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The Historian Francesco Guicciardini between Political Action and Historical Events*

IGOR MELANI

The ambassadors sent abroad are the eyes and ears of republics, and it is they who should be believed, not those who have a personal stake in affairs.¹

1. The Statesman Portrayed

When composing his *Dialogo della mutatione di Firenze* (*Dialogue on the Revolution in Florence*) around the year 1520, Bartolomeo Cerretani set the scene in Modena, where Giovanni di Bernardo Rucellai, Florentine ambassador to the King of France and a »Pallesco« (partisan of the Medicean faction), encountered two Florentine gentlemen who were »Frateschi« (partisans of the Savonarolan faction). After their unexpected meeting abroad, the three fellow citizens, at the suggestion of Giovanni Rucellai, decide to spend the evening together at the house of the Governor (»a casa il Governatore«), who at that time was Francesco Guicciardini (»el quale era ms. Francesco Guicciardini«).

The host had been absent from Florence (as ambassador to the King of Aragon) during the period of regime change in 1512, when the so-called »popular Government«, led by the Gonfaloniere-for-life Francesco Soderini, was overturned and the Medici family restored. The dialogue is prompted by his request for news on this delicate topic, but with an eight-year delay: on recent political history, Cerretani's Guicciardini seems far from up-to-date.

In accordance with Rucellai's wishes, the structure of the Dialogue is conceived as a sort of debate between two voices, integrating that of the Pallesco Rucellai himself on one side (giving an account of the »fall of the popular government«),

* Primary sources in this expanded version of the paper presented at the conference *Humanistische Geschichten am Hof* have been translated into English by Patrick Baker except where otherwise noted.

1 Guicciardini, *Discorsi politici*, IX (Sulla proposta fatta ai Veneziani d'entrare nella lega contro i Francesi. In contrario per la opinione che prevalse), 133: »Gli imbasciatori che si mandono fuori sono gli occhi e gli orecchi delle repubbliche, ed a loro si ha a credere, non a quegli che hanno passione nelle cose«.

with those of the Frateschi Hieronimo and Lorenzo on the other (of whom it is said: »let them repeat and explain the parts of Savonarola's prophecy that seem to them to be in support of the popular government«).²

This dialogue, set in 1520, is generally supposed to have been written in the summer of the same year (in which case the time of the action and the time of narration would coincide), although the somewhat later date of 1521 has recently been suggested.³ One year, which is a long time in terms of philological micro-chronology, would appear less significant if considered within a longer cultural perspective. What is more interesting, though, is that the *Dialogo* portrays Guicciardini in a stage of his development – in an historical phase – in which he was, and was principally known as, a Florentine patrician and a statesman in the service of the pope rather than an author or more particularly an historian. Taking the idea of history expressed in the *Dialogo* as a point of departure, we can then consider this initial supposition about the relationship between Guicciardini's political activity and his historical writing.

Even if Cerretani's *Mutatione* appears to be a political dialogue, it is in fact an historical one. This need not surprise us: the traditional humanist view, based on the classical one, tended to think of history as a literary genre dealing not with the past, but with the present, or rather with the historian's present, which could become the past for (future) readers. Of course, the main topic of classical and humanist history was politics. There is nothing surprising here, then, except perhaps the literary form chosen by Cerretani: a dialogue. Scholars tend to see this dialogue as part of a larger historical work, the manuscript *Hystoria Fiorentina*.⁴ In his proemial dedication to his father, however, the author clarified his motivation for taking quill in hand thus:

While thinking of what I might compose in these few days, it occurred to me that I would be doing an injustice to the things that have happened in our city in the last eight years (since the Medici family returned from exile), if I did no record them like we have done for other events of past times, especially since their beginning (principio), middle (mezzo), and end (fine) were most memorable and had never happened before in our city.⁵

The events – »most memorable« – had to be recorded. That is, they deserved to be transformed into historical narration, into history. But whereas the »other

2 See Cerretani, *Dialogo*, 3: »mutatione dello Stato popolare«; »replichino et sponghino tutto quello che par loro secondo la profetia di fra Girolamo in favor dello Stato popolare«. The dialogue presents a curious case of homonymy: the two Frateschi here have the same names as Savonarola and his first protector, Lorenzo il Magnifico.

3 See Mordenti (1990), xlviiii–lvii.

4 See Mordenti (1990), xlviiii–lvii.

5 Cerretani, *Dialogo*, 2: »pensando quello che io potessi in questi brevi giorni comporre, pensai che si farebbe torto alle cose sute fatte da otto anni in qua nella Città nostra, sendo tornata la famiglia Medica dallo Exilio, se io non facessi memoria, come habbiamo fatto de l'altre de'tempi passati, maxime che per il principio, mezzo e fine sono sute memoriabilissime et non mai più sute nella nostra città«.

events of past times« had already been written about and recorded as they deserved to be (as historical events), these more recent ones were going to be »composed« (comporre) in a different way. Why?

Not only unique (»never happened before«) and exemplary (as history requires), these recent events had been »most memorable« on account of their »beginning, middle, and end« (principio, mezzo e fine): in a certain way they were not just examples of simple events but rather exemplifications of an evolutionary process in both history and philosophy (ethics). The ambiguous lexical choice therefore seems anything but casual: the temporal »beginning, middle, and end« could also be the ethical »principle, means, and aim«, but at the same time the historical »cause, means, and effect« as well. After all, teaching by examples was considered the substance of history by Ciceronian humanists.⁶

Cerretani goes on to explain that he is dealing with »most memorable« examples of the relationship between cause and effect within the realm of the theory and practice of politics. Considering them thus as philosophical events of a kind, he attributes to them a philosophical »principle« (principio) which extends beyond the naked facts themselves and which makes them capable of being understood as general, not just as »particular« (singolari).

Since this reflection clearly refers to the Aristotelian division of narrative forms into history, philosophy, and poetry (a division based on the distinction between particular matter and general matter), it is not by chance – I would argue – that the author decides to switch from one literary genre (historical treatise) to another (philosophical dialogue):

thinking about how to construct and order them [the »things that have happened in our city«, I pondered using the mode employed not only by the ancient and modern historians but also by myself, since I had imitated them to the best of my ability in my own writing. And although it does not behoove me, who possess so little learning, to take up new modes for the writing of history not employed by the ancients, nevertheless new things, even if they are not unique (singolari), tend to please. Therefore I decided to write in a new mode, one that has been used by famous authors for works of moral philosophy, mathematics, theology, and similar subjects, but not for history. And so taking strength in the ears and judgment of those who will test it by hearing or reading it, I will initiate the mode of writing history as a dialogue, which I readily send to you [his father Paolo, to whom the Dialogue is dedicated] as my Judge. When reading it, use that maturity and gravity of Judgment which nature has given you in order to correct [...] any deficiencies in language, style, arrangement, quality of material, or anything else. For there are no other eyes so worthy, no other judgment so sound, to which I could entrust myself.⁷

6 Gilbert (1965), 205–206; 215–218 (chapter on »The Theory and Practice of History in the Fifteenth Century«).

7 Cerretani, *Dialogo*, 2: »pensando il modo del constituirle et ordinarle [these »cose sute fatte [...] nella città nostrà«] mi venne avanti non solo il modo delli storici antichi e moderni, ma il mio, che ho quelli imitati quanto m'è suto possibile scrivendo, et benché a me, per essere di pochissima dottrina, non si convenga pigliare nuovi modi in scrivere le storie disforme dalli antichi,

From the Proemio it is clear that Cerretani has chosen this »mode« (modo), the dialogue, not just for philosophical reasons – the uniqueness of the events (»had never happened before«) calls for the new application of a traditional mode (»new modes for the writing of history not employed by the ancients« – but also for aesthetic ones (»new things [...] tend to please«). Moreover, this choice is in accord with the opinion of his advisors, whom he had asked to test his work by »hearing« and »reading« it.

This oral dimension of historical narration (the idea of which is conveyed through the choice of the literary form of the dialogue) might provide insight into the social (and political) context in which the *Dialogo* is set. History – and especially contemporary history – was very much discussed and talked about in political circles, not only in those composed of opponents of the regime (such as the Florentine fuoriusciti in Venice, who often discussed ambassadorial relazioni,⁸ or the »group of youngsters« in the Orti Oricellari »whom the Medici were keeping out of public life«, and who received some »history classes« from the former Secretary Machiavelli⁹) but also in those operating in institutional contexts, as this one would be. History, experience, proverbs, and quotations from classical authors were, moreover, frequently adduced during debates in the Pratica, a consultative body devoted to the discussion of foreign policy in republican Florence during the Renaissance.¹⁰

In sum, the setting of the dialogue places the use of history squarely in the political dimension.

Traditionally, republican civic humanism had encouraged a political use of history, i.e., had put it at the service of the state. Humanist chancellors of the Florentine Republic were capable both of composing some of the best civic historiography ever written (Leonardo Bruni, Carlo Marsuppini), and of using classical or modern history in their actual, current political arguments in discussions with friends and foreign colleagues, or when writing official political correspondence (Coluccio Salutati).¹¹ The aspiration of contemporary humanist historiography to ethical/political and aesthetic goals (glorifying the state's past and institutions

pure perché le cose nuove etiam che le non sieno singolari sogliono piacere, ho destinato nuovo modo allo scriverle, il quale è usato da celebrati scrittori in compositione di filosofia morale, matematica, teologia, et simile scientie, ma storie no. Ma preso sicurtà negl'orecchi et giuditio di chi l'udirà o legerà gustandole, darò principio a questo modo chiamato Dialogo, il quale a te [his father Paolo, to whom the Dialogue is dedicated] come mio Giudice liberamente lo mando, acciò leggendolo con quella maturità e gravità del Giuditio che ti ha dato la natura, dove nella lingua o nel modo dello scrivere o nella dispositione et qualità delle materie o in alcun'altra cosa havessi mancato, la possi correggere [...], perché non ho occhi più grati, né giuditio più saldo a chi io mi possa gettare liberamente in grembo«.

8 Melani (2004), 470.

9 Cantimori (2005), 55.

10 See Gilbert (1957), 67–114, and especially 203–205.

11 See Garin (1993), 1–32, especially 6–11 (use of history in the political correspondence of Coluccio Salutati); 14–16 (writing of Leonardo Bruni's *Florentine History*); 20 (Carlo Marsuppini's *Florentine History*).

through a perfect classical writing style) entailed both a secularization and a localization of historiography (ecclesiastical topics lacked an appropriate classical Latin vocabulary; republics and republicanism were dominant tendencies in the political ideals of the early humanists).¹²

Here, though, we can take a further step: history is (fictionally) stated as the best possible substitute for personal experience. A statesman in the service of the Medici pope Leo X requests historical information concerning events he had not directly observed. This technique of interviewing witnesses (widely known thanks to its use by Paolo Giovio in his *Histories*: »we have entrusted to the faithful memory of the written word what we have heard from the mouths of [...] kings [...] popes [...] condottieri [...]«),¹³ is presented as an historiographical training ground, a foundational aspect of the historical method of Francesco Guicciardini, who in the 1520s was not yet, but was to become, one of the most renowned historians of the sixteenth century.

Was the Guicciardini in Cerretani's *Dialogo* collecting materials for his future *Storia d'Italia* (*History of Italy*), which was written between 1537 and 1540 but published posthumously? We cannot say exactly. In any case, Roberto Ridolfi, Guicciardini's most authoritative biographer, considers his »commentaries on the wars of Italy« (which he [Ridolfi] refers to as *Commentari* of his Luogotenenza, or commentaries of his command) to be the very first draft of the *Storia d'Italia* (afterwards integrated into it and constituting its Books XVI and XVII), which he started composing around 1528.¹⁴ He also explains how collecting historical materials and testimonies and taking notes – practices Guicciardini had used all his life – made it easier to »narrate things he had narrated day by day in his minutari, after having lived and suffered them hour by hour«.¹⁵

As the publishing of most of Guicciardini's works from the nineteenth century onwards has shown, nothing except the posthumous *Storia d'Italia* was conceived for publication. Nevertheless, from the point of view of a sixteenth-century Florentine patrician, this does not mean that his other writings were private. On the contrary, they were intended to be public in two different contexts: state and family.¹⁶ Guicciardini gives voice to this intention in the dedication to his *Memorie di famiglia*, imploring »our descendants« to keep the text secret in a special

12 See Fueter (1936), 9–15.

13 For the quotation see Giovio's *In Libros Historiarum sui temporis Praefatio ad Cosmum Medicem Reipublicae florentinae Principem* in Id., »Historiarum sui temporis Libri«, t. 1, 6: »[...] regum [...] pontificum [...] ducum [...], ex eorum ore haec hausimus quae, [...] fideli literarum memoriae mandavimus«; for a general discussion on Giovio's use of written and oral interviews, see Chabod (1967 b), 241–267, and Zimmermann (2001), 433–434. On Paolo Giovio as an historian, see Zimmermann (1995) and Elisabeth Stein in this volume.

14 See Ridolfi (1939), revised and augmented in: Id. (1978), 79–130; Id. (1982), 294–295.

15 See Ridolfi (1982), 317–318.

16 The important topic of the »public use of history« has been discussed by Habermas (1988), 40–50, who parses it in two dimensions: as a collective matter, and as an official practice (of a group, movement, or current of thought).

space, the family Palace in Via Guicciardini («do not let it be seen outside the house»), for the utility of the family («for themselves and their utility»), whose goal was not just its own private good (particolare), but also that of the city: »I desire two things most of all in this world: one is the perpetual exaltation of this city and its liberty; the other is the glory of our house, not only during my lifetime but forever«. ¹⁷

In light of this observation, Cerretani's 1520–1521 portrait of Guicciardini must be seen as to some extent influenced by the latter's earliest historiographical efforts: for before *Cose fiorentine* (1527–28) and *Commentari* (1528), *Storie fiorentine* (1509) had stood as his very first attempt at endowing the Florentine aristocratic tradition of *ricordi di famiglia* with a wider, urban perspective. ¹⁸ It is also possible to view Cerretani's image of Guicciardini the statesman-historian as confirmation of Felix Gilbert's argument, namely that the birth of a new kind of »historical pragmatism« – a kind of political history not bound to the forms and languages of humanist historiography, and often inserted into political treatises – was somehow heralded by Guicciardini's *Dialogo sopra il reggimento di Firenze*. This political dialogue was conceived between 1514, the year of his return from Spain in the wake of the Medicean restoration of 1512, and 1524 (incidentally, the date of Cerretani's death). Its second part treats the question of the best kind of regime for Florence (based on the *Discorso di Logrogno*), while its first part is an excursus on different forms of government based on historical examples. ¹⁹

Set in the early 1520s, Cerretani's Guicciardini seems to be a user, a political user, much more than a writer, of history, confident in its role as a bearer of political truth for ethically relevant events. But Guicciardini's guise would ultimately change: about half a century later, and many miles north of Florence, Cerretani's »Governatore Guicciardini« would become a model historian.

2. A Model Historian

One of the main indications of (and instruments for) the early reception of Guicciardini as an outstanding model historian all over Europe is provided by Chapter IV, *De historicorum delectu* (*How to choose historians*), of the *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* (*Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, published in Paris in 1566 and again in 1572), a text whose author, the French jurist Jean Bodin, expresses great admiration for Guicciardini's historical approach.

17 Guicciardini, *Memorie di famiglia*, 3: »discendenti nostri«; »non le mostri a alcuno fuora di casa«; »per sé e per sua utilità«; »desidero due cose al mondo più che alcuna altra: l'una la esaltazione perpetua di questa città e della libertà sua; l'altra la gloria di casa nostra, non solo vivendo io, ma in perpetuo«. On this topic, see also Melani (2005), 77–81.

18 See Ridolfi (1982), 236–252.

19 Gilbert (1965), 233–235.

The *Storia d'Italia* was Bodin's source for his discourse on Guicciardini's historiography; indeed, it was the essential reason for considering Guicciardini primarily an historian (and not primarily a statesman, which is how Cerretani sees him). After circulating in manuscript from 1545–1546 onwards, the text enjoyed genuine publishing success all over Europe starting in 1561, when the folio editio princeps (containing sixteen books) was published in Florence by Lorenzo Torrentino; an octavo edition came shortly thereafter. In the following year (1562) the *Storia d'Italia* was also printed outside the borders of Florence: of three editions that year, only one was published in Guicciardini's hometown (again by Torrentino), and the other two in Venice (the first by Gabriele Giolito, the second by Niccolò Bevilacqua, edited by Francesco Sansovino). Bevilacqua's Venetian edition was reprinted in 1563, 1565, and 1568. In 1564, the last four books of the work were published for the first time, on their own, by Gabriele Giolito in Venice and Seth Viotti in Parma; Giolito's first complete edition in twenty books was published in 1567, and reprinted in 1568 and in 1569. The *Storia d'Italia* had also become a truly humanist text by 1566, thanks to its translation into Latin by Celio Secondo Curione (Basel, Pietro Perna: a second edition was issued in 1567). Between the two editions of the *Methodus* (the latter of which was reviewed by the author), Bodin could even have read the *Storia d'Italia* in his own language, French, in the famous translation by Jérôme Chomedey (Paris, 1568), which went through three further editions (1577, 1593 and 1612).²⁰

This success in publishing helped to transmit a double image of Francesco Guicciardini. One of its artificers was Francesco Sansovino, whose *Vita di Francesco Guicciardini* first appeared in Bevilacqua's 1562 Venetian edition (reprinted in 1563, 1565, 1568), and was also included in Latin translation in the 1566 and 1567 editions of Celio Secondo Curione's Latin version. The other sculptor of Guicciardini's persona was Padre Remigio Nannini (Remigio Fiorentino), whose *Vita di M. Francesco Guicciardini* first appeared in the 1567 Giolito edition (reprinted in 1568 and 1569). Both the short *Vita* by Francesco Sansovino – which Bodin could have read in a Venetian edition anterior to 1566 – and the much longer one by Remigio Fiorentino – which shows traces of the author's access to Guicciardini's personal and family archives but was published too late to be read by Bodin before the first edition of the *Methodus* – focus their attention on three key elements of Guicciardini's personality: his family's political power as a key to his successful career; the pre-eminence of a juridical over a humanist (literary) education; intellectual and moral honesty as both a personal trait and a familial inheritance.

Guicciardini's character as an historian was thus presented as both a combination and a consequence of all these elements. He wrote the *Storia d'Italia* in the wake of Cosimo I's rise to power, and thus in a period of calm following years of frenetic political activity, in a sort of otium literarium which very much resembled a humanist ideal (»he lived very quietly, spending most of the time in one of

20 Luciani (1949), 15–16; 32–36.

his villas and attending quite zealously to weaving the intricate tapestry of his History»). The text was that of a statesman, and it had to be considered reliable because of the trustworthiness and virtue its author had shown in his political career, not to mention as a private individual (»in this and all other affairs he acquitted himself as befitted a *statesman* [*homo statuale*], such that he was considered one of the seven sages of his times. He was acknowledged and held in high esteem by all the princes of Italy and abroad«).²¹

The contents of the *Storia d'Italia* could be trusted, since Guicciardini was to be considered as morally impartial an historian as he had been a statesman. In short, the text gained historical authority from the political authority of its author. This notion receives its clearest expression from the publisher of the first complete edition (of all twenty books, 1567). Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari writes:

Everyone is familiar with his conduct in those times so troubled, in those places so important, and in the service of those princes so great. And using the character of the author to evaluate the things that happened in his times and about which he wrote so well and prudently, they arrive at this conclusion: that no one but GUICCIARDINI ought to have managed affairs so worthy of being written about, nor written about things so worthy of being properly managed.²²

Regarding this last point, both Sansovino and Remigio Fiorentino had instead reasoned according to the (rather traditional) paradigm exemplified in Julius Caesar's *Commentaries*: who could have more authority to write about historical events than one who had himself been a protagonist in them? Nonetheless both of them, citing an episode related by Jacopo Nardi, also affirm that Guicciardini's many virtues enabled him to translate the historical narration of events which he had personally experienced into a general »history of his times«. ²³ All in all, this

21 Remigio Fiorentino, »Vita di M. Francesco Guicciardini (1567)«, fol. [*** iij r]: »si viveva il piu del tempo in una sua villa molto quietamente, attendendo con sommo studio a tesser la molto bene ordita tela della sua Istoria«; and Sansovino, »La vita di M. Francesco Guicciardini (1562)«, fol. [*4 v]: »egli fu tale in questa materia e in tutte l'altre che si richieggono ad *homo statuale*, che hebbe titolo d'esser un de Sette Savi d'Italia de suoi tempi. Fu osservato & tenuto in gran reverenza da tutti i Principi d'Italia & fuori« (emphasis mine).

22 Giolito de' Ferrari, »All' Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signore, il Signor Cosmo de' Medici Duca di Fiorenza, et di Siena, di Venetia, a X di Febraio M.D.LXVII«, fols. [*ij v – * iij r]: »tutti hanno l'occhio a' maneggi ch'egli hebbe in quei tempi tanto travagliati, e in quei luoghi tanto importanti, & per quei Principi tanto grandi: & dalla persona dell'Auttoe misurando le cose successe ne'suoi tempi, et da lui bene et prudentemente scritte; deducono questa conclusione che niuno altro che 'l GUICCIARDINO doveva maneggiare tante imprese degne d'essere scritte, ne scriver tante cose degne d'esser con tanta accuratezza maneggate«.

23 See the two versions. Sansovino, »La vita di M. Francesco Guicciardini (1562)«, fol. [*4 v]: »in 1527 he discussed with messer Iacopo Nardi [...] an idea he had of writing, in imitation of Caesar, about the things he himself had done. But messer Iacopo persuaded him to write a history of his times in order to avoid the envy that writing about himself might have caused, and so he began this honorable undertaking« (»conferì l'anno 1527 con M. Iacopo Nardi [...] un pensiero ch'egli havea di scriver le cose fatte da lui medesimo a imitation di Cesare, ma persuaso da M. Iacopo a scriver quelle de'suoi tempi, per fuggir l'invidia quando avesse trattato di se medesimo, si mise a questa honorata impresa«). And Remigio Fiorentino, »Vita di M. Frances-

vision of the historian as a personal witness to his own subject distances Guicciardini and his *Storia d'Italia* from the conventional humanist historiographical paradigm, established by Giovanni Pontano (on the basis of Cicero), according to which the perfect historian will not have been involved in the facts he narrates (in order to avoid envy).²⁴ Instead it pushes the whole question out of the ethico-political realm of reputation and into the socio-political one of competence. A more subtle contribution to this discourse and its implications for historical method is the observation made by Agnolo Guicciardini, Francesco's nephew and the first editor of the *Storia d'Italia*, in his dedicatory epistle to Duke Cosimo I. There he lists, among the consequences of Francesco's political activity (besides proximity to events and the ability to understand them, which were traditionally recognized), the use of his own authority to gain access to official archival (manuscript) sources:

judgment and knowledge growing in him with age, he was invested by the most powerful princes with the highest authority over enormous armies, over the management of lands, and over the administration of Provinces. In sum, he was engaged nearly all his life in the greatest and gravest affairs. Since he directed so many of these himself and took active part in most of them, it was easy for him to discover many things which remained hidden to nearly everyone else. Furthermore, he most diligently investigated the public records not only of this City, where they are diligently preserved, but also of many other places, where his authority and reputation permitted him to see whatever he wanted.²⁵

co Guicciardini (1567)«, fol. [**** r]: »it is said that he wanted to assemble the things he had done into the form of commentaries, in imitation of Caesar, but after having discussed this idea with Iacopo Nardi [...] he was dissuaded by him and urged to write the History of his times. For Nardi knew he was intelligent enough to complete such an undertaking, and he was quite sure that he would report the pure truth without regard for fear or hope of reward. He also wanted him to avoid the envy of his fellow Citizens and universal criticism for having wanted to honor only himself« (»dicesi che egli hebbe volonta di ridur le cose fatte da lui in foggia di Comentarij, ad imitation di Cesare, & havendo conferito questo suo pensiero con Iacopo Nardi [...] fu da lui dissuasato, & esortato a scriver l'Istoria de suoi tempi, si perche lo conosceva d'ingegno, atto a condurre un'impresa cosi fatta a perfezzione, e perche anche sapeva molto bene, ch'egli era per describer la pura verita, senza rispetto di paura, ò di speranza di premio, [...] si ancora perche fuggisse l'invidia de suoi Cittadini, e 'l biasimo universale de l'haver voluto celebrar solamente se stesso«). If both authors are right in dating this decision to 1527, then we must reconsider Rüdolfi's argument and think of the *Commentari* not so much as a first attempt at writing the *Storia d'Italia* but rather as a sort of antecedent.

24 Gilbert (1965), 206–208; 295–297.

25 Guicciardini, Agnolo, »All'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo Signore, il Signor Cosimo de Medici, Duca di Firenze, et di Siena, Signore, et padrone nostro osservandissimo, di Firenze il giorno iij. di Settembre MDLXI«, fol. [* iij v]: »crescendo in lui insieme con l'età il giudizio, & il sapere, fu da potentissimi Principi con somma autorità preposto a grandissimi eserciti, a governi di Terre, & amministrazioni di Provincie, & in somma quasi per tutta la vita sua in cose grandissime, & gravissime esercitato: La onde, & per haverne egli trattate assai, & essere intervenuto dove le piu si trattavano, gl'è stato facile venire alla cognitione di molte cose, che a infiniti altri sono state nascose: oltre a che egli fu diligentissimo investigatore delle memorie pubbliche non solo

Jean Bodin, who had every possibility of reading this epistle, clearly takes a position between Agnolo's and that of the other editors. What we might dub his theory of analogical, or indirect, experience is probably based on the following conception of historical method: as a good jurist must search for documents, so a good historian must search for sources, and in this case documentary sources tend to be preferred to literary ones (other works of history). This represents a step forward with respect to traditional humanist historiographical theory, and it probably accounts for why Bodin makes no reference to Guicciardini's direct speeches as a form of literary fiction, which Gilbert considers a key reason for regarding the *Storia d'Italia* as a humanist text (but we shall return to this point in the conclusion).²⁶

Bodin partially based his model of the modern historian on Guicciardini's figure, focusing on two fundamental qualities. The first was his ability, which was a comparative quality. It was related to politics and based on his own experience with situations similar to the ones being written about. The second was his objectivity, which was both a natural and a derived ethical quality. In part a result of the moral virtues which in the first place made him an author capable of impartially deciding among various points of view and parties (as an actual judge has to do), this quality was strengthened by the critical distance (of about forty years) separating the time of composition from the time of the historical events (of course, Bodin did not take into account succeeding events which occurred nearer to the time of composition and in which Guicciardini was directly involved).²⁷

Surely, juridical culture was one of the parameters of this conception of history, which was formulated, created, and perhaps projected by Bodin onto his figure of the historian Francesco Guicciardini. Historical truth was not a philosophical, absolute form of truth, but a legal one, the result of a lawyer's speech forcing the judge (reader) to agree with the position of one party and to establish the truth according to it. Truth as a form of conquest was, however, just one half of Bodin's legal image of history. The other was legal method, divided into a method of reading (that of juridical *loci communes*) and a method of writing (the evaluation of the degree of certainty and reliability an historian could achieve as a consequence of his search for sources).

Guicciardini explains events by reasoning about the protagonists' inner thoughts. Rather than seeing this procedure as a product of humanist fantasy (as it well might have been), however, Bodin views it almost as a lawyerly argument, one which tries to explain the motivations of an action, and he gives it complete trust: »for where anything came under deliberation which seemed inexplicable,

di questa Città, dove se ne tiene diligente cura, ma ancora di molti altri luoghi, donde per la sua autorità, & riputazione potette ottenere quanto volle«.

26 Gilbert (1965), 271–301 (chapter on »Guicciardini«).

27 Melani (2006), 138–139; 200–204.

just there he showed the keenest subtlety in discussion, and everywhere he sprinkled sage opinions appropriately like salt«.28

Bodin portrays Guicciardini's historical method as an advance beyond traditional humanist historiography as represented by Paolo Giovio, but not yet as reaching what we might call modern historical method. Guicciardini aspires to reconstructing truth through the use of sources, but, as we have seen, it is not yet an historical truth but rather a legal truth that he seeks. It is a kind of truth which tends not to be absolute (transmitting the exact meaning of the source) but which falls somewhere between the lawyer's reconstruction and the judge's verdict; it is something the historian can reasonably state and the reader can reasonably believe. This explains why, when describing Guicciardini's character as an historian Bodin, uses juridical language – »ferreting out the truth« (veritatem inquirere), »with all needful proofs« (argumentis confirmare), »extract and interpret from the sources«, (ex fontibus haurire) – as well as why, in Bodin's opinion, there was not an epistemological difference between (true) sources and (fictive) speeches, but a logical one: just as a lawyer must reconstruct the thought process leading to an action, an historian must search for written words and use them to reconstruct (depending on the speaker's nature) the larger discourse exactly or approximately.

His zeal for ferreting out the truth was remarkable. He affirmed nothing rashly, but with all needful proofs. He is said to have extracted and interpreted letters, decrees, alliances, and speeches from the sources. And often this expression occurs, »He spoke in these words«; or, if the words are lacking, »he spoke in such sense«.29

Bodin, however, clearly expresses his opposition to the standard humanist practice, embodied in Paolo Giovio's work, of composing fictive speeches as show-cases for perfect Latin (»whereby it came about that he was plainly unlike Jovius, who, just as he invented a great part of history, also invented speeches or rather declamations in the manner of scholastics«).30 Instead, he, like Guicciardini, both of them jurists, thought of fictive speeches not merely as a stylistic ornament but rather as a point of contact between juridical practice and humanist theory, ac-

28 Bodin, »Methodus«, 136 a, 16–19: »ubi quid in deliberationem cadit quod inexplicabile videatur, illic admirabilem in disserendo subtilitatem ostendat, & graves ubique sententias veluti sal accommodate perspergit« (Engl. trans. B. Reynolds, in Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, 73).

29 Id., »Methodus«, 136 b, 3–11: »Est autem in eo studium veritatis inquirendae. Nihil enim temere, sed omnia necessariis argumentis confirmat. Fertur enim epistolas, decreta foedera, conciones, ex ipsis fontibus hausisse & expressisse. Itaque frequenter occurrit illud locutus est in haec verba: aut si verba ipsa defuerint, locutus est in hanc fere sententiam« (Engl. trans. B. Reynolds, in Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, 74).

30 Id., »Methodus«, 136b, 11–14: »quo fit ut Jovio plane dissimilis sit, qui ut magnam historiae partem; ita conciones vel potius declamationes scholasticorum in modum finxit« (Engl. trans. B. Reynolds, in Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, 74).

ording to which – following Cicero – fictive speeches are the best way to express »non solum quid actum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quomodo«. ³¹

3. An Historian in Action

What had made Guicciardini such a renowned historian was, as we have seen, his reputation as a well-informed statesman. But it was equally the case that as a statesman he was also regarded as a well-informed historian or, at least, an historian in the making. Focusing on a crucial month in Guicciardini's political career, May 1527, we note that as Commissary of the Holy League he was not present in Rome on Monday the 6th. ³² He was approaching the city from the north with the armies of the League, and he first heard reports of the Sack of Rome in Carnaiola, near Città della Pieve, on 10 May. That same night, rumors about the Sack reached Venice (a distance normally covered in 4–5 days of travel), and in less than a week, starting from Venice, those same rumors would cross over the Alps, and become news. ³³

How was Guicciardini perceived in those days of May? Was his physical distance from the events compensated for by the authority of his political and military role, and was this authority beginning to provide him with the basis for his later reputation as an historian? The Florentine government certainly considered him a reliable source, and of necessity: in light of the chaos of the times, as well as the absence and the contradictory nature of news, Guicciardini's social and political rank and duties (a Florentine patrician serving a Medici pope) made him the best possible means of obtaining information about the Sack, an event that immediately caused an anti-Medicean revolt in Florence.

Guicciardini was viewed, if not as a professional historian, nevertheless as an authoritative and more-or-less impartial medium of information. So much is confirmed by documents, such as a letter of 13 May from the Otto di Pratica to Roberto Acciaiuoli, Florentine ambassador to the French court: »Magnifico Oratore: you will see in the enclosed copy what Guicciardini writes about the woeful massacre (miserabile excidio) of Rome«. ³⁴ There is reason to identify the »Guicciardini« mentioned in the letter with Francesco, even if – up to the present – the search for this »enclosed copy« has been unsuccessful: there is no text included in

31 Cicero, *De oratore*, II, 15,63: »not only what was done or said, but also in what way«. On this topic see also Gilbert (1965), 210–211, 297–299. On Francesco Guicciardini as a jurist, in addition to the work of Cavallar (1991), see now Carta (2008), who takes a much broader view of the relationship between law and politics.

32 For a general analysis of the events related to the Sack of Rome see especially Chastel (1983).

33 Maissen (1997), 177–201.

34 Otto di Pratica to Roberto Acciaiuoli (»oratori apud Christianissimum Regem«), Florence, 13 May 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, *Legazioni e Commissarie*, 18, fols. 159 r–160 r: »Magnifico Oratore: tu vedrai per la inclusa Copia che scrive il Guicciardino il miserabile excidio di Roma«.

the *Otto di Pratica* – Responsive copy register, no mention in scholarly literature, nor yet any result from my own research in the Guicciardini family archive in Florence. Furthermore, there is no literal reference to the Sack as a »woeful massacre«, a miserabile excidio, in Guicciardini’s correspondence. Nor does it resemble the language of the *Lamenti* genre (to which, as we shall see, Guicciardini also seems to have contributed), in which the terms usually employed are somewhat less sophisticated and more immediate: »wicked and frightening act« (nefanda e spaventevole opra), »cruel horror« (fiero orrore), »indescribable harm« (gran dannaggio), »scourge« (flagello), »torment« (stratio), »injuries« (vituperi), »harsh losses« (acerbi danni), »bitter sufferings« (aspri tormenti), »cruelty« (crudeltà).³⁵ It is possible, since it sounds like a Latinism, that the expression miserabile excidio came from the language typically used in the Florentine Public Offices.

Even if we cannot trace the exact reference of the letter, we must still consider this utterance a very important one, and for three reasons: first, it shows that Guicciardini was considered a valuable (the best possible) instrumental historian, so to speak, in the service of Florentine politics in those dramatic days; second, it shows how necessary the work of the historian was to political action in a Renaissance state (in Federico Chabod’s sense of bureaucracy, diplomacy, permanent armies);³⁶ finally, it shows the kind of impromptu historical work that Guicciardini was compelled to undertake and to compose.

Let us now take a short step back to the day before, 12 May 1527, when the *Otto di Pratica* confess, in a letter to Alessandro de’ Pazzi, Florentine Ambassador in Venice, that

we suppose what happened in Rome is known there. Here we have confused reports and nothing from Rome, but they all say that Monday morning the enemy took possession of the Borgo and the pope fled to the Castello, and that Monday evening they entered Rome by way of Trastevere and sacked it, and that Bourbon was killed in the assault on the Borgo. The Datary, who happened to be in the Castello before they took Rome, wrote to Guicciardini about Bourbon.³⁷

In this short period from 6 to 13 May, Guicciardini became first a vehicle of news he indirectly managed (12 May: »the Datary [...] wrote to Guicciardini about Bourbon«), and then an historian in action (13 May: »you will see in the enclosed

35 See respectively: [Guicciardini], »Lamento d’Italia attribuito a Francesco Guicciardini«, verse 63, and verse 269, p. 407, and p. 415; »La presa et lamento di Roma« (ottave 27, 29, 30, 32, 36, 38), 850–851.

36 Chabod (1967 a), 591–604.

37 *Otto di Pratica* to Alessandro de’ Pazzi (»oratori Venetiis«), Florence, 12 May [incorrectly dated June] 1527, in ASF, *Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie*, 18, c. 159 r: »noi pensiamo che costì si sappi appunto come il caso di Roma sia successo. Qui habbiamo li advisi confusi et non di Roma ma tutti confermano che lunedì mattina li nimici presono il borgo & il papa fuggi in castello et che lunedì sera per Transteverj entrorno in Roma & la saccheggiorono & che Borbona nello salto del borgo fu morto. Questo di Borbone lo scrive il Datario al Guicciardino poi che era in castello avantj havessino preso Roma«.

copy what Guicciardini writes«) contributing to a progressive elaboration (by sum) of historical truth, developed in four or five stages.

Guicciardini received his very first news about the events of 6 May two days later (»I have a report on this matter«), in a letter from the papal Datary Giammatteo Giberti, dated 8 May. This news included: the arrival of the enemy outside the walls of Rome on Saturday 4 May (»they had arrived in Rome on Saturday«); the fight for the Borgo on Monday 6 May (»they assembled at the Borgo Monday morning at sunrise«; »they entered it after a battle of about two hours«), in which the commander of the Imperial army, Constable Charles of Bourbon, was killed (»he was killed by an arquebus in the first assault«), and which gave the enemy possession of the Borgo and of the Vatican Palace (»the Borgo and the Palace are theirs«); the pope's escape to Castel Sant'Angelo (»Our Lord retreated to the Castello«); and the continuing defence by »the people of Rome« of the Trastevere area (»the vigorous defense of Trastevere was attended to«). Even on the basis of this very sparse information, Guicciardini was already able to fulfill a typical duty of the Renaissance historian³⁸ (which he would later complement with a certain degree of statistical precision in his *Storia d'Italia*): describing the course of the military events of a battle, and giving an approximate account of deaths (»we have learned that many of the enemy were killed; few of our own men died, but they retreated in disorder«).³⁹

Guicciardini reached a second stage of knowledge about the events of 6 May in the early morning of Friday 10 May, by way of a letter from the condottiere Guido Rangoni, dated Tuesday 7 May, whose news regarded two fundamental, theretofore missing events: the imprisonment of the pope and the Sack of the City: »only this morning did I receive your letters of the 7th, from Otricoli, and learned of the current, [incredibly cruel] state of affairs in Rome; [...] let us put off complaining for now and concentrate all our attention on saving His Holiness«. ⁴⁰ Even if the importance of the news was growing, the means for conveying it (letters and dispatches) remained slow: the initial delay of two days had now grown to three days' delay from the letter, and four from the events. Guicci-

38 See Gilbert (1965), 210–211.

39 Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, Castel della Pieve, 8 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (19–21), 19–20 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 87): »in questo punto ho aviso«; »sabato erano arrivati a Roma«; »si presentorono lunedì mactina all'alba al Borgo«; »doppo havere combactuto forse due hore, vi entrorono«; »nel primo assalto fu morto da uno archibuso«; »è loro el Borgo et el Palazzo«; »Nostro Signore si ritirò in Castello«; »popolo di Roma«; »si actendeva gagliardamente alla difesa di Trastevere«; »si intendeva delli inimici essere morti molti. E nostri ne morirono pochi, ma si ritirorono con disordine«.

40 Francesco Guicciardini to Count Guido Rangoni, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (21–22), 21 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 88): »non prima che questa mattina ho avuto le sue de'7, da Otricoli, et inteso la conclusione [Id., *Opere inedite*, vol. V, 438: »crudelissima«] nuova di Roma; [...] posposte le querele, non s'ha da pensare a altro che a salvare la persona di Sua Sanctità«. The former edition of the text in *Opere inedite*, vol. V, 438, has »la crudelissima nuova«.

ardini's response to Rangoni was given with words of complaint, not of condemnation (»I complain«, *mi lamento*; »disgrace«, *disgratia*),⁴¹ and his tone still seems to be far from the one attributed by the Otto to Guicciardini's recollection of the events of the Sack (»woeful massacre«, *miserabile excidio*). The logical structure of this letter is far more political than historical: it proposes action and does not comment on the events, preserving a distinction of attitudes and parameters which will soon be united due to the complexity of the events themselves.

A third stage of knowledge shows Guicciardini as a vehicle, and not only as a destination, for information, and it is represented by the quick historical recollection of all the events, from 6 May on, that he composed in a letter to Francesco della Rovere, also dated 10 May. He defines a first level of information he had reached two days earlier, confirming those events that happened on the morning of 6 May; then he adds a second level, which included events that happened later the same evening but that had become reliable news (after many rumors) only the night before (9 May): »we received reports from various sources, but no sooner than last night«. This second set of news included the capture of Trastevere, the entrance of the Imperial armies into the city, the Sack itself, and the imprisonment of the pope in Castel Sant'Angelo: »on Monday the 6th of this month, the enemy not only took the Borgo in the morning, as I reported the day before yesterday, but they increased their victory by taking Trastevere the same day, and that evening at 23 hours they entered Rome by way of Ponte Sisto and sacked the city; and according to what we have learned, there were many killings and infinite cruelties«. Regarding the transmission and reception of information and its eventual impact for the epistemology of history, it is important to note four points:

1. this abridged narration is probably the summary of a longer one, since this news had already been communicated to della Rovere that same morning (»as I wrote this morning to Vostra Signoria reverendissima [...]«);
2. Guicciardini emphasizes how difficult it was to get direct news from Rome after the pope's imprisonment in Castel Sant'Angelo, since the latest news concerned the loss of the Borgo (»I don't know what they will do now, nor what His Holiness's plans are, since the last reports I have from them regard the loss of the Borgo, nor do I think they have been able to write since then«);
3. he shows how other means of transmitting information were more rapid than his own, since Guido Rangoni, for instance, had received news of the »loss of Rome« the very evening of Monday 6 May (»on Monday evening Count Guido went with the light cavalry and eight hundred arquebusiers to the Ponte di Salara, whereupon, having heard of the loss of Rome, he returned to Otricoli, where the rest of the infantry was«);
4. even if he reports reported rumors in order to describe the circumstances of the events and thus to show their gravity, Guicciardini still complains about the nature of the news he manages to receive, which takes the form of many

41 Francesco Guicciardini to Count Guido Rangoni, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (21–22), 21.

different »reports« (»avisi«), none of which unfortunately is direct or fast (»we received reports from various sources, but no sooner than last night«).

Finally, in an explanation of why the pope, having been badly advised, was now a prisoner, Guicciardini acts in the very way that will eventually give him much of his fame as an historian. In particular, we note:

- a. description of events with indirect reference to sources (»Our Lord retreated the same morning to the Castello, and his mind was to make off to Ostia; but hearing from a prisoner about Bourbon's death and that [the enemy] did not believe they could take Rome, our poor Lord let himself be moved by those advising him not to leave«);
- b. insight into the thoughts (and potential actions) of the protagonists, and confirmation of them with reference to ulterior sources (»up until the last day they were so confident of being able to defend everything, that on the 4th they wrote to Count Guido to send them only 400 light cavalry and 500 infantry, and to take the rest of his people and join us«);
- c. moderate, well-balanced, spirited sentences (»despite such great confidence, Vostra Signoria reverendissima can see how basely Rome was lost from our hands, and the world was ruined, in one day of combat«).⁴²

A fourth stage is represented by a letter to Cardinal Silvio Passerini (»Cortona«, dated 13 May, where Guicciardini – probably lacking confidence in the whole mass of information circulating in those days – summarizes once again »what happened in Rome«. Guicciardini indicates that this new summary is the necessary consequence of the slow circulation of information aggravated by the increase of unreliable sources and rumors (»Vostra Signoria Reverendissima will have learned from my letters, and perhaps from other sources [...]«) and by the interruption of important channels of information (»if you intend to write me, use several routes, since the roads are broken and I have not had any letters from you

42 Francesco Guicciardini to Francesco della Rovere, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 23–25 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 89): »habbiamo havuto avviso per varie vie, non però prima che la nocte passata«; »lunedì a'6 del presente li inimici non solo presono la mactina el Borgo, come avisai avanti hieri, ma continuando la victoria presono el dì medesimo Trastevere, e la sera a hore 23 entrarono per ponte Xisto in Roma, la quale mandavano a saccho; et, secondo si è inteso, con molti homicidii et crudeltà infinite«; »come scripsi questa mactina a Vostra Signoria Reverendissima [...]«; »non so hora come faranno, né che siano e disegni di Sua Sanctità, perché gli ultimi avisi che ho da loro sono della perdita del Borgo, né credo che habbino havuto modo a scrivere poi«; »el conte Guido si conduxo lunedì sera con li cavalli leggieri et 800 archibusieri al Ponte di Salaria, dove, intesa la perdita di Roma, si ritirò [*Opere inedite*, vol. V, 442: »si ritornò«] a Otricoli, nel quale luogo era tucto el resto della fanteria«; »Nostro Signore la mactina medesima si era ritirato in Castello, et era stato in opinione di andarsene a Hostia; ma per havere inteso da uno prigione la morte di Borbone, et che non confidavano di piglare Roma, si era lasciato, el povero Signore, volgere da quelli che lo consiglorono che non partissi«; »certo insino all'ultimo di siano [*Opere inedite*, vol. V, 440: »erano«], stati in tanta speranza di difendere el tucto, che a'4 havevano scripto al Conte Guido che mandassi loro solo 400 cavalli leggieri et 500 fanti, et lui col resto della gente venissi a unirsi con noi«; »nondimanco in tanta confidentia vegga Vostra Signoria Reverendissima quanto vilmente si è perduta in uno dì a bactaglia di mano Roma, et rovinato el mondo«.

since you left Cortona«). Nevertheless, discarding misleading or misinterpreted news, Guicciardini presents this summary as the core, the »effective« (è in effecto che) truth of the events of 6 May, and in fact he reports them in clear chronological order:

1. the capture of the Borgo and Trastevere and the entry into Rome: »on the sixth day of this month the enemy took the Borgo early in the morning, and on the same day Trastevere, and later they entered Rome by way of Ponte Sisto«;
2. the Sack of Rome, now described in a religious perspective: »they sacked the city, committing many killings and employing every kind of cruelty and sacrilege and showing no respect not only for those dignities adored by the whole world but even for churches and for God«;
3. the imprisonment of the pope along with a few Cardinals: »la Valle, Cesarino, and Araceli are prisoners«;
4. as a sort of first post-scriptum, Guicciardini gives an account of the re-organization of the Imperial army after the death of its Commander: »now that Bourbon is dead, the army is under the command of 22 captains, elected by the soldiers; and it is said that they were waiting for Alarcone, for whom they have sent, nor do they want the Viceroy«;
5. a second post-scriptum contains a description of the first negotiations for an agreement to free the pope: »they had begun to speak about an accord with Our Lord, but they demanded 300 thousand ducats and that His Holiness and all the Cardinals go to Spain, leaving affairs here to their own discretion«.

It seems that the mass of news and rumors spreading out from Rome had some influence on Guicciardini, as we notice him indulging for the first time in some colorful accounts of sacrilegious episodes: »Araceli [...] was set atop an ass and paraded publicly at the pleasure of certain Spaniards who had captured him«.

The customary rumors about the consequences of an army sacking a city are interpreted here, by the statesman Guicciardini, as historical possibilities, portrayed by making reference to (oral) sources. Pietro Chiavelluzzo, ordered by the pope to organize aid for the prisoners in the Castello, discussed matters with Guido Rangoni and the Duke of Urbino »explaining that the enemy, on account of the immensity of the booty, on which they were all intent, and on account of their lechery (since they have all the women of Rome as their plunder), are in the utmost disorder and in disagreement amongst themselves, and that a good 1500 soldiers died in the attacks«. And »el Signor Federigo«, together with some French chevaliers, attempted a »plan« (disegno) to rescue the pope from the Castello, »a move [...] based entirely on his opinion that the enemy, intent on the sack, would not be on their proper guard, and that, arriving suddenly at night, they would find them disordered rather than ready to defend«. ⁴³ Precisely this explora-

43 Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (26–29), 26–28 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 91): »el successo delle cose di Roma«; »Vostra Signoria Reverendissima harà inteso per più mie, et

tion of historical possibilities through the speech(es) of protagonists was considered one of Guicciardini's best qualities as an historian.

It would seem that Guicciardini himself considered this last stage of knowledge and reconstruction of events to be satisfactory, if not definitive, as a description of this very first phase after the Sack. In a letter addressed to the Otto di Pratica of the Florentine Republic, dated the same day (13 May), he attached a copy of it as the most updated narration of the Sack of Rome: »with this letter I am sending a copy of one that I wrote to our reverendissimo Cortona, which is the latest news we have from Rome«.44

In line with what we saw above about how the Otto usually handled information, it is quite possible that this same letter was then sent out to Florentine ambassadors abroad to inform them of the current news concerning Rome. It is hardly possible though – even if Guicciardini attests that letters from the Otto could reach him much more quickly than those sent by others45 – that this last letter, sent on 13 May, could have reached Florence in time to be sent out to Roberto Acciaiuoli on the very same day. On the other hand, it seems certain that the Otto, as recently as the day before (12 May), had only gotten a first letter from

forse per altre vie [...]«; »havendomi a scrivere, lo faccia per più vie, perché le strade sono ropte, et io non ho lectere sue poi parti di Cortona«; »li inimici a' di 6 del presente presono la mactina a buon' hora el Borgo, et el di medesimo Trastevere, et più al tardi entrono per Ponte Xisto in Roma«; »la quale hanno sacheggiata, factovi occisione assai, et usato ogni spetie di crudeltà et di sacrilegii, non havendo rispetto non solo a quelle degnità che tucto el mondo adorava, ma né alle chiese né a Dio«; »sono prigionii la Valle, Cesarino et Araceli«; »lo exercito, dopo la morte di Borbone, si governa socto 22 capitani, electi dall' universale; et si dice che aspectavano Alarcone, quale hanno mandato a chiamare, né voglono el Viceré«; »havevano cominciato a parlare di accordo con Nostro Signore, ma dimandavano 300 mila ducati, et che Sua Sanctità con tucti e Cardinali andassi in Spagna, lasciando loro a discrezione le cose di qua«; »Araceli [...] fu condocto publicamente in su uno asino dove piacque a certi Spagnoli che l' havevano preso«; »mostrando che li inimici per la grandeza della preda, alla quale sono tucti intenti, et per le lascivie (ché hanno a boctino tucte le donne di Roma) sono in grandissimo disordine et in roptura tra loro, et che ne sono morti in questi assalti circa a 1500 de' buoni«; »mossa [...] fondata tucta in su la opinione che li inimici, intenti al saccho, non faccino guardie debite, et che, arrivandovi allo improvviso di nocte, s' habbino a trovare disordinati che in sulla forza«. Rumors of violence against women and prelates also supply a standard topos in many topical writings in ottava rima: »other sad little women, wretched and aggrieved/ had their dresses ripped right from their knees.// And others, weeping desolately cried/ for the innocent creatures/ thrown from windows on high« (»altre assai donne afflitte e meschinelle/ troncate gli fu ai fianchi le gonelle.// Et altre lachrimando dissolate/ piangevan le innocenti creature/ che da alte fenestre eran gittati«); slightly different from the one referred to by Guicciardini is the following episode with a prelate and an ass: »a priest was skinned, how evil a fate!// for refusing to say mass/ to a dressed-up ass« (»fu schirticato un prete ahi sorte ria/ per non voler a un asino vestito/ dar lostia che allartare havia«); see »La presa et lamento di Roma« (ottave 30–31 and 32), 850–851.

44 Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (31–32), 31 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 94): »con questa mando copia di una che ho scripto al Reverendissimo Cortona, che è la più fresca notitia che habbiamo di là.«

45 In less than two days, if on 13 May he affirms: »This evening I received Vostre Signorie's letter of the 12th« Ibid.

Guicciardini, representing an intermediate stage of information between stage one (they have news about the morning and evening of Monday, 6 May) and stage two (they know of the pope's escape but not of his later imprisonment). This probably means that the Otto, on 12 May, disposed of a complex set of news from different informants, among which the only information provided by Guicciardini was that referring to the morning events of 6 May (the capture of the Borgo and death of Bourbon, about which he had read in the Datary's letter).⁴⁶ Such can be confirmed by Guicciardini himself, who on 13 May protests yet again that he provided the Otto not with complete but with cursory information (»this evening I received your letter of the 12th [...] and thus learned of your need for news from Rome, which I reported as soon as I had it«).⁴⁷ Another sure proof is the fact that he also protested on 11 May that he had received no more news from the Datary or the others »in the Castello« after that regarding the loss of the Borgo (»from whom, after the loss of the Borgo, there has been no report at all«).⁴⁸ Therefore the most recent news available to and provided by Guicciardini, as attested by the Otto in their letter of 12 May to Alessandro de'Pazzi, was that stemming from the Datary. Until we find new evidence, we shall have to presume that the »ghost« letter on the miserable excidio was either an earlier, missing letter dated between 8 and 12 May (the same one quoted in the letter to Alessandro de'Pazzi), and so including news only of the Sack but not of the pope's imprisonment, or a very rapidly delivered copy of the letter to »Cortona«, dated 13 May.

However that may be, the fact that, five days at most after his first letter (sent no earlier than 8 May, when he first heard about the events to which the Otto eventually referred in their 12 May letter to Alessandro de' Pazzi), Guicciardini sent another batch of news upon request to the Otto (a copy of the 13 May letter to »Cortona«) seems to illustrate his idea that rapidity in political information was not sufficient without completeness of reasoning. And this reasoning, since so similar to his own way of arguing in the *Storia d'Italia*, can be assumed to be historical reasoning. Furthermore, that the Otto adduced information provided by Guicciardini and allowed it to circulate must mean that his name vouched for truthfulness – the same quality readers would find (or think they found) in his *Storia d'Italia*. Here is the essence of what we might call Francesco Guicciardini's historical writing in action. Here is testimony to his reputation and working method and, much more, evidence that political correspondence and historiography were to him different functions of the same activity: investigating sources

46 See above, the passage cited from the Otto di Pratica to Alessandro de'Pazzi, Firenze, 12 May 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, 18, fol. 159 r.

47 Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 31 : »ho havuto questa sera la di Vostre Signorie de' 12, e inteso quanto occorre loro sopra le nuove di Roma, delle quali avisai subito che io le intesi«.

48 Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Orvieto, 11 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 26 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 90): »in Castello«; »da' quali, doppo la perdita del Borgo, non s'ha avviso alcuno«.

to construct the multiple layers of an historical account for the purpose of conveying information.

Of course, different contexts required a different approach and presumed a different mentality.

Guicciardini amply describes (although not as his main object) the difficulty of acquiring information in those dramatic days of May 1527. A letter dated 3 May is full of references to his necessarily indirect access to sources, his lack of first-hand knowledge from direct observation, and the indispensability of »learning« (intendere) from incomplete reports.⁴⁹ The environmental and social difficulties of war aggravated the seeking and sending of news, and this had a pronounced effect on Guicciardini's perception of present time.⁵⁰ The present came not only to include the current day but spanned all the preceding and following ones from when the last letter had been received until the next was expected to arrive.⁵¹ Recent past and immediate future meld into a present of uncertainty, where the time lag itself between action and information becomes a matter of news.⁵²

Within this extended present tense, moreover, explaining one's actions necessitated accounting for future possibilities in case the information arrived days later and was no longer up-to-date.⁵³ This procedure, as we have seen, would

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- 49 Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Cortona, 3 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (15–17), 15–16 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 84): »having learned of the enemy's advance on Rome«; »I understand he has lost no time« (»intesa la venuta delli inimici verso Roma«; »intendo non ha perduto tempo«).
- 50 Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Castel della Pieve, 8 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (18–19), 19 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, XX, V, 3, n. 86): »the roads have been entirely broken either by soldiers or by the locals, so I am not surprised that the letters have gone lost. And I recommend myself to Vostra Signoria« (»le strade sono ropte per tucto o da'soldati o da'paesani, in modo che non mi maraviglio che le lectere vadino in sinixtro. Et a Vostra Signoria mi raccomando«).
- 51 On 7 and 8 May, Guicciardini had no more recent news from the Datary Giberti than that of 5 (6) days earlier (»I have had no letters or messengers from Vostra Signoria since that of the 2nd«), and again the following day he pleaded for more (»any more recent news«): »God knows how greatly we desire to learn something«. See Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Castel della Pieve, 7 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, (17–18), 17 (original text in: Archivio Guicciardini, Firenze, V, 3, n. 85): »non ho lectere né messi da Vostra Signoria dopo la de'2«; »Dio sa con quanto desiderio si sta di intendere qualcosa«; and Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Castel della Pieve, 8 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 19: »notitia alcuna più fresca«.
- 52 See Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Castel della Pieve, 7 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 17: »the Count of Ormento informs me that he received a dispatch from Vostra Signoria and sent it by another route; misfortune wills it not to have turned up yet« (»bene mi avisa el conte di Ormento essergli capitato in mano uno spaccio di Vostra Signoria et haverlo mandato per altra via; et la disgratia vuole che ancora non sia comparso«).
- 53 See Francesco Guicciardini to the Datary Giammatteo Giberti, Castel della Pieve, 8 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 18–19: »when I wrote yesterday, [...] I thought that the Duke would come yesterday evening and encamp in Pacciano, [...] for he had written that such was his intention; and in this belief we came to Castel della Pieve. But last night he let us know that [...] he

eventually become one of Francesco Guicciardini's most renowned qualities as an historian: not limiting his narration to what happened, but explaining how it happened and why, speculating on the intentions of the actors, and concluding the analysis with a likely judgement, a ruling of sorts.⁵⁴ At the same time, declaring one's own intention necessitated escaping the strict present tense of writing and acting, and situating oneself in the broader one spanning from the composition of a letter to the moment when it would be read, keeping in mind the possible consequences of present action. Foresight was also a necessary duty of the sixteenth-century historian.⁵⁵ Living within the temporal limits of the present, the writer was torn between his desire to reconstruct a coherent historical account and his

had decided to go to Perugia instead, and from there to go by way of Todi to Orti; and that he would depart this morning from Cortona, where he had remained for one day, and in three days he would be in Orti« (»scripsi hieri, [...] et allora credevo che el Duca venissi hiersera a alloggiare a Pacciano, [...] perché così aveva scripto volere fare; et socto questa credenza eravamo venuti a Castello della Pieve. Ma hiersera ci fece intendere che [...] haveva risoluto andare alla volta di Perugia, et di quivi per la via di Todi drizarsi a Orti; et che questa mactina partirebbe da Cortona, dove è stato fermo uno di, et in tre di sarà a Orti«).

54 See *ibid.*: »which seemed very strange to us, not so much because he did it without consulting anyone and it was contrary to what he had written, but because it seemed more fitting for us to proceed together and not give the enemy the opportunity of drawing close to us« (»cosa che ci è parso molto strana, non tanto per haverla facta senza consulta et in contrario di quello che haveva scripto, quanto perché ci pareva più a proposito procedere uniti, et non dare occasione alli inimici di pensare di accostarsi verso noi«).

55 See *ibid.*, 18–19: »there being no other choice, we must obey necessity. And since we are forced to remain here today [...], we shall go to Orvieto tomorrow; and we could be in Orti at the same time as he, if he indeed gets there from Cortona in three days. [...] I made an official report and wrote to the commissary that I think he might be there. And if he is not there, Vostra Signoria would do well to report this immediately so that no time is lost for lack of what is needed. The Duke has not yet specified whether he plans for us to cross the Tiber at Orti, or if he would rather cross himself; nor could I say, since on the one hand it is a thing that might depend on reports received about the enemy, and on the other hand no one can expect anything of him except what is seen from one moment to the next« (»non ci sendo rimedio, bisogna governarci con la necessità. Et perché siamo stati constrecti di soprasedere hoggi qui [...], andreno domani a Orvieto; et potreno essere a Orti al medesimo tempo che lui, quando bene vi si conducessi da Cortona in tre di. [...] Ho facta una patente et scripto al Commissario che penso possi essere là. Et se non vi è, saria bene che Vostra Signoria vi spacci subito, acciocché, per mancamento delle cose necessarie, non s'habbia a perdere tempo. Non specifica già el Duca se disegnerà che noi passiamo el Tevere a Orti, o se pure lo vorrà passare lui; né io saprei dirlo, si perché è cosa che potrà dependere dalli avisi che s'haranno delli inimici, si ancora perché di lui non si può promectersi se non quanto si vede d'hora in hora«) (emphasis mine). Two days later, in a letter to Francesco della Rovere, Guicciardini drove to the same conclusion: »even if the French are quite willing, there are not enough of us to give aid to the Castello alone, nor do we know what the Duke's mind might be« (Francesco Guicciardini to Francesco della Rovere, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: *Id.*, *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 24: »noi soli, ancora che e Franzesi siano dispostissimi, non bastiamo a soccorrere el Castello. Nè sappiamo quale sarà la mente del Duca«). On foresight in sixteenth-century historiography see Melani (2006), 8–13.

awareness of being a victim of factual uncertainty. As Guicciardini confessed to Cardinal Silvio Passerini: »we'll see what the day brings«.⁵⁶

Let us now compare this personal, social, historical, and historiographical context to the one which generated Guicciardini's most important historical work, the *Storia d'Italia*. To do so we shall take a step into the historian's workshop, which will also help us understand the relationship between Guicciardini's dual aspects as witness and historian. Ridolfi reconstructs a very detailed process of composition. It began late in 1536 with the collection, ordering, and initial appraisal of materials, including the complete Archive (Carteggi) of the Dieci di Balìa. Guicciardini was able to take possession of the archive after the Siege of Florence (1530) thanks to his prominent position in the papal government. This made available to him the complete documentation concerning Florentine foreign policy (even his own correspondence). Quires of notes were then prepared for the redaction of a first draft, which amounted to quick summaries of the Carteggi he had read. Re-elaboration of these summaries in chronological order constituted a second draft, coordinating and merging them together a third. Notes on modern historians who had written on the same topic were made on different quires. Loose sheets were used to note things he had directly seen or heard. Around the spring of 1537, a version of the text was ready. After writing three versions of the first book, Guicciardini composed the second, and then, much more rapidly, Books III to XV. Then, he incorporated into the text the first two books of the *Commentari* (which constituted the original core of the *Storia d'Italia*), making them Books XVI and XVII. Then he hastened to the planned conclusion (death of Pope Clement VII and election of Paul III). Thereupon followed a thorough revision and integration of some missing or incomplete sections and another, linguistic revision on the basis of Bembo's language and Livy's style. Then, in the autumn of 1538, he undertook a fresh correction of the first five books, opted for a new division in ten, then in nineteen books, and provided for a check of his sources and of the Livian style of his sentences. Between the end of 1538 and the beginning of 1539 he had the text revised by his friend Giovanni Corsi, who is responsible for the final division in twenty books. A new revision by the author in the spring and summer of 1539 was interrupted at Book XV by illness, which soon made him unable to write or even dictate the final version of the text. The last four books (XVII to XX) remained for the most part sketches (whereas the first ones had been rewritten up to five or seven times).⁵⁷ This was probably the reason why the author's nephew Agnolo, when he decided to publish the *Storia d'Italia* in 1561, advised that »four other books at the end« were »more an outline than a finished product«, and that »for that reason they are not being issued at the present time, since he [Francesco] was not able to fill in the final lines of their

56 Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 28: »vedreno alla giornata«.

57 Ridolfi (1982), 321–328.

shape, as required for a completed work.⁵⁸ And this is the reason why the first editor of the last four books ultimately decided to incorporate them into the first complete edition, for, although a novelty, they lacked the sufficient stylistic and historiographical care to stand alone:

therefore, having not long ago issued the final four books of this most excellent historian, it would have seemed a great injustice to the author's glory, to the expectation and desire of the world, and to my own profession, if I had not joined them with the rest of the history, so that its whole body might be united together and no longer lie dismembered.⁵⁹

Obviously, then, reading about an episode such as the Sack of Rome from one of the last four books of the *Storia d'Italia* (Book XVIII, Chapter 8) would be inappropriate as a means to philologically reconstructing the author's intentions. The examination of a text that is mere sketch, however, would, precisely on account of its unpolished state, increase our understanding of several phenomena: the layers of historical writing undergirding Guicciardini's notion of history; the passage from source collection to historical writing it presumed; the relationship between Guicciardini's guises as historian and statesman; and the extent to which a future historian is molded in the everyday practice of the statesman.

The existence of a strict relationship between these two sides of Guicciardini's intellectual personality can clearly be seen in the episode of the death of Charles of Bourbon, the commander of the Spanish troops of the Imperial army. As we have seen, Guicciardini had received news about it on 8 May 1527 from a letter from the papal Datary, news which he then transmitted to the Otto di Pratica in Florence between 8 and 12 May. Initially a matter of official correspondence, then the subject of the ›ghost‹ description of the Sack, its importance now brought it to the higher narrative plain of the *Storia d'Italia*, where it became the object of a proper historical account:

On the fifth of May, Bourbon and his army took up quarters in Prati near Rome. [...] The following morning at daybreak, he determined either to conquer or die [...], and approaching the Borgo on the side toward the hills and Santo Spirito, a bitter battle began [...]. At the beginning of this battle, Bourbon, goaded by ultimate desperation, was at the forefront of his troops, not only because if he failed to obtain a victory, no refuge remained to him, but also because he saw how the German footsoldiers were

58 Guicciardini, Agnolo, *All'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo Signore, il Signor Cosimo de Medici, Duca di Firenze, et di Siena, Signore, et padrone nostro osservandissimo, di Firenze il giorno iij. di Settembre MDLXI*, fol. [* 5 r]: »quattro altri ultimi libri d'essa [...] piu presto abbozzati, che finiti [...] per tale cagione non si mandano fuori al presente, onde non possesse a questa sua figura dare quegli ultimi lineamenti, che a perfetta opera si conveniva«.

59 Giolito de' Ferrari, Gabriele, *All'illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signore, il Signor Cosmo de' Medici Duca di Fiorenza, et di Siena, di Venetia, a X di Febrario M.D.LXVII*, fol. [* iij r]: »per tanto havendo io non molto tempo a dietro dato in luce i quattro ultimi libri di questo eccellentissimo historico; n'harebbe parso far gran torto alla gloria dell'Auttore, all'espettatione & desiderio del mondo, & alla professione mia, se non gli havessi accompagnati co 'l rimanente dell'historia; acciocche tutto il corpo d'essa fosse insieme unito, & non punto smembrato«.

marching coldly into battle. At the onset of the assault, he was wounded by a shot from an arquebus and fell dead to the ground.⁶⁰

Clearly, this narration of the episode is strictly related to those that appear in the different stages of Guicciardini's earlier official correspondence. Using this chapter as a case study, we can observe to what extent the *Storia d'Italia* is composed of different layers of information, including the author's own personal experience, which, testified and witnessed in his correspondence, must be seen as providing the frame and the plot of the historical narration.

Sometimes a more strictly factual description allows room for the voice of rumor, as in the case of the fog which facilitated the assault of the enemy troops. Depicted in supernatural terms by many Lamenti of the year 1527,⁶¹ it had not been mentioned by Guicciardini in his correspondence of May 1527. Nevertheless it appears in the *Storia d'Italia*: »and fortune favored them because a thick fog which had risen before daybreak made it possible for them to approach the city more safely, covering their movements until they reached the position where the battle began«.⁶²

Some information is provided with much greater exactitude, enhancing the statistical spirit displayed in Guicciardini's correspondence, e.g., regarding the total number of deaths (»about four thousand men perished in the battle and in the furor of the sack«), or the total monetary loss incurred by the Sack (»it was rumored that, counting money, gold, silver, and jewels, the sack amounted to more than one million ducats, but that an even greater sum had been extracted by ransoms«).⁶³ The »about« (circa) and the »it was rumored that« (era fama che) seem

60 Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1856: »alloggiò Borbone con l'esercito, il quinto di di maggio, ne' Prati presso a Roma [...], e la mattina seguente in su il fare del di, deliberato o di morire o di vincere [...], accostatosi al Borgo della banda del monte di Santo Spirito, cominciò una aspra battaglia [...]. Nel principio della quale Borbone, spintosi innanzi a tutta la gente per ultima disperazione, non solo perché non ottenendo la vittoria non gli restava più refugio alcuno ma perché vedeva i fanti tedeschi procedere con freddezza grande a dare l'assalto, ferito, nel principio dello assalto, di uno archibuso, cadde in terra morto« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 382).

61 See for example »La presa et lamento di Roma« (ottava 28), 850: »when the troops lunged at me, aroused/ to my death, they were covered by a cloud/ which greater time and ease for my defense allowed« (»poi che la turba al mio flagello intenta/ mi venne adosso: un nembro la coperse/ per mia difesa far più pigra e lenta«); and Celebrino, »Il successo de tutti gli fatti« (ottava 71), 832: »but if the air with fog was thick/ so that no shot could be made near or far/ a rush from the North (of soldiers) dispersed it/ renewing with gusto the game of war« (»ma si la nebbia era per laria folta/ che non si puote trar molto ne poco/ in tanto tramontani a la disciolta/ van rinforzando il bellicoso gioco«).

62 Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1856: »avendogli favoriti la fortuna nel fargli appresentare più sicuramente, per beneficio di una folta nebbia che, levatasi innanzi al giorno, gli coperse insino a tanto si accostorno al luogo dove fu cominciata la battaglia« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 382, slightly modified).

63 Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1858–1859: »morirono, tra nella battaglia e nello impeto del sacco, circa quattromila uomini«; »vera fama che, tra denari oro argento e gioie, fusse ascaso

to be an intertextual reference to Guicciardini's continual desire to accumulate data. This desire began soon after the events, when the statesman reported on the Sack for the first time »according to what we have learned« (secondo si è inteso) and computed a cursory account of the number of Imperial soldiers who died during the assault (»about 1500«, circa a 1500) on the basis of an »explanation« (mostrando) by Pietro Chiavelluzzo. A final textual revision would have given Guicciardini the opportunity for greater historical accuracy, at which point he likely would have inserted references to historical events and parallels of whose chronology he was uncertain, and increased the precision to a text that, as it has come down to us, is marred by occasional holes, for example: »having been sacked by the Goths [...] years before«.⁶⁴

The epistemological framework shifts from the written, indirect collection of news that constitutes *intendimento* (in which the statesman interacts with his informers by *intendere*, »learning«)⁶⁵ to a direct report that expresses with heightened literary ability the jumbled audible context – the *udito* – of the Sack (»hearing the cries and miserable shrieks«; »on every side were heard [...] endless lamentations«).⁶⁶

The general albeit moderate moralistic tone which his contemporary readers and critics so greatly appreciated (»it would be impossible not only to narrate but even to imagine the calamity of that city, destined by heaven's orders to consummate greatness, but also to drastic shifts of fortune«) resembles that of certain *Lamenti* published right after the Sack. Guicciardini very well might have collected and read these as they appeared, since he himself is thought to have written a *Lamento* to the King of France in those months of 1527: »We lack the ink, paper, and pens/ to recount the sufferings of all those men«; »once of chastity the world's example/ I have been corrupted by this impious people«.⁶⁷

il sacco a più di uno milione di ducati, ma che di taglie avessino cavata ancora quantità maggiore« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 384, 386, slightly modified).

64 Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1858: »era l'anno [...] che era stata saccheggiata da'goti« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 384, slightly modified; inexplicably, Alexander fills the blank left by the author without providing any explanation or even an indication of having done so: »having been sacked by the Goths 980 years before«).

65 As in Francesco Guicciardini to Count Guido Rangoni, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 21; in Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 26; and in Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 31.

66 As in Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1859: »sentivansi i gridi e urla«; »udivansi [...] infiniti lamenti« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 385).

67 See Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1857–1858: »sarebbe impossibile non solo narrare ma quasi immaginarsi le calamità di quella città, destinata per ordine de'cieli a somma grandezza ma eziandio a spesse direzioni« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 384); and »La presa et lamento di Roma« (ottave 25–26), 850: »aracontare & dolermi di tutti/ mancheria prima inchiostro carte & penne«; »gia fui di castita nel mondo esempio/ hor son corrotta da sto popol empio«.

To obtain the moderate, impartial and detached judicial tone that readers and careful critics (like Bodin) appreciated so much in him, Guicciardini adds some irony to the critical sense he provides for his narration: »hearing the cries and miserable shrieks of Roman women, and nuns led in droves by the soldiers to satisfy their lust, one could not but say that God's judgments were beclouded and concealed from mortal men, inasmuch as He allowed the renowned chastity of the Roman women to be so miserably and brutally violated«. ⁶⁸ Furthermore, certain lexical changes are made in order to furnish the text with more evidence and literary strength and to transform diplomatic sources (Guicciardini's own and other colleagues' correspondence) into a narrative text: here »lust« (libidine) replaces the term »lechery« (lascivie), which Guicciardini had used to describe this same episode in a letter to the Cardinal Silvio Passerini. ⁶⁹

The chapter is dotted with a kind of cryptic intertextuality between Guicciardini the historian and Guicciardini the statesman, comprised of near-verbatim quotations from his own letters. The description of Guido Rangoni's arrival in, and departure from, Rome (»the same day that the imperial troops took Rome, Count Guido arrived with the light cavalry and eight hundred arquebusiers at the Ponte Salario to enter Rome the same evening; but when he learned of what had happened, he withdrew to Otricoli where the rest of his troops joined him«) ⁷⁰ is the quasi-literal transposition of the contents of a letter written by Rangoni himself (»I received your letters of the 7th [...] and learned«) and reformulated by Guicciardini as a report to Francesco della Rovere (»Count Guido [...] wrote me on the 7th«). ⁷¹ Not just the narration of plain events, but also the accompanying commentary (usually considered the exclusive bailiwick of historians) seem to quote Guicciardini's own state of mind and reflections in those days of May 1527:

Nor were those people lacking [...] who reprehended Count Guido for not having known how to take advantage of a noble opportunity. For the imperials, all of them so intent on rich booty [...] were dispersed all over the city, [...] so that many believed that if Count Guido and his troops had quickly marched into Rome, not only would

68 Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1859: »sentivansi i gridi e urla miserabili delle donne romane e delle monache, condotte a torme da'soldati per saziare la loro libidine: non potendo se non dirsi essere oscuri a'mortali i giudizi di Dio, che comportasse che la castità famosa delle donne romane cadesse per forza in tanta bruttezza e miseria« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 385).

69 See above for the quotation from Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 26–28.

70 Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1859: »arrivò, il dì medesimo che gli imperiali preseno Roma, il conte Guido co'cavalli leggieri e ottocento archibusieri al ponte di Salara, per entrare in Roma la sera medesima; ma intese il successo si ritirò a Otricoli, dove si congiunse seco il resto della sua gente« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 386).

71 See above Francesco Guicciardini to Count Guido Rangoni, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 21 (»ho havuto le sue de'7 [...] et inteso«); and Francesco Guicciardini to Francesco della Rovere, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 25: »el Conte Guido [...] mi scrive de'7«.

they have brought about the Pope's liberation simply by presenting themselves at the Castello, which was neither besieged nor guarded outside by anyone, but also some glorious feat of arms would have befallen them. [...] But men often persuade themselves that if such and such a thing were done, or not done, certain effects would follow, but if one could see the actual results thereof, such judgments would often be found fallacious.⁷²

This is clearly Guicciardini's ›morning-after‹ appraisal of the suggestions put forth by Pietro Chiavelluzzo and ›el signor Federigo‹ for freeing the pope, which, in the urgency of those days of May, he seemed not to have disagreed with too strongly.⁷³

In the light of this case study, the *Storia d'Italia* must be considered an historical work in progress, and Francesco Guicciardini the historian a narrator who reflects on the events he recounts through a silent though evident (humanist?) dialogue within himself: a dialogue between the present writer and the historical actor. This is probably the reason why he sometimes conceals his presence in the text of the *Storia d'Italia*. For while his official duties had compelled him to use the first person (›I‹) as a statesman, rhetorical and ethical reasons prevented him as an historian from explicitly stating that he was his own source. To give a single example, the incipit of Book XVIII, Chapter 9 of the *Storia d'Italia*, where the author explains why the army of the Holy League reached Rome too late, is the a posteriori transposition of the complaints Guicciardini expressed on 10 May to Francesco della Rovere regarding the Duke's change of route.⁷⁴ The reader of the *Storia d'Italia* would not know, unless he had himself been involved in the events as a political actor, that Guicciardini had been among those officers of the Army who, ›on account of the disorder and the general occupation with booty, did not arrive at the bridge in Carnaiola until the 10th, where they learned of the loss of Rome‹.⁷⁵ Nor would he suspect that the news (as Guicciardini affirms in that same letter) was in fact received ›the night before‹ (la notte passata): sometimes,

72 Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 8, vol. III, 1859–1860: ›né mancò [...] chi riprendesse il conte Guido di non avere saputo conoscere una preclarissima occasione, perché gli imperiali, intentissimi tutti a sì ricca preda [...] erano dispersi per tutta la città, [...] in modo che molti credettero che se la gente che era col conte Guido si fusse condotta con prestezza in Roma non solo arebbero conseguito, presentandosi al castello non assediato né custodito di fuori da alcuno, la liberazione del pontefice ma ancora sarebbe succeduta loro più gloriosa fazione [...]. Ma gli uomini si persuadono spesso che se si fusse fatta o non fatta una cosa tale sarebbe succeduto certo effetto, che se si potesse vederne la esperienza si troverebbero molte volte fallaci simili giudizi« (Engl. trans. S. Alexander, in Id., *The History of Italy*, 386).

73 See above for Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Silvio Passerini, Orvieto, 13 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 27.

74 See above for Francesco Guicciardini to Francesco della Rovere, Carnaiola, 10 May 1527, in: Id., *Carteggi*, vol. XIV, 23–25.

75 Id., *Storia d'Italia*, XVIII, 9, vol. III, 1861: ›per il quale disordine, intenta la gente alla preda, non si condusseno prima che a' dieci di al ponte a Carnaiuolo, dove ebbero avviso della perdita di Roma‹. This passage is missing from Alexander's translation in Id., *The History of Italy*.

personal memories can be more valuable than historical research and writing for reconstructing the true course of events.

4. State and Family between History, Humanism, and Politics: Towards a Conclusion

It is the image of Francesco Guicciardini the historian, not the statesman, that gained unquestionable pre-eminence over the *longue-durée*. One example of this general view is provided by Carlo Milanese's introduction to his 1867 edition of a text called the *Sacco di Roma*, written by Luigi Guicciardini, elder brother of Francesco. The text's editorial history can be briefly summarized. In 1758, a small volume was printed in Lucca (though it bears the imprint of Köln), entitled *Il Sacco di Roma descritto in due libri da Francesco Guicciardini edizione seconda*. A first edition had been published by the same publisher two years before, but with no author's name. The publisher (rather unconvincingly) denied that his attribution of the text to an author as important as Francesco Guicciardini was motivated by economic considerations («not for base personal interest»), but claimed rather that he was following the judgment of the Florentine journal *Nouvelle Letterarie*. Earlier that same year (1758), the journal had printed an article identifying the text as Book II of a 1664 work entitled *Il sacco di Roma dal Guicciardini*, which it mistakenly thought was written by Francesco, not Luigi, Guicciardini, and which it supposed had been published in just one edition (Paris, Jolly). Of course, the whole affair was presented by the Tuscan publisher as an act of justice to the name of »such a famous Historian, who of the many to have written about that mournful event is reputed the most precise and truthful«.76 In its three editions of 1664 by three different publishers in Paris (Louis Billaine, Palais Royal; Thomas Jolly, Palais Royal; Simeon Piget, Rue Saint Jacques),77 the text was probably considered, even if it was not presented as such (at least not explicitly), to have been written by Francesco Guicciardini, and it can easily be seen as the lip of a more general wave of fame enjoyed by Francesco Guicciardini during the Thirty Years War, as shown, for example, by the three closely spaced Protestant editions of the *Storia d'Italia* in Geneva, (Jacob Stoer, 1621, 1636, 1645).78

76 »Lo stampatore a chi legge«, in: Guicciardini, *Il Sacco di Roma descritto in due libri da Francesco Guicciardini edizione seconda* (1758), ix: »non già per viltà d'interesse«; »un Istorico sì famoso, il quale fra tanti, che hanno scritto di quel lugubre avvenimento, vien riputato il più esatto, e il più sincero«.

77 Apart from the woodcut frieze on the frontispiece of one of them, these three editions coincide exactly, as shown, among other elements, by their identical typographical fingerprints: lae' era-a-o- sado (3) 1664 (R).

78 See Luciani (1949), 16. An idea of Guicciardini's status in the book-market is provided by the voluminous Catalogue of one of the Parisian publishers of the 1664 text, Simeon Piget: *Catalogus librorum qui reperiuntur in officina Simeonis Piget. Bibliopolae Parisiensis, Parisiis, ex Of-*

In 1867, Milanese was led to question and ultimately refute the long-standing mistaken attribution of the Sacco to Francesco (which he notes was first amended by a certain Bernardo Lessi, a member of the Accademia Colombaria in Florence) on two grounds: suspicion about the 1664 Parisian publishers' motivation for not specifying the author's first name (»the first name – whether deliberately or not – having been omitted«); and the »controversies and disputes over which of the Guicciardinis this account should be attributed to«, which pushed the 1758 publisher to choose the more congenial option on the basis of »reasons [which are], to tell the truth, specious and groundless«. His resulting confutation of these »reasons« is based on four arguments: a rhetorical one (»the verbose style of this writing«, vs. the »gravity of this supreme historian and statesman«); a methodological one, (an historian's vs. a chronicler's approach: »not [...] all the facts of his times, but only the Sack«); an historical one (since Luigi Guicciardini was, according to Eugène Benoist,⁷⁹ gonfaloniere in April 1527 and thus in charge of the Florentine government, he could have affirmed not to want »to write about himself«); lastly, a philological argument (the discovery of the supposed autograph codex of the text (preserved in the Biblioteca Magliabechiana in Florence)).⁸⁰

In light of all this, the omission of the author's name in 1664 and the subsequent mistake in 1758 can be seen both as testimony to Francesco Guicciardini's posthumous fame as an historian and as a force in shaping it. In fact, among the arguments adduced by the 1758 publisher to confirm the theory articulated in *Novelle letterarie* about the authorship of the *Sacco di Roma*, two directly concern the perception of Francesco Guicciardini as an historian:

- a. he was thought to have been a witness to the Sack of Rome (»Guicciardini, who happened to be present at the pitiable Sack of Rome«);⁸¹
- b. this account (*Il sacco di Roma*) is considered complementary to the *Storia d'Italia*, whose chapter on the Sack (Book XVIII, Chapter 8) is much shorter than expected since – according to the 1758 publisher – Guicciardini had already composed a longer one (»the reason that the same Guicciardini rushes over the Sack of Rome with few words in his grand History [...] is that he had already written a fully complete, separate treatment of it«).⁸²

ficina Morelliana, Sumptibus Simeonis Piget, M.DC.XLVI., 3–139 (unfortunately dated some eighteen years before the publishing of the *Sacco di Roma*).

79 He cites Benoist (1862), 193–195.

80 See Milanese (1867), x–xiii: »omesso – sia con deliberazione o no – il prenome«; »controversie e dispute a chi dei Guicciardini attribuir si dovesse questa narrazione«; »ragioni, per vero dire, speciose e insussistenti«; »stile di questa scrittura, verboso«; »gravità [...] del sommo storico e statista«; »non [...] i fatti tutti di quei tempi, ma solo il Sacco«; »scrivere di sé medesimo«. Milanese cites the shelfmark of the autograph manuscript thus: »Biblioteca Magliabechiana, Classe XXV, Cod. no 651. Palch. 8.«

81 »Lo stampatore a chi legge«, in: Guicciardini, *Il Sacco di Roma descritto in due libri da Francesco Guicciardini edizione seconda* (1758), vi–vii: »essersi trovato presente il Guicciardini al compassionevole Sacco di Roma«.

82 *Ibid.*, vii–viii: »perchè il medesimo Guicciardini nella sua grande Istoria si sia con brevi parole sbrigato dal Sacco di Roma, [...] è, che egli ne aveva scritto a parte un trattato assai compiuto«.

This eighteenth-century misapprehension of the authorship of the *Sacco di Roma* is in a certain sense ideological, and it gives us the opportunity of searching for a deeper historical explanation as to why, and how, Luigi di Piero di Iacopo Guicciardini, elder brother of Francesco,⁸³ could compose a text capable of being thought to have been written by his brother. To do so, we must recall the above-described relationship between state and family, between the private and the public use of history, and between the mentality of civic-humanists and public officials in the Renaissance.

Why did Luigi Guicciardini compose the text? Some scholars have recently interpreted it as a kind of *captatio benevolentiae* towards Duke Cosimo I, which might then postpone the composition of the text to about ten years after the events – to 1537⁸⁴ (the same year when Francesco started writing his *Storia d'Italia*) – even if the author inconsistently claims to have directly and recently observed them: »I wrote in those unhappiest of days about the Sack of Rome, not for the pleasure it afforded at the time, [...] but because I continually had before my eyes a manifest example of how much evil is caused by pride and unbounded ambition«.⁸⁵

How did he attempt the task? It might help to think first about who Luigi Guicciardini was. In this regard, one piece of information seems to have eluded the attention of scholars: from late November 1526 onwards (until at least the end of May, since the charge normally lasted 6 months), he was in fact one of the *Otto di Pratica*.⁸⁶ This mainly means that he was one of those Florentine officials that interacted with his brother, who held the commands of Commissary of the Holy League and papal lieutenant-general. In this capacity, he read, answered, and sent his brother's letters to other Florentine officers and ambassadors. We can postulate that Luigi used his brother Francesco as a source when composing the *Sacco di Roma* ten years after the events in which neither the one nor the other had directly taken part – that is, in the same years, if not in the same months, when the latter was using himself as one of his sources to write about the same subjects in his *Storia d'Italia*. His own source as an historian, Francesco Guicciardini was at the same time both the source for and an historical character in his brother's chronicle: the commander »Francesco Guicciardini, sent to that undertaking by the Supreme Pontiff as his lieutenant«, or »Francesco Guicciardini, the pope's

83 For a biographical note see Doni (2003), 138–142.

84 See Bardini (1989), 121–141; now reprinted (revised and augmented) in: Id. (1991), 15–59.

85 Guicciardini, »Lettera scritta all'illustrissimo & Eccellentissimo Signore il Signor Cosimo de Medici Duca Secondo della Republica Fiorentina dal Guicciardini«, fol. [A 5 r]: »in quelli infelicissimi giorni del Sacco di Roma scrivessi, non per pigliare all' hora piacere, [...] mà per haver continuamente avanti à gl'occhi miei un manifesto esempio, di quanto male sia cagione la superba, & immoderata ambitione«.

86 ASF, Tratte, 799, fol. 122 v; ASF, Tratte, 906, fol. 187 r.

luogotenente.⁸⁷ From this perspective, we might tend to partially excuse the eighteenth-century scholars who (mistakenly) thought the *Sacco di Roma* was a work by Francesco Guicciardini. Modern research on the 1664 edition should be expanded in this direction with an aim to shedding new light on the material textual tradition responsible for bringing the text from Florence to Paris,⁸⁸ as well as to explaining why its title is so ambiguous about its author and authorship (*Il sacco di Roma dal Guicciardini*): was it done »deliberately or not«?

The mixture of private and public interests, which emerges from the published correspondence between the Guicciardini brothers from the early 1520s⁸⁹ (and which we could conjecturally extend to the spring and summer of 1527), suggests to us a mentalité approach to the study of political discourse and the public and familial uses of history in Renaissance Florence, one not too different from that attempted by Gilbert in an old yet important essay devoted to »Florentine Political Assumptions in the Age of Savonarola and Soderini«, which focuses on the use of proverbs:⁹⁰ interpreting historical thinking, writing, and acting as a way of expressing public and private thoughts and needs.

To get an idea of just how common this mentality – materialized in language, idiomatic expressions, and shared concepts – was to colleagues connected to each other by social or familial ties, or even to different pieces of writing by the same author, let us take a brief comparative look at two passages. The first is a letter

87 Guicciardini, »Il sacco di Roma descritto da Luigi Guicciardini« (1867), 32, 145: »Francesco Guicciardini, mandato a quell'impresa dal sommo pontefice per suo luogotenente«; »Francesco Guicciardini, luogotenente del papa«.

88 The autograph manuscript is now in BNCf, Manoscritti, Classe XXV, n. 651. See: Bardini (1991), 16; Milanese (1867), xii–xiii, affirms that »qual codice abbia servito alla prima edizione fatta a Parigi non si conosce«.

89 See for example Luigi Guicciardini to Francesco Guicciardini, [Castrocaro], 28 July 1521, in: Guicciardini, *Le lettere*, vol. VI, 115–116 (n. 1332): »I hope it will not be a hardship for you to send me reports about certain things, especially if the French have the Swiss at their side, which is doubted in Florence« (»né vi paia grave darmi advixo di qualche cosa, et maxime se e Franzesi hanno dal canto loro e Svizeri, come a Firenze si dubita«); Francesco Guicciardini to Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, Reggio, 23 September 1521, in: Id., *Le lettere*, vol. VI, (n. 1419), (371–374) 373: »regarding those stratioti my brother Luigi wrote about, a letter was sent yesterday to the governor of Bologna telling him to enlist some or all of them« (»di quelli stradiotti, di che scripse Luigi, mio fratello, hieri si scripse al governatore di Bologna che gli facessi fermare in tucti o parte«); Francesco Guicciardini to Luigi Guicciardini, Modena, 29 March 1523, in: Id., *Le lettere*, vol. VII, (n. 1766), (466–477) 466: »Honorande frater etc. I want all of us to share in paying the decima on that property I bought in the Mugello« (»Honorande frater etc. Io vorrei che la decima di quelli beni che io ho comprati in Mugello si tirassi insieme con la commune di tutti noi«); Luigi Guicciardini to Francesco Guicciardini [Castrocaro], 13 October 1523, in: Id., *Le lettere*, vol. VIII, 432–433 (n. 2046), 432: »Magnifice vir, frater honorande etc. Since I need to have the tratta for certain grain bought on behalf of the 8 di Pratica in the castle and territory of Savignano, of which Count Guido Rangoni is the lord, I am forced to send this courier to see to its payment« (»Magnifice vir, frater honorande etc. Havendo bisogno di havere la tracta di certo grano comprato per conto delli 8 di Pratica nel castello et territorio di Savignano, del quale n'è signore el conte Guido Rangoni, sono forzato mandare l'aportatore di questa a postax«).

90 See Gilbert (1957), 187–214.

from the Otto di Pratica to Roberto Acciaiuoli, dated six days after the Sack of Rome: »it must be said that God or Fortune *took the Emperor by the Hair* in order to make him ruler of the world«. ⁹¹ And now let us compare this letter with a sentence from the *Sacco di Roma* by Luigi Guicciardini: »whereas fighting now would be easy and the victory secure, tomorrow it would end up difficult and incredibly perilous: [it is] an opportunity not to be put off by the prudent, whose understanding is distinguished from that of the ignorant precisely in *knowing how to grab [Chance] by the Hair* when with her swiftness she shows herself and offers herself to a man«. ⁹²

The relationship between the political mentality of sixteenth-century Florence and the use of history as a key to interpreting current politics thus turns out to be more complex than one might have imagined. The process of writing history often required dovetailing multiple layers of information of varying grades of reliability. Moreover, traditional political history, in a century as unsteady as the sixteenth was becoming, owed much more to the everyday practice of politics than to literary theory.

In this context, any relationship between what could be called late humanist culture and historical writing should probably be sought in the chancellors' civic tradition of political involvement rather than in their coherent development of humanist historiographical theory, which was based on a strict principle of adopting ancient standards in modern works: imitation of language and style (*brevitas, celeritas*), contents, themes; choice of models (principally Livy and Sallust) and narrative forms (annals); goals (the ethical aim of history, teaching through example; desire for truth); peculiarities (fictional discourses as a key to moral teaching); arguments (explanation of events and causes as a means for interpreting the inner motivations underlying the course of events: »non solum quid actum aut dictum sit, sed etiam quomodo«). ⁹³

The birth of »historical pragmatism« in early sixteenth-century Florence⁹⁴ closed the gap that had previously existed between the collection of sources and testimonies (as an auxiliary scholarly discipline) and historical writing (as a literary practice). It also entailed the broadening of the historian's task and the entrance of new methods and practices into his intellectual toolkit – not in the sense of a cultural limitation, as in Lucien Febvre's *outillage mental* (mental tools), but

91 Otto di Pratica to Roberto Acciaiuoli, Florence, 13 May 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, *Legazioni e Commissarie*, 18, fol. 159 r: »bisogna dire che Idio o la Fortuna *habbi preso lo Imperatore per li Capelli* per volerlo fare principe del mondo« (emphasis mine).

92 Guicciardini, *Il sacco di Roma dal Guicciardini* (1664 b), 158; Id., »Il sacco di Roma descritto da Luigi Guicciardini« (1867), 162: »dove hora combattendo, gli sarebbe facile, e sicura la vittoria, domani riusciria difficile, e pericolosissima: occasione da non essere diferita da ciascuno prudente, la cognitione dè quali non si fa differenti da gl'ignoranti, se non in *sapere per li Capelli pigliarla*, quando con la sua velocità si dimostra, & si appresenta all'huomo« (emphasis mine).

93 See Gilbert (1965), 203–218.

94 See *ibid.*, 218–226.

in a more expansive one denoting a series of possibilities for increasing the range of one's knowledge – such as juridical inquiry and, more importantly, the quotidian praxis of the statesman.

These changes resulted, first of all, in the replacement of what we might call an orthodox humanist historiographical method with less standard humanist practices, which over the centuries have continued to be some of the basic practices of writers considered good historians: correct (philological) reading of sources; evaluation of texts, editors, and editions; comparison between authors; and cited quotations.⁹⁵

Secondly, they brought about a change in instruments, methods, and references. To cite only one example, it was common for ambassadors to use direct speech in their diplomatic correspondence when reporting important meetings. It would therefore seem possible to disagree partially with Gilbert's opinion, namely that the use of direct speech in Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia* illustrates the necessity for a ›modern‹ historian like him to employ standard humanist devices in order for his work to be taken seriously. Fictional speeches, Gilbert says, are the most important humanistic inheritance in Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*: on the one hand they give it legitimacy as a work of history; on the other they are adapted by the author to illustrate the tension between the potential perfection of rational politics, the limits of human action, and the mysterious role of Fortune.⁹⁶

No doubt fictional speeches were a device of classical and humanist historians, but we have seen how those inserted by Guicciardini into his *Storia d'Italia* were understood by Jean Bodin instead as ›juridical‹: that is, they are no mere systlistic ornaments, and the humanist tradition was not the only point of reference in their composition. If the »speeches« in the *Storia d'Italia* do indeed constitute a kind of technical device derived from the statesman's and the diplomat's attitude to historical narration, then they might provide us with deeper insight into sixteenth-century historiography: it might be less a literary genre and moral device, and more a personal (individual) and a political (general) instrument for understanding the present and the future.

Guicciardini's letters to the Otto di Pratica in the crucial months of 1527 offer us some examples for this. In one case he gives an account of a conversation among political and military representatives of the Spanish faction, stating that »the viceroy departed this morning at dawn from Castrocaro, and today he probably spoke with the Bourbons, and it is reasonable to think that he was quickly informed about what will be done«. ⁹⁷ In another, reconstructing a long discussion

95 On this last theme, see, among others, Grafton (1999).

96 See Gilbert (1965), 273–274, 297–299.

97 Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, Brisighella, 14 April 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, *Carteggio, Responsive*, 49, fol. 106 r: »el vicere parti stamanj allalba da Castrocaro, et hoggi doveva haver' parlato co' Borboni, et ragionevolmente si sara adviso presto di quanto sara operato«.

among representatives of the papal and French factions about how to free the pope from the Castel Sant'Angelo, he presents: »the settlement of affairs here«; »Count Guido's proposal«, which was »rejected by the others as impossible«; explanations for why it would be too difficult (»learning that a large guard and good order are continually maintained at night«); the »deliberation on setting up quarters«; some other opinions (»others having a contrary opinion«), and a hopeful conclusion (»finally it was concluded«).⁹⁸ In another letter, he is seen piecing together the course of a military chief's speech, describing the arrival of the »Duke« at the camp who, »working and toiling opposite the trenches, says he hopes to come to the aid of the Castello, adding that he does not count on it, but including in this number the Swiss who at the moment are on the field«, »says that in that case those who are in Rome will be able to join the rest«, and observing (in conclusion) that »if [the enemy's] forces are increased, there will be need of greater reinforcements, and such that they can be fought once on the open plain«.⁹⁹ Elsewhere, Guicciardini gives an account of a speech made by a frequent stock character of political historiography, the ambivalent and intriguing secretary to some dignitary, in this case »messer Saporito [...], cameriere« of the »Viceroy«: he »arrived here yesterday to request safe-conduct for the Viceroy to go to Rome, which the Marquis granted him, and this morning he went to the Duke of Urbino [...] to obtain the same thing and, having received it, will go the Viceroy together with a Spaniard [...] for the purpose of bringing him to Rome«. Even »the enemy« is sometimes given the right to speak, as when »the enemy speaks with the same thirst and haughtiness as before of wanting to come [to Florence], just as soon as they have the Castello«.¹⁰⁰

In sixteenth-century Italy, where no territorial state was comparable in dimension and strength to the monarchies beyond the Alps, a discourse on »nation« (Nation) and »region« (Land) could not be coherently developed in the wake of

98 Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, dal Campo, Isola Farnese, 25 May 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, *Carteggio, Responsive*, 50, fols. 6 r-v: »la resolutione delle cose di qua«; »l'offerta fatta dal conte Guido«; »dalli altri posta da parte come impossibile a riuscire«; »intendersi che la notte vi tengono di continuo grossa guardia et ordine«; »deliberatione in sul fare lo alloggiamento«; »altri essendo di opinione contraria«; »finalmente si concluse«.

99 Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, dal Campo, Isola Farnese, 30 May 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, *Carteggio, Responsive*, 50, fols. 8 r-10 v: »Duca«; »lavorando et travagliando all'incontro delle loro trincee dice sperare di soccorrere il castello, aggiungendo che non fa fondamento, ma computa in questo numero e'Svizzeri che alpresenti sono in Campo«; »dice che in tal caso sara in potestà di quelli che sono in Roma [...] unirse«; »pero augumentandosi le loro forze essere necessario maggiori provisioni, et tale che una volta si possono combattere in campagna«.

100 Francesco Guicciardini to the Otto di Pratica, dal Campo, presso Bracciano, 31 May 1527, in: ASF, Otto di Pratica, *Carteggio, Responsive*, 50, fols. 12 r-v: »messer Saporito [...] cameriere«; »Viceré«; »arrivo hieri qui adimandare salvocondotto col quale il vicere possa andare a Roma il che il Marchese gli ha concesso et questa mattina è andato dal duca durbino [...] per ottenere il medesimo et havendolo andra al vicere insieme con uno spagnolo [...] per condurlo a Roma«; »li inimici parlano con la medesima sete et bravura di volervi venire che facevano prima, subito che haranno havuto il castello«.

the humanist tradition of civic historiography. And this despite the fact that its virtuosity in using historical research to glorify the greatness of contemporary political power made it especially apt for doing so, for no amount of searching could unearth the roots of a formidable monarchy as was possible in the historiography of France (e.g., Paolo Emilio's *De rebus gestis francorum*) or of the German empire (e.g., Beatus Rhenanus' *Rerum germanicarum libri III*). For this reason, Italian Renaissance historians were able to contribute to the development of modern historiography more in the realms of practice and writing than those of theory, method or ideology. The example of the historian Guicciardini illustrates the usefulness of being able to adapt one's own culture, ability, and attitude to a difficult task: that of describing a present which could not be explained by plain analogy with the past.

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