COLUCII PIERI SALUTATI

CONTRA MALEDICUM ET
OBIURGATOREM QUI MULTA
PUNGERENT ADVERSUS
INCLITAM CIVITATEM
FLORENTIAE SCRIPST

1 Fuit nuper per quosdam insignes et venerables viros mihi trans-
missum invectivae cuitsudam exemplam quod sumptum ab exem-
plari verissimo carissimi fratris mei Antonii Lusci Vicentini certis-
sime dicebatur, quam aiebant, ut res ipsa docet, eum contra nomen
et gloriam Florentinorum, immo certissimum asserebant imperu
quodam mentis et voluntatis mordaciter dictavisse, rogantes ob-
rixius ut ob patriae de cus ad singula responderem. Ad cuicti qui-
dem rei annuntium et hortatum faveor me fuisse permutum ut
scriberem, indignatione magis an dolore nescio; me quidem
utrumque simul invasit. Dolebam enim quod in meam patriam
praesumeret aliquis maledicere indignabarque Antonium meum
gratis talem provinciam accepsisse.

2 Sed postquam scriptum illud legendo percurri, videns in mae-
dictis illis nullum ordinem, nullum finem, nihil ibi probatum ni-
hilique penitus peruausum, et exordium, ut omittam vulgare atque
commune, clara ratione commutabile, quod scilicet inventis solum
nominibus magis appositorum sit adversario quam scribenti, risi
me cum clique: Iuvenis est istic dictator vel doctrina vel tempore,
qui nullo dictionis vel rationis nervo, sed solo voluntatis imperu
moveator; qui sic adversarium maledictis oneret quod, si narrata
negentur, inveniatur potentinus nil egisse, sed oporteat eum alium

COLUCCIO SALUTATI

REPLY TO A SLANDEROUS
DETRACTOR WHO HAS WRITTEN
MANY WOUNDING THINGS
AGAINST THE RENOWNED
CITY OF FLORENCE

Certain distinguished and venerable men have placed in my hands
a copy of an invective, transcribed from an authoritative copy, said
to be the work of my dear brother Antonio Loschi of Vicenza; an
invective, they said, written against the good name and the honor
of the Florentines, as the text itself makes clear. The author, they
added, had most certainly written with the desire and intent to
defame, and they besought me to write a reply to every accusation
in defense of my country. Informed of the matter and exhorted to
act, I confess that I felt at once the impulse to write, whether
driven more by indignation or by pain I know not; both attacked
me at the same time. I was pained that someone dared to defame
my country, and I was indignant that my Antonio had elected to
take on such a task without pay. 1

But once I had scanned the text and found that there was
no foundation to the accusations, no order or purpose, nothing
proven or convincing, and that the beginning, to leave aside its
commonplace clichés, could easily be turned upon the accuser just
by reversing the names, 2 I had to laugh to myself and think: "The
fellow who dictated this is immature either in age or in learning,
motivated entirely by impulse and lacking any power of speech or
reason; the accusations cast in the face of his enemy are so weak
that simple denial would be enough to disprove them all, and he

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orationis filium texere, et ab initio, quasi nil prorsus dixerit, omnia retractare.

Puerile quidem est sic multa dicere quod, unico negationis verbo, causa de manibus aferatur. Non est dicendi virtus in eo quod solum dicitur vel ipsius dictio non ratione, sed si probes, si persuasias sitque fidem facias et irrefragabiliter dicas. Quid enim est sceleris aut vitii quod non possit de quoque, licet omni vitio crimineque careat, narrari? Nec sufficient ad fidem ornatus, qui quidem falsis et veris possit acqualiter adhiberi. Quibus firmissime teneo, sicur vero similis ratione coniecto, numquam Luscinum meum, qui non natura solum sed eruditione doctrinaque valeat, in tam talijs orationis nugas vel tam mordax obiurgationis perulantiam incurrisse, quamvis verba sic redoleant iuxta corticem — non medullitas — Cicerone, quod difficile sit alium ab Antonio meo, qui talia referre scelerit, assignare. Cum enim sententiarum soliditas et argumentationum vis desit, credere non possit hoc ab Antonio scriptum esse. Nam, ut alia omissam, quis credat gentes Luscinum caecyntientes dicere Florentinos?

Dimittamus, ergo, Luscinum nostrum, et cum illo, quisquis fuerit qui Spartam hanec — ut Graecum proverbium haber — susceptibility, contendamus. Perdo tamen occasione pulcherrimam et oratoribus exoptaram cum adversarii persona, contra quem multa saepe dicere licet, aferatur. Uter tamen in eum, quisquis ille sit, unumque libertus quis nescio plane qui sit, dignus pro meritorum suorum fraude nominibus, ut cum se videt per universum huius responsionis nostrae corpus veris rationibus laceratum, paenitet eum aliquando temeritatis et audaciae suae discarque parcius maldecere, quom contra se cognoerit semel ultionis debitae laqueum

would have to retract them and start all over again from the beginning, as though he had said nothing at all.”

Indeed it is schoolboy error to speak at such length without realizing that, by simply denying what is said, the entire case falls to pieces. The force of an argument lies not only in what is said and how prettily, but in whether you prove it, whether you persuade, whether you give incontrovertible evidence of what you say. Is there a sin or a vice that cannot be attributed to anyone, however immune from vice or crime? Moreover, neither is elegance of style enough to produce belief, since it can be applied equally to true things and to false. All this leads me to affirm without the least doubt that m Loschi — who is an able man not only because of his natural gifts but thanks to culture and education — could never have gone in for such trilling and petty speech or such impudently caustic reproaches. To be sure, the words do bear a superficial resemblance to Ciceron’s, such that it would be hard to attribute them to anyone besides Antonio, who knows how to write in that manner. But, again, the lack of both coherence in the discourse and force in the arguments makes it hard for me to believe that Antonio could have composed it. For example (to mention nothing else), who would have thought that a man whose family name was Loschi would call the Florentines “blind”?

So let us leave aside our Loschi and address ourselves to whoever has seen fit, as the Greek proverb says, “to take on Sparta.” But not knowing the name of my adversary takes from me a splendid opportunity, dear to all orators, who may often attack their opponents at great length. Nevertheless, I will not hesitate to upbraid him (even more freely since he is nameless), adopting the epithets that he has earned by fraudulent action, in order that, finding himself torn to shreds by the incontrovertible proofs in my reply, he may eventually repent of his rash boldness and learn to be more cautious in making accusations, since he will feel the consequences: the noose of a just revenge and infamy, instead of the
intendisse ac unde stulte quaesiverit, ut arbitror, gloria, infamiae turpis notam in se perceperit esse conflatam. Compator tamen stultitiae suae, qui se malilloquio suo prodiderit cunctisque sua legentibus se cupiverit esse ludibrio, insinuavit quidem singularius documentum et malae mentis perspicuum argumentum. Quis enim non ut inscius et malignum irrideat homunculum quemdam os in caelu appone et unum populum—singulare decus Italii, quem metuant hostes, socii velut numen aliud in terris degens colant, orbis universi principes multi faciant, legationibus visitent cunctisque prosequantur honoribus—tam stulte, tam procaciter violare?

5 Nescio videre tua praesumptionis aut ambitus rationem. Hominis est, enim, ut cuncti volunt tam theologi quam philosophiae studiosi: quicumque egerit agere propter finem vel propter aliquid quod tandem in verum finem hominis reducatur. Nunc autem dico, obscro, quem finem his obirigationibus intendisti? Namquid in verum illum et ultimum finem omnium—qui beatitudo perpetae et eterna est, perpes dono, quod in tempore traditur, sed eterna participacione, quoniam sine principio fuerit id quod datur—illa te dirigunt vel perducunt? Contra caritatem quidem proximi, ni fallor, est eum non diligere; quanto magis illi maledicere vel famam eius etiam leviter maculare? Tu vero non unum quemquem sed innumerabilem populum gentemque non suis contentam moenibus sed quae totam sparsa per orbem est, veluti gloriosum aliquid, non levit dicto sed gravibus contumelios insectariis. Quod equidem non credam ad ultimum illum finem pertinere te, licet desipias, reputare. Cumque qui dixerit fratri suo 'racham,' 'veritate teste, reus sit iudicio,' quid te moverit qui tanto populo maledicas?
6 Nec video—cum pro domino tuo et, fas sit vera dicere, pro tyranno contra civilatem liberam et libertatis vindicem obloquaris—quem finem beatitudinis politicae maledictis intendas tuis. Nec cum, ut scripsa testantur tua, non mediocrer eruditis esse videare—sine ratione tamen dicendi quam te, certum est, vel parte minima non teneres puto—cogites quod haec via sint vel instrumentum ad speculationis apicem vel virtutem? Ut cum nullus tibi finium qui laudatur praepositus esse possit, restet ut in hoc tamquam homo nullable sumus locutus, sed ut animal, quod ratione penitus non uratur. Curasti forsan domino tuo placere, cui non crediderim fuisse gratum audire malloquia vel contextum tot et talium falsitatum. Tanta quidem in illo circumspectio fuit talisque prudentia quod quaeriti nixa non esse cognosceret, sine dubitatione videret non solum cum infamia peritura fore sed etiam in assentationem eius, quia nihil suspicatus sapientibus dominis esse debet, vel malitioso vel puelliter ordinata.

7 Nullus, ergo, tibi finis nisi malitia frui tua, nisi latrata rabida—cum vitiosissimus esse debes; talis est enim habitus mentis iniquae queales sermones product foris—latrataque foedissimo persequi virtuosos, ut rabidam bestiam te possim, si recte loqui vultero, vocitare. Licer enim bestia sis, non tamen es ciceris, id est humana, sed rana: non simplex bestia, sed omnino bestia bestialis. Accedit huic inhumanitati tuae—vel, ut rectius loquer, procacitati—summa quaedam dementia. Nam cum stultum sit maledicere mortuis propter posteros, stultus est offendere vivos, licet aliquando mortuus sint, propter utroque, praesentes scilicet et futuros. Stultissimum vero vivis maledicere, qui numquam sine successione continuo moritur. Tali est, ni fallor, populus Florentinus, quem difficile sit ad unum penitus interire. Capta quidem,

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7 Since you are attacking a free city and a champion of liberty on behalf of your lord and (it would be God's truth to say) on behalf of a tyrant, I don't see what end of political happiness you are aiming at with your insults. And since you are a man of considerable education, as your writings attest—though they lack logic, something I am sure you have no understanding of at all—are you thinking that these insults of yours are a path or a vehicle to the apex of contemplation or to virtue? Not having set yourself any praiseworthy end, we are forced to deduce that you speak as an animal, not as a man, that is, without making any use of reason. You may have hoped to please your lord, but I doubt that it pleased him to hear insults and a tissue of gross falsehoods. He was indeed so circumspect and prudent that he doubtless saw that the things which he knew were not supported by the truth were not only going to perish, to his discredit, but also that they had been designed, whether maliciously or ingeniously, to flatter him, flattery being among the greatest dangers for wise rulers.

In short, you have attained no end except satisfying your malicious instinct, except a rabid howl—and a vicious creature you must be, as the quality of one's language reveals one's real character—a dirty howl with which you vent yourself on upright people, deserving the label of "raging animal," if we wish to state how things really are. You are indeed an animal, but not even a swine domesticated for human use, but a toad: not an ordinary animal but a wholly brutish beast. This subhuman, or more properly, this shameless attitude of yours is accompanied by total madness. If it is like a fool to slander the dead because of their descendants, it is even more like a fool to attack the living, although they shall die some day, because of both present and future generations. The most foolish thing of all is to slander the living whose number will never decrease, since their issue cannot end. The latter is the case, if I mistake not, of the Florentine people, whom it would be hard to kill off entirely, all at once. Even if Florence should ever be
quod Deus avertat, dirutaque Florentia, tot sunt extra Florentiam Florentini quod viris et opibus novam possent alteris vel refectis moenibus Florentiam excitare quique si, veluti loquiturque tua meritis, bellum indigentem, stultice tuae locutum non reliquent tibi tutum sed etiam in domini tuo curia te conficere poterunt et punire. Tutus enim vix in castris suis fuit contra Romanum unicum rex Persenna, nec in tabernaculo suo femineac manus evasit, maximo comitatur exercitu, dux ille formidabilis Holophernes. 8

Sed haec reliquamus. Securus enim es, quoniam Luscus is, de quo dicitur, fuisset non creditis, et si forte prodibis in medium detegasque quis sis, vilitas et stultitia tua te reddet omnibus noffensum. Sed his omissis, silvis ad id quod intendimus defecturus. In cibus quidem rei principio, quoniam de te perpauca dixi, de me non est consilium subtricare: docendus enim es—et quicumque nostra haec scribenda perlegerit—cur ergo me defensione tuisque refellendis rigus, cum me non provoces, offeram, ne te videam eadem qua tu Florentinos libidine persequeris impetisse. Scripsi praeclarus orationis fronte me rogatum omnibus quod in patriae decus deberem ad singula respondere, ut tam iusta rogantibus honestum non fuerit morem non gerere. Sed vehementius rami tanger—acens licet—patria, cui non praestare nullo modo possimus quod debemus, ut armis meis ipsam protagam nec in tam acerbae sanguinationis iniuria derelinquam ipsam, tot diffamationem mendaciam, indefensionem; ut sicur hactenus commissa sequens dominorum meorum, publicae scripitionis officio causas incidentiis, etiam cum hostium diffamationibus, ut iubebar, defendere sum.
conatus, ita nunc, cum privata laceratur lingua, privatim tuear et defendam.

Quis enim patienter ferat, cum eius interritis, patriam, cui cuncta debemus, contra veritatem ab eo cuius non interisit tam turpiter diffamari? Velem autem hanc causam coram aliquo principum inscribere et ipsorum hostium odiosi ventilare; velem ipsos audire quaelque principum mendaciis illis facerent intelligere, quas probationes et argumenta sument; ornarem eos, ni fallor, meritis suis, efficeremque quod patriam verbis non laederent, quam adhuc non potuerunt, nec per Dei gratiam potuerunt, etiam ea quam tu iactas potentia, supertare. Cumque civis quilibet sit civitatis et populi sui portio, non extraneus, causam patriae, quam quilibet defendere tenetur, assumo, rogans quibus vabat habe legere quod me benignum ferant pro veritate, pro iustitia, pro patria disputantem. Et sic male vel, quod non arbitror, patienter impietatem adversarii tulerint, sic pietatem meam aequis animis et patientissime dignentur ferre; quoque dicendorum ordinatio paterc, ponam prius adversarii verba, sicut scripsit, ad litteram, de membro in membro, et articulam in ea quae dixerit respondebo, ut cum unum eliardo, non alium cum sua confutatione subnectam.

Incipis, ergo, venenum quod conceperas evomens in haec verba, videlicet: 1 Illucineon quam dies, perditissimi cives, vastatorem patriae et quiets Italicae turbatores, quae dignum vestris sceleribus peenam meritarium supplicium consequamini? Dabiturne aliquando, vestae cuiuspiam calamitatis insignis exemplo, sic vestri similis deterreri et sic in aerumnis vestris suam formidare discrimen, ut calamitates vestra videoxur non solum insta in ulione, sed etiam utilis in exemplo. Eruntne ullo tempore sic vestra detecta atque delusa praestigia, in quibus omne vestrum praesidium collectum est,

enemies, so now, since she has been abused by the tongue of a private citizen, I shall protect and defend her as a private citizen. Indeed, what responsible person could bear it patiently when his country, to which we owe everything, is irresponsibly made subject to shame and defamation? I would like this case to be brought before a prince and tried under the eyes of our very adversaries; I would like to hear them out and to understand the starting point of those lies and the proofs and arguments they are assuming; and unless I'm mistaken I could set them off in proportion to their merits and cause them not to defame our country—a country they have hitherto been unable to defeat and, please God, never shall, even with that military power of which you boast. And as every citizen, so far from being extraneous to his state and his people, is a constituent element of them, I take on the defense of my country, as each is called upon to do, and I pray all who may read these lines to be well-disposed toward me as I speak for truth, justice, and country. And just as they have borne with patience or (as I suspect) with annoyance the wicked assertions of my adversary, let them likewise bear with equanimity and utter patience my holy ones. So that my discourse may be easier to follow, I will first cite my opponent’s affirmations word for word and line by line, then respond point by point to his accusations, passing from disproof of one assertion to exposition of his next, followed by its rebuttal.

You begin spewing the poison you’ve stored up with these 10 words: Will that day ever dawn, O wicked citizens, enemies of your country and disturbers of the peace in Italy, when you will pay the penalty your crimes deserve, when you will have to undergo the punishment you merit? Will it ever come about that the example of your special undoings will frighten those like you and make them comprehend, in light of your disasters, the risks they ran, such that your ruin will be not only a fitting vindication but also a useful example? And will your deceptions be revealed and thus foiled, deceptions that you rely upon wholly, so that other nations may
COLUCCIO SALUTATI

ut oculatae ceterae gentes appareant, vos, ut estis, vanissimi et caecuntissimi videamini?

Principio quidem, sicur dictis verbis exprimitur, in huius orationis auspicio tribus votis, velut accensus in iram, mirabiliter excandescent—non alter quam si Ditas, quod extremae desperationis est, exeptis et clames—Florentinis indignas poenas innumerataque supplicia verbis acerrimis imprecaris. Cupis sic ipsos aliquos calamitatis exitio sui similibus exemplo fore, quod videntes metuant et iusta sit pro factis utrius, nec non utilis in exemplo. Cupis sic nostra denudari praestigia, quod oculatae ceterae gentes appareant et Florentini vanissimi, sicur sunt, atque caecuntissimi videantur. Quia quidem tuae narrationis introitus quam ineptus sit, quidque legentibus affecta paucissimis edocebo. Quis dominus quisque princeps quaeve communitas est in quam non possit hoc ideam, si quis debachari voluerit, iaculati? Si tuum in dominum haec est dorem verba scribantur, quis inconvenienter posita causareetur? Quid erit necessarium immutare, nisi pro civibus tyrannum et pro plurali ponere numerum singularum?

Sed illum et mortuos dinitratus, cum quibus decret mitius agere quam si vivant. Dic, obscuro, nonne te Florentinis verbis tuis prodis et detegis inimicum, et capitalem ac tertiterrum inimicum? Nunc autem fare, precor, quam personam induis; accusatoris an testis? Et testis, quam te offeras planeque te geras et declaras his tuis optatibus illorum quo inherueris inimicum, quem locum reliquis ut tibi vel levisima fides detur? Accusator autem quis tantae gravitatis unquam fuit, qui vel criminationis vel inventioneis solo contexta potuerit culpabiliem reddere quem accusat? Sit Cicero, sit Demosthenes, sit summae vir integritatis Cato, sit

REPLY TO A SLANDEROUS DETRACTER

be found to be clear-sighted and so that you may appear to be what you are: utterly empty and utterly blind.

At the start of your oration, then (as expressed in the foregoing), exactly as though you were invoking the Furies—a sign of utter desperation—and like one in the grip of awesome rage, you curse the Florentines in the bitterest terms, with triple vows, calling down upon them unjust punishments and unmerited torments. You desire that their ruin might be an example to others like them, a frightening sight and a worthy as well as a useful vindication of wrongs done. You hope that our deceptions may come to light, that other peoples show themselves clear-sighted, that the Florentines show themselves as they really are, thoroughly untrustworthy and blind. It won’t require much for me to show that this is an inept beginning and what effect it has on readers. Is there any lord, any prince or any community at all against which the same accusations could not be hurled, if one wants to give way to uncontrollable rage? If the selfsame words were directed against your lord, who would make the case that they are wide of the mark? What else has to be changed but the word “tyrant” in place of “citizens” and the singular for the plural?

But let us leave in peace him and all the dead, with whom it is fitting to be gentler than with the living. Tell me, pray, doesn’t your mode of address give away and reveal you to be an enemy of the Florentines, indeed a deadly and loathsome enemy? And declare now, please, which role you are assuming: that of prosecutor or witness? If you play the witness, how can one have any trust in you at all, since you show yourself, prove yourself and even declare yourself, with these desires of yours, the enemy of those against whom you bear witness? On the other hand, since when has a prosecutor possessed authority of such a kind as to render the defendant guilty by the mere fact of accusing and attacking him? Even were he Cicero or Demosthenes, or that Cato of
Antonius aut Crassus, sit Demosthenis insecator Aeschines vel quicumque togatus aut palliatus plus quam in curia pro rostris vel subsellii valuit; sint, si placet, et omnes simul, numquam, nisi probaverint, reum damnabunt. Quamobrem vide recognosceque tuam inscitiam, tuum errorem, disceque, rabida stultissimaque bestia, quod etiam in judiciis senatu vel populo nulla fides accusatoris vel testibus qui se gesserint inimicos soleat vel debet adhiberi, quamvis etiam saepe sint iudices, sit senatus aut populus illi quem quis accusaverit subintratus. Ut quotiens accusator vel vocati testes hoc inimicitiae virus, quod tu tam manifeste prodis, prae se tulerint, vel se stulti non sentiant insanire vel auditores ut insanos repurent et in suam inclinare stultitiam et in insipientiae supinae notam aut iniquitatis infamiam tradere mediterint.

13 Quis enim adeo demens vel retum humanarum ignarus quis credat accusatoris vel testi qui profiteatur aut eius, quem insequitur, se detegat inimicum? Tu vero, cum non unum aliquem dominum vel iudicum, non unum vel aliquos populos sed universam genus hominum, quos haec tua legere continget, alloquaris, nonne (si putas te sapere, sicut credo; tali quippe non scribere nisi tibimet de scientia acque prudentia blandireris) stultissimus es si speras haec illis te persuasum siti? Nonne tibi similis arbitraris vel, quod malignus est, iniquos ducis? Cavebimus omnes, igitur, teque cum tua stultitia relinquamus; nec usquam fidem merebere, nisi forsitan apud stultos. Quae cum ita sint (negari quidem non possunt, orator egregie), nonne primo tam elegantis orationis ingressu te rabidam bestiam probas, ut superius diffinivis? Sed haec omittamus

supreme integrity, Antony or Crassus, Aeschines against Demosthenes, or any other Roman or Greek orator who proved himself in the curia, senate, or tribunal: were he able to unite all their strengths, he still could not get an accused person condemned without any proof. So recognize and accept your own ignorance and error, and learn, raging and stupid animal, that when there is a trial, neither the senate nor the people consider reliable a prosecutor or witnesses who conduct themselves as enemies of the accused, even though there is often prejudice against the accused on the part of judges, senate or people. And any time the prosecutor or the witnesses called show the venom of hostility [toward the accused], as you clearly do, [one of the following holds good]: either, stupid as they are, they remain unconscious of their own madness; or else they reckon their audience is mad and study how to push them into their own brand of stupidity, so that they acquire the stigma of passive foolishness or the infancy of active injustice.

Whoever could be so mad or naive as to believe a prosecutor or a witness who shows himself or confesses himself to be enemy of the person he speaks against? Now, since you are addressing yourself, not merely to one lord or one judge, not to one or several peoples, but to every human being who may happen to read your text, and assuming you believe yourself wise, as I believe (for surely you wouldn't write stuff like this if you didn't flatter your own learning and wisdom), aren't you actually rather a dunce to believe you can convince them with these arguments? Isn't it the case that you either think them like you or—even more maliciously—unjust? Then let's all be careful and leave you to your stupidity; nor will you ever deserve trust, unless perhaps among those who are equally stupid. Since that is undeniably how things stand, my fine orator, haven't you proven yourself to be a rabid beast, as above defined, from the outset of your elegant oration? But enough of this. Granted you are completely untrustworthy, let
et quamvis omni fide careas, videamus an vocabula quae Florentinus imponis vere vel idonee sint his, quos insequeris, attribuata.

14 'Perditissimos cives, vastatores patriae turbatoresque pacis Italiam' Florentinos vocas. 'Perditissimos,' inquis, 'cives.' Si cunctos Florentinos increpas, falsissimum est quod dicis; licet enim aliquibus hoc nomen forte convenire possit, qui sua prodigant, male vivant et pravitatis morum ac sceleribus delectentur, sine comparatione tamen longe plures sunt quos perditos, si vera loqui velitis, nequeas appellare multisquis utmetare facerebe qui possint, immo debent, non perditi sed boni cives omnium judicio vocari. Sed hosti nostro non congruit hoc querelegus genus; nostrum est ista conquire vel dolere, quorum interest cives non perditos habere sed utiles, sed bonos, sed tales quibus possit res publica se invarie. Relinquas igitur hoc nobis, relinquas et id quod sequitur, 'patriae vastatores.' Quid enim aliud est vastare patriam quam patriam exhauriare? Ut, si de patria nostra sentias, opandum hoc esse tibi debere, non dolendum! Si vero de Liguria, Flaminia Venetiaeque, domini tui pressis iugo, forsan intelligis, doleas, obsecro, non reprehendas, optesque cibi tuaque portibus tales hostium patriae vastatores, nec reliquam ex hoc deplores Italiam. Habet tot Augustae gentes quae tuo non subiacta domino, fines suos habent et ora habent et qui dicere noverint arque possint; et quis unquam illorum partium dominus aut populus hoc quod nobis imputas fuit conquestus? Quis personam eorum tibi conmissit et vices?

15 Ut in hoc non sis, etiam si verum dixeris, audiendus: si pacem turbamus Italiam, sicut scribis, totam haberemus Italiam inimicam; quod cum non sit, sed ubique quaiuorvae serpentes iugum.

us now see if the words with which you have been attacking Florentines are truthfully and fitly applied to them.

You call the Florentines wicked citizens, enemies of their country and disturbers of the peace in Italy. "Wicked citizens," you say. If you are upbraiding all Florentines, this is absolutely untrue. The word might apply to some of them if they wasted their patrimony, conducted themselves deplorably, took delight in perversion and crime. Still, if you wanted to tell the truth, those who in no way merit such an accusation are incomparably more numerous, and indeed you really ought to admit that there are many who can be, and indeed should be called, by anyone's judgment, not "wicked" but "upright citizens." In addition it is hardly the business of our enemies to make such a complaint: we should be the ones to blame or regret any such state of affairs, since it behooves us in the first place to have not wicked but good and upright citizens, such as can serve the state. Leave this to us, and also the next part about "enemies of their country." What can "enemies of their country" signify except those who bring it to ruin? If you mean our country's ruin, that ought to be something desirable for you, not a source of pain. But if perhaps you mean Liguria, Emilia Romagna and the Veneto, regions oppressed by your lord, you should feel sorry for them, not attack them; and you should be wishing for such enemies of your enemies' country for your own sake and that of your region, not lamenting the behavior of the rest of Italy on that account. Many are the Italic nations which are not under your lord's rule, who are masters of their shores and borders and who know how to speak and can speak: when has any lord or people of those regions brought out the imputations that you do? Has any one of them entrusted their persons or their fortunes to you?

Even if you were speaking the truth, your claim on this head could not be accepted: if we were the "disturbers of peace in Italy," all Italy would be against us. But as that is not the case—on the contrary, wherever the yoke and the venom of the legality-
venenumque non attigerit maneat habeanturque carissimi suis commerciis Florentini, nonne patet haec, quae fraudem, ut arbitror, esse vis? Non enim detegenda tuae optares votis, nisi praestigium ludificationes sententiae occultas. Sed quis te docuit hostibus haec obicere? Dolum an virtus, quis in hoste requirat? Dic tamen ubinam vel tuum dominum vel aliquem illum res publica Florentina decepit? Quas quidam alios, praeterquam hostibus, struxit insidias? Nil te prohibet haec omnia de quibuscumque tibi placuerit delatrare. Non dicis, sed probes oporet istar quae scribis, ut verum dixisse videaris, non maledixisse. Sed quis te praestigiosior, qui cum Florentinos tibi sic propoueris diffamandos, quod credi non velis omninoque credendus non sis, omnes qui faciant quae reprehendis infamia, quam Florentinis imponas, notandos sine dubio delinquas? Quis enim aliud intendit qui mordet aliquem de virtu—cui nec re nec audientia opinione talis, in quem invecerit, sit affinis—nisi reprehendere vitium et omnes qui damnavo illo vitio sint infecti? Ut si turbare pacem Italiam, destruere subditos et vastare vicinos dominum tangeri mus, in ipsum illa votorum tuorum acrimonia, non in illos qui tali culpa careant, inveteris, praesertim cum sic Florentinos arguas quod nil probes. Qui damnavo quidem vitia, damnavo procul dubio vitiosos, si qui sint vel evidentia rerum vel opiniione publica tali vitio criminosi. Bene ergo tibi iam est de totius tam elaboratae dictionis invento, cum illa sumpti in unum quae cunctis convenire possine quaecumque communia sint tam accusatori quam etiam accusato, saltatem verbis paucissimis immutatis; cum te faciens accusatur inimicum fidem perdas, et illos, quos alloqueris, aut insanos

devouring serpent has not yet reached, the Florentines remain loved and respected for their commerce— isn’t it obvious that you are mixing together your boasts with counterpoint evidence, so that this word “tricks” you use to characterize Florentine acts really suits you. “Tricks” is a word you would like to have mean, I think, “hidden acts of fraud.” Indeed, you could hardly want them exposed unless you knew that there were hidden swindles in the first place. But who instructed you to make these accusations against an enemy? Whose business is it if an enemy be virtuous or evil? Tell me, when, pray, has the Florentine republic ever deceived your lord or anyone else? Whom, except enemies, has it ever plotted against? Nothing forbids you from barking accusations like this against anyone you like. But you have to prove them, not just make them, if you want to show you are telling the truth and not simply throwing out calumnies. But really, who is trickier than you are? When you would expose the Florentines to defamation in such a way that your charge is entirely lacking in credibility, surely you are letting everyone else who acts in the way you condemn escape the infamy you are putting on the Florentines? After all, what aim can one have in accusing a certain party of a vice to which it has no inclination in fact or in public opinion, except to condemn the vice itself and all those who are infected by it? So if to upset the peace in Italy, ruin one’s subjects and plunder one’s neighbors apply to your lord, you must direct your acrimony against him, not against those guiltless of these things, all the more so as not one of your accusations against the Florentines stands proved. He who condemns the vice condemns also those who practice it, if they are incriminated of such a vice by clear evidence or public opinion. Quite a start for your elegant oration: you attribute to a sole party things that may be said of many, such that by changing a word here and there they apply to the accuser; next you show how you are not to be trusted by revealing your opposition to the accused; and last you let it be known that


· COLOCCIO SALUTATI ·

reputes aut facere coneris iniquos. Quae quantum oratoriae facultatis sint, tibi, si forsan haec nostra videris, relinquuo cunctisque qui nostra haec legerint tribuo inducandum.

Sed iam ulterius procedamus videamusque quid post haec vosa tua, sive maledicta, subnectas: Sic erit profecto, non fallor: adventant temporae, fata sunt proprie, piena currus appropriatius exspexit mortalsbus ruina vestrae superbae. Videbinus, ecce videbinus illam vestram in defendenda quaedam fecissima libertate vel potius crudelissima tyrannidae constantiam fortitudinemque Romanam; hoc enim nomine superbire soletis et vos genus praedicare Romanum, quod quam impudenter facitis alio dendum erit loco. Nunc prossequi videbinus, inquam, illam inanem atque ventosam inactiam et insolentiam Florentinam et quam virtuti vere respondat a vobis, praetereter mortales, propriarum rerum semper usurpata laudatio cognoscemus.

Quibus quid responderim nisi quod cum oratoris officium deseras—diffidentia sit olecit, ut arbitror, probationum—cadem stultitia, qua dicere cepisti, nunc incipias divinare? O singularis orator, qui primis orationis tue verbiis, cum nihil probaturus omnino sis, probare quidem non potes, tibi fidem abstuleris et, etiam si quid posses orationis dulcedine vel artificio consequi, stultitia tua perdas! Quis te docuit oratorem exuere teque transfere, quod est periculum, in prophetam? 'Sic erit,' inquit, 'profecto.' Quis hoc tibi stulte promissit? 'Non fallor,' addicis, quasi quae turbatus opus sic tibi comperta sint quod in illo malvolentiae tumultu nec falli valeas nec errare. Fabellam uesti, cum nugas tuas relego, reminiscor: cum enim pyrorum anni futuri secum copia lactarentur, interrogatus unde premiserit respondaisse.

· REPLY TO A SLANDEROUS DETRACTOR ·

you believe your audience is either mindless or malleable enough to act unjustly. How far all these exordia belong to the art of public speaking I leave it up to you to judge, should you ever read this text, and to any other readers I may have.

But let us proceed to see what you add to these wishes of yours, or rather curses: So shall it surely be, I am certain; the times have arrived, destiny is about to be fulfilled, and with great strides there approaches the collapse of your arrogance, long wished for by the human race. We shall see—and how we shall see!—your celebrated constancy and "Roman" tenacity in defending that repulsive liberty, or rather cruel tyranny. You are accustomed to boast of the name of Rome and declare to all that you descend from the Romans. This impudent lie I will refute another time. Now I continue: we shall see, I say, that Florentine boastfulness and insolence is empty as the wind, and we shall learn how much the praise that more than any other nation you claim for yourselves, truly corresponds to virtue.

How else can I respond to accusations like these except to point out that, having once decided to abandon the obligations of an orator (presumably for want of evidence), you now put on the airs of a prophet, still brandishing words in the same foolish fashion as before? What an extraordinary orator you are! From your very first lines, you can prove absolutely nothing at all, since it is impossible; you do your utmost not to be credible, and even when you might achieve something through sweetness and verbal artifice, you lose it all with your stupidity! Who counseled you to drop the cloak of orator and put on the (perfectly laughable) mantle of prophet? So shall it surely be, you say. And who was fool enough to promise it to you? I am certain, you add, as if the things you were wishing for in your confusion were made known to you in such a way that you were able neither to err nor be deceived in the tumult of your malevolence. These inanities remind me of the little story about the bear bursting with happiness that next year would bring a bumper crop of pears; when asked why it was so
fingitur: 'Quoniam opto.' Tu, non alter quam ursus ille, quae concepscis affirmas, ut non minus bestialiter sentias quam loquaris.

Sed subdis: 'Adventant tempora, fata sunt prope, pleno cursu appropinquat exoptata mortalibus ruina vestrae superbiae.' Adventant tempora, immo labuntur, immo currunt. Inquit enim Naso:

Tempora labuntur tacitisque senescimus animis
Et currir freno non remorante dies.

Adventant, fateor; immo tempora, quae tunc adventare nuntiasti, tuis (per Dei gratiam) mania vocis et optaribus adverterunt. Vide tecumque considera quid loquaris mementoque quod non sit tuum scire tempora vel momenta, quae Pater noster, qui in caelis est, in sua potestate regnatur. 'Fata sunt prope'; stultissime Lombardorum, quid nomine fatorum intendis? An ea Pater omnipotens Phoebus, tibi Phoebus Apollo praedixit, ut nobis haec tu, Furiarum maxima, pandas? Sed audiamus ulerius vorecord vementemque novum hunc vatem.

'Videbimus, ecce videbimus illam vestram in defendenda pra, dam foedissima libertate vel potius crudeissima tyrannide constantiam fortitudinemque Romanam; hoc enim nomine superbre soleris et vos genius praedicare Romanum. Quod quam impudenter faciatis alio dicendum erit loco.' 'Videbimus,' inquis; immo videres, vides atque videbis plus quam Romanam fortitudine atque constantiam populi Florentini in defendenda dulcissima libertate, 'quod caeleste bonum,' ut ille dixit, 'praeterit orbis opes,' quam mens est omnibus Florentinis ut vitam, imo supra vitam, opibus ferroque defendere nostrisque posteris hanc hereditatem optimam, quam a maioribus nostris accepimus, relinquire—Deo favente—solidam et immaculatam. Adeo placet nobis haec quam

sure of this, it replied "because I wish it." Just like that, bear, you assert as true the things you hope for, and your ideas are no less bestial than your language.

Next you add the times have arrived, destiny is about to be fulfilled, and with great strides there approaches the collapse of your arrogance, long wished-for by the human race. Oh yes, the times have arrived, they are slipping by, they run. As Ovid writes:

The times slip by, we grow old amid the silent years,
And the day runs on, held back by no rein.27

The times have arrived, true; indeed, the times you have announced are now here and, lo—thanks be to God—they are empty of all your hopes and wishes. Think well and reflect on what you say; recall that it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which our Father, who art in heaven, hides within his power.28 Destiny is about to be fulfilled, but what, foolish Lombard, do you mean by the word 'destiny'? Did the omnipotent Father vouchsafe this prophecy to Phoebus Apollo, and Apollo to you, in order that you, as chief of the Furies, might divulge it to us? Well, let us listen further to this mad new seer as he raves.

We shall see—and how we shall see!—your celebrated constancy and "Roman" tenacity in defending that repulsive liberty, or rather cruel tyranny. You are accustomed to boast of the name of Rome and declare to all that you descend from the Romans. This impudent lie I will refute another time. "We shall see," you write, and indeed you have seen, you do see and you shall see the more than Roman constancy and tenacity of the Florentines in defending sweet liberty, "the celestial good exceeding all the wealth in the world," as [Aesop] says.29 It is the resolve of all Florentines to defend liberty with their sword and substance as they defend their own lives, indeed beyond their own lives, and to leave this finest inheritance to their posterity, an inheritance we have received from our ancestors—through God's favor—undiminished and unstained.30 So much do we treasure
foediissimam vocas, omnium hominum sultissime, libertatem, quam inexperti solum, qualis es, nec alciusus momenti faciunt nec cognoscunt, quam solum Lombardorum genus, sive natura, sive consuetudine, sive forsae utraque fract, nec videntur diligere nec optare. Tu vero solus hoc summum divinitatis munus foediissimum reputas et abhorres, cuius sententiae non arbitror te socum invenire, etiam sub tu principis dominatu, adeo naturale est diligere libertatem. Quo mihi videtur, non humilitate sed vitio, te posse 'servorum servum,' immo debere rationabiliter appellari.

20 Sed cur 'servum' te vocas, qui tam valde servitute delectaris tua, quod non pudet vocare 'foediissimam' libertatem? Immo, quod stultius est, non es veritus eam tyrannidem crudelissimam appellare. Quod verbum, cum omnes risum isse vel ire certum sim, ferre non potui. Numquid aliquam nosti vel in Italia vel alibi libertatem quae sit Florentinorum libertate liberior aut integrior, vel quam nostrae libertati possis, ne comparare dixerim, antequera? Talis est tyrannis illa domini cui servis, quod tyrannidem audaces Florentinorum dicere libertatem? Sic quo gravis et instar servitutis est custos legum libertas—gravis et instar servitutis est effrenae iuventutis, quae cupit suam libidinem evagari, quae passionibus ductur atque vivit, ut te facile putem et tui similis non solum non intelligere libertatem quid sit, sed rem et nomen, veluti teetrum aliquid, abhorrec.

21 Cui rei testis est Livius, cum pruditionem de reducendis regibus solido illo stilo suo referret: 'Erant, inquit, in Romana iuventute adolescentes aliquot; nec hi tenui loco orti, quorum in regno libido solutior fuerat, aequales sodalesque adolescentium Tarquiniorum, assueti more regio vivere. Eam tum sequutu irem omnium licentiam querentes, libertatem aliquorum in suam vertisse servitutem.

\textit{Reply to a Slanderous Detractor.}

this liberty which you, most foolish of men, call repulsive. Only those who have never experienced it, people like you, can fail to appreciate it or know its worth, and it is precisely the Lombards who seem the only people (whether from nature, custom, or both) not to love it or long for it. But it is you alone who regard as repulsive and shrink from this highest gift of divinity; and I don't think you will find any who share your sentiment, even within the domain of your lord, so natural is love of liberty. That is why it seems to me that you could be styled—indeed you ought with good reason to be styled—the "servant of servants," but as a mark of moral weakness rather than humility.

But why do I call you "servant" when you are so pleased with servitude that you unashamedly define liberty "most hateful"? Still worse, you call it "cruel tyranny." This is really unbearable and I am sure everyone has laughed and will laugh at it. In all Italy and elsewhere is there a freer and more intact liberty than the liberty enjoyed by the Florentines, a higher liberty or even an equal one? Or is the tyranny of the lord you serve such that you dare call the liberty of the Florentines a tyranny? I know a liberty that stands guard over law may appear burdensome and like slavery—burdensome and like slavery for disolute youth who want only to follow their lusts and live dragged by their passions. So I can easily understand how you and your kind not only do not understand the essence of liberty, but shrink from its reality and reputation as though it were something repulsive.

To all this Livy bears witness when he describes, in that lapi-

dary style of his, the plot to bring back the monarchy: "There were among the young men of Rome a number of youths, the sons of families not unimportant, whose pleasures had been less confined under the monarchy, who, being of the same age as the young Tārquinii and their cronies, had grown used to the untrammeled life of princes. This license they missed, now that all enjoyed equal rights, and they had got into the way of complaining to each other
that the liberty of the rest had resulted in their own enslavement." I'm sure that this and other passages of this great author led you to long introspection—the thoughts of mankind being inquisitive and inclined to the things they desire—and brooding upon the matter you came to view as a most cruel tyranny that liberty which instead is the sweetest of all things, and to define as hateful so great a good, indeed the most precious of all. The absurdity and falseness of these views I would leave to you to adjudicate, were you capable of acting like a human being. Still, I offer them for dissection to everyone who reads these pages.

But since you seem to deny the Roman origins of the Florentine people, tell me, please, wherever did you find the contrary view? Why do you envy what all Italy (save you) grants us, what no one except you, filthy beast that you are, has ever doubted? Why be jealous of what the city of Rome and the Roman emperors have at no time denied, so that still today they call us and regard us as their children, flesh of their flesh and bones of their bones, a source of pride and honor to their name? And in order to make you ashamed of the doubts you have foolishly raised, I want to tell you my views about the origin of this noble city and confirm them by means of authorities I shall be able to cite, so that I may remove from you, who have "kept for another time" your demonstration that we wrongly take pride in descent from the Romans, any grounds for your ravings and give you the opportunity to adopt more correct views.

In undertaking to set out the origins of Florence, an obscure question that is buried in the depths of antiquity, I am prepared to believe that this people rich in glory and their celebrated city will have come from small beginnings (as is often the case), but not ignoble ones. Yet if the most ancient city-state of Fiesole left its dwellings and came flooding down into the site of our
CONFLUERIT SEDESQUE SUAS RELIQUERIT, NEMINI DUBIAM RADIUS POTEST URBEM HANC AUGUSTISSIMAM QUAM PUTETUR INITIUM HABUISSE. QUOD SIE NOS LAETAREM, NON EST MIRUM. NAM, UT EXTERNA PERTRANSCENDUM, URBIS ROMANAEE PRIMUM PRINCIPUM, DIC MII, QVIS NOVIT? LEGIMUS EVANDRUM ET ARCADAS—CUM FATIS, UT ADIUNT, AUCTORE CARMENNE, PER TYBERIN INTRANTES ITALIAM APPULISSUNT—UBI POSTEA CONDIT A ROMA FUIT OPPIDUM INVENITSE QUID LATINE NOMINE "VALENTIA" DICEBATUR, VOCABULUM CUIUS ARCADIS VERTENTES IN GRAECUM, ITAUXA VERBI SIGNIFICATIONEM, "RHOMEN" PRO "VALENTIA" VOCABERUNT, UNDE CREDITUM A NONULLIS EST INCITUM ROMAE NOMEN, NON A ROMO, SICUT COMMUNITATIS TRACTAT, DESCENDIT. AUCTORI QUIDEM URBIS VETERUM NON ROMULUS SED ROMUS FUIT, UNDE ROMA, NON ROMULA DICTA EST; ET VARRO PLAUS "ROMUM" VOCAT ET "ROMULUM." QUIS AUTEM LEGIT QUENNAM AUCTOREM HABERIT ANTIQUISSIMUM ILLUD OPPIDUM QUID VALENTIA DICTUM FUIT? QVIS VERUM EIS OPPIDI PRINCIPUM VALEAT ASSIGNARE? UT HEREDITARIUM NOBIS SIT IGNOTAM HABERE NOSTRAE CONDITIONIS ORIGINEM, SICUT ROMA, QVID QUIDEM ANTIQUITATIS EST VALDISTISSIMUM ARGUMENTUM.

QUOD AUTEM HACURBS ROMANOS HABERIT AUCTORES, URGENTISSIMIS COLLEGGITUR CONJECTURIS, STANTE SQUIDEM FAMA, QUE SE OBSCUROR ANNIS, URBEM FLORENTINAM OPUS FIUISE ROMANUM: SUNT IN HAC CIVITATE CAPITOLIUM, ET IUXTA CAPITOLIUM FUTUM; EST PARISIUM SIVE CIRCUS, ET LOCUS QUI "THERME" DICTORUM, ET REGIO PARIONIS, ET LOCUS QUIDEM "CAPACIAM" VOCANT, ET TEMPLUM OLIM MARTIS INSIGNIS, QUEM VIENTITAS ROMANI GENERIS VOLEBAT AUCTOREM (ET TEMPLUM NON GRAECO, NON TUSCO FACTUM, SED PLANE ROMANO). UNUM ADIANGAM, LOC ET NON EX ETALUI ORIGINIS NOSTRÆ SIG- NUM, QUID USQUE AD TERUAM PARTEM QUARTIDECIMIS SAEUCULI POST INCARNATIONEM MEDITATORIS DEI ET HOMINUM IESVS CHRISTI APUD PONTEM QUI "VEITU" DICTORUM ERA: AEQUESTRIS STATIONE MARTIS, QUARN IN

REPLY TO A SLANDEROUS DETERCTOR.


THAT THIS CITY WAS FOUNDED BY THE ROMANS MAY BE GATHERED FROM WEIGHTY ARGUMENTS, SO LONG AS THE TRADITION LASTS (WHICH GROWS DARKER WITH EACH YEAR) THAT THE CITY OF FLORENCE WAS THE WORK OF THE ROMANS. THERE EXISTS IN THIS CITY A CAPITOL, AND NEXT TO IT A FORUM; THERE IS AN AMPHITHEATER OR CIRCUS; THERE IS A PLACE CALLED THE BATHS; THERE IS THE AREA CALLED PARIONE, A PLACE CALLED CAPACIA, AND AN IMPORTANT TEMPLE, IN ANCIENT TIMES DEDICATED TO MARS, ACCORDING TO THE PAGANS THE FATHER OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE, A TEMPLE NOT IN GREEK OR ETRUSCAN STYLE BUT WHOLLY ROMAN. I MAY ADD YET ANOTHER INDICATION OF OUR ORIGIN, NO LONGER EXACT BUT WHICH STOOD, UNTIL THE THIRD PART OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY AFTER THE INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST, MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, VIABLE NEAR THE PONTE VECCHIO: AN EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF MARS, TORN
memoriam Romani generis iste populus reservabat, quam una cum pontibus tribus rapuit vis aquarum, annis iam comprehendi pridie nonas Novembras septuaginta. Quam quidem vivunt adhuc plurimi qui viderunt.

25 Extant adhuc arcus aquaeductusque vestigia, more parentum nostrorum, qui talis fabricae machinamentis dulces aquas ad usum omnium dedecebat. Quae cum omnia Romanae sint res, Romana nomina Romanique moris imitatio, quis audeat dicere, tam celebris famae stante praesidio, rerum talium auctores alios fuisset quam Romanos? Extant adhuc rotundae turres et portarum monumenta, quae nunc episcopatus connexa sunt, quae qui Romanum viderit non videbit solum, sed iurabit esse Romana, non solum qualia sunt Romae moenia, latericia coctilique materia, sed et forma. Non mirum ergo si, tot astipulantibus rebus, constans et inextinguibili fama est urbem nostram opificium esse Romanum oppositum Faesulanis, quos Romanis fuisset contrarios et adversos clarissimum facit, quod sociali bello legatus Faesulas et alia quae
dam oppida fuisset deleta; ut Romanum opus esse Florentiam plane sit stultissimum dubitare.

26 Legitur enim apud Sallustium, certissimae veritatis historicum, L. Catilinam quemdam C. Manlium praemisisse Faesulas ad exercitum comparandum, qui sollicitans in Erruria plebem, egestate simul et dolore inuriae novarum rerum cupidam, quod Sullae dominatione agros bonaque omnia amiserant; praeterea latrones cuissque generis, quorum in ea regione magna copia erat, nonnullus etiam ex Sullanis colonis, quisque libidino arce luxuria et magnis rapinis nihil reliqui fecerant; magnum paravit exercitum. Quibus Sallusti verbis, Ciceronis nostri ditissimum eiudem rei testimonium, si placet, adiachamus, clarus efficat quod intendo. Scribit ergo Tullius oratione secunda, quam ad populum Romanum habuit contra Catilinam, dum qualitatem exercitus, quem habuit hostis ille perdichissimus patriae, per membra

away along with three bridges by violent floods exactly seventy years ago this November fourth, a statute that our people had preserved in memory of the Romans; many who are still alive today have seen it. 49

In addition there are the arches and remains of the aqueducts built in the accustomed fashion of our ancestors, who by means of these structures made drinkable water available to all. Given all these Roman remains, these Roman names, and the imitation of Roman customs, and with the protection of a famous tradition still standing, who would dare say that the founders of all this were any people other than the Romans? There are still extant the round towers and remnants of the gate, today attached to the bishop's palace, which anyone who has seen Rome will swear to as Roman, not just because they show the identical materials as Roman walls (brick and terracotta) but also style. It is no surprise to me, with so much supporting evidence for it, that there is an unbroken and unbreakable tradition that Florence was built by the Romans in opposition to the Fiesolans, who were famously hostile to the Romans. We read that in the Social War Fiesole and certain other towns were destroyed. In short, it is absurd to doubt that Florence was built by the Romans. 50

In fact we read in the entirely trustworthy historian Sallust that Lucius Catiline sent one Gaius Manlius to Fiesole to recruit an army, which he did "by stirring up the common people, desirous of revolt because of their poverty and the many offenses they had suffered, having lost their lands and possessions under Sulla; also robbers, a great many of whom infested the area, as well as members of Sulla's colonies, who in feeding their vices and appetites had dissipated all their ample gains from thefts," and so assembled a large army. 51 Allow me to add to Sallust's words the very rich testimony of our Cicero on the same topic, as comparison of the two will better clarify what I mean to show. For in his second oration to the Roman people against Catiline, Cicero writes,
designat, in haec verba, videlicet: ‘Tertium genus est acutae iam affectum, sed tamen exercitatione robustum, quo ex genere ipse Manlius, cui nunc Catilina succedit. Hi sunt homines ex his coloniis quas Faesulans Sulla constituit, quas ego universas civitatem esse optimorum et fortissimorum sentio.’

Respondeat velim nunc vel dementissimus ille, qui negat Florentinos esse Romanos, vel quivis alius cui placuerit ista contendere, negetque, si potest, Faesulans in finibus Romanas colonias esse deductas, et uti velint assignent eas — praeter Florentiam — Romanis congruentes nominibus, aedificis atque notis, et Marte praeide, quem iste populus in illo gentilitatis errore religiosacolebat. Quod cum facere nullo modo valeant, famam sequatur tot vigentem saeculis, et rem notissimam, tota lata administratio, non negent, nec contra Ciceronis sententiam arbitrentur et dicant viles illos milites agricolaque fuisse, sed cum tantus auctor cives illos optimos et fortissimos esse dicat, cum ipso sentiant id, quod decent, et audiant quid sequatur.

Subdit enim immediate post illa quae proxime retulit: Sed tamen hi sunt coloni qui se insperatis ac repentinis pecuniis sumptuosius insolentiusque iactantur; hi dum aedificant tamquam beati, dum praeliis, lectionibus, familiis magnis, convivis apparatis delectantur, in tantum ade alienum inciderunt, ut si salvi esse velit Sulla sit his ab inferis excitandus; qui etiam nonnullus agrestes, homines tenues atque egentes, in eadem illam spatiam veterum rapinarum impulerunt. Haec Ciceru, quibus facile capi potest quae genus illud optimorum fortissimorumque civitatem Romanorum fuerit quibus illae coloniae fuerint nunc temporis assignatae.

- REPLY TO A SLANDEROUS DETRACTOR -

describing the sort of army that perfidious enemy of his country possessed: “The third category consists of men advanced in age but vigorous in their activity, among them this same Manlius, whom Catiline is replacing. They are men from the colonies which Sulla founded in Fiesole, all of them, I think, consisting of the finest and bravest citizens.”

Now I would like to hear that raging madman respond who dares deny that the Florentines are Romans, or anyone else who would like to defend that view: let him deny if he can that the Romans founded colonies within the territory of Fiesole; let him say where else besides Florence they would have put those colonies, so close to the Romans in names, building types, and features, and under the aegis of Mars whom this people, led astray by pagan error, venerated most highly. But since they will find this impossible, let them follow a tradition kept alive for many centuries, and may they kindly refrain from denying something which is widely known and amply borne out by much evidence, and not dare to contradict the opinion of Cicero by speaking ill of the soldiers and country folk whom this great author calls “good and earnest citizens.” Let them accept his opinion as is proper and listen to what follows.

Directly after this passage, Cicero adds: “But these I speak of are the colonists who, finding themselves suddenly rich, well beyond all expectation, took to fast and pretentious living; by dint of immoderate construction, and squandering on properties, litters, slaves, and sumptuous banquets, they piled up debts so massive that they would have to call Sulla up from Hades to save their skins. What’s more, they also compelled many simple country people, humble and needy, to hope for quick gains, as with the robberies of olden times.” Thus Cicero, and from his words can be understood the excellent and honest mettle of these Roman citizens to whom these colonies had at that time been assigned.
• COLUCIO SALUTATI •

Cumque nulla prorsus colonia supersit cius vestigia sine praeter Florentiam, credant Sullanos illos milites, quo possent resistere Faesulanis, in huius unius sedificationem consensisse. Nec quem ad male sentitendum de maioribus nostris moveat quod nonnulli, sicut vult Sallustius, vel qui male rem gesserant, ut tradit Cicero, contra patriam adhaeserint Catilinae; neuter, enim, ipsorum iones dixit, sed alienos, quos, siciler, ad illud nefas rei familiaris augustom perpuluerunt, quos credibile sit illa pugna taeterrima, quam in agro Pistoriensis commissam legimus, perisse.


30 Quod autem apud Plinium legitur, cum oras Tusciae diligentissime scribit, in haec verba videlicet: 'Fluentini profluent Arno appositi,' forte corruptum est et scribi debuit 'Florentini,' quodque sequitur, 'profluent Arno appositi,' non minus librariss dare potuit corrupendi materiam quam auctori 'proficient' vocabulo ei, quod 'Fluentini' dixerat, alludendi. Nam cum inter

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And since the remains of no colony except Florence survive in the area, they should trust that the soldiers of Sulla shared in its construction as part of the resistance to the Fiesolans. Nor should one be moved to think ill of our forefathers because a few of them (according to Sallust) or those who had conducted themselves badly (as Cicero reports), had joined Catiline against their country: neither writer says "all" but "some," that is to say, those brought to this crime by economic difficulties, only to die (we suppose) in the great battle fought in the countryside near Pistoia.45

You may perhaps ask about the name, and I admit to not finding it in the historical sources we know of. Very likely, as the fields around Florence are naturally fertile with lilies, its flowers gave rise to the city's name. At all events the city is mentioned under this name "Florentia" precisely by Ptolemy, the fine author of the period of Antoninus Pius, in the third book of his Geography, a work surpassing all earlier ones in clarity and precision. He says, with some omissions, when describing Mediterranean Tuscany in brief form (as elsewhere) the following: "Lucca, Lucus Feronis, Pistoia, Florence, Pisae, Volterra, Fiesole, Perugia, Arezzo, Cortona."46

Note that besides leaving out many other important cities and large towns, perhaps because they did not exist or were not worthy of attention at the time, he clearly mentions Florence, proof that it was worthy of note. Perhaps too, when thanks to his knowledge of celestial bodies, a subject to which he had devoted great study, he saw that this city would achieve conspicuous greatness, he preferred not to remain silent about so marvelous a circumstance, knowing the future as he did.

When in his careful description of Tuscany Pliny writes "the Fluentini situated on the Arno River flowing by,"47 there may be a corruption and it should have been written Florentini, because the phrase that follows, "situated on the river Arno flowing by," could easily have led copyists into error because of the resemblance between profuenti and Fluentini. Now given that the city had been
Africum, Munionem et Armum aliquosque torrentes, qui iam extincti sunt, haec civitas sita fuerit, cui mirum si 'Fluentia' forsan ab initio dixit fuit et quod a florum copia maluentum eam posteri 'Florentiam' appellare? Nec pater aliquis Plinius de Florentia non sensisse. Cum enim dixisset 'Clusini veteres. Clusini novi, me adiecit 'Fluentini profuenti Arno appositi, Faesulae' et cetera quae subscript. Quod adeo verum est quod etiam auderem dicere, nisi rationi temporum Prolemaei repugnaret auctoritas, priscum nominem illud in 'Florentiam' commutatum quando, mense Januario, singulari Dei miraculo certum est ultimum ephorion ad feretri vel sandapilae contactum, quae corpus sanctissimi patris nostri Zenobii continebat, traditur floruisse; ut ex tune pro 'Fluentia' Florentia coeperit vocitari.

Nec hoc a Romani nominis sono vel institutis abhorret. Habit enim et ipsi non ignobile Urbis partem quae vulgo dicitur 'Campus Flore' vel, ut hodie dicitur, 'Campus Floris,' ut consonum satis sit Romanis rationem illius nominis placuisse. Potuerunt et essequamplures ex regione Campi Flore qui, tali nomine delectari, causa nominis existire. Licet etiam cogitare Deum, qui cunctatum rerum efficiens causa est, talis nominis sonum9 et faciendi inspirasse, sciens quo potentiae, pulchritudinis et honoris eam suam Florentiam percutetur. Ex cum 'Nazareth,' hieronymo teste libro quem transtulit atque compositum cui titulus est De Hebraicis nominibus et ipsorum etymologia, interpretatur 'flos' sive 'virgultum,' et ipsa sit, eodem auctore teste, 'viculus in Galilae uterque Salvator noster 'Nazarens vocatus est,' ut in locorum libello scriptum, quis dubitet, attenta fide qua semper floruit super alias Italiae civitates urbs nostra Florentia, illum rerum omnium opificem Deum nomen hoc futurae cultrici Christi Florentiae tribuisse, quod Latinis significaret idem quod Hebraice 'Nazareth' dicitur importare?

 founded in a position between the Affrico, the Mugnone, the Arno and other streams now extinct, would it be strange if the city had first been known as 'Fluentia' and later, because of the abundance of flowers, its later inhabitants preferred to call it 'Florentia'? Nor should it be supposed that Pliny had in mind a place other than Florence, for after stating "the inhabitants of old Chiusei and those of the new Chiusei," he at once adds "the Fluentini situated on the river Arno flowing by, Fiesole" and so on.48 This is so true that I would even dare say, if Prolem's authority did not conflict with the chronology,49 that the old name was changed to 'Florentia' in that month of January when, as tradition attests, a bare elm tree burst into flower by a special divine miracle, as the pali or bier holding the body of our most holy bishop Zenobius brushed it,50 and from then on began to say 'Florentia' instead of 'Fluentia'.

The sound of the name does not distance it from Roman names or practices. Rome itself has, for example, an area of some importance in the city called "Campofiore" or as one says today "Camo dei fiori," so that such a name (as 'Florentia') could well have seemed suitable to the Romans. It is not to be excluded that some denizens of Campofiore came here to settle, attracted by the name. One may also suggest that God, efficient cause of all things, inspired the sound and look of the name, knowing the height of power, beauty and fame that would be attained by his Florence. Now since, as Jerome relates in the book he composed and translated, Of Hebrew Names and their Meanings, the word "Nazareth" means "flower" or "bud"51 and this is (following the same author's brief text on places) "the village in Galilee from which Our Savior took his name 'Nazarene';"52 then given the faith thanks to which our city of Florence has always flourished more than any other in Italy, who could ever doubt that the Artificer of all things assigned to this future devotee of Christ that name, "Florentia," which is the Latin equivalent of the Hebrew "Nazareth"?
COLUCCIO SALUTATI

Videtis, ut cunctis loquitur, immo digito tangitis nostrae civitatis exortum Romano genere, civibus optimis acque fortissimis ex coloniis Faesulanis! Videtis quod originis Romanae vestigia damnet et consentiant illud ideam; videtis insignem tam gloriosi nominis rationem, habetis famam constantissimam acque latam, cura in huius memoria non existit! Quis ergo poterit, inter tot veritarum sufragia, super hoc amodo, si nostra haec legerit, rationabiliter dubitare? Cum enim omnia consenunt veritati nihilque prorsus sit quod in hujus originis contrarium possit adduci, quis intellectus potest, nisi desipiat, dissentire? Verum, dicit aliquis, nonne legitur apud Senecam—quem quidem Florum vocant—ubi civile bellum, quod inter Sullam ac Marium gestum est, non minus conquiritur quam descriptur: 'Municipia Italicae splendidissima venierunt: Spoletium. Interamnum, Praeneste, Florentia. Nam Sulmonae vetus oppidum, socium acque amicum, o facinus indignum, nondum expugnatum, ut obsides iure belli et modo morte damnati duci iubentur. Sic damnatam civitatem iussit Sulla deleri? Scio quod sic aliquibus in codicibus scriptum est; alibi vero, quod emendatis arbitrator, non Florentia legitur sed Florentina; curis quidem nominis adhuc est in Campaniae furius oppidum, quod dictur Florentinum, ut tam similitudine nominis, quam locorum aliorum vicinitate, quae pestis illa confecit, deocean potuisse talem errorem faciliter irepessisse, praesertim cum antiquissimo codice legerem Florentina.' Accedit ad haec quod urbis nostra summo magistratu, sicut olim Roma per consules, regeretur usque ad exactos annos incarnatissimis divinae sapientiae mille ducentos octoginta duos, ut hoc eriam arguam originem a Romanis.

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You can see (and I am addressing everyone), indeed you can touch with your finger the Roman origins of our city, founded by the finest and bravest citizens from the Fiesolan colonies! You can see how many Roman remains cry out and harmonize with the very same conclusion; you can see the noble explanation of a name so glorious and you can grasp its unbroken and widespread tradition whose beginning is lost in the night of time. Who, in the face of so many certain proofs and after reading these pages of mine, could henceforth harbor any doubts on the matter? If, as we have seen, all points to this one truth about the origin of Florence and no counterargument may be sustained, what person of understanding, who but a fool could ever disagree? And yet, someone will object, is not the following passage to be read in Seneca (whom some call Florus)? In this passage, during the war between Marius and Sulla, he writes (or better, laments) that "the finest cities in Italy came up [for auction]: Spoletus, Terni, Praeneste, Florence. As for Sulmo, an allied and friendly city of long standing, Sulla, instead of storming or besieging it according to the rules of warfare, committed an act of base injustice in condemning the city and ordering its destruction, even as those condemned to death were ordered to be led to execution." This, I know, is the reading found in many manuscripts; however, in others one reads Florentina in place of Florentia, and I think this is a better reading; still today there is a village in Campania known as Florentinum. I hence, because of the similarity of these names and of the proximity of the other places struck by that disaster, an error of this kind may easily have come about, especially if we keep in mind that I have read in a very old codex the form "Florentina." Finally, we may add that our city was governed by a chief magistracy, just as Rome was one time under the consuls, until the year 1282 after the Incarnation of divine wisdom, and this is further proof of our Roman origin.
· COLUCCIO SALUTATI ·

33 Nunc ad tua reditum faciens, adicis: "Videbimur, inquam, illam inanem atque ventosam iactantiam et insolentiam Florentinam, et quam virtuti vere respondet a vos pariter ceteros mortales usur-para laudatio cognoscemus." Inanem dictis et ventosam iactantiam Florentinam. Et quid umquam Florentinum regimen aliquid dicere potest, tunc quas per orbem sparsi litteris, iactatione? Iactandum futu-ram rispect, quod tibi relinquimus tibi simulilibus faciendum. Gravitatis enim Florentiae non est inanis divinando iactante, sicur tu facis, quod quidem in tempus alius differamus. Quod si iactan-tiam et insolentiam gloriationem intelligis, sicur credo, quis in Italia dominus aut in orbis populus est qui posset rebus pace bel-loque gestis veritus et honestius gloriaris quique se minus umquam curaverit exaltrare? Quae vero laus inanis et ventosa minus est quam quae procedit ex meritis? Quam ea quam nemo possit incre-pare mendacem? Quae princeps iste populus pro libertate gessit sua, vel in defensione eorum sociorum, tam sponse sua, sicut multotiens, quam ex foedere, sicut semper (numquam enim in hac parte defect), nonne licitum moribus est, improprio sequen-stra, in aliorum exhortationem et exemplum et in consecutio-nem vicissitudinis recensere? An inane vel ventosum est id quod nititur veritate? Si vellem domini tui (tua nequeo, cum ignovem) si vellem, inquam, domini tui factura dictaque, quibus iactantiam et insolentiam prae se tuit, hoc in parte colligere, credo nihil, nihil simile posses Florentini vel privatum vel publice, nisi more tuo ad fin- genua confugeres, imputare. His ergo dimissis, quam vera post haec prosequearis videamus.

34 Subdis ergo: Non possunt amplus homines sine stomacho vestrum nomen audire; non potest utilia esse insolentes videre qui, cum eam deditus multis afflictent, ad extremum suffocare turpissima servirion conati sunt; non potest deinique vos ferre diutius divina iustitia. Quanoda igitur stare possint non video, contra quos omnium ferre hominem voa ae

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To return to your text, you proceed: Now I continue: we shall see. I say, that Florentine boastfulness and insolence is empty as the wind, and we shall learn how much the praise that more than any other nation you claim for yourselves, truly corresponds to virtue. You call the boastfulness of the Florentines "empty as the wind." But who could say that the Florentine government has ever been boastful in the numerous letters it sends around the world? Boasting always looks to the future, an attitude that we leave to you and your like. Indeed it is no part of Florentine seriousness to throw out empty and boastful predictions, as you do; it is something we put off to another moment. And if, as I suppose, by "boastfulness" and "insolence" you mean to show pride in one's own merits, what lord in Italy or what people in the whole world can more justifiably and more honorably pride itself on its own accomplishments in peace and in war, and what community has ever shown less interest in self-promotion? Besides, what praise is less empty and windy than that based on merit—praise that no one can call dishonest? All that this sovereign people has done to defend its own liberty and to protect its own allies—either spontaneously (as so often) or in fulfillment of agreements (always honored)—isn't it right for the sake of good morals to rehearse these actions to show the outcome of events and also as an example and encouragement to others? If I wished to speak of your lord—you I don't know and can't speak of—if I wished to bring up here all the deeds and words of your lord which put his boastfulness and insolence on display, believe me, you could impute nothing like that to the Florentines, either in public or in private, unless you took refuge in fictions, as is your wont. Now let us see if there is any truth in your next lines.

You go on: People can no longer bear your name without vexation; 34 Italy can no longer bear that those who have afflicted her with many disas-ters, and in the end even sought to strangle her with wretched slavery, should remain unpunished; divine justice herself can no longer tolerate you. I can hardly see how you can hold out when the yearnings and hopes of
studia accensa sunt; quos vexata per vos et ad servitutem vocata Italia detestatur; in quos denique tantis flagitiis irritata in caelestis armatur. Haec, nisi credite sedereati, contra vos militabit; haec noceissentis sanguinem vestrum sit; haec extremam ranam insidiosissimae et flagitiiosissimae gentis exposcit, aique idem tantum haec fariam meutibus vestris inicuit, ut de excidio sacrosanctae matris ecclesiae, de mutazione Romani imperii, de ruina gloriosissimi ducis, perniciosa consilia tractaretis. Quid enim aliud cogitandum est, nisi divinum numen, iam iam sedereatis vestris infensus, vos occu- cacatos in tantam inaniam impulisse, ut odia et arma illa contra vos excitaret, quorum virtus non solum non possit resistere, sed nec etiam ferre fulgorem?

'Non possunt,' inquis, 'amplius homines sine stomacho vestrum nomen audire.' O vir mirabilis, primis orationibus tuae partibus optas; secundis, velut prophetans, futura praedicit; nunc te sublimius elevans, quod solius Dei est, scrutari reses et corda. Nec solum hominum affectus referis, sed etiam, quasi divinae mentis arcum agnoscas, ait: 'Non potest, denique, vos ferre diutius divina iustitia.' 'Non possunt,' ut dicas, 'amplius homines sine stomacho nomen audire' nostrum. Sed possunt viri, possunt, credite mihi, nostrum audire nomen homines virtutis; nec possunt solum, sed volunt, sed cupiunt, sed delectantur. Scio quod Guelforum, quos habet Italia, multitudine populum Florentinum, huic sanctissimae conglutinationis caput, columna atque principem, et huius herematus quois Gellibellae factionis crudelitas premit, quales infiniti sunt, qui tuo domino subiacent, non solum granulanter Florentinum nomen audient, sed adorant, sed victoriem et felicitatem eius cupiunt; nec solum cupiunt, sed expectant. Gellibelli vero, nisi desipient, qui tyrannico iugo subiacent, Gellibello quidem favore mallent, sed si non detur, etiam Guelforum manibus eligerent liberari.

...
Sed addis: 'Non potest pati Italia eos incoluores videre, qui cum eam cladibus multos affixerint, ad extremum suffocare turpissima servitute conari sunt.' Verissimum est hoc, inquam; non enim quae vera dixeris denegabo. Restat tibi quod probes, vel ratione liquidissima declaretur, quinam sint qui Latamin cladibus affixerint, et ipsum conati fuerint subicere servitute. Quod postquam ostenderis, si conviceris hos esse Florentinos, tunc in ipsos dico quicquid libet. Et quoniam hoc alibi commodius dissersendum est, donec illuc pervenero sum contentus quilibet Italus secum examinet qua vexatione Florentia, sic ut ais, affliccit Italiam, quis ipsam cogitaverit occupare vel sibi subicere servitute.

Sed coniecteris et asseras de rebus hominum quicquid libet; quis tibi secretum divinae justitiae revelavit? Sed quis praeter te, foedissima belua, diiceret quod non possit diutius nos divina justitia sustiner? Non potest divina justitia, quae sine misericordia divina non esset, quaeve sustiner diabolum, idolatras, inimicos sui nominis et alios peccatores, nos diutius sustiner? Vel quoniam velle et posse in Deo realiter unum sunt, non potest quia non vult, vel non vult quia non potest? Stultre nimis et impetenter de Deo loqueris. Stultissime nobis iram Dei, quae donec venerator semper occulta fuit, veluti rem certissimam ministris. Quod si, ut inquit Cicero, nihil est principi illi Deo, qui mundum regit, quod quidem sit in terris acceptus quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur, sique, ut testatur tragicus, victima hand ualla amplior potest magisque opima mactari iovi quam rex iniquus, quid domino tuo quidque nobis potest metui vel sperari, non tibi, qui non capis, sed omnibus recte sentientibus exhibeo iudicandum.

But you add, Italy can no longer bear that those who have afflicted her with many disasters, and in the end even sought to strangle her with wretched slavery, should remain unpunished. This is perfectly true, I admit, for I shall not deny what you are saying is true. There only remains for you to prove or make clear with lucid arguments just who are they who have brought so many ills to the peninsula and tried to enslave it. After you give your demonstration, if you have proven convincingly that these men are Florentines, then say whatever you will against them. And since there will be another better occasion on which to discuss it, until then I am happy for any Italian to ponder both the evils that, according to you, Florence supposedly has inflicted on Italy, as well as the question of who, in fact, has been planning to take control of and enslave it.

Speculate and hold forth as you like about human affairs, but who was it who revealed to you the secrets of divine justice? Who besides yourself, filthy beast, would dare say that divine justice can no longer tolerate us? Divine justice, which without mercy would not be divine, and which tolerates the devil, idolaters, enemies of its own name and other sinners, can no longer tolerate us? Since to will and to be able are one and the same thing in God, is it that He can't because He doesn't want to, or is it that He doesn't want to because He can't? Your talk of God is silly and impertinent. It is utter foolishness to threaten us by bringing in divine ire as though it were an accomplished fact, when in fact it is always hidden until it appears. And if, as Cicero says, 'nothing that happens on earth is more pleasing to that supreme God who governs all than communities and associations of human beings assembled according to law that are called states,' and if, as a tragic poet claims, 'no victim is finer and more pleasing to Jupiter than an evil king who is to be immolated,' then I leave it to all those of correct understanding, not to a witless fellow like you, to decide what is to be wished or feared by us or by your lord.
Sed, ut ad reliqua veniamus, adicis: 'In quos denique tantis flagitiis irritata ira caelestis armatur.' Ab iva divina descendis ad caelestem, sed quid est armari caelestem iva in nos? Irasciturum caelum, aut quasi metuet, cum offendere decrevit, armatur? Scio quod nihil divina majestate dignum, quoniam inanabillis est, proferre possimus, sed de illo, velut homine quopiam, quicquid loquimur enarramus. Cavendum est rames, quod si quid de ipso dixerimus, tam sobrie talique moderatione relatum sit, quod nec includat impossible nec inoptum. Quid autem est dicere: 'Haece, mifi crede, scelerati, contra vos militat; haece noementissimum sanguinem vestrum sitit; haece extremam ruinam insidiosissimae et flagioissimae gentis exposcit? Sibi Deus iratus contra nos militat, ut affirmavis, quomodo potuimus aut possimus una hora consittere? Si sic nostrum sanguinem, cur non bibit, cur non eruit? Si ruinem nostram exposcit, quis obstacle potest divinae manus, cum scriptum sit: 'Voluptati eius quis resistet?' Mox autem velit ab eectu probare niteris quae dixistis. Scribis enim: 'Atque ideo tumultum furiam mentibus vestris iniecit, ut de excidio sanctae matris ecclesiae, de mutatione Romani imperii, de ruina gloriosissimi ducis, perniciosae consilia tractaretis.' Unde ribi—quo de duce tuo, cuius utinam ordinare potuissesmus excidium, dimittramus—unde ribi tot, inquam, comperta sunt et tanta mendacia? Nosne de excidio sanctae matris ecclesiae cogitantis, qui semper opibus et subsidios nostris illam fovimus, iuvimus, auximus? Florentine possum aut cogitare de mutatione Romani imperii providere? Quis nobis hanc auctoritatem dedir potestiamque concessit? An forte tanta dementia nos inasit quod sumptibus et expensis nostris prae- sumamus quod ad nos non attinet quodque nec de iure nec de facto possimus sed tatum ex aliena pendent potestate? Dic, obseco, vel in medium proferas, quoniam principes ob hoc adivimus, vel ubi super hoc colloquium commune nostrum tenet aut, the reply to a slanderous detractor.

But to continue, you next add: 'Heaven’s wrath itself, upset by so many misdeeds, fights you. You move from divine to heavenly wrath, but what exactly does it mean for heavenly wrath to take up arms against us? Heaven is enraged with us or, as though it is fearful, it takes up arms and has decided to attack? I well know that we do not have words suitable to divine greatness, it being indescribable, and so when we speak of it we fall to speaking as if of a person. But we must still be careful to speak with the greatest care and circumspection to avoid impossible or unsuitable statements. What sense have phrases like: Heavenly wrath too makes war upon you, believe me, wicked ones; it too thirsts for your guilty blood; it too requires the total ruin of the most scheming and criminal of nations. If God is enraged with us and—as you state—wars upon us, how could we have held out for even an hour? If He desires our blood, why doesn’t He take it, and spil it? If He wants our undoing, what ever can hold back the hand of God, if it is written “Who can oppose His will”? Next you try to demonstrate a posteriori what you have just stated, and you write: That is why it has injected this madness into your minds, so that you hatch pernicious plots to destroy Holy Mother Church, to undermine the Roman Empire and ruin the most glorious of dukes. Where have you found—that’s leave aside your duke, and would that we could have brought about his ruin!—where, I say, have you found so many enormous lies? We plotted to destroy Holy Mother Church! We, who have always fostered it, helped it, strengthened it with every means at our disposal. Do the Florentines have the intention or capacity to plan for the overthrow of the Roman Empire? Who gave us this authority or allowed us so much power? Have we been gripped, perhaps, by such a fit of madness that we are presuming, at huge cost to ourselves, to do what is none of our business and what is in law and in practice impossible, something that rather depends wholly upon others? Tell me, please, or make known publicly, what rulers we have approached to this end? Just when has our commune debated or
tractatum? Non possunt haec, cum a potestate nostra non pendant, a nobis incipi. Ridiculum, immo stultum et inane nimir, immo prostrus et impossibile nec a nobis, quae facere non possumus, inchoare.

Quae cum iis sint, quid immoror diutius super hoc, quod prostrus nec persuaderi potest, cum non sit veritissim, nec probari, cum omni careat veritate? Nec nobis obicias bellum quod contra quosdam officiales sanctae matris ecclesiae — qui sic terrar eis in Italia commissas essent — quod subditos miserabili servitute prementes et nostram et aliorum cogitantem extingueri libertatem — Florentium populum suscipere fuit necessario! Satis enim illa causa per Italianam et omnia Christianitatis regna ventilata fuit et, ut per effectum patuit, universus orbis commendavit et vidit populi nostri iustitiam, at illud non in exitium sanctae matris ecclesiae, sed in nostrae libertatis defensionem iudicavit, non in aliud ordinatum. In quam quidem objectionem si forte peragas, referam socios, referam alia multa bella, quae tam intentione quam causa tumprosum habet, quibus nobis, notam inuenite multaque scelera renovabunt, quae quidem pudore, non metu, urbanitate, non formidin, ubrietur. Scimus quibus fautoriis damnaviae memoria Ludovicus, quem Bavarii vulgo dixit, contra Ius et voluntatem ecclesiae conatus sit Romanum imperium occupare. Scimus quam antipapam sibi constituit quosque sedes et monstrum illud antecardinales habuit et praetorios. Scimus aeternam illam Ghibellinam factionis infamiam, quam renovabimus et in nostram et seputam licet tembris obscuranique lapsu temporum, detegimus. Et cum voluerimus malefactis veritate nixi — non mendaciis, ut tu — maledicere, alter nos videbis quam tu tuis mugis et factis adinventionibus resonare.

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negotiated on this subject? We certainly cannot embark upon any such thing, since it does not depend on our own authority. It would be ridiculous, indeed foolish and worse than useless — indeed quite impossible — for us to commence something we cannot do.

This being so, why dwell further over something which, being improbable, can convince no one, and being quite devoid of truth, cannot be demonstrated? And kindly don't advance as an objection the war which the Florentine people were compelled to fight against some officials of Holy Mother Church, who had so cruelly brought low the lands entrusted to them that they were forcing their subjects into despicable slavery, with the aim of destroying our own and others' liberty. Much about this has been said in Italy and in all the states of Christendom and, in light of the outcome, everyone recognized and praised the justice of our people and believed that the war had been undertaken, not to destroy Holy Mother Church, but only to defend our liberty, nothing else. And if you wish to press this accusation, I shall bring forward many allies, many other wars that in terms of aims and causes shall throw the greatest discredit upon those you would least like to, calling back to mind many crimes that we pass over in silence out of a sense of decency, nor fear; out of courtesy not cowardice. We know with whose help that Louis of accursed memory, commonly called "the Bavarian," attempted to possess the imperial crown against all right and the express will of the Church. We know what antipope he set up for himself, and what antecardinals and prelates that criminal and monstrous creature had about him. We know the eternal shame of the Ghibelline Party and we shall bring it back to life and drag it into the light of notoriety, buried though it is in the shadows and obscured by the passage of time. And as it is our aim to condemn crimes like these on a foundation of truth, not of lies as is your way, you will see our account reechoing widely in a way quite different from the response to your tripping fictions.
COLOCCIO SALUTATI

40 Sed haec satis; si sapiente enim te gesseris, satis erunt. Nolotamen—cum sciam (latere quidem me non potest) non esse prorsus ab offensionibus tam ecclesiae quam imperii, quicquid ognanias, alienos—nos terreas et ob hoc scribas: Quid enim aliud cogitandum est nisi divinum numen, iam iam sceleribus vestris infensus, vos occaecatos in tantam insaniam implicuisse, ut odia et arma illa contra vos excitaret, quorum viribus non solum non possit exercere sed nec etiam ferre fulgorem? Indigebat, ergo, Deus caecitate et insanias nostra, qua contra nos arma, quae minaribus, excitaret? Impellitque Deus in scelera nos, vel alios mortales, ut puniat, an potius mentem inspirat, quo cavere possimur, declinare malum et facere bonitatem? Non sapit oratio tua stultitiam solum sed blasphemiam, sed haeresim, eis apud Gebellinos facilis est iactura, sed summum supimumque mendacium. Nec Martium hunc populum, qui tor bella sustinuit, torque gessit, non posse resistere vel arborum splendorem ferre dicas; restitut, enim, et restitut, et aedem splendorem arborum non ehorret quod armis arma, sicut solat, obicientem tua iam sensit et per Dei gratiam sentiet Lombardia.

41 Sed iam ad reliqua procedamus: Atque, ut omittam ceteros vestros inimicos, quibus nihil videtur antiquius quam ut aliquando de cuncto illo superbiae scopulo corruptis, ecce contra perfidia vestra venit his armis et copiosis armorum ducibus instructus exercitus, ut majori multa potentiae quam vestra sit (et qua tam adeo superbitis ut arroganter vestra tolerari vix possit) extimescendas esse videatur. Veniteque non tam avide et missius quam desiderare atque expectatione vestris; vestris, inquam, si ita sunt appellandi quorum cum in fortunas et corpora crudele et animarum habeatis imperiam, nihil minus quam animos possideitis. Sperant eodem hoc uno asertore suae libertatis exercitu, vobis prolapso in servitutem, dignitatem pristinam, quam sibi per vos crepatam lugent, tandem essse recuperatae. Itaque arma haec omnes hi populi, quos sub acerbissima tyrannis

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But enough of this, and if you conduct yourself wisely, it will be enough. Yet I won't have you frightening us—since I know (what can hardly have escaped me) that we are completely innocent of any plots against Church or Empire, for all your chatter—and to that end writing: What else can one imagine but that God Himself, outraged by your wickedness, has blinded you, driving you to the height of madness, so that he might arouse hatred and arms against you? You cannot bear even the gleam of your enemies' arms, to say nothing of their power. So God will stand in need of our blindness and insanity to see against us the armed force you speak of in your threats? God drives us and other mortals to commit crimes in order that he may punish us; or rather he inspires in us an intention so that we might learn caution, turn aside from evil and do good? Your speech seems to smack not only of stupidity, but blasphemy and heresy—a charge easy to suppose in the case of Ghibellines—and utter, helpless mendacity. And do not say that this martial people, which has endured and conducted so many wars, cannot fight back or bear to see even the gleam of your arms. It has resisted and does resist, and so far is it from cringing at the gleam of your arms that Lombardy has already felt her armed resistance to your arms, as usual, and will continue to feel it, by God's grace.

But now let us pass on to the rest: And leaving aside other enemies, for whom nothing seems more desirable than for you to topple from that bloody eminence of pride, behold an army is advancing against you, strong enough in arms, soldiers and commanders as to strike you down in fear of a power much greater than your own, despite your intolerable arrogance. It is advancing, driven not just by its own eagerness, but because it is desired and awaited by your allies—if you can call "allies" those whose souls you by no means possess, though you exercise a cruel and greedy empire over their bodies and fortunes. Indeed, they hope that, thanks to this army of liberation, you will finally be enslaved and they may recover that ancient dignity which, as they lament, they saw you bear from them. All the peoples whom you are chokes with your unbearable tyranny await these forces, and as
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suffocatis, expectant, ut cum temporibus occasioneque prosperiuss, excusatus ilium illud servitium, qua manente nihil ipsius potest esse iocundum. Etenim quid delectabile videri potest miserrius serventibus, et speciosae amplitudine fortuna, quae magnum affere solent voluptatem, aut summo dolori ablatae aut, ne eripiantur, aestivo metus sint oparet? Quid uxor, quid liberis dulcius? Quam tamen ex his seniorem ducendim potest esse si videri nuptias ad ulterius petitionem comparasse, liberis ad alienam libidinem procreasse? Patria vero, quae unicaque debet esse iocunda, infinitam affert tristitiam atque maerorem in servitute conspecta, ubi non solum non auditur altae voce libera, sed nec etiam ulli sunt liberi cogitatur. Haec quidem cum ab uno pati sit miserum, miseria est a multis, miserrimum vero a his quorum avaritia, libido, crudelitas, post hominum memoriam, tyrannorum omnium maligniam excerser. Ergo hic, quo hab tam infestia vitae conditione sub iugo intolerabili servitio oppressus, onmis in speculis sunt, observando praestolanturque opportunitates qua esse in libertatem asserere possint, quibus quantum spem praestiterit huius adventus exercitus difficile dictus est. Affret enim sunt inexamimibili atque incredibilis alacritate seque iam pedem posuisse in possessionem desperatam quondam libertatis existimantem.

Nunc autem ad ineptias rediens tuis, adhuc minis omnium terris, de secreto mentium subditorum nostrorum male sentis, peius auguras et pessimum ministrat. In quibus enim: Atque, ut omitam ceteros vestros mimicos, quibus nihil videtur antiquissim quam ut aliquando de cruento illo superbiae scopulo corrugis, ecce contra perfidiam vestram venit armis et ceps hisque armorum ducibus instructus exercitus, ut maiori quidem potentiae quam vestra sit (ea qua tamen adeo superbia ut arrogantia vestra tolerari vix possit) extimanderis esse videatur. Veniteque non tam avide eo missus quam desideratus atque expectatus a vestris.

Reply to a Slanderous Detractor

soon as the moment and opportunity arise, they will throw off the yoke of your slavery, under which they can have no joy. Besides, what enjoyment could exist under the wretched slavery, with the pain of seeing riches and properties gathered with such care—ordinarily a great source of happiness—taken away, or else with the constant fear of having them snatched away? What is sweeter than a bride and children? But how can they make happiness when someone sees that he has prepared his nuptials to minister to another man’s wantonness, and given birth to children to satisfy a stranger’s lust? Our own country, which should be a source of joy to everyone, instead causes us sadness and grief when we see it enslaved, without free speech or even a single free thought. It is sad if a single person should inflict all this, sadder still if many do so, but the saddest thing of all is when it is done by a people whose avarice, lust, and cruelty defeat the malice of every tyrant in human memory. This, then, is why all those whom you are oppressing in this accursed condition of life, under the yoke of intolerable bondage, are now upon the watchtowers, anxiously awaiting the chance to reclaim their liberty, and it is hard to say how great is the hope the arrival of our army is offering them. They are moved by a boundless enthusiasm, and they reckon they have already taken steps to repose the liberty they thought forever lost.

Coming back now to your nonsense: still spreading terror everywhere with your threats, you discern evil in our subject populations’ secret thoughts, predict worse, and threaten the worst. In fact you state: And leaving aside other enemies, for whom nothing seems more desirable than for you to topple from that bloody eminence of pride, behold an army is advancing against you, strong enough in arms, soldiers and commanders as to strike you down in fear of a power much greater than your own, despite your intolerable arrogance. It is advancing, driven not just by its own eagerness, but because it is desired and awaited by your allies.
And from where, pray, do you get this inference? The Florentine people have fought two wars with your lord—or rather, they have had two wars forced on them—and now a third is imminent.\(^2\) In the first war, did you perchance see our subject population acting in a way that you could infer what you wrote from what happened? But let's first give an airing to the opening words of your discourse, And leaving aside other enemies. Who, if you please, are these enemies, if we leave aside your lord and, as is fitting, those who are boiling with envy at our successes or have been seduced by your duke? Envy makes people hate you, but it's an offense that creates enemies; and as you are unable to name anyone who is our enemy due to injuries received from us, you cannot help talking of things that are nonexistent; nor should you have heaped such lies upon the good name of the Florentines, although you have selected enemies for us free of charge—but only because you could not send anyone the bill! And in that phrase for whom nothing seems more desirable, I would like you to say, greatest of the orators, just what the word more desirable means in this context; and since you mean to signify by it, I think, a preference of sentiment, not of time,\(^6\) if nothing is more desirable for them than for us to fall from our bloodstained precipice, may this wish not be realized in this any more than in the other cases; or rather, may it be realized the less, the more they believe it to be desirable. I believe perhaps it is you who wish this; but better prayers and divine mercy shall prevail and shall preserve us from the noose of servitude that you announce is being prepared for us.

To return to the army that you threaten us with: It is advancing, driven not just by its own eagerness, but because it is desired and awaited by your allies—if you can call "allies" those whose souls you by no means possess, though you exercise a cruel and greedy empire over their bodies and fortunes. Indeed, they hope that, thanks to this army of liberation, you will finally be enslaved and they may recover that ancient dignity which, as they lament, they saw you tear from them. All the peoples whom you are
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Itaque arma haec omnes hi populi, quos sub acerbissima tyrannide suffocaris, expectant, ut cum tempus occasionemque prospecerint, excutiant iugum illud servitutis, quo manente nihil ipsis potest esse iocundum. Ergo, domini tuoi tyrannique crudelis exercitum desideratum exspectatum a nostris putas? Vidisti priore bello per effectum quantum secundo posses debereque sperare de nostro montibus subditorum. Vidisti quidem, et nisi fores insensata belua potuisti plus quam satis addiscere quid sperandum de montibus subditorum nostrorum, ut—cum quo possis exemplo quae somnias sperare vel dicere omnino non habes, sed ex praeteritis oppositum non earis—certum sit te captum ambitu splendoreque verborum tam stulte quam reprehensibiliter delirare.

Nam quod nostros subditos, dignitate pristina spoliatos, dicis acerbissima tyrannide suffocari, tale quidem est quod te tam falsa dicere si quis arguerit, non habes quid excuses. Tyrannidene suffocantur aut dignitate pristina spoliati sunt Florentinorum subditis quos vel urbes nostra constituit atque fecit vel de tyrannorum magnibus eruit aut receptit? Qui aut vel nobiscum in libertate nati vel de miserrimae servitutis angustiis in dulcedinem libertatis ascit? Num iugum excutere cupiunt, quod non habent, vel dulce libertatis frenum—quod est iure vivere legibusque, quibus omnes subiacent, oboedire—desiderant in tyrannici domini tuj iugum, ut arbitrarie se simulat, commutare? Desinor nunc mirari quod multo tiens sumum cum stupore mecum conquestus sum. Conquerbar enim tot gentes, tot urbes, tot oppida quod domini tui iugum premit saevas nimis tyrannidi subiacere, mirabarque quod infinita Dei benignitas hoc tam longo tempore toleraret. Sed ex te video nihilque firmiter persuasi vos adeo servitute delineari, quod

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choaking with your unbearable tyranny await these forces, and as soon as the moment and opportunity arise, they will throw off the yoke of your slavery, under which they can have no joy. Do you therefore believe that our people desire and await the army of your cruel lord and tyrant? You saw from the first conflict what you could and ought to expect from the state of mind of our subjects. You have seen it and, if you were not a blind beast, you could have learned well enough how much hope to place in our subjects' state of mind; and as there are no grounds at all for entertaining such hopes and dreams, and as experience teaches you the exact opposite, there is little doubt that, enamored of your own lofty words, you are raving on in a way that is as mad as it is despicable.

To assert as you do that our subjects have lost their ancient dignity and are suffocating under an insufferable tyranny is so manifestly false that you would be unable to reply to anyone who contests your affirmation. The subject peoples of the Florentines—the very ones who founded and built our city or who accepted or wrested it from the hands of tyrants—they are supposed to be smothered under a tyranny and deprived of their original liberty? They, who were either born free along with us or were adopted into sweet liberty out of the poverty of a wretched servitude? We are to suppose that they would shake off a yoke they do not have and would long to exchange the sweet restraint of liberty—which is to live in accordance with [natural] right and to obey laws to which all are subject—for the tyrannical yoke of your lord? Here I cease to wonder at something that I have so many times deplored numbly to myself. It used to embitter me, in fact, that so many peoples, cities, and villages oppressed by the yoke of your lord, were subject to tyranny beyond measure, and I would ask how infinite divine goodness could allow this for so long a time. But thanks to you I see and am firmly persuaded that you delight so much in servitude that you can only live in submission to an overlord, and you don't understand how to abide within the sweet
non possetis sine domino vivere nec secretus in libertatis licentiosa dulcedine permanere. Legibus obsequi, quae cunctos aequalitatis iustissima ratione respectiunt, grave vobis iugum et horrenda servitut est; obodiere vero tyranno, qui cuncta pro sua voluntatis moderatur arbitrio, summa vobis est libertas et inextricabilis dignitas. Et ob id putas illam populi Florentini partem quae deigit extra nostrae civitatis moenia vel in municipia vel in agris, quos nescis quanta libertate fruantur, appetere, quia subditi sunt urbi nostrae, sub vestro dominio servitutem.

46 Abest, et absti oro, tantus furor tantaque dementia ab eis quorum singularis gloria sit, vel nativitatem vel lege vel incremento donoque fortunae, quod, quoniam nostri sint, se possint dicere Florentinos. Quid enim est Florentinum esse nisi tam natura quam lege civem esse Romanum et per consequens liberum et non servum? Proprium enim est Romanae nationis et sanguinis divinitatis munus quod libertas dictatur et adeo proprium quod qui deserit esse liber nec Romanus civis nec etiam Florentinum rationabiliter dicit possit; quod donum queevo gloriae nomina quis velit amittere, nisi qui nihil curat de libero servus esse? Desinas, igitur, dividare tam sculta quae nec potes de praeterita ratione percipere nec videas iusta blanditiias suas, licet tempus illud iam longe transierit, evenisse.

47 Nec scio quam probabiliter dixeris tyranni crudelis exercitum libertatis assertorem et quod subditi debeat nostri, nobis prolapse in servitutem, dignitatem pristinam, quam sibi per nos erepam lugeant, recuperare. O verbum oratorium, tyranni crudelis exercitum libertatis assertorem, quod sit plus quam ridiculum, appellare! Quos credis legentibus stultitias suas, cum ad id verbum venerint, te moturum esse cachinos? Miror quod aliquando tuis haec relegens te numquam intellexeris erravisse. Quis enim non

license of liberty. To obey the laws, which treat everyone in accordance with the most rightful principle of equality, for you is a heavy yoke and revolting servitude; but to obey a tyrant, who controls everything arbitrarily by his will, is for you the highest liberty and honor beyond price. This is why you believe that the part of the Florentine people living outside our city walls, in the villages or farms, with how much liberty you have no idea, simply because they are subject to our city, yearned for enslavement under your lord.

Never has it come to pass, and I pray it never may, that such folly and madness take hold of those whose singular glory it is, because they are our subjects, to be able to call themselves Florentines, whether by birth or by legal right or by an increase or gift of fortune. What does it mean to be Florentine except, by nature and by law, to be a Roman citizen and hence free and not a slave? 70 It belongs to the people and bloodline of Rome to have that divine gift called liberty, and so much does it belong to them that whoever ceases to be free can no longer rationally be described as a Roman or Florentine citizen. And who would ever wish to lose this gift and these glorious titles but someone to whom it makes no difference to pass from the condition of a free man to that of a slave? So leave off these absurd predictions which have no basis in past events and which you will not see coming to fruition in accordance with your flattering blandishments, although the time for that is already long past.

I have strong doubts that the army of that cruel tyrant is a defender of liberty, as you say, and also that our subjects, who lament that we took away their ancient dignity, after we ourselves had fallen into slavery, would be able to regain it. What an absurd piece of rhetorical trickery, to call a cruel tyrant’s army a defender of liberty! Did you think you were going to arouse guffaws when readers of your nonsense reached this passage? I wonder that you never understand the mistake you had made when rereading what you’d written. Who was not going to see how inappropriate it was

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videt quam inepte coniungatur exercitii tyrannico assertio libertatis? Quis non dicit te tibi contrarium esse cum exercitu, quem assertorem libertatis dicis, nos in servitudinem prolapso esse confirmes? Assertorem libertatis in servitute trudit? Aut tam stulti subditi nostri sunt quod servitute nostra sperent maiorem habere quam obtineant libertatem?

Sed uterius accedentes videamus quomodo probes quod, manente subiectione subditorum nostrorum, nihil ipsis possit esse iocundum. Subdis namque: Etenim, quid delectabile viseri potest miserrimae servienti, cui speciosae magnaeque fortunae, quae magnam affere solent voluptatem, aut summo dolori ablatae aut, ne eripiantur, azerno metui sint oportet? Quid uxor, quid libevis dulcis? Quam tamen ex his sentire dulcedinem potest is qui se videt nuptias ad alterius petulantam comparasse, liberos ad alie-nam libidinem proccrasse? Patria vero, quae unicumque debebat esse iocunda, infinitam affert tristitiam atque maerorem in servitute conspecta, ubi non solum non auditur ulla vox libera, sed nec etiam uilis liberis cognitans. Haec quidem cum ab uno pati sit mis-erum, miserius est a multis, miserrimum vero ab his quorum avaritia, libido, crudelitas, post hominum memoria, tyrannorum omnium malitiarum exessimur.

Haec omnin tua sunt, quae quidem si negaverim esse vera memetipsum te stultorem vanissimunque factorem. Verissima namque sunt, quibus adicias velim quod nihil misericordia esse potest quam de vita necesse, de statu vel splendore dignitatis, arbitrio, crudeli-tate vel etiam bonitate cuitiapiam qui tyrannus sit die nocuque pendere. Quis enim securis comedet, securus vigilat vel securus dormit, qui capiit suo continuo videt immineire securum, qui videt quod ad domini sui voluntatem illa sit in iugulum descendura, qui minimo dominicae suspicionis motu de vita periclitetur, qui se

to link a tyrant's army with the defense of liberty? Who could fail to call out how you'd contradicted yourself when you asserted that we would be enslaved by the army you were calling a defender of liberty? What, does a defender of liberty enslave people? Or is our subject population so foolish that it hopes through our enslavement to have greater liberty than it has [already] obtained [from us]?

But let us move forward and examine how you prove that, so long as our subjects remain in subjection, they can enjoy no happiness. You add, Besides, what enjoyment could exist under the most wretched slavery, with the pain of seeing riches and properties gathered with such care — ordinarily a great source of happiness — taken away, or else with the constant fear of having them snatched away? What is sweeter than a bride and children? But how can they make for happiness when someone sees that he has prepared his nuptials to minister to another man's wantonness, and given birth to children to satisfy a stranger's lust? Our own country, which should be a source of joy to everyone, instead causes us sadness and grief when we see it enslaved, without free speech or even a single free thought. It is sad if a single person should inflict all this, sadder still if many do so, but the saddest thing of all is when it is done by a people whose avarice, lust, and cruelty defeats the malice of every tyrant in human memory.

These are all your words, and if I denied their truth I would show myself to be still more foolish and untrustworthy than you are. For these words are most true indeed, and I would only like to bear you add that nothing is more wretched than to be dependent, night and day, for death and life, for one's position and success, on the arbitrary choices, the cruelty and even the goodness of a tyrant. For who indeed could eat in security, stay awake or sleep in security, knowing that a blade always hangs over his head, knowing that it may fall upon his throat at the whim of his overlord, who is in danger for his life at his lord's least suspicion, who sees that he has to fear the tale-bearing of all those who have his
videt cunctorum, qui dominantis aures possint imbuere, formidare relatus, quibus letale sit domino suo vel leviter displicere? Haec et alia quae recenses sine scrupulo te tuosque conservos respiciunt et dominum notant tuum, sub cuius imperio sunt omnia quae verissime deplorasti quae de tyrannorum subditis annotavi.

50 Quae quidem verba, quoniam contra propositum tuum sunt, credo Deum, qui plentudo veritatem est, tibi taliter inspirasse quod tacere non potuisti, quin scriberes; fors etiam ex proposito factum est, ut praeestigiosissimus ess, quod in tuorum admonitionem ista preferres.Utcunque tamen fuerit, certum est te verbis illis elississe domini tui causam, determinasse nos et nostros ut mortem prius quam ea, quae desideranda praedicas, eligamus simulque conservos tuos quid optare quidque moliri debeant monuisti. Haec tibi gratias asseque non magnas solummodo sed ingentes, qui talia scribere—licet minus oratorie, licet contra causam quam tum ris, in hoc te gesseris—non es veritus, sed libere, sicut veridicum decuit, ausus es. Nihil enim maius pro nobis quisquam posset vel efficacius affirmasse.

51 Sed instablis: 'Nonne cum miserrum dixerim esse haec ab uno pati miserius a multis addidi miserrimumque ab his, qui tyrannorum malitiam excesseret?' Dixisti, faecer; sed cum de nobis nullam factas mentionem et notum sit omnibus, nisi fecistis omni sensu caruerint, eorum aliquid quae dixisti quaque ego ipse subiici sta tum nullo modo respicere populum, publicaque sua et re turum nullum orbis populum magis imponentem esse talium rerum quam genus et populum Florentinum, nolo quod nos non tangent quodque nobis non imponis nec possis imponere (nam esset omnino supervacuum) excusare, relinquoque tuis dominis et ipsorum dominio talem notam—sive fuerit unus, cui talia licuerint, sive lord's ear, for whom it would be fatal to displease their lord in the slightest way? These and the rest of the horrors you describe without scruple really regard you and your fellow slaves and brand with infamy your lord, under whose rule all the things you, with complete truth, deplore, and all the things I have condemned regarding the subjects of tyrants.

As these assertions fly in the face of your purpose, I well believe that God, in whom is the fullness of truth," inspired you in such a way that you could not be silent and couldn't help writing them down. Perhaps you even did this on purpose, tricky fellow that you are, to warn your fellow slaves. In any event, writing thus you clearly spoke against the interests of your lord and convinced us and ours to prefer death to embracing the course of action you declare to be desirable; and at the same time you warned your fellow slaves what to wish for and what to undertake. I give you, not just great, but enormous thanks for daring to write such things, fearlessly, freely, as befits the truth—although you've conducted yourself in the matter without oratorical skill and without aiding the cause you were defending. No one could have spoken more convincingly and more forcefully on our behalf.

But you will object: "Did I not say, it is sad if a single person should inflict all this, sadder still if many do so, and I added, the saddest thing of all is when it is done by those who exceed the malice of tyrants?" So you said, I admit, but since you made no mention of us, and everyone who has any sense in their head knows that what you said and what I added have no relevance whatever to a popular state, and since it is public knowledge that there is no people on earth who tolerate less the state of affairs we described than the Florentine nation and people, I don't want to defend against this state of affairs that doesn't apply to us and that you can't impute to us (that would be useless). I leave to your lords and their domain the task of defending against these charges—whether it be one person to whom they may apply or many, or whether there exist those
sint multi, sive fuerint etiam qui tyrannorum omnium malignitatem excesserint — excusandam, tibique concedo, requires omnium quod nos doces apud quem rhetorem legies vel apud quem invenieris oratorem, cum officium in alquem invehendi susceperis, illi malediceris pro quo loquaris, vel singulariter adversarii imponere quod ipsi possint, evidencia rerum omniumque consensu, in illis reflectere quos tuleris, ut ridendum sit quod, veluti concludens, in huius loci materia subiecisti.

52 Scribis etenim: 'Ergo hi, quos hac tam infausta vitae condicio sub iugo intolerabili servitutis oppressitis, omnes in speculis sunt, observant praestolanturque opportunitatem qua sese in libertatem possint assere, quibus quantum spem praestiterit huius adventus exercitus difficile dicere est. Affecti enim sunt inextimabili atque incredibili alacritate sesque iam pedem posuisse in possessionem desperatae quondam libertatis existimant.' Non potest ex stulte praemissis sequi nisi stulta conclusio. Stulte dixisti, nec solum stulte sed false, nostros subditos esse servos; stultus resumis quod, infausta vitae condicio, iugo servitutis intolerabili oppressus, nec stultus solum sed mendacius; stultissime vero submersos quod omnes in speculis sint, observent et praestolentur nescio quam opportunitatem ut se possint in libertatem assere. Quae vel ubi sunt hae speculae? Quamam ex orbis parte nobis eas, si querere voluerimus, assignabis? In quam maiorem libertatem subditis nostris se possunt assere?

53 Difficile dictu dicis quantum spem eis praestiterit adventus huius exercitus. Non difficile solum fateor sed impossibile; quod enim non est, quomodo veraciter dici potest? Difficile quidem dicere quot sint in mari piscis; quot autem ibi stellae vel sidera sint, cum nulla proorsus sint, non est aliquo modo possibile. Solus enim Deus novit quot astra maris ambitu non continentur. Ipse quidem,

who exceed even the malice of tyrants. I concede all that to you, asking only, with firmness, that you instruct us in what rhetor you read or in what orator you found, when you took up the role of attacker, the device of calumniating the very person you are defending, or of imputing to your adversaries the very charges which, in view of the evidence and by universal consent, you yourself could turn on the very persons you are defending. Thus you've made ridiculous the theme that you put at end of the passage above.

For you write, This, then, is why all those whom you are oppressing in this accursed condition of life, under the yoke of intolerable bondage, are now upon the watchtowers, anxiously awaiting the chance to reclaim their liberty, and it is hard to say how great is the hope the arrival of our army is offering them. They are moved by a boundless enthusiasm, and they reckon they have already taken steps to repossess the liberty they thought forever lost. From a silly premise only a silly conclusion can follow. Senselessly (senselessly and falsely) you say that our subjects are slaves; even more senselessly (more senselessly and even more falsely) you add that these unfortunate are under the yoke of an intolerable slavery; most senselessly of all you claim that they are on the watchtowers, trembling in expectation of some sort of chance to regain liberty. And just where are these watchtowers? Can you say in what part of the world you will be allotting them to us if we wish to seek them out? And where is this greater liberty to be found that our subjects can reclaim?

According to you it is difficult to say how many hopes they harbor for the arrival of this army. I say it is not only difficult but impossible. For who can speak truthfully of something that doesn't exist? It is hard to say how many fish there are in the sea, but to say how many planets or stars are in the sea is utterly impossible, since there aren't any at all; God only knows how many stars are not contained by the broad ocean. Indeed even He, who has the
qui summa et perfectissima notitia rerum et veritas est, sicut scire non potest quod aliquam sidera sint ibi, cum nulla sint, sic scire non potest quot sint. Et nemo eximiam non poetae alacritas qua nulla sit, sed nec etiam assignari nec sperare possunt nostri subditi maiorem quam habeant libertatem nec unquam potuerunt quam habeant desperare; spes enim et despario sicut quod non habe- mus respiant, sic eorum, quae fuerint in manibus nostris, om- nino non sunt. Alias autem spes esset in patria quae aulae habe- tur in via.

54 Sed iam ab his, quae nobis ex tuis praescriptis erexissent et ad alia, quae sequuntur, per ordinem quem promissimus veniamus. Subdis ergo: Necque vos tantum Sancti Miniasi oppidi extollat illa quidem oppidani infelix — vosbi, ut videtur, fortunata — receptio quantus territae tam cito properea rebellio, ex qua quid animi sit reliquis municipiis atque urbebus pari servitutibus calamitate liceat intelligatis. Qui- bus, nihili creditis, illius magnanimi quidem sed vel praecipitix nimium vel proditi atque deserti liberatoris patriae exstimum necququam praecum velitatem exsiviet, sed admonebit ut diligentius cogitent suas suas esse consulendum.

55 ‘Necque vos,’ inquis, ‘tantum oppidi Sancti Miniasi extollat illa quidem oppidani infelix — vosbi, ut videtur, fortunata — receptio quantus territae tam cito properea rebellio. Inflexum terrigenis illius oppidi fuit mutatio de servitute in libertatem, de rabiie civilis belii deque obsidionis urgentissimae periculis in dulcedinem securitatis et pacis? Fuit, fuit illa, si nescis, exclusio quae viveram saevientem tyrannidemque Ligusticam ex illo potentissimo castro praecipitem cedimus, gloriosissima nobis, optatisima faustaque

highest and most perfect knowledge of all things, and is very Truth, cannot know that there are some stars where none at all exist, and likewise cannot know their number. And eagerness cannot be measured where it does not exist, and our subjects cannot hope for or be allotted a greater liberty than they [already] pos- sess, nor will they ever be able to lose hope in the liberty they possess; for hope and despair are not emotions that refer to what we already possess; thus hope and despair are both emotions that look to things we do not have, and so are entirely unrelated to things which we already possess. The hope to be in one's home country one can only have when away. 

But it is time to set aside what we have learned from your own words and proceed as promised to your next words: And boast not of the surrender to you of the town of San Miniato — a happy circumstance for you, but sad for the inhabitants. Rather, may the sudden revolt that followed afterward fill you with terror, so that you may come to understand the kind of spirit that animates other towns and cities subjected to a like calamity for those enslaved. Believe me: the exile of that magnanimous liberator of his country—even though he was too hasty (or perhaps was just betrayed and abandoned)—far from blunting their wills with fear, will just teach them that they need to be more careful when taking counsel about their own affairs.

And boast not of the surrender to you of the town of San Miniato — a happy circumstance for you, but sad for the inhabitants. Rather, may the sudden revolt that followed afterward fill you with terror. So, then, it would have been an unhappy change for the natives of that town, to pass from slavery to liberty, from the fury of civil war and the dangers of an oppressive siege to the sweetness of safety and peace. It was precisely that expulsion—in case you didn't know it—that allowed us to throw the cruel viper and Ligurian tyrant's headlong out of that most powerful fastness; it was a moment of high glory for us, highly desired and auspicious for the those townsmen, who were dying of biting hunger and being oppressed