemata, che si avvale dei partecipanti alla discussione per creare all’interno del discorso una tensione dialettica, per dare sfogo alla vocazione polemica del pensiero machiavelliano, per autorizzare deviazioni che permettano di confermare l’assunto da più direzioni” (Messineo 606).

88 Verrier goes on to say that “[n]elle pieghe delle digressioni convertite in margini di libertà, Machiavelli scrive le pagine più autobiografiche dell’*Arte della guerra*” (415).

89 The use of the secondary characters as the means of creating the useful digressions in the text is a notion Michela Sacco Messineo also indicates in her theory of a the dialogue as an exposition of a pre-determined thesis: “Se nel maestro non sussistono più dubbi, la discussione serve ad apportare, comunque--grazie ai diversi personaggi--, digressioni utili all’assunto, rivolte a confermare la tela già predisposta del ragionamento” (Messineo 607).
This undoubtedly allows Machiavelli to express his thoughts clearly and unequivocally in a manner hitherto not observed in his other works, however, as we will see with *Il principe*, even Machiavelli’s treatise is neither static nor abstract. He will borrow heavily from the expressiveness and immediacy of the dialogue, which will result in an engaging work. *Arte della guerra*, however is not a treatise, and while the value of the dialogic element is visible, and Verrier has successfully pointed out and justified its visibility, the work still remains a poor example of Renaissance dialogue. In particular, Verrier’s use of the noun *innesto* in describing the process by which these two genres are fused is very revealing. The idea that a grafting has occurred in which the dialogue is superimposed onto the treatise, and that the resulting hybrid has benefitted from an introduction of dialogue is a valid one. However, as with any grafting, the points of impact are clearly visible, and the dialogic aspects or the dialogic potentiality of *Arte della guerra*. The same elements which helped to rescue it from simply being a didactic military treatise, also served to make it too self-conscious and awkward as a dialogue. In order to determine its value and worth, solely on its merits as a dialogue, it would need to be compared and contrasted with a dialogue; one that is a paragon of the genre.

2.8 Machiavelli vs. Castiglione: Dialogue vs. Dialogue

What makes Baldassar Castiglione’s *Il libro del cortegiano*, to quote Olga Pugliese “the prime exemplar of the numerous literary dialogues written in the period” (Pugliese, *A Classic in


Carla Forno sees the treatise element of this hybrid as ultimately influencing the direction of the work, leaving the dialogic element as the external vestment: “Il trattato, per sua natura didattico e monologico, si traveste da dialogo, assumendone la struttura esterna, la veste formale, l’organizzazione a più voci, senza rinunciare, tuttavia, alla sua programmatica utilità, perseguita con una distribuzione dei ruoli tale da concedere più spazi di intervento a colui che, al centro della conversazione, è tenuto a docere” (Forno 261).
the Making 41) is undoubtedly the care the author put into the dialogic elements of the work. The final product—a series of four books which represent four separate dialogues discussed in four successive evenings on the idea of a perfect courtier—was published in 1528 and was the result of 15 years of revisions on the part of its author (Pugliese, A Classic in Making 13). The resulting dialogues “are made to appear natural and spontaneous” which Pugliese attributes in part to the extensive revisions the work underwent (A Classic in the Making 41). The goal of this section will be to highlight some of these developments of the dialogic structure of Il libro del cortegiano and to compare and contrast them with Arte della guerra in an effort to demonstrate the achievements made by the former which are lacking in the latter. To begin, we examine the prefaces of both works:

E giudicando io, per quello che io ho veduto e letto, ch’e’ non sia impossibile ridurre quella negli antichi modi e renderle qualche forma della passata virtù, diliberai, per non passare questi mia oziosi tempi sanza operare alcuna cosa, di scrivere, a sodisfazione di quegli che delle antiche azioni sono amatori, della arte della guerra quello che io ne intenda. E benché sia cosa animosa trattare di quella materia della quale altri non ne abbia fatto professione, nondimeno io non credo sia errore occupare con le parole uno grado il quale molti, con maggiore prosunzione, con le opere hanno occupato; perché gli errori che io facessi, scrivendo, possono essere, se non con la rovina degli imperii, conosciuti. (Arte della guerra Proemio, 301-302)

After claiming as his audience those who love ancient deeds, Machiavelli instantly acquits himself and the dialogue of being able to affect any change with their words, because even if his work should contain errors, he can damage no one. Those, however, who are able to exercise their words or will into action, can ruin governments through their error. This is a decidedly
bleak assessment of writing, and of dialogic writing in particular. That Machiavelli expected writing to serve a more direct and immediate purpose, we have *Il principe*’s earnestness and energy as proof. Since writing *Il principe*, however, nearly six years have passed in which Machiavelli was no closer to regaining a political post than he had been when he first composed his treatise in 1513. The words in the preface cited above stress the complete realization that Machiavelli had of his impotence in political matters, and instead of being able to act, was now relegated to simply writing about actions. This could perhaps explain his unwillingness to actively engage this dynamic genre to its fullest potential in the pages of *Arte della guerra*. He was still trying to impart his knowledge on matters that he knew would be useful if implemented; he could not permit himself the luxury of indulging in a purely literary exercise. The importance of this chronology will be discussed more at length in subsequent chapters. It was not his goal to debate or delight, but to transmit, and to this end, his dialogue suffers in his refusal to willingly engage the element of *diletto* as Speroni had deemed it. Castiglione’s Book I demonstrates this more convincingly:

> Noi in questi libri non seguiremo un certo ordine o regola di precetti distinti, che ’l piú delle volte nell’insegnare qualsivoglia cosa usar si sòle; ma alla foggia di molti antichi, rinovando una grata memoria, recitaremos alcuni ragionamenti, i quali già passarono tra omni singularissimi a tale proposito; e benché io non v’intervenissi presenzialmente per ritrovarmi, allor che furon detti, in Inghilterra, avendogli poco appresso il mio ritorno intesi da persona che fidelmente me gli narrò, sforzerommi a punto, per quanto la

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91 Paolini believes that this is as a result of Machiavelli being convinced of his ideas at this point in his life, and sees the doubts or ambiguities raised in *Il principe*, as proof that at that time, he was uncertain, and thus debated them within the text of the treatise: “Machiavelli, invece, tende a mostrarsi convinto di essere arrivato a possedere la verità (nel suo campo politico-militare) dopo lungo studio delle storie antiche ed esperienza delle cose moderne, e che il suo compito sia ora quello di persuadere alla verità (leggi: catechizzare un principe nuovo in vista dell’azione politica). Al tempo della discussione e del dialogo subentra il tempo dell’azione” (57).
memoria mi comporterà, ricordarli, acciò che noto vi sia quello che abbiano giudicato e creduto di questa materia omini degni di somma laude ed al cui giudicio in ogni cosa prestar si potea indubitata fede. Né fia ancor fuor di proposito, per giungere ordinatamente al fine dove tende il parlar nostro, narrar la causa dei successi ragionamenti.  

(II libro del cortegiano 17)

In choosing dialogue, Castiglione means to, in the manner of the ancients, relive or renew a pleasant and agreeable memory by way of the repetition of reasonings made among excellent men. Clearly Castiglione displays a preference for the process of dialogue rather than its ability to achieve a specific end, so much so that he claims to not have been present at the time of the discussions. He writes that he was in England, and thus these events came to him by way of another who faithfully reported them to him. Machiavelli’s presence at the time of the discussions of Arte della guerra is assured by its author, and indicates an unwillingness to cede any possibility of his message being misunderstood or misinterpreted. Already for Machiavelli it was enough to have his thoughts disseminated and fragmented among a number of interlocutors, to add to that the unreliability of secondhand narration would have indeed been too much for him. As a witness he is allowed to exist outside of the preface, the space conventionally assigned to the author, and now trespasses into Book I (Verrier, Il polemologo sdoppiato 181). Castiglione instead is not hindered by these preoccupations, for again, the goal for him was to recreate the delight in the exposition of the conversation, rather than its final product or message. This is not to say that an end is not achieved in Castiglione’s work as with the help of his

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92 Petrarca used similar terminology in the narrative introduction of his Secretum: “l’ho scritto perché dalla sua lettura io possa ancora gustare, quando lo voglia, la stessa dolcezza che gustai, un giorno, dal vivo colloquio” (Il mio segreto 57-58)

93 Verrier sees this ambiguous status of witness as contributing to Machiavelli’s elusiveness (Il polemologo sdoppiato 181). It also helps to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality and “cornice storica e quadro teorico” (Verrier, Il polemologo sdoppiato 182).
interlocutors he is able to paint a picture of the perfect courtier. Castiglione is, however, undeterred by the indirect path that dialogue can take, and opposition is welcomed, even encouraged.

In declaring he has not chosen to follow any certain order, rules or appointed precepts, he has instead “chosen a design that is less rigid, and more flexible and humanized than that of the formal treatise” (Pugliese, *A Classic in the Making* 51-52). This, of course, presents its own challenges, and the greatness of *Il libro del cortegiano* certainly resides in its ability to navigate these challenges; to quote Pugliese, “he had to find a way to articulate his ideas through the verbal exchanges of his characters, rather than directly using his own voice, and thus needed to refine each discussion by means of the dialogic techniques available to him as a writer” (*A Classic in the Making* 42). To this end, Castiglione expertly executed the voices of contradictions and kept in check both the role of the author and its interlocutors in order for his dialogues to achieve the maximum amount of effortless or *sprezzatura* in their execution. Let us briefly consider these in turn.

In Book I, it is determined that the interlocutors will discuss the courtier and that this should be carried out “principally by means of opposing arguments” (Pugliese, *A Classic in the Making* 61). One of the protagonists, Emilia, goes so far as to say “dicendo ogni cosa al contrario, come speramo che farete, il gioco sarà più bello,ché ognun averà che rispondervi” (*Il libro del cortegiano* 37).94 Moreover, Castiglione indicates a preference for these objections, and not merely questions: “siami perdonato s’io, avendo a contradire, dimanderò” (*Il libro del cortegiano* 55).95 These procedures are readily observed and employed in Castiglione’s text. In

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94 Speroni used the term ‘gioco’ to describe dialogue.

95 Pugliese notes that both questions and contradictions are “regularly admitted as suitable procedure for furthering the dialogue. One should keep in mind, though, that the questions that Castiglione’s characters pose may often imply contrast, inasmuch as they can be simply more polite forms of contradiction” (*A Classic in the Making* 62).
Arte della guerra, however, the questions or objections admitted are done so rather reluctantly, with Cosimo asking to be pardoned for this necessary dialogic procedure: “[...] e se io, domandando o replicando, scuserò o accuserò alcuno, non sarà per scusare o per accusare, ma per intendere da voi la verità” (Arte della guerra I, 303). Machiavelli seemingly even loses patience with this limited role for his interlocutors, as at certain intervals, Fabrizio asks the questions himself, in particular in the final pages of the dialogue, where Fabrizio laments the licentiousness of the modern armies:

Di che gli ho io a fare vergognare, che sono nati e allevati sanza vergogna? Perché mi hanno eglino ad osservare, che non mi conoscono? Per quale Iddio, o per quali santi gli ho io a fare giurare? Per quei ch’egli adorano, o per quei che bestemmiano? Che ne adorino non so io alcuno; ma so bene che li bestemmiano tutti. Come ho io a credere ch’egli osservino le promesse a coloro che ad ogni ora essi dispreggiano? Come possono coloro che dispreggiano Iddio, riverire gli uomini? Quale dunque buona forma sarebbe quella che si potesse imprimere in questa materia? (Arte della guerra VII, 388).

This passage brings the reader outside of the monotony of hearing Fabrizio relentlessly pursue his agenda, and it is one that does enliven the discourse.96 Why then, not have it apportioned out among his interlocutors, so as to further the dialogue in a more dynamic manner? Instead, the furtherance of the dialogue is here not accomplished through an oppositional structure, rather primarily through acquiescence as we have also seen above. Below are more examples:

Cosimo: [...]in modo che, se voi non me la dichiarate meglio, io non resto sodisfatto... (Arte della guerra I, 306).

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96 Paolini concludes that this self-questioning reveals “una lunga esposizione fatta da un esperto, che risponde alle domande di interessati dilettanti, una sorta di prolungata intervista, come diremmo oggi. Del dialogo resta solo la struttura (54). In this Fabrizio ‘stubborness’ can be interpreted as an expression of his unwillingness to stray from the subject at hand, and is thus is more characteristic of the treatise than the dialogue.
Cosimo: Io resto contento assai e sodisfatto di quello che insino a qui avete dettto, e piacemi assai questa conclusione che voi avete fatta; e quanto si aspetta alla republica,...(*Arte della guerra* I, 307).


Contradictions are rarely offered, and when they do occur, they are quickly rebuffed by Fabrizio, who continues with his own agenda:

Fabrizio: E non mi allegate all’incontro alcuno regno presente, perché io vi negherò quelli essere regni bene ordinati. Perché i regni che hanno buoni ordini, non danno lo imperio assoluto agli loro re se non nelli eserciti; perché in questo lugo solo è necessaria una subita diliberazione e, per questo, che vi sia *una unica podestà* (*Arte della guerra* I, 306, italics mine).

Fabrizio: Questa è un’altra vana opinione, per la cagione vi dirò. (*Arte della guerra* I, 315).

In citing the “*una unica podestà*”, Fabrizio seemingly references his own role in the dialogue.97 Therefore contrast through overt contradictions of doctrines is not achieved here, nor is it done, as Pugliese suggests for *Il libro del cortegiano*, by allowing one who is not too knowledgable to direct the discourse (*A Classic in the Making* 63). In *Il libro del cortegiano*, Emilia says to Count Ludovico: «se un altro che sapesse più di voi avesse questo carico, non si gli potrebbe

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97 Paolo Paolini sees both Machiavelli and Colonna depicted as the experts: “Fabrizio Colonna è in realtà uno sdoppiamento di Niccolò, e la lunga trattazione di questi militari finisce per risolversi quasi in un’auto-intervista di Niccolò, con personaggi di contorno all’ascolto” (54).
contradir cosa alcuna perché diria la verità, e così il gioco saria freddo» (Il libro del cortegiano 37). Clearly in allowing the military captain Fabrizio to direct the conversation, the game of conversing does become tedious in permitting no more than muted forms of agreement to escape the other interlocutors.

As Machiavelli’s portavoce, the author sanctions Fabrizio to speak only truths, again, for fear that the message would be distorted. This leads Fabrizio to make lengthy speeches or monologues in the manner of disputatio perpetua with the exception that there are no other interlocutors of equal intelligence who can counterbalance with their own monologues. Pugliese notes how Castiglione chooses neither the disputatio perpetua, characteristic of Cicero’s De Oratore, nor the disputatio interrupta which is the “staccato form of interrogation...practised by Socrates, which would presuppose a strict differentiation and hierarchy among the characters, some of whom would be considerably less well prepared intellectually” (A Classic in the Making 63). In not choosing the disputatio interrupta as the Socratic dialogue would have dictated based on the choice of a master/student relationship, Machiavelli demonstrates to have very little patience for the various absurdities and diversions which these constant interruptions would have had. This type of interaction seldom occurs, and is not allowed to continue for long before Fabrizio is permitted to continue with his oration:

Cosimo: Dunque vorresti voi fare una ordinanza simile a quella che è ne’ paesi nostri.

Fabrizio: Voi dite bene. Vero è che io gli armerei, capitanerei, eserciterei e ordinerei in un modo, che io non so se voi gli avete ordinate così.

Cosimo: Dunque lodate voi l’ordinanza?

Fabrizio: Perché, volete voi che io la danni?
Cosimo: Perché molti savi uomini l’hanno sempre biasimata.

Fabrizio: Voi dite una cosa contraria, e dire che un savio biasimi l’ordinanza; ei può bene essere tenuto savio ed essergli fatto torto (Arte della guerra I, 310-311).

Note the colour and dynamism of this exchange, again, it is one of those rare moments where the reader is permitted to appreciate the fruits of the chosen genre. Fabrizio (and Machiavelli) are aware of the length of the digressions and do little other than acknowledge it:

Cosimo: [...] Ma perché questo ragionamento debbe essere lungo, io voglio aiuto da questi miei amici, con licenza vostra... (Arte della guerra I, 305).

Fabrizio: Ma io ho fatto troppa grande digressione, e forse sono uscito del proposito mio; pure lo ho fatto per rispondervi e dimostrarvi che non si può fare fondamento in altre armi che nelle proprie...(Arte della guerra I, 312).

Cosimo: E’ mi pare che questo ragionamento vi abbia alquanto trasportato, perché,... (Arte della guerra II, 326).

Fabrizio: Questa domanda vostra ha bisogno, perch’ella ha assai capi, d’una lunga risposta (Arte della guerra III, 340).

Allowing each speaker or each point of view to contribute to the holistic meaning of dialogue is what Castiglione intended (Pugliese, A Classic in the Making 66). However, of Arte della guerra despite Verrier’s assertion that only at the end of the treatise do we discover the answer to Cosimo’s key question of the coherence between theory and practice (Verrier, Un felice ibrido retorico 416). While this is true, it cannot be said that it was

98 “In Castiglione...no one is in full control or a truly omniscient princeps sermonis who will emerge absolutely victorious, nor is any single interlocutor totally annihilated in defeat” (Pugliese, A Classic in the Making 67).
achieved via the concerted efforts of all the interlocutors, or to say it with Pugliese “in the sum total of all the utterances or opinions expressed (A Classic in the Making 66), rather it lay in the entirety of the thoughts expressed by Fabrizio. Mikael Hörqvist’s assessment is an apt one: “Due to the dominant and lecturing position of Fabrizio, it lacks the dramatic qualities and multivocal charms of other Renaissance dialogues” (121).

The naturalness or sprezzatura99 attained in Castiglione’s work is denied in Machiavelli’s due largely to the fact that Machiavelli makes his reader painfully aware of the genre rather than expertly employing its most prized elements.100 In constantly referring to the act of speaking, whether it be to summarize or bring forth a new point, in agreement with Verrier, it certainly makes the work more enjoyable than the treatise. However, judged solely on its dialogic merits, it also renders it somewhat awkward and mannered in its self-consciousness:

- Fabrizio: Voi passate in un altro ragionamento. Io vel dirò nel suo luogo, che fia quando io vi arò detto come si debbono armare i fanti, o come a fare una giornata si preparano (Arte della guerra I, 317).
- Fabrizio: Io ve l’ho poco fa detto; ma poiché voi non lo avete inteso, io ve lo replicherò (Arte della guerra II, 319).
- Fabrizio: Io vi dirò volentieri quello che io ne pensi (Arte della guerra II, 332).
- Fabrizio: Di tutto si ragionerà nel luogo suo (Arte della guerra V, 359).
- Fabrizio: Ma seguitiamo il ragionamento nostro (Arte della guerra V, 362).

99 “Castiglione’s treatise has had a lasting effect in some areas, most notably through the advice it offers repeatedly on the need to master and practice sprezzatura, or effortlessness, that is, the art of hiding the conscious exertion involved in one’s actions and achievements, and of having one’s masterful deeds and effective speech appear natural. This is a fundamental conviction of the author’s — one which interestingly enough, may have some affinity with the strategy of dissimulation recommended in the same period by Machiavelli who, in his political tract on the prince, likens it to the cunning of a fox” (A Classic in the Making 12).

100 In her criticism of Machiavelli’s dialogue, Cox compares these two works claiming: “Castiglione’s modest description of his ‘portrait’ as a mere sketch, barren of the charms and perspective of colour, could be applied with far greater justice to Arte della guerra” (21).
These are only a few of the constant reminders that a complex theory is being espoused and effectively takes the reader out of the pretense that they are bearing witness to a transcription of a real conversation. While Verrier believes that Machiavelli is indeed able to accomplish this suspension between fiction and reality (*Un felice iberno retorico* 413), I submit that by making the reader too aware of the ‘tools of the trade,’ he does not employ them judiciously enough in order to be truly effective. The essential suspension between fiction and reality is not achieved. This, of course, is keeping with the comparison of *Arte della guerra* as a Renaissance dialogue, and not as Verrier has justifiably done, in classifying it as “un trattato militare dialogato” (*Un felice iberno retorico* 405).

The distinction between fiction and reality is analogous to the distinction between dialogue and treatise, and consequently between possibility and certainty. As noted above, Machiavelli was interested in disseminating, not debating his message, therefore it is not surprising that the elements of the treatise genre were employed more frequently than those of the dialogic genre. It is the treatise that deals with the certain and the real, while the dialogue with its plurivocality and non-linear structure, negotiates the possible and consequently, the fictitious, or even the different interpretations that one can have. By minimizing the dialogic elements, Machiavelli effectively minimizes the ambiguity which, as we have seen, is often his over-riding concern. This elicits the question of why Machiavelli chose the dialogic genre, if ultimately he suppressed its most marked characteristics? The answer is a testament to the efficacy and legitimacy of Machiavelli as a writer of literary works: Machiavelli was able to mine the dialogic genre in order to benefit the exposition of his treatise. He manipulated the

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101 By comparison, in *Il libro del cortegiano*, the allusions are removed: “Over time, the author did tend to remove from his work allusions like this one to compositional strategies that were too explicit, deeming metaliterary or metarhetorical terminology to be counterproductive to and incompatible with his general desire to create a natural sounding dialogue” (Pugliese, *A Classic in the Making* 69).
form, in order to enhance the transmission of the content with a deftness that might even be called ‘modern’. The choice of a hybrid genre anticipates its popularity in the late 1500s with the success of the tragicommedia and the poema epico. We can agree with Michela Sacco Messinea: “Infatti il dialogo machiavelliano non è assimilabile ai grandi esempi classici, né a quello platonico né a quello ciceroniano quanto ai dialoghi quattrocenteschi, che sono in realtà, come questo, trattati in forma di dialogo” (Messineo 601).102 While Arte della guerra highlights more of the treatise than the dialogue, it is certainly a more successful hybrid than Discorso intorno alla lingua.

2.9 Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua103

Structurally, Discorso intorno alla lingua is a treatise in which a brief dialogue is carried out. It is introduced and concluded by lengthy monologues, and between these two monologues is a dialogue between the characters ‘Niccolò’ and ‘Dante’. In this dialogue, Machiavelli indicates a desire to have a word with Dante Alighieri on the subject of the nature and number of foreign elements in the language of La Divina Commedia. Being well aware of the techniques of dialogue, he indicates a preference for the mimetic form over the diegetic one: “Ma perchè io voglio parlare un poco con Dante, per fuggire «egli disse» ed «io risposi», noterò gl’interlocutori davanti” (Discorso intorno alla lingua 926). As with Arte della guerra, the dialogue proceeds in a very didactic way with Niccolò (as teacher) convincing Dante (the student) that he has in fact

102 Messineo goes on to cite Cristoforo Landau’s Disputationes camaldulenses as the “modello di dialogo tenuto presente dal Machiavelli...Il sospetto che il Machiavelli abbia tenuto presente il dialogo di Landino nasce da una serie di corrispondenze strutturali, pur nella diversità tematica e concettuale che distingue le due opere” (Messineo 601).

103 For the purposes of this dissertation, the Discorso intorno alla lingua is attributable as a work of Niccolò Machiavelli, as it has been done on the part of most critics, as Paolini reminds us, with the notable exceptions of Mario Martelli and Cecil Grayson (Paolini 51).
written *La Divina Commedia* in the Florentine tongue, and that furthermore it is the nature of language to be a complex entity bearing the imprint of foreign influences: “io voglio che tu [Dante] consideri come l’altre lingue non possono esser semplici, ma conviene che sono miste con l’altre lingue” (*Discorso intorno alla lingua* 928). In resurrecting such an illustrious figure as Dante, one would expect a more lively and heated debate; however as it was with Fabrizio Colonna, such is not the case, as the dialogue seems forced and heavy-handed with Niccolò’s voice remaining the sole authority throughout the ‘discussion’. Niccolò asks questions of this Dante at the start, but his responses are at times, dismissive, with Niccolò at one point declaring “Tu dirai le bugie” (*Discorso intorno alla lingua* 927). Dante is reduced to a mere convention, and the last we hear of him is when he meekly concedes “[e]gli è il vero; e io ho torto (*Discorso intorno alla lingua* 928). After this, Niccolò—seeming to have grown tired of even the small role Dante has played—proceeds to conclude the dialogue on his own, with echoes of the method employed in *Il principe*, that is, responding to the objections of an absent interlocutor: “E su tu la chiamassi o comune d’Italia o cortigiana, perchè in quella si usassino tutti li verbi che s’usano in Firenze, *ti rispondo* che...E se tu mi alleggassi il parlar curiale, *ti rispondo*...” (*Discorso intorno alla lingua* 928-929; italics mine). The dialogue concludes with a narrative summation as follows:

> Udito che Dante ebbe queste cose, le confessò vere, e si partì; e io mi restai tutto contento, parendomi d’averlo sgannato. Non so già, s’io mi sgannerò coloro che sono si poco conoscentori de’beneficii ch’egli hanno auti dalla nostra patria, che e’ vogliono accomunare con essa lei nella lingua Milano, Vinegia e Romagna, e tutte le bestemmie di Lombardia (*Discorso intorno alla lingua* 930).
Again, we have a depiction of Dante as a meek and unworthy opponent; one who merely acquiesces and departs. That Machiavelli was not taking the genre, or the character of Dante seriously\textsuperscript{104}, is fairly obvious. His last words in the dialogue border on the sarcastic, and are certainly comedic in nature.\textsuperscript{105} The content of this text is of interest for what Machiavelli has to say on language, but he makes a mockery of his chosen medium. In truth, he was not attempting to have a discussion with Dante, but simply to espouse his own ideas of the topic, which amounts to nothing more than a treatise. The choice to embed this treatise within a weak dialogic structure is a curious one. It accomplishes little other than to discredit Dante and augment Machiavelli. The reputation of the former was sacrificed for the benefit of the latter. As it is unclear who was the intended recipient of this work, we cannot surmise as to Machiavelli’s intention. Nonetheless, it, along with \textit{Arte della guerra} remain the only two works of Machiavelli’s written in an explicitly dialogical form, and therefore cannot go unnoticed. While the actual dialogue may be unexceptional, the introduction and conclusion contain rhetorical similarities with \textit{Arte della guerra} which help to illuminate Machiavelli’s understanding of the dialogic genre.

Machiavelli declares that the reason for his writing the work is in response to the recent musings on whether the language employed by “i nostri poeti e oratori fiorentini, è fiorentina, toscana o italiana” (\textit{Discorso intorno alla lingua} 924). His succinct and biting response indicates a recognition of the various positions, and his opinion of them: “Nella qual disputa ho

\textsuperscript{104} Filippo Grazzini cites this ‘antidantismo’ as grounds some critics have used to deny Machiavelli as author of the work: “ostenando un antidantismo così radicale da non poter far escludere la possibilità di una stesura a più mani. Un’idea, questa, già vicina a quella formulata dal Martelli, secondo il quale però l’identità del Machiavelli non è accettabile in nessuna delle due personae scrittorie” (58).

\textsuperscript{105} Paolini sees the ending as adding a drama and presence to the work, likening the two interlocutors to actors on a stage in which Machiavelli is left alone to collect his accolades: “Ed è, questa finale, una splendida trovata che dà all’intero dialogo una concreterza di presenze animate su una scena: dei due attori, uno si allontana, vinto o convinto, l’altro resta quasi in attesa di ricevere l’applauso di un pubblico immaginato” (52).
considerato come alcuni, meno onesti, vogliono che la sia toscana; alcuni altri, onestissimi, la chiamano italiana; e alcuni tengono che la si debba chiamare al tutto fiorentina…” (Discorso intorno alla lingua 924). Machiavelli acknowledges the various facets of the argument but does little beyond that, and gives no space to debating any of these positions before dismissing them in favour of his own. The absence of any other interlocutors, even those as shadowy and ill-defined as appeared in Arte della guerra, would have enlivened the discourse. As is, the introduction never embodies any objections, but only alludes to ‘alcuni’ or ‘altri’:

Vogliono alcuni che a ciascuna lingua dia termine la particula affermativa, la quale, appresso alli Italiani, con questa dizione sì è significata […] Alcuni altri tengono che questa particula sì non sia quella che regoli la lingua; (Discorso intorno alla lingua 924-925)

The potentiality for a dialogue exists, but Machiavelli does not permit it to come to the surface; it lies just underneath with these types of allusions to diverse opinions.¹⁰⁶

2.10 Arte della guerra: ‘hot’ or ‘cool’ medium?

Machiavelli is indeed successful in asking more of his reader than a writer of treatise would. In a treatise, a reader is asked to absorb the information being transmitted with every effort made to avoid misunderstanding or ambiguity. As such, to borrow McLuhan’s definitions as a medium, we would classify the treatise as ‘hot,’ namely requiring little of the user. In comparison, the hybrid dialogue-treatise which Machiavelli presents in his Arte della guerra would be ‘cooler’ as the author is requiring the reader or user’s involvement to be higher in order to glean the final

¹⁰⁶ Messineo concludes that the dialogue is used “non nella sua funzione problematica, ma come espediente retorico, come scelta, la più adatta alle sollecitazioni che gli vengono, anche questa volta, dall’urgere di una situazione fortemente drammatica, dalla improrogabilità nel cercarvi rimedio” (608).
message. In choosing Fabrizio, as we have seen, Machiavelli may have desired to render his treatise more global and eternal. As such, Machiavelli was well aware of the implications of having Fabrizio play the part of the main interlocutor, and that he was not asking his reader to believe that it was Fabrizio Colonna who was speaking rather, to pretend to believe it (cfr. Verrier, *Il polemologo sdoppiato* 186). For Verrier, there are too many allusions to Machiavelli’s other works which would indicate “Fabrizio Colonna sono io” and that Machiavelli is actually inviting his reader to read *Arte della guerra* in conjunction with his other works (cfr. *Il polemologo sdoppiato* 187). Seen in this context, he certainly is asking his reader to play a significant role in the text, classifying this as a ‘cooler’ medium however, it relies too heavily on the historical significance of Colonna, and would be lost on the modern reader who is not in possession of the complete knowledge of this significance. This certainly does not suggest that ignorance of the historical Fabrizio Colonna is an excuse for not appreciating a dialogic aspect of the work, only that it might preclude it from the *ab aeterno* quality that Machiavelli had envisioned. What also adds to the coolness of the *Arte della guerra*, is the hybrid genre itself. As noted above there is dialectic which occurs between the dialogue and the treatise, and by analogy, between the fictional and the reality, and this dialectic is one that needs to be interpreted by the reader, thus calling for a greater involvement in the work, which contributes to its coolness. It amounts to the difference between simply presenting (as is accomplished in a treatise) and perceiving (as is instead accomplished in dialogue). Even the barest of dialogical elements will necessitate an interpretation, and any amount of interpretation will increase the reader’s involvement.

107 Carla Forno comments on the nature of this hybrid genre, and how it’s fictitious: “Può infatti accadere che nonostante la struttura dialogica, il dialogo-trattato si ponga come dialogo fittizio, non finalizzato al confronto e scontro delle idee, da cui far emergere quella ottimale, ma unicamente all’illustrazione della posizione dell’autore, in contrasto con le posizioni altrui, sempre comunque secondo un fittizio movimento del pensiero, che resta ancorato a un punto di vista determinato” (260).
Even the involvement of minor characters contributes to the overall coolness of the medium. They are, for the most part, not military experts, and as such more easily identify with the reader who in turn “si sente in tal modo partecipe e rappresentato, soprattutto, dai personaggi che non parlano il linguaggio della scienza militare ma quello di chi vuol capire e acquisire una competenza che non possiede” (Messineo 608).

When *Arte della guerra* is placed alongside *Il libro del cortegiano* however, we readily observe that the reader’s involvement in the latter which includes *diletto* of the scenes that are played out, make it far cooler of a medium than the former. This is enhanced if we include the ambiguous ending which *Il libro del cortegiano* leaves to its reader due to the contrasting opinions which have been allowed to be depicted (cfr. Pugliese, *A Classic in the Making* 67). The reader must resolve the ambiguity himself, and thus his involvement in the text is greatly increased. Recall it was this ambiguity which was prized as the ending *par excellence* by Speroni. In this way, *Arte della guerra* is a much hotter medium due to its insistence on carving out a clear, linear path for its reader to follow, as this chapter has demonstrated. Machiavelli and Fabrizio conspire to accomplish this task adeptly, in their attempts to thwart any meaningful dialogical exchange with their interlocutors. A more meaningful dialogical exchange awaits Machiavelli’s reader in *Il principe*, where in the guise of a treatise, Machiavelli introduces a series of silent interlocutors whose influence and power permeate the text. It is here that Machiavelli will achieve the ‘coolness’ of the great Renaissance dialogues, in his attempt not only to curry favour with the Medici, but also to demonstrate his knowledge of matters political. Never described as an ‘easy’ or ‘straight-forward’ work, *Il principe* houses all the complexity and plurality that lends itself greatly to be analyzed as a dialogue.
Chapter 3: *Il principe*

3.1 How to re-fashion *Il principe* as a dialogue

If we consider *Il principe* as a dialogue, the Dedication Letter addressed to Lorenzo de’ Medici can be interpreted as the narrative frame. Within its brief, but weighty pages, we are introduced to the ‘interlocutors’ of the dialogue, the topic they will discuss, and also the locus amoenus in which this conversation takes place. While this is indeed what we would expect to find in the frame of any Renaissance dialogue, here it is accomplished in a more subtle and indirect manner:

Sogliono el più delle volte coloro che desiderano acquistare grazie appresso uno Principe, farsegli incontro con quelle cose che infra le loro abbino più care, o delle quali vegghino lui più delettarsi; donde si vede molte volte essere loro presentati cavalli, arme, drappi d’oro, pietre preziose e simili ornamenti degni della grandezza di quelli. (*Il principe* 257)

From the first, we are met with an affirmation that the conventional wisdom of his time will be of no use to us here. In choosing the verb ‘solere’, Machiavelli highlights what is usually done by those who wish to acquire the favour of a Prince, and on its face, this would not appear to be wrong. However, Machiavelli will not side himself with this conventional wisdom, instead, he will lay claim to a far greater gift to be offered a Prince, one that while appearing to lack monetary value, may actually prove to be more valuable:

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108 The *proemio* is 400 words long.

109 All citations for *Il principe* are taken from Mario Martelli’s *Tutte le opere*, Sansoni Editore. Please see Works Cited.
Desiderando adunque offerirmi alla vostra Magnificenza con qualche testimone della servitù mia verso di quella, non ho trovato intra la mia suppellettile cosa quale io abbi cara o tanto esistimi, quanto la cognizione delle azioni degli uomini imparata da me con una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antique. \(II\) \textit{principe} 257

The authority, or even the legitimacy of Machiavelli’s gift will come from the Ancients, whose actions Machiavelli alone will be able to interpret, and employ for the benefit of the Prince. In these first few lines, Machiavelli establishes a reversal: the frivolity of material gifts such as “cavalli, arme, drappi d’oro, pietre preziose e simili ornamenti” will no longer be prized in favour of more tangible gifts, such as those being offered by Machiavelli, namely “la cognizione delle azioni degli uomini imparata da me con una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antique.” A political guide based solely on the principles of politics is a march towards the specialization that will become the hallmark of a burgeoning modernity.

Therefore the ‘loro’ implied in the ‘sogliono’ will represent the homogenous majority who has not yet understood, or realized this nascent concept, and continues to apply the platitudes or morality to a world who no longer abides by them.\textsuperscript{110} It is no coincidence that they are not directly addressed, instead referred to in the third-person plural, virtually marginalized in the

\textsuperscript{110}Di Maria identifies these as the ‘MOLTI’ in his theory, and attributes to them the objections raised to Machiavelli’s theories: “A porre l’obiezione è MOLTI, il cui punto di vista è rappresentato da “obiezioni” che, a loro volta, determinano il discorso di IO. Il dialogo, quindi, appare svolgersi tra IO e MOLTI, questi ultimi presumibilmente autori di teoria politica, dei cui precetti IO sarà indubbiamente al corrente” (Di Maria 75).
discussion. They hold no power, and serve only to demonstrate faulty logic, which Machiavelli will acknowledge, and then dismiss in favour of a better approach.¹¹¹

This brings us to the Prince, who is directly addressed in the Preface, and shown to be the recipient of the work, namely Lorenzo de’ Medici.¹¹² The importance of this Prince is an entirely relative one; relative to the position of Machiavelli himself. The prince exists as an exalted figure, which is immediately acknowledged by Machiavelli as he simultaneously casts himself, and his work, as inferior:

E, benché io giudichi questa opera indegna della presenzia di quella, tamen confido assai che per sua umanità li debba essere accetta, considerato come da me non gli possa essere fatto maggiore dono, che darle facultà a potere in brevissimo tempo intendere tutto quello che io, in tanti anni e con tanti mia disagi e periculi, ho conosciuto e inteso.

(*Il principe 257*)

Machiavelli reiterates this difference between himself and the Prince, later on in the Dedicatory Letter, and while on its surface this can appear ingratiating, it is in actuality a unique advantage for Machiavelli, one that his prince does not, and can never possess, unless he too falls from grace:

Né voglio sia reputata presunzione, se uno uomo di basso ed infimo stato ardisce discorrere e regolare e’ governi de’ principi; perché, così come coloro che disegnano e’

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¹¹¹ The verb ‘solere’ appears again in the *Proemio*, when Machiavelli dismisses the writerly custom of cluttering his work with “unnecessary ornamentation”, instead favouring the tools of variety and *gravitas* as a means of enhancing one’s works: “La quale opera io non ho ornata né ripiena di clausule ample, o di parole ampullose e magnifiche, o di qualunque altro lenocinio o ornamento estrinseco, con li quali molti sogliono le loro cose descrivere e ornare; perché io ho voluto, o che veruna cosa la onori, o che solamente la varietà e la gravità del subietto la facci grata” (*Il principe* 257).

¹¹² Lorenzo de’ Medici is not to be confused with Lorenzo il Magnifico (1449-1492). The prince referenced here is Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici, duke of Urbino (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. I* 660). Machiavelli’s original intention (as stated in his famous letter to Francesco Vettori of 10 December 1513), was to dedicate *Il principe* to Giuliano de’ Medici, son of il Magnifico, who ruled Florence after the restoration of the Medici in 1512; his death in 1516 led Machiavelli to change the dedication to the afore-mentioned Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. I* 660).
paesi si pongono alti sopra e’ monti, similmente, a conoscere bene quella de’ principi, bisogna essere populare. (Il principe 257)

Here Machiavelli likens himself to the artist who, in order to be able to accurately depict the mountains, places himself in the plains. In an analogous manner, Machiavelli, now a member of the populace due to his exile, is the best candidate to act in the role of adviser. Both the artist and Machiavelli, from their respective vantage points, lay claim to the perspective necessary for both to carry out their tasks. Interestingly, Machiavelli attributes to the Prince the corollary of this theory, namely that the latter, from his exalted position, is best able to judge the populace below him. However, as we shall see, it will be Machiavelli, and not the Prince, who will also speak at length on the nature of the populace throughout the treatise.

The choice to parallel Machiavelli’s work with that of the artist (“coloro che disegnano”), is one that allows us to further consider Machiavelli in the real position of power, over that of the Prince. As artist, Machiavelli is the creator truly in control of that which he wants to create, namely a portrait, or ritratto of the Prince. As creation, then, the Prince becomes the malleable object which Machiavelli can manipulate to suit his needs. He takes immediate advantage of this by issuing two commands in the last paragraph of the Dedicatory Letter:

Pigli adunque Vostra Magnificenzia questo piccolo dono con quello animo che io lo mando; il quale, se da quella fia diligentemente considerato e letto, vi conoscerà dentro uno estremo mio desiderio, che Lei pervenga a quella grandezza che la fortuna e le altre sue qualità gli promettano. (Il principe 257)

113 Following the sack of Prato in August 1512, Piero Soderini is forced from office, and by November of that same year, Machiavelli is dismissed (Najemy xv). In February of the following year (1513), Machiavelli is arrested on suspicion of participation in the Boscoli-Capponi plot against the Medici; after his incarceration which included torture, he is released, and now resides in the family’s country home in Sant’Andrea in Percussina (Najemy xv).
This first suggestion is the most overt, and instructs the Prince to accept his work or *piccolo dono*, in order that the Prince may obtain the greatness promised to him by both fortune and his own capacities. The second is more of an indirect suggestion, almost a supplication for assistance on the part of Machiavelli, reinforcing the distance between these two men once again, as Machiavelli asks Lorenzo de’ Medici’s help in escaping his current miserable situation:

> E se Vostra Magnificenza dallo apice della sua altezza qualche volta volgerà gli occhi in questi luoghi bassi, conoscerà quanto io indegnamente sopporti una grande e continua malignità di fortuna. (*Il principe* 257)

In this final sentence of the Dedicatory Letter, Machiavelli as artist, creates a vivid tableau of his creation. Machiavelli depicts the Prince as a stationary, inert figure, perched on a throne far away from the populace he should be shepherding, who moves only his eyes to observe the *luoghi bassi*, and this is all that would be needed to instantly recognize that Machiavelli is an unworthy victim of fortune. It is no coincidence that Machiavelli cites only his lack of *fortuna* as the reason for his current predicament and does not offer any indictment of his virtues or capabilities as it is the latter which he has offered to the Prince as the greatest of his gifts.

Recast as a narrative frame to a unique dialogue, the Dedicatory Letter introduces us to the two principal interlocutors of the dialogue, namely Machiavelli-character and the Prince. Although silent, as recipient of the work, the Prince will play an important role in the unfolding

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114 The crucial Machiavellian binomial of *fortuna/virtù* already, in the Dedicatory Letter, begins to contextualize the importance of these forces on human destiny. Here Machiavelli limits himself to indicating the presence of these two entities, and indicating that it is indeed with both their favours that earthly success is achieved. Later on, in this same final paragraph, Machiavelli will mention ‘*fortuna*’ again as the agent which has confined him to his current state of exile and consequent unemployment (see footnote 106).

115 The concept of *Il principe* as a clandestine dialogue has been explored by Michael McCanles in his 1983 work *The Discourse of Il Principe*; Salvatore Di Maria in his 1994 article “La struttura dialogica nel Principe di Machiavelli”; John Parkin’s 1995 chapter “Dialogue in *The Prince*”; Paolo Paolini in his 2000 article “Machiavelli di fronte a una scelta: scrivere in forma di trattato o di dialogo”. We will have occasion throughout this chapter to discuss each of these contributions. In using the term we are referring to a work that is not strictly-speaking dialogic in structure, but which contains dialogic elements to such a degree that we can identify a ‘dialogue’ just underneath its surface.
of the information which Machiavelli has chosen to communicate. It is to him that Machiavelli must make the work palatable and acceptable, while simultaneously carrying out his agenda of disseminating a work which contains some of his most treasured ideals on government and rule. One of the ways in which Machiavelli accomplishes this is to fashion a Prince out of his own making, one that will serve the narrative purposes of the author.

The character of Machiavelli as depicted in *Il principe* is not to be confused with Machiavelli-author. The Machiavelli who ‘dialogues’ with the Prince is an idealized version of the author, one who would be best suited to partake in this ‘discussion’, not unlike what Machiavelli-author has done in creating his idealized Prince. As a silent interlocutor, Machiavelli’s Prince is best able to capture the tacit acquiescence needed to advance Machiavelli’s theories. In the role of the dominant interlocutor, Machiavelli-character is able to speak and act in a way that would endear him to the Medici Prince, the result of which may be that the theories espoused in *Il principe* may appear contradictory. This, of course, is explained by the fact that they are not historical figures, but characters created to serve the purpose of the dialogue, a process Eva Kushner identifies as being the main characteristic of the dialogic genre, namely: “the author’s initial self-projection into two voices…which precedes more complex fragmentation to come” (Kushner, *Dialogue and Subjectivity*, 229). While we can certainly see that Machiavelli-character has much in common with the historical Machiavelli, they are indeed two separate and distinct entities. This we can observe, for example in the humility that appears on the surface of this introduction to *Il principe*, which is indeed just a thinly-veiled dressing which Machiavelli employs to obscure his own authority as author or creator over his production of a model prince. Had this been an overt dialogue, this could not have been accomplished as deftly for the reader would have been instantaneously aware of Machiavelli’s ‘voice’ in the
mouth of the Prince, as it occurred with Fabrizio Colonna in Arte della guerra, as well as with Dante Alighieri in Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua.

The liberties that Machiavelli took with these latter two illustrious figures were highly recognizable, as Machiavelli neatly and swiftly brushed them aside so that the author’s voice reigned supreme in their respective discussions. In Il principe, this brusqueness of manner will be replaced with a more subtle and deft touch on the part of our author, who will expertly wield the voices of objection which will yield a more complex and fragmented product. In doing so, Machiavelli is requiring much more of his reader, making the medium he has chosen, namely the ‘clandestine dialogue’ in the form of a treatise, a much cooler one than either Arte della guerra or Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua. The ‘voices’ that are heard and not seen require not only a more attentive reading, but one that must interpolate and extrapolate in a way that ‘fills in the blanks’ prior to achieving comprehension and understanding. This is the very definition of Marshall McLuhan’s ‘cool’ medium, namely the type of medium in which the higher the audience’s interpretation, the ‘cooler’ the medium. We had observed this coolness with the hybridity of Arte della guerra, and it will be even more pronounced with Il principe and will open an avenue of study and interpretation of this work, hitherto unexplored.

3.2 The role of the reader in the dialogue of Il principe

In his initial chapter (Di quante ragionoi sieno e’ principati e in che modo si acquistino) we find a brief, but illustrative example of Machiavelli’s rhetoric, or communicative arsenal. It reads as a sequence of logical outcomes to the over-arching thesis that all states or dominions, whether in the past or the future, can be deemed either republics or principalities, however it betrays a
polyphony of rhetorical questions, and indicates its broad scope that immediately enliven the
treatise:

Tutti gli stati, tutti e’ dominii che hanno avuto e hanno imperio sopra gli uomini, sono
stati e sono o repubbliche o principati. E’ principati sono: o ereditarii, de’ quali el sangue
del loro signore ne sia suto lungo tempo principe, o e’ sono nuovi. E’ nuovi, o sono
nuovi tutti, come fu Milano a Francesco Sforza, o sono come membri aggiunti allo
stato ereditario del principe che li acquista, come è el regno di Napoli al re di Spagna.
Sono questi dominii così acquistati, o consueti a vivere sotto uno principe, o usi ad
essere liberi; e aquistonsi o con le armi d’altri o con le proprie, o per fortuna o per virtù.

(Il principe 258)

What is ‘missing’, but can easily be imagined, are the interrogatives that would have elicited
some of these responses. Had this work been written as a conventional dialogue, we might have
found, for example: “In che maniera si governano gli uomini?” Before sub-dividing the new
principalities, an appropriate question might have been: “Si possono suddividere i nuovi
principati?” Re-imagined above, in this manner, by bringing the questions to the forefront,
instead of allowing them to reside in the reader’s mind, the introduction loses not only its brevity,
but its succinctness and consequently does not permit the reader to appreciate the analytical
element of Machiavelli’s classification and the specialization it illustrates. The reader would
have also needed to consider the nature and character of the person posing these questions. As
is, however, Machiavelli has delegated the responsibility of fleshing out these potential

116 As outlined in Chapter One, the ninth effect of the printing press was this process of specialization.

117 Paolo Paolini declares that Machiavelli objected to the time this would have taken, for he was in a rush to present
his work to the Medici, and presumably recall him back to Florence: “La forma del dialogo avrebbe richiesto tempi
più lunghi e una maggiore distensione mentale nell’ambientare la conversazione, nel distribuire gli argomenti tra i
vari interlocutori ecc. Machiavelli è invece teso e ha fretta: deve fare presto per offrire il trattatello ai Medici, che si
persuadano del suo valore e lo richiamino a Firenze nei circuiti attivi della politica e della diplomazia” (Paolini 51).
interlocutors to his reader, and in doing so, has increased their level of participation in the text. As we have seen in Chapter One, this increased level of participation on the part of the reader results in a cooler medium; one in which the reader must now be classified, not as passive observer, but as participant in the text. Machiavelli has deftly accomplished this ‘cooling off’ of his medium without the aid of named interlocutors, but only via a suggestion of them.

This level of involvement by the reader is consistent with Umberto Eco’s reader-reception theory as outlined in *Opera aperta*: “[...] un’opera d’arte è un messaggio fondamentalmente ambiguo, una pluralità di significati che convivono in un solo significante” (16). The author may certainly state his intentions, as Machiavelli has done, in his Dedicatory Letter to the Prince, however, what interests us is how the work interacts with its audience, and the result of this interaction. Eco declares the motive for this type of analysis: “[...] porre in luce un certo tipo di rapporto tra opera e fruitore, il momento di una dialettica tra la struttura dell’oggetto come sistema fisso di relazioni, e la risposta del consumatore come libera inserzione e attiva ricapitolazione di quello stesso sistema” (Eco 20). Machiavelli often asks the reader to go outside of the text, either by way of the *richiami* to other texts, or (as noted above), by asking the reader to supply the backstory to the unseen interlocutors. In doing so, the text (as supplied by Machiavelli) is both ending and beginning; the end of Machiavelli’s efforts, and the beginning of

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118 Eco defines his use of the term ‘poetica’, and justifies the existence of both the explicit and implicit intentions of the author: “Noi intendiamo “poetica” in un senso più legato all’accezione classica: non come un sistema di regole costrittive (l’Ars Poetica come norma assoluta), ma come il programma operativo che volta a volta l’artista si propone, il progetto di opera a farsi quale l’artista esplicitamente o implicitamente lo intende. Esplicitamente o implicitamente: infatti una ricerca sulle poetiche...si basa sia sulle dichiarazioni espresse degli artisti...sia su una analisi delle strutture dell’opera, in modo che, dal modo in cui l’opera è fatta, si possa dedurre come voleva essere fatta” (Eco 18).
the reader’s. Consequently, Eco sees the reader as an essential element to the reading of any text, even for one that may not necessarily be considered ‘incomplete’:

[…] che qualsiasi opera d’arte, anche se non si consegna materialmente incompiuta, esige una risposta libera ed inventiva, se non altro perché non può venire realmente compresa se l’interprete non la reinventa in un atto di congenialità con l’autore stesso (Eco 36).

With Machiavelli, we are certainly not in the *forma aperta* attributable to the Baroque period whose dynamic form induces the observer to continually engage the work, as if it were in constant motion (cfr. Eco 39). We are equally not, however, stuck in the classic Renaissance model where ideas are fixed notions around a central dominant theory (cfr. Eco 38-39).

Machiavelli seemingly navigates this liminal space between these two periods, as his work cannot be considered static, and resembles more the dynamicism and involvement which instead defines the Baroque period. It definitely ‘suggests’, as we have seen, and in doing so we can

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119 Eco writes that this is the ‘*opera riuscita*’: “Una forma è un’opera riuscita, il punto di arrivo di una produzione e il punto di partenza di una consumazione che--articolandosi--torna a dar vita sempre e di nuovo, da prospettive diverse, alla forma iniziale” (Eco 21).

120 Eco cites historical precedence for this type of reader reception: “Il peso della quota soggettiva nel rapporto di fruizione (il fatto che la fruizione implicasse un rapporto interattivo tra il soggetto che ‘vede’ e l’opera in quanto dato oggettivo), non era affatto sfuggito agli antichi, specie quando dissertavano sulle arti figurative” (Eco 36). Among the examples he cites is the Medieval use of the theory of allegory: “nel medioevo si sviluppa una teoria dell’allegorismo che prevede la possibilità di leggere la Sacra Scrittura (e in seguito anche la poesia e le arti figurative) non solo nel suo senso letterale, ma in altri tre sensi, quello allegorico, quello morale, e quello anagogico” (Eco 37).

121 “La forma barocca è...dinamica, tende ad una indeterminatezza di effetto (nel suo gioco di pieni e di vuoti, di luce e di oscurità, con le sue curve, le sue spezzate, gli angoli dalle inclinazioni più diverse), e suggerisce una dilatazione progressiva dello spazio;” (Eco 39). Seymour Chatman also sees the text not as static object, and because of this admits to a role for the reader which is similar to Eco’s; he defines it as a ‘reading out’ of the text, as opposed to a simple ‘reading’: “Though this chapter has treated story as an object, I do not mean to suggest that it is a hypostatized object, separate from the process by which it emerges in the consciousness of a “reader” (using the term to include not only readers in their armchairs, but also audiences at movie houses, ballets, puppet shows, and so on)...From the surface or manifestation level of reading, one works through to a deeper narrative level. That is the process I call, technically, *reading out*. Reading out is thus an “interlevel” term, while mere “reading” is ‘intralevel’ ” (Chatman 41).

122 “La definitezza statica e inequivocabile della forma classica rinascimentale, dello spazio sviluppato intorno a un asse centrale, delimitato da linee simmetriche e angoli chiusi, costringerlo al centro, in modo da suggerire piuttosto una idea di eternità “essenziale” che non di movimento” (Eco 38-39).
agree with Eco that “L’opera che “suggerisce” si realizza ogni volta carica degli apporti emotivi ed immaginativi dell’interprete” (Eco 41). The reader is imperative in this paradigm and, as author, Machiavelli invited him to make sense of the world he sought to create inside the text. The over-riding principle in Il principe was to gain and maintain the political state, however, outside of this, a relativity reigns throughout the text making it, at times, ambiguous in its determinations. This ambiguity, according to Eco, need not only be considered as a negative:

[...] l’opera rimane inesauribile ed aperta in quanto “ambigua”; poiché ad un mondo ordinato secondo leggi universalmente riconosciute si è sostituito un mondo fondato sulla ambiguità, sia nel senso negativo di una mancanza di centri di orientamento, sia nel senso positivo di una continua rivedibilità dei valori e delle certezze (Eco 41-42).

Eco calls this an opera aperta, while McLuhan refers to a cooling of the medium, but both theorists suggest a role for the reader which conditions the overall reception of the text. This is not to suggest that there are an infinite number of interpretations in Machiavelli’s work, for while it does invite suggestion and input from the reader, there are boundaries within which Machiavelli intends both he and the reader to operate.123 These boundaries, however, are more blurred between the author and reader, and when no longer hampered by the responsibility of embodied speakers, Machiavelli is able to engage his reader by way of the dialogic elements while simultaneously presenting his theories clearly, and uninterrupted.

123 Eco cautions against an indiscriminate number of interpretations, as this is still the author’s world: “L’opera in movimento, insomma, è possibilità di una molteplicità di interventi personali ma non è invito amorfo all’intervento indiscriminato: è l’invito necessario né univoco all’intervento orientato, ad inserirci liberamente in un mondo che tuttavia è sempre quello voluto dall’autore” (Eco 58).
This is not to imply that Machiavelli’s aim was to simplify his classification, or not invite reflection, even objection on the part of the reader. Parkin concludes that this actually facilitates the dialogue between Machiavelli and his Prince, “making it easier for him (Prince) to find a place in the text and analyse its effects and advantages for him” (Parkin 84). Machiavelli employed the axiom that all _dominii_ are either republics or principalities, in order to establish a theoretical framework which would serve as a launch-pad for his argument. Certainly this brief paragraph cannot house all the complexities inherent in defining republics or principalities, but it contains the necessary first-steps. We can say of Machiavelli what McLuhan noted for scriptural scholars:

> Scriptural scholars of both the Old and New Testaments frequently say that while their treatment must be linear, the subject is not. The subject treats of the relations between God and man, and between God and the world, and of the relations between man and his neighbor -- all these subsist together, and act and react upon one another at the same time. (_Understanding Media_ 42)

Here the subject treats the relations between Prince and principality and between Prince and populace, and these too, as stated above, all exist simultaneously to react to one another in real-time. These interactions must, by nature, be complex and Machiavelli acknowledges this complexity, while still seeking to bring to it an order and clarity for the benefit of the Prince he is

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124 On this imagined interlocutor, John Parkin speculates: “Listing of points, selection of telling narrative details cogently recounted, use of illustrative examples, establishment of significant dichotomies, emphasis of key terms in order to structure the argument in a preselected direction: all of these are apparent in the discussion, and the imagined interlocutor is the opponent in the negotiation whom one has to influence in some way to accept the point one is proving, however transparent be the rhetorical subterfuges one employs” (Parkin 80). Maria Serena Sapegno identifies the apparent and imagined interlocutors as follows: “L’interlocutore fictus è il Principe (dedica ed esortazione), l’interlocutore reale, i Medici; ma i politici in genere, gli Italiani dell’età sua, sono un interlocutore in negativo, non hanno nulla da dirgli e vanno piuttosto provocati, in un’orgogliosa affermazione della propria superiorità” (Sapegno 977).
instructing. One of the ways he carves a clear path for his Prince to follow, is to leave out what is unnecessary, or what can distract from the communication of his message, such as the rejoinders from minor interlocutors as we observed in *Arte della guerra*, which do little more than provide acquiescence or state the next logical step of Machiavelli’s argument. This new amplified role for the reader, conditions how Machiavelli structures his text.

3.3 Machiavelli’s qualifications as advisor in *Il principe*: Letting the reader decide for himself

That a treatise, whose objective is to instruct a Prince on his governance of a principality would even contain a reference to a republic, is noteworthy. This is especially noteworthy when we consider that the very principality in question, is one that had just been reacquired from the Medici from Piero Soderini’s republican regime. More extraordinary still, that these casual references would come from a man who served under Soderini’s republic, and was now trying to realign his allegiance to the principality and its Prince. What could Machiavelli have sought to gain by reminding his Prince of all this? It is in the clandestine dialogue which exists just below the surface that we seek an answer.

Machiavelli mentioned the republic for the benefit not of his Prince, but for the other interlocutors that would, and should, question Machiavelli’s intentions. Again, had this been a conventional dialogue, the following question may have arisen: “Perché parlate voi dei principati? Voi che avete servito Soderini e la repubblica sua”? In response to this Machiavelli

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125 For John Parkin, these dichotomies point to a dialogue with “the reader of the textbook who looks not for inspiring examples...but for clarity and a transparent correspondence with known reality” (Parkin 68). Parkin also acknowledges Machiavelli’s editorial role in not allowing these dichotomies to progress indefinitely: “...Machiavelli’s common sense is summoned to break the chain at an appropriate point: a concession to the interlocutor as much as to the complexity of the subject” (Parkin 73).
might have referred to his Dedicatory Letter in which he claimed that in this context, he is speaking as a subject and not as a former agent of any government. Machiavelli’s qualifications lay in his “cognizione delle azioni degli uomini grandi, imparata da me con una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antique…” (Il princone 257). This understanding of the “cose moderne” would not have been achieved without his serving the republic. Does that exempt him from being a legitimate advisor? Not at all, for just as he was able to write the Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio, he can now write Il principe. It is to this work that he refers in the opening sentence of Chapter II (De’ prinipi ereditarii): “Io lascerò indietro el ragionare delle republiche, perché altra volta ne ragionai a lungo” (Il principe 258). It is not a coincidence that he cites similar credentials for the former, as he did for the latter:

Io vi mando uno presente, il quale, se non corrisponde agli obblighi che io ho con voi, è tale, sanza dubbio, quale ho potuto Niccolò Machiavelli mandarvi maggiore. Perché in quello io ho espresso, quanto io so e quanto io ho imparato per una lunga pratica e continua lezione delle cose del mondo. (Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio 75)

Machiavelli reinforces this link with an allusion to his previous work early on in Il principe, and does not shy away from it, as one might expect. This is especially curious when we consider that the Dedicatory Letter in the Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio, addressed to Zanobi Buonelmonti and Cosimo Rucellai contains a reference to the nefarious custom of addressing works to princes:

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126 Begun in 1513, and taken up again in subsequent years, with a probable conclusion date of 1518, Machiavelli’s other political work is a series of reflections and notes that sought to provide the foundation of a modern political theory based upon the examples drawn from ancient Roman history (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 650). The work is divided into three books. Book I, consisting of 60 chapters, treats the internal politics of the State, its administration, its laws, and above all the importance of religion as the unifying vehicle and political instrument of the ruling government (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 650-651). Book II deals with external politics, war and militia, and is composed of 33 chapters (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 651). Book III is more varied, consisting of 49 chapters, and treats among other things, the “corruption” and the crisis in Florence (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 651).
E crediate che in questo io ho una sola satisfazione [...] di avere eletto voi, ai quali, sopra ogni altri, questi mia Discorsi indirizzi: sì perché, facendo questo, mi pare avere mostro qualche gratitudine de’ beneficii ricevuti: sì perché e’ mi pare essere uscito fuora dell’uso comune di coloro che scrivono, i quali sogliono sempre le loro opere a qualche principe indirizzare; e, accetati dall’ambizione e dall’avarizia, laudano quello di tutte le virtuose qualitadi, quando da ogni vituperevole parte doverrebbono biasimarlo. (Discorsi sopra la prima Deca di Tito Livio 75)

It is impossible to ignore the hypocrisy of Il principe in the above passage, as it is dedicated to the Prince with the hopes of currying favour in the form of a political position with the Medici. It is also impossible to ignore that the placing of such a reference must have been deliberate, and could serve to ‘speak’ to those very same friends (Buondelmonti and Rucellai) to whom he had dedicated his Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio. Could Machiavelli have intended that they too ‘participate’ in some way in this treatise on a prince and his principality? This question does not necessarily need to be answered, it is enough that in the mind of the reader, it has now become a possibility, and it is this process of engagement which adds to the dialogic element we are exploring.127 We can also consider, as we have done above, that the character we identify with Machiavelli is not to be confused with Machiavelli-author. This is a persona that the author created in order to facilitate the work he intended to create.

The simple introductory sentence to Chapter II, in which Machiavelli claims to set aside any discussions of the republic due to his having discussed them elsewhere, simultaneously addresses and acquits Machiavelli’s republican-bias in a non-apologetic and direct manner which

127 John Parkin identifies several addressees for Il principe, which include Machiavelli’s friends. He speaks of a conjuring of recipients, and recognizes “Giuliano and Lorenzo de’ Medici (in effect the book’s dedicatees), the colleagues and opponents with whom Machiavelli had conducted political business, the public authorities who had employed and then discarded him, the princes and peoples of Italy at large whom he chooses to imagine responding his eloquence and passion, and finally his friends, including in particular, Francesco Vettori...” (Parkin 66).
asserts his dominance in the text. Machiavelli’s choice to not explicitly voice these legitimate objections does allow his opinion to reign supreme, however, it also permits a dialogicity to seep through which enlivens the more linear and non-subjective characteristics inherent to the treatise-genre. He would have been well aware of the implications of mentioning the republic to a Medici Prince, especially with respect to his own involvement with the republic. In the mind of the reader, this would have conjured inevitable questions, concerns, and even objections which Machiavelli-author does not seek to silence, but he does seek supremacy among these voices.

This is not unlike what occurred in *Discorsi sopra la nostra lingua* and *Arte della guerra*, however, in these two dialogues, Machiavelli placed restrictions and limitations on the length and intelligence the objections were permitted to have. As a result, we were left with stilted, forced dialogues\footnote{128 Dionisotti also makes mention of this imposed structured in reference to *Arte della guerra*: “Notevole in especie è la struttura dialogica imposta all’Arte della guerra...Perché è struttura evidentemente imposta, non richiesta dalla materia né dallo sviluppo stesso, sostanzialmente monologico, che la materia ha nell’opera” (Dionisotti 107).} in passages, which consequently lacked the delight that credible opposition among interlocutors brings.\footnote{129 Sapegno writes that the reason a true dialogue could not take place is due to the fact that in order to do so, it would have to appear as if a discussion was being conducted among equals: “Non può, d’altra parte, scegliere la struttura dialogica cara ai suoi illustri concittadini del passato, quella struttura che vedeva la conquista della verità come un risultato raggiunto insieme, attraverso la partecipazione ad una discussione tra uguai” (Sapegno 976). As we saw in the Dedicatory Letter, Machiavelli sought to recommend himself to the Medici, by casting himself as their inferior, and not their equal.} By shifting this opposition to reside not on the page, but in the reader’s mind, it allows for a limitless amount of dialogical interactions to occur. The benefit of this process is that it makes the user-participation more essential, thus rendering the text more interactive, and as a medium, again serves to ‘cool’ down an otherwise hot medium, which the treatise can tend to be. Machiavelli has acclimated his reader to an environment where it is not enough to simply read what is on the page, as the reader is now also charged with the task of supplying the subtext. Machiavelli accomplishes this by employing subvergent dialogical elements in the form of questions or concerns which are not explicitly-voiced, but deftly and
plainly alluded to. Machiavelli must now seek to maintain his supremacy, not in suppressing the other interlocutors (as he did in his dialogues), but in reinforcing his position as creator and arbiter of the text.

In supplying his reader with a direction, or initiative for Chapter II, Machiavelli writes: “Volterommi solo al principato, e andrò tessendo gli orditi soprascritti, e disputerò come questi principati si possino governare e mantenere” (*Il principe* 258). Here again, we have the image of Machiavelli as artist; not as a depictor of landscapes as we saw in the Dedicatory Letter, but now as a ‘weaver’ (*tessere*) who will artfully impose order and logic to his stated subject of discourse, namely the principality. This makes of the work, and of the Prince, objects to be constructed and wielded by Machiavelli. Just as he did with Dante Alighieri and Fabrizio Colonna, Machiavelli makes the Prince an instrument to be used to further his own agenda. This however, is accomplished not in the overt, and often heavy-handed manner of his dialogues, but in a way which permits a more balanced and equitable exchange of ideas. While no other voice is directly employed, Machiavelli is still able to use *richiami* to other texts, and responses to unspoken objectives, very effectively. The subtlety and complexity of this process certainly legitimizes the claim that there can be, and are a multitude of, intended recipients for *Il principe*. It begs the question, who else was in the room with Machiavelli and the Prince? Before turning to the implications of this theory, we consider Salvatore Di Maria’s work on the identity of the ‘voices’ in *Il principe*, and how they have impacted its interpretation.

Salvatore Di Maria rightly concludes in the introduction to his 1984 article “La struttura dialogica nel Principe di Machiavelli,” that while much attention has been paid to *Il principe* in terms of its content, the form or manner in which that content is communicated has been largely ignored, and he proposes “[...]un esame del testo quale forma di comunicazione letteraria” (Di
Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 66). In doing so, Di Maria sought to further inform the content-based discussion with his examination of the act of communication employed in Il principe:

“Pertanto, intendo procedere con una discussione dell’operazione comunicativa a fine di identificarne il significato e la funzionalità nel discorso testuale “(Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 66).

Di Maria emphasizes the importance of the subject pronouns: IO, TU, and VOI. The IO is identified with Machiavelli, yet he cautions that this textual IO is not necessarily the historical or biographical Machiavelli, rather he is best defined by the reality given to him by the text or the written page (cfr. “La struttura dialogica” Di Maria 67). He sees the IO-TU relationship employed predominantly when the author intends to counsel or admonish (cfr. Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 68). Di Maria goes so far as to conclude that “[l]a somma di tutti i precetti che nel corso del trattato l’IO offre al TU fa di quest’ultimo il flatus dell’ideologia machiavelliana, ossia il principe per eccellenza” (Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 68-69). For Di Maria this means that the TU is not the true recipient of the message, but the message itself, thus “TU non si realizza come polo di comunicazione, ma solo come oggetto di essa” (Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 69). This leaves VOI as the true recipient because he is constantly called upon to consider and evaluate judgments set out by the IO (cfr. Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica”


130 “Nel Principe il mittente si manifesta nella prima persona singolare, cioè nell’IO enunciante del discorso. Basta sfogliare l’opuscolo per avvertire ovunque la presenza di IO, soprattutto in forme verbali come dissi...voglio...concludo...rispondo...giuro...replicherei,” eccetera” (Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 66).

131 Di Maria highlights the following examples: “Consigli ed avvertimenti come “i malcontenti ti possono aprire la via a quello stato e facilitarti la vittoria...Nè ti basta spegnere el sangue del principe;...ti debbi servire di quelli grandi...perché nelle prosperità te ne onori,” eccetera, indicano che la parola della forma comunicativa IO-TU è ancorata all’IO, il cui discorso verte sulle virtù e sulla ‘prudenza’ che il TU deve esibire per procedere efficacemente alla conquista ed all’ulteriore governo di un principato” (“La struttura dialogica” 68).
Di Maria assigns the role of interlocutor to VOI, as it is to this persona that the anticipated objections are attributed, and consequently responded (cfr. Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 72). Di Maria depicts this exchange in the following graphic:

Figure 1:

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IO ← messaggio (TU) → VOI
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testo

In choosing to employ a variety of pronouns in a treatise, Machiavelli has activated a hidden dialogue within his work. Once the reader registers the ‘io’, either through the use of the subject pronoun or the first-person conjugation (lascerò, dico, voglio etc.), speculation immediately begins on the identity of this individual. One asks whether he is the known author or a reasonable facsimile, or an alter ego that exists only within the confines of the text in question. To this we add the even more irresistible mystery, the one who is never seen or heard, but still has a significant role to play. Bakhtin writes:

The phenomenon of hidden dialogicity [...] is not synonymous with the phenomenon of the hidden polemic, [...] Let us imagine a dialog of two people in which the

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132 Di Maria highlights the following examples: “Si considerino questi questi due esempi. Nel capitolo XVIII, IO espone i due modi di combattere rivolgendosi a VOI: “Dovete adunque sapere come sono dura generazione di combattere”; e in XXV, avendo espresso la propria convinzione sulla necessità di prevenire con “argini” e “ripari” le calamitoso variazione della fortuna, IO invita VOI a verificare la veridicità di tale giudizio: “Se voi considererete l’Italia, che è la seda di queste variazioni...vedrete essere una campagna senza argini e senza alcuno riparo.” (“La struttura dialogica”).

133 Graphic is a pasted image from Di Maria’s article, which originally appeared on page 73 of said article. On the relationship between the speakers authors and readers in dialogue, Forno sees it as a central aspect to dialogue: “il suo codice si fonda infatti su un principio di continua interazione: fra i parlanti e fra l’autore e il lettore, all’interno di precise coordinate spaziali e temporali” (Forno 16).

134 On this topic, Di Maria states that the ‘io’ in Il principe is a creation to be considered only within the text: “Benché in ultima analisi il mittente o autore (in quanto produttore del testo) si identificherà con Machiavelli stesso, bisogna tener presente che l’IO testuale non si definisce da dati storici o biografici, ma dalla realtà conferitagli dal testo, ossia dalla pagina scritta” (Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 66-67).
speeches of the second are omitted, but in such a way that the sense is in no way done violence. The second interlocutor is invisibly present, his words are absent, but the profound traces of those words determine all of the first interlocutor’s words. Although only one person is speaking, we feel that this is a conversation, and a most intense one at that, since every word that is present answers and reacts with its ever fiber to the invisible interlocutor, it points outside itself, beyond its own borders to the other person’s unspoken word. (Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics 163-164)\textsuperscript{135}

The reader is brought outside the text, beyond the spoken word, in order to fill in the gaps left by the unspoken word; in order to make the interaction whole. Parkin states that: “The point is more to initiate a relationship than to present a theoretical fait accompli: meanwhile, in terms of ‘verità effettuale’…”(Parkin 83).

3.4 The cooling of a hot medium: from treatise to dialogue

Here we have the very definition of the ‘cool’ medium. In Chapter 1, we referenced the difference between the ‘hot’ medium of a photograph and the ‘cool’ medium of the cartoon. The latter was deemed cooler for its tendency toward minimalism and its only suggesting completeness through lines and curves and gestaltic perception where the artist is relying on the impulse of the human mind to supply what has not been provided in order to render it whole.\textsuperscript{136} In this way, so too functions the clandestine dialogue. A photograph requires no such process for it is an exact reproduction of what the eye sees at a given moment in time, and little

\textsuperscript{135} Di Maria also cites a portion of Bakhtin’s quote in his article; see page 73 of “La struttura dialogica”

\textsuperscript{136} Not simply the sum of its parts, the gestalt effect describes the ability of the human brain to perceive the whole, prior to the parts. Gestalt psychology adheres to the ‘minimum principle’ whereby “we do not perceive what is actually in the external world so much as we tend to organize our experience so that it is as simple as possible” (Benjafield 72).
interpretation is required, with respect to the cartoon. In this way, the treatise\textsuperscript{137} with its linear, non-interpretive scope is the photograph, while the dialogue or better, the hidden dialogue is the cartoon rendering which requires high level of user involvement. This is reflective of one of the basic principles of the difference between the ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ medium where the “hot form excludes, and the cool one includes” (McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media} 40).

In choosing to include rather than exclude, Machiavelli was able to render his text not only very palatable to his reader but also consequently capable of issuing instruction to said reader.\textsuperscript{138} Again, we turn to McLuhan for an explanation of how the cool medium is able to impart a lesson more effectively than the hot medium:

Intensity or high definition engenders specialism and fragmentation in living as in entertainment, which explains why any intense experience must be “forgotten,”

“censored,” and reduced to a very cool state before it can be “learned” or assimilated.\textsuperscript{(Understanding Media 40)}

Essentially Machiavelli has disarmed his reader both in the literal and figurative sense of the word. Figuratively, he has “won over” his reader by allowing him to be a necessary accomplice to his objective, and this level of inclusion removes any fear that he will be annexed and/or

\textsuperscript{137} As a genre, the treatise had objectives that needed to be met, and a method for meeting these objectives: “La sua lingua deve essere dunque adeguate all\textquotesingle statuto specifico del genere, impiegata cioè in funzione prevalentemente referenziale e con finalità argomentative. La struttura logica-argomentativa, basata sullo stile dilemmatico e disgiuntivo. la dimostrazione della verità delle proprie tesi e la confutazione delle tesi altrui, il ricorso a esempi che abbiano il valore e l\textquotesingle esemplarità di prove, rispondono alle finalità comunicative specifiche del genere” (Luperini and Cataldi, \textit{Vol. 1} 671).

\textsuperscript{138} On the clarity and accessibility of the text, Lanfranco Caretti writes: “In quanto al tessuto linguistico della prosa del Machiavelli, sarà da dire che ci troviamo di fronte, sempre per quell\textquotesingle obiettivo di massima chiarezza e di forza dimostrativa, ad un impasto vivacissimo, denso e mordente di espressioni popolaresche o, al contrario, cólte. Le prime tendono addirittura a emulare l\textquotesingle aspetto dialogico e aggressivo del «parlato», e le seconde, quelle cólte, se non addirittura latinegianti, sollevano la disputa e la nobilitano ove occorra” (37). Caretti also notes how this accessibility is achieved by avoiding conceptual abstractions and direct imparting of doctrine: “Il Machiavelli persegue dunque uno stile icastico e fortemente corposo per evitare le astrazioni concettuali e gli schemi dottrinari, e per immedesimare invece le idee e i sentimenti nella concretezza dell\textquotesingle espressione linguistica e nell\textquotesingle evidenza rappresentativa e suasoria delle immagini realistiche o tangibilmente plastiche” (37).
coerced by the author to think or feel anything that he does not sanction first. As accomplice, the reader is made to feel he has a choice and this choice will permit him from being duped by the author. In doing so, the reader lays down his ‘arms’, namely skepticism, objections, even convention or tradition that would prevent his reception of Machiavelli’s message. In lowering the reader’s defenses, Machiavelli increases the likelihood of his reception of the message. Here again, we recur to McLuhan for an explanation:

The Freudian “censor” is less of a moral function than an indispensable condition of learning. Were we to accept fully and directly every shock to our various structures of awareness, we would soon be nervous wrecks, doing double-takes and pressing panic buttons every minute. The “censor” protects our central system of values, as it does our physical nervous system by simply cooling off the onset of experience a great deal.  

(Understanding Media 40)

All of this accomplished by Machiavelli in a way that is as effective as it is unobtrusive. As readers, we are instinctively drawn to its pages, without being fully aware of the communicative power which has brought us there. Let us consider a brief example contained in Chapter XVI (Della liberalità e della parsimonia):

John Parkin also sees this process as a means by which Machiavelli gains the confidence and trust of the reader. He does not view it as a defeat of the recipient, rather as encouraging trust in the recipient, and he describes a less antagonistic relationship between the sender and receiver: “It is a professional compositional practice and the effect is not to establish an intellectual monopoly which leads the interlocutor (the tu of the dialogue) into inevitable defeat, but rather to encourage trust in the judgment of the persona (the io of the dialogue) who respects his opponent in discussion, has anticipated at least some of his objections and is able to present a meaningful if not exhaustive case, encouraging one to think that his command of the field of enquiry is respectably adequate if not in fact total” (Parkin 79).

On this chapter, Parkin writes “What we have in chapter XVI is an excellent example of the kind of advice a political mentor (Niccolò Machiavelli by name) would give viva voce in the anterooms of the political headquarters where his prince was operating. Clear points unrestrained by deference, clever but not over-subtle distinctions, famous but relevant analogies (ancient and modern) applying a measure of both scholarly and practical expertise, an intelligently flexible rather than dogmatic confrontation of issues and a clear sense of priorities (politics before ethics): these are the components of Machiavelli’s apparatus, rendered available to the Medici with the specific recommendation that a former opponent can be a more active supporter than those long-term servants who have grown complacent in their security, and, this particular piece of special pleading apart, even at a distance of all but five centuries it is enough to convince one that a genuine political discussion is taking place” (Parkin 79-80).
E se alcuno dicesse: Cesare con la liberalità pervenne allo imperio, e molti altri, per essere stati ed essere tenuti liberali, sono venuti a gradi grandissimi; rispondo: o tu se’ principe fatto, o tu se’ in via di acquistarlo: nel primo caso, questa liberalità è dannosa; nel secondo; è bene necessario essere tenuto liberale. (Il principe 281)

The passage is masterful in its simplicity and its effectiveness. No overt blame or censure is awarded to any one individual as the indefinite pronoun ‘alcuno’ is applied as his opinion is stated clearly, and without any sarcasm. Machiavelli then employs the casual ‘rispondo’ to respond to these objections and move his point forward to his conclusion that liberality will always be a vice, while parsimony, when applied correctly will not:

Pertanto è più sapienza tenersi el nome del misero, che parturisce una infamia senza odio, che, per volere el nome del liberale, essere necessitato incorrere nel nome del rapace, che parturisce una infamia con odio. (Il principe 281)

Machiavelli convinces his reader, almost coerces his acquiescence, with finer and more subtle dialogical instruments. This, of course, is the point for if Machiavelli were to have made these techniques too transparent, they would have the opposite effect that they intended. This is what occurred with Arte della guerra and Discorso intorno alla lingua. In these two dialogues, the dialogical techniques were too bare and blunt, with their overt transitions and weak adversaries so that the reader was never able to immerse himself in the dialectic, and consequently the subject-matter of the discourse. Too frequently these jarring or incongruous elements served to shatter the image Machiavelli as author was trying to create by allowing doubt and objections to be raised in the mind of the reader. The heavy-handling of personages such as Fabrizio Colonna and Dante Alighieri naturally raised questions as to the veracity of the content, especially those passages which betrayed ‘too much’ Machiavelli. There are no such personages in Il principe,
and thus free from this responsibility Machiavelli is able to conjure up more effective interlocutors who ‘speak’ only when necessary, and who are more under his control than any he had embodied in his dialogues. Machiavelli uses these techniques to his full advantage throughout *Il principe*, and the pages that have fascinated scholars and academics for centuries, namely those on ambition, friendship, cruelty, human nature, fortune, *virtù*, free will, morality, piety, the populace, the prince, religion, and reality are each testaments to the dialogicity in Machiavelli’s text. The content has been readily acknowledged as captivating for its innovation and controversy, but we will examine how Machiavelli manipulates the form of his chosen genre, to enhance that captivation. It is no coincidence that *Il principe* is often cited as a manual or textbook either for politician, or the student of political science.\textsuperscript{141} The authority and reliability that Machiavelli infuses into the work is due in large part to the way he chooses to communicate his message. We will examine how Machiavelli is able to cool his medium in order to draw the reader enough into his created world, so that notions on human nature and its governance are not branded as novel and absurd, but rather praised for their innovation and utilitarianism.

3.5 De’ Principati Misti: How to be an effective ruler

One of the tools Machiavelli effectively adopts in his treatise is the summation, or concluding remarks. He often provides his reader with the conclusions they need to accept before moving forward to the next topic. These are placed strategically throughout any given chapter, not only to bring resolution to a topic before turning to another, but also to ensure the

\textsuperscript{141} Among the other addresses John Parkin cites (see footnote 105), are the political student and the contemporary scholar: “Two further political addressees of *The Prince* are, first, Machiavelli’s own political student, the person who reads the work as an objectively devised textbook and is thereby persuaded to help found the discipline of political science (although of course the term is never used), and, second, the contemporary scholar, expert less in the science of politics than in the art of rhetoric and who, responsive to the sense of leisured contemplation conjured up for Vettori, would situate the work in the literary contexts established by Renaissance humanism” (66).
message was well-received. In providing these conclusions, Machiavelli offers a road-map for his reader to follow which is not rebuffed because it is one that offers success for those who follow, and ruin to those who do not.¹⁴²

Let us consider some examples taken from Chapter III (De’ Principati Misti): “E chi non governerà bene questa parte, perderà presto quello arà acquistato; e mentre che lo terrà, vi arà dentro, infinite difficoltà” (Il principe 260). In governing a province, unlike his own, Machiavelli suggests the prince make himself the leader and defender of the less powerful neighbours and not allow a foreigner of equal strength to enter. Should you not heed his advice, you will quickly lose the province, moreover difficulty and worry will characterize the short-ruling of it. Stated as it is, Machiavelli is providing a choice, albeit one that has only one logical option. In addressing ‘anyone’ (E chi), Machiavelli speaks to ‘everyone’ and increases the participation level of his accomplices. Machiavelli continues to adopt this procedure to which he also adds the authority of the ancients:

Perché, e’ Romani feciono in questi casi quello che tutti e’ principi savi debbono fare; li quali non solamente hanno ad avere riguardo agli scandoli presenti, ma a’ futuri, e a quelli con ogni industria obviare; perché, prevedendosi discosto, facilmente si può rimediare; ma, aspettando che ti si appressino, la medicina non è a tempo, perché la malattia è divenuta incurabile. (Il principe 260)

In equating the actions of the Romans with what all wise princes should do, is a clear reminder that the Ancients have proved their reliability and expertise in the governance of states, and the

¹⁴² Parkin has made a similar observation in noting this skill of Machiavelli’s: “one notes his [Machiavelli’s] skill in rendering points succinctly, compressing theories and explanations into a relatively short essay (similar to an administrative memorandum) which the interlocutor or reader can expand herself or himself if so inclined” (Parkin 80). In doing so, Parkin concludes that one of Machiavelli’s goals is to continue to secure the reader’s attention without boring him: “The compositional skill of Machiavelli aims to secure the reader’s attention, the brevity of The Prince as a whole...aims to prevent his outstaying his welcome in the author/reader dialogue it stimulates” (Parkin 80).
prince should now rely on their examples, as presented by Machiavelli. It also contains a failsafe to guard against, not only present evils, but future ones as well. Again, Machiavelli predicts only failure for those who do not act as he suggests. This time it comes in the form of a disease that, left untreated too long, becomes incurable. There are no imperatives employed, but at every turn, they are implied. He vividly presents the consequences of the ‘bad’ choices, which adds to the illusion that choices are being offered, when in reality, they are threats. These threats consist in the ruination and loss of one’s dominion.

Machiavelli carries this point further when he lists the errors of King Louis XII of France:

Aveva, dunque, Luigi fatto questi cinque errori: spenti e’ minori potenti; accresciuto in Italia potenzia a uno potento; messo in quello uno forestiere potentissimo; non venuto ad abitarvi; non vi messe colonie. E’ quali errori ancora, vincendo lui, possevano non lo offendere, se non avessi fatto el sesto: di torre lo stato a’ Viniziani... (Il principe 261)

Machiavelli here borrows the authority of a king, not so we can follow his example, but rather to avoid it. He has attributed to the king a lack of adherence to all of Machiavelli’s recommendations, and in presenting a failure on so large a scale, the reader is forced to acknowledge Machiavelli’s method as superior. Machiavelli concludes the chapter, declaring a general rule:

Di che si cava una regola generale, la quale mai o raro falla: che chi è cagione che uno diventi potente, rovina; perché quella potenzia è causata da colui o con industria o con forza, e l’una e l’altra di queste due é sospetta a chi è diventato potente. (Il principe 262)
After having successfully demonstrated the veracity and effectiveness of his methods, Machiavelli can finally employ the term *regola generale*, without it being met with suspicion. In allowing consequences to speak for themselves, the reader supplies the message Machiavelli intended, without ever having to resort to explicit commands or demands. Had he done so, Machiavelli would have overwhelmed his reader with information and rendered his chosen medium much hotter. This would have resulted in a risked rejection of his intended message, as the reader would have (as per McLuhan’s terms) been forced to ‘forget’ or ‘censor’ the information before assimilating it. Machiavelli will use this process again as he turns his attention to topics which are even more controversial than those raised in the governance of mixed principalities.

3.6 Common sense: *La verità effettuale nell’essere laudato o biasimato*

‘Controversial’ is a term that has often been applied to *Il principe* for reasons ranging from sanctioned violence to perceived piety. In most of these cases “il giudizio etico e morale tradizionale viene rovesciato” (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 666). It is precisely this *rovesciamento* which makes pronouncements such as ‘controversial’ only applicable to the world external to the text. Within the text, exists a morality that is strictly upheld and generally revolves around the maintenance of the state. Within these parameters, the means applied to achieve these ends, go against traditional moral and ethical values. Machiavelli, however, was
not interested in exploring the usual and staid reflections on the perfect princes;\textsuperscript{143} the very first word in the Dedicatory Letter was the verb ‘Sogliono’, and from its mention, he sought to point out the error of conventional wisdom and to consequently establish its opposite. Machiavelli was trying to devise precepts not for a utopian world, but for the real one, the one in which he had gained experience through his political and personal dealings. He knew the importance of seeing the world not as it should be, but as it was. This become the basis of his political doctrine, and for this reason he was now advocating and operating in an environment hitherto unexplored.

How was Machiavelli to achieve this? How did he seek to overturn the external judgment of controversial into the conventional? One of the ways he sought to achieve this, as we have seen, is to leave a trail of bread crumbs for the reader to follow in which he presents irrefutable evidence as a way of internalizing the message Machiavelli is trying to communicate.

Chapter XV (\textit{Di quelle cose per le quali li uomini, e specialmente i principi, sono laudati o vituperati}) reminds the reader of the veracity of the world Machiavelli has created by comparing it to the fictional one provided by his contemporaries:

\begin{quote}
E perché io so che molti di questo hanno scritto, dubito, scrivendone ancora io, non essere tenuto prosuntuoso, partendomi massime, nel disputare questa materia, dagli ordini degli altri. \textit{(Il principe 280)}
\end{quote}

Again we have the ‘loro’ subject pronoun to denote those whose ideas pertain to wisdom, no longer applicable to Machiavelli’s time (\textit{hanno scritto}). Machiavelli also includes an apology for

\textsuperscript{143} The treatise on the perfect prince was a familiar work at the time: “Il genere aveva conosciuto una nuova fioritura nell’ambito della trattatistica politica cinquecentesca, con la moltiplicazione degli specula principis (specchi del principe), elenchi delle virtù mondane del “principe perfetto” corredate di esempi greci e latini” (Luperini and Cataldi, \textit{Vol. 1} 661). There were several treatises in circulation around the same time: “Cronologicamente vicini a Machiavelli sono, tra gli altri, il \textit{De regis et boni principis} [Il compito del re e del buon principe] di Diomede Carafa (1480 ca.), il \textit{De vero principe} [Il vero principe] di Battista Platina (1481 ca.) e il \textit{De principe liber} [Libro del principe] di Giovanni Pontano (1503 ca.) (Luperini and Cataldi, \textit{Vol. 1} 661). Machiavelli’s treatise, however, retained very little from the contemporary examples, and sought instead to produce something different: “Tra questa produzione trattatistica e il \textit{Principe} di Machiavelli, però, vi è una forte differenza sia sul piano tematico e formale che su quello teorico e ideologico” (Luperini and Cataldi, \textit{Vol. 1} 661).
his ‘presumption’ in departing radically from the procedures of others. This, of course, is all a
ruse as Machiavelli makes it clearly understood that his method is that which reflects reality, and
this is the only perception which could yield a benefit to a prince:

Ma sendo l’intento mio scrivere cosa utile a chi la intende, mi è parso conveniente
andare dritto alla verità effettuale della cosa, che alla imaginazione di essa. E molti si
sonoimaginatinirepublice e principati che non si sono mai visti né conosciuti essere in
vero; perché egli è tanto discosto da come si vive a come si doverebbe vivere, che colui
che lascia quello che si fa per quello che si doverrebbe fare impara piuttosto la ruina
che la perservazione sua [...] Lasciando, adunque, indiretto le cose circa uno principe
imaginate, e discorrendo quelle che sono vere, dico che tutti gli uomini, quando se ne
parla, e massime e’ principi, per essere posti più alti, sono notati di alcune di queste
qualità che arrecano loro o biasimo o laude. (Il principe 280)

The dialogicity in the passage can be found in its humour as we are privy only to Machiavelli’s
rejoinders to, what must have been, a lively conversation composed of staccato interactions. The
blanks could be filled in innumerable ways, and it is this process of completing what Machiavelli
has only alluded to, which again cools the medium. Machiavelli ridicules those who follow the
advice of those who operate within a fictional world, and logically concludes that this advise
would be useless. The reader is given only one option: agree with Machiavelli or appear as silly
as those who oppose him.

This is necessary, as in this chapter he is advocating an upending of the classification of
human characteristics either as vices or virtues. Machiavelli begins with a list of qualities
commonly attributed to men which include: liberale; misero; donatore; rapace; crudele; pietoso;
fedifrago; fedele; effeminato; pusillanime; feroce, animoso; umano; superbo; lascivo; casto;
intero; astuto; duro; facile; grave; leggieri; religioso; incredulo. Machiavelli proposes a re-classification in which the Prince studiously avoids those vices which would lose the state for him, and protect also from those that would not, for fear of the bad reputation that they would garner:

E io so che ciascuno confesserà che sarebbe laudabilissima cosa in uno principe trovarsi, di tutte le sopracritte qualità, quelle che sono tenute buone; ma perché le non si possono avere né interamente osservare, per le condizioni umane che non lo consentono, gli è necessario essere tanto prudente che sappia fuggire l'infamia di quelli vizi che li torrebbero lo stato, e da quelli che non gnene tolgano, guardarsi, se egli è possibile; ma, non possendo, vi si può lasciare andare.  (*Il principe 280*)

Once again, Machiavelli cites what would be best (*sarebbe laudabilissima*), but immediately contrasts this with what is indeed true, namely that no man can claim to possess all human virtues, and consequently, the Prince should only bother to rid himself of those vices that would jeopardize the state.

From the beginning of the chapter Machiavelli has been working towards introducing a relative morality that would completely upend any traditional classifications of good versus evil. This could not have been possible, without first laying out the theoretical groundwork of the ‘*verità effettuale.*’ It is a slow, but steady progression from *verità effettuale* to a relative morality that would see the ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ classifications of ‘virtues’ being completely relative to how they either help or hinder the acquisition and/or maintenance of the state. Machiavelli does

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144 Lanfranco Caretti identifies Machiavelli’s ability to create an irrefutable choice for his reader, in a manner which is analytical and intuitive: “Questo procedimento analitico e intuitivo, questo lucido dispiegare i corni del problema, definendo le tesi in contrasto nettamente contrapposte, trova il suo corrispettivo stilistico in una sintassi largamente costruita sul fondamento di schemi antitetici, secondo un’impostazione dramaticamente dilemmatica che nulla tiene della retorica scolastica, ma piuttosto rivela una sorte di lucido furore ragionativo rivolto a creare ipotesi oppositive e infine a imporre una scelta perentoria non mistificabile” (36).
achieve this by first making his reader acknowledge the obvious veracity of the verità effettuale, then by outlining the consequence of this concept for human virtues and vices, and finally by offering what is now, the only logical conclusion, namely a complete reversal of our notions of good versus evil:

 [...] perché, se si considerrà bene tutto, si troverà qualche cosa che parrà virtù, e, seguendola, sarebbe la ruina sua; e qualcuna altra che parrà vizio, e, seguendola, ne riesce la securtà e il bene essere suo. (Il principe 280)

The reason the reader is able to accept this, is due in large part to the manner in which it was presented. Machiavelli ensures the mind of the reader has been trained in the diversity of thought, as an acceptable thing. At every turn, he cools the medium as participation and complicity on the part of the reader are secured by Machiavelli-author in order to ensure that the message is not just preached from the pulpit of Machiavelli, rather, that it is offered up by the reader himself. The nature of the cool medium is indeed in its elastic presentation and Machiavelli provides the groundwork and framework, and leads the reader to the only ‘logical’ conclusion, namely Machiavelli’s conclusion.145 He employs this method again in the pivotal Chapter VII (De’ principati nuovi che s’acquistano colle armi e fortuna di altri) in which the exploits of Cesare Borgia are called on to be a positive example for the Prince.

3.7 Cesare Borgia: vittima della Fortuna

145 On Machiavelli’s method of offering the only logical solution to the situation he describes, Caretti writes “E di qui anche prende le mosse quel suo argomentare con implacabile conseguenzialità e piglio risoluto, traascurando le soluzioni intermedie e di compromesso, e ponendo subito, con perentoria decisione, i termini inelusibili di ogni questione, mettendo in luce tutte le possibili alternative e l’unica soluzione consentita...” (35).
Cesare Borgia’s bid for a principality was ultimately unsuccessful as Chapter VII outlines, however, he alongside Francesco Sforza are featured in Machiavelli’s discussion on new principalities acquired with the arms and fortunes of others. In prefacing an account of Borgia’s exploits, he justifies this inclusion of an unsuccessful bid, by answering the logical question: “Perché Borgia? Lui ha fallito?” In ‘response’ Machiavelli writes:

Se, adunque, si considererà tutti e’ progressi del duca, si vedrà lui aversi fatti gran fondamenti alla futura potenzia; li quali non iudico superfluo discorrere, perché io non saprei quali precetti mi dare migliori a uno principe nuovo, che lo esempio delle azioni sua: e se gli ordini suoi non li profittorono, non fu sua colpa, perché nacque da una estraordinaria ed estrema malignità di fortuna. (Il principe 266)

Machiavelli’s endorsement of Borgia is significant praise from an author who has cited only the grandest and greatest examples both past and present. Machiavelli acquits Borgia of any negative attributes that may have contributed to his failure, by blaming not Borgia, but his extreme ill-fortune. Machiavelli studiously avoids any mention of the word ‘failure’ in his justification and instead shifts the responsibility to the very unreliable and indiscriminate force capable of striking even the most capable of men: Fortuna. Machiavelli’s brief but effective explanation for Borgia’s presence in his treatise is, in effect, answers to a series of questions or objections naturally raised by the inclusion of a ‘negative’ example. Again, we can re-imagine the passage with a few pointed interjections, as done above. Machiavelli is careful to keep these ‘interactions’ brief, as shown above, so that they do not over-power the treatise. He imagines one or two pointed questions that the reader should logically ask, and in this way, also avoids the meek capitulations (‘va bene’ ‘vedo’ ‘hai ragione’ etc.) which were so detrimental in Arte della

146 Cesare Borgia was born in 1475, the son of Pope Alexander VI and Vannozza Cattanei, and is also known as Il duca Valentino (cfr. Janni 108).
guerra and Discorso intorno alla lingua. These displays of weakness or stupidity by the interlocutors in these dialogues prevented the reader from identifying himself with any one character or interlocutor, as to do so would be to identify with a simpleton. Even the great Colonna and Dante were over-handled to the point that they too lost some of their luster. Here, instead Machiavelli is not tempted to include these weak rejoinders and thus insult his reader, keeping him as a supporter rather than an opponent to his message. As supporter now, Machiavelli continues to guide the reader through Borgia’s narrative, and in particular, to reconcile him to Borgia’s use of force and cruelty.

After detailing a list of Borgia’s accomplishments, including the seizures of Romagna, the defeat of Colonna and the weakening of the Orsini and Colonna factions in Rome, Machiavelli gives his reader an account of the events that led to Senigallia:147

E, ritornatogli la reputazione, né si fidando di Francia né di altre forze esterne, per non le avere cimentare, si volse agli inganni. E seppe tanto dissimulare l’animo suo, che gli Orsini medesimi, mediate el signor Paulo, si riconciliorono seco; con il quale el duca non mancò d’ogni ragione di offizio per assicurarlo, dandogli danari, veste e cavalli; tanto che la simplicità loro li condusse a Sinigaglia148 nelle sue mani. Spenti adunque, questi capi, e ridotti li partigiani loro amici sua, aveva il duca gittati assai buoni fondamenti alla potenzia sua, avendo tutta la Romagna con il ducato di Urbino, parendogli massime, aversi acquistata amica la Romagna e guadagnatosi tutti quelli popoli, per avere cominciato a gustare el bene essere loro. (Il principe 267)

147 On the summary account of the Sinigaglia massacre, Parkin comments “the narrative is brief, trenchant, delighting in lurid details and summary conclusions about the manipulation of alliances and public opinion” (Parkin 81).

148 Having served their purpose, in the night between 31 December 1502 and 1 January 1503, Borgia had Vitellozzo Vitelli and Oliverotto da Fermo murdered; on 18 January 1403, at Castel della Pieve, Paolo Orsini and Duke Gravina Orsini met similar fates (cfr. Janni 112).
Machiavelli prefaces the massacre by remarking its justification, namely that Borgia sought not to be reliant on France or outside forces, whose loyalty to Borgia should not be tested to his detriment during a difficult time. For this reason, he turned to *inganni* or deception in order to lure them to their deaths. Again Machiavelli is meticulous in his word choice, attributing to the Orsini a *semplicità* or stupidity which allowed themselves to be delivered into Borgia’s waiting hands. The reader is assured that Borgia was compelled to recur to this action for his own security, and that of the state. As John Parkin has stated on this chapter, Machiavelli provides his persona “with sufficient information to create an aura of expertise and expressing himself with sufficient clarity to make it appear more reasonable to side with him than against him” (Parkin 81). Again, the reader must decide for himself if Machiavelli is to truly succeed in winning him over.

Once their deaths are a foregone conclusion, Machiavelli acknowledges them with the elegant euphemism ‘*spegnere*’.¹⁴⁹ In using the term ‘spegnere’, Machiavelli compels his reader to fill in the blank with the requisite ‘uccisi’ or ‘morti’. This is akin to Machiavelli pointing the gun, but asking the reader to shoot, thus making the latter complicit in the plot.¹⁵⁰ This has a twofold effect; firstly it dulls the ‘censor’ mentioned above, so that this incident of betrayal and murder can quickly be ‘learned’ or assimilated as part of the accepted means by which a state can be maintained. Secondly, it allows the reader more freedom to “discover and define his

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¹⁴⁹ Etymology: lat. parl. *expingère*, propr. ‘cancellare’, comp. di ēx- ‘via da’ e pingère ‘dipingere’ (cfr. Zingarelli 1708). Most dictionaries will include a literary meaning for ‘spegnere’ which is the equivalent of ‘uccidere’.

¹⁵⁰ In his seminal work *Opera aperta*, Umberto Eco explains the consequence of placing an ‘unfinished’ text before the reader, and in doing so, anticipates McLuhan’s statements of the direct correlation between the coolness of the medium (high level of reader participation), and consequent acceptance of the message or text: “L’autore offre insomma al fruitore un’opera *da finire*: non sa esattamente in qual modo l’opera potrà essere portata a termine, ma sa che l’opera portata a termine sarà la *sua* opera, non un’altra, e che alla fine del dialogo interpretativo si sarà concretata una forma che è la *sua* forma, anche se organizzata da un altro in un modo che egli non poteva completatamente prevedere: poiché egli in sostanza aveva proposto delle possibilità già razionalmente organizzate, orientate e dotate di esigenze organiche di sviluppo” (Eco 58-59).
functions” (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 46). If Machiavelli had described the grisly event in greater detail, this would have necessitated lower reader participation “[f]or the highly developed situation is, by definition, low in opportunities of participation, and rigorous in its demands of specialist fragmentation from those who would control it” (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 46).\footnote{Di Maria has identified Machiavelli’s desire to control the heart and mind of this reader, and how the fictitious dialogue has assisted in this process: “l’IO sembra voler controllare, come si è detto, l’esercizio critico di VOI, identificando con la propria posizione concettuale. Questa forma di manipolazione è anche implicita nella struttura fittizia del dialogo che, costituendosi quale risposta ad un’obiezione anticipata, permette ad IO di riservare per sé l’ultima parola e di far prevalere così, contro ogni altra opinione, il proprio punto di vista” (Di Maria 78).}

We have the benefit of observing this ‘specialist fragmentation,’ by comparing this passage to the one Machiavelli narrated in his 1503 work of the events entitled *Descrizione del modo tenuto dal duca Valentino nello ammazzare Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, il signor Pagolo e il duca di Gravina Orsini.*\footnote{This work was first published alongside the first printed edition of *Il principe*: “La prima edizione a stampa del *Principe* vide la luce, congiuntamente alla *Vita di Castruccio Castracani* e alla *Descrizione del modo tenuto dal Duca Valentino nello ammazzare Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, il signor Pagalo e il duca di Gravina Orsini*, nel 1532 a Roma presso l’editore Blado” (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 660).} The final passage in which the strangulation deaths are detailed is a cold and impassive retelling, which adds insult with its explanation of the undignified manner in which the victims acquitted themselves upon their death:

Ma, venuta la nocte et fermi e tumulti, al duca parve di fare admazare Vitellozo et Liverotto; et, conductogli in uno luogo insieme, gli fe’ strangolare. Dove non fu usato da alcuno di loro parole degne della loro passata vita, perché Vitellozo pregò che si supplicassi al papa che gli dessi de’ suoi peccati indulgencia plenaria, et Liverotto tucta la colpa delle iniurie facte al duca, piangendo, rivolgeva adosso ad Vitellozo. Pagolo et el duca di Gravina Orsini furno lasciati vivi per infino che il duca intese che ad Roma el papa haveva preso el cardinale Orsino, l’arcivescovo di Firenze et messer Iacopo da
Sancta Crocie: dopo la quale nuova, a di 18 di giennaio, ad Castel della Pieve furno anchora loro nel medesimo modo strangolati. (*Descrizione del modo tenuto* 11)

In this account, Machiavelli does not hesitate to employ verbs such as ‘admazare’ and ‘strangolare’, as he lays bare the gruesome facts as they unfolded. Adding insult is the depiction of Vitelli begging for plenary indulgence of his sins, and Oliverotto crying and blaming Vitelli. This undignified tableau is one that leaves the reader overwhelmed with information, and this ‘hot’ narrative cannot help but lead to a feeling of disgust for these two individuals.

Machiavelli’s intention is clear in how he desires these victims to be portrayed; not as victims at all, but as individuals who deserved their fate. This is the ‘specialist fragmentation’ to which McLuhan was referring, and points to a desire on the part of the author to control the perception of the work. This is in sharp contrast to what occurs in the passage from *Il principe*, as we saw, where Machiavelli relinquishes the control by permitting so much to remain outside the narrative, but in doing so gains a valuable ally in his reader. Here we can liken it to the detective story, as outlined by McLuhan: “Likewise, in reading a detective story the reader participates as co-author simply because so much has been left out of the narrative” (*Understanding Media* 46). In allowing the reader this function as co-author, Machiavelli’s true opinion is not as blunt, but in this dulled version, it remains just as effective.

The passage is bookended with another one of Borgia’s successes, thus closing the chapter on the Senigallia massacre with the foreshadowing of the events in Romagna.

Machiavelli wastes no time in this chapter by following up one instance of deception and cruelty with another which surpasses it in its audacity. He makes no apologies for this incident,

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153 Of note is also the use of their first names (Vitellozo and Liverotto), while in *Il principe*, they are simply referred to as ‘i capi’.

154 On the notion of a co-author, Eco writes “le opere “aperte” in quanto *in movimento* sono caratterizzato dall’invito a fare l’opera con l’autore” (Eco 60).
rather he is proud to introduce it as a worthy example, and one to be imitated: “E perché questa parte è degna di notizia e da essere imitata da altri, non la voglia lasciare indietro” (Il principe 267). Romagna was under the control of “signori impotenti, li quali più presto avevano spogliato e’ loro sudditi che corretti...” (Il principe 267) and Borgia saw it as his duty to “volerla ridurre pacifica e obediente al braccio regio, darli buon governo” (Il principe 267). This is the justification Machiavelli gives prior to introducing Remirro de Orco, to whom was given the task of establishing order in Romagna: “Però vi prepose messer Remirro de Orco, uomo crudele ed espedito, al quale dette pienissima potestà. Costui in poco tempo la ridusse pacifica e unita, con grandissima reputazione” (Il principe 267). Once this task had been completed, Borgia disposed of him:

Di poi iudicò el duca non essere necessario si eccessiva autorità perché dubitava non divenissi odiosa; e preposevi uno iudicio civile nel mezzo della provincia, con uno presidente eccellentissimo, dove ogni città vi aveva lo avvocato suo. (Il principe 267)

In order to distance himself from the nefarious deeds of his lieutenant, even though they had been fully sanctioned by Borgia, the latter made of de Orco’s death a very public display:

E perché conosceva le rigorosità passate averli generato qualche odio, per purgare gli animi di quelli popoli e guadagnerseli in tutto, volle mostrare che, se crudeltà alcuna era seguita, non era nata da lui ma dalla acerba natura del ministro. E presa sopra’ occasione, lo fece a Cesena, una mattina, mettere in dua pezzi in sulla piazza, con uno pezzo di legno e uno coltello sanguinoso a canto. La ferocità del quale spettaculo fece quelli popoli in uno tempo rimanere satisfatti e stupidi. (Il principe 267)

Remiro de Lorqua, in his function as Cesare Borgia’s lieutenant was the political instrument of violence employed by Borgia to establish order in Romagna; once this task had been completed Borgia had Remirro killed and his body put on display for the satisfaction of the people who hated him (cfr. Janni 112). Machiavelli was witness to this event which took place in December 1502, as at the time he was serving his second legation to Borgia (cfr. Janni 112).
Machiavelli’s dramatic retelling of these events are both vivid and impactful. The tableau presented in this passage is gruesome, however, since it depicts the murder of a man so hated by the populace of Romagna, Machiavelli does not feel the need to employ euphemisms, in order to dull its image. De Orco’s death is one that, in Machiavelli’s words, left the people ‘satisfied’, as he is quick to indicate, therefore, Machiavelli uses this to full advantage by not hiding the gruesome details of his death. The information provided is in no danger of overwhelming the reader, therefore it is supplied. Borgia’s actions are also not questioned, as he becomes emblematic throughout the treatise as an example to be admired, and this position is cemented in an actual dialogue that takes place:156

E lui mi disse,157 ne’ di che fu creato Iulio II,158 che aveva pensato a ciò che potessi nascere, morendo el padre, e a tutto aveva trovato rimedio, eccetto che non pensò mai, in su la sua morte, di stare ancora per lui morire. (Il principe 268)

Here we have the one thing Borgia could not skillfully manipulate, namely the length of his own life. He died before he could solidify his position for his son’s succession. Machiavelli ends his chapter with a rigorous defense of Borgia:

156 Parkin speaks of a process whereby Machiavelli shifts from free indirect speech to true indirect speech: “The confident projection of Borgia’s future successes...has been read as a piece of free indirect speech where Machiavelli adopts the persona of Cesare in a further variation on the dialogue of experienced diplomat with emergent ruler, whereupon in the next paragraph he recounts in true indirect speech his own conversations with the man where they discussed the mischance which laid him mortally ill at the moment of his father’s death, so rendering void all the plans described above” (Parkin 81-82).

157 With this ‘Lui mi disse’ we have a subtle reminder that Machiavelli was present during these events. See footnote 114. On this, Parkin comments “Finally, one can discern, here and elsewhere int he work, a subdominant dialogue between author and persona which helps to raise the text’s emotional tension? It arises from Machiavelli’s onslaught on his own self-doubt and aims to reassure himself that, despite his disgrace, his political credentials remain valid” (Parkin 82).

158 Following his father’s death (18 August 1503), opposed by the new pope Giulio II, Borgia sought protection from Consalvo di Corda in Naples, who had him arrested for treason and sent him to Spain (1504) where he remained imprisoned in the Castle of Chinchilla. Escaping this, he sought refuge in with Giovanni d’Albret in Pamplona. He died during an ambush at Viana on 12 March 1507, near Pamplona (Janni 108).
Machiavelli continues his exaltation with a long list of Borgia’s extraordinary accomplishments, which lay bare the successes he was able to achieve in a manner which is difficult to oppose:

Chi, adunque, iudica necessario nel suo principato nuovo assicurarsi de’ nimici, guadagnarsi degli amici, vincere o per forza o per fraude, farsi amare e temere da’ populi, seguire e reverire da’ soldati, spegnere quelli che ti possono o debbono offendere, innovare con nuovi modi gli ordini antiqui, essere severo e grato, magnanimo e liberale, spegnere la milizia infedele, creare della nuova, mantenere le amicizie de’ re e de’ principi in modo che ti abbino o a beneficare con grazia o offendere con respetto, non può trovare e’ più freschi esempi che le azioni di costui. (Il principe 268)

Every possible virtue of a prince has been attributed to Borgia and it is only a lack of fortune that saw him ultimately fail. The reader is met with an onslaught of praise in the form of a series of infinitives: assicurarsi; guadagnarsi; vincere; farsi amare, farsi temere; seguire o reverire; spegnere; innovare; essere severo e grato, magnanimo e liberale; creare, mantenere le amicizie.

In this manner, the reader is forced to capitulate to Machiavelli’s opinion of Borgia’s superiority, and in doing so, also tacitly accepting the violent methods used to achieve his success.

Machiavelli is careful to make of violence a precise and occasional tool, to be wielded only by those who are most worthy, as he demonstrates in Chapter VIII (Di quelli che per scelleratezze sono pervenuti al principato).
3.8 Crudeltà

Machiavelli censures the ancient example of Agathocles the Sicilian, and his methods:

“Non si può ancora chiamare virtù ammazzare e’ sua cittadini, tradire gli amici, essere senza fede, senza pietà, senza religione; li quali modi possono fare acquistare imperio, ma non gloria” (Il principe 269). Agathocles’ exploits include murder and betrayal (ammazzare; tradire; essere senza fede, pietà, religione), not unlike those of Borgia, however, the terms ‘ammazzare’ and ‘tradire’ are pointedly used, whereas for Borgia the euphemisms ‘spegnere’ and ‘condurre...alle sue mani’ were employed in their place. Furthermore, Machiavelli does not confer upon him the glory he had liberally bestowed upon Borgia for despite his successes: “[...] non dimanco, la sua efferata crudeltà e inumanità, con infinite scelleratezze, non consentono che sia infra gli eccellentissimi uomini celebrato” (Il principe 269). Machiavelli does credit Agathocles for employing those evils in a way that secured him the favour of the people, and prevented their uprising against him:

Credo che questo avvenga dalle crudeltà male usate o bene usate. Bene usate si possono chiamare quelle (se del male è licto dire bene) che si fanno a uno tratto, per la necessità dello assicurarsi, e di poi non vi si insiste drento, ma si convertiscono in più utilità de’ sudditi che si può. Male usate sono quelle le quali, ancora che nel principio sieno poche, più tosto col tempo crescono che le si spenghino. Coloro che osservano el

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159 Tyrant of Syracuse from 317 to 289 AC (cfr. Janni 117).

160 The term ‘omicidio’ is also used in the chapter in reference to Oliverotto da Fermo: “Dopo il quale omicidio montò Liverotto a cavallo, e corse la terra, e assediò nel palazzo el supremo magistrato; tanto che, per paura, furoo costretti obedirlo, e fermare uno governo del quale si fece principe” (Il principe 270).
primo modo, possono con Dio e con gli uomini avere allo stato loro qualche remedio, come ebbe Agatocle; quegli altri è impossibile si mantenghino.  (*Il principe* 270)

Perhaps sensing that such a declaration of justifiable evil would be unpalatable to his reader, Machiavelli punctuates his discourse with references meant to soften the blow: “se del male è licito dire bene.” Here again we have a cooling of the message with a request for permission to speak well of evil. With his use of ‘se,’ Machiavelli is in effect asking permission of his reader and this instantly renders the entire statement less offensive than if he had left out this pleasantry. We can imagine that the reader would have asked: “Come bene usate? Bene, si chiama il male?” Again, complicity is the key to this type of discourse, achieved through the cooling of the medium by increasing the involvement of reader participation.

### 3.9 Fortuna-virtù

Just as *Il principe* and Machiavelli-author exist as terms relative only to one another, so too the central binomial of *fortuna-virtù*, was put forth by Machiavelli not as individual concepts, but as a pairing. This is reinforced in the chiasmus employed in Chapter VI (*De’ principati nuovi che s’acquistano con l’arme proprie e virtuosamente*) which explains the manner in which virtuous princes (Moses, Cyrus, Romulus and Theseus) gained their state: “...e senza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e senza quella virtù la occasione sarebbe venuta invana” (*Il principe* 264). By entrenching these two terms, they become inextricably linked, so that their definition and operation is tandem: “Nel Principe, [...] la virtù coincide con la capacità dinamica e operativa di sostenere il contrasto con la “fortuna” e con la forza dei tempi” (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 664). Fortune loses the Dantean quality of Divine
Providence, and changes into a voluble creature characterized as a ruinous river. Fortune instead becomes “l’imprevedibilità delle circostanze, l’avvenimento fortuito in grado di abbattere il progetto umano” (Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 668). This is taken up by Machiavelli in an entirely new manner where virtù is no longer represented by the interior forces who oppose adversity, but by the will and capacity of political action, while fortune is the force that works against that political action (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 668).

Machiavelli has demonstrated their respective influences in the examples he chose to highlight in his treatise, showing how a lack of either virtù or fortuna will inevitably lead to ruination. Even as an exception to this Agathocles the Sicilian achieved his state only through infamy. This leads us to the explicit definition of fortuna in the penultimate chapter of Il

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161 “La fortuna in Dante diviene ministra della volontà di Dio, intelligenza celeste e provvidenziale che amministra i beni del mondo secondo disegni imperscrutabili ai quali nessuna ragione umana può resistere. Non è una divinità capricciosa e crudele, dunque, come nella tradizione pagana, ma un’intelligenza angelica posta infinitamente al di sopra delle capacità interpretative dei mortali” (Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 668).


163 “Il significato del binomio virtù-fortuna nel Principe corrisponde al conflitto fra l’abilità dei soggetti politici e la sfera d’influenza dei condizionamenti storici oggettivi e imponderabili che essi devono fronteggiare” (Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 668).
principe: Quanto possa la fortuna nelle cose umane e in che modo se li abbia a resistere.

Machiavelli opens by acknowledging the Providential view on fortune:\footnote{164}{On the ambivalence of this opening, Paolini sees a Machiavelli who is unsure of his own opinion, and is trying to convince himself, as much as the reader: "A me sembra invece che anche questa, come altre ambivalenze (non diciamo contraddizioni) sia da ricondurre a una più profonda perplessità, a un precedente dibattito, tutto interno alla mente di Machiavelli, di cui egli tende a far trasparire poco, per timore di non sembrare abbastanza convincente. La perentorietà di certe sue asserzioni è insomma frutto di una sopravvenuta volontà di persuadersi per poter meglio persuadere il lettore (che è poi il principe nuovo) all’azione" (Paolini 55). Paolini goes on to cite a letter to Vettori on 15 December 1514 in which he continues to ponder the on the topic after having read Giovannni Pontano’s De Fortuna, and Paolini concludes “[q]uindi dentro di lui, la questione della Fortuna non era affatto risolta una volta per tutte all’altezza del dicembre 1514; a fortiori non era risolta definitivamente neppure un anno primo, quando scriveva il Principe. Un dibattito interno in lui c’era stato e c’era ancora, su questo e su altri punti” (Paolini 55). To this, we could add that our author could have also employed this ambivalence as a way of acknowledging the current theory, before asking his reader to believe something contradictory. In this way, Machiavelli would have wanted to demonstrate that he is indeed well-versed in the conventional theory, and still wishes to propose a new one. Therefore, it can be seen as a dialogical element, rather than Machiavelli just rehearsing his own uncertainties, and one that would have certainly won him the favour of his reader, and increased his participation in the debate, and consequently the text.}

E’ non mi è incognito come molti hanno avuto e hanno opinione che le cose del mondo sieno in modo governate dalla fortuna e da Dio, che gli uomini con la prudenzia loro non possino correggerle, anzi non vi abbino remedio alcuno; e per questo potrebbono iudicare che non fussi da insudare molto nelle cose, ma lasciarsi governare alla sorte. (\textit{Il principe} 295)

He ultimately dismisses this notion, claiming both free will and fortune almost equally share in the determination of our actions.\footnote{165}{Nondimanco, perché il nostro libero arbitrio non sia spento, iudico potere essere vero che la fortuna sia arbitra della metà delle azioni nostre, ma che etiam lei ne lasci governare l’altra metà, o presso, a noi (\textit{Il principe} 295).} With the employment of the pronoun ‘noi’, Machiavelli adds another bridge between the text and the reader.\footnote{166}{Di Maria sees the NOI pronoun as an intention to win the consensus of the interlocutor. The person speaking is certainly the IO, but the subject of the enunciation is ‘noi’ namely IO and VOI. The VOI serves a different function here: “Qui il VOI non è chiamato a giudicare o a valutare il pensiero di IO, come nel caso di “considerate,” ma è promosso a co-autore dell’enunciazione e del pensiero. Strategia, questa, distintamente affettiva in quanto tende a coinvolgere l’interlocutore nel proprio discorso.” (Di Maria 78).} This is an explicit call for him to ‘join-in’ on the conversation of a force with affects us all. Hope is supplied by way of the relinquishment of half our destiny to ourselves ‘\textit{a noi.’}
Alongside hope, Machiavelli also supplies solutions for opposing this force. In likening fortune to ruinous rivers who indiscriminately become enraged and leave destruction in their wakes, Machiavelli advises to take precautions during calmer weather. These precautions consisting of embankments and dikes may not be able to completely avoid damage, however, they can mitigate it. In an analogous manner, virtù is seen as the precautionary weapon against fortuna:

Similmente interviene della fortuna; la quale dimostra la sua potenzia dove non è ordinata virtù a resisterle; e quivi volta li sua impeti dove la sa che non sono fatti gli argini e li ripari a tenerla. (Il principe 295)

The second solution is to mimic fortuna’s variability by changes as she changes:

Credo, ancora, che sia felice quello che riscontra el modo del procedere suo con le qualità de’ tempi, e similmente sia infelice quello che con il procedere suo si discordano e’ tempi. (Il principe 295-296)

This type of procedure would require a change in one’s character which Machiavelli admits is not readily achievable, as the existence of such a prudent man is doubtful, mainly due to the difficulty in modifying one’s nature. In order to extricate himself from this no-win situation, Machiavelli offers this concluding advice:

Concludo, adunque, che variando la fortuna, e stando gli uomini ne’ loro modi ostinati, sono felici mentre concordano insieme, e, come discordano, infelici. Io iudico bene

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167 È benché sono così fatti, non resta però che gli uomini, quando sono tempi quieti, non vi potessino fare provvedimenti, e con ripari e argini, in modo che, crescendo poi, o egli andrebbero per uno canale, o l’impeto loro non sarebbe né si licenzioso né si dannoso (Il principe 295).

168 Né si trova uomo si prudente, che si sappi accomodare a questo; si perché non si può deviare da quello a che la natura lo inclina; si etiam perché, avendo sempre uno prosperato camminando per una via, non si può persuadere partirsì da quella. E però l’uomo respettivo, quando egli è tempo di venire allo impeto, non lo sa fare; donde rovina; ché se si mutassi di natura con li tempi e con le cose, non si muterebbe fortuna (Il principe 296).
In explaining fortune, Machiavelli devises a labyrinth of possibilities which often lead to dead-ends, as noted in the above citations. It is only Machiavelli who can provide the necessary information in order to escape from this maze. As a medium, Chapter XXV is much hotter than the ones which have been examined thus far, due to the amount of information provided to the reader; it requires less participation than acquiescence. Machiavelli is still able to capture his reader with the inclusion of the pronoun ‘noi’ as noted above. He also smartly tempers his onslaught of information and avoids ‘panic’ of the medium by offering solutions and exits to the dim prospect of destiny as personified by a violent and turbulent river, or a fickle woman. Either of these concepts would have greatly distressed the reader, but Machiavelli ‘cools’ this down with his explicit advice, which as a hot agent contained the potential to be rejected, but instead, in this context, is gladly accepted.

3.10 Chapter XXVI: A call to action

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169 Caretti praises Machiavelli’s inventive use of the ruinous rivers and the woman: “non ricorrendo alle ormai stilizzate figure allegoriche della tradizione letteraria e figurativa classica e medievale, bensì dando vita, corpo e sangue, sulla scena, a due forti immagini tratte dall’osservazione delle forze naturali e della psicologia umana: il fiume tumultuoso che straripa e tutto travolge, ma è frenabile dall’uomo con opportune opere di difesa preventiva, e la donna che ama essere battuta da giovani animosi e piegarsi docile ai loro comandi” (38).

170 Sapegno highlights Machiavelli’s dominance in the text, and links it to his desire to affect change through a true understanding of the world: “è lui che ha da dire, da analizzare, da ammonire. È lui che trae regole, che ordina, che si rifà ad una tradizione per selezionare sprejudicatamente, svelare gli inganni dell’ideologia, riportare provocatoriamente al reale, all’esigenza di conoscere per cambiare” (Sapegno 977).
Containing the final Exhortatio, Chapter XXVI has often been cited as the chapter which distinguishes itself from the preceding twenty-five. Parkin writes:

One reason for this distinction is the fact that the dialogue climaxing there (an impassioned address to Italians at large) is so unlike much of the textual patterning encountered elsewhere [...] The dialogue evoked is with a subjectively predisposed supporter who will cheer on the author’s points, converting the optimistic statements about Italy’s readiness for self-birth into a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Parkin 75)

We can agree with Parkin that the reader of this chapter is a “subjectively predisposed supporter”, however this does not have to also lead us to conclude that the chapter is, dialogically speaking, much different from its predecessors. Machiavelli is still employing those same strategies that proved successful, namely cooling down the medium by increasing the reader’s participation.

In order to examine this, we consider the following passage, early on in Chapter XXVI (Esordazione a pigliare la Italia e liberarla dalle mani de’ barbari):

E se, come io dissi, era necessario, volendo vedere la virtù di Moisè, che il popolo d’Isdrael fussi stiavo in Egitto; e a conoscere la grandezza dello animo di Ciro, ch’e’ Persi fussino oppressati da’ Medi, e la eccellenza di Teseo, che gli Ateniesi fussino dispersi; così, al presente, volendo conoscere la virtù di uno spirito italiano, era necessario che la Italia si riducessi nel termine che ella è di presente, e che la fussi più stiava che gli Ebrei, più serva ch’ e’ Persi, più dispersa che gli Ateniesi; sanza capo,

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171 On this same topic, Luperini and Cataldi write “I venticinque capitoli precedenti sono caratterizzati dalla metodologia rigorosamente logica. Il ventiseiesimo, invece, si contraddistingue per una forzatura dell’andamento lucidamente ragionativo dominante nell’intera opera e per la prevalenza dell’aspetto emotivo” (Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 663).
sanza ordine; battuta, spogliata, lacera, corsa; ed avessi sopportato d’ogni sorte ruina.

(Il principe 297)

Contained in this paragraph is the example of the Ancients, so prized by Machiavelli and designed to lend authority and validity to his argument; the comparison with the events of modern day, which Machiavelli has demonstrated himself an expert; and finally the vivid depiction of an Italy who now finds herself in worse situations than all these Ancients combined. Borrowing on what he has been developing and creating from the very first lines of treatise, Machiavelli’s final chapter is indeed a climaxing not only of the content, but of the form he has championed throughout the text. Before anything is explicitly asked of the reader, the foundations are laid to ensure the reader is thoroughly convinced of Machiavelli’s reliability, and ultimately his authority in matters political.

Machiavelli also employs an example of verità effettuale in declaring that the saviour of Italy will be a man, and thus should not fear to imitate these great examples, for they too were human beings:

E benché quegli uomini sieno rari e maravigliosi, nondimanco furono uomini, ed ebbe ciascuno di loro minore occasione che la presente; perché la impresa loro non fu più iusta di questa, né più facile, né fu a loro Dio più amico che a voi. (Il principe 297)

Machiavelli uses the summary tool in order to guide the reader to where he needs to be; as in the example below where the importance of native troops is championed:

Di qui nasce che, in tanto tempo, in tante guerre fatte ne’ passati venti anni, quando egli è stato uno esercito tutto italiano, sempre ha fatto mala pruova. Di che è testimone prima el Taro, di poi Alessandria, Capua, Genova, Vailà, Bologna, Mestri. (Il principe 297)
All of this to support the final break from ordinances and precepts, where emotion finally spills out in a series of impassioned questions:

Né posso esprimere con quale amore e’ fussi ricevuto in tutte quelle provincie che hanno patito per queste illuvioni esterne; con che sete di vendetta, che lacrime. Quali porte se gli serrerebbero? quali popoli gli negherebbero la obbedienza? quale invidia se gli opporrebbe? quale Italiano gli negherebbe l’ossequio? *(Il principe 298)*

It would be impossible to ignore the theatrical element of this passage, as one could easily imagine a sole actor on stage with only a spotlight to illuminate his figure. Even the questions asked, have a single answer, namely a resounding ‘no’: no doors would be closed to him; no people would deny him obedience; no jealousy would oppose him; no Italian would deny him homage. Here we have the last bit of participation from the reader and Machiavelli makes it impossible to resist, so that he can end his treatise in the same manner he begun, with an overt directive to the Prince to take up the mission which Machiavelli had painstakingly outlined for twenty-six chapters:

Pigli, adunque, la illustre casa vostra questo assunto con quello animo e con quella speranza che si pigliano le imprese iuste; acciò che, sotto la sua insegna, e questa patria ne sia nobilitata, e, sotto li sua auspizi, si verifichi quel detto del Petrarca:

Virtù contro a furore

prenderà l’arme, e fia el combatter corto;

ché l’antico valore

nell’italici cor non è ancor morto. *(Il principe 298)*

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172 On this *perorazione finale*, Caretti writes “non è da considerarsi come un’aggiunta posticcia, una concessione retorica, ma piuttosto come un momento essenziale della meditazione machiavelliana. Momento che—poggiando sulla speranza inesausta in un rimedio, pur nella coscienza dell’immensità della crisi e delle catastrofi—potenzia all’estremo, anche nelle forme dissuete nel Machiavelli della più alta eloquenza espressiva, la fede nella «politca», e quindi nella risurrezione del popolo italiano per virtù di un grande principe” (41).
Now, we can accept one of the weak rejoinders which maligned his two other discourses, but here Machiavelli has proved to be appropriate: “Egli è il vero, e io ho torto” (*Discorso intorno alla lingua* 928).

### 3.11 From *Il principe* to *Mandragnola*

Machiavelli infused his treatise with dialogical elements at a time when treatises on these subjects were completely devoid of those elements.\(^{173}\) Therefore while not being a proper dialogue, it still contains many dialogic elements. Paolini refers to it as “una tendenza latente al dialogo, quasi un dibattito e un contraddittorio interno al testo, forse addirittura interno alla psiche dell’autore, in una sorta di foro interno” (Paolini 51).\(^{174}\) We do not necessarily need to consider whether or not Machiavelli was rehearsing a debate that was being waged in his own psyche, or (as Michael McCanles has), contemplate the nature and functions of the contradictions in the text.\(^{175}\) What we will consider is the method he employed to express his theories, and how they condition or inform our reading of the text. On this method, we can agree with McCanles that Machiavelli employed a “free indirect discourse”, which is

namely, discourse that through style, ideological content, tone, or syntactical markers

(or some combination of these), can be plausibly assigned to two different speakers

\(^{173}\) “It is then curious, but for our purposes vitally significant, that a work which emerges from a thoroughly didactic tradition (humanist prince literature) in which the interlocutor occupies an impregnable moral and intellectual position knowing all the answers and disbursing his knowledge, tediously as so predictably, to a passive recipient, should in fact be invigorated with so many dialogic patterns” (Parkin 85-86).

\(^{174}\) Paolini even sees the justification for the dialogic elements in this treatise, as mirroring the process that a wise prince should follow, namely to learn to take his counsellors’ advice: “Ecco la giustificazione del nucleo dialogico da cui idealmente si irradiia l’intero trattatello: il consigliere e il principe devono dialogare, il principe deve essere «domandatore» e saper ascoltare; e tutto intorno la cerchia dell’udienza si allarga alla vasta schiera dei lettori tesi all’ascolto, non solo allora, ma nei secoli. La struttura del trattato dunque cela (ma non poi troppo) una trama di dialogo inintermesso, tra lui, il principe, noi”

\(^{175}\) One of the many examples can be found on pg. 26 of McCanles text, *The Discourse of Il Principe*. 
simultaneously. Free indirect discourse stands between indirect discourse on the one hand and direct discourse on the other. The latter two types of discourse are recognizable as versions respectively of the diegetic and mimetic modes. As regards narration, diegetic discourse is assignable to the narrator himself, wherein he describes a person or scene and recounts events in his own person and from the outside. Mimetic discourse is “showing” as distinct from “telling,” and in narrative fiction is usually identified with the directly quoted speech of a character. Free indirect discourse, however, combines both kinds of discourse in such a way that the text is assignable both to narrator and to a character in the narrated story. (McCanles 34-35)

We consider carefully McCanles’s assessment as we contemplate how closely Machiavelli achieves the mimetic mode of discourse in *Il principe*. The text’s approximation of the mimetic discourse has been identified by Parkin as the surfacing of the latent dialogue (cfr. Parkin 78). Di Maria sees the potential for a communicative structure that could be called theatrical:

*dove l’autore (IO) comunica con lo spettatore (VOI) tramite la scena (microdialogo IO--MOLTI). A questo proposito non si può fare a meno di non pensare alla performatività (teatrale) del discorso dell’IO con tutti i suoi “giuro...rispondo...voglio discorrere,” e alla funzione spaziale (scenica) di deittici come: io, voi, noi, mi, ti, nostro, questo, ciò, eccetera. (Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 77)*

For Di Maria this does more than demonstrate the argumentative passion of IO, it also serves to “dominare l’emozione e l’attenzione dell’interlocutore. L’effetto voluto è appunto quello di

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176 For Carlo Dionisotti, Machiavelli does not approximate this, he achieves this in *Il principe*: “Si nota insomma uno sviluppo drammatico, dal monologo al dialogo, dal discorso alla rappresentazione...” (Dionisotti 107).

177 “Now, however, from being latent, the dialogue surfaces, Machiavelli (a playwright after all) even giving it a kind of dramatic form...” (Parkin 78).
sopraffare l’attività ermeneutica dell’interlocutore, predisponendolo ad accettare gratuitamente il messaggio” (Di Maria, “La struttura dialogica” 77-78). The process of wanting to overwhelm the interlocutor’s method of interpretation, in order to predispose him to readily accept the message could be understood as the cooling down of the treatise-medium, as we have discussed throughout this chapter. The high level of reader participation which Machiavelli demands of his reader in *Il principe*, has translated into several different forms, and allows Machiavelli to present his message in a more palatable, and ultimately more convincing way, as he is not overwhelming the reader with information, but providing just enough in order to draw the reader into his narrative. Once inside, the reader is compelled to ‘fill in the blanks’ left out by our author, and in doing so the reader becomes complicit in the plot, increasing greatly the chance of the message, not only being received, but accepted and internalized. The dialogical elements that have contributed to this ‘cooling’ process require someone to furnish their completeness, and this is essentially the difference between hot and cold prose. McLuhan offers yet another explanation of this contrast with the example of Francis Bacon:

Francis Bacon never tired of contrasting hot and cold prose. Writing in “methods” or complete packages, he contrasted with writing in aphorisms, or single observations such as “Revenge is a kind of wild justice.” The passive consumer wants packages, but those, he suggested, who are concerned in pursuing knowledge and seeking causes will resort to aphorisms, just because they are incomplete and require participation in depth.

(*Understanding Media* 49)

The aphorism is the quintessential open message, and as such is the coolest of the cool media. Machiavelli’s *Il principe* contains many such aphorisms, and does an excellent job of presenting
itself as a riddle to be solved in the manner described by McLuhan above. Too numerous to mention, we highlight only a few:

Pertanto a uno principe è necessario sapere bene usare la bestia e l’uomo. *(Il principe* 283)

[...] perché gli uomini sdimenticano più presto la morte del padre che la perdita del patrimonio. *(Il principe* 282)

E gli uomini, in universali, iudicanò più agli occhi che alle mani; perché tocca a vedere ognuno, a sentire a pochi Ognuno vede quello che tu pari, pochi sentono quello che tu se’. *(Il principe* 284)

[...] perché quello del populo è più onesto fine che quello de’ grandi, volendo questi opprimere e quello non essere oppresso. *(Il principe* 271)

[...] e sono tanto semplici gli uomini, e tanto obediscano alle necessità presenti, che colui che inganna, troverà sempre chi si lascerà ingannare. *(Il principe* 283).178

Each one does not offer tidy answers, but invites further reflection, speculation, objection and a desire to provide meaning, to reconcile any apparent contradictions; in short to participate in the discussion which Machiavelli has rendered irresistible. An obligation is created for the reader to participate, and the effectiveness of this method can be attested by the popularity of Machiavelli’s text the world over, which has continued virtually unabated for centuries. The content becomes almost irrelevant, as the manner in which it is presented, permits a large variety of interpretations to be sustained. While the content has certainly fascinated, it is also the manner in which the content was communicated or (to say it with Di Maria) dramatized, which

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178 On this aphorisms, Caretti writes that they contain “il sapore delle antiche massime proverbiali e in forme estremamente ellittiche, tutta la scienza mondana del Machiavelli, l’essenza delle verità scoperte e indagate durante il lungo e acuto sperimentare gli uomini e i loro comportamenti. È in fondo una sorta di sintetica di radioscopia, tanto lucida quanto impietosa, dei vizi e delle debolezze dell’umana natura” (39).
has enhanced this effect. Dionisotti identifies a movement from Machiavelli being the sole actor on stage, to now residing behind the stage:

> Anche è a prima vista notevole il trapasso da un discorso personale, come nel *Principe* e nei *Discorsi*, in cui l’autore è attore, solo personaggio in scena, a una rappresentazione di idee e di fatti che l’autore promuove e dirige stando dietro le quinte, intervenendo sulla scena eccezionalmente, fra un atto e l’altro...” (Dionisotti 107)

We can observe this process already beginning in *Il principe*, whereby while we do not have the sharply-defined characters of a play, we have their shadowy allusions which Machiavelli has used to full-advantage to advance the narrative of this text. The characters, scenes and the latent dialogue in this ‘princely’ drama captivate and inform the reader as Machiavelli blurs the lines between expert dialogician and skillful playwright. These lines are blurred again by Machiavelli in 1518 when he writes his celebrated comedy *Mandragola.*
Chapter 4 - *Mandragola*

4.1 The dialogic elements in the *commedia*

“[...] le tragedie e le commedie propriamente sono l’imitazioni dell’azioni, ma ’l dialogo è imitazione di ragionamento” (Tasso, *Dell’arte del dialogo* 41). With this quote, Tasso provides the fundamental similarity between theatre and dialogue, namely that they both are imitations or extensions of either human action or human thought respectively. Sperone Speroni emphasized their similarity by also noting their reliance on imitation where each character must be embodied as they should be, despite their status (cfr. Speroni 267).

At their core, these two genres are both representative of a fiction, or a series of fictitious conversations, that strive to make these interactions as realistic as possible. An affinity between these two genres has also been maintained by contemporary theorists who include theatre as one of the genres which impinge upon the definition of dialogue. With this notion of imitation we can agree with Carla Forno that “nella commedia come nel dialogo, i personaggi sono maschere e rimandano agli interlocutori reali senza poterli incarnare” (Forno 216). We can apply a similar analysis to analyzing theatre as we did to analyzing dialogue, namely by asking such questions as why have these particular characters been chosen?; what do they say?; who can they represent beyond the

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179 “ogni dialogo sente non poco della commedia. dunque siccome nelle commedie varie persone vengono in scena, e molte d’esse non molto buone...e parla ognuno da quel che egli è, o pare essere; e se parlassè altrimenti, non ostante che egli dicesse di buone cose, male farebbe il suo officio e spiacerebbe al teatro: così il dialogo ben formato, siccome è quel di Platone, ha molti e vari interlocutori, che tal ragionano, quale è il costume e la vita, che ciascun d’essi ci rappresenta” (Speroni 267).

180 See footnote 3 on the hybrid nature of dialogue.
Ferroni makes this link even clearer when he writes “Ogni dialogo è in realtà collegato ad una messa in scena, si costituisce in una rappresentazione” (Ferroni 20).

No matter how great the performance element of even the most lively dialogue, it cannot match the performance of the play. Again, we turn to Tasso to outline the essential difference between dialogue and theatre, namely while both imitate facets of human expression, the latter imitates thought or reasoning while the former imitates action. This differentiation will permit us to modify our analysis of the dialogist’s mode of communication, so that we can now take into account a genre that not only imitates action, but is also intended for a broader audience than the reader we have identified thus far.

With the theatre we have a movement of setting from the page to the stage. Forno calls attention to this change, declaring that in doing so, theatre now belongs to a different dimension:

Se il dialogo è pura conversazione, la sua trasposizione in genere teatrale comporta la proiezione in una diversa dimensione, in un processo di esteriorizzazione che attinge al reale per visualizzare sulla scena ciò che, nel testo, è affidato alla scrittura” (Forno 224).

Carla Forno identifies the elements these two genres have in common: “Incidono sul dialogo, pertanto, la scelta e la disposizione degli interlocutori; la loro attitudine a porsi non solo, astrattamente, come portatori di idee nel confronto dialettico, ma concretamente in uno spazio individuato in base a parametri reali; la successione diretta delle battute, precedute, secondo l’esempio platonico e ciceroniano, dalle sigle dei nomi, con la conseguente scomparsa della “cornice” introduttiva”; la strutturazione stessa degli interventi, talvolta concepiti teatralmente come “a parte” rispetto alla conversazione in corso, in un’alternanza di dialogo e “dialogismo”, cioè secondo l’accezione retorica dei termini, di reale e apparente comunicazione; l’accento a un minimo di gestualità durante il colloquio, o il ricorso ad espedienti teatrali” (Forno 217-218).

Ferroni identifies this relationship or rapport as the defining characteristic of theatre, and in turn this relationship affects the linguistic dialogue: “il dialogo teatrale è comunque determinato dal suo rapporto con la scena; e il rapporto con la scena ha un interesse fondamentale anche per la ricostruzione delle procedure e delle situazioni del dialogo linguistico, nelle stesse forme che assume nella vita quotidiana” (Ferroni 20). Di Maria identifies this difference as follows: “More specifically, unlike prose narratives, which represent their world through verbal constructs, theater relies chiefly on visual and audible precepts, such as physical appearance, tone of voice, gestures, movements, sounds, and other stage peculiarities” (Di Maria “From prose to stage” 132).
The description that was necessary on the page, and thus entrusted solely to the mind’s eye, is now perceived by the eye. Speroni acknowledges the effect this has on the audience members, more so than when in the dialogue the writer introduces other characters to speak:

Nè solamente la poesia amorosa è professione sofistica, ma la odiosa e la bellica
della tragedia e della epopea; che non è altro, se non di rado, che ira a morte di gran
signori; introducendo il poeta questo e quell’altro a parlare, per imitarlo con le parole:
è, veramente parlando, sofisteria della istoria. e [sic] questa allora giunge alla cima del
suo parlare, quando ella è in scena rappresentata; imitandosi nel teatro non pur la voce,
ma il volto ancora del movimento della persona, e il pianto e il sangue delli infelici.
la [sic] qual suprema sofisteria tanto ha di forza nei spettatori tanto ha di forza nei
spettatori, che bagna loro abbondantemente le guancie e il petto di vere lagrime: e, che
è cosa meravigliosa, essi vinti da tale inganno bene conosciuto, mentre si dolgono e si
lamentano, così gioiscono di quel pianto, come del riso nelle commedie (Speroni 366).

The immersion to which the theatre subjects its audience allows for a more visceral response from them, and as a communal activity, this response is enhanced even further.  

4.2 The commedia as a medium

Seen in this light, the theatre is a complex medium in terms of sensorial involvement, thanks to its ability to supply users with a variety of information. This carries with it significant implications, in terms of defining the “temperatures” of the two media (dialogue and theatre) in

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183 On the advantage that action has in the commedia, Sumberg adds an ability for it, as a medium, to convey more dangerous opinions, which Machiavelli employs in Mandragola by way of the many disguises worn by the characters: “For though we hesitate to say shameful things and even hesitate to put shameful things in the mouths of others, we may take the smaller risk of having other people, masked and in the night, do shameful things. Since a play has more action than dialogue, it is even a more excellent medium for dangerous opinions” (Sumberg 338-339).
relation to one another. The writer of the dialogue increases user participation in his work by supplying a series of characters who are employed to transmit his message. In order to understand the totality of the message, the reader must evaluate essentially whether a particular character has been entrusted to act as the *portavoce* for the author, or as its antagonist. This type of non-linear exposition requires a high level of interpretation, which increases the reader’s participation in a work, especially when we compare it to the more linear exposition of the treatise genre, for example, effectively making the dialogue a much cooler medium. The *commedia*, at its core, is also a dialogue, and as such, possesses all the cooling characteristics of the dialogic genre. To this, the *commedia* also adds the visual element as Speroni described above, which requires an even greater amount of interpretation from the reader, which makes the *commedia* even cooler than the dialogue. The dramatist has the advantage over the writer in this aspect, as McLuhan points out: “The writer [...] has no means of holding a mass of detail before his reader in a large bloc or *gestalt*” (McLuhan, *Understanding Media* 387). This *gestalt* of information presented on the stage, requires a greater amount of involvement from the audience member in order to interpret what is happening, than the two-dimensional information presented to a reader on the written page. For this reason, the audience member provides more input to the theatrical performance, than the reader would provide to the written dialogue, thus making

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184 On the visual cues that need to be supplied in TV, and on stage in comparison to film, McLuhan rates TV and the stage as cooler: “The stage and TV can make do with very rough approximations, because they offer an image of low definition that evades detailed scrutiny” (*Understanding Media* 387). He reaches this conclusion after highlighting the detail that is needed to recreate settings on film, and the unforgiving nature of the camera eye. McLuhan recounts T.S. Eliot’s comments on the making of the film *Murder in the Cathedral*: “it was not only necessary to have costumes of the period, but--so great is the precision and tyranny of the camera eye--these costumes had to be woven by the same techniques as those used in the twelfth century. Hollywood, amidst much illusion, had also to provide authentic scholarly replicas of many past scenes” (*Understanding Media* 387). It is important to remember therefore, that ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ are always to be perceived as relative terms.

185 Di Maria outlines the difference between the prose narrative and theater: “More specifically, unlike prose narratives, which represent their world through verbal constructs, theater relies chiefly on visual and audible precepts, such as physical appearance, tone of voice, gestures, movements, sounds, and other stage peculiarities” (Di Maria “From prose to stage” 132).
the play cooler than the dialogue. The increased involvement by the audience member versus the reader is not only measured by the amount of information needed to be interpreted by the latter over the former, but also by the type of information it provides.

The suspension of disbelief necessary for dialogue is not achieved on stage, as no one is fooled into believing they are watching a transcription of real-life events. In a dialogue, the reader, with the author’s assistance and guidance, conjures up images of the characters and the setting in which the conversation took place. The characters which the reader’s mind brings into being, are not actors playing a part (as they will be in the theatrical production), but the evocation of what the author intended. In the theatrical production, an actor embodies the character on the page, and essentially gives them a three-dimensional aspect which is impossible of the mental image produced by the reader. This three-dimensional embodiment might have the advantage in being able to provide a more realistic portrayal of a character, it is not something that goes unnoticed by the audience. They realize that the stage is a fictitious place, and that the actors are not the characters created by the author, for at best, they stand in place of them, albeit convincingly. The audience is aware that the actor is an intermediary, and as a result, the actor’s portrayal must now be taken into account by the spectator. Essentially, it must be interpreted by the spectator in a way that the reader would not need to interpret the mental image of the character they have created. This added, necessary almost imposed level of interpretation increases the user’s participation in the commedia and consequently makes it cooler than the dialogue.

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186 Di Maria comments on this process: “Formally, a large cast fulfills the theatrical necessity to dramatize in physical terms characters and situations that can only be imagined when reading a story. In prose fiction, characters exist only as verbal constructs and act out their parts in the reader’s mind. In theater, instead, they rise to their full essence through their physical presence and deportment. They appear not as the reader may imagine them, but as the playwright wishes the audience to see them” (Di Maria, “From prose to stage” 146).
Furthermore, the audience in a theatrical production is the only one to be unaware of the ending of a play; unlike in a dialogue, the actors are aware not only of the outcome, but also of the «percorso» dialogico which will lead to that outcome (cfr. Meneghetti 92).  

The idea that the theatrical production betrays an artificiality which the written dialogue does not is highlighted by Meneghetti, whereby the dialogo teatrale is meant that which is performed on stage, versus the dialogo poetico, which is one intended only to be read:

Mentre il dialogo teatrale non giunge mai [...] a spingere lo spettatore alla cosiddetta sospensione dell’incredulità, non giunge cioè mai a dargli l’illusione che quanto accade sulla scena abbia lo stesso statuto della realtà vissuta, il dialogo poetico, sia esso più sottilemente nascosto in quei testi che dialettizzano voci poetiche diverse, si svolge in un contesto comunicativo che punta decisamente verso l’illusione, verso la confusione fra realtà vissuta e finzione poetica. (Meneghetti 92)

For this reason, we can agree with Michel Le Guern when he uses ‘truth’ to distinguish between dialogue and theatre, explaining that (while the characters are fictitious in both genres) in the theatre the statements made by the characters are true only within the boundaries of the play, while the statements made by the characters in a dialogue are boundary-less and therefore their truth value is also applicable to the real world (cfr. Le Guern 142).

187 “nella performance teatrale è solo il pubblico ad ignorare, per statuto suo proprio, tanto lo sviluppo della vicenda che gli viene presentata quanto il «percorso» dialogico attraverso il quale tale vicenda andrà a compimento, laddove gli attori-emittenti conoscono fin dall’inizio il testo nella sua interezza, nel dialogico poetico, in linea di principio, nemmeno i protagonisti immaginano l’esito della loro composizione a più voci, anche se, ora l’uno ora l’altro, ne diventano gli arbitri” (Meneghetti 92).

188 In cautioning against a simplistic conclusion that dialogue and theatre are synonymous, Ferroni writes“Ciò non significa che si possa porre una semplicistica equivalenza tra dialogo e scena” (Ferroni 20).

189 “On peut remarquer un autre trait commun au dialogue et à l’œuvre de théâtre: les personnages, même dans le cas où ils sont la représentation de personnes véritables, sont des créations de fiction...Mais, si l’on examine les propos eux-mêmes, la différence essentielle apparaît: alors que, dans l’œuvre de théâtre, les propos échangés prennent [sic] leur valeur de vérité--au sens des logiciens--sur l’univers fictif défini par les personnages, le dialogue se distingue par le fait que les propos échangés prennent leur valeur de vérité sur l’univers réel” (Le Guern 142).
contained world, the author of the theatrical production requires more of his consumer than the
author of the dialogue, as the latter will need to process and interpret this creation before it can
be understood. There is no confusion between the “realtà vissuta e finzione poetica” as
Meneghetti mentions in the above citation (and as is the case for the dialogic genre) therefore the
commedia creates a world unto itself, and in so doing increases the involvement of the spectator
to interpret that creation, which makes of the theatrical production a cooler medium than the
dialogue.

4.3 Machiavelli and his Mandragola

Machiavelli’s Mandragola is a bold and fearless play, which takes full advantage of the
theater’s removal from the real world. For Machiavelli and his Mandragola, this permits him to
be bold and fearless in the staged spectacle. The medium of theatre itself allows the author to
take liberties with accepted notions of taste and decorum. On this Sumberg justly writes:

A man writing in his own name can easily condemn himself, but writing in the name of
others he can ward off blows and thus speak more boldly. He can even adopt several
noms de plume. A play is but a whole set of assumed names. So in fact is a dialogue,
and the opportunity that the dialogue gave Plato the comedy gives to Machiavelli
(Sumberg 338).

Machiavelli does not only use this to his advantage in order to supply the burlesque or ‘low’
elements of the play, he also uses it to allow speak more freely and frankly on other topics as
well. In order to do so, however, Machiavelli needs to deftly navigate those sections or passages
of his commedia which require greater or lesser user participation in order to successfully convey
his message. He clearly demonstrated his ability to use the reader as accomplice in Il principe by
adhering to the principles of a cooler medium. With Mandragola, we will have the opportunity to observe how he handles an even cooler medium, one which lends itself to an even greater amount of interpretation. Scholars of Machiavelli have been equally delighted and frustrated by Mandragola and have often sought to make sense of the work, and contextualize it among his other writings. One of the reasons for their frustration, is that just below the surface of this light-hearted comedy, there are echoes of his political works which cannot be ignored.\textsuperscript{190} We can, however, treat the work as a medium (in the manner we have applied in previous chapters), in order to determine not only its method of communication, but also potentially illuminate any message contained therein. The challenge Mandragola presents is that it is not a linear exposition of ideas, but rather a kaleidoscope, not only of phrases and maxims, but of actions as well. They interact, or dialogue with one another, in a way that warrants careful analysis.\textsuperscript{191} If Mandragola is not, structurally speaking, a traditional dialogue, just underneath its surface lies an exchange of ideas worthy of the genre. To decipher this, we begin with its ‘frame’.

Written in 1518,\textsuperscript{192} we are now five years after the composition of Il principe, and in this time, Machiavelli has spent his life in political seclusion, and was not able to regain a post with

\textsuperscript{190} Jean Claude Zancarini examines the relationship between the comedic and the political in his 2004 article, whereby he examines how Machiavelli-author has read and assimilated Machiavelli-politician: “le Machiavel auteur comique a lu et assimilé le Machiavel politique” (Zancarini 21). Zancarini goes on to say that these auto-citations are essentially a wink to the reader which signifies a passage from the “serious” to the “facetious”: “Certaines de ces auto-citations sont essentiellement des clins d’œil qui soulignent le passage d’un domaine sérieux à un domaine facetieux” (Zancarini 21-22). Zancarini concludes that they are illustrations of the central theses of Il principe: “celle-ci est une illustration de thèses centrales du Prince qui deviennent ici le substrat même du fonctionnement comique e du système des personnages” (Zancarini 23).

\textsuperscript{191} Zancarini claims that the commedia plays with the political, and with the language of the political, in a comedic environment: “La Mandragore joue avec la politique, avec le langage de la politique, avec les thèses politiques de son auteur” (Zancarini 30). He sees the laughter as part of the political criticism: “Car le rire est bien, chez Machiavel, une tonalité récurrente de l’analyse et de la critique politique...Un rire grinçant, sarcastique, qui est une arme de la critique” (Zancarini 39).

\textsuperscript{192} The reliance of this date is verified by several scholars including Luperini and Cataldi (Vol. I 657); Najemy (xvi) and Bonino (v). Sergio Bertelli’s 1971 article “When did Machiavelli write Mandragola” outlines the scholarship dedicated to the dating of the play.
the Medici, which he had so obviously desired. Mandragola’s links with the works of Terence, Plautus and Boccaccio have been well-established, as well as to the famed correspondence between Machiavelli and Francesco Vettori. Against this backdrop, we read the opening stanza of the canzone which inaugurates the play:

Perché la vita è breve
e molte son le pene
che vivendo e stentando ognun sostiene;
dietro alle nostre voglie,
andiam passando e consumando gli anni,
ché chi il piacer si toglie
per viver con angosce e con affanni,
non conosce gli inganni

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193 Machiavelli’s time was not spent in complete seclusion, as we know that he participated in the famed conversations held in the Rucellai Gardens from 1515 (Najemy xv). Parronchi goes so far as to say we are dealing with “un Machiavelli in declino...che mentre i barbagli del suo genio illuminano le poche intelligenze in grado di capirlo, si avvia verso l’incomprensione e la tristezza che circondano i suoi ultimi anni” (Parronchi 8).

194 Luperini and Cataldi write: “All’influenza di Terenzio and Plauto si aggiunge quella di Boccaccio; il protagonista, il dottore in legge Nicia, ha infatti qualcosa di Calandrino; e il tema della beffa erotica deriva anch’esso dal Decameron (Vol. I 657). Ezio Raimondi lists three of Boccaccio’s stories which Machiavelli has “implicate liberamente nell’azione della Mandragola...la settima della settima giornata, che ha per protagonisti Lodovico, madonna Beatrice ed Egano de’ Galluzzi, la sesta della ottava, con Calandrino e il porco imbolato, e la sesta della giornata terza, di nuovo nel mondo dell’adulterio, giocato tra Ricciardo Minutolo, Catella e Filippello Signinolfi” (Raimondi 179). Commenting on the epistolographic influence, Raimondi writes: “Quando si discorre della Mandragola, viene sempre naturale il riferimento alle lettere giocose dello scrittore del Principe e al loro gusto della deformazione, del linguaggio comico-realistico, o del minimo burchiellesco” (Raimondi 182).

195 The songs in Mandragola are dated 1526 as Sergio Bertelli notes: “Francesco Guicciardini organized a performance of La Mandragola in Faenza and for that occasion Machiavelli wrote the songs that are inserted in the comedy” (Bertelli 318). In their notes to an edition of Machiavelli’s correspondence, James B. Atkinson and David Sices comment on a letter to Guicciardini from Machiavelli (16-20 October 1525), in which he mentions these songs. They write: “Machiavelli worked carefully on the lyrics for the intermezzi, in the expectation that they would be performed at a production to take place in Faenza under Guicciardini’s patronage. It never occurred because Pope Clement VII summoned Guicciardini to Rome early in January 1526” (Atkinson and Sices 547). Bernard comments on the pointed difference between the pastoral canzoni and the urban setting: “The pastoral pursuit that it projects of simple pleasures in the country serves as an appropriately deceptive guise for the urban setting of the sardonic comedy to follow” (Bernard 77).
In the prologue which follows, Machiavelli communicates the conventional content of setting, characters and subject matter as we shall see, however it is here that the author unveils another key component to understanding the play, namely himself. The *canzone* functions as a preface to the frame. Even before we are introduced to any one character, we are acquainted with the creator who will animate the interlocutor’s dialogue, namely, Machiavelli-author.

The Machiavelli of *Mandragola* will not converse with princes or political dignitaries on matters of state both domestic and abroad, instead he will speak on the mundane aspects of everyday life. The life that Machiavelli describes in his *canzone*, however, is a decidedly bleak one: short, full of many pains whose sole purpose should be to seek pleasure, not for the enjoyments they bring, but in order to understand the world’s deceits and those events which crush almost all mortals. Anguish, distress, apprehension and pain are all avoided as men and women choose to indulge in constant merry-making and mirth. In considering *Mandragola* a dialogue for the purpose of this study, we recast this *canzone* as the frame, not unlike was done with the Dedicatory Letter in *Il principe*. In the latter work, we saw how Machiavelli meant to cast himself in an ‘inferior’ position to that of the Prince so that he might recommend himself to him. Machiavelli demonstrated to the Prince their relative positions to one another, and in doing
so hoped to justify his own ‘presumption’ in advising a Prince. While it was certainly possessed of an ingratiating tone, Machiavelli revealed the disadvantage of the Prince’s exalted position in not being able to offer the necessary perspective required to successfully gain and govern the state.

In an analogous manner, here in Mandragola, Machiavelli also sought to address his intended audience and demonstrate to them the reality of their position in life. As we saw, one of the main differences between the commedia and the dialogue is that the latter speaks not to a single individual, but rather outwards to the public at large. In describing life as a continual avoidance of all pain, and instead a disproportionate pursuit of pleasure, Machiavelli could not have better depicted the audience seated waiting to watch his play. They too were not engaged in any active occupation, and instead were in search of entertainment, at a festival. Machiavelli acknowledges the festival atmosphere: “Or qui venuti siamo/con la nostra armonia,/sol per onorar questa/si lieta festa--e dolce compagnia” (Mandragola 868). Of importance is also the use of the pronoun ‘noi’: where in Il principe Machiavelli kept his distance from his intended audience, in Mandragola he instead classes himself among them. As in Il principe, while his expressed intention is to please, he does not shy away from the truth, and this image of an audience in idleness and ignorance was not necessarily flattering. Machiavelli instantly creates a self-consciousness or awareness in his audience, which seems to suggest that rather than passively digesting what is about to be shown for their pleasure, they should be circumspect because this will not be the last time a mirror will be placed before them in order that they may observe their own folly. While the drama will undoubtedly delight and entertain, it will not be done in an environment completely alien to them. Machiavelli is clear in using Florence as the setting, which he directly references in the Prologue: “Vedete l’apparato,/qual or vi si dimostra:/
quest’è Firenze vostra” (Mandragola 868). In employing the possessive adjective vostra, Machiavelli further cements the relationship between the audience and the setting of the performance. They will recognize the city, the characters and even the vices of these characters which will be commented upon in the Prologue. For now, Machiavelli has succeeded in engaging a viewing that will increase the audience’s participation; one that will be made cooler by the level of this participation when he promises glimpses of themselves and their situation in a comedy about a cuckolded dimwitted husband outdone by a band of clever characters.

Just who these clever characters are, is told to us in the Prologue. Nicia, Fra’ Timoteo, Callimaco and Lucrezia are all mentioned, though the latter is denoted not by her name instead as “una giovane accorta” (Mandragola 868) or a prudent young woman. In terms of a key for how to interpret these characters, Machiavelli does provide subtle cues in their brief description. For Nicia he says: “[...] un dottore, che imparò in sul Buezio legge assai (Mandragola 868). Boethius is cited here as a master of law, who would have been read by Nicia, but also for his evident phonetic association with bue, thus establishing the character as stupid or cornuto (cfr. Bonino 4). Fra’ Timoteo’s occupation is identified not through his actions, but instead through the superficial discernment of his dress, suggesting his piety will likely also be skin-deep: “conoscer poi potrai/a l’abito d’un frate/qual priore o abate” (Mandragola 868). Callimaco is similarly introduced as a pleasant young man based on his appearance: “Costui, fra tutti gli altri buon compagno,/a’ segni ed a’ vestigi/l’onor di gentilezza e pregio porta” (Mandragola 868).

196 Di Maria identified the ‘VOI’ employed in Il principe as the true intended recipient of the work (cfr. Di Maria 70). Di Maria also identifies the necessity of having the fictional world appear as ‘real’ as possible: “The stage had to simulate life as closely as possible so that audiences might experience as “real” the fictional world of theater. Accordingly, playwrights often pointed proudly to the living realities informing their work, claiming novelties in form and content” (Di Maria “From prose to stage”, 134).

197 Ferroni sees this description of Callimaco as suggesting that his worth is also only superficial: “Ma ci si accorgerà subito che Callimaco porta i suoi segni distintivi in un risalto esterno e fittizio, di apparenza sociale, di rivestimento cortese che tace la sua reale sostanza, come se si trattasse di un pregio non appoggiato all’interna presenza di un superiore «sapere»” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «riscontro» 29).
The interlocutors Machiavelli presents us with are not worthy, illustrious personages; we do not have a Fabrizio Colonna or a Dante Alighieri or even a Medici prince, instead:

Un amante meschino,

Un dottor poco astuto,

un frate mal vissuto,

un parassito, di malizia il cucco,

fie questo giorno el vostro badalucco.  (*Mandragola* 869)

The second last verse is a reference to Ligurio who, while never directly mentioned in the Prologue, will prove to be an important character in the text. This again points to a change in the subject matter from politics and the universal to the minutiae of daily life and the particular.\(^{198}\) From looking outwards to the world, he now looks inwards, closer to the streets and places he inhabits. In doing so, Caretti justly identifies a change in language and tone to match this new theme and its personages, namely parody and satire (cfr. Caretti 40).\(^{199}\) According to Caretti, this is exactly the type of subject-matter that would have stimulated Machiavelli’s “spirito acre di osservazione, l’estro polemico e rappresentativo, [e] il gusto dissacrato” (Caretti 40).

Machiavelli himself acknowledges this distinction in the following four stanzas of the prologue which are more serious and personal in nature.\(^{200}\) The fourth stanza seemingly apologizes for the

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\(^{198}\) On this reversal, Caretti writes: “Soltanto che qui sfondo e persone sono mutati: si assiste ad una sorta di capovolgimento di un mondo che prima era osservato e giudicato nella sua vicenda primaria, quella tragica della politica, entro il quadro dei grandi eventi storici, e che ora invece si prospetta al Machiavelli, e ne attira la curiosa attenzione, entro i confini ridotti della minuta cronaca cittadina e delle meschine operazioni private” (Caretti 40).

\(^{199}\) “Il tono e la lingua di queste operette letterarie, e in particolar modo di quel capo lavoro che è la *Mandragola*, sono naturalmente, giusto in rapporto alla nuova tematica e ai nuovi personaggi, quelli della parodia e della satira” (Caretti 40).

\(^{200}\) On the nature of the second half of the prologue, Ferroni writes: “In questa prospettiva la seconda parte del prologo verrebbe a collocarsi tutta al di fuori dell’orizzonte della commedia: segno di un amaro sguardo dall’esterno, di una volontà di non partecipazione ad un mondo privo di spessori morali e di valori civili...” («*Mutazione*» e «*Riscontro*» 19).
slight and insignificant subject-matter, Machiavelli has taken on and blames it on a fortuna which will not permit him to have it otherwise:

E, se questa materia non è degna,

per esser pur leggieri,

d’un uom, che voglia parer saggio e grave,

scusatelo con questo, che s’insegna

con questi van’ pensieri

fare el suo tristo tempo più suave,

perché altrove non have

dove voltare el viso,

ché gli è stato interciso

mostrar con altre imprese altra virtùe,

non sendo premio alle fatiche sue. (Mandragola 869)

This same sentiment was expressed in the Dedicatory Letter of Il principe, however, while there it was enough to say “quanto io indegnamente sopporti una grande e continua malignità di fortuna”, in Mandragola a bitterness and visceral quality seemed necessary in order to describe his fate.\footnote{Raimondi calls attention to this bitter tone as well: “occorre riconoscere che nel tessuto del prologo resta qualcosa di aspro, quasi un rovello represso” (Raimondi 198).} This sentiment is carried further into the fifth stanza when he writes:

El premio che si spera è che ciascuno

si sta da canto e ghigna,

dicendo mal di ciò che vede e sente.

Di qui depende, sanza dubbio alcuno,

che per tutto traligna
Here the great deeds of the Ancients are mentioned, just as they were in *Il principe*, but the possibility of their being imitated in Machiavelli’s time is denied. This is due to the reception that those who try would receive from the world at large: those who with much hardship would try, would easily be undone. Machiavelli employes the image of a wind that would spoil (*guastai*) and a fog that would conceal (*ricuopra*). Here, our author seemingly describes himself and his own situation. Despite this dejection, however, he does not surrender but goes on the offensive, threatening those who would wish to intimidate him:

\[
\text{Pur se credessi alcun, dicendo male,}
\]
\[
\text{tenerlo pe’ capegli}
\]
\[
\text{e sbigottirlo o ritirarlo in parte,}
\]
\[
\text{io l’ammonisco, e dico a questo tale}
\]
\[
\text{che sa dir male anch’egli,}
\]
\[
\text{e come questa fu la suo prim’arte,}
\]
\[
\text{e come in ogni parte}
\]

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202 Here Parronchi justly identifies a heated tone on Machiavelli’s part: “Qui la voce del Machiavelli s’accalora, sale di tono, e divien quella stessa che ha dolorosamente gridato l’esortazione dell’ultimo capitolo del *Principe*” (Parronchi 34).

203 On this reference to the Ancients, Parronchi writes: “il Machiavelli agita per un momento il fantasma della grandezza antica, con un tono di non sopita passione” (Parronchi 35).
del mondo, ove el «si» sona,
non istima persona,
ancor che faccì sergieri a colui,
che può portar miglior mantel che lui.  \textit{(Mandragola 869)}

In the last verse, we are again met with a reference to the value of appearance over merit in Machiavelli’s society, which he laments. To serve he who “può portar miglior mantel” implies that Machiavelli’s worth is not reflected by the position he currently holds, conversely, those who do hold those positions are not necessarily deserving of them.\textsuperscript{204} Another pointed criticism in a prologue and introduction (which includes the \textit{canzone} discussed above) which, while amusing and light-hearted, is also harsh and uncompromising. The audience is drawn instinctively to this mirror of itself, as constructed by Machiavelli who compels them to both laugh and censure themselves in equal parts. What it cannot do is ignore what is about to unfold. Machiavelli has successfully ensured not only the audience’s attention, but also their participation as this mirror of their daily reality will require them to draw comparisons between the events on stage and the events in their own lives, even if only to say a particular instance is not applicable. They will need to engage with \textit{Mandragola}, in order to understand it. Ferroni draws attention to this aspect of the prologue as well: “[...] numerosi spunti, in tutto il prologo, chiamano in causa la partecipazione anche ideologica degli spettatori alla vicenda che sarà presentata” (Ferroni, \textit{«Mutazione» e «riscontro»} 37). They have been warned against a complacent and passive viewing and are primed for an active one. More so than in any other of his works, \textit{Mandragola}’s call for the audience’s participation is both crucial and direct. It is almost redundant of

\textsuperscript{204} Parronchi sees this as a daring challenge to authority: “Al di sopra dell’odio che lo tien relegato, al di sopra della modestia delle sue condizioni, qui il Machiavelli osa contrapporsi ai suoi uditori davanti al giudizio dei posteri...” (Parronchi 35).
Machiavelli to say, as he does in the last stanza of the prologue: “Stia ciascuno attento, né per ora aspettate altro argomento” (Mandragola 869).

Even a superficial reading of this commedia will undoubtedly yield echoes of Machiavelli’s political writings. From Sostrata’s “Io ho sempremai sentito dire che gli è ufizio d’un prudente pigliare de’ cattivi partiti el migliore...” (Mandragola III.i, 877) we can recall chapter twenty-one of Il principe: “[...] ma la prudenzia consiste in sapere conoscere le qualità degli inconvenienti, e pigliare il meno tristo per buono” (Il principe 292). Callimaco stresses the importance of the dual source of knowledge: “...avendo compartito el tempo parte alli studii, parte a’ piaceri, e parte alle faccende; ed in modo mi travagliavo in ciascuna di queste cose, che l’una non mi impediva la via dell’altra” (Mandragola I.i, 869-870), which is an important part of the Dedicatory Letter: “...la cognizione delle azioni degli uomini grandi imparata da me con una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antique...” (Il principe 257).

From this and other instances, some critics have tried to identify the voice of Machiavelli within the play.

There are those who see Mandragola as two separate works: on its surface a comedy, with a strong political undercurrent just below. With this type of interpretation, the characters in the play are now representative of others: for Parronchi, Callimaco is Lorenzo de’ Medici, Duke of Urbino calling attention to the frequent allusions to sojourns in France as evidence supporting the claim (cfr. Parronchi 28-29). In this same interpretation, Nicia is Piero Soderini as they both lacked ambition and had sterile wives (cfr. Parronchi 30-31); and Lucrezia is Florence whose representation as a woman was not an uncommon trope in poetical and political

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205 Theodore A. Sumberg asserts “It is hence two plays in one: one light and frivolous, the other serious and even didactic” (Sumberg 320). Parronchi also champions a reading “in chiave di allegoria politica” (Sumberg 31), but one that compares the characters and situations depicted in the play with contemporary examples, and claims this is what was missing from Sumberg’s analysis: “Manca un punto all’indagine del Sumberg; quello di dare alle persone e alle azioni i nomi e i significati contemporanei” (Parronchi 31).
language (cfr. Parronchi 32). Sumberg also acknowledges Lucrezia as Florence and the common use of this symbol:

A wife has for long been held to represent the body politic and he newly possessed of it is naturally *pater patriae* [...] Marriage imitates political life. It creates a small society that is the seed of the larger society [...] The “marriage” between the two lovers is the new state that wisely keeps old appearances, as Machiavelli recommends in the Discourses (Book I, Ch. 25). (Sumberg 325)

In Sumberg’s interpretation, Callimaco is a “Florentine Moses” who follows not divine law, but his own (cfr. Sumberg 331). Ligurio then, is granted the privileged position of being associated with our author (cfr. Sumberg 338). On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are those who do not subscribe to this “conventional view of the play’s personages as stock figures in a presumed Machiavellian power struggle” (Bernard 79). John Bernard, for example, does not subscribe to the theory of Lucrezia as anything other than the victim of those around her (Bernard 80-81). In Callimaco, he does not attribute any special claims to his being the prince *par excellence* who functions successfully with Ligurio as his adviser, but as someone who has, at best, proven “himself to be adept at taking Ligurio’s instruction” (Bernard 81). Ligurio, also is not seen as a “stand-in” (82) for Machiavelli as others have done, however, he does acknowledge him as a pivotal character who is used as the vehicle by which “Machiavelli exposes the whole instability and hollowness of their social and psychic ordini [...] Through his superior

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206 Ligurio, Fra Timoteo, and Sostrata are not given the privilege of further investigating, as according to Parronchi, they were “maschere teatrali talmente convenzionali, da non favorire un’iniziativa intesa a individuarli come persone reali” (Parronchi 81).

207 On this relationship, Sumberg writes: “It must often occur to the careful reader of the play that Machiavelli and Ligurio are brothers under the skin. Both are astute counselors of prince; both are content to serve the fame of others, or are content to seem content; and both are superior to the men they serve. There is only the small difference that Ligurio is a counselor rewarded in his time while Machiavelli is not, and the large difference that while Ligurio served one conspiracy, Machiavelli serves many. His play will keep Machiavelli will keep Machiavelli conspiring for all time” (Sumberg 338).
intelligence and grasp of human motive, he conquers and reshapes his world” (Bernard 84). Giulio Ferroni sees Machiavelli as creating an anthropology in which happiness and success can only be achieved by adapting one’s particular nature to the variations of Fortune, thus «mutare» according to the directions these variations take; if Fortune oscillates between extremes, we must do the same in order to obtain a «riscontro» with her (cfr. Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «riscontro» 21). In this model, Lucrezia is the true authentic sage, as it is she who is in possession of the virtù which will battle against fortuna in order to achieve the necessary transformation of her nature, consequently ensuring her survival. In this, Ferroni saw an opportunity for Machiavelli’s theatrical productions to be classed among his other political works as the former were simply the luoghi «comici» in which a conception of humanity is discussed and debated (cfr. Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «riscontro» 26).

Machiavelli provides enough information to substantially support these, and other interpretations of Mandragola, and one can readily validate its coolness of medium due to the number and variety of interpretations it can sustain. The problem lies when we follow and apply any of these interpretations to their logical conclusion, we find that there are inherent

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208 Bernard’s comments on Ligurio are worth reading in full: “The trickster Ligurio, on the other hand, comes closer to representing the more active, if refined, “Machiavellian” agent of these transitional years. Though we should take care not to reduce him to a stand-in for the author, we might nevertheless... reconsider Ferroni’s dismissal of Ligurio as a merely mechanical animator of events... Are his interlocutors—the materia on which he imposes forma—his victims or his (even if unwitting) collaborators? Finally, and most important, is the entire interaction to be viewed as the hostile encounter of adversaries evoked in the two “prologues,” or as an ultimately positive social engagement?” (Bernard 82).

209 “La garanzia della felicità e del successo può essere offerta, nell’antropologia machiavelliana, solo dalla capacità di adattare la propria natura alle variazioni della fortuna, e quindi di «mutuare» volta per volta modo di procedere, a seconda della direzione di queste variazioni. Se la fortuna si muove con continui ritorni tra poli estremi ed opposti, l’uomo potrà ottenere un «riscontro» con essa solo se saprà ugualmente trascorrere tra gli estremi, se sarà sempre pronto a rovesciare il proprio modo di procedere” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «riscontro» 21).

210 “A Lucrezia tocerà il consenso che spetta all’autentico «savio» (e non importa che si tratti di un personaggio femminile), alla «virtù» capace di aggredire la fortuna anche attraverso decisive «mutazioni» di natura: niente più lontano da facili immagini di statica felicità borghese” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «riscontro» 46).

211 “la produzione comica del Machiavelli si presenta non certo come momento «minore» e periferico di una attività engagée e ben diversamente problematica, ma come luogo «comico» in cui si dibatte integralmente una concezione dell’uomo: teatro e politica si incontrano tramite l’antropologia...” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «riscontro» 26).
contradictions. For example, while Ligurio does indeed occupy a central role throughout the play, we find him nearly absent in the last two scenes of the final act. In those interpretations which favour Ligurio being the *portavoce* for Machiavelli, are we to assume then that Machiavelli has now “left the stage” at one of the most pivotal moments in the play, namely its conclusion which would house the final message or moral? This certainly would contradict what has occurred in the other works we have examined until now in which Machiavelli would not even relinquish final authority to characters of impeccable pedigree such as Fabrizio Colonna or Dante Alighieri. In the dialogues *Arte della guerra* and *Discorso intorno alla lingua*, the presence of the author was strongly felt, even to the detriment, at times, of the dialogic genre’s mandate of a true exchange of opinions and ideas. This was done all in an effort to ensure that the final word always remained with Machiavelli himself. It would be unlikely, therefore that he would permit Nicia, Sostrata or Fra’ Timoteo to speak for him. While Callimaco or Lucrezia might seem better candidates, they do not appear to great advantage at the end; the former, while achieving his object, it is clear that it was won due in large part to Ligurio’s efforts, and the latter has merely capitulated to the desires of those who conspired against her. Furthermore, while Lucrezia may be the most qualified of all the characters to lead a principality, as a woman, her will is rarely executable, therefore it will almost always be denied the opportunity. The exact opposite was said by Machiavelli in this notable chiasmus from *Il principe*:

212 In the final scene of the play, Ligurio does nothing more than ask whether or not Siro has been remembered: “Di Siro non è uomo che si ricordi?” (*Mandragola* V.vi, 890). It is not in response to any inquiry about Siro, as if Ligurio were no longer partaking in the scene around him. Frye explains the presence of the parasite in the final act of a comedy: “The tendency of the comic society to include rather than exclude is the reason for the traditional importance of the parasite, who has no business to be at the final festival but is nevertheless there” (Frye 166).

213 Lucrezia’s acquiescence is eloquently achieved, though not told directly by her, instead it is narrated to us by Callimaco: “Poichè l’astuzia tua, la sciocchezza del mio marito, la semplicità di mia madre e la tristizia del mio confessore mi hanno condotto a fare quello che mai per me medesima arei fatto...” (*Mandragola* Viv, 889). Interesting also to note how in Lucrezia’s summation, she declares the attributes of those who led her to commit adultery, which mirrors those that were told to us in the Prologue: “Un amante meschino, Un dottor poco astuto,/un frate mal vissuto,/un passitho, di malizia il cucco” (*Mandragola* 869). The difference being however, that Ligurio has now taken credit for Ligurio’s astuzio/malizia.
Ed esaminando le loro azioni e vita loro, [Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus] non si vede che quelli avessino altro dalla fortuna che la occasione; la quale dette loro materia a potere introdurvi dentro quella forma parse loro; e sanza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e sanza quella virtù a occasione sarebbe venuta invano. (Il principe 264)

The final word is, in fact, given to Fra’ Timoteo who, at this juncture in the play, is aware of all the deception that has occurred (having not also participated but abetted in the plot), and it is he who directly addresses the audience: “Voì, aspettatori, non aspettate che noi uscìàn più fuora: l’ufizio è lungo, io mi rimarrò in chiesa, e loro, per l’uscìo del fianco, se n’andranno a casa. Valete!” (Mandragola V.vi, 890). We remember that it was in the prologue (examined above) that Machiavelli addressed the audience directly, thus creating a link between the audience and the writer which is picked up by various other characters throughout the play. Furthermore, it is not, for example, to Ligurio alone that some of Machiavelli’s most important political maxims are attributed, as the other characters are also granted this privilege. In order to make sense of this ending, we start again at the beginning of the play, in Act I, and examine the degree to which Machiavelli-author allows each character to interact or identify with the world around them; in McLuhan’s terms, we identify which characters are either ‘hot’ (unable to adapt to their environment), and those that are ‘cool’ (able to demonstrate adaptability and elasticity with their environment). In analyzing their ability to interact with their surroundings, we will also be inherently be examining the play’s dialogicity as these characters interact with one another.

With no clearly identified portavoce, what we can observe in Mandragola is a fundamental aspect of dialogue, one which Kushner identifies as the main characteristic of the
genre: “the author’s initial self-projection into two voices...which precedes more complex
fragmentation to come” (Kushner, Dialogue and Subjectivity, 229). If Machiavelli exists in more
than one character (or interlocutor), then we can speak of a representation of an internal dialogue,
where the “author identifies with each speaker in turn, thus enlivening the discourse” (Kushner,
Dialogue and Subjectivity, 230).

This identification which each speaker will lead us to interpret the play, not in a traditional, linear format, but one in which the complexities of the play do not have to necessarily lead to contradiction. Here we can anticipate Sumberg’s conclusion: “In fact, neither the comedy nor any one work of Machiavelli represents his full teaching. La Mandragola contributes only something to confirm or correct points made in the other works” (Sumberg 339).

4.4 Callimaco: coolest of the cool

As examined above, the canzone and prologue of Mandragola cast a long shadow over the entire play. Even before a word is spoken by any of the actors, the audience is told how they should be perceived and received. As the main protagonist, we are told of Callimaco’s worth, but are warned that this is attributable more to his appearance than to his merit. The implication of this being that Callimaco is not the hero of the tale. Ferroni explains how, according to the normal comic-erotic scheme, Callimaco’s central position in the comedy should be assured (cfr. Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 39). From the first scene, he is just such a hero, who offers

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214 This process was also named by Bakhtin as the fundamental aspect of Dostoevsky’s dialogue: “object is precisely the passing of a theme through many and various voices, its rigorous and, so to speak, irrevocable multi-voicedness and vari-voicedness (Bakhtin, 266).

215 Bonino speaks of the play operating on a double structure. On the surface is the love story, and inside of this, we have the joke or hoax: “La struttura «prima» della Mandragola è quello che potremmo chiamare la struttura d’amore (dentro la quale si sviluppa la struttura «seconda», quella della beffa” (Bonino vii). To Callimaco is entrusted the amorous structure (cfr. Bonino ix).
himself to the audience, as defined by prestigious habits, guaranteeing him automatic approval with them (cfr. Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 40). As readers of Machiavelli’s earlier political works, we can say that Machiavelli concurs with this assessment by allowing Callimaco to paraphrase one of the most enduring images in his work, namely the dual source of knowledge (referenced above), which also appears in Il principe. Machiavelli also permits Callimaco to present reasoned arguments of the obstacles, preventing him from reaching his goal, namely that of obtaining Lucrezia as his own:

Dua cose: l’una, la semplicità di messer Nicia, che, benché sia dottore, egli è il più semplice ed el più sciocco uomo di Firenze; l’altra, la voglia che lui e lei hanno d’aver figliuoli, che, sendo stata sei anni a marito e non avendo ancora fatti, ne hanno, sendo ricchissimi, un desiderio che muoiono. Una terza ci è, che la sua madre è suta buona compagna, ma la è ricca, tale che io non so come governarmene. (Mandragola I.i, 870)

The obstacles are enumerated in a manner reminiscent of the procedure employed in Il principe, when listing, for example, the difficulties of governing new principalities, namely that the loyalty of man is not a fixed object, as men will gladly change their masters if they believe it will benefit them.216 In both these cases, the reality of the situation is presented, in order that a true solution might be found. Callimaco makes no scruple out of wanting to commit the act of adultery, as it is not even mentioned as a possible obstacle. This would be a ‘moral’ objection which presents no real, observable, or quantifiable obstacle, and therefore has no bearing on the situation. From

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216 “Ma nel principato nuovo consistono le difficoltà. E prima, se non è tutto nuovo, ma come membro (che si può chiamare tutto insieme quasi misto), le variazioni sua nascono in prima da una naturale difficoltà, quale è in tutti e’ principati nuovi: le quali sono che li uomini mutano volentieri signore credendo migliorare; e questa credenza gli fa pigliare l’arem contro a quello; di che è’ s’ingannano, perché veggono poi per esperienza avere peggiorato” (Il principe). The manner in which Callimaco presents this argument has also been noted by Douglas Radcliff-Umstead where he writes that Callimaco “thinks by the same analytical process that Machiavelli uses in Il principe” (Radcliff-Umstead 123). Di Maria comments on this passage saying: “Thus Callimaco, exhibiting a highly-analytical mind, depicted in part by the complex syntax in his speech, calculates that the weakest points on which to concentrate his attack are Nicia’s simplicity and wish for an heir” (Di Maria, “Ethical premises, 20).
the start, Callimaco proves himself to be a realist, who is able to interact with the world around him, not as it should be, but as it is. With this elasticity of mind, Callimaco demonstrates a key aspect of his personality, namely adaptability to his environment which evokes the coolness of his character.

In addition, Machiavelli also has Callimaco astutely defend his choice to employ Ligurio in order to obtain his object, by guaranteeing Ligurio’s loyalty is assured because both stand to benefit. This echoes the same sentiments expressed in *Il principe* where a servant can only be trusted when the situation benefits the helper in the form of a promised reward or imminent harm. Furthermore, Callimaco demonstrates himself to be open to an opportunity presenting itself in the scheme of persuading Nicia to take his wife to the baths: “Di cosa nasce cosa, e ’l tempo la governa” (*Mandragola* I.i, 871). Again, this would echo *Il principe* in its insistence on the importance of opportunity quoted above. This presentation of Callimaco as the central protagonist is cemented by the servility displayed by Siro, who casts himself as the inferior (cfr. Ferroni, «*Mutazione*» e «Riscontro» 40). It is Siro who will offer those rejoinders of acquiescence that were also noted in the inferior characters of *Arte della guerra*, as well as an explanation of his role:

Siro: Eccomi
Siro: Voi dite el vero.

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217 “Nondimeno, quando una cosa fa per uno, si ha a credere, quando tu gliene comunichii, che ti serva con fede. Io gli ho promesso, quando e’ riesca, donarli buona somma di danari; quando e’ non riesca, ne spicca un desinare ed una cena, ché ad ogni modo i’ non mangerei solo” (*Mandragola* I.i, 871).

218 “Ma, come uno principe possa conoscere el ministro, ci è questo modo che non falla mai; quando tu vedi el ministro pensare più a sé che a te e che in tutte le azioni vi ricerca drento l’utile suo, questo tale così fatto mai fia buon ministro, ma te ne potrai fidare: perché quello che ha lo stato di un mano, non debbe pensare mai a sè, ma al principe, e non li ricordare mai cosa che non appartenga a lui. E dall’altro canto, el principe, per mantenerlo buono, debba pensare al ministro, onorandolo, faccendolo ricco, obligandoselo, partecipandoli gli onori e carichi, acciò che vegga non può stare senza lui, e che gli assai onori non li faccino desiderare più onori, le assai ricchezze non li faccino desiderare più ricchezze, gli assai carichi li faccino temere le mutazioni. Quando dunque e’ ministri, e li principi circa e’ ministri, sono così fatti, possono confidare l’uno dell’altro, e quando altrimenti, sempre il fine fia dannoso o per l’uno o per l’altro” (*Il principe* 293).
Siro: Io sono servitore: e servi non debbono mai domandare el padrone d’alcuna cosa, né cercare alcuno loro fatto, ma quando per loro medesimi le dicano, debbono servirgli con fede; e così ho fatto e sono per fare io.

Siro: Egli è così.

Siro: Io lo so.

Siro: Egli è la verità.

Siro: Io sono or chiaro di quello che voi volete dire.

Siro: Che pensate, adunque, di poter fare?

Siro: Come?

Siro: Io vo. *(Mandragola I.i, 869-871)*

Not unlike what was achieved in the Dedicatory Letter of *Il principe*, we have an emphasis on the distance between those in the upper class versus those in the lower class. Machiavelli successfully negated any advantage of the superior class by claiming the prize of perspective: the affairs of the state are best observed by those who are far from its rule, namely the populace. In effect, Machiavelli reverses the position of both he and the Prince. So too here, in *Mandragola*, the roles are reversed, not between Callimaco and Siro, but between Callimaco and another servant: Ligurio.

In agreement with Ferroni, already in the third scene of Act I “definisce un rapporto Callimaco-Ligurio perfettamente rovesciato a quello Callimaco-Siro della prima scena” (Ferroni, *«Mutazione» e «Riscontro»* 47). In this scene, it is now Callimaco who plays the part of the inferior in the dialogue, charged only with asking questions, or acquiescing:

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219 On this Ferroni writes: “Di fronte all’immobile assenso di Siro, Callimaco può svolgere non soltanto la mostra del suo potere di «padrone», ma soprattutto quella dell’«onor di gentilezza e pregio» indicata già dal prologo...” (Ferroni, *«Mutazione» e «Riscontro»* 42).
Callimaco: Perché?
Callimaco: Io conosco che tu di’ el vero.
Callimaco: A che ci ha a servire cotesto?
Callimaco: Che di’ tu?
Callimaco: Tu mi risusciti.
Callimaco: Così farò, ancora che tu mi riempia d’una speranza, che io temo non se ne vadia in fumo. (*Mandragola* I.iii, 872-873)

Ligurio abandons the bath scheme, claiming anyone, not only Callimaco, might be drawn to Lucrezia’s beauty, and therefore try to usurp him; especially one who might be richer and more charming. Callimaco acknowledges the veracity of this observation, and proceeds to fall into an unhero-like despair:

Callimaco: Io conosco che tu di’ el vero. Ma come ho a fare? Che partito ho a pigliare? Dove mi ho a volgere? [...] Meglio è morire che vivere così. Se io potessi dormire la notte, se io potessi mangiare, se io potessi conversare, se io potessi pigliare piacere di cosa veruna, io sarei più paziente ad aspettare el tempo; ma qui non c’è rimedio; e se io non son tenuto in speranza da qualche partito, i’ mi morrò in ogni modo; e, veggendo d’avere a morire, non sono per temere cosa alcuna, ma per pigliare qualche partito bestiale, crudele nefando. (*Mandragola* I.iii, 872).

Ligurio is now the one to dictate the action and says: “Non dire così, raffrena cotesto impeto dello animo” (*Mandragola* I.iii, 872). It is Ligurio who will come up with a more suitable plan, and it is for Callimaco to simply wait to be told what it is. The worth of Callimaco is now linked with Ligurio, as the latter is the one to orchestrate the action of the play. Callimaco’s gallant appearance and fine words alone will not be enough to bring the plot forward, as action and
determination is needed, which will be supplied by the servant Ligurio. Ligurio’s understanding of what needs to be done is unparalleled in the play: it is Ligurio who will navigate not only his master, but everyone else as well. Through these various interactions which highlight his crude realism, Ligurio will prove himself, as a character, to be even cooler than Callimaco.

As the hero, Callimaco is the true “eroe d’amore [...] un individuo in cui l’agire e il patire si mescolano in una sconcertante alternanza” (Bonino ix). This constant oscillation between the desire to act, or to obtain his object, and the frequent lamentations over the fear of it not being realized, make Callimaco unfit to put into motion the action required to realize his goal.

While certainly in agreement with Bonino that “Callimaco contrappone allo sgomento degli eroi ariosteschi una diversa perentorietà e determinazione” (Bonino x), it is in appearance only that he appears determined and decided, in practice, he acts only under the direction of Ligurio. Initially, Callimaco’s shallow character was given the advantage by casting it against the background of a minor character such as Siro. In this context, Callimaco was able to play off of the audience’s expectation of a hero, by supplying only the minimal amount of information, again, in consonance with what the audience was expecting to see and hear. In revealing more of himself and his nature in the third scene of Act I, Callimaco is found to lack some of the necessary traits of a complete hero.

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220 Bonino writes that Callimaco is a more worthy love-hero than the Panfilo in Machiavelli’s translation of Terence’s Andria, which was Machiavelli’s first play, with a rough translation completed possibly in the 1490s, with a second, correction version in 1517-1520 (Stoppelli, 25-41). On Panfilo, Bonino writes: “Lo «sgraziato» e «infelice» Panfilo, di continuo «stupefatto» d’essere «schernito» e «vilipeso» dalla sorte, è uno di codesti modelli di amante «maninconoso». La sua cifra è «l’incertitudine»: vorrebbe abbandonarsi a «confidenza», sfogare il proprio «ardire»: e non fa altro che fremere d’incertezza, «rinvolto» com’è in tanti mali, dinnanzi ad una sventura che di continuo «si rinnuova»” (Bonino ix). While Callimaco may not be portrayed as forlornly as Panfilo, when measured against the other characters in Mandragola, his character suffers more greatly.

221 Here Bonino cites Callimaco’s speech in scene one of Act I: “E’ non è mai alcuna cosa si disperata che non vi sia qualche via da poterne sperare, e benché la fusi debole e vana, e la voglia e ’l desidero che l’uomo ha di condurre la cosa non la fa parere così” (Mandragola I.i). As we saw above, the speeches that Callimaco makes in the first scene, are almost immediately compromised in subsequent scenes, and thus void of any meaning.
In scene two of Act II, in which Callimaco (as per Ligurio’s plan) poses as the doctor who will ‘cure’ Lucrezia of her sterility, the protagonist displays only too well how adept he is at creating illusions:

Callimaco: A me non fia mai discaro fare piacere a voi ed a tutti li uomini virtuosi e da bene come voi; e non mi sono a Parigi affaticato tanti anni per imparare per altro, se non per potere servire a’ pari vostri. (Mandragola II.ii, 873-874)

It would seem his studies in Paris were not of the same caliber as those Machiavelli obtained. With this, the character has been completely undone; the audience is perhaps left in little doubt of his succeeding to bed the lovely Lucrezia, however, they are now wise to his actual worth: a skillful agent of anyone who has a solid plan. The rest of the second act is spent in servicing Ligurio’s plan. Nicia has been convinced of Callimaco’s false credentials as a doctor, and has assented to convincing his wife of efficacy of the mandrake root as the only cure for their childlessness. Callimaco is absent from the third act in which Fra Timoteo is recruited as well as Sostrata to assist in their endeavour of convincing Lucrezia.

Callimaco returns in Act IV, with the important information that he has no knowledge of the plot, and is subsequently a pawn in the game of others, hoping that this will somehow yield his desired object:

Callimaco: Io vorrei pure intendere quello che costoro hanno fatto. Può egli essere che io non rivegga Ligurio? [...] In quanto angustia d’animo sono io stato e sto! Ed è vero che la Fortuna e la Natura tiene el conto per bilancio: la non ti fa mai un bene, che, a

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222 “la cognizione delle azioni degli uomini grandi, imparata da me con una lunga esperienzia delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antique” (Il principe 257).

223 Ferroni cites Callimaco’s lack of usefulness as the reason his absence: “Il terzo atto si svolgerà senza di lui [Callimaco], non avrà alcun bisogno della presenza di un personaggio che non sembra garantire alcuna possibilità di movimento, che non può che ribadire, dietro l’apparenza di una prestigiosa «reputazione», la propria natura di amante «meschino» e «impazzato» (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 54).
l’incontro, non surga un male. Quanto più mi è cresciuta la speranza, tanto mi è cresciuto el timore. Misero a me! Sarà egli ma possibile che io viva in tanti affanni e perturbato da questi timori e queste speranze? Io sono una nave vessata da dua diversi venti, che tanto più teme, quanto ella è più presso al porto. (Mandragola IV.i, 882)

Callimaco is able to recognize the effects of Fortune\textsuperscript{224} according to Machiavellian doctrine, but proves ineffective in combatting its effects, as he confesses to ‘womanly cowardice’. The final lines in the soliloquy are humorous not only for the force of their description, but also for the betrayal of Callimaco’s true cowardice:

Callimaco: [...] ma io ci sto poco sù, perché da ogni parte mi assalta tanto desìo d’essere una volta con costei, che io mi sento, dalle piante de’ piè al capo, tutto alterare: le gambe triemano, le viscere si commuovono, el cuore si sbarba del petto, le braccia s’abbandonono, la lingua diventa muta, gli occhi abarbagliano, el cervello mi gira.

(Mandragola IV.i, 883)\textsuperscript{225}

\textsuperscript{224} Volgi el viso alla sorte; fuggi el male, o, non lo potendo fuggire, sopportalo come uomo; non ti protesternere, non ti invilire come una donna” (Mandragola IV.i, 882-883).

\textsuperscript{225} On these effusions, Ferroni acknowledges that they do not belong to the amante gentile e cortese, but instead are a comic affirmation of an inability which lead to unflattering connotations for the ‘hero’: “Anche le effusioni «passionali» di Callimaco, le sue tirate amorose e la sua tensione ad un male d’amore radicale ed estremo, disposto all’eccesso di decisioni violente e mortali, si spostano da naturale espressione dell’amante gentile e cortese ad iperbole eccessive e stridente, dove il pathos erotico non vale come sostegno di un rilievo sublime, ma come conferma comica di una incapacità di movimento, come dato di una natura «meschina» che, invece di adattarsi veramente al reale e di sottoporlo così a controllo, sosta su di un orizzonte (fatto di motivi topici ed iperbolici) che, nel mondo della commedia, non può assumere altro che un valore franco of derisorio e parodistico, senza ambire certo a proporre astratti modelli ideali” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 49). Luperini and Cataldi comment on the linguistic register Callimaco employs as solemn, but empty, capable only of reciting his own feelings: “quello solenne e vuoto, del letterato che declama i propri sentimenti” (Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 658).
It is telling that this ends with a plea for Ligurio, so that Callimaco may have someone with which to discuss all his anxieties. Callimaco does not exhibit the self-assurance and stability befitting a person of his stature.

Scene two is composed of a series of interactions between Callimaco and Ligurio, in which the plan is explained in detail. Callimaco is no longer in control, as Ligurio is the one to give the particulars. Again, it is Callimaco who will supply the ‘servile’ phrases, which serve as sharp contrast to the opening scene of the play. The contrast is thrown into sharper relief in scene three of Act IV where we have the same two protagonists as were in the play’s opening scene, namely Callimaco and Siro. In this scene, Siro is still Callimaco’s inferior, as evidenced by the nature of his rejoinders to Callimaco’s request that the take the mandrake ‘cure’ to Nicia’s house:

Siro: Messere!

Siro: Eccomi.

Siro: Sarà fatto.

Siro: Eccolo.

Siro: Io vo. \textit{(MandrAgola IV.iii, 884)}

It no longer, however, has the same effect on the audience, as it did in the first scene.

Callimaco’s instructions to Siro are merely those communicated by Ligurio at the close of the

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\textsuperscript{226} “Pure se io trovassi Ligurio, io arei con chi sfogarmi. --Ma ecco che ne viene verso me ratto: el rapporto di costui mi farà o vivere allegro qualche poco, o morire affatto” \textit{(MandrAgola IV.i, 883).}

\textsuperscript{227} John Bernard believes that the excess of emotion betrayed by Callimaco, is actually a warning from Machiavelli: “On the deepest level, he [Callimaco] may reflect Machiavelli’s abiding sense that eros always drives men outside their true selves and hence represents a threat to stable identity” (Bernard 81).

\textsuperscript{228} “Noi abbiamo tutti a travestirci. Io farò travestire el frate: contrafarà la voce, el viso, l’abito; e dirò al dottore che tu sia quello; e’ se ’l crederrà” \textit{(MandrAgola IV.ii, 884).}

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The distance created in the first scene between Siro and Callimaco has been narrowed considerably so that they are almost on equal footing: Siro and Callimaco are both servants. Callimaco serves Ligurio, and therefore in serving Callimaco, Siro is also a pawn of Ligurio’s. Callimaco himself confirms this is scene five of Act IV, where Siro, Ligurio and Callimaco appear together:

Callimaco: Siro, odi qua: tu hai questa sera a fare tutto quello che ti dirà Ligurio; e fa’ conto, quando e’ ti comanda, ch’e’ sia io; e ciò che tu vedi, senti o odi, hai a tenere segretissimo, per quanto tu stimi la roba, l’onore, la vita mia ed il bene tuo.

(*Mandragola* IV.v, 885)

Callimaco is absent again until Act V, until after the plan has been successfully carried out, and he reappears in the fourth scene to boast of his night with Lucrezia. Though Callimaco tells of how he convinced Lucrezia that they could live happily without any scandal, in the new arrangement, until such time that they could be married once Nicia was dead, the majority of Callimaco’s last important speech is dedicated to a narration of Lucrezia’s response to the plot. Callimaco narrates Lucrezia’s capitulation, but she also issues a set of instructions to Callimaco:

Callimaco: Però, io ti prendo per signore, patrone, guida: tu mio padre, tu mio defensore, e tu voglio che sia ogni mio bene; e quel che ’l mio marito ha voluto per una sera, voglio ch’egli abbia sempre. Farà’ti adunque suo compare, e verrai questa mattina a la chiesa, e di quivi ne verrai a desinare con esso noi; e l’andare e lo stare starà a te, e potremo ad ogni ora e senza sospetto convenire insieme. (*Mandragola* V.iv, 889)

While this circumstance may have been forced upon her, Lucrezia is far from being a passive object in the scheme. She takes full possession of this plot in declaring that what was desired for

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229 “Chiama Siro, manda la pozione a messer Nicia, e me aspetta in casa. Io andrò per il frate: farollo travestire, e condurrollo qui, e troverreno el dottore, e fareno quello manca” (*Mandragola* IV.ii, 884).
one night, will now be forever. Callimaco may no longer serve Ligurio, but he will certainly serve Lucrezia, as evidenced by the immediate compliance of Lucrezia’s requests: “Andian verso la chiesa, perché io le promissi d’essere là, dove la verrà lei, la madre ed il dottore” (*Mandragola* V.iv, 889). With Ligurio’s remark that all went according to his plan, the relationship between Ligurio and Callimaco effectively ends. This has been a very fruitful collaboration, with the two of them effectively interpreting and manipulating their environment in order to obtain Callimaco’s goal. In unison, their coolness was demonstrated in their adherence to utility and practicality, guided by their accurate understanding of a crude realism. They act based on their ability to interpret and manipulate their environment, not as it should be, but as it is. They use empirical observation to determine their strategy, and do not rely on magical devices, such as Nicia will do in trusting the efficacy of the mandrake root. Of the two, Ligurio is certainly the one who proves himself more adept at this process.

While Callimaco and Nicia are tied to sociological and environmental implications, Ligurio is not, and exists solely as a function of his own role in comedy, going beyond the conventions associated with the parasite’s role (cfr. Ferroni, *«Mutazione» e «Riscontro»* 67). He appears to not have any exterior motivations for his actions, and is the only one to assist others in servicing the plot. His role is pivotal, of course, but accomplished in complete neutrality. On this, Ferroni writes:

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230 On Lucrezia’s power, Ferroni notes: “Di fronte a questa situazione resta preminente la centralità del soggetto attivo e giudicante (non a caso la reggente è «io voglio»: l’accettazione della fortuna è completamente cosciente, vale come una assunzione di responsabilità, come una presa di possesso delle circostanze, per cui è Lucrezia stessa ad impartire ordini a Callimaco e a formulare precisi programmi per il futuro” (Ferroni, *«Mutazione» e «Riscontro»* 98).

231 “Io ho gran piacere d’ogni tuo bene, ed ètti intervenuto quello che io ti dissi appunto” (*Mandragola* V.iv, 889).

Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 69)

... si tratta di una figura sociologicamente e caratterologicamente neutra […] che assume su di sé funzioni rigorosamente teatrali, che manovra dall’interno il gioco della Mandragola, senza aspirare a significazioni estranee alla struttura in cui è inserito, ma operando a rompere ogni significazione estranea già cristallizzata in altri personaggi.

(Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 69)

Ferroni speaks of a complete detachment from the world around him, which does not arise from moral dimensions (cfr. Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 69).²³³ Raimondi highlights:

l’occhio freddo e disincantato del «tristo» Ligurio, che controlla i gesti di tutti gli attori senza pretendere d’altro canto un prestigio finale di protagonista, sembra fatto apposta per essere coreografo; e l’occasione per manifestarsi consapevolmente in questo ruolo, sia pure nell’orizzonte del grottesco e della caricatura... (Raimondi 212)

Bernard claims that he “seems to incarnate the Machiavellian ideal of an intense but disinterested morality” (Bernard 83).

In any case, it is clear that Ligurio drives the majority of the action throughout the play.²³⁴ He devises the mandrake root scheme and orchestrates the movement of all the characters in the piece. He overcomes Lucrezia’s objections by employing Fra’ Timoteo and Sostrata to work on her conscience. While Ligurio does occupy a central functional role, it is one that does exist in relation to Callimaco. One of the reasons Callimaco is still permitted to be the hero is due in large part to Ligurio. According to Sumberg “The complete statesman is Callimaco and Ligurio in council, the leader and his counselor jointly acting. There is obviously less need to demand

²³³ Sumberg comments on Ligurio’s detachment: “Ligurio is even one of those few who in an exaggerated way is aloof from the all too human desire for power and fame” (Sumberg 332).

²³⁴ Di Maria highlights Ligurio’s function as intermediary, and how he enhances our understanding of the other characters: “In Mandragola…the intermediary [Ligurio] is an actual character who is central to the plot and instrumental to our appreciation of other characters” (Di Maria, “From prose to stage” 141).
excellence in the ruler if a strong counsellor is always at hand” (Sumberg 332). It is important to note, however, that Ligurio could never have achieved this on his own. Machiavelli is careful never to offer praise to Ligurio (cfr. Bonino xx). Bonino sees Machiavelli’s own situation reflected in Ligurio’s status: “il personaggio, sempre lucido, sempre scattante, il tema che Ligurio impersona trae una sua strana, dolorosa risonanza” (Bonino xxi). Both have all the ideas and intelligence to mastermind the world’s affairs, but without any legitimate position, they can accomplish nothing on their own, and are forced to bind themselves to lesser characters. In this case, Ligurio bound himself to Callimaco, and gained his trust by claiming “Non dubitare della fede mia, ché, quando e’ non ci fussi l’utile che io sento e che io spero, e’ c’è che ’l tuo sangue si confà col mio, e desidero che tu adempia questo tuo desiderio presso a quanto tu” (Mandragola I.iii). This type of analysis lends credence to the theories which suggest that writing was the means by which Machiavelli could regain an active role in political life. Should this have been his goal, it was accomplished by way of the audience’s participation. Raimondi writes:

Il testo teatrale si realizza nell’interazione dei vari livelli dinamici della favola e nel loro proporsi a un pubblico che in un certo senso deve farsi complice del gioco tra i personaggi ogni volta che il linguaggio scenico si sdoppia e si carica di contromovimenti, di ambivalenze caricaturali. (Raimondi 256)

Already by the third scene of Act I, Callimaco’s credibility and reputation as the hero has been supplanted. It is Callimaco’s character who may be considered an even greater fool than Nicia, because the latter is expected to be foolish or sciocco, but the former should have

235 Raimondi sees Ligurio as being Callimaco’s “double”, but with a very important difference: “ma nel medesimo tempo stabilisce una distanza, una differenza di prospettiva, in quanto è evidente che la sua [Ligurio’s] comprensione del reale include anche quella dell’interlocutore, mentre non sembra vero l’opposto” (Raimondi 211). Bernard comments: “Through the persona of Ligurio he [Machiavelli] exposes the whole instability and hollowness of their social and psychic ordini” (Bernard 84).
displayed more heroic qualities. Ferroni identifies the true affinity between these two characters, and how both are Ligurio’s pawns: “La presenza regolatrice di Ligurio svaluta dunque le nobili apparenze di Callimaco, mostra la «meschinità» del suo comportamento, nel quale quello che avrebbe dovuto essere un ideale protagonista si abassa in un «riscontro» inessenziale col suo sciocco antagonista” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 52-53).

As a pairing, however Callimaco and Ligurio represent the new anthropological dimension of typographic man. Their combined ability to recognize and seize opportunity in a world which is no longer based on the ineffable and magical, foreshadowed the modernity which was to inaugurate the next century. They are on one side of the dialogue which is unfolding between the new establishment and the old one. In particular, Ligurio, who “is a crafty parasite with an uncanny discernment of the motives and ambitions that drive others to action” (Di Maria, “From prose to stage” 141). Their eventual victory clearly places them on the new side, which is triumphing over the old. They are the incarnation of the Machiavellian prince who, in basing his action on the reality of the world around him, supersedes the old who is still tied to the world of magic and superstition. The antagonist of this dialogue is Nicia. His obtuseness and lack of ability to perceive what is really happening around him, renders his character much hotter than those represented by Callimaco and Ligurio.

4.5 Nicia: hottest of the hot

Nicia is not only the antagonist in the dialogue between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ order, he is also the antagonist of Mandragola’s plot. As Lucrezia’s husband, he is the obvious obstacle

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236 Di Maria highlights the ability to discern between fact and fiction as the essential difference between Callimaco and Nicia respectively: “Callimaco succeeds because of his accurate assessment of the facts before him as well as for his prudence in choosing a worthy ministro. Nicia, to the contrary, fails because he chooses to disregard factual truth and to focus, instead, on its appearance” (“Ethical premises” 28-29). Di Maria goes so far as to call Nicia a “blocking character”: “[Nicia] is a blocking character recognized by the play’s community as a menace to the growth and the decorum of society” (“Ethical Premises” 31).
(alongside Lucrezia’s virtue), that needs to be overcome in order for Callimaco and Lucrezia to be together. The audience would have instantly recognized this stock character, and his role as the opposite or negative pole to Callimaco; a character Northrop Frye would call the alazon (cfr. Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 54). As Frye explains, the alazon is the “impostor, someone who pretends or tries to be something more than he is [...] We are most familiar with such characters in comedy, where they are looked at from the outside, so that we see only the social mask” (Frye, 39). As such, they are highly-defined characters and consequently ‘hot’, in relation to the other characters as perceived by the audience. The audience knows what to expect when they enter on stage, and are prepared to interact with them on a superficial level, as dictated by Frye “from the outside.” From his first scene, the allusion to the dottor poco astuto (from the Prologue) is confirmed as Nicia proves to be the simple fool which had been promised.

Linguistically he too has a specific register defined by his use of stereotypical Florentine proverbs and idioms, as well as vulgarity (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. I 658). In speaking with him, Ligurio also employs the same register, and in this brief exchange we can witness the cunning adaptability of one, and the stupidity of the other, as Nicia tries to convince Ligurio he is a great traveller, when in fact, he has not been further away than Pisa and Livorno:

237 “Se la «natura» di Callimaco si definisce in questo gioco di ambiguità tra la presunzione di un rilievo positivo determinato dalla sua posizione di esterno privilegio e una continua contestazione e demistificazione di questo rilievo, più semplice ed immediatamente riconoscibile è la definizione di Nicia, di colui che nella esterna struttura comica rappresenta a priori il polo opposto negativo, quello che il Frye chiamerebbe l’ἀλαζόν” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 54).

238 On this aspect of Nicia’s character, Raimondi writes: “Quanto piú il personaggio si lancia, per affermare se stesso, nella giostra delle sue fantasie ammiccanti e delle sue esclamazioni idiomatiche, sospinto da un furore esibitorio che ha qualche vena di follia, tanto piú la sua lingua lo trascende e diviene azione essa stessa, puro gesto, spettacolo nello spettacolo, per adottare un termine moderno, che si correla alla dimensione negativa del protagonista in scena” (Raimondi 209-210).
Ligurio: E’ vi debbe dar briga, quello che voi dicesti prima, perché voi non sete uso a perdere la Cupola di veduta.239

Nicia: Tu erri. Quando io ero più giovane, io sono stato molto randaggio: e’ non si fece mai la fiera a Prato, che io non vi andasse; e’ non c’è castel veruno all’intorno, dove io non sia stato; e ti vo’ dir più là: io sono stato a Pisa ed a Livorno, o va’! 

(Mandragola I.ii, 871).

Ligurio mocks Nicia in his reply, and chastises him for making such a fuss over his plan of taking Lucrezia to the baths as a cure for her sterility:

Ligurio: Io mi maraviglio, adunque, avendo voi pisciato in tanta neve,240 che voi facciate tanta difficoltà d’andare ad un bagno.

Nicia: Tu hai la bocca piena di latte.241 E’ ti pare a te una favola avendo a sgominare tutta la casa? Pure, io ho tanta voglia d’aver figliuoli, che io son per fare ogni cosa.

(Mandragola I.ii, 871).

His affinity for Florentine phrases is certainly exaggerated, as they are a ubiquitous aspect of his speech, however, it also serves to create a link with the audience as their recognition of the ‘inside-joke’ will endear Nicia to them, in spite of his stupidity and ignorance.

Nicia’s stupidity is a marked characteristic of his personality, however, it is not carried to excess. While certainly not an antagonist worthy of Ligurio’s cunning, Nicia is of moderate intelligence, and able to express thoughts of some worth. Bonino draws attention to the type of comedy Nicia brings, not one that is passive, but “attiva, giacché elabora da se stessa le occasioni

239 An example of the idioms and phrases employed: to lose sight of the Cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore, which is an allusion to Nicia’s unwillingness to be far away from Florence (cfr. Bonino 15).

240 With this comedic image, Ligurio means ‘having visited many places’ (cfr. Bonino 16). And also that Nicia is older and has seen many winters.

241 Again, Nicia often speaks proverbs, and clichès; this one means that you are naive as a child (cfr. Bonino 16).
When asked by Callimaco (disguised as a doctor) whether he is on pleasant business (*buone faccende*), Nicia replies:

Nicia: Che so io? Vo cercando duo cose, ch’un altro per avventura fuggirebbe: questo è di dare briga a me ad altri. Io non ho figliuoli, e vorre’ne, e, per avere questa briga, vengo a dare impaccio a voi. (*Mandragola* II.ii, 873)

To make trouble for oneself and others is certainly to be avoided and reminiscent of Machiavelli’s noted aversion to mercenary soldiers. This instance of rationality and reasonable thought is not an isolated one. Through Nicia, Machiavelli makes many pointed criticisms toward Florence and Florentines. In the following passage, Nicia laments that his *concittadini* do not value ability, and for this reason one cannot make a decent living:

Nicia: E’ fa molto bene: in questa terra non ci è se non cacastecchi, non ci si apprezza virtù alcuna. S’egli stessi qua, non ci sarebbe uomo lo guardassi in viso. Io ne so ragionare, che ho cacato le curatelle per imparare dua hac, e se io ne avessi a vivere, io starei fresco, ti so dire! (*Mandragola* II.ii, 873)

The harsh criticism is somewhat shielded by the vulgar, and thus comedic tone of the passage. Spoken by Nicia, it is further screened from any serious attention by the audience, who again would not expect sage words of wisdom from him. That these words, however, were spoken by

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242 “Le mercenarie e ausiliarie sono inutile e periculose: e, se uno tiene lo stato suo fondato in sulle arme mercenarie, non starà mai fermo né sicuro; perché le sono disunite, ambiziose, senza disciplina, infedele; gagliarde fra gli amici; fra e’ nimici, vile; non timore di Dio, non fede con gli uomini; e tanto si differisce al ruina, quanto si differisce lo assalto; e nella pace se’ spogliato da loro, nella guerra da’ nimici” (Il principe 275).
Nicia is not a coincidence; both he and Florence suffer from an ignorance that does not permit them to accurately perceive the world around them.243

In the same scene, however, Nicia recognizes his inability to be heard or attended without some kind of recognized status or official government position:

Nicia: E questo è che, chi non ha lo stato244 in questa terra, de’ nostri pari, non truova can che gli abbai; e non siàn buoni ad altro che andare a’ mortori o alle ragunate d’un mogliazzo, o a starci tuttodi in sulla panca del Proconsolo a donzellarci. (Mandragola II.iii, 874)245

The good doctor’s ability to recognize the evils of the world is played up for comic fodder, but nothing more. Nicia does nothing to improve his situation within this world, as he fails to recur to a rational solution to his problem. Instead, he puts his faith in the magical and fantastical, and plays directly into the cunning hands of those who have mastered the dialectic of the new establishment, namely Ligurio and Callimaco. As antagonist, in agreement with Ferroni, we see that this role:

[...] si riconosce non tanto nella sua posizione di ostacolo al successo di Callimaco, nella sua reazione al viaggio del presunto protagonista verso la felicitas, quanto nella

243 Raimondi explains how much these two are actually deserving of one another: “Non è casuale dunque che l’immagine spregiativa di Firenze appartenga al repertorio tematico di Messer Nicia: la malizia dell’accoppiamento non si arresta al montaggio dell’enunciato, ma invade anche l’universo del discurso e si duplica nell’orchestrazione diretta delle voci, delle cadenze. La città che il dottore mostra al pubblico in fondo alla scena, angusta e maligna, è già presentata nelle sue parole a catena, a forte connotazioni affettive, dei «cacastecchi», delle «curatelle», dei «mortori», dei «mogliazzi», della «panca del Proconsolo”’ (Raimondi 210).

244 This refers to he who has no recognized status, an official position in government, or among those who govern (cfr. Bonino 24).

245 On this aspect of Nicia’s role, Ferroni writes: “Ma la maldicenza di Nicia è notevole soprattutto là dove giunge a riferimenti precisi alla situazione fiorentina, all’ambito contemporaneo alla Mandragola; essa vuol assumere addirittura un aspetto di critica morale e politica come una denuncia dell’ostilità fiorentina verso l’autentica «virtù», del fatto che in Firenze vengono negati riconoscimenti agli autentici valori culturali, delle abitudini oziose e domestiche dei suoi concittadini, delle loro ambigue connivenze col potere statale” (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 61).
sua statica condizione di «pazzo» nella sua passiva irrazionalità iscritta entro norme e convenzioni borghesi. (Ferroni, «Mutazione» e «Riscontro» 54-55)

This passive irrationality towards the bourgeois norms and conventions is acknowledged in the final sentences of the citation quoted above: “Ma non vorrei però ch’elle fussino mia parole, ché io arei di fatto qualche balzello o qualche porro di dietro, che mi fare’ sudare” (Mandragola II.iii, 874). Nicia’s real foolishness and stupidity lies in the irrational fear of violating these conventions, as he is unable to insert himself in the new establishment, and is instead paralyzed into inaction. This inability to act and interact with the world which surrounds him is what makes Nicia’s character a hot one, in relation to that of Callimaco and Ligurio. He allows himself to be guided not by rational, calculable thought, but by its very opposite: irrationality and fear.

It is this irrationality which will overcome Nicia’s common sense. In response to Callimaco’s suggestion that in order for Nicia to be spared the death that the mandrake root causes to he who first sleeps with his wife, they engage a young man to take his place the first night, Nicia denies saying: “Io non vo fare cotesto[...] Perché io non vo’ fare la mia donna femmina e me becco” (Mandragola II.vi, 876). He continues to offer reasonable objections, including fear of repercussion: “Chi volete voi che io truovi che facci cotesta pazzia? Se io gliene dico, e’ non vorrà; se io non gliene dico, io lo tradisco, ed è caso da Otto: io non ci vo’ capitare sotto male” (Mandragola II.vi, 876).

Fear of the Eight, or of justice, makes Nicia waver on this point, but finally accepts on condition of it not being made known to the authorities: “Io sono contento, poiché tu di’ che e re e principi e signori hanno tenuto questo modo. Ma soprattutto, che non si sappia, per amore

246 “Otto di giustizia [è] la magistratura che presiedeva il tribunale penale” (Bonino 29).
degli Otto!” (*Mandragola* II.vi, 876). As noted in the citation, Nicia is also pacified by the fact that it is an apparently accepted practice of “re e principi e signori.” Nicia’s desire to abide by the law is not motivated by any sense of morality, rather fear of repercussion. In agreement with Ferroni, Nicia’s simplicity is anchored to his desire to have children which overrides every notion of reality and common sense which leads him straight down the path of cuckoldry (cfr. Ferroni, *«Mutazione» e «Riscontro»* 59).

While Nicia does allow his desire for children to outweigh his better judgment, Machiavelli continuously permits a display of the judgment of which he is capable. As Bonino says “la «pazzia» di Nicia non è fine a se stessa, è il riverbero di una «pazzia» collettiva [...] la struttura della beffa intrude ora un’appassionata denuncia etica e civile” (Bonino xv). Bonino accurately describes Nicia as the medium for Machiavelli’s criticism of contemporary society: “c’è una struttura «profonda» della beffa, di cui Nicia è il mezzo, Machiavelli il risoluto mandante e il pubblico la vittima inconsapevole” (Bonino xvi-xvii).

When re-produced graphically, we can use Di Maria (Figure 1) to modify as follows:

**Figure 2:**

Criticism of contemporary society

IO (Machiavelli) <-----------------------------> Audience

Text (Nicia)

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247 On Nicia’s hypocrisy, Sumberg writes: “This man, who is an accomplice to a planned murder, could not be more law-abiding. Nicia pleads repeatedly with his fellow-plotters not to transgress the law, even in its most picayune detail. The mortal dread of sanctions and the loss of good name are constantly before him. He is the hypocrisy that is the official ethic of Florence” (Sumberg 329).

248 Zancarini sees Nicia as the embodiment of the the thesis of “simplicity” illustrated in Chapter 28 of *Il principe*: “Le personnage de Nicia...et le déroulement de la beffa dont il est victime semblent faits pour illustrer la thèse de la «simplicité» des hommes, exprimée dans le chapitre XXVII du Prince: «sono tanto semplici gli uomini...che colui che inganna troverà sempre chi si lascerà ingannare” (Zancarini 23).
Machiavelli has created the perfect medium in Nicia in order to convey his most celebrated criticisms.\footnote{Bonino makes the same conclusions concerning the importance of Nicia as medium for Machiavelli’s criticism of contemporary society: “Nicia è il «portatore» della struttura della beffa in quanto è lo schermo di una corruzione, etica e civile, che è la corruzione del suo pubblico...Attraverso Nicia Machiavelli profana e dissacra nel suo sdegno di grande solitario deluso, la società del suo tempo” (Bonino xviii).}

On the clergy, Machiavelli has rarely remained silent. In Mandragola, Nicia says: “Egli è pur male però che quegli che arebbono a dare buoni esempli sien fatti così. Non dich’io el vero?” (\textit{Mandragola} III.ii, 877).\footnote{Machiavelli’s criticism of the clergy is common knowledge. The example here is from a letter to Guicciardini: “Moreover, since I am aware how much belief there is in an evil man who hides under the cloak of religion, I can readily conjure up how much belief there would be in a good man who walks in truth, and not in pretense, tramping through the muddy footprints of Saint Francis” (17 May 1521, Letter 270).} Nicia’s stupidity and foolishness is a marked characteristic of this ‘hot’ character. The characters that surround Nicia are certainly all conspiring against him, and the audience too is hoping for a ‘successful’ resolution to the scheme, namely the joining of Lucrezia and Callimaco. A large part of the comedic success of the play also lies with Nicia obtaining his object, namely legitimate heirs. The element of secrecy is necessary to all parties, and therefore, there is no distinction between the ‘true’ happiness of Callimaco and the ‘false’ happiness of Nicia. As Sumberg notes, both characters achieving happiness in their own sphere, and this serves as good advice for the astute ruler:

\begin{quote}
Callimaco as well as the cuckolded husband get their hearts’ content. The first attains true happiness, the second false happiness. The second is not a mite less genuine than the first. The difference is simply that the first is for the few who can live with the truth and the second for the many whose natural medium is illusion. The good republic will give to each his type of happiness. Since politics is rule over many, it will take special pains to spread abroad the second kind of happiness. Delusions wear off, it is true, but the astute ruler has a Pandora’s box full of them.” (Sumberg 336)
\end{quote}
Those in control, however, are always fully aware of the reality that surrounds him. Nicia’s ‘false’ happiness may serve him well in this circumstance, but he will never be in control of his destiny as the pawn of others. For the purposes of the lieta fine, all turned out to Nicia’s advantage in the fulfillment of his desires; but his success in any future endeavours is completely dependent upon meeting with another situation such as the one described in Mandragola. If he continues to act irrationally in a rational world, he will meet with failure. This ‘hot’ aspect of his character will not be any guarantee of future success. With the interaction of these ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ characters, Machiavelli establishes the central dialogue of the play. The audience is witnessing the new and cool characters successfully navigate the world, while the old and hot are left to the mercy of fortune. This dynamic or dialogue is not only played out by the main protagonists, but also by the minor ones. Fra Timoteo and Sostrata are also placed on opposite ends of the argument: the friar is a cynic or realist, while Lucrezia’s mother is the credulone. Just as with Callimaco/Ligurio and Nicia, the cynic or realist in the form of Fra; Timoteo will exhibit coolness in his dealings with the world, while the gullible one, this time in the form of Sostrata will be on the opposite side of the spectrum in her reliance on the advice of others to make her way in the world.

251 Di Maria summarizes Nicia’s function in the play, not only with regards to his role as the comic relief, but also in terms of his role in the new society: “[...] Nicia is comical precisely because he considers himself shrewd and socially aware, when, in fact, his behavior not only offends social decorum, it also exhibits a clear lack of virtù, since he is unable to discern fact from fiction. In Machiavellian terms, he is laughable essentially because he fails to perceive the actual truth (“realtà effettuale delle cose”), allowing himself to be taken in by its appearance. Indeed, throughout the play his view of the facts is consistently dimmed by his extreme adherence to shallow values, such as his social status, and his enthusiasm for French elitism” (“Ethical premises” 26).
4.6 Fra’ Timoteo and Sostrata: the cynic and the gull, from hot to cool

Fra Timoteo’s wickedness is foreshadowed in the Prologue (un frate mal vissuto), and vigilantly upheld throughout the play. Ligurio exposes the depths of this treacherous nature, when he tricks the Friar into assisting with an abortion, and insisting on it serving the greater good. Ligurio wanted only to confirm the Friar would be amenable to deception and of questionable morality. This Fra’ Timoteo confirms in his soliloquy in scene 9 of Act III, demonstrating a shrewdness in understanding Ligurio’s motives. Fra’ Timoteo clearly exhibits his opportunism, and the lengths he will go when a situation favours him:

Egli è vero che io ci sono suto giuntato; nondimeno, questo giunto è con mio utile.

Messer Nicia e Callimaco sono ricchi, e da ciascuno, per diversi rispetti, son per trarre assai; la cosa convien stia secreta, perché l’importa così a loro, a dirla, come a me. Sia come si voglia, io non me ne pento. È ben vero che io dubito non ci avere difficoltà, perché madonna Lucrezia è savia e buona: ma io la giugnerò in sulla bontà.

(Mandragola III.ix, 880)

He and Callimaco/Ligurio are indeed characters of the same ilk, in that they do not allow any moral scruple to interfere with the attainment of their stated goal. At the end of Act IV, Fra Timoteo offers this summary while simultaneously betraying his lack of morality by admitting to not adhering to his vow of chastity:

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252 “Ligurio: Guardate, nel far questo quanti beni ne resulta: voi mantenete l’onore al munistero, alla fanciulla, a’ parenti; rendete al padre una figliuola; satisfate qui a messere, a tanti sua parenti; fate tante elemosine, quante con questi trecento ducati potete fare; e, dall’altro canto, voi non offendete altro che un pezzo di carne non nata, sanza senso, che in mille modi si può spendere; ed io credo che quel sia bene, che facci bene a’ più, e che e più se ne contentino” (Mandragola III.iv, 879).

253 Frate: Io non so chi si abbi giuntato l’uno l’altro. Questo tristo di Ligurio ne venne a me con quella prima novella, per tentarmi, acciò, se io li consentivo quella, m’inducessi più facilmente a questa; se io non gliene consentivo, non mi arebbe detta questa, per non palesare e disegni loro sanza utile, e di quella che era falsa non si curavano (Mandragola III.ix, 880).
Frate: E voi, spettatori, non ci appuntate, perché in questa notte non ci dormirà persona

[...] Callimaco e madonna Lucrezia non dormiranno, perché io so, se io fussi lei e se voi
fussi lei, che noi non dormiremo. (Mandragola IV.x, 887).

Drawing the audience in with his use of the pronoun ‘noi’, Fra’ Timoteo is also able to establish a
link with them, even if it is not under the most chaste of contexts. He reveals that he suffers
from the same failings as the audience does, and this is used to full advantage by Machiavelli
when he has the Friar point out how the lack of devotion in the clergy has led to a lack of
devotion among the populace:

Frate: E si maravigliano poi se la divozione manca! [...] Noi vi solavamo ogni sera
doppo la compieta andare a procissione, e facevànvi cantare ogni sabato le laude.
Botavànci noi sempre quivi, perché vi si vedessi delle immagine fresche; confortavamo
nelle confessioni gli uomini e le donne a botarvisi. Ora non si fa nulla di queste cose, e
poi ci maravigliamo che le cose vadin fredde! (Mandragola V.i, 887)

Having these soliloquies appear one after the other, is very effective in taking advantage of the
rapport that had just been established at the end of Act IV. While this Friar is certainly no
paragon of morality, he is still an astute observer of how the Church and its members have led
the people astray. It is this ability to make astute observations which classifies the friar as a cool
character. Like Ligurio, not only is he able to accurately perceive the world around him, but he
has used this knowledge to successfully interact with it, in order to obtain his goal. The final
scene in which all the characters are seen entering the Church has also been perceived as a sort of

254 Bonino remarks on this relationship with the audience: “La riflessività di Timoteo si espande, in prima istanza, sul piano drammaturgico. A differenza degli altri personaggi che non calano mai la maschera, Timoteo tende di continuo ad uscire dalla finzione per instaurare un dialogo diretto cool pubblico” (Bonino xxi).
benediction on the new morality the “union” of Callimaco and Lucrezia represents. This adaptability is in direct contrast with Sostrata’s immovability as a character. While Sostrata actively supports the plot against her daughter, she was not the one to devise the plan. She recognizes its benefit, but only in a limited and crude fashion.

As Lucrezia’s mother, Sostrata, is applied to for assistance in persuading her daughter to be a part of the plan, and thus proving to be a woman who does not adhere to traditional morality. Though alluded to throughout the play, she does not appear until the inaugural scene of Act III, and does so expressing one of Machiavelli’s most enduring maxims:

Sostrata: Io ho sempreai sentito dire che gli è ufizio d’un prudente pigliare de’ cattivi partiti el migliore: se ad averefigliuoli, voi non avete altro rimedio che questo, si vuole pigliarlo, quando e’ non si gravi la coscienza. (Mandragola III.i, 877)

This not only echoes Chapter 21 of Il principe, but also a passage in I Discorsi. This practical stance mirrors that of the Friar who cites no unnecessary scruples to the proposed scheme. Di Maria praises Sostrata’s pragmatism and rightly claims:

Sostrata’s subordination of morality to actual reality defines her as a truly practical character in pursuit of an immediate and tangible good or utile. Her behavior, unhinged from rigid moral standards, is informed by the Machiavellian “necessità” of the

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255 For example, Di Maria notes: “The movement of the action from the stage into the saintliness of the church suggests a religious endorsement of the play’s final resolution [...] The audience, in turn, told to go home while the characters assemble for the religious ceremonies, is left with an indelible impression of the Church’s approval of the lovers’ arrangement [...] The Church’s approving gesture tends to coalesce with the society’s other ethical imperatives to inspire a general approbation of the play’s final resolution. The audience is thus authorized to look favorably upon the two lovers whose union inaugurates a pragmatic and vigorous new society led and controlled by youth. Ultimately, the audience’s endorsement is warranted by the laws of nature which require that a fertility rite be performed by youth (“Ethical Premises” 31-32).

256 “[...] ma la prudenzia consiste in sapere conoscere le qualità degli incovenienti e pigliare il meno tristo per buono” (Il principe 292). Berardi (Bonino 32) brings to our attention the quote from I Discorsi: “E però in ogni nostra deliberazione si debbe considerare dove sono meno inconvenienti, e pigliare quello per miglior partito, perché tutto netto, tutto senza sospetto non si truova mai” (I, vi).
moment, in this case a woman’s need to have a family. (Di Maria, “From prose to stage” 149-150)

Not only does she not oppose the plan, but Sostrata is an active conspirator, as she is seen and heard admonishing her daughter for having any objections. She suggests that Lucrezia let the Friar’s superior knowledge of religious morality guide her own.\(^{257}\) Lucrezia acknowledges Sostrata’s influence, among those of the other characters, in the conversation reported by Callimaco, in which Lucrezia submits to him (“la semplicità di mia madre”). Sostrata offers the realist argument that the audience would acknowledge could not be contradicted: “Sostrata: Lasciati persuadere, figliuola mia. Non vedi tu che una donna, che non ha figliuoli, non ha casa? Muorsi el marito, resta come una bestia, abbandonata da ognuno” (Mandragola III.xi, 881). Sostrata also adds to the comic relief when she suggests that apart from the rational argument quoted above, the pleasure of the plan is not to be ignored: “E’ ci è cinquanta donne, in questa terra, che ne alzerrebbono le mani al cielo” (Mandragola III.xi, 881). Sostrata’s role as witness is one that is, not only apparent in the final scene, where she sees the establishment of the new order, but throughout the play as well. Neither she nor Nicia can claim to be moral pillars of their society; and while exaggerated caricatures of wickedness, they nevertheless represent the hypocrisy and selfishness that permeated in Machiavelli’s Florence, which the author often decried. The hotness of these characters, however, is not determined by their hypocrisy or selfishness, which one could also readily apply to Fra’ Timoteo, Callimaco or even Ligurio, what makes Nicia and Sostrata hot characters is their inability to adapt and demonstrate the elasticity of mind necessary to survive and succeed in the world. They are support structures only, as they

\(^{257}\) “Io credo che tu creda, figliuola mia, che io stimi l’onore ed el bene tuo quanto persona del mondo, e che io non ti consiglierei di cosa che non stessi bene. Io ti ho detto e ridicoti, che se fra’ Timoteo ti dice che non ti sia carico di consienza, che tu lo faccia senza pensarvi” (Mandragola III.x, 880).
echo and reinforce what has been already devised by others. Theirs is not an active participation in the world around them, but a decidedly passive one. Their passivity lies not in their unwillingness to act, but in their inability to recognize how to best interact with their environment in order to achieve their goals. Nicia’s desire for children is fervent, and his willingness to act in order to bring about this desire is made clear throughout the play, however, he relies on others to come up with a plan. Nicia is unable to manipulate the environment himself, in order to find a solution. Sostrata, to a lesser degree, is also able to articulate the assurances of her daughter’s future with the birth of heirs, however, she also does not contribute anything material to the scheme devised by Ligurio and the Friar, as she is only able to follow the plan established by them. The crudeness and comedy often displayed by both Nicia and Sostrata further cements their social positioning as inferior to those of the cooler characters. The debate between the hot and cool characters intensifies throughout the play, and with each triumph, with each success that the cool characters experience at the expense of the hot ones, it becomes clear to the audience which method should be prized. The final scene is witness to the triumph, but it is not the comedic ending in any classical sense.

In constructing his play, Machiavelli followed the formula for any comedy as transmitted by Plautus and Terence, which Frye describes as follows: “What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will” (Frye 163). The “twist in the plot” used in Mandragola is due to the arrangement of a complex trick which features the adaptability of Callimaco and Ligurio. It is to them that the new society will be entrusted, for this is what is revealed at the end of the comedy:
At the beginning of the play the obstructing characters are in charge of the play’s society, and the audience recognizes that they are usurpers. At the end of the play the device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize around the hero, and the moment when this crystallization occurs is the point of resolution in the action, the comic discovery, *anagnorisis* or *cognitio*. (Frye 163)\textsuperscript{258}

The subversive element which *Mandragola* brings to this formula, is that the mandrake root or the device that unites the hero and heroine, the very one which should establish a new society was a ruse, it had no magical powers. The power lay in the cunning of those who employed it. The mandrake root is therefore stripped of any of significance, except for the very important element of perception of power it wielded throughout the play. It was instrumental in tricking Nicia, just as the other disguises worn by the other characters. In particular, those of Callimaco, who played the part of the doctor and the *garzonaccio* who ‘died’ in order to remove the poisonous side effects for he who first had sex with Lucrezia.\textsuperscript{259}

According to Frye

\[\ldots\] the final society reached by comedy is the one that the audience has recognized all along to be the proper and desirable state of affairs. (Frye 164)

This cannot be said of the society established at the end of *Mandragola*. The new society is established around falsehoods and deceit. There is no notion of a betterment of society, rather just one that is ruled not by morality, but by relativity.

\textsuperscript{258} Di Maria also cites Frye and the “movement of comedy”: “Accordingly, following the formula of classical comedy, by which “movement of society”, notes Northrop Frye, “is usually a movement from one kind of society to another,” [Frye 164-170] the play concludes by marking the passage from a society threatened by corruption and stagnation (or sterility) to a wise and productive one” (Di Maria “Ethical Premises” 31).

\textsuperscript{259} Raimondi comments on the impotence of the mandrake root, and how it transforms into a grotesque element: “Ma nel contesto dell’evento reale, dove di fatto non accade nulla di tragico, essa si svuota, si trasforma in grottesco, diventa caricatura di sé medesima, così come i personaggi debbono travestirsi a scena aperta […] Dall’intrigo della pozione e dei suoi sviluppi tattici o coreografici scaturiscono in questo modo trovate di bellissimo effetto comico, in gioco insidioso di fantasie e di veleni, di maschere sconcertanti quasi da autentico metateatro” (Raimondi 261-262).
Repeatedly, we have used, and witnessed the use of the word ‘accomplice’ to describe Machiavelli’s rapport with the audience. This key term is brought to fruition in the writing of *Mandragola*. Machiavelli does not simply write, he creates dialogues in which the audience’s participation is an integral part of the transmission of the message. It is not enough for the audience to simply watch the comedic events unfold, Machiavelli asks that they interpret the dialogue he has established between the cool and hot characters. Speaking of *Mandragola’s* language, Caretti claims it employs an “innata vena dialogica”, which we can readily observe.²⁶⁰ No play can exist without the audience, however, Machiavelli makes a special gift of their participation by insisting their involvement be elevated to that of ‘accomplice; this must be achieved in order for a message to be communicated. To this end, Machiavelli is careful in creating a series of relationships among his characters, which the audience will need to interpret.²⁶¹ For Di Maria, the “individual ambitions and interests come together to inform a social context that ultimately shapes the view the playwright intended to dramatize” (“From prose to stage” 151).²⁶² The choice of the stage as a medium for this message allowed Machiavelli to “represent it in all its dynamism and provoke a lively and immediate dialogue with his audience” (Di Maria, “From prose to stage” 151). The level of interpretation required by the audience is at its height in *Mandragola*, making it cooler than anything else Machiavelli has written. The importance of the individual to adapt to his environment is even more pointed...

²⁶⁰ “Il «comico» è qui la vera «musa» machiavelliana e il nostro autore mette a profitto, oltre alla sua innata vena dialogica e a quella novellistica, evidenti anche nelle opere politiche e nelle bellissime lettere private...” (Caretti 40).

²⁶¹ Bernard highlights the importance of this procedure as well: “How the author perceives these characters’ relations is one of the chief cruxes of the play” (Bernard 77).

²⁶² Di Maria specifies this more forcefully when he says “Neither Callimaco’s triumph over Nicia’s defeat should be attributed to authorial whimsy, but rather to a specific system of values that determines reward and punishment, good and bad, right and wrong [...] Such a judge is normally the author, as he interprets and dramatizes society’s laws. However, the ultimate judge is the audience, who must approve or disapprove of the values at work in the world being represented” (“Ethical Premises” 21).
in the play, than it was in *Il principe*. The *commedia* is able to exhibit how the opposite of adaptation and elasticity would be absurd: “Comedy usually moves toward a happy ending, and the normal response of the audience to a happy ending is “this should be,” which sounds like a moral judgment. So it is, except that it is not moral in the restricted sense, but social. Its opposite is not the villainous but the absurd...” (Frye 167). This is *Mandragna’s* ultimate reveal, namely the absurdity of not adhering to the new society that was being established around them.

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263 In choosing the *commedia* as his medium, Machiavelli took full advantage of the movement from illusion to reality: “Thus the movement from *pistis* to *gnosis*, from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and the older characters to a society controlled by youth and pragmatic freedom is fundamentally, as the Greek words suggest, a movement from illusion to reality. Illusion is whatever is fixed or definable, and reality is best understood as its negation: whatever reality is, it’s not *that*” (Frye 169-170)
Conclusion

When contemplating Machiavelli’s legacy, the term ‘modernity’ is often associated with him, however, without there being a clear definition of what ‘modernity’ means. John Najemy writes:

Frequently accompanying the notion that Machiavelli still speaks to us is the conviction, shared by many commentators, critics, and scholars, that he marked, and may even have been the chief protagonist of, an epochal turning point in the history of the West, the emergence of modernity, or indeed in the evolution of human consciousness--but without any consensus as to whether this was a good or a very bad thing. (Najemy 12)

Najemy’s last thought encapsulates a certain level of unease or discomfort that contemporary readers have with Machiavelli and his theories for, in many ways, he “has been assigned...the status of prophet whose revelations concerning what is constant in human nature and politics are still and always valid (quite apart from whether or not we welcome or like them), because they are believed to have foretold our condition” (Najemy 8). Seen in this light, the ‘modernity’ that Machiavelli is accused of ushering in is certainly a bleak one, however, this thesis has sought to uncover a different type of legacy for him or one that certainly does credit him foresight and modernity, but in a more classical context.

In Renaissance society, the artist has a central role, one that every citizen should mirror, namely that of being architect of his own life, creator of his own destiny (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, Vol. 1 603). Machiavelli applied the principle of reward, both in his own world and in the worlds he created in his writings. The content and form of Machiavelli’s work were informed by the supremacy of the individual. In terms of content, life was not to be undertaken
in a passive manner by relying on the universe to provide that which you desired. As we saw in Chapter 4, Machiavelli greatly derided Messer Nicia in *Mandragola* for taking this approach, branding him a fool and ultimately, a cuckold. That Nicia obtained his desire for heirs, was only as a result of the active scheming of the people around him. To take a central and active role in your own destiny was also the key to Machiavelli’s advice addressed to the prince, and to any others who wished to ensure the survival of the state.

In the form Machiavelli employed to communicate his content, this dissertation has indicated that when presented with a genre that required objection and dissension to his theories and maxims (as did the dialogic genre), our author was unwilling to cede control and allow his thoughts to be refracted and potentially distorted in the mouths of others. *Arte della guerra* and *Discorso intorno alla lingua* reduce two great historical figures, Fabrizio Colonna and Dante Alighieri, respectively, to merely talking-heads for our author. Machiavelli was driven by the desire to clearly disseminate the messages he created in these two works, and not by a desire to display their merits.

As a product of the Renaissance, Machiavelli was also inspired by the naturalism and harmony that the artist was asked to reproduce. In this period, the figurative arts were able to establish: “l’esigenza naturalistica di raffigurare il corpo umano nella sua nudità, gli oggetti concreti, la realtà materiale, il paesaggio con quella classicistica dell’armonia, dell’equilibrio, delle proporzioni fra le parti” (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 603). To depict life as it is, and not as one would hope or wish it to be, is the cornerstone of Machiavelli’s *verità effettuale*. Without it, Machiavelli argues that one could not successfully interact with the world around him. In *Mandragola*, we encounter Callimaco who is rewarded for assessing the veracity of his situation and for finding a solution (with the astute help of Ligurio) based on the *verità effettuale* and not
an imagined state of things. The prince is also advised to follow Machiavelli’s way of assessing the world, should he wish to succeed in it. We can observe a visual representation of this in the architecture of the day. Here the principles of centralization and subordination regulate the space and the best expression of this can be found in the central drawing of Donato Bramante’s churches (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 604). In particular, San Pietro in Montorio demonstrates the perfect symmetry radiating from the centre. The drawings for Palazzo Strozzi and Palazzo Farnese are also excellent examples of this movement from a central or focal point, which radiates outwards creating symmetry.

In essence all things radiate from a central point, and exist in relation to that point. If instead of a central point, we substitute truth or, better, the world as it is, we can see how all things that radiate outwards from the truth achieve a harmony and balance with the outside world. We can draw parallels between the latter and Machiavelli’s *verità effettuale* since it is in the extrapolation based on the truth, or reality of a situation that one is sure to succeed in the political world.

For Machiavelli, the truth or reality of the world as it is, was not a fixed notion, but a malleable one. This is where Machiavelli meets modernity, or better anticipates Mannerism and Baroque. The *verità effettuale* is not a static, immovable object, as was represented in the Renaissance. Instead, it is always in flux, subject to a variety of influences including the nature of man and the irrationality of Fortune. It will be Mannerism which dissolves the regularity and harmony of Classicism and privileges forms that are more subjective, more troubled or disturbing, even bizarre bordering on the incomprehensible (cfr. Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol. 1* 603). The final tableau in *Mandragola* gives us a sense that the new normal (a society which does not censure adultery or any other perceived vice, as long as it allows for a greater good to
prevail) which has been established does not necessarily maintain a conventionally pleasant aspect. The *lieta fine* includes an extramarital affair, illegitimate heirs, and a cuckolded, dim-witted husband. Its ‘beauty’ lies not in the conventionality, but in the flexibility and adaptability that is demonstrated by the clever characters in order to make the best of their respective situations. Here, survival has been the driving force behind many of the decisions that were made. This anticipates the relativity that will be a hallmark of the Baroque period in which:

“Non c’è un collegamento spontaneo e necessario fra l’io e il tutto, ma i rapporti fra le cose sono relativi, stabiliti dall’ingegno del singolo individuo” (Luperini and Cataldi, *Vol.* 2 182).

Visually, we can reference the facade of Francesco Borromini’s Church of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, with its curves which mimic the movement of water and not any principle of stasis. It defies a singular, cohesive definition and invites the eye to ponder, interpret, ask questions, and never purports to prove any fixed answers. This very same observation has also been made concerning Machiavelli’s work, and his wide-spread appeal is constituted by the notion that:

Machiavelli provocatively addressed, with his characteristic freedom from the chains of convention and tradition, fundamental issues of his and all political cultures. He refused, moreover, to resolve such questions with straightforward dogmatic pronouncements or doctrinal declarations, preferring instead a discursive, dialectical style of analysis that enters into the terms of debates (in some cases already centuries old), ponders contrasts, measures the different sides and aspects of controversies, subverts received solutions, and proposes new and unsettling perspectives. (Najemy 8-9)

As we have seen through his use of the dialogic genre and its elements, Machiavelli has harvested the cooling elements of this medium and invites the reader not only to participate, but to become an accomplice in his works and consequently in the worlds he created. The beauty of
this coolness lies in the new and subversive elements that he introduces. Najemy reminds us that Machiavelli is one of the most ubiquitous figures in the academic world.\footnote{He is studied, analyzed, and debated by scholars from a greater variety of academic disciplines and intellectual directions (literature, history, philosophy, government, political science, theater studies, religion, military science, and even art history) and assigned as required reading (albeit usually only The Prince) in more university courses and departments than any other writer” (Najemy 5).} Machiavelli’s work is able to support this myriad of interpretations by inviting the reader to think and to ultimately create for himself. This is why Machiavelli has been appropriated by such a vast variety of disciplines, each claiming Machiavelli as their own. His genius lies in his ability to provide just enough information for the reader to begin to interpret his works. He is always careful not to cool his medium down too much so that a hallucination is triggered, as McLuhan puts it, which is a filling in of the blanks to an extent that the reader imagines something which is not there \textit{(Understanding Media 50)}.\footnote{On the other hand, in experiments in which all outer sensation is withdrawn, the subject begins a furious fill-in or completion of senses that is sheer hallucination. So the hotting-up of one sense tends to effect the hypnosis, and the cooling of all sense tends to result in hallucination” (McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media 50}).} This study has sought to prove that this is achieved, in part, due to the cooling agent or medium of the dialogic genre. Machiavelli asks of his reader a level of involvement which puts him on the cusp of modernity in the tradition of the reader reception theory championed by Umberto Eco some five hundred years later.

In undertaking this study, we recognized that only a small number of critics had analyzed Machiavelli’s work in terms of its form, and not (as the majority of critics have done) its content. The notable exceptions were Salvatore Di Maria, Frédérique Verrier and Michela Sacco Messineo. In analyzing Machiavelli’s works, both dialogues proper and those dialogic in nature, this dissertation evaluated the emergence of the voice of the ‘other,’ and the role that this voice is given. Furthermore, we observed how balance is created in his works; a balance which tries to reveal his theories while simultaneously observing the decorums outlined by the dialogic genre.
His success, or lack thereof, in achieving this balance will reveal much about the urgency of the message, and his desire to not have it, (or his opinions and point of view) distorted by way of his interlocutors. All of this was informed by a conception of dialogue as medium, as an extension of the mind’s ability to perceive a disputation.

This dissertation analyzed *Il principe* and *Mandragola* in terms of their dialogic elements however, the approach could be applied to our author’s other works as well, in an attempt to ascertain how Machiavelli creates and sustains a dynamic with his audience which informs the work as a whole. This would be particularly apt for Machiavelli’s other comedie, among them, *Clizia* and *Asino d’oro*. Among his political works, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* would provide ample opportunity to examine the communicative element in this work to which Machiavelli dedicated six years of his life.
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