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The Tuscan Contest.

Neutrality, Trade and Diplomacy between England and Tuscany (1696-1704)

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A thesis submitted to Swansea University in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Swansea University

2021

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the commercial and diplomatic relations between England and Tuscany through a case study, the Plowman case. The case developed between the end of the Nine Years' War and the War of Spanish Succession. It began in 1696 when William Plowman, an English merchant residing in Livorno, asked Grand Duke Cosimo III of Medici to arm three ships to trade in the Levant. Tuscany was neutral in the conflict and the sovereign demanded the merchant not to harm any French vessel during his voyage. Plowman broke his promise and captured several French vessels. Cosimo III arrested the merchant and forced him to pay compensation to the French. Meanwhile the English government interceded in favour of Plowman, starting a complicated dispute between England and Tuscany that eventually brought them to the brink of war.

The analysis of the Plowman case allows to assess the economic and political importance of the Mediterranean Sea and of the Tuscan port of Livorno at the end of the seventeenth century. Livorno was not only one of the most important trading centres in the Mediterranean but also a fully equipped military port and thus had fundamental strategic importance for England. The controversy was instrumentally used by England to impose its sovereignty over Tuscany with the aim of acquiring a privileged access to the port.

The study of the Plowman controversy reveals the extraordinary case of Tuscan neutrality and this work will demonstrate how Tuscany was the first European state to apply a long-term neutrality policy. This thesis explores how a small state as Tuscany managed to preserve its neutrality intact and how trade could be used as an instrument for resolving international disputes.

The analysis of the Plowman case also reveals how the Glorious Revolution had profound impact on the English administration and consequently on its diplomatic capabilities. Not only does this work show the challenge of re-establishing diplomatic relations with Catholic European countries, but also demonstrates how the regime change forced the English government to rely on inexperienced personnel, which were chosen more for their political affiliation rather than for their competence.

Finally, the analysis of the Plowman case allows to significantly re-evaluate Tuscany at the end of the Seventeenth century. The Grand Duchy has been so far described as a weak and decadent country, but study of the controversy demonstrates

instead how Tuscany played an important role in the European scenario both from an economic and political point of view.

Declaration

I Ubaldo Morozzi declare that this work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed **Ubaldo Morozzi**

Date 06/07/2021

Statement 1

I Ubaldo Morozzi declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed **Ubaldo Morozzi**

Date 06/07/2021

Statement 2

I Ubaldo Morozzi hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Date 06/07/2021

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Acknowledgments

It is difficult to retrospectively reconstruct a path that lasted years. Emotions and experiences stratified one upon the other and it is complex to untangle them convincingly and adequately. Therefore, I will write my thanks as they spontaneously come to mind, and the order in which they are is not necessarily revealing of their importance.

The earliest memories I have of my doctorate belong neither to Wales nor to the British Isles, but to a pretty German town overlooking the North Sea. It was there, in the company of my dear friend Paul Gögler, that I made the decision to embark on this Welsh adventure. I dedicate my first thanks to him, not only for encouraging me on this path, but above all for giving me so many moments of absolute and priceless tranquillity. Another friend, Dr. Stefano Libri, is more directly responsible for my academic successes. I will not list his many personal qualities, his intelligence and his sagacity. I will just say that not only did Stefano support me during my doctoral years, but it was he who convinced me, many years ago, not to leave university and to continue my studies. To him therefore all the honours, but also all the burdens, of this result!

Professor Anna Benvenuti is among the people who have had the most influence in my education and it is difficult for me to find the right words to express my gratitude and my affection. Not everyone, in fact, is lucky enough to meet a mentor on their path, a person willing to share their knowledge and experience, always able to give the right advice and to open, with a few words, a window onto intriguing new worlds. This is a privilege that only few have, and for this I consider myself very fortunate.

I wish to dedicate special thanks to my supervisors Dr. Leighton James and Dr. Jonathan Dunnage. Their advice was essential to transform an idea into a concrete project, and their constant support and dedication were for me a source of reflection and inspiration. Doing a doctorate abroad is a complex and enlightening experience at the

same time. Different cultures conceive university in different ways, as well as having different methods and objectives of research. The adaptation process can be complex but, with the right guidance, the resulting cultural enrichment compensates for any effort.

A special mention goes to Janet Penrose, my outstanding English teacher, because it is clear that without her teachings, I would have never been able to write this thesis.

Last but really not least, I would like to thank my parents for their love and tireless support. For the patience and interest with which they have listened to the developments of my research and for the endless proof-reading of each version of each chapter, for the countless affectionate kindnesses they constantly dedicate to me, they really would deserve an honorary doctorate.

Stylistic Conventions

The primary sources used in this thesis are in three languages: English, Italian and French. The names of people and places have been standardized according to a criterion of linguistic belonging, that is, privileging their form in the original language (for example, it was decided to use the Italian term Livorno, instead of the French Ligourne or the English Leghorn). Instead, the names of people and places that appear in the quotes have been left as they are in the original documents. The dating of the sources has been standardized according to the Gregorian calendar, with the years starting on 1st January.

The non-English sources have been translated by the author trying to preserve as much as possible their terminology, punctuation and expressiveness. The English sources, on the other hand, have been transcribed literally, and no changes have been made to any of their linguistic, grammatical or spelling discrepancies. In quotes where it was necessary to clarify the meaning of the sentence, words in square brackets '[]' were added. When units of measurement appear in the text, their conversion to the metric system has been reported in the footnote where possible. No conversion was instead attempted for coinage, which was left expressed as it appears in the primary sources.

Abbreviations

A.S.F.	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
M.d.P.	Mediceo del Principato (a section within the A.S.F.)
A.S.L.	Archivio di Stato di Livorno
T.N.A.	The National Archives at Kew
C.S.P.	Calendar of State Papers
C.T.P.	Calendar of Treasury Papers
B.A.V.	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
B.N.F.	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
O.N.B.	Österreichische Nationalbibliotek
A.P.O.F.M.Cap.	Archivio Provinciale dei Frati Minori Cappuccini

List of images and tables

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The fortifications of Livorno in the year 1700, A.S.F., Scrittoio fortezze e fabbriche, 79/2. p. 181

Medal of Cosimo III, O.N.B., Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung, n. 57558/02. p. 219

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Introduction

This thesis analyses the diplomatic and commercial relations between Tuscany and England from 1696 to 1704 through the analysis of a case study, the Plowman case.[1] At first glance this case appears to be a simple commercial controversy, but it initiated a complex international dispute that brought England and Tuscany to the brink of war. This introductory chapter will begin with a brief summary of the case and will proceed by stating the fundamental objectives of this research. It will then describe the historical methodology adopted and will introduce the primary sources used for this work. As we will see, the Plowman case is extremely complex and stratified: its structure is similar to that of an iceberg, where the part that emerges, i.e. the most visible traits of the story, actually hide the most consistent and most interesting part of the controversy. Through the analysis of the Plowman case it will be possible to explore numerous historical issues such as the 'invention' of Tuscan neutrality, the strategic role of the Grand Duchy, the role of merchants in promoting diplomatic actions or resolving international disputes, the impact of regime change in England, the role of public opinion and the economic importance of the Mediterranean.

The introduction will provide an overview of the methodology and of the primary sources used in this thesis. The introduction will also deal with the general historiographical themes that constitute the fundamental historical context for this work: the Mediterranean, trade and diplomacy, and Tuscany at the end of the seventeenth

[1] This case was also studied, with different purposes, by Giacomo Giusti and Tristan Stein. Giacomo Giusti's master's thesis, *Il Granducato di Toscana e il "caso Plowman": la difesa della neutralità e la crisi con l'Inghilterra (1696-1707)* (University of Pisa, 2008) reconstruct the main events of the case, but he seems to be more interested in the commercial nature of the case. The main part of his dissertation is embargoed until 2048. Tristan Stein's PhD thesis, *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade, 1660-1748* (Harvard University, 2012) uses an episode of the Plowman case to highlight the difficulty of the English government to impose its sovereignty on its subjects abroad (see also footnote 4, p. 340).

century. More specific topics, such as the English situation after the Glorious Revolution or Tuscan neutrality will be directly addressed in the chapters.

Research objectives and the Plowman case

In 1696, at the end of the Nine Years' War, William Plowman, an English merchant who lived in Livorno, asked Grand Duke Cosimo III of Medici permission to arm three ships to trade in the Levant. The Grand Duchy was neutral in the European conflict, therefore, before consenting, the Tuscan sovereign demanded from the merchant his word that during the voyage he would not attack any French ship. Plowman, however, broke his promise and captured numerous French vessels. The French government considered the Grand Duke to be the guarantor of Plowman's actions and demanded compensation. Cosimo III responded by arresting Plowman, who was convicted and obliged to pay damages to the French. Meanwhile the English government, informed of Plowman's arrest, begun to pressure Tuscany to obtain his release. English demands went unheeded and Plowman was released from prison only three years later, after having compensated the French. Once back in England the English merchant accused the Grand Duke of having unjustly imprisoned him and demanded damages as well. The English government supported Plowman's requests demanding that Cosimo III pay a large sum to the merchant. The case dragged on for years in a crescendo of tension until Tuscany and England were on the brink of war.

William Plowman's actions were neither 'exceptional', nor 'extraordinary', as piracy or piracy-like actions were relatively common, especially during war time. It was,

rather, the political and geographical context in which Plowman acted that made the case 'special'.[2]

Europe was indeed fighting the Nine Years' War, and the conflict started after the Glorious Revolution and the accession to the throne of William of Orange. Louis XIV and several other European monarchs had not recognized the legitimacy of William III's claim to the English throne until 1697, the year of the end of the war and the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick.[3] Thus, from a political point of view, the Plowman case represented an opportunity for the new Williamite regime to consolidate its international position. At the same time, the dispute with Tuscany also offered England the opportunity to extend its influence over the Mediterranean.

In fact, the English merchant armed his ships in Livorno, which was at the time one of the most important ports in the world. Numerous merchant communities from all over Europe resided in the Tuscan port which, due to its convenient geographical position, freedom of worship, low taxation and its neutrality, had become one of the major trading centres in the Mediterranean and 'the principal entrepôt of long-distance commerce connecting northwestern Europe, Italy, and the Levant and in the world'.[4] The Tuscan port had an immense commercial volume and functioned as a modern freight terminal:

[2] For an overview of the importance and consequences of privateering at the time see: Steve Murdoch, 'Breaching Neutrality: English prize taking and Swedish neutrality in the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1651-1654', *Mariner's Mirror*, 105:2 (2014), pp. 134-147; Gijs Rommelse, 'Privateering as a Language of International Politics: English and French Privateering against the Dutch Republic, 1655-1665', *Journal of Maritime Research*, 17:2 (2016), pp. 183-194; Goncal L. Nadal, 'Corsairing as a Commercial System: the Edges of Legitimate Trade', in *Bandits at Sea: a Pirates Reader*, ed. by C.R. Pennell, (New York, New York University Press, 2001), pp. 125-136; William R. Meyer, 'English Privateering in the War of the Spanish Succession, 1702-1713', *Mariner's Mirror*, 69 (4), (1983), pp. 435-446; Virginia Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering in the Golden Age of the Netherlands* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); David J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the 18th century* (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2001); Steve Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas? Scottish Maritime Warfare, 1513-1713* (Leiden, Brill, 2010).

[3] Geoffrey Symcox, 'Louis XIV and the Outbreak of the Nine Years' in *War*, in *Louis XIV and Europe*, ed. by. R. Hatton (London, Basingstoke, 1976), pp. 179-212.

[4] Corey Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 3.

goods from the Americas, Northern Europe and the East were shipped to Livorno and redistributed throughout the continent.

The real key to Livorno's success was its neutrality. This meant that when the European states were at war with each other they could still freely trade in the Tuscan port, thus managing to reduce the economic impact of the conflict. Yet at the same time, Livorno was also a perfectly equipped military port of great strategic importance. Significant economic and political interests of the major European countries such as France, Spain, the Dutch Republic and England were therefore concentrated on the Tuscan port. For England and the Dutch Republic in particular Livorno represented a strategic key for accessing the Mediterranean as these countries did not have a port in that sea and therefore had to rely on Livorno to supply their fleets in case of war.

It was therefore due to this incredible convergence of interests on Livorno that the relatively 'normal' actions of William Plowman became the pretext for a major diplomatic dispute between Tuscany and England. From Britain's perspective the case was an opportunity to extend its influence over the port of Livorno, on its commercial network, and to satisfy the its ambition to have its own port in the Mediterranean.

For Tuscany the Plowman case represented one of the greatest dangers that the state had faced since the Thirty Years' War. Since 1649 the Grand Duchy had avoided entanglements in European wars, applying a rigid policy of neutrality that had not only guaranteed the country over fifty years of peace, but had also contributed to greatly expanding the commercial traffic of Livorno. The dispute with England threatened to put an end to this long period of neutrality and peace, and seriously endangered the independence of Tuscany. Indeed, yielding to the English requests would have meant for Tuscany not only admitting its subordinate position in the European political scenario, but also compromising its sovereignty.

The Plowman case will be used in this work as a *passepartout*, as a key to access unexplored rooms of European history between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The analysis of the controversy will show that the Mediterranean at the end of the seventeenth century was a scenario of primary importance both from a political and economic point of view. Anglophone historiography has mainly focused on the Atlantic and has perceived and described the importance of the 'old' Mediterranean as in decline by the late seventeenth century.[5] In particular, British historiography has underestimated the role that the Mediterranean played in the development of the country and in the foundation of the empire.[6] The Plowman case the reveals how the Mediterranean at the end of the seventeenth century remained of fundamental economic and political importance for European nations and especially for England.

This work will focus on the concept of 'regime change' in the context of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Historiography on the period has analysed the religious, [7]

[5] David Eltis, 'Atlantic History in Global Perspective', *Itinerario*, 23:2, 1999, pp. 141-161; Horst Pietshmann, 'Introduction: History between European History and Global History', in *Atlantic History, History of the Atlantic System*, ed. by H. Pietshmann (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 11-43; *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800*, ed. by D. Armitage M. J. Braddick (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); John K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World 1250-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Karen O. Kupperman, *The Atlantic in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. by J. Greene and P. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[6] *The Oxford History of the British Empire* hardly mentions the Mediterranean and its trade. Cfr. *The Oxford History of British Empire*, ed. by N. Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Important recent publications, which also contain chapters entitled 'The grandest society of merchants in the universe', have also focused mainly on Atlantic trade. Cfr. Richard Woodman, *Neptune's Trident. Spices and Slaves: 1500-1807* (Stroud: The History Press, 2008); Similarly, specific publications on the Mediterranean practically do not mention the English presence in those waters: *Braudel Revisited: the Mediterranean World* 1600-1800, ed. by G. Pieterberg, T. F. Ruiz e G. Symcox (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

[7] *England's Wars of Religion Revisited*, ed. by C. W. A. Prior and G. Burgess (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); W.A. Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. by Tim Harris, Mark Goldie, Paul Seaward (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

political[8] and economic[9] aspects of the Glorious Revolution, but it has largely neglected the impact that regime change had on the relationship between the government, its representatives, and its citizens. The thesis will demonstrate how the continuous revolutions experienced by English society, from the execution of Charles I, to the protectorate of Cromwell, to the Restoration, up to the Glorious Revolution, had greatly weakened the political and social cohesion of the country. The analysis of the Plowman case will highlight the fracture between the government, its representatives and its citizens, both at home and abroad. It will also be shown how Tuscany instrumentally used the division within the English government and the political and social conflicts of the country to obtain a decisive advantage in successfully concluding the Plowman controversy.

Several works have focused on the fragmentation of the British political system in the years between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,[10] however the quality and

[8] *England's Wars of Religion Revisited*, ed. by C. W. A. Prior and G. Burgess (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); W.A. Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. by Tim Harris, Mark Goldie, Paul Seaward (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

[9] Geoffrey M. Hodgson, *1688 and all that: property rights, the Glorious Revolution*, in Journal of Institutional Economics (2017), 13:1, pp. 79-107; Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009); Steven Pincus, James A. Robinson, 'What Really Happened During the Glorious Revolution?', in *Institutions, Property Rights, and Economic Growth: The Legacy of Douglass North* (Cambridge and New York:Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 192–222; J. R. Jones, *Liberty Secured? Britain Before and After 1688* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); John Morrill, 'The Sensible Revolution', in, *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact*, ed. by Jonathan I. Israel (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 73–104; *Politics and Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain*, ed. by Howard Nenner (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997). D. C. North, B. R. Weingast, 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Economic History*, 49**:**4 (1989), pp. 803–832; Melinda S. Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[10] Melinda Zook *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power, Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London: Longman, 1993); Tim Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts, Party Conflict in a Divided Society, 1660-1715* (London: Longman, 1993); *Politics and Political Immagination in Later Stuart Britain*, ed. by Howard Nenner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1993); S. Reed Brett, *The Stuart Century 1603-1714* (London: George Harrap, 1961); George Clark, *The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714* (Oxford, 1955).

consistency of the sources that have been preserved regarding the Plowman case will allow us to have a unique perspective on the functioning of the English administration of that period. By reconstructing the political development of the Plowman case, it will be seen how the dispute with Tuscany was used by the English parties as a tool to gather consensus among the population for short-term political purposes. It will be shown how the political divisions within the English government, on the one hand made the administration inefficient, and on the other, were exploited by Tuscany to obtain information and seek allies in support of its neutrality.

Most of the studies on Livorno argue that the port's success was due to the fact that it was a free port, namely that it had extremely low taxation and duties on goods.[11] On the contrary it will be shown in this work that the real reason for Livorno's success was its neutrality. In fact, it will be seen how Tuscany was the first European country to apply a long-term neutrality policy, that is, to make neutrality the fundamental objective of its foreign policy. The practical strategies implemented by the Grand Duchy to defend its neutrality will also be analysed, using modern game theory as an interpretative tool. The thesis will highlight in particular how Tuscany used the opposing commercial interests of the European countries that gravitated around Livorno as an effective protective shield against English ambitions. Furthermore, the thesis will show how the massive involvement of English public opinion played a fundamental role in the resolution of the dispute. Indeed, the political debate around the Plowman case became national in England and went so far as to question the legitimacy of Queen Anne's

[11] Corey Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Andrea Addobbati, *Commercio, rischio, guerra. II mercato delle assicurazioni marittime di Livorno (1694-1795)* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2007); Jean Pierre Filippini, *II porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1998); Vittorio Marchi, *Un porto europeo ed intercontinentale in Toscana* (S. Giovanni in Persiceto: Editrice Nuova Fortezza, 1984); *Livorno, progetto e storia di una città tra il 1500 e il 1600* (Pisa: Nistri-Lichi e Pacini Editori, 1980); Lucia Frattarelli Fisher, 'Livorno 1676: la Città ed il Porto Franco', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga (Florence: Edifir, 1993), pp. 45-66; Mario Baruchello, *Livorno e il suo porto. Origini, caratteristiche, e vicende dei traffici livornesi* (Livorno: S.A.E.R.T., 1939).

government. The major role played in particular by the powerful English merchant community in London and Livorno to resolve the dispute will be also highlighted.

Finally, the analysis of this case will challenge the deep-rooted historiographical prejudice that has so far characterized the studies on seventeenth century Tuscany. Indeed, historiographical consensus maintains that, in this period, the Grand Duchy was a provincial, weak and decadent country. Cosimo III of Medici in particular has been held responsible for the political, economic and social ruin of Tuscany, and has been described as a proud, inept and bigoted ruler.[12] Through the Plowman case it will be effectively demonstrated not only that the Grand Duchy was deeply involved in the highest politics and diplomacy of the time, but also how Cosimo III had a decisive personality capable of ferrying his country unscathed through these very turbulent years of European history.

Research methodology

From a methodological point of view, this research was developed using a micro-historical approach. Micro-history is defined as a type of analysis which, by studying small episodes and case-studies and preferring a qualitative rather than a quantitative

[12] Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana* (Firenze: Cambiagi, 1781); Francesco Inghirami, *Storia della Toscana compilata ed in sette epoche distribuita* (Fiesole: Poligrafia Fiesolana, 1843); Antonio Zobi, *Storia Civile della Toscana dal 1737 al 1848* (Firenze: Molini, 1850); George Frederick Young, *The Medici* (Dutton, 1909); Harold Acton, *The last Medici* (London: Methuen & Co., 1932); John Rigby Hale, *Firenze e i Medici* (Milano: Mursia, 1977); Maurice Andreaux, *I Medici* (Milano: dall'Oglio, 1963); Gaetano Pieraccini, *La stirpe dei Medici di Cafaggiolo* (Firenze: Nardini, 1986); Furio Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana, I Medici* (Torino: UTET, 1976); Emilio Grassellini, Arnaldo Fracassini, *Profili Medicei. Origine, sviluppo, decadenza della famiglia dei Medici attraverso i suoi componenti* (Firenze: SP44, 1982), Giovanni Ciappelli, *Memory, Family, Self. Tuscan Family Books and Other Egodocuments (14th-18th centuries)* (London: Brill, 2014); Troes Kardel, Paul Maquet, *Nicolaus Steno, Biography of and Original Papers of a 17th Century Scientist* (Berlin: Springer, 2013); Patrizia Urbani, 'I vestiti nuovi del quasi Granduca Cosimo III', *ZoneModa*, 8:1, (2018); Gaetano Greco, *Storia del Granducato di Toscana* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2020).

approach, 'illuminates larger phenomena connecting individual stories with a larger historical context'. [13]

However, it should be noted that there is no unanimous definition of the concept of 'microhistory', and that the many scholars who use this method give their own definitions of the fundamental characteristics of microhistory.[14] However, micro-history studies are characterized by some fundamental traits: the first is 'the intensive historical investigation of a relatively well-defined smaller object'; the second is to look for 'the answers to great historical questions when studying small objects'; the third is 'its stress on agency'. [15]

The link between 'micro' and 'macro' is another aspect usually at the centre of micro-historical studies. Carlo Ginzburg argues that 'microhistory, conceived as an analytical approach to history, far from being opposed to world history, may in fact be regarded as an indispensable tool of it'.[16] In fact, a correct micro-historical investigation starts from the assumption that 'macro-phenomena are not less real, microphenomena are not more real. [...] The controlled multiplication of the scales of observation is likely to

[13] Maria Fusaro, 'After Braudel. A Reassessment of Mediterranean History between the Nothern Invasion and the Caravane Matitime' in *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. by M. Fusaro, C. Heywood, M. Omri (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010), p. 8.

[14] On this topic see: István Szijártó, 'Microhistory Today: a Roundtable Discussion', *Journal of Medioeval and Early Modern Studies*, 47:1 (2017), p. 9; Carlo. Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: Two or Three Things that I Know About It', in *Threads and Traces: True False Fictive* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 193-214; Dagmar Freist, 'A Global Microhistory of the Early Modern Period. Social Sites and the Interconnectedness of Human Lives', *Quaderni Storici*, 52:2 (2017), pp. 537-555; Sigurur Gylfi Magnùsson, 'A New Wave of Microhistory? Or: It's the Same Old Story. A Fight for Love and Glory', *Quaderni Storici*, 52:2 (2017), pp. 557-575; Thomas V. Cohen, 'The Macrohistory of Microhistory', *Journal of Medioeval and Early Modern Studies*, 47:1 (2017), pp. 53-73; Peter Burke, 'The Invention of Microhistory', *Rivista di Storia Economica*, 24:3 (2008), pp. 259-273.

[15] Szijártó, 'Microhistory Today', p. 9.

[16] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory and world history', in *The Cambridge World History* ed. by J. Bentley, S. Subrahmanyam, & M. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 446-473. Also on this topic: John-Paul A. Ghobrial, 'Introduction: See the World as a Microhistorian' in *Microhistory and Global History*, Past & Present, 242:14 Supplement (2019), pp.1-22; Jean de Vries, 'Playing with Scales: The Global and the Micro, the Macro and the Nano', *Microhistory and Global History*, Past & Present. 242:14 Supplement (2019), pp.23-36; Matti Peltonen, 'Clues, Margins and Monads: the Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research', *History and Theory*, 40 (2001), pp. 347-359; Francesca Trivellato, 'Is there a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?', *California Italian Studies*, 2:1 (2011), Filippo de Vivo, 'Prospect or Refuge? Microhistory, History on the Large Scale', *Cultural and Social History*, 7 (2010), pp. 387–397; Laura PuT.N.A.m, 'To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World', *Journal of Social History*, 39 (2006), pp. 615–630.

produce additional knowledge'.[17] The narration of history tends to describe the historical reality of the time in a clear, structured and orderly way, simplifying through statements of a general nature, phenomena that were much more complex.[18] This complexity is clearly perceptible at a rather close level of description, that is, at the very level of the actors who lived, moved and acted in that reality and in that moment.[19] The micro-historical method, through 'microscopic investigation aims to reveal factors that otherwise go unobserved' and is therefore 'capable of furnishing a more realistic description of human behaviour'. [20] As Maria Fusaro said, the use of a micro-historical approach 'is most useful in order to reach larger conclusions, that is to say that it is necessary to concentrate on the small-scale in order to collect the kind of evidence on the basis of which larger-scale structural issues can be properly investigated, and established interpretations challenged'.[21]

Usually the scholar who adopts this method chooses as an object of study an episode that is not only 'exceptional' in itself (perhaps due to the particularity of the protagonist, history or context), but which above all has a high level of 'connectivity', namely that it is capable of connecting to other events and with a much larger context.[22] This connective capacity is what allows the historian to use the specific case as a tool to illuminate unknown aspects of history, or to question consolidated historical paradigms.

[17] Bernard Lepetit, 'Architecture, géographie, histoire: Usages de l'échelle', *Genèses*, 13 (1993), p. 126 and 137.
[18] Giovanni Levi, 'Frail Frontiers?', in *Microhistory and Global History*, Past & Present 242:14 Supplement (2019), pp. 37-49. In particular Levi mantains that: 'Microhistory provides a method of seeing, through a reduction of scale, how new perspectives and new explanations can arise, which global history has a tendency to take for granted, having decided in advance how things work because it already knows what happened subsequent to the period being studied, and therefore fails to register surprising discoveries that are right there under its nose'.
[19] Giovanni Levi, 'Frail Frontiers?', pp. 37-49.
[20] István Szijártó, 'Microhistory Today', p. 22.
[21] Maria Fusaro, *After Braudel. A Reassessment of Mediterranean History*, p. 8.
[22] Sharon Strocchia, 'Microhistory Today: a Roundtable Discussion', *Journal of Medioeval and Early Modern Studies*, 47:1 (2017), p. 29.

The case object of this research possesses many of the characteristics of a 'typical' micro-historical study. The Plowman case is certainly a small episode in European history, which concerns a single person, and which takes place in a relatively limited period of time (1696-1704). In addition, the story of Plowman is quite intriguing, given that it is an adventure made of reckless night chases, cannonades and boardings. However, the real exceptionality of the story lies precisely in the 'connectivity' of the case with major historical themes such as the role of the Mediterranean at the end of the seventeenth century, the 'invention' of neutrality, the impact of regime change on English society, and the role of trade and public opinion in resolving international disputes.

As we have seen above, micro-historical studies greatly focus on the concept of 'agency' and underline the fact that '[the] people who lived in the past are not merely puppets in the hands of great underlying forces of history; they are active individuals, conscious actors'. [23] In studying the Plowman case, particular attention was paid to the role, ambitions and, when possible, also to the feelings of the characters who animated the story. The beginning, the evolution and the conclusion of the Plowman case depended strictly on the concrete actions, desires, aspirations, strengths and weaknesses of all the protagonists of this story. For example, one of the key players in the case was the Tuscan ambassador to England Iacopo Giraldi: it will be shown that he was the one who devised the strategy that allowed Tuscany to successfully conclude the controversy. However, it will also be shown that Giraldi could achieve this success only after a long, painful and hard-fought process of assimilation and adaptation to the English cultural and institutional system.

Furthermore, this case study is particularly interesting because it allows us to evaluate the different levels of agency of this story. In fact, an institutional level of agency

[23] István Szijártó, 'Microhistory Today', p. 9.

can be identified, that is the ‘state level’: Tuscany and England were competing to achieve some specific political and economic objectives. Then a lower level of agency can be identified, that is, that of institutional actors, such as monarchs, ministers and ambassadors. Moving further down, we find the level of agency of ‘common’ citizens, such as Plowman or the English merchants of Livorno and London. Of course, all these levels of ‘agency’ were closely linked to each other and both the actions of Plowman and the English merchants were strictly dependent on the higher (but also lower!) levels of agency to which they were interlinked.

It has been said above that micro-historical studies try to connect the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro’ to deal with great historical problems starting from the analysis of small specific episodes. In the Plowman case the relationship between micro and macro is particularly evident. The controversy began in fact from the actions of a private individual (Plowman) and developed to become an international dispute. What is really interesting about this case is that it is possible to accurately reconstruct the dialectical relationship between ‘micro’ and ‘macro’. The various levels of agency that can be identified in the Plowman case and the way in which these influenced each other, give us the opportunity to analyse the functioning of the relationship between ‘micro’ and ‘macro’. What appears evident from this analysis is that the importance of the various levels of agency does not depend on their hierarchical position, that is, the highest, for example the sovereign, has no more importance than the hierarchically lower one, for example the citizens. Indeed, the controversy started only because Plowman decided to be a pirate and it was concluded only by the intervention of the merchants of London and Livorno.

The sources

The sources used for this work come mainly from The National Archives in London[24] and from the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Florence, Italy).[25] As mentioned in the previous section, the Plowman case has a high level of 'connectivity' with significant topics of European history at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This connective capacity is made possible by the large quantity, quality and coherence of the primary sources that have been preserved. Indeed, the abundance of sources regarding the Plowman case can be used as a first indicator of the importance of the dispute. Indeed, the production of documents is never a casual or neutral action, but rather reveals a precise will, in this case of an institutional subject, to collect and transmit the memory of a certain event. However, the conservation of documents, and their survival in subsequent eras, is instead more uncertain and subject to a good deal of fortuity. The Archives of the Customs of the port of Livorno collected, in a complete series from the end of the sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, all the documents of the ships entering and leaving the

[24] As regards The National Archives, of particular interest are the documents contained in the State Papers 98 section, in particular (State Papers Foreign, Tuscany SP98 18, 19, 20, 21). These collect the diplomatic correspondence between the British representatives in Tuscany (Lambert Blackwell and John Burrows) and the Secretary of State. In addition, documents relating to this study were found in: *Calendar of State Papers* (CSP vols. 7-11), which contains economic documents on the administration of the consulate in Tuscany; in S.P. 100 (State Papers Foreign, Foreign Ministers in England, Italian States, S.P. 100, 29), which concerns the correspondence of Tuscan diplomatic representatives in England; in S.P. 101 (Secretaries of State, Tuscany, Newsletters S.P. 101, 80), which contains notices and news from Tuscany and Livorno; in S.P. 102 (Royal letters, Tuscany), which contains the letters sent by the Grand Duke to the King of England; in S.P. 104 (State Papers Foreign, Entry Books, Italian States, S.P. 104/89, 90, 195, 206), which contains in particular the instructions to the ambassadors and part of the correspondence from the Secretariat of State to the Italian States, including Livorno and Tuscany.

[25] As for the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, the documents come from the *Mediceo del Principato* section of the archive. Of particular interest is the material contained in M.d.P. f. 2674 (Instructions to Ambassadors, Extraordinary Missions), which collects the documents of the Plowman trial; M.d.P., f. 4215 (Relations with Italian and foreign states, England) and f. 4216, which concern the correspondence between the Tuscan ambassador to England and the Secretariat of State; M.d.P. f. 2224 and 2225 (Governments of cities and subject places, Livorno), which contain correspondence between the governor of Livorno and the Secretariat of State; M.d.P. f. 4685 (Relations with Italian and foreign states, France), which contains the correspondence between the Tuscan ambassador in Paris and the Secretariat of State; M.d.P., f. 3411 and 3412 (Relations with Italian and foreign states, Rome), which concern the correspondence between the Tuscan ambassador in Rome and the Secretariat of State; M.d.P. f. 1815 and 1824 (Affairs of State and War), which contain information about Livorno.

port.[26] However, after the unification of Italy, in 1877, the entire archive was completely destined for destruction. In the eyes of Piedmontese officials, and perhaps also in the eyes of the Tuscan ones, that archival material represented not only the memory of people, businesses, ships and commercial companies that have disappeared for centuries but, above all, the archive as a whole represented the memory of a state, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, which no longer existed. Those documents were thus deemed of little interest and since they occupied a lot of space it was decided that the best thing would be to simply destroy them. The documentary loss was immense (it seems it took at least ten railway wagons to take away the material), and with it not only the memory of many generations was lost, but also a fundamental resource for historical analysis had disappeared.

It has been mentioned above that the Plowman case began as a commercial dispute and therefore a large part of the documents were initially kept in Livorno. However, when the case turned into a clash between Tuscany and England and thus became a state affair, all the documents concerning the controversy were transferred from Livorno to Florence.[27] And there, after the case was forgotten, they survived, covered by the dust of the centuries, in a corner of the State Archives of Florence. If it were not for this fortunate archival 'coincidence', which actually witnesses the will of the Grand-Ducal government to preserve those documents, today we probably would not know anything about Plowman or his controversy. The Tuscan ministers and officials, in their zeal, not only collected the documents strictly related to the proceedings in progress but put together all the material which concerned, even from a distance, the English company

[26] The information was incredibly detailed, including not only the name, origin and destination of the ships, but also what goods they transported; the cargo list; the crew list, the volumes of traded goods, their prices, the balance sheets of the commercial companies, the names of the merchants resident in the city and that of their foreign correspondents.

[27] A research in the surviving sections of the Archive of Livorno showed that all the documents regarding Plowman were transferred to Florence. Indeed in several folders the only sub-folder missing is the one relating to Plowman. Archival sections consulted: Archivio di Stato di Livorno (A.S.L.), Governatore Auditore, Repertorio cause civili, ins. 7, 218, 220, 227, 325, 649, 749, 750, 787, 893. A.S.L., Governatore Auditore, Repertorio Cause Delegate, ins. 2466, 2467, 2468, 2470, 2471, 2472.

of Plowman. Thus, part of the correspondence between the three partners Plowman, Rigby and Shepard was preserved; the consular correspondence, both English and French, from Livorno and other Mediterranean ports; the company's balance sheets (taken from the ledger from 1685 to 1696); the loading bills; the type, quantity and price of the goods handled by Plowman's company; even the loading lists of the ships plundered by William Plowman during his voyage were preserved. With the documents of Plowman's company has indeed survived also a little but important part of the Archives of Livorno.

Through the analysis of these documents emerges the dense commercial network of Plowman's company, which extended throughout the Mediterranean: from Tunis to Alexandria, from Aleppo to Candia, from Messina to Naples, from Marseille to London. The company traded in the 'classic' English products, such as salted fish, tin, lead and woollen cloths, but also in wheat, silk, spices and coffee. The practice of commerce emerges clearly, showing how goods were transported and exchanged, how business could be managed remotely, how merchants could monitor one's goods that were left in a distant port. The document also disclose the forms of protection and representation, in particular the consular offices and their functioning. These documents even provide access to the stormy waters of piracy and privateering, showing how bounty was valued, and illustrating the responsibilities of those who ran the sea. Through these papers one can even discover how commercial companies and merchants themselves could serve as unofficial diplomatic agents, conducting important negotiations with foreign states, or how they were used as a means of pressure in international disputes.

The documentary wealth preserved around the Plowman case is truly exceptional and indeed the abundance of sources and potential topics, and therefore the need to choose which ones to favour, represented one of the first obstacles to this work. Indeed many other ramifications of the case, such as the more strictly commercial aspects, the role of Tuscany in the attempt to restore James II to the throne, or the role of the English

merchants in promoting diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire and the states of North Africa, will only be mentioned in the course of this work, while they would deserve further analysis and study.

The documents mainly used for this research are therefore diplomatic sources, produced by the English and Tuscan ambassadors and governments. Any primary source must be analysed with caution, being aware that it does not describe a historical phenomenon, but a highly partial and subjective version of the phenomenon itself: this is even more true for diplomatic sources. Indeed, consuls and ambassadors, whose position, honour, and personal prestige depended on the success of their mission, tended to magnify their successes and minimise their failures. However, this analytical prudence must double when the diplomat was also a merchant, as in the case of the English consul in Livorno, or belonged to a specific political faction, as in the case of the English ambassador in Tuscany.

As will be seen later in the thesis, the consul exercised his function not only because he was the holder of a King's patent, but also because the local merchants recognized him in that role. Basically, the consul had to enjoy a double trust: that of the government and that of the merchants. Often, however, the interests of the government and those of the English communities abroad greatly diverged and the consul found himself in a difficult position as an intermediary: his loyalty was in fact divided between that which he owed to the Crown and that which he owed to the fellow merchants who he represented. However, the consul was himself a merchant, and he also had his own interests to manage, which could be separate both from the wishes of the government and those of the competing merchants. During the Plowman case this ambiguity of role and this conflict of loyalty led the English consul in Livorno to not only completely falsify his reports to the English Secretary of State, but also to enter into conflict with the local

merchant community. It will be seen how this conflict became so harsh that the consul tried, twice, to assassinate a fellow competitor.

The same caution must be used when analysing the documents of the English ambassador to Tuscany, Lambert Blackwell. Before being appointed envoy to the Grand Duchy, he too had been a merchant and then consul in Livorno. Therefore the new ambassador was not a neutral figure, but a person already highly involved in the affairs of the English and Tuscan communities, and therefore partial not only towards his old associates, but also towards himself and his own personal business. Furthermore, Blackwell was appointed envoy to the Grand Duchy not for his experience, or for his abilities, but for political reasons: thus the ambassador's allegiance was divided also with the political loyalty he owed to his supporters in England. These conflicting interests caused Blackwell to conveniently adapt his reports to the government and generated an open conflict between the ambassador and the British Secretary of State, who belonged to an opposing political faction.

In such a complex and intricate situation, where much of the correspondence contains unreliable or false information, it can prove very difficult to reconstruct reliable dynamics of the events. However, the abundance, quality and consistency of the sources regarding the Plowman case are such that for many episodes described in this work it was possible to carry out a comparative analysis between different sources. Indeed, Tuscan and English sources concerning the same episode were often compared, and it was therefore possible to highlight the perception that different people had of the same event. Furthermore, as regards the English sources, in addition to diplomatic correspondence, it was possible to discover part of the correspondence of the English merchants in Livorno, and above all some extracts from their 'National Jornall' (a sort of diary of the English community residing in the Tuscan port). This extraordinary document, compared with diplomatic sources, allows us to reconstruct with great precision some of the most salient

moments of the Plowman case, and to highlight the discrepancies between the ambassador's 'official' story and what was actually happening in Livorno.

The possibility of comparing different sources on the same topic was particularly useful in describing the effects of the regime change on English society. In fact, the analysis of the documents shows not only the climate of bitter political division that reigned within the British government, but also the distrust that existed between the government, its citizens and their representatives abroad. On the contrary, the study of the Tuscan documents reveals the greater institutional stability of the Grand Duchy. It will be highlighted how the greater political and institutional cohesion between the government and its representatives abroad, constituted one of the greatest advantages for the Grand Duchy.

In the complex confrontation between Tuscany and England, diplomatic communication was extremely intense and often occurred through symbols or symbolic language. Although the use of symbols has characterized diplomatic practice right from its origin,[28] there are not many works expressly dedicated to this topic, especially in the historical context.[29] However, as Juyang Zhang pointed out, 'diplomacy is inseparable from symbolism'. [30] Diplomacy, that is, the set of actions and interactions through which states maintain relations with each other, is primarily a symbolic act. In fact, through diplomatic relations the 'states', which are not concrete entities but abstract and symbolic ones, are brought into communication.[31] Thus, as Alisher Faizzulaev said, 'symbolism is a tool for meaningful objectification of the state' and, above all, 'symbolism is a way of

[28] Christer Jönsson, 'Diplomatic Signaling in the Amarna Letters', in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* ed. by R. Cohen and R. Westbrook, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 191.
[29] David Onnekink, 'Symbolic Communication in Early Modern Diplomacy: Naval Incidents and the Third Anglo-Dutch war (1667-1672), *English Historical Review*, 135:573 (2020), pp. 337-358.
[30] Juyang Zhang, 'Public Diplomacy as Symbolic Interaction: A Case Study of Asian Tsunami relief campaign', *Public Relation Review*, 32 (2006), p. 26.
[31] Indeed as Michael Walzer wrote 'the state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived'. Michael Walzer, 'On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought', *Political Science Quarterly*, 82:2 (1967), p. 194.

managing complexity in international relations and diplomatic practice'.[32] Virtually anything can become a diplomatic symbol,[33] but this means that, while the symbol serves to simplify and objectify relations between states, the symbols themselves are ambiguous and can have multiple possible meanings. In this research, particular attention has been paid to analysing the symbolic meaning of the sources. In fact, it will be demonstrated how relations between England and Tuscany were brought forward through the use of symbols that were placed in different areas of their diplomatic relations. The symbolic messages could relate to the number of cannon shots fired to greet the national flag, or the superscription of a missive, the tone and words used in a letter, but they could also relate to broken wine flasks, or the precedence of coaches. The analysis of the symbols used by Tuscany and England is essential to effectively reconstruct the complexity of the Plowman case and identify the strategies adopted by the two states during the dispute. In fact, the thesis will demonstrate how most of the interactions between Tuscany and England had a symbolic aspect and how the use, understanding and reaction to these symbols was one of the methods through which the two states reaffirmed their position and intentions, both mutually and in the eyes of the international community.

The forgotten Mediterranean

This work is part of the recent line of studies that intends to re-evaluate the role of the Mediterranean at the end of the seventeenth century. Indeed, it is often believed that the inland sea, after the discovery of America, had rapidly lost importance, both from a political and economic point of view. Through the analysis of the Plowman case it will

[32] Alisher Faizullaiev, 'Diplomacy and Symbolism', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 8 (2013), p. 92, 93.
[33] Zdzislaw Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 35.

be possible to demonstrate the economic centrality of the Mediterranean at the end of the seventeenth century. Above all, the case will highlight how the 'Atlantic' countries, such as England and the Dutch Republic in particular, had great commercial and political ambitions in the Mediterranean.

If one studies the world of the Mediterranean, Braudel's name emerges almost spontaneously from the wealth of research on the subject.[34] His books and his method had a huge impact on subsequent historiography, which was divided precisely with respect to the reception and interpretation of the French scholar's work.[35] The first belongs to the countries that overlook or are completely inserted in the Mediterranean, such as France, Spain and Italy. For the scholars of these countries the importance of the sea was clear even before the fundamental contribution of Braudel.[36] However, their scientific production has mainly focused on investigating specific topics or local realities which, while revealing interesting aspects of Mediterranean history, do not sufficiently highlight the overall perspective of the events.[37] Above all, these studies neglect to highlight the links that connected the Mediterranean with the rest of the world, and in particular with the Atlantic world. Instead, Anglophone historiography, perhaps also due to the contrast between the English historiographic school and that of the Annales founded by Braudel,[38]

[34] In particular Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (London: University of California Press, 1996 [first English ed. 1970]) and F. Braudel-R. Romano, *Navires et Marchandises à l'entrée du port de Livourne* (Paris, Colin, 1951).

[35] For an overview of the state of the art on the subject, see: Cornel Zweirlein, 'Early Modern History and the Mediterranean (short review of the state of research)', in *Handbuch derMediterranistik. Systematische Mittelmeerforschung und disziplinäreZugänge*, ed. by M. Dabag, A. Lichtenberger et al. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), pp. 87-105; Peregrine Horden, 'Mediterranean Excuses: Historical Writing on the Mediterranean Since Braudel', *History and Anthropology*, 16:1 (2005), pp. 25-30.

[36] Maria Fusaro, 'After Braudel. A Reassessment of Mediterranean History between the Nothern Invasion and the Caravane Maritime', in *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, ed. by M. Fusaro, C. Heywood; M. Omri, (London: I.B. Tauris Pub., 2010), p. 3.

[37] For some examples, reference can be made to the volumes *Anglo-Saxon in the Mediterranean: Politics, Commerce, Ideas (XVII-XX Centuries)*, ed. by C. Vassallo e M. d'Angelo (Malta: Malta University Press, 2007) and *Mediterraneo in Armi (secc. XV-XVIII)*, 2 vol. ed. by Rossella Cancila (Palermo, 2007).

[38] Bernard Baylin, *Atlantic History. Concepts and Contours*, (Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 4; Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'Fernand Braudel, the *Annales* and the Mediterranean', *The Journal of Modern History*, 44:4 (1972), pp. 468-479.

has largely neglected the Mediterranean.[39] In fact, English-speaking scholars have focused almost exclusively on the Atlantic world, which is interpreted as the true political and economic centre of the Early Modern Age. This historiographical attitude was so successful that it gave birth to a separate historical discipline, Atlantic History, which, focusing on the study of Atlantic trade, on the history of empires and colonies, perceived and described the 'old' Mediterranean as a reality of secondary importance. In contrast, the Atlantic is perceived as a complex and truly global place, made up of continuous exchanges and interactions that were not only economic, but above all social and cultural.[40] In particular, British historiography has been deeply fascinated by the 'Atlantic' approach even if, in this way, it has neglected a truly significant part of the history of its country, namely its constant commitment to the waters of the Mediterranean.

But what was this Atlantic World at the end of the seventeenth century? As Pierre Gervais wrote 'in the most literal sense "Atlantic World" is a misnomer'.[41] In the seventeenth century 'the Atlantic Ocean was a forbidding expanse of salt water, mostly empty save for a few islands, and could hardly constitute a world'.[42] The fundamental problem of Atlantic History (but also of 'Mediterranean' history), is that it analyses

[39] Colin Heywood, 'The English in the Mediterranean. A Post-Braudelian Perspective on the 'Nothern Invasion', in *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (London: Tauris Publishers, 2010), p. 30. Also recent books such as *Braudel Revisited: the Mediterranean World* 1600-1800, ed. by G. Pieterberg, T. F. Ruiz e G. Symcox (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015) hardly refer to the English contribution in the Mediterranean. An important exception is Tristan Stein's doctoral thesis *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade*, (Harvard, 2012). The American scholar, focusing on the categories of sovereignty and jurisdiction effectively demonstrates that England made an immense effort to secure a dominant position in the Mediterranean. On the same topic see also Kelly A. De Luca, Ph.D thesis, *Beyond The Sea: Extraterritorial Jurisdiction And English Law, c. 1575 - c. 1640*, (Columbia University, 2008).

[40] Bernard Baylin, *Atlantic History. Concepts and Contours*, (Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 60; David Eltis, *Atlantic History in Global Perspective* (Itinerario, 23, n.2, 1999), pp. 141-161; Horst Pietshmann, 'Introduction: History between European History and Global History', in *Atlantic History, History of the Atlantic System*, ed. by H. Pietshmann (Goettingen, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002); *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800*, ed. by D. Armitage M. J. Braddick (Palgrave MacMillan, 2009); John K. Thornton, *A Cultural History of the Atlantic World 1250-1820*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012); Karen O. Kupperman, *The Atlantic in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2012); *Atlantic History: a Critical Appraisal*, ed. by J. Greene and P. Morgan, (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[41] Pierre Gervais, 'Neither Imperial nor Atlantic: a Merchant's eye view of International Trade in the 18th Century', in *History of European Ideas*, 34:4 (2008), p. 465.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 465.

historical phenomena by adopting an organic perspective of geographical derivation, whose investigation limits overlap with the physical ones of 'Atlantic' and of 'Mediterranean'. But, as Alison Games asks, 'what makes a geographic region a logical unit for historical analysis'?[43] The point is that taking a geographical area, even if as vast as the ocean, as the primary reference for analysis, is ontologically limiting. Indeed, it is precisely the vastness that constitutes the fundamental problem that makes these categories inadequate. In fact, even from a geographical point of view it is evident that there is no 'Mediterranean' nor 'Atlantic', but an infinite number of areas with different characteristics that are bathed by an expanse of salt water, which conventionally was called with a single name. Similarly, historically there is no 'Atlantic World' or 'Mediterranean World', but an enormous variety of local characteristics and dynamics, interconnected with each other. However, it is also clear that to describe a phenomenon, it is still necessary to refer to macro categories which, if they are not particularly specific, provide a context for the analysis. Therefore, if the categories of 'Atlantic' and 'Mediterranean' are essential concepts in order to describe historical reality, they must also be consciously used for what they are, that is, objects created a posteriori to simplify a much more complex reality. Indeed, as Peter Coclanis argues, an unconscious 'categorizing' approach risks being 'constricting interpretively and somewhat misspecified analytically [...]'.[44] To truly describe the historical reality of the period it is in fact necessary to overcome these conceptual constructions created a posteriori and describe 'the early modern world as its inhabitants might have perceived it, not as historians have since dichotomized it'. [45] Would it actually have made sense to ask an English or a Tuscan merchant of the seventeenth century if he perceived the world more

[43] Alison Games, 'Beyond the Atlantic: English Globetrotters and Transoceanic Connections', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 63:4 (2006), p. 675.
[44] Peter A. Coclanis, 'Drang Nach Osten: Bernard Bailyn, the World-Island, and the Idea of Atlantic History', in *Journal of World History*, 13:1 (Spring, 2002), p. 176.
[45] Alison Games, 'Beyond the Atlantic', p. 677.

as ‘Atlantic’ or as ‘Mediterranean’? Probably his answer would have been, after a moment of understandable perplexity, that Mediterranean goods travelled in the Atlantic and Atlantic goods in the Mediterranean, respectively where their profit was better and their distribution more convenient. The answer, therefore, would have meant that the two worlds were closely interconnected and that separating them would have been impossible.

Some scholars, and in particular Pierre Gervais, have shown that breaking down the ontological unit of ‘Atlantic’ reveals that ‘the so-called Atlantic community was never strictly Atlantic and contained many very different communities’, most of which actually came from the Mediterranean.[46] Furthermore, Gervais underlines that most of the commercial activities were certainly carried out not in the middle of the Atlantic, but on the European continent.[47] Following this type of analysis, we note that many of those characteristics attributed to the Atlantic world, such as extensive commercial, information and personal networks, ‘were merchant, not Atlantic characteristics and they created order in merchant life almost everywhere’.[48] These networks in fact ‘focused on goods and markets rather than specific empires or regions whether Atlantic or other’.[49] In short, the dynamics in action in the Early Modern Age concerned ‘a general social process, much more than a technical tendency to cross boundaries and Oceans’.[50] Taking these elements into consideration, the Atlantic world appears much less…’Atlantic’ but also ‘less markedly “new” and innovative than assumed in current historiography’.[51] Therefore, Atlantic historians, abusing of the category of ‘Atlantic’, have not only

[46] Pierre Gervais, ‘Neither Imperial nor Atlantic’, p. 472.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 472; Peter A. Coclanis, *Drang Nach Osten*, p. 176. On this topic see also: Robert S. DuPlessis, *Transitions to Capitalism in Early Modem Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1989); Jonathan I. Israel, *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).
[48] Pierre Gervais, Neither Imperial nor Atlantic, p. 479.
[49] *Merchants and Profit in the Age of Commerce 1680-1830*, ed. by P. Gervais, Y. Lemarchand and D. Morgairoz (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), p. 173.
[50] Pierre Gervais, ‘Neither Imperial nor Atlantic’, p. 473.
[51] Pierre Gervais, ‘Neither Imperial nor Atlantic’, p. 472.

neglected the deep bond that linked the Ocean to the Mediterranean, but also neglected how the inland sea played an important role in the global political, economic and social dynamics.

If it was undoubtedly true, as Adam Smith said, that 'the discovery of America and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind',[52] this does not mean that the Mediterranean and the old trade routes had become of little importance.[53] Indeed, military historians have always underlined that maintaining a military and commercial presence in the Mediterranean 'remained fundamental in the fight for European supremacy'.[54] More recently Cornel Zwierlein affirmed that 'there is no reason to regard the Mediterranean as less important than the Empire's informal trade with India, at least before the Bengal acquisition of 1757'.[55] In fact, breaking the ontological unity of 'Atlantic' leads to another fundamental result, namely that of highlighting the dynamics of historical change. In fact, if it is clear that Atlantic trade outweighed the Mediterranean one, how long did it take to happen? Without delving into the problem of periodization, it must be borne in mind that history is made of contemporaneity.[56] Very often different production models, institutions, technologies, routes and markets coexisted in the same environment and at the same time. Thus while the merchants began to travel the Atlantic

[52] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Vol. 4, (Edimburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1843), p. 258.
[53] Mehmet Bulut, 'The Role of the Ottomans and Dutch in the Commercial Integration between the Levant and the Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 45:2 (2002), pp. 197-230.
[54] Nicholas Rodger, 'Sea-Power and Empire, 1688-1793', in *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. II, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 179.
[55] Cornel Zwierlein, *Imperial Unknowns: The French and British in the Mediterranean, 1650–1750*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 4.
[56] On the topic of periodization see: Jaques Le Goff, *Il tempo continuo della storia (Faut-il vraiment découper l'histoire en tranches?)* (Bari: Laterza, 2017); Reinhart Kosselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Franco Cardini, *Europa 1492. Ritratto di un continente cinquecento anni fa* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1989); Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972); Robert Baker, 'History and Periodization', *Clio*, 26:2 (1997), pp. 135-141; David Blackbourn, '"The horologe of time": periodization in history', *PLMA*, 127:2 (2012), pp. 301-307; Maria Fusaro, 'Cooperating Mercantile Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean', *The Economic History Review*, 65:2 (2012), p. 713.

routes in search of new opportunities they continued to exploit the old and rich Mediterranean routes; while the empires founded colonies in America, they still tried to gain dominion of the Mediterranean: in essence, as Le Goff said, 'unmeasured duration and measured time coexist'[57] and only after centuries did the Atlantic overtake the Mediterranean in importance.

Undoubtedly the Atlantic epic, the creation of the colonies and of the empire were a great British (but also French, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese) achievement, which was magnified, taught, and transmitted as a real myth. A myth so strong that it has prompted many British scholars to almost completely neglect[58] an important part of their history.[59] As Tristan Stein wrote 'the "new" British and Imperial histories that have emphasized the importance of empire in the political and cultural development of Britain have, ironically, affirmed the insularity of British history: if Britain was a nation defined by empire, then its European context was of little consequence'.[60] In fact, just as the empire was beginning to take root with the first English colonies on the East coast of North America with the founding of Virginia (1607), English merchants were already crossing the Mediterranean in large numbers, starting to establish themselves as one of the dominant forces of those waters. Furthermore, some historians have pointed out that the experience accumulated by the British in the Mediterranean had a fundamental

[57] Jaques Le Goff, *Il tempo continuo della storia*, p. 136.

[58] English historiography has largely neglected the subject so much so that *The Oxford History of the British Empire* hardly mentions the Mediterranean and its trade. *The Oxford History of British Empire*, ed. by N. Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Important recent publications, which also contain chapters entitled 'The grandest society of merchants in the universe', have also focused mainly on Atlantic trade: Richard Woodman, *Neptune's Trident. Spices and Slaves: 1500-1807*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2008).

[59] Recently some historians have begun to re-evaluate the English presence in the Mediterranean. In particular: Michela d'Angelo, *Mercanti inglesi a Livorno 1573-1737. Alle origini di una british factory* (Messina: Istituto di studi storici "Gaetano Salvemini", 2004); *Italy and Britain between Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds: Leghorn – 'an English port', Archeologia Postmedievale* n. 15, ed. by Hugo Blake (Firenze: All'insegna del Giglio, 2017); Corey Tazzara, *The free port of Livorno and the transformation on the Mediterranean world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Claire McCloughlin, *Scottish Commercial Contacts with the Iberian World, 1581-1730* (PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2014); Lisa M Lillie, 'Empire, Community, Nation: The English Merchants of Livorno, Italy and the Sociability of Commerce in Early Modernity' (PhD Thesis, Washington University, St Louis, 2017).

[60] Tristan Stein, PhD Thesis, *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade* (Harvard, 2012), p. 6.

influence on the creation of the first North American colony and especially on the foundation of Jamestown.[61]

As mentioned above, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean were deeply linked, but the old and the new world also offered very different opportunities. If one examines the values of English imports from the Mediterranean, between 1699 and 1701, it will note that they amounted to 1,550,000 pounds, while those from America reached 1,107,000 pounds.[62] The situation was similar for exports as well. While goods worth 1,484,000 pounds were exported to the Mediterranean, just 539,000 pounds were sent to America.[63] The imports then concerned very different goods. From the Mediterranean England imported silk and textile products, dyes for fabrics, wine, fruit, pepper, iron and steel. From America came mainly sugar and tobacco. England, on the other hand, exported wool and manufactured products of the same material, fish, lead and tin, to both markets, although, as we have seen, in very different proportions. The Mediterranean, in fact, was worth 48% of English exports, 43% was destined for the rest of Europe, while the American colonies absorbed just 9% of the goods.[64] Instead 18.9% of English imports came from America, while as many as 26.6% came from southern Europe and the Mediterranean.[65] Thus the Atlantic and Mediterranean markets were not interchangeable or mutually substitutable since the goods handled were completely different. Therefore,

[61] James Horn, 'The Conquest of Eden: Possession and Dominion in Early Virginia', in *Envisioning an English Empire. Jamestown and the Making of a North Atlantic World*, ed. by Robert Appelbaum and John Sweet (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), pp. 16, 31; Lisa Blansett, 'John Smith Maps Virginia: Knowledge, rhetoric, and Politics, in *Envisioning an English Empire. Jamestown and the Making of a North Atlantic World*, ed. by Robert Appelbaum and John Sweet (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 48.

[62] Ralph Davies, 'English Foreign Trade 1660-1700', *The Economic History Review*, New Series 7:2 (1954), pp. 164-165.

[63] *Ibidem.*

[64] *Ibidem*. See also: David Ormrod, 'Consuming the Orient in Britain, 1660-1760', paper presented at the XIV International Economic History Congress, (Helsinki, 2006); Richard T. Rapp, 'The Unmaking of the Mediterranean Trade Hegemony: International Trade Rivalry and the Commercial Revolution', *The Journal of Economic History*, 35:3 (1975), pp. 499-525.

[65] Christopher G. A. Clay, *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500 - 1700: People, Land and Towns*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 167.

despite the opening of the Atlantic routes, at least in the period covered by this study, the Mediterranean[66] had not become of secondary importance but it represented a much richer market than the American one.[67] This was an element that, although forgotten by contemporary historiography, had not escaped the economist and entrepreneur Richard T. Rapp who already in 1975 argued that 'the rise of the colonial trade with the new world is best interpreted as the outcome of the growth of North Atlantic prominence inside the internal European market context. It was the invasion of the Mediterranean, not the exploitation of the Atlantic, that produced the golden ages of Amsterdam and London'.[68]

The economic and political importance of the Mediterranean emerges clearly through the analysis of the Plowman case. In fact, the controversy takes place between two European general wars, the Nine Years' War, and the War of the Spanish Succession, in which England employed very large forces in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that from a political point of view the main English strategic weakness was the lack of its own port in the Mediterranean. The English, in order to protect their rich trade there, and to successfully continue the war on the continent, needed to send large war fleets to the Mediterranean, but had to rely on foreign ports to supply them. It will be demonstrated how Livorno was the only port to which the English fleet could go, and this constituted a major weakness for Britain in the handling of the Plowman case.

From an economic point of view it will be shown how Livorno constituted one of the fundamental centres of English trade. In fact, one of the reasons for Livorno's success was its convenient geographical position, halfway between East and West. This

[66] For an overview of the evolution of British trade in the Mediterranean, see: Gigliola Pagano de Divitiis, 'English Merchants in the Italian Peninsula in the Long 17th century', in *Italy and Britain between Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds: Leghorn – 'an English port', Archeologia Postmedievale* n. 15, ed. by Hugo Blake, (Firenze: All'insegna del Giglio, 2017), pp. 29-38.

[67] Michael Pearson maintains that in the 17th century 'more spices and paper were coming to Europe via the Red Sea and the Mediterranean than via the Cape'. Michael Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Guharat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 79.

[68] Richard T. Rapp, 'The Unmaking of the Mediterranean Trade Hegemony', pp. 499-525.

had transformed the Tuscan port into a strategic warehouse, where Eastern goods met Western ones and were then redistributed in Europe. Livorno was therefore particularly important for English merchants, who exported there products from the colonies and imported from there oriental goods to the motherland.

As mentioned above, the Plowman case dragged on for years, until England and Tuscany were on the brink of war. The conflict would have been disastrous for the British merchant community, which wrote a heartfelt petition to Queen Anne. In line with the data on trade volumes cited above, the English merchants declared that the taxes derived from the trade of the port of Livorno alone were 'one of the most sensible parts'[69] of the revenues of the Crown, and amounted to over 300,000 pounds per year.[70] The merchants also claimed that British-made goods exported to Livorno, and therefore to the Mediterranean, employed over a million English subjects, that is 19.2% of the population of England.[71] The merchants added that the trade there was 'so very considerable'[72] that 'even the two East India Companies are considerably enriched [...] in the consumption of their goods as pepper, calicoes etc', and this further demonstrates the complete integration between the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.[73] The petitioners then concluded by arguing that any obstacle to Livorno trade would represent 'a stab at heart of the Kingdom in general'.[74] Therefore the analysis of the Plowman case will underline the importance of the Mediterranean trade for an 'Atlantic' country like England, and it

[69] *The Answers of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Leghorn to the Account of Damages Laid to the Charge of the Grand Duke of Toscany by Sir Alexander Rigby, Mr. William Shepard, Mr. William Plowman Together with Their Reply* (London, 1704), p. 12.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[71] The population of England and Wales at the time was 5,200,000 people. M.W. Flinn, *British Population Growth, 1700–1850* (London: Palgrave, 1970); Hubert P.H. Nusteling, 'The Population of England 1539-1873. An Issue of Demographic Homeostasis', *Histoire and Mesure*, 8 (1993), pp. 59-92; Peter Razzel, 'The Growth of Population in Eighteenth-Century England, A Critical Reppraisal, *Journal of Economic History*, 53:4 (1993), pp. 743-771.
[72] *The Answers of the Merchant-Petitioners*, p.12.
[73] *Ibidem.*
[74] *Ibidem.*

will also demonstrate how the Mediterranean at the end of the 17th century was of primary importance both from a political and economic point of view.

Commerce and diplomacy

The large quantity, richness and coherence of the sources regarding the Plowman case allow us to explore many significant aspects of the relations between Tuscany and England at the end of the seventeenth century. This thesis will give ample space to the diplomatic part of the Plowman case which can effectively illustrate the connection between trade, politics and diplomacy.

In recent years, the academic world has shown a renewed interest in the history of diplomacy.[75] In particular, with the birth of the 'new diplomatic history', scholars have adopted a new approach to the study of the relations between states, focusing not only on the political content of the negotiations, but also on the structures and methods of diplomatic practice.[76] The 'new diplomatic history' focuses on the concept of 'agency', interpreting the relations between states as the product of the actions and the will of the multiplicity of the people involved, at various levels, in the constant dialogue between different cultures. The studies produced by this new and complex approach to the history of international relations have focused particularly on the analysis of the representative

[75] As regards the evolution of historiography on this topic, see: Thomas Otte, 'The Inner Circle: What is Diplomatic History (And Why Should We Study It?), *History: the Journal of Historical Association*, 105:364 (2020), pp. 5-27; Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, 'A New Diplomatic History and the Networks of Spanish Diplomacy in the Baroque Era', *The International History Review*, 36:4, (2014), pp. 603-618.
[76] Giacomo Giudici, 'From New Diplomatic History to New Political History: the Rise of the Holistic Approach', *European History Quarterly*, 48:2 (2018), p. 314.

structures, on the role of the ambassador,[77] on the diplomatic practice, [78] on the meaning of ceremonials, [79] of gifts,[80] of public speeches.[81] The 'new diplomatic history' argues that the relations between European countries 'rested upon a common European elite culture, or were enmeshed in the shared values of a "society of princes"',[82] underlining how successful diplomatic relations 'depended on more than resident ambassadors alone. […] A range of different diplomatic actors created forms of state diplomacy beyond treaty making and alliances'.[83] According to Eric Thompson, if this approach illuminates many important aspects of European diplomatic relations, 'it is not sufficient to capture neither

[77] Timothy Hampton, *Fiction of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Catherine Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Reinassance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Marie-Héléne Côté**,** 'What Did It Mean to be a French Diplomat in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries?', *Canadian Journal of History* (2010), pp. 235-258; Madeline Bassnet, 'All the ceremonyes and civilityes': The Authorship of Diplomacy in the *Memoirs* of Ann, Lady Fanshawe, in *The Seventeenth Century*, 26 (2011), pp. 94-118; Daniela Frigo, 'Prudence and Experience: Ambassadors and Political Culture in Early Modern Italy', in *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38 (2008), pp. 15-34.

[78] André J. Kirsher, Hillard von Thiessen, 'Diplomacy in Global Early Modernity: the Ambiguity of Sovereignty', *The International History Review*, 41:5, (2018), pp. 1100-1107; *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World (1410-1800)*, ed. by T. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (London: Routledge, 2017); *Diplomacy in Early Modern Culture*, ed. by R. Adams and R. Cox (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011); Daniela Frigo, *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy. The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[79] Jeanette Dillon, *The Language of Space in Court Performance, 1400–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Jan Hennings, 'The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1698', *The International History Review*, 30:3 (2008), pp. 515–544; Laurie Nussdorfer, 'The Politics of Space in Early Modern Rome', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, 42 (1997), pp. 161–186; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Riti di corte e simboli della regalità. I regni d'Europa e del Mediterraneo dal Medioevo all'età moderna* (Rome: Salerno Editore, 2009); Toby Osborne, 'The Surrogate War between the Savoys and the Medici: Sovereignty and Precedence in Early Modern Italy', *The International History Review*, 29:1, (2007), pp. 1-21; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, 'II cerimoniale come linguaggio politico. Su alcuni conflitti di precedenza alia corte di Roma tra cinquecento e seicento', *Ceremonial el rituel a Rome (XVIe-XIX siecle).* ed. by M. A. Visceglia and C. Brice (Rome: Ecole Fancoise de Rome, 1997), pp. 152-154.

[80] Kim Siebenhuner, 'Approaching Diplomatic and Courtly Gift-giving in Europe and Mughal India: Shared Practices and Cultural Diversity', *The Medieval History Journal*, 16 (2014), pp. 525-546; Sharon Kettering, 'Gift-Giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', in *French History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 131–151; Hillard von Thiessen, 'Exchange of gifts and ethos of patronage in the relations between Spain and the papal states in Early 17th century', *L'arte del dono scambi artistici e diplomazia tra Italia e Spagna, 1550–1650* (Milano: Silvana Ed, 2013), pp. 27–32; Maija Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9 (2006), pp. 348-370; Diana Carriò Invernizzi, 'Gift and Diplomacy in Seventeenth Century Spanih Italy, *The Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), pp. 881-899.

[81] Helmer Helmers, 'Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Towards a New History of News', *Media History*, 22 (2016), pp. 401-420.

[82] Erik Thomson, 'For a Comparative History of Early Modern Diplomacy', in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 31:2, 2005, p.151.

[83] Erica Heisen Roach, 'Consuls-of-State and the Redemption of Slaves: The Dutch Republic and the Western Mediterranean, 1616–1651', *Itinerario*, 39:1, (Research Institute for History: Leiden University, 2015), p. 70.

the variety of diplomatic institutions and practices, nor the complexity and creativity involved in their imitation and adaptation'.[84]

The Plowman case demonstrates that merchants were a significant part of this 'creativity'.[85] Their activities, their information networks, their constant travelling, made merchants an essential component through which states evaluated and promoted their political and diplomatic strategies. The merchants were in fact in the ideal position to move at the margins of different areas such as trade, politics, diplomacy and espionage. They could operate without arousing suspicion among contexts which differed for ethnicity, culture and religion. They had a thorough knowledge of the places and their uses, they had personal contacts with local institutions and with eminent personalities of those societies.[86] We will see later in this work how William Plowman and his trading company were a tool through which Tuscany sought to gain a monopoly on the Tunisian grain trade. Although without a formal investiture, Plowman acted on that occasion as a real diplomatic representative, carrying out an important negotiation on behalf both of England and Tuscany. However, the merchants were not always willing to assist the political objectives of their governments. In fact, the merchants were primarily merchants, that is, they only acted in the political sphere when this was convenient for them and for their business. Governments often found themselves facing the fierce opposition of the merchants if the political decisions taken were in contrast with the economic interests of the country or, more specifically, with those of the merchants. They thus contributed to redefining the policies of the state making them appropriate to the specific context in

[84] *Ibid*., p. 152.
[85] Michael Auwers, 'The Gift of Rubens: Rethinking the Concept of Gift-Giving in Early Modern Diplomacy', *European History Quarterly*, 43:3 (2013), pp. 421–441.
[86] As Anuschka Tischer underlined often the ambassadors were completely unprepared to adequately fulfil their role: Indeed, 'many politicians still neglected the importance of permanent diplomacy. Thus, there was no training, and few ambassadors had solid experience in foreign traditions and languages or in methods of diplomatic negotiations'. Anuschka Tischer, 'Claude de Mesmes, Count d'Avaux (1595–1650): the Perfect Ambassador of the Early 17th Century', *International Negotiation*, 13:2 (2008), pp. 197-209.

which they were placed and also to their own interest.[87] The Plowman controversy brought Tuscany and England to the brink of war, therefore threatening to destroy the rich trade of the English merchants in Livorno. The merchants thus appealed to the government and to Queen Anne, asking her to reconsider the resolution taken against the Grand Duchy. However, when the English government ignored their complaints, the merchants were not intimidated: those who were residents of Livorno explicitly rebelled, while those in England organized a massive media campaign against the government, going so far as to question the legitimacy of Queen Anne.

In line with the approach suggested by the 'new diplomatic history', this work will therefore show how the relations between Tuscany and England developed through a complex network of relationships that only partially referred to institutionally recognized figures such as consuls and ambassadors. A significant part of the diplomacy between the two states was carried out by private individuals, such as merchants who, due to their knowledge, wealth and influence, had a fundamental impact on the political decisions of their states.[88]

The historiographical prejudice on seventeenth century Tuscany

Italian and foreign historiography has represented Tuscany at the end of the seventeenth century as a provincial, weak and decadent country. Historiography has identified Cosimo III of Medici as having the main responsibility for the political,

[87] This is the case, for example, of the policy for ransom of prisoners and slaves in the states of Barbary adopted by the United Provinces. Erica Heisen Roach, 'Consuls-of-State and the Redemption of Slaves: The Dutch Republic and the Western Mediterranean, 1616–1651', *Itinerario*, 39:1, (Research Institute for History: Leiden University, 2015), p. 70.

[88] On the role of merchants in the formation of the diplomatic strategy of the states, see: Mitra J. Brewer, Ph.D thesis, *Gold, Frankincense , and Myrhh: French Consuls and Commercial Diplomacy in the Ottoman Levant, 1660-1699* (Georgetown University, 2002); Erica Heinsen-Roach, Ph.D thesis, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Captives: the Creation of Dutch Diplomacy in the Early Modern Mediterranean 1596-1699* (University of Miami, 2012).

economic and social ruin of the Grand Duchy, describing him as a proud, inept and bigoted ruler.[89] This work challenges this historiographical paradigm. The analysis of the Plowman case will clearly demonstrate not only how the Grand Duchy was deeply involved in the highest politics and diplomacy of the period, but also that it was strong enough to openly confront a much powerful country such as England. This section will first explore the origins of the historiographical prejudice against Tuscany, demonstrating how this long-lasting cultural phenomenon was strengthened by the lack of in-depth scientific studies on this period. It will therefore be shown that the Grand Duchy was not in decline, but rather exhibited indicators of economic expansion, an increase in commerce, agricultural production, and population. It will be shown that Cosimo III was by no means a weak and bigoted ruler, but on the contrary a decisive personality, who was able to lead the country unscathed through extremely turbulent years of European history.

Historical research and even the books entirely focused on the Medici family dedicate only a few pages to Cosimo III, despite his reign being the longest of the dynasty: fifty-three years, from 23 May 1670 to 31 October 1723. A characteristic example of this historiographical attitude is Furio Diaz's *Il Granducato di Toscana* (1976), one of the most famous and influential works on the history of Tuscany. The historian described that period as 'the decline of a dynasty', characterized by 'depression and obscurantism'.[90] The historian cites 35 archival references to support his assumption, while the rest of the footnotes derive mainly from the *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana* by Riguccio Galluzzi

[89] In Italian 'bigot' has a different meaning than in English. In Italian 'bigotto' means 'person who shows exaggerated zeal more in external practices than in the spirit of religion, observing all the rules of worship with ostentation and meticulousness'. Since most of the historiography on the subject is in Italian and it has made extensive use of this term it was decided to keep using the English word 'bigot', which therefore must be interpreted according to the Italian meaning.

[90] Furio Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana, I Medici*, (Torino: UTET, 1976), p. 465. *Legislazione Toscana* of Cantini is a collection of Tuscan laws from the fifteenth century onward. Lorenzo Cantini, *Legislazione Toscana Raccolta e Illustrata*, (Firenze: Stamp. Albizziniana, 1800).

of 1781.[91] The first surprising thing, on which we will return later in this section, is that Diaz has used so few primary sources. The other interesting fact is that a relatively recent book such as Diaz's contains many references to a work as dated as that of Galluzzi.

Galluzzi describes the years from 1670 to 1723 as 'the most memorable period of the decline of the Medici House and the prosperity of the Grand Duchy'.[92] He defines Cosimo III as 'the weakest of the princes of the Medici house', and his government as 'an unreasonable despotism mixed with cruelty and avarice'.[93] 'The crimes, the excesses, the atrocities', continued Galluzzi, 'became frequent and familiar throughout the state and the distressed subjects [...] chose to live under another sky rather than submit to the censures of such a malignant justice'.[94] Galluzzi, relentlessly attacking Cosimo III, condemned more than fifty years of Tuscan history to oblivion.

Diaz was by no means the only one, and unfortunately not the last, to have made extensive use of Galluzzi's work in his work as a historian. The *Istoria* is the first comprehensive and coherent work of Tuscan history and has constituted a significant historiographical precedent to which subsequent works have always referred. The interesting thing is that historians, including contemporary ones, have uncritically quoted Galluzzi taking for granted that what he had written was 'true', that is, treating his book more as a primary source than as a secondary source. Hardly anyone ever wondered if Galluzzi could have had a personal interest in describing Cosimo III and his reign so harshly.[95] Galluzzi condemned that period, and all subsequent historians, without any critical scrutiny, did the same. Antonio Ferrini almost literally copied what Galluzzi had

[91] Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana,* (Firenze: Cambiagi, 1781).
[92] Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*, p. 77.
[93] *Ibidem*.
[94] *Ibid*., p. 262.
[95] One exception is Valeria Pinchera, 'La Toscana di Cosimo III', *Quaderni storici*, 75:3, (1990), pp. 998-1002.

written,[96] and Francesco Inghirami showed the same attitude of prejudice and condemnation for Cosimo III.[97] Even historians of the twentieth century continued on this track. Giuseppe Conti, copying Galluzzi, lashes out against Cosimo III: 'the Medici principality, which with Ferdinand II insensibly began the period of its decline, under the bad government of Cosimo III fatally proceeded to his complete ruin'.[98] English historians as well have absorbed the Italian historiographical attitude towards Cosimo III. George Frederick Young in his *The Medici* (1909) makes massive use of Galluzzi's *Istoria* and even manages to outdo him: 'the story of the long reign of Cosimo III is the story of the evils that a vain, weak, tyrant, brainless, superstitious and bigoted sovereign can provoke. Taking note of it becomes tiring due to the constant repetition of enormity and imbecility, while the conditions of the outraged people were always worsening'.[99] Slightly more objective towards Cosimo III is Harold Acton who, in his *The last Medici* (1932), devotes ample space to the figure of the penultimate Grand Duke, although one of the main sources cited by the author is still Galluzzi.[100] Instead, John Rigby Hale, in his *Florence and the Medici* (1977), devotes very little space to 'Cosimo III and Giangastone' summarizing in the usual 'Galluzzian' way, and in just ten pages , 67 years of history.[101] Even French historiography has not been immune from this prejudice. Maurice Andrieux in his *I Medici* (1958) argued that 'every year of Cosimo III's long

[96] Antonio Ferrini, *Compendio di storia toscana dall'origine degli Etruschi fino ai nostri tempi*, (Firenze: Tipografia Sansone Corn, 1840), p. 189.
[97] Francesco Inghirami, *Storia della Toscana compilata ed in sette epoche distribuita*, Tomo X, (Fiesole: Poligrafia Fiesolana, 1843), p. 470. These are the words taken from the book of Inghirami, identical to those reported in the volume by Ferrini: 'the new Grand Duke soon changed his behaviour, and stimulated by pride, ambition and vanity, he despised the just paternal economy, and adopted pomp and magnificence which proved disastrous for the subjects. [...] The result of his travels was the increase of his pride and vanity. He lacked his father's talents, while he was proud, he was also a coward. Coupling bigotry and bad heart, pride and cowardice, his government was bad, and Tuscany regarded him as its oppressor'. Another publication of the same period is Antonio Zobi, *Storia Civile della Toscana dal 1737 al 1848*, (Firenze: Molini, 1850), which again copied what Galluzzi had written.
[98] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[99] George Frederick Young, *I Medici*, (Firenze: Salani, 1957), p. 399.
[100] Harold Acton, *The last Medici*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1932), p. 81.
[101] John Rigby Hale, *Firenze e i Medici*, (Milano: Mursia, 1977), pp. 234-244.

reign was to mark a new stage of a painful decline'.[102] This 'copied' history goes as far as the 21st century, so much so that Emilio Grassellini and Arnaldo Fracassini attribute the economic decline of the Grand Duchy to the exasperated bigotry of Cosimo III.[103]

Galluzzi's work evidently created the prejudice against Cosimo III. But why did later historians give him so much credit? Galluzzi, in 1769, was commissioned by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo of Habsburg-Lorraine[104] to rearrange the Medici archive. He had complete access to the papers of the Medici dynasty and it was for this reason that his *Istoria* acquired such great credibility. In short, subsequent historians trusted that Galluzzi used the documents to truthfully represent the historical facts. However, what has not been taken into consideration is that Galluzzi had good reason for attributing the worst possible characteristics to the reign of Cosimo III. After finishing rearranging the archive, Pietro Leopoldo had commissioned another work to the scholar: precisely that of writing a history of the Grand Duchy. The *Istoria* must therefore be interpreted bearing in mind that Galluzzi had two fundamental objectives: to please the sovereign who had commissioned his work and to give legitimacy to the new reigning house in Tuscany. Indeed, describing the inexorable decline of the Medici dynasty made the new one shine by contrast. To obtain this result, Galluzzi had therefore conveniently adapted the content of his book and Cosimo III was artificially transformed into a negative example, in the

[102] Maurice Andreaux, *I Medici*, (Milano: dall'Oglio, 1963), pp. 502-503. The French historian then went into fanciful statements, once again copied almost literally by Galluzzi, claiming that the Grand Duke 'ceded all administrative powers to the clergy, including those of the police', dedicating himself only to 'espionage inside the families'. Andrieux even compares life in Tuscany 'to that of the Asian peoples subject to the harshest oppression' so much so that many inhabitants of the grand duchy 'without any guarantee for their safety and oppressed in all ways' were forced to emigrate.

[103] Emilio Grassellini – Arnaldo Fracassini, *Profili Medicei. Origine, sviluppo, decadenza della famiglia dei Medici attraverso i suoi componenti*, (Firenze, SP44, 1982), pp. 130-131. According to the authors, in the Grand Duchy there was 'a continuous succession of processions, sermons and religious celebrations' and the prince forced his subjects not to work 'to solemnize saints and anniversaries'. Finally, continuing indiscriminately to copy Galluzzi, the authors paint the Tuscan government as 'an irrational despotism mixed with cruelty and avarice, veiled by the appearances of justice and religion'.

[104] The Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty succeeded the Medici in 1737, after the death of the last Grand Duke Giangastone, son of Cosimo III.

stereotype of the retrograde, obscurantist and bigoted ruler, in stark contrast with the progressive and 'enlightened' government of Pietro Leopoldo.

The historiographical attitude of 'Galluzzian' origin cracked for the first time in the early Nineties, during a conference held in Pisa and Fiesole. The numerous scholars who intervened underlined the inconsistency between the historiographic paradigm on seventeenth-century Tuscany and the evidence that emerged from the analysis of archival documents.[105] Marcello Verga highlighted the important administrative reform initiatives implemented by Cosimo III, in particular in the matter of civil and criminal jurisdiction.[106] Paolo Malanima demonstrated how, from an economic point of view, the reign of Cosimo III shows, rather than the decline, the beginning of the recovery after the plagues and wars that afflicted the first half of the seventeenth century.[107] One figure is particularly significant: between 1640 and 1737 the population of the Grand Duchy increased by 173,000 people, from 721,000 inhabitants in 1640 to 894,000 in 1738, with an incredible 24% growth over the course of a century.[108] This growth was supported by a high production of wheat whose prices remained low throughout Cosimo's reign.[109] In particular, the Grand Duke was extremely careful in managing the food production policy, rationalizing the legislation on the subject and making use of economic experts to increase

[105] *La Toscana nell'Età di Cosimo III, Atti del Convegno, Pisa-S. Domenico di Fiesole, 4-5 Giugno 1990*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli e M. Verga, (Firenze: Edifir, 1993).
[106] Marcello Verga, 'Appunto per una storia politica del Granducato di Cosimo III (1670-1723), in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), pp. 335-354.
[107] Paolo Malanima, 'L'economia toscana nell'età di Cosimo III', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), pp. 3-17. Paolo Malanima, *La decadenza di un'economia cittadina. L'industria di Firenze nei secoli XVI e XVII*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982), pp. 314-320.
[108] To make a comparison: population growth in Tuscany was more than double compared to that of England. Paolo Malanima, 'L'economia toscana nell'età di Cosimo III', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), p.4. On the same topic see also: Lorenzo del Panta, *Una traccia di storia demografica della Toscana nei secoli XVI-XVIII*, (Firenze: University of Florence, 1974). On the English population see: E.A. Wrigley, R.S. Shofield, *The Population of England, 1541-1871, a Reconstruction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
[109] Andrea Menzione, 'Riordinamenti Colturali e Mutamenti Strutturali nelle Campagne Toscane fra XVII e XVIII secolo', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), pp. 19-32.

the efficiency of the system.[110] In fact, we will see later in this work how an interest in wheat had been at the basis of Cosimo III's decision to grant Plowman permission to arm his ships in Livorno.

The Grand Duke also favoured the expansion of another cultivation, which would have shaped and characterized the Tuscan landscape up to the present day: that of the vine.[111] Cosimo III focused especially on promoting the 'brand' of Tuscan wine: the Grand Duke sent it as a diplomatic gift to foreign sovereigns and dignitaries. Indeed it was certainly the association with the Medici, which was synonymous with luxury and refinement, as well as the quality of the product, which made Tuscan wine so famous.[112] The operation was so successful and the demand for Tuscan wine increased so much that, in 1716, Cosimo III implemented an extremely innovative legislation for the time, delimiting the Chianti wine production areas and creating the first PDO area in the world.[113]. The Grand Duke was also extremely active in promoting trade[114] and, as it will be seen in the course of this work, Cosimo III had special attention for Livorno.[115] He enlarged the city, endowed it with new and imposing fortifications and above all he

[110] Anna Maria Pult Quaglia, 'Politica Annonaria e Congiuntura Economica nella Toscana di Cosimo III', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), p. 34. On food production policies see also: Alessandra Contini, 'La Riforma della Tassa delle Farine', *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), pp. 241-274.

[111] Andrea Menzione, 'Riordinamenti Coltuali', p. 25; Elsa Luttazzi Gregori, 'Un'azienda agricola toscana nell'età moderna: il Pino, fattoria dell'Ordine di Santo Stefano (secoli XVI-XVII)', in *Quaderni Storici*, 39, (1978), p. 899.

[112] Anna Maria Pult Quaglia, 'Politica Annonaria e Congiuntura Economica', p. 39. During the research for this work numerous references were found to the gifts of wine made by Cosimo III to many English dignitaries and ministers.

[113] First Cosimo established a 'congregation' which had the task of verifying the good quality of the wine destined for trade. This 'congregation' had large powers of control and discipline on the product and on the producers and carried out the same functions that today are usually performed by the product quality control agencies. A few months later, on 24th September 1716, the Grand Duke decided to reinforce this provision by issuing a proclamation which delimited the production areas of the most famous Tuscan wines: Chianti, Pomino, Carmignano and Valdarno Superiore (today Chianti Rufina). Only wine actually produced within those specific areas would have had the right to bear the name 'Chianti' therefore enjoying all the marketing benefits associated with it.

[114] Paolo Malanima, 'L'economia toscana nell'età di Cosimo III', p. 7.

[115] Lucia Frattarelli Fisher, 'Livorno 1676: la Città ed il Porto Franco', in in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Florence: Edifir, 1993), pp. 45-66.

favoured its trade, managing to transform Livorno into the bulwark of Tuscan politics and diplomacy.

The scholars who attended the 1990 conference returned an image of Cosimo III's Tuscany that was very different from the one until then transmitted by historiography.[116] They hoped to be the forerunners of a general revaluation movement of this period, but their appeal remained essentially unheard: thirty years have passed since then, and little has changed in the landscape of the historiography on Tuscany.[117] Indeed, most of the historians who have dealt with seventeenth century Tuscany have continued to repeat the same paradigm of decadence, or have simply overlooked the reign of Cosimo III, as if it never existed.[118] The only characteristic that Giovanni Ciappelli in his *Memory Family and Self* (2014) attributes to Cosimo's reign is that of being 'ostentatiously pious',[119] while Troes Kardel and Paul Maquet, in their *Nicolaus Steno, Biography of and Original Papers of a 17th Century Scientist* (2013) argue that 'Cosimo

[116] In the same volume see the articles by Francesco Martelli and Paola Benigni regarding the training and selection of Grand Ducal ministers, as well as the interesting article by Giuseppe Pansini on Tuscan taxation.

[117] It is worth mentioning some exceptions, even if they come mainly from people, such as Riccardo Spinelli, or Marcello Verga, who were among the participants of the 1990 conference. In particular, art history scholars have given prestige and relevance to Tuscan cultural life of that period and to the patronage of Cosimo III, without however making an overall revaluation of the period: Riccardo Spinelli, 'Il Gran Principe Cosimo di Ferdinando II (1642-1723), in *Fasto di Corte. La decorazione murale nelle residenze dei Medici e dei Lorena*, vol. 2 (Firenze: Edifir, 2006); *Il Gran Principe Ferdinando de' Medici (1663-1713). Collezionista e Mecenate*, ed. by R. Spinelli (Firenze: Giunti, 2013); *Ferdinando di Cosimo III de' Medici, Gran Principe di Toscana e Violante di Baviera*, ed. by. R. Spinelli, *Valori Tattili*, 3-4 (2014); R. Spinelli, *Le committenze sacre di Cosimo III de' Medici. Episodi poco noti o sconosciuti*, (Firenze: Edifir, 2019); Nadia Bastogi, 'Protezione delle arti, interessi naturalistici, devozione e sacra regalità del potere nel mecenatismo del sovrano', in *Fasto di Corte. La decorazione murale nelle residenze dei Medici e dei Lorena*, vol. 3 (Firenze: Edifir, 2006); *Un Granduca ed il suo ritrattista. Cosimo III de' Medici e la stanza dei quadri di Giusto Sustermans*, ed. by Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato (Livorno: Sillabe, 2006). Nel campo delle scienze politiche, con particolare riferimento alla situazione amministrativa si veda invece: Jean Boutier, 'Les formes et l'exercice du pouvoir', in *La Toscana in età moderna (Secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Atti del Convegno, Arezzo 12-13 Ottobre 2000, ed by. Mario Ascheri e Alessandra Contini (Firenze: Olschki, 2005); Luca Mannori, 'Effetto domino. Il profilo istituzionale dello stato territoriale toscano nella storiografia degli ultimi trent'anni', in *La Toscana in età moderna (Secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Atti del Convegno, Arezzo 12-13 Ottobre 2000, ed by. Mario Ascheri e Alessandra Contini (Firenze: Olschki, 2005); *Luca* Mannori, *Lo stato del Granduca. Le istituzioni della Toscana moderna in un percorso di studi commentati* (Pisa: Pacini Fazi Editore, 2015).

[118] This was rightly pointed out also by Ashley Lynn Buchanan, *The Politics of Medicine at the Late Medici Court: the Recipe Collection of Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici (1667-1743)*, Ph.D Thesis, (University of South Florida, 2018), p. 16.

[119] Giovanni Ciappelli, *Memory, Family, Self. Tuscan Family Books and Other Egodocuments (14th-18th centuries)*, (London: Brill, 2014), pp. 233, 252.

did not enjoy ruling the state. His government occurred in a period of decline in Italy and he was not able to stop the regression of Tuscany'.[120] Patrizia Urbani (2018) even goes so far as to say that 'the Medici dynasty after the death of Ferdinand I no longer expressed sovereigns of great stature, and one of these was his great-grandson Cosimo',[121] condemning in a single sentence not one but four Grand Dukes. Gaetano Greco, in his very recent *Storia del Granducato di Toscana* (2020), continued to quote Galluzzi, and entitled the chapter concerning that period 'Decadence of a dynasty: Cosimo III'. Greco, always insisting on the Grand Duke's exasperated bigotry, describes Tuscany as having 'disastrous economic and anthropic conditions',[122] and argues that Cosimo's reign was 'bound to a condition of humiliating subordination to the Catholic powers'.[123]

It is evident that the prejudice against Cosimo III, which stratified over the centuries, has been so much strengthened by its continuous uncritical repetition that it has itself become a complex historical phenomenon. In fact, this cultural prejudice has become over time so widespread and rooted that it constitutes a fundamental obstacle for new studies on this topic. It has been said above that in Furio Diaz's book *Il Granducato di Toscana* (1976), the historian, in addition to the work of Galluzzi, cites only a few primary sources. Yet there is no lack of documents about this period and indeed the sources relating to the reign of Cosimo III, preserved in the State Archives of Florence, constitute one of the most consistent collections of the entire Medici era. Why, then, did Diaz cite so few sources in his book? Because the historian, trusting those who had preceded him, and failing to distance himself from a centuries-old historiographical

[120] Troes Kardel, Paul Maquet, *Nicolaus Steno, Biography of and Original Papers of a 17th Century Scientist*, (Berlin: Springer, 2013), p. 306. However, the two authors have a milder attitude towards Cosimo, especially considering that Steno himself had great esteem and admiration for the Grand Duke.
[121] Patrizia Urbani, 'I vestiti nuovi del quasi Granduca Cosimo III', *ZoneModa*, 8:1 (2018), p. 106.
[122] Gaetano Greco, *Storia del Granducato di Toscana*, (Brescia, Morcelliana, 2020), p. 196.
[123] Gaetano Greco, Intervista rilasciata a Letture.org. Accessible at: https://www.letture.org/storia-del-granducato-di-toscana-gaetano-greco.

paradigm, was convinced that the sources of this period were not interesting, and therefore could offer very little for historical analysis. 'It is characteristic', wrote Diaz,

> that the universal correspondence of the prince, kept in the *Fondo Mediceo* of the A.S.F., instead of copied letters by a secretary, increasingly began to contain very short registers with summaries of the letters sent by the sovereign to the various correspondents, of any importance, domestically or abroad. This underlines the decreasing importance of the work of the Secretariat of State and the increased personal character of the occupations of the Grand Duke, aimed at issues of diplomacy, court, family and dynasty, rather than to government'.[124]

Diaz's sentence needs to be more accurately explained as it is very interesting for two strictly interconnected reasons. The first is that it reveals the deleterious effects produced by this long-standing prejudice about seventeenth century Tuscany on historical research. The second is that this sentence helps to understand why even very recent books on the subject continue, without citing primary sources, to repeat the same unfounded paradigm of decadence, obscurantism and bigotry. It is *characteristic* (of the epoch of Cosimo III) that the documents *instead of* containing copied letters (therefore before things were very different) contain *very short* registers (therefore there is little material to work on) of letters sent to the various correspondents *of any importance* (then the already poor material available is of little interest, almost frivolous). Such poorly interesting sources *underline* the *decreasing* importance of the work of the Secretariat (so the state

[124] Furio Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana*, p. 466.

was malfunctioning) and the *increased personal character* of the occupations (of a not very competent grand-duke) in diplomatic, court, family and dynastic matters.

In these few words Diaz completely reverses the demonstrative process: the period of Cosimo III is not negative *because* the sources prove it, but since *it is believed* that the sources are of little value *therefore* the period is negative. It is evident that this statement, based on unfounded convictions of a 'scarcity of value' of the sources, as well as being illogical, is methodologically wrong. However, Diaz's words are interesting because they reveal a thought that was probably common to many historians and that could explain the scarcity of adequate studies on this period: if there are few sources and if these sources are of little interest, what is the purpose of doing research?

In fact, a general analysis of the archive material available for the reign of Cosimo III already reveals profound contradictions between the image of Tuscany provided by historiography and the image that transpires from primary sources. The material is extremely abundant and reveals not only how Cosimo III entertained an intense personal correspondence, but also the administrative efficiency of the Tuscan government. More specifically, the study of the Plowman case and the scientific evidence derived from the analysis of the sources, make it possible to effectively contradict the consolidated historiographical prejudice against Tuscany. During the work on this thesis, many documents were examined, and the breadth of the Plowman case allowed the exploration of different sections of the archive, which collect sources produced by different branches of the Grand Ducal government.

The first thing that strikes one is the degree of administrative efficiency: each folder contains not only the incoming correspondence, but also the minutes of the outgoing mail. Everything is catalogued with extreme precision, the copies of the documents are marked in a special way, and if a document was removed from its original location, a little coupon always informs where that specific document was transferred.

The second surprising factor is the amount of correspondence handled by the Secretariat of State, which was meticulously informed not only of what was happening within the borders of the Grand Duchy, but also of what was happening in the rest of Europe and the world.[125]

The grand-ducal bureaucracy was carefully selected and the Secretaries of State reached that position only after having already proved their abilities. Many of them, for example, had previously been ambassadors. Just to mention a few characters who will appear in this work: Coriolano Montemagni, Secretary of State, was ambassador to Spain, Anton Francesco Montauti, Secretary of War, was ambassador to the imperial court, Francesco Terriesi, Superintendent of Customs of Livorno, was a merchant and agent in England. These ministers brought to the government not only an intimate knowledge of the most important European countries and their culture, but above all they brought with them a series of useful relationships created at the time of their residence abroad. The information they received, combined with the constant work of the ambassadors (also appointed only after spending a few years in the administration) ensured that the Tuscan government was always fully informed, and sometimes well in advance, of what was happening or about to happen in the rest of Europe. It will be seen later how during the Plowman case this information superiority will guarantee a significant advantage over England and will prove to be one of the main assets of the Tuscan government.

The analysis of the documents proves, therefore, that Tuscany was an efficient and dynamic state, very different from the decadent nation described by previous historiography. Even from a diplomatic and political point of view, the image of Tuscany that emerges from the analysis of the Plowman case is completely different from that of

[125] Cosimo III's awareness of living in a world with increasingly expanding borders was recently highlighted by the study of the collection of geographical maps purchased by the Grand Duke. On this topic see: *The Global Eye. Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese Maps in the Collection of the Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici*, ed. by A. Cattaneo e S. Corbellini (Firenze: Grafiche Martinelli, 2019).

'humiliating subordination' to foreign powers supported by some historians.[126] On the contrary, Tuscany, to defend its neutrality, independence and sovereignty, did not hesitate to openly challenge England. The challenge was even more significant because Tuscany, being a neutral state, accomplished it alone, making exclusive use of its own forces. Through the analysis of the Plowman case this work will not only demonstrate the political, economic and diplomatic importance of Tuscany in the European context but will also show how Tuscany was able to victoriously manage a dispute with a much powerful country as England.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, historiography has identified Cosimo III as being responsible for the ruin of Tuscany. The Grand Duke is usually described, due to his devotion and his constant commitment to peace, as a bigoted and weak ruler. The 'bigotry' of the Grand Duke is one of the dominant themes in historiographic works on Tuscany, and it is used as one of the main arguments to explain the reasons for the Tuscan decadence: 'in short time the friars became advisers, the theology replaced good politics and the economy of the state [was based] on the subtleties of the clergymen'; [127] '[Cosimo III] was sunk in bigotry [...] and was only happy in the company of friars and priests'; [128] 'He tirelessly travelled through his territories, but his purpose was to seek out relics, promote indulgences, lustre religious processions [...]'[129] so much so that 'theology took the place of the art of governing'; [130] 'An exasperated bigotry remained in him [which] was able to manifest itself during his long principality [...] in political choices [and] in very showy personal behaviour'.[131]

[126] Gaetano Greco, Intervista rilasciata a Letture.org, https://www.letture.org/storia-del-granducato-di-toscana-gaetano-greco
[127] Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana*, p. 242.
[128] George Frederick Young, *I Medici*, p. 388.
[129] John Rigby Hale, *Firenze e i Medici*, p. 236.
[130] George Frederick Young, *I Medici*, p. 390.
[131] Gaetano Greco, *Storia del Granducato di Toscana* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2020), p. 194.

The first to use this term to describe Cosimo III was Galluzzi and his opinion was uncritically repeated by almost all subsequent historians: in this way 'bigotry' not only entered the cultural coordinates that define Tuscany at the end of the seventeenth century, but it has become a historical category, an interpretative means considered suitable for identifying the reasons that caused the decline of the Grand Duchy. But what makes 'bigotry' an adequate tool for historical analysis? The weakness of this category is already evident if we consider what the political motivations that led to its creation were. In fact, as mentioned above, the *Istoria* of Galluzzi had the objective of enhancing the figure of the then reigning Grand Duke. Pietro Leopoldo and Cosimo III were transformed by Galluzzi into opposing figures: while the first was described as an enlightened, progressive and 'laic' ruler, the second assumed the opposite characteristics, that is, obscurantist, retrograde and bigoted. It is not particularly surprising that Galluzzi in his work expressed judgments that were typical of the 'enlightened' culture in which he lived. However, what is perplexing is to observe how the 'bigotry' category has survived even in most contemporary historiography about Tuscany. The methodological error in using such a category is obvious: it is indeed evident that this category applies a moral judgment, identifying in Cosimo III's 'bigotry' a negative element that is surreptitiously compared with the 'modernity' achieved by society in the following centuries. If the Grand Duke might have seemed 'bigoted' in the eyes of an eighteenth-century man like Galluzzi, he will seem even more 'bigoted' nowadays. However, the fact that a historical phenomenon is culturally distant or personally incomprehensible to those who describe it, does not constitute a sufficient reason for expressing hasty moral judgments that are not supported by any in-depth documentary investigation. In fact, the use of a category such as that of 'bigotry' not only trivialises to the extreme a very stratified and complex problem such as the confessional one, but completely eradicates the phenomenon from its historical reality.

The analysis of the available sources allows us to reconstruct a very different image of Cosimo III. Most historians, stalling at the external and superficial aspect of Cosimo III's religiosity, have failed to investigate what the more concrete effects of the Grand Duke's devotional system were and how this was used as a political tool.[132] To analyse the relationship between Cosimo and religion one must first consider the geographical position of Tuscany. The Grand Duchy was in fact surrounded by the State of the Church and having good relations with the Pope also meant protecting Tuscany's borders. As the ambassador of the Republic of Lucca Silvestro Arnolfini wrote in 1674, although 'the pontiff is far superior and surrounds [Tuscany] [...] he cannot make use of such superiority' because of the 'great connections' that the Grand Duke had in Rome.[133] The Tuscan sovereigns, the diplomat continued, had had for a long time such an enormous influence '[on] the election and exclusion of Popes' that 'those cardinals who set this goal for themselves' were willing to do anything to preserve the support of Cosimo III '[...] protecting the interests of the Grand Duke [...] [and satisfying] every other need of his'.[134] Of the same opinion was the Venetian ambassador to Rome, Pietro Mocenigo, who in 1676 wrote: 'much consideration is given [in Rome] to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, in regard to the proximity [of his] states and to the number of [Tuscans] cardinals, prelates and subjects he has in Rome'.[135] 'The reigning nephews [of the Popes]' continued Mocenigo, 'always try to have [Cosimo III] well-disposed so as not to have him enemy and harmful after the death of the Pope'.[136] Cosimo III and his predecessors had therefore

[132] For an evaluation of Cosimo III's religiosity as an instrument of internal political control in Tuscany, see: Marcello Fantoni, *La corte del Granduca*. *Forme e simboli del potere mediceo fra Cinque e Seicento* (Roma: Bulzoni Editore, 1994); Marcello Fantoni, 'Il bigottismo di Cosimo III: da leggenda storiografica ad oggetto storico', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga, (Firenze: Edifir, 1993), pp. 389-402.
[133] Amedeo Pellegrini, *Relazioni Inedite di Ambasciatori Lucchesi alle Corti di Firenze, Genova, Milano, Modena, Parma, Torino*, (Lucca: Tip. Marchi, 1901), p. 222.
[134] Amedeo Pellegrini, *Relazioni Inedite di Ambasciatori Lucchesi*, p. 223.
[135] *Relazioni degli Stati Europei letti al Senato dagli Ambasciatori Veneti nel Secolo Decimosettimo*, ed. by Nicolò Barozzi e Guglielmo Berchet, Serie III, Vol. II, (Venezia: Tip. Pietro Naratovich, 1878), p. 392.
[136] *Relazioni degli Stati Europei letti al Senato dagli Ambasciatori Veneti*, p. 392.

developed a formidable network of patronage: the Grand Dukes could count on a large number of cardinals who were their subjects, and this guaranteed them a decisive influence on the election of the pontiff. On the one hand, having good relations with the Pope meant protecting the borders of the state, on the other, controlling his election made sure that only cardinal friends of Florence could access the Chair of Peter. The benevolence of the popes indeed allowed Cosimo III to achieve important political and economic goals, such as the imposition of new and substantial taxes on the Tuscan clergy, [137] or the faculty to appoint Tuscan bishops.[138] One of the most significant results achieved by the Grand Duke, however, was to obtain from the Pope, in 1691, the royal treatment: this meant raising the Grand Ducal crown to the same dignity as those of the other European monarchs and guaranteed Cosimo III the title of 'Royal Highness'. This recognition, long sought by the Medici house in the context of a competition with that of Savoy, was made possible thanks to the political influence of Cosimo III at the Roman court.[139] The royal treatment was also confirmed by the Emperor but some other courts, such as that of Spain, struggled to recognize the new status achieved by the Grand Duke. Thus, on the Jubilee of 1700, Cosimo III obtained from the pontiff also the appointment as Canon of St. Peter. This episode is usually employed to demonstrate the Grand Duke's bigotry, who also was portrayed in cassock with the distinctive symbols of his role to commemorate the event, thus giving rise to rumours that he loved to dress as a priest. In reality, the nomination as Canon of St. Peter had eminently political significance. Indeed being elected Canon, a title that since the Middle Ages was part of the ceremonial of the

[137] Gregory Halnon, *Human Nature in Rural Tuscany an Early Modern History*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 171. During this research documents were found about in A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Correspondence between Ambassador Fede and the Secretary of State, regarding the raising of a new tax to be imposed on the Tuscan clergy.

[138] *Relazioni degli Stati Europei letti al Senato dagli Ambasciatori Veneti*, p. 392. The appointment was formally submitted to the Pope, to whom the Grand Duke presented four candidates of his choice.

[139] On the competition between the Medici and the Savoy see: Toby Osborne, 'The Surrogate War between the Savoys and the Medici: Sovereignty and Precedence in Early Modern Italy', *The International History Review*, 29:1 (2007), pp. 1-21.

imperial coronation,[140] gave further and public confirmation of the new royal dignity achieved by the Grand Duke. Cosimo III, thanks to his support in Rome, was enrolled in the Olympus of kings and emperors, finding further legitimacy in the sacral character of his investiture. The appointment as Canon of St. Peter definitively sanctioned the new status of Cosimo III and in 1702 Spain too, followed by other European states, recognized the royal treatment of Cosimo III.

The influence of Cosimo III in Rome was also an important advantage from an international point of view: the Grand Duke was in fact perceived as 'the supreme arbiter and the source of favours'[141] to the Roman curia, so much so that many European monarchs, such as the king of Poland, turned directly to the Tuscan sovereign to obtain what they wanted from the Pope.[142] Moreover, the importance that was attributed to the Grand Duke in directing Roman affairs is evident if we consider that his brother Francesco Maria managed to accumulate simultaneously the office of cardinal protector of Spain, the Empire and France.[143] The power of Cosimo III was such that, as reported by the Venetian ambassador in Paris, Girolamo Venier in 1688, 'the affairs of Rome and the trade of the Mediterranean will always be two powerful reasons for France to maintain good relations with the Grand Duke'.[144]

This passage is particularly interesting because the ambassador highlights the two greatest strategic and political assets of the Grand Duchy of Cosimo III, namely the influence on Rome and the port of Livorno. In fact, having power at the papal court meant, by extension, having power over the entire Catholic world and this meant also having

[140] Marcello Fantoni, 'Il bigottismo di Cosimo III', p. 98.
[141] Marcello Fantoni, 'Il bigottismo di Cosimo III', p. 391.
[142] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1029, correspondence between Cosimo III and the King of Poland, and f. 3411, correspondence between ambassador Fede and the Secretary of State.
[143] The cardinal protector, or crown cardinal, defended the interests of the nation he represented in the Roman curia. Furthermore, the cardinal protector played a leading role in conclaves as he could veto the name of a candidate.
[144] *Relazioni degli Stati Europei letti al Senato dagli Ambasciatori Veneti*, p. 485.

influence on much more tangible matters than theology or mysticism. Indeed through religious orders, bishoprics, ecclesiastical benefits, relics and sanctification processes, an immense political, economic and consensus patrimony was managed. For Cosimo III, being ‘the source of favours’ at the court of Rome therefore meant having a power that far transcended the borders of his own state and that was rooted into the deepest social fabric of other Catholic countries. This power was such that it constituted a ‘powerful reason’ even for France which was, at the time, the most powerful European state.

The political significance of Cosimo's appointment as Canon of St. Peter is also evident from the analysis of the iconography. Indeed, on the right of the painting both the grand-ducal crown modified as a royal crown and the coat of arms of the Medici are clearly visible. This shows how the appointment as canon was functional to the recognition of the royal treatment obtained by the Grand Duke. Niccolò Cassana, *Cosimo III in veste di Canonico di San Pietro*, (1700), Galleria degli Uffizi, Firenze, n. 2656.

The other 'reason' cited by the Venetian ambassador was the trade in the Mediterranean, namely the port of Livorno. Its convenient geographical position, low taxation, the privileges enjoyed by merchants of every nation, and above all its neutrality, had made the Tuscan port one of the most important in the world. As will be seen later, Tuscany was the first European country to apply a long-term neutrality policy, that is, to make neutrality the fundamental objective of its foreign policy. It will be shown that Tuscan neutrality was supported by particular geographical, economic and political conditions which, in part, can be identified precisely in the two 'powerful reasons' mentioned by the Venetian ambassador, that is, in the influence on Rome and in the trade of Livorno.

It is precisely neutrality, or rather the fact that Cosimo III's Tuscany was never involved in any European conflict, that has prompted many historians to describe the Grand Duke as a weak ruler. To give an example, Gaetano Greco compares Cosimo III to Vittorio Amedeo II of Savoy: 'while Vittorio Amedeo II used the growth of the public debt to defend his state from the appetites of the most powerful neighbours with the war, Cosimo III instead used the same financial instrument with the aim of mitigating the damage resulting from its neutrality, paying in hard currency the possible devastators of his country'.[145] It is indeed interesting to note the methodological paradox that involves not only this, but most of the studies on Cosimo III. On the one hand, historians were not worried in applying negative categories such as that of 'bigotry', but on the other they were not as quick in considering the 'modernity' of the Tuscan sovereign in his constant application for peace. Indeed, the very fact that the Grand Duke never went to war justified his image as a weak and submissive sovereign. It is also interesting to note that, although our society recognizes peace as a universal positive value, in the reconstruction

[145] Gaetano Greco, *Storia del Granducato di Toscana*, p. 203.

of history the epic aspect always tends to prevail: the image of the victorious sovereign at the head of his army seems to exercise a mystical fascination on historians. Certainly, evaluating a posteriori the decisions of Vittorio Amedeo II, it can be said that they were the 'right' ones, in the sense that they led to an expansion of the state and a growth in the power of the Savoy house. However, those choices could also have meant total annihilation for Vittorio Amedeo, which in fact almost occurred during the siege of Turin in 1706.[146] Furthermore, in the epic description of these victorious sovereigns, a fundamental part is often missing, namely the evaluation of the impact that those wars had on their subjects. Vittorio Amedeo's policy was, in political and dynastic terms, risky but successful, nevertheless in civil and social terms the wars promoted by the Savoy brought horror and devastation to their state. In retrospect it is easy to give an organic and heroic vision of wars and battles, but we must not forget what terrible consequences they brought with them. Therefore, rather than comparing the finances of Cosimo and Vittorio Amedeo, we must try to understand *why* the two sovereigns adopted such different policies. What emerges from this analysis, which will be more fully demonstrated in the third and fourth chapters, is that, in fact, the Duke of Savoy could not avoid war: the borders of his state were in direct contact with France, with the Empire and with the Spanish dominions. For the Savoy, neutrality was in fact impossible, and it was indeed imperative to side with one of the contenders. Tuscany, on the other hand, was in a safer geographical position because its borders were almost entirely protected by the State of the Church. But this also meant that the possibilities for expanding the territory of the Grand Duchy were extremely limited, which of course made a conflict even less convenient. Thus Cosimo III, unlike Vittorio Amedeo, *had the choice* whether to remain in peace or participate in the conflict. The fact that he had always decided to remain in

[146] Geoffrey Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II: Absolutism in the Savoyard State, 1675-1730*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1983).

peace, rather than his weakness, shows his political capacity to keep Tuscany neutral and independent from the largest and most powerful European countries. Cosimo III was certainly a peaceful ruler but, as will be seen in the course of this work, he was by no means a weak ruler. Indeed, the Plowman case shows the Grand Duke's remarkable determination in defending the independence and sovereignty of Tuscany. In fact, even when England threatened to declare war on the Grand Duchy, Cosimo III was not at all frightened, but mobilized the army and further fortified Livorno, preparing for the conflict.

Cosimo III therefore appears to be a very different sovereign compared to the image that historiography has given of him so far. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that his 'bigotry' or his 'weakness' is the expression of the uncritical and indiscriminate application of historical categories that give a simplified, superficial and stereotyped interpretation of an extremely more complex reality. As will be seen in this work, Cosimo III possessed not only a refined diplomatic ability but also a great personal determination. These qualities allowed him not only to openly confront a state as powerful as England, but above all allowed him to profit from the strategic advantages of Tuscany to keep the country at peace during these extremely turbulent years of European history.

Structure of the Thesis

The chapters of this thesis are thematically divided. The first chapter will focus on William Plowman and on the origins of the Plowman case. The chapter reconstructs a biographical profile of the merchant and then analyses his journey in the Mediterranean, showing what the reasons that led the English merchant to become a pirate were. The chapter then highlights the diplomatic, dynastic and economic situation of Tuscany, illustrating the motives that transformed Plowman's actions in an international dispute.

The second chapter will focus on regime change in England following the Glorious Revolution, showing what impact it had on the relations between England and the other European countries. The chapter highlights how the regime change weakened the social cohesion of English society and shows how the lack of trust between the government, its representatives and its citizens affected English diplomatic capabilities.

The third chapter will deal with the theme of Tuscan neutrality. After having set neutrality in its historical context, the chapter demonstrates that Tuscany was the first European state to apply a long-term neutrality policy, i.e. to make neutrality the fundamental objective of its foreign policy. The chapter highlights also what the characteristics that allowed the Grand Duchy to apply a long-term neutrality policy were. The chapter then explores the diplomatic struggle between England and Tuscany, showing how the Plowman case endangered Tuscan neutrality.

The fourth chapter shows Tuscan neutrality system in action, analysing the practical methods with which Tuscany managed to maintain its neutrality during the Plowman case. The chapter will illustrate how Tuscany's best intelligence capability allowed it to gain a fundamental strategic advantage over England.

The fifth and sixth chapters will focus on the role of public opinion in the evolution and conclusion of the controversy. The chapters highlight how Tuscany exploited the fragmentation of English society at its own advantage, sowing discord between the English government, its representatives and its citizens abroad. Tuscany, leveraging on the economic interests of the English merchant society, pushed both the English merchants of Livorno and those residing in London to openly rebel against the Crown until the English government was forced to renounce to its claims.

Chapter I: The Plowman Case

The Plowman case began in April 1696 when William Plowman, who left Livorno on a commercial expedition to the Levant, captured numerous French merchant ships. As explained in the introduction, Plowman's actions were not in themselves 'exceptional' or 'unusual'. Plowman, as a private individual, decided to add piracy to his commercial expedition, thus exposing himself to the consequences of his actions. There is no doubt that Plowman was a pirate because, as it will be seen later in this chapter, neither he, nor any of the captains accompanying him had a letter of marque. Normally the responsibility for those crimes would fall exclusively on Plowman who would be pursued, arrested and probably hanged for what he had done. However, the first reaction to Plowman's actions was diplomatic. Indeed, France threatened to block all Tuscan ships and goods in French ports until the Grand Duke, who was deemed guarantor for Plowman's behaviour, would pay damages to the French merchants. The French government instrumentally used Plowman's actions as a pretext to accuse Tuscany of having broken its neutrality in the Nine Years' War.

This chapter reconstructs the political and diplomatic context of the Plowman case, in order to illustrate the reasons that led France to transform the controversy into a state affair. It will demonstrate that the case derived both from the European political context and from diplomatic and dynastic decisions made by the Grand Duchy in the previous decade. The chapter then analyses Plowman's expedition to the Levant and argues that Plowman's voyage was not merely commercial, but it also had diplomatic objectives, such as creating a monopoly for the import of Tunisian wheat to Tuscany. Finally, the chapter will describe the impact of Plowman's arrest on the English merchant community in Livorno. These events not only to highlight the fragmentation of the

merchant community of Livorno, but also underline the political and confessional contradictions of English society after the Glorious Revolution.

William Plowman and his case

On 22nd April 1696 three English ships, the *Charles*, the *Philip and Mary*, and the *Peace Sloop*, left the port of Livorno bound for the Levant. Their expedition had been carefully prepared, and the three vessels were about to embark on a journey that would take them across the length and breadth of the Mediterranean and to initiate a complicated international controversy.

This section will explore the reasons behind William Plowman's expedition to the Levant. After reconstructing a biographical profile of the English merchant, it will be shown that his expedition, which was apparently of a purely commercial nature, also had important strategic and political motivations. Although officially the English vessels should have headed to Alexandria in Egypt to buy coffee, in reality the most important objective of the expedition was to make a deal with the Bey of Tunis[1] for the exclusive export of the grain to Livorno. It will be demonstrated how the signing of this agreement, which had significant political, economic and strategic implications, was the main motivation that convinced Cosimo III to grant Plowman permission to arm his ships in Livorno.

The information in this section comes from two types of sources, namely from pamphlets on the controversy published between 1701 and 1705 and from the documents preserved in the State Archives of Florence and in The National Archives in London. The Plowman case sparked a fierce public debate in England, which was fuelled through the

[1] Bey was an Ottoman title for the governor of a city or province. With this title from the fifteenth century it was generally indicated the lord of Tunis.

publication of several pamphlets. The first was printed by Plowman and his associates in 1701, and that is what turned the controversy into a question of politics and public opinion.[2] Although this aspect of the story will be extensively explored in the fifth and sixth chapters, it is useful to know that, in 1704, the London merchants, who opposed Plowman's demands against the Grand Duke, published another pamphlet, in which they contested the claims of the English merchant.[3] Plowman thus published another pamphlet[4] to which the merchants responded with another publication.[5] From the first one, published in 1701, each of these pamphlets had been specially designed to influence English public opinion, therefore the information contained in them represents only a partial and conveniently adapted version of the events. Through the comparative analysis between these various publications and archival documents a more accurate biographical profile of William Plowman will emerge. Furthermore, this analysis will reveal what the real reasons for this expedition were, both from the point of view of Plowman and Cosimo III.

William Plowman was an English merchant living in Livorno and co-owner, together with Alexander Rigby and William Shepard, of the trading house 'Rigby, Shepard & Co.'.[6] The company was founded on 29th November 1690 with a capital of

[2] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard, and William Plowman, setting forth the damages they have suffer'd by the imprisonment of William Plowman, Seizure of their effects, and other proceedings of the Grand Duke of Toscany*, (London, 1701).
[3] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn, for Printing Their Case*, (London, 1704); *The Answer of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn to The Account of Damages Laid to the Charge of the Great Dule of Toscany by Sir Alexander Rigby, Mr. William Shepard and Mr. William Plowman, Together with Their Reply and The Mercnahts-Petitioners Second Answer thereto*, (London, 1704).
[4] *The Case of the Ship Charles Being an Article Comprehended in the Account of Damages Suffer'd by the Proceedings of the Great Duke of Tuscany, Complained of by Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard, and William Plowman*, (London, 1704).
[5] *The Grand Duke of Tuscany's Proceedings Against William Plowman with Remarks thereupon*, (London, 1705).
[6] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, memorial from Rigby and Shepard to Cosimo III, 26 March 1697.

13,500 *pezze*,[7] invested in equal parts by each of the three partners.[8] The three came from quite different backgrounds. Alexander Rigby, born in 1663, was the third child of Alexander Rigby of Layton Hall and Burgh, and of Anne Birch. The Rigby family had considerable landholdings and was quite wealthy, so much so that Alexander Jr. was sent to study at the University of Padua (1684).[9] Rigby went later into business with Lambert Blackwell[10] on behalf of whom he made numerous trips to Europe and to the Near East,[11] until he founded his own trading company in 1689.[12] William Shepard was the son of a London merchant 'of good credit and substance'[13] and is described, upon his arrival in Livorno, as 'a very hopeful young man'. [14] No other details are given on this partner, and from the analysis of the sources it appears that he was not a prominent figure in the company.

William Plowman also had a commercial background. In the pamphlet of 1701 Plowman is briefly described as the operational arm of the company because 'by a long experience, acquired a knowledge of the trade in Italy and other places in the Mediterranean Seas', which made him highly qualified to manage the business of the company.[15] The other pamphlets reveal that he was a Catholic[16] and that he had arrived in Livorno in 1676, probably following his father Mattew Plowman, who was registered

[7] The 'piece' was a generic denomination of a coin to which the value was added (a piece of twenty-four soldi or a piece of 8 Spanish royals). In particular, for this work 'piece' means a coin of 'eight Spanish royals' or 'piece of eight'. This coin was one of the most minted and most widespread coins in the world, and, especially in the commercial field, it became the standard reference for defining the value of goods.
[8] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, memorial from Rigby and Shepard to Cosimo III, 26 March 1697.
[9] 'Alexander Rigby', in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1690-1715*, ed. by D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Accessible at: https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/rigby-sir-alexander-1663-1717.
[10] Lambert Blackwell (? -1727) was first consul in Livorno (1690) and then ambassador to Tuscany (1698-1704). He was one of the main protagonists of the Plowman case.
[11] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard and William Plowman*, (1701), p. 1.
[12] The pamphlets of 1704 draw a rather merciless profile of Alexander Rigby, accused of numerous embezzlements. In particular, it appears that Rigby had defrauded his four sisters of their share of their father's inheritance.
[13] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard and William Plowman*, (1701), p. 2.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[16] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners*, (1704), p. 2; *The Answer of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn*, (1704), p. 147.

as a merchant in the city.[17] No information is given regarding the social and cultural background of the young Plowman, although it appears that his love life was quite adventurous, as he was married to two women at the same time. The English merchant got married for the first time on 12th September 1681 to Katherine Salisbury, daughter of William Salisbury Esq., 'a gentleman of a worthy family in Essex, whom […] he clandestinely seduced to marry him in the church of St. Mary Newington in Surrey'.[18] It seems that Plowman had no children with his first wife, who died around 1693-94.[19] On the other hand, there is much less information available on the second wife and her nationality is not clear. This woman resided permanently in Livorno with Plowman and the two had at least seven children, the eldest of whom was born in 1682.[20] From the date of birth of the first child, it could thus be assumed that the couple had married about a year earlier, in 1681, which would mean not only that Plowman was married to two women at the same time, but that he married them in the same year as well. Through the information gathered from the comparison of the various pamphlets, we could argue that the fact that the pamphlet of 1701 only vaguely described Plowman stemmed from the 'particular' conditions of his background, namely that he was Catholic and that he was bigamous.[21] Anyway the reference to Plowman's 'long experience' in trading could mean

[17] *The Grand Duke of Tuscany's Proceedings Against William Plowman with Remarks thereupon*, (London, 1705), p. 1. In 1687 Plowman's father unsuccesfully tried to be elected English consul in Livorno. A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4245, Mattew Plowman, 12 September 1687.

[18] *The Answer of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn*, (1704), p. II-III. The pamphlet also contains the marriage certificate, signed by the rector of the parish William Taswell and by the parish-clerk Richard Savage. St. Mary Newington's Church was bombed in 1941 and its archive was completely destroyed.

[19] *The Answer of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn*, (1704), p. 147.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[21] As it will be seen later in this work in England prejudice against Catholics was very strong. Indeed, since 1701 there were laws persecuting anyone who practiced the Catholic religion. The law was entitled 'An Act for the Further Preventing the Growth of Popery' and was passed the 25th March 1700. William III, 1698-9: An Act for the further preventing the Growth of Popery, in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (Great Britain Record Commission, 1820), pp. 586-587. On this topic see: Alexandra M. Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700 (*Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009*);* Alexandra M. Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)*;* Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

that the merchant was older than the other two partners. We will see later how this hypothesis could find confirmation in Plowman's actions during his cruise in the Mediterranean.

From the 1701 pamphlet we learn that the commercial house Rigby&Shepard specialized in the trade of fish, lead, tin, clothes and woollen products but also of lye, cotton, silk and, above all, coffee.[22] Other income derived from the shipping business, while a more significant share of income came from privateering.[23] It seems that the company's affairs thrived because, over a few years, its capital increased significantly, reaching, in 1695, 20,000 pezze per partner.[24]

At the beginning of 1696 the European war had paralyzed continental trade for years, and coffee had become scarce and extremely expensive. The Rigby&Shepard house learned that a large amount had arrived in Alexandria in Egypt and there, due to the plague that was ravaging the city, was struggling to find buyers. The prices were formidable: the merchants would have paid 22 pezze for the coffee in Alexandria, while they could have resold it in Livorno for 62.5 pezze, with a considerable profit of 298%.[25]

The merchants outfitted three ships:

- The *Charles*, Captain Charles Pickering, 20 guns and 150 crewmen
- The *Phillip and Mary*, Captain John Brome, 20 guns and 180 crewmen
- The *Peace Sloop*, Captain William Garland, 6 guns, 20 crewmen

[22] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, 26 March 1697; from Alessandro dal Borro to Pietro Angeli, 6 May 1697.
[23] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard and William Plowman*, (1701), p. 2.
[24] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, memorial from Rigby and Shepard to Cosimo III, 26 March 1697. In reality, there is much uncertainty about what the economic situation of the trading company in 1696 really was. In the other pamphlets it is indeed suggested that the company was already on the brink of financial collapse, and that the expedition to the Levant was the latest in a series of dangerous speculations in which the three partners were involved.
[25] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby* (1701), p. 3.

However the French 'alarm'd at this expedition, and surmizing that the consequence thereof would be to their prejudice […] made use of all their art and interest at the court of Florence to frustrate the design and to hinder the departure of these ships'.[26] According to the 1701 pamphlet, the French tried to hamper the expedition because they were envious of the commercial success of Plowman's company. [27] In reality, the French merchants of Livorno feared that the heavily armed English ships had more aggressive intentions than trade. The fears of the French appear even more justified when one considers how the crew of the English ships had been recruited. In fact, one of the ways in which it is possible to distinguish a merchant ship from a privateer is to establish the method of hiring and paying the crew. Sailors on merchantmen received a salary, while those of a privateer were tipically paid with a share of the booty.[28] Therefore, if Plowman's expedition were exclusively of a commercial nature, the salary of the 350 crewmen would have significantly reduced its profit. The crew of the English ships was instead recruited with the 'no purchase, no pay' rule:[29] this meant that, in case of the capture of a prize, the crew would be entitled to a third of the booty while, if the expedition were not lucky, they would receive nothing.[30] Plowman's method of hiring was therefore typical of a privateer. Indeed, such a large crew, useless in a merchant expedition, was indispensable to simultaneously manoeuvre sails and guns, and to board other ships.

The French protests against the armament of the English ships was prompted also by the European political and economic context. The Nine Years' War was rapidly

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[27] *The Grand Duke of Tuscany's Proceedings Against William Plowman with Remarks thereupon*, (London, 1705), p. 4.
[28] Benerson Little, *The Sea's Rovers Practice. Pirate Tactics and Techniques 1630-1730* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books Inc., 2007), p. 35.
[29] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby and William Shepard* (1704), p. 4.
[30] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696. 'An Act for continuing the Acts For prohibiting all Trade and Commerce with France and for the encouragement of Privateers', William and Mary [Chapter XXV. Rot. Parl. pt. 5. nu. 7.]', in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 6, 1685-94*, ed. by John Raithby (1819), pp. 419-425. Accessible at: *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol6/pp419-425.

coming to an end and, in the spring of 1696, the representatives of the nations involved in the conflict had already gathered in The Hague to negotiate peace.[31] The war had gone very badly for France which, unable to bear the economic costs of a conflict of such vast proportions, was on the verge of financial collapse.[32] Therefore, considering that Plowman's company was already involved in privateering, the new expedition appeared to the French conveniently set up for taking advantage of the last months of the war to plunder what was left of French trade in the Mediterranean.

To prevent the expedition the French wrote several memorials[33] to the Tuscan government and finally appealed directly to the Grand Duke. They argued that the arming of the English ships contravened the neutrality of Livorno[34] and that it was also in open contradiction to a Grand Ducal Bando[35] of 1683 which prohibited the arming of any privateer without the explicit authorization of the monarch.[36] The French protests induced Cosimo III to ascertain what Plowman's intentions actually were. The English merchant first spoke with one of the most important ministers of the Grand Duke in Livorno, Francesco Terriesi, then with the governor of the city, Alessandro dal Borro, and finally with Cosimo III himself, promising all of them that his ship *Philip and Mary*, commanded

[31] Addington Davenport, *The Acts and Negotiations Togheter with the Particular Articles at large, of the General Peace concluded at Ryswick by the Most Illustrious Confederates with the French King* (London: Robert Clevel at the Peacock 1698), p. 38.
[32] Guy Rowlands, *The Financial Decline of a Great Power, War, Influence, and Money in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 20-22.
[33] The word 'memorial' is used as it was intended at the time, i.e., a written official document which usually contained requests, grievances or explanations.
[34] The neutrality of the port of Livorno will be extensively discussed in the third chapter of this work. The French referred to an international treaty between Tuscany, France, Spain, Holland and England. The treaty was extremely concise and provided that: 1) No hostility was allowed in the port of Livorno; 2) No armed ship that had been at anchor in the harbour or in the port could have gone out to fight or disturb any enemy vessel entering the port; 3) Any merchant ship of any warring nation that was in the harbour or port of Livorno shall have left at least 24 hours after the departure of a merchant ship of a hostile nation. Compliance with this treaty was guaranteed by the Grand Duke through the cannons of his fortresses in Livorno which would have fired 'always and quickly' at those who violated the obligations of the agreement.
[35] The Tuscan laws were called 'Bando', from the verb 'bandire': 'announce with a public proclamation'.
[36] Lorenzo Cantini, *Legislazione Toscana raccolta ed illustrata*, (Firenze: Stamperia Albizziniana di Santa Maria in Campo, Vol. XIX, 1801), p. 295.

by Captain Broom, would not attack or take any 'French ships or other French vessels'.[37] Plowman's word seemed to be a sufficient guarantee for the Grand Duke who, having reassured the French, granted his permission and let them leave undisturbed for the Levant.

Arriving at this point in the story, what is most striking is the personal involvement of the Grand Duke. Why had Cosimo III personally exposed himself, and why had he trusted the word of a simple merchant as Plowman was? Indeed, who *really* was William Plowman?

As mentioned above Plowman was Catholic and during the Glorious Revolution he had remained faithful to James II. This is clearly demonstrated by the pardon that Plowman received by William III on 7th March 1700, which states: 'lycence to William Plowman, merchant, who went into the French King's Dominions since the 11th day of December 1688 without lycence from his Majesty or the Queen, to return into and abide in this Realm or any other of his Majesty's Dominions'.[38] The 11th December 1688 was the date of the 'Guildhall declaration', which started the counter-revolutionary movement in support of James II and several of the pardons later asked by James' supporters mention this date.[39] Plowman's support for James II is further confirmed by the fact that the merchant continued to have relations with the English court in exile in St. Germain, so much so that Queen Mary commissioned him to bring a portrait of her son James Francis Stuart to her brother, the Duke of Modena.[40] Certainly Plowman's services were much appreciated since on 5th February 1694 James II wrote to Cosimo III defining Plowman a 'fidelle sujet qui nous a donne des marques de son zele et de sa capacité' and asking the

[37] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, from Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696.
[38] T.N.A., S.P. 44/351, 7 March 1700.
[39] Robert Beddard, 'The Guildhall Declaration of 11 December 1688 and the Counter-Revolution of the Loyalysts', *The Historical Journal*, 11:3 (1968), pp. 403-430.
[40] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn, for Printing Their Case*, (London, 1704), p. IV. Duke of Modena was Francesco II of Este (1660-1694).

Grand Duke to recognize him as 'nostre Agent et Consul in Ligourne'.[41] However, James II added that Plowman's appointment should not have been made public 'pour certaines raisons qui regartent notre service'[42]. The fact that the Grand Duke recognized the English merchant exclusively as Consul, and not also as Agent of James II is particularly significant. The omission of the title of Agent in Cosimo III's reply had immediate consequences for Plowman's legal status. Consuls, although considered representatives of their nation, did not enjoy the diplomatic immunities that were due to agents, envoys and ambassadors.[43]

Those 'certaines raisons' that led to the secret appointment of Plowman as the representative of James II in Livorno are also significant. The 1704 pamphlet suggests that the English merchant was aware of the plot of 1696 to assassinate William III.[44] Indeed, it seems that Plowman met in Livorno with James Drummond, Duke of Perth, one of the most influential members of the Stuart court in exile in St. Germain.[45] Those 'certaines raisons' could therefore be linked to the plot, or to the attempt to involve members of the English community of Livorno in the plan to restore James II to the throne. The available archival sources cannot reveal what Plowman's role in the plot actually was, but the fact that James had appointed him his Consul and Agent in Livorno clearly shows that the merchant played an important role in supporting the Jacobite

[41] A.S.F., M.d.P. f. 1029, from James II to Cosimo III, 5 February 1694. Translation: 'Plowman is a faithful subject who already has given proof of his zeal and capacity'.
[42] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1029, from James II to Cosimo III, 5 February 1694. Translation: 'for some reasons that regard our service'.
[43] Paolo Castignoli, 'Aspetti Istituzionali della Nazione Inglese a Livorno', in *Atti del Convegno Gli Inglesi a Livorno e all'Isola d'Elba*, (Livorno: Bastogi, 1980), p. 113.
[44] The plot, known as '1696 Jacobite Assassination Plot', was organised by Robert Charnock and other supporters of James II. On this topic: Paul Hopkins, 'Charnock, Robert (1663–1696)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[45] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn, for Printing Their Case*, (London, 1704), p. IV. Drummond was soon after appointed governor of the Prince of Wales. Edward Corp, 'Drummond, James, fourth earl of Perth and Jacobite first duke of Perth (1648–1716)', in Oxford Dictionary *of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Accessible at: https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8070.

cause.[46] However, James II's recommendation is useful to explain why Cosimo III considered the word of Plowman as a sufficient guarantee to allow him to organize his expedition to the Levant: the Grand Duke had not trusted the word of a simple merchant but of that of the personal agent of a monarch who, moreover, was allied with the French.

In fact, the Grand Duke also had other and more personal reasons for believing Plowman's assurances. The first was that the English merchant would go to the Levant to buy a large lot of coffee. This was an extremely valuable commodity, and even in times of peace it was very expensive. In 1696 the European conflict had severely damaged the continental trade and coffee had become scarce and almost impossible to find in Europe. However coffee was not just an exotic and precious commodity: Cosimo III had been using coffee for years as a diplomatic gift.[47] Through the analysis of the correspondence between the Tuscan ambassador to Rome, count Anton Maria Fede, and the Secretary of State, it emerges that Cosimo made presents of coffee to numerous and influential members of the Roman curia.[48] Thus, the Grand Duke had a personal interest in Plowman's expedition because it would allow him to continue to supply the papal court with a commodity that the war made scarce. Supplying Rome with coffee meant not only being able to make a precious good available, but also demonstrating that the Medici house was able to provide it. It was above all a question of image: coffee became in fact

[46] Even the name of his ships reveals Plowman's Jacobite position and Catholic faith, since the Charles was evidently dedicated to Charles I (or II), and the Philip and Mary was named after Philip of Spain and Mary Tudor.

[47] On the importance of gifts in diplomacy see: Maija Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th Centuries', in *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9 (2006), pp. 348-370; Kim Siebenhuner, 'Approaching Diplomatic and Courtly Gift-giving in Europe and Mughal India: Shared Practices and Cultural Diversity', *The Medieval History Journal*, 16 (2014), pp. 525-546; Sharon Kettering, 'Gift-Giving and Patronage in Early Modern France', in *French History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 131–151; Hillard von Thiessen, 'Exchange of gifts and ethos of patronage in the relations between Spain and the papal states in Early 17th century', in *L'arte del dono scambi artistici e diplomazia tra Italia e Spagna, 1550–1650* (Milano: Silvana Ed., 2013), pp. 27–32; Diana Carrìò Invernizzi, 'Gift and Diplomacy in Seventeenth Century Spanih Italy, *The Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), pp. 881-899.

[48] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, correspondence between Anton Maria Fede and Francesco Panciatichi, 1695-1696.

a symbol of the refinement and power of the Tuscan house which, apparently unaffected by the difficulties of the conflict, managed to be an example of generous liberality. As Ashley Buchanan pointed out, there was a real 'gastronomic policy' made up of 'valuable gifts that could aid in solidifying political alliances and interpersonal relationships with important elite families across Europe'.[49]

However, if coffee was already a good reason for allowing Plowman to leave, Cosimo III had also entrusted the English merchant with a much more important business: that of ensuring the monopoly of the export of grain from Tunisia to Livorno. By 1696 the French had not only financial problems but were also on the verge of famine and they were forced to buy wheat produced by other states. France, having no ally in Europe, sought supplies from North Africa, and in particular from Tunisia. Around 1685, the French had signed a contract with the Bey of Tunis for the lease of an area 'call'd the farme of Cape Negro'.[50] This area was particularly fertile, and the village of Capo Negro had a small port where merchant ships could dock to be directly loaded with grain, therefore lowering the logistical costs of the operation. In 1696 the French imported from Capo Negro such a volume of grain that 'Provence and Languedoc are chiefly supported from thence'.[51] The French imported from Tunisia 240,000 British Bushels,[52] equal to about 8,736 cubic meters of wheat. Consequently, if France lost control of Cape Negro, famine would be inevitable and the war would surely be lost.[53] Before 1695 the English had tried several times, albeit unsuccessfully, to persuade the Bey of Tunis, Muhammad Al-Muradi, to rescind the agreement with the French. But, according to the English consul

[49] Ashley L. Buchanan, 'The Politics of Chocolate: Cosimo III's Secret Jasmine Chocolate Receipe', *The Receipe Project*, www. recipes.hypotheses.org. Also medicines or pharmaceutical products developed in the famous 'Spezieria' of Palazzo Pitti in Florence were used by the Medici as diplomatic gifts. On this see Ashley L. Buchanan, *The Politics of Medicine at the Late Medici Court: the Recipe Collection of Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici (1667-1743)*, Ph.D Thesis, University of South Florida, 2018.
[50] T.N.A., S.P. 71/27, Chetwood to James Vernon, 3 February 1696. Capo Negro is on the west coast of Tunisia, 120km far away from Tunis.
[51] T.N.A., S.P. 71/27, Chetwood to James Vernon, 3 February 1696.
[52] The Bushel was a unit of measurement of volume used for cereals, equal to 8 gallons, or 36,4 litres.
[53] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 38.

in Tunis Chetwood, the French frequently sent warships there 'which have as often defeated the designes of this pusillanimous Bey as he discovered inclinations in our favour'.[54] However, in 1696 the Bey died and was succeeded by his brother Romdhane, who had an open sympathy for the English and for the Tuscans. Indeed, a few years earlier the Bey of Tunis Muhammad Al-Muradi was dethroned by the Dey[55] of Algiers and was forced to flee abroad together with his brother Romdhane.[56] The latter had first taken refuge in Chios and then went to Livorno, where Cosimo III agreed to host him until he was able to return to his country.[57] In Livorno Romdhane also met Plowman and his associates and developed a close relationship with them. When in 1695 his brother Muhammad Al-Muradi managed to return to the throne again, Romdhane was brought back to Tunis, together with his entourage, on board the ship *Charles* at the expense of the Rigby&Shepard.[58] In 1696 Romdhane succeeded his brother and became Bey of Tunis: the circumstance was truly fortunate, both for the English merchants and for Cosimo III. For the former, the accession to the throne of the new Bey could mean huge profits, because of the concrete possibility of taking the Cape Negro grain monopoly away from the French. However, since England did not have its own port in the Mediterranean, the merchants would have had to export the Tunisian wheat to Livorno. Cosimo III as well was most interested in the success of the English enterprise because it would allow him to combine two fundamental objectives of his internal and foreign policy: that of preventing a famine in Tuscany, and that of strengthening the importance of the port of Livorno. It is clear that if the English had stolen Tunisian wheat from the French, it would

[54] T.N.A., S.P. 71/27, Chetwood to James Vernon, 3 February 1696.
[55] Dey was the title of the regents of the cities of Algiers and Tripoli under the Ottoman Empire, from 1671 to 1830.
[56] This episode fits into the context of the Muradide War of Succession (1675-1705). In 1695 became Bey Muhammad Al-Muradi, who died in 1696 and was succeeded by his brother Romdhane, who reigned until 1699, when he was deposed and beheaded by his nephew. André Raymond, *Tunis sous les Mouradites: la ville et ses habitants au XVII siècle*, (Tunis: éd. Cérès, 2006).
[57] A.P.O.F.M.Cap., Filippo Bernardi da Firenze, *Memorie dall'Anno 1691 fino al 1739*, p. 39.
[58] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 38.

have had a huge international impact because this wheat was used by the French to feed the southern regions of Provence and Languedoc: a famine would have been inevitable and the country would have been forced to surrender to the imperial coalition.

Romdhane, grateful for the hospitality received in Tuscany and remembering his friendship with Plowman and his associates, was indeed willing to revoke the concession to the French and to grant it to the English. In April 1696 the deal was already in an advanced stage, so much so that the English merchants, to seal the agreement, brought the Bey a precious scimitar set with rubies and diamonds, worth 7,000 pezze.[59] The draft for the new Cape Negro agreement was ready and it was sent to England to get the government's approval.

Thus, when Plowman gave Cosimo III his assurance that he would not attack any French ship, the Grand Duke had no reason not to believe him. First of all, Plowman was an 'accredited' person who enjoyed the trust of James II. Furthermore, the English merchant would have carried out two important tasks for the Tuscan sovereign: buying coffee and signing a fundamental strategic agreement with the Bey of Tunis.

The actions of the Grand Duke, although correct from a formal point of view, still threatened to expose him to the discontent of the French. In fact, although the Tunisian wheat agreement was formally carried out by an English commercial company and by the English government, it was clear that Tuscany would enjoy many advantages and benefits from it. We will see later in this chapter how the relations between Tuscany and France were already very tense and that the Tunisian wheat episode was the last of many issues that caused the two to clash.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Plowman's voyage in the Levant

This section will reconstruct Plowman's journey to the Levant. It will be shown that Plowman's actions, and in particular the attacks against French ships, were in all respects acts of piracy, given that neither he nor the captains of his ships had a valid letter of marque. The analysis of Plowman's behaviour during his voyage will demonstrate how the English merchant had planned that expedition to be the last of his career. Through the comparative analysis of the available sources, i.e. of the pamphlets already mentioned in the previous section and of the archival sources, the discrepancies between the 'official' story published in the pamphlets and Plowman's real actions will be identified. A fundamental document for this analysis is an original letter written by William Plowman during his expedition and addressed to John Crookshanks, a close friend of the English merchant, as well as the accountant of his commercial house.[60] The study of this document will be essential to understand what the English merchant's objectives for that expedition were.

The English ships left Livorno on 22nd April 1696 and the investment by the Rigby&Shepard for that expedition was substantial. The armament of the ships *Charles* and *Philip and Mary* had cost 12,458 and 9,946 pezze respectively, while goods of various kinds were loaded on board, in particular perpetuans,[61] woollen cloths and cochineal for a value of 10,228 pezze.[62] In addition, 8,944 pezze in cash had been brought on board to purchase coffee in Alexandria.

[60] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[61] A heavy woollen cloth.
[62] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 39.

After leaving the port of Livorno the English ships headed for Tunis. The wind blew clearly from the North-East, since instead of taking the fastest route, directly to the South, the small fleet headed towards Corsica and Sardinia, probably passing through the Strait of Bonifacio. On 27th April, near Capo Caccia, the three ships encountered a French ship, the *Santa Barbara*. Plowman easily captured the vessel, which was richly loaden with seventy bales of wool, about a thousand cantara of tin,[63] a thousand cantara of silver alum[64] and sixteen cantara of wax.[65] After capturing the *Santa Barbara* Plowman headed for Tunis where, as seen above, he carried on the negotiations with the Bey Romdhane for the Cape Negro grain.

The English merchant left Tunis on 6 or 7th May 1696. The ships had just left the port when some sails appeared on the horizon that looked like promising prizes. Plowman, 'hoping to catch something', gave the order to pursue those ships.[66] They were in fact a merchant convoy, escorted by two French warships, the *Marquise* and the *Serieux*.[67] By the time Plowman noticed the presence of the warships, it was too late: the French vessels opened fire and pursued him. The only hope of salvation for the English ships was to split up and flee. The *Peace Sloop* managed to take refuge in Porto Farina,[68] while the damaged *Charles* was forced to turn north, eventually reaching the Island of Elba, where she stopped for repairs.[69]

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[63] Ancient unit of measurement of medieval origins, used to measure the volume of goods. The value of the 'cantaro' has undergone considerable variations, but it is likely that at the time it was equivalent to about 100 kilograms.
[64] Silver nitrate.
[65] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of the Santa Barbara, written by Notary Giuseppe Vittorio Barsotti, 4 June 1696; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of Captain Fougasse of the ship Santa Barbara to the French consul at Tunis, 8 May 1696.
[66] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[67] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Memorial of the French consul in Livorno, Gilecourt, sent to Gen. Del Borro, Governor of Livorno, 4 February 1697; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696. The *Marquise* was a galley, in service from 1690 to 1697, while the *Serieux* was a second-class 58-gun ship, active from 1687 to 1718. Rin Winfield, Stephen Roberts, *French Warships in the Age of Sail 1626-1786: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publising, 2017), p. 88, 380.
[68] Nowadays is called Ghar El Mehl, it was a famous port for barbary pirates.
[69] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.

Plowman, on *Philip and Mary*, managed to escape the French ships and continued his journey towards Alexandria. The journey was peaceful and uneventful until the *Philip and Mary* arrived, in early June, in sight of the Egyptian city. Just outside the port of Alexandria there was a French merchant ship, upon which Plowman fired three broadsides.[70] The French ship took refuge under the fort of Alexandria which fired at the *Philip and Mary*.[71] Plowman had no choice but withdraw from the fight and, after waiting a few days offshore, he entered Alexandria.[72]

In the city the plague raged so fiercely that no one, neither officers nor crew, had the slightest intention of docking in port.[73] Thus, Plowman delivered the money to his correspondent in the city, with orders to invest everything in coffee and to ship it to Italy aboard the *Peace Sloop*, that soon would arrive in Alexandria. These operations were completed as quickly as possible and the *Philip and Mary*, much to the relief of everyone on board, set sail for Scanderoon to resupply.[74]

According to the 'official' account, that is the one presented in the pamphlet printed by Plowman in 1701, the English merchant travelled peacefully to the Turkish port, without having any encounters. However, archival sources and in particular a letter written by William Plowman to his friend Jack Crookshanks reveal a different story.[75]

From this letter it emerges that Plowman, six days after leaving Alexandria, had already captured another ship, *Nostra Signora della Speranza e S. Antonio*.[76] This ship

[70] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of the *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[71] The French ship, approaching the coast, entered what were considered Turkish territorial waters. Territorial waters extended by convention for the distance that could have been covered by the firing of the cannon. Wyndham L. Walker, 'Territorial Waters: the Cannon Shot Rule', *British Year Book of International Law*, n.22 (1945), pp. 210-231; H.S.K. Kent, 'The Historical Origins of the Three-Mile Limit', *The American Journal of International Law*, 48:4 (1954), pp. 537-553; James Kraska, *Maritime Power and the Law of the Sea. Expeditionary Operations in World Politics*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 114-115.
[72] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[73] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 5.
[74] Nowadays is called Iskenderun, is in Turkey, near to the Syrian border.
[75] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[76] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.

was not French, however, but Maltese. The Knights of Malta were neutral in the conflict and their ships should have travelled without fear of being attacked by the English.[77] This capture therefore shows how Plowman's behaviour was similar to that of a pirate rather than a privateer, who was required to respect neutral ships. The English merchant sold the goods loaden on the *Nostra Signora della Speranza* to Cyprus for 7,000 pezze, and kept the ship to himself, considering it useful to have another vessel with him.

The *Philip and Mary* then arrived in the vicinity of Scanderoon, where she met another ship. According to the pamphlet of 1701, the English ship approached the other vessel peacefully but 'so soon as they hailed her, [she] fired a broad side and brought the topmast of the *Philip and Mary* by the board'.[78] Again Plowman's letter tells a different story. In fact, the English merchant wrote that 'at midnight by the light of the moon' they spotted another ship and immediately initiated a pursuit.[79] The hunt was long and adventurous because the other ship was not willing to surrender peacefully and returned fire on the *Philip and Mary*. It was therefore for this reason that 'the main topmast came by the bord [sic]'.[80] Despite the damage received, Plowman managed to board the vessel and 'in less than an hour dispute she yeilded'.[81] The captured ship was French, called the *Vergine della Speranza*, and carried a rich cargo, which the English merchant sold for 22,000 pezze, while he obtained another 8,000 from the sale of the ship itself. [82] From Plowman's letter it is clear that *Philip and Mary*'s 'hail' was much less peaceful compared to the account reported in the pamphlet and that, in reality, the other ship was simply trying to defend itself. The fact that pamphlet claims that the French ship had fired first, served to justify Plowman's actions, transforming them into self-defence.

[77] The topic of Neutrality will be extensively analysed in the third chapter.
[78] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 6.
[79] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[80] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[81] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[82] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.

According to the pamphlet, the *Vergine della Speranza* was the last ship captured by Plowman in the first part of his voyage. The letter written by Plowman to Crookshanks reveals that he captured another vessel, the *Santissimo Sacramento*. This ship, sought refuge in the shallow waters closer to the coast, but Plowman 'approached [the ship] as neare as [he] could and came to an anchor'.[83] Then, after having armed 'the Maltese boat with thirty soldiers and sailors',[84] 'to fighting wee went and after two hours dispute [the French] abandoned their vessel but first sunke her'.[85] In the battle Plowman lost two men[86] and finally the English merchant, 'after plundering [the French ship], sett [her] on fire'.[87] The explicit reference to the plundering and to the fact that the ship was set on fire clearly show how Plowman's action were piratical.

After stopping for about ten days in Cyprus, Plowman resumed sailing and soon spotted another ship, which he chased without being able to capture it.[88] The English merchant then decided to head to Scanderoon, with the intention of travelling by land to Aleppo,[89] where he had some business with the merchants of that city.[90] While the ship was in port, Plowman faced a mutiny of his crew who claimed that their contract with Plowman was not 'to trade' and that they considered the time that the merchant would have spent to go to Aleppo as time taken from hunting at sea.[91] Plowman managed to contain the situation even though several sailors were 'landed ashore amidst protests' without any part of the bounty, while those who remained were promised to have a third of the whole booty.[92]

[83] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[84] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[85] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[86] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[87] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[88] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[89] Aleppo is 140 kilometres afar from Scanderoon.
[90] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 6.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[92] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.

Once back from Aleppo, Plowman headed back to Cyprus 'where he had some business to settle', probably related to his prizes.[93] The *Philip and Mary* was fully loaden and had a dirty hull[94] therefore it would have been too risky to load other goods on her. However, there was a 'well commanded and equipped' Dutch 40-gun privateer ship in port, the *Golden Rock*, which agreed to let Plowman embark as a passenger and load some of his goods on board. Thus, the English merchant not only gained additional space to load his stolen goods, but also a powerful escort for the *Philip and Mary*.

Leaving from Cyprus the two vessels headed to Messina and two days later they encountered another vessel, a French merchant ship called the *Nostra Signora del Buon Incontro*. According to the pamphlet, the French vessel approached the *Philip and Mary* believing that she was a friendly ship.[95] Captain Broom then raised the English colours and chased the *Nostra Signora*, which after a few hours surrendered to the English.[96] The pamphlet particularly emphasizes that the *Philip and Mary* had raised English colours before attacking the enemy ship. Indeed, it is highly probable that the *Philip and Mary* hoisted the French flag, and probably this was the reason why the French merchant ship approached, believing she was a friendly vessel. Raising a different flag from the national one to deceive the enemy was considered a legitimate *ruse de guerre*, until fire was opened on the opponent. The fight was honourable and the prize valid, when the ship's true national flag was raised before firing the first shot, otherwise the action would have been considered piracy. It is unclear whether the *Philip and Mary* actually raised English colours before firing, but significantly this is the only episode described in the pamphlet in which it explicitly refers to which flag the *Philip and Mary* was flying. This would therefore suggest that in the capture of the *Nostra Signora* the formalities were not

[93] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 6.
[94] Before ships had copper-clad keels, the planking was easily covered with algae. These grew so much as to significantly affect the speed and manoeuvrability of the ship.
[95] The *Philip and Mary* was, as Plowman himself wrote, probably built in France.
[96] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.

respected, thus making it necessary to explicitly declare that the capture took place under the English flag.

The *Nostra Signora* turned out to be quite a rich prize and the Dutch commander, who came aboard the *Philip and Mary*, demanded his share of the booty. By the law of the sea, it did not matter that the *Golden Rock* did not actively participate in the fight: she was travelling with Plowman's ship and she witnessed the fight, therefore she was entitled to a share of the booty.[97] Plowman and his crew were reluctant to share the prize and 'a dispute arose between the Dutch captain and Captain Broom'.[98] Plowman eventually managed to persuade the Dutch commander 'with promises of payment to settle the matter in Messina'.[99] The latter seemed to be satisfied with the word of the English, which was made more secure by the fact that part of Plowman's goods were loaded aboard his *Golden Rock*. Finally, the two ships arrived together in Messina in mid-September 1696.[100]

As soon as he was through with the quarantine, Plowman made a series of very rapid moves. He sold the goods that were loaded on both the former Maltese *Nostra Signora della Speranza* and the *Nostra Signora del Buon Incontro*; he sold the goods that were loaded on the *Philip and Mary* and even sold the ship to a certain Leen.[101] The crew reacted angrily, fearing that the English merchant would not divide the booty as he had told them in Scanderoon. Plowman promised to resolve things the next day, but soon after he quickly found a ride on a felucca and escaped to Naples.[102] The merchant took away with him all the money made from the sales, leaving in Messina a disgruntled crew and

[97] On this topic see, Steve Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas? Scottish Maritime Warfare, 1513-1713* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), pp. 177, 258-259.
[98] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 6.
[99] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696..
[100] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 6.
[101] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.
[102] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Affidavit of the sailors of *Philip and Mary*, 15 November 1696.

an astonished Dutch captain.[103] The commander of the *Golden Rock* had no choice but to make the best of a bad situation by seizing the goods that Plowman had left on board, although they were of no great value. Once back in The Dutch Republic he filed a petition with the Dutch admiralty court, which ruled that he could appropriate those goods as just compensation for Plowman's misconduct.[104]

At this point of the story one really wonders why Plowman behaved in this way. Why, even though he had given his word to Cosimo III not to attack any French vessel, did he spend most of his time chasing ships? Although the available documents do not allow us to give a conclusive answer, we can try to give an explanation analysing the letter that Plowman wrote from Cyprus to his friend Crookshanks. The letter is strictly personal, and the intimate dimension of the document is immediately clear from the salutation, which also helps to define the relationship that existed between Plowman and Crookshanks. The letter begins with 'dear Jack' and this, along with numerous attestations of friendship, are also repeated in the closing of the document.[105] The structure of the letter provides the impression that what Plowman is describing is 'the last big score' before a well-deserved retirement. The English merchant had already thought of retiring as early as the beginning of 1696, after recovering from a serious illness.[106] It is not clear what prompted Plowman to undertake this journey, but it is likely that he planned it with the idea of retiring with much more money in his pocket.

This hypothesis is clearly confirmed by Plowman himself who recommends Crookshanks to act in any respect according to his best judgment, declaring that he should rely 'intirely on your freindshipp and that you manage [these] concerns as your owne, this being towards our future happyness of purchasing something in Ireland'.[107] The reference

[103] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 6.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[105] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[106] *The Answers of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Leghorn* (1704), p. 83.
[107] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.

to Ireland is repeated a second time when the English merchant states that after the trip 'we may retire as soon as wee will for Ireland' and then again when he informs his friend that 'Capt. Broom resoluted to live with us in Ireland'.[108] Plowman recommended Crookshanks to keep their possessions ready in Livorno 'at a days warning', reinforcing the hypothesis that the merchant had organized his expedition with the specific aim of accumulating as much money as possible and then fleeing with his friend to Ireland.[109] By capturing the French ships, Plowman had not only broken his word with Cosimo III, but had also betrayed James II. The exiled monarch was allied with the French, and certainly James II would have been deeply displeased to know that his 'bon et fidelle sujet' and consul in Livorno, plundered the ships of his ally Louis XIV.

One explanation for Plowman's bad faith is offered by the failed plot to assassinate William III. The operation had been carefully planned for at least a year: the idea was to attack the king on his return from a hunt, on 15th or 22nd February 1696. However, informers had warned the government and the plot failed and, by 23rd February, a royal proclamation was issued for the capture of the conspirators.[110] The news had spread rapidly and certainly must have reached Livorno around the middle of March 1696, just as Plowman was preparing his expedition. The English merchant found himself in a very difficult position. If Plowman had actually been involved in the plot he might have feared the consequences of his participation. However, even if he had not been aware of the plan to kill William III, his appointment as consul of James II was more than enough to highlight his relationship with the English court in exile, and therefore to make him guilty of connivance with the conspirators. In this scenario it might have been convenient for him to devise a plan to raise as much money as possible and escape. Moreover, the

[108] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[109] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[110] *By the King, a proclamation issued for the apprehending several persons therein named who had entered into a conspiracy to assassinate and murder Our Royal Person*, (London: Charles Bill Printer to the Kings Most Excellent Majesty), 23 February 1696.

failure of the assassination plot, combined with the looming defeat of France in the conflict, definitively removed the prospect of James II's return to the throne. From Plowman's point of view this meant that his patron was neither in a position to reward him for his loyalty nor to punish him for his betrayal.

This hypothesis is further reinforced by the fact that neither Plowman nor any of the captains of his ships had a valid letter of marque. In particular, the Admiralty records showed that 'no letter of mart was granted to Capt. Brome in the Philip and Mary'.[111] During a war it was not strictly illegal for a citizen to capture an enemy ship, but that prize would be regarded as the property of the Crown. Indeed, in the opinion of Henry Newton, a lawyer at the Doctors-Commons, 'if any English ship without commission [had taken] any enemy ship, the prize does not belong to the captain but to the Admiralty'.[112] If Plowman had wanted to behave with probity, he would have presented to the Admiralty a list of the captured ships and goods, which he never did.[113] Instead, as we have seen, the merchant sold everything, including his ship, and quickly escaped to Naples. It therefore appears plausible that Plowman had organized his expedition with the aim of accumulating as much money as possible in order to escape to Ireland.

The analysis of the sources makes it possible to identify the complex stratification of the motivations that created 'the case': from the intimate and personal ones of a man like Plowman who was looking for a better life in Ireland, to that of the countries involved in the struggle for European supremacy. As it will be seen later, the Plowman controversy quickly became an international one, but it all began with the English merchant's decision to seek a profitable shortcut to his retirement.

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[111] *The Answer of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn*, (1704), p. 79.
[112] A.S.F., M.d.P, f. 2674, Parere legale di Henry Newton dei Doctors-Commons, 14 April 1704. On the legal aspect of piracy and privateering see: Nicholas Rodger, 'The Law and Language of Private Naval Warfare', *Mariner's Mirror*, 100:1 (2014), pp. 5-16.
[113] *The Answer of the Merchant-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn*, (1704), p. 79.

Why the Plowman case became 'a case'

The Plowman case was essentially a private matter. William Plowman carried out act of piracy taking advantage of the concession that was made to him to arm three ships in Livorno. Although the concession granted by Cosimo III could make the Grand Duke partially responsible for what happened, there is no doubt that the main culprit was the one who had freely and willingly chosen to commit piracy, namely William Plowman himself. Furthermore, Plowman's ships did not fly the Tuscan flag, but the English one, and this made the Grand Duke and the Tuscan government even less responsible. Yet the French government's reaction was not to attempt to criminally prosecute Plowman, but was first to block all Tuscan ships and goods in French ports, and then to threaten indiscriminate reprisals against the Grand Duchy. The French reaction had, therefore, a public character and was expressed through political and diplomatic actions against Tuscany. Why, however, did the private actions of Plowman have a public response? To answer this question, it is necessary to reconstruct the international context in which William Plowman's actions took place. This section will first place the Plowman case in its historical context. It will then be shown that the French government instrumentally used the case against Tuscany, as a retaliation for the political position held by the Grand Duchy during the Nine Years' War. In fact, it will be seen that the French reaction stemmed from Tuscany's decision to remain neutral in the conflict, and from the active role played by the Grand Duchy in preventing the formation of a league of Italian princes in support of the French. Finally, it will be seen that one of the secondary objectives of the French was to crack the diplomatic relations between Tuscany and England.

The Nine Years' War began in 1688, and saw France opposed to a coalition formed by the Empire, England, Spain, the Dutch Republic and other smaller states. The

conflict was part of the long confrontation that France had had with other European states since the mid-seventeenth century.[114] The European states were increasingly worried about the growing French power and their fears peaked in 1685. This year witnessed three occurrences that had profound consequences on European history and, later, on the Plowman case: Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, James II ascended the throne of England, and the Palatinate changed its ruling dynasty when the Protestants Pfalz-Simmern were replaced by the Catholics Pfalz-Neuburg.[115] Confessional issues, however, overlapped with political ones: the accession to the throne of James II increasingly cemented the possibility of a French-English alliance against The Dutch Republic, which would have radically endangered the balance of power of the continent.[116] When James II began to take openly pro-Catholic measures, the English Protestants began to fear that the sovereign would try to emulate what Louis had done in France with the revocation of the Edict of Nantes: the growing discontent of the population created the conditions for the Glorious Revolution and the accession to the throne of William of Orange.[117]

The Glorious Revolution, which will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, from an international point of view can be interpreted as the result of a political will expressed by some European states to maintain the balance of power in Europe.[118] Indeed the reasons that pushed the Dutch Republic to finance the huge military expedition

[114] On this topic see: John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV 1667-1714*, (London, Longman, 1999).
[115] The house was actually that of Wittlesbach, but to clearly distinguish them it was decided to define them according to their title of investiture.
[116] Andrew Thompson, 'Balancing Europe: Ideas and Interests in British Foreign Policy (c. 1700-1720)', in *Ideology and Foreign Policy in Early Modern Europe (1650-1750)*, ed. by D. Onnekink and G. Rommelse (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 343-362.
[117] Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England (1660-1760)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 152-192.
[118] On this topic see: Andrew Thompson, *Britain, Hanover and the Protestant Interest, 1688-1756* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006); Tony Claydon, *William III. Profiles in Power* (London: Longman, 2002), pp. 66-69; *Redefining William III. The Impact of the King-Statholder in International Context*, ed. by E. Mijers and D. Onnekink (London: Routledge, 2007).

that accompanied William of Orange to England[119] and the reasons that pushed the Empire and Spain to accept the Dutch coup, were mainly of a political nature, that is precisely to avoid an alliance between James II and Louis XIV. In fact, the help of England would have been important for the Dutch Republic and the Empire in their struggle against France. It was mentioned above that another key event of 1685 was the change of the ruling dynasty in the Palatinate. The major goal of Louis XIV in the Nine Years' War was ousting William III from England and putting James II back on the throne. However, the casus belli of the conflict was not the Dutch invasion of England, but the French dynastic claim on the Palatinate.

The Palatine Elector Charles II Pfalz-Simmern died in 1685.[120] The Protestant elector had no heirs and his title had passed to his cousin, Philip William Pfalz-Neuburg[121], who belonged to the Catholic branch of the family. This succession was contested by the sister of Charles II Pfalz-Simmern, Elisabeth Charlot, [122], wife of Philip of Orleans,[123] brother of Louis XIV. The Sun King did not care about his sister-in-law's requests until 1688 when he saw, in the dynastic claim on the Palatinate, a legitimate opportunity to start the conflict with William III.[124]

Tuscany, meanwhile, was in a rather complex position. On the one hand, with the Glorious Revolution the Grand Duchy had lost an important ally. Cosimo III and James II had met in 1669: the sympathy was reciprocal and was strengthened by family

[119] William III landed in England with an army of 20,000 men and assisted by a fleet of 500 ships. Scott Sowerby, *Making Toleration. The Repealers and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambrigde: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 219.
[120] Karl II Wittelsbach (1651-1685), was Elector Palatine from 1680 to 1685.
[121] Philip Wilhelm Wittelsbach-Neuburg (1615-1690), Elector Palatine from 1685 to 1690.
[122] Elisabeth Charlotte Wittelsbach-Orleans (1652-1722), daughter of Karl II Wittelsbach and wife of Philip d'Orleans, brother of Luigi XIV.
[123] Philip of Bourbon, (1640-1701), brother of XIV and duke d'Orleans.
[124] The expansion policy applied by Louis XIV leveraged on dynastic principles and is defined as the policy of the *Reunions*. On this topic see: György Borus, 'The Thököly Uprising in Hungary and the Timing of the Nine Years' War and the Glorious Revolution', *Prague Papers on the History of International Relations*, 2 (2019), pp. 7-18; Geoffrey Symcox, *Louis XIV and the Outbreak of the Nine Years' War*, in *Louis XIV and Europe*, ed. by. R. Hatton (London: Basingstoke, 1976), p. 181.

ties and by the common Catholic faith.[125] For a certain period there was even a rumour of a dynastic union, with the prospect of marrying Anna Maria Luisa, daughter of Cosimo III, to the future English sovereign.[126] This union was not achieved, but James II always behaved amicably towards the Grand Duchy, benevolently protecting the Tuscan trade and giving great confidence to Cosimo III's agent in England, Francesco Terriesi.[127] Despite the strong bonds that had always characterized the relations between the Medici and the Stuarts, the hypothesis of an alliance between France and England worried Tuscany as well. If the balance of power on the continent changed and the power of France grew further, a small state like the Grand Duchy, which had managed to remain neutral for fifty years, would have no hope of escaping French influence anymore. Thus, Tuscany opted to accept the consequences of the Glorious Revolution and decided to support the anti-French coalition. This is evident if we analyse the dynastic policy adopted by Cosimo III, who married his daughter Maria Luisa to the new Elector Palatine, John William Pfalz-Neuburg, who succeeded his father in 1690. Through this union Cosimo III directly thwarted the ambitions of Louis XIV to appropriate the Palatinate, therefore siding in favour of the anti-French coalition. The position of Tuscany had become even clearer in 1694, when Cosimo III was the first Italian sovereign to formally recognize William III as king of England.[128]

[125] James II's grandmother was Maria of Medici, daughter of Francesco I of Medici and Queen of France.
[126] Anna Maria Crinò, 'Progetti di Matrimonio fra i Medici e gli Stuart', in *Fatti e Figure del Seicento Anglo-Toscano* (Firenze: Olschki, 1957), pp. 261-287.
[127] Francesco Terriesi (1639-1715), Tuscan merchant, he founded a thriving trading house in London, managing to accumulate a considerable fortune in a short time. He managed to establish a privileged import route for Tuscan goods into England. Friend of Cosimo III, well-liked by Charles II and by James II, he was appointed Tuscan agent in London from 1670, he remained in office until 1691. Back in Tuscany he was appointed by Cosimo III, General Superintendent of the Customs and Port of Livorno, a position he held until his death. Stefano Villani, 'Note su Francesco Terriesi (1635-1715), mercante, diplomatico e funzionario mediceo tra Londra e Livorno', *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, 10 2003, pp. 59-80.
[128] *Reports on the Manuscripts of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry Preserved at Montagu Hall, Whitehall*, Vol. 2, (London, 1899), p. 151. The fact is reported in a letter between Secretary Blathwayt and the Duke of Schrewsbury of 23rd October 1694: 'His Majesty has at the same time received a letter of respect of the Great Duke of Tuscany, which seems to be intended as a forerunner of the acknowledgment of their Majesties, which may be soon expected as well as from the other Princes and States of Italy'.

The dynastic and diplomatic decisions taken by the Grand Duke signalled a marked cooling in the relations between France and Tuscany. As mentioned above, the growing French expansionism, which culminated with the conquest of Strasbourg (1682), aroused great concern throughout Europe and also in Italy. From a diplomatic point of view the French tried to sell themselves as the defenders of the peninsula, but the treatment they reserved to Messina in 1678[129] and the brutal bombing and attempted conquest of Genoa in 1684,[130] created a profound distrust of them.

However, this did not discourage the French ministers who, during the war, tried several times to persuade the Italian sovereigns to join a French-led league against the emperor. These attempts intensified in the last years of the conflict, when it was increasingly evident that France urgently needed new allies. However, the small Italian princes would certainly not have taken the French side if the largest among them who had remained neutral, first of all the Grand Duke of Tuscany, would not have shown any desire to endorse French politics. Thus, in the spring of 1696 the Secretary of State Jean-Baptiste Colbert[131] renewed to the Tuscan ambassador in Paris, Marquis Averardo Salviati, the proposal to create a league of Italian princes.

The French still tried to present themselves as the protectors of Italian liberties. Indeed Colbert maintained that the proposals regarding peace 'heard by the Duke of Savoy, the Emperor and the Prince of Orange were very contrary to the peace and tranquillity of Italy'[132] However, 'if the [Italian] Princes wanted to free themselves from

[129] In 1674 the city of Messina rebelled against Spain and placed itself under the protection of Louis XIV. The French monarch held the city until the Treaty of Nijmegen in 1678, when he left it again to the Spaniards, who ferociously retaliated against it. On this topic see: Luis Ribot, *La rivolta antispagnola di Messina. Cause e antecedenti (1591-1674)* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2011); Saverio Di Bella, *La rivolta di Messina (1674-78) e il mondo mediterraneo nella seconda metà del Seicento,* (Cosenza: Pellegrini, 2001).

[130] Between 13,000 and 16,000 bombs fell on the city of Genoa. Su questo argomento si veda: Riccardo Delle Piane, *Mura e Forti di Genova*, (Genova: Nuova Editrice Genovese, 1984).

[131] Not to be confused with the homonymous finance minister. Jean Baptiste Colbert (1665-1746) was the son of Charles Colbert and succeeded his father in June 1696.

[132] A.S.F., M.D.P, f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.

this harassment, as it can grow, they must resolve to unite to push the Germans out [of Italy]'.[133] Naturally, the French minister continued, 'for our part, we will not neglect to give a hand with everything that might be useful to help [the Italian Princes]'.[134] The French Secretary of State was certain that 'the Most Serene Grand Duke, who more than any other prince knows the importance of this business, would not have been the last' to join the French coalition. [135] Ambassador Salviati diplomatically replied that 'it could not be denied that the appearance of things was not favourable for the interests of the Princes of Italy'.[136] However, continued Salviati 'the States of the Grand Duke of Tuscany are far away [from the Germans], thus they would have eventually experienced their inconvenience after some other state would have suffered it'[137] Until then, Salviati added, Tuscany 'did not feel the weight [of the war and the imperials] in proportion to what others had suffered' and therefore 'since the danger for His Highness was negligible' the Grand Duke preferred to remain neutral.[138]

In fact, the French proposal seemed unrealistic. What benefit could the Grand Duchy have in joining a league against the Empire? If it was true that the imperial troops in the north of Italy were causing severe inconvenience to the sovereigns of those areas, it was also true that the Grand Duchy was in a much safer position. Tuscany had no direct borders with the Empire (the northern border was completely protected by the Papal States), moreover the economic contributions paid to the Emperor and the recent marriage of Maria Luisa with the Elector Palatine had greatly strengthened the ties between Florence and Vienna. As the case of Messina well proved, it would have been unwise to trust the French promises of help. Indeed, the very vague assurance made by France of

[133] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685 Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.
[134] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685 Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.
[135] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685 Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.
[136] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685 Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.
[137] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685 Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.
[138] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685 Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.

'giving a hand' did not appear even remotely sufficient to reassure the Grand Duke. The Italian princes would have risked embarking on a perilous adventure eventually to find themselves completely alone against the Empire.

Although the response of the Tuscan ambassador had been quite clear, the French minister had not given up but, on the contrary, he had continued tirelessly, week after week, to put forward his proposal for an Italian league. Colbert had at first argued that the Grand Duke had been 'spared until then because there was no need to prevail on him but that [...] in the future he would probably have been treated like the others, since [the Germans] could move into the States of His Highness, it being quite likely that they wouldn't pay respect even to the State of the Pope'.[139] According to Colbert 'if the Grand Duke and the other Italian Princes had raised troops to defend their country this would have been sufficient, because the Germans having so many enemies'[140] would not have dared to confront also an Italian league. These discourses went on in the same way, albeit with modest variations on the theme, for months and months. The Tuscan ambassador, seeing that his arguments were completely useless, began to reply to Colbert, as a Florentine saying advised, that 'what he was saying was full of prudence and reason, but it would be difficult to put it into practice.[141]

The fact that Tuscany wanted to remain strictly neutral certainly irritated the French. However, the dynastic and diplomatic choices undertook by the Grand Duchy, first with the marriage between the daughter of Cosimo III and the Elector Palatine and then with the refusal to participate in a league of Italian princes, clearly showed that Tuscany was on the side of the imperial coalition.

[139] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, from Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 27 August 1696.
[140] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, from Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 27 August 1696.
[141] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, from Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 27 August 1696.

Another reason of tension and contrast between Tuscany and France arose in March 1696, when Elisabeth Marguerite d'Orleans, sister of Marguerite Louise d'Orleans, wife of Cosimo III, passed away. The latter had married the rich Duke Louis of Guise in 1667 and other money had arrived at the death of her sister, Anne Marie Louise d'Orleans (1627-1693).[142] So Elisabeth Marguerite's wealth was enormous, including the Palais de Luxembourg,[143] lands, works of art and a huge amount of money. The contract signed in 1662 between Ferdinand II and Louis XIV for the marriage between the future Cosimo III and Marguerite Louise expressly provided that the Grand Duke's bride could inherit from her own blood relatives. Marguerite Louise was the only direct relative still alive of Elisabeth Marguerite, therefore by law and by virtue of the marriage contract the Grand Duchess of Tuscany should have inherited all the assets of her sister. Naturally, the idea that palaces, lands and millions of francs would pass into the hands of the Grand Duchess (and therefore, through her sons, to the Medici house) did not appeal to Louis XIV at all. Thus, minister Pontchartain, on behalf of the sovereign, had started to create hindrances regarding the matter. At first it was argued that the contract did not explicitly include the inheritance clause, and when Ambassador Salviati asked to see the document in order to verify this, he was told that it was not possible because apparently the contract had been misplaced and was missing.[144] The Tuscan minister then had a copy sent to him from Florence and the French had to admit that the clause was there, but that it could not be applied since Marguerite Louise, having married the Grand Duke of Tuscany, had become a Tuscan citizen, and French law did not allow a foreigner to inherit.[145] Whenever ambassador Salviati attempted to resolve the situation, some other impediments emerged, more and more pretentious: it was increasingly clear

[142] Famous for being considered the richest unmarried woman of France.
[143] The imposing palace now home to the French Senate, was built by Maria de' Medici, Queen of France.
[144] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, from Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 20 July 1696.
[145] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, from Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 20 July 1696.

that the French crown was willing to do everything not to pass the legacy of the Duchess of Guise into the hands of the Tuscans.

However, neither was Cosimo III willing to give such a fortune to his cousin. It was not only a matter of money but above all a matter of dignity. Eventually the affair reached the court of justice, and is not difficult to imagine the consternation of the first judge of the Paris Court of Appeal when he saw a millionaire lawsuit between the King of France and the Grand Duke of Tuscany brought to his hands.[146] It is not necessary to delve further into this topic, suffice to say that these proceedings generated great unrest in the French court, especially when the tribunal ruled in favour of the Grand Duke.

As we have seen in the previous section Tuscany endorsed Plowman's company's project to sign a deal with the Bey of Tunis for the exportation of wheat from Cape Negro to Livorno. The negotiations were proceeding well, and the draft of the agreement was sent by the English consul of Tunis to London for the government's approval. However, the ship on which this correspondence was sent, the *Expedition*, was captured by the French, who therefore came to know of the plan devised by the English.[147] Imported wheat from Tunisia was essential to avoiding a severe famine in France, and therefore it is not difficult to imagine the anger of the French government when it learned that Tuscany was supporting the project.

This is evident if we analyse the language used by Colbert on 2nd July 1696, when he urgently summoned the Tuscan ambassador to complain about the *first* capture made by Plowman. Colbert was furious to see how 'the Grand Duke [had] been mocked by Plowman, who lied and then put his premeditated design into execution. [...] This *méchant homme*[148] has fooled the Grand Duke.'[149] Plowman's actions, Colbert

[146] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 27 August 1696.
[147] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 38.
[148] Reported in French in the dispatch of the ambassador, it literally means 'evil man'.
[149] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati a Francesco Panciatichi, 2 July 1696.

concluded, were 'an evident breach of neutrality [...]'.[150] The aggressive language used by the French minister leaves no doubt about the profound irritation that reigned in the French court against the Grand Duchy. On the one hand Colbert's use of words such as 'fool' or 'mock' provocatively attacked the Grand Duke. On the other hand, he immediately clarified that the Plowman affair had turned into a political issue. In fact, Colbert's reference to the 'evident breach of neutrality' reveals that French's real objective was to make the Plowman case an instrument of pressure against Tuscany. Indeed, on 2nd July Colbert still knew nothing about the many other French ships captured by Plowman, and therefore his aggressiveness shows that the French government was waiting for the right occasion to vent its profound irritation against Tuscany.

The Tuscan diplomat chose initially to procrastinate. He hoped that the French government, in the midst of so many more urgent questions, would forget about the issue.[151] However, a few days after the encounter between Colbert and Salviati, the French seized a Tuscan ship in Marseille 'in retaliation for what followed with the ship taken by Plowman'.[152] Despite this confiscation, the Tuscan ambassador's strategy seemed to work. The matter, Salviati wrote to Secretary of State Panciatichi on 6th August, seemed 'to have cooled', thanks to the fact that it had been months with no news of Plowman. Some wrecks had been found at sea and rumours had spread, 'that Plowman and his ship could have been lost'[153] or that, after a long battle, 'Plowman had been sunk by certain French ships'.[154]

[150] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati a Francesco Panciatichi, 2 July 1696.
[151] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 July 1696.
[152] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 July 1696.
[153] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 August 1696.
[154] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 27 August 1696. The ships to which the ambassador refers to are the *Serieux* and the *Marquise* with which Plowman met off the coast of Tunisia.

It is not difficult to imagine on the one hand the frustration and on the other the satisfaction of the ministers of Louis XIV as soon as they learned that Plowman had captured many other French ships. The English merchant had not only caused considerable damage to their trade. He had also made the French government's claim against the Grand Duchy stronger and more legitimate. On 2nd September 1696 Secretary Phélypeaux[155] summoned the Tuscan ambassador and in a 'very unpleasant'[156] way told him that since 'the Grand Duke preferred to keep the commitment he had with Plowman rather than the word given to His Majesty [...]',[157] Louis XIV had forbidden 'in the future to receive any grievance about what could happen in the Ports or under the flag of His Highness until reparation was ordered for the damages caused by Plowman to the French merchants'.[158] Phélypeaux's threat was very clear: the French government was one step away from granting its vessels an unconditional right of retaliation towards Tuscan ships and ports. Furthermore, to reinforce the concept, Phélypeaux reminded Salviati that for a similar case a few years before the French government had ordered to consider 'all Genoese ships as enemies and that no respect was to be used to their port', and dismissed the ambassador threateningly, saying, 'look out that the same would not intervene even to you as well'.[159] The Tuscan ambassador was understandably worried. The episode mentioned by Phélypeaux regarding Genoa was not accidental. The French minister was referring to the casus belli used by France in 1684 to declare war on Genoa and which had led to the ferocious bombardment and the attempted conquest of the city.[160] What happened in 1684 was dangerously similar to the Plowman case: an English ship out of Genoa had captured a French ship near the port. Although the Genoese government could

155 Jerome Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain (1674-1747), son of Louis Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain (1643-1727) aided him in his role as Secretary of the Navy and Minister of the Royal Household..
156 A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 3 September1696.
157 A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 3 September1696.
158 A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 3 September1696.
159 A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati a Francesco Panciatichi, 3 September 1696.
160 Riccardo Dellepiane, *Mura e Forti di Genova* (Genova: Nuova Editrice Genovese, 1984), p. 125.

not objectively be held responsible for the incident, the French nevertheless used the fact as a pretext to declare war on the Republic.[161]

The strategic situation of the Grand Duchy was certainly better than that of Genoa in 1684. First, it was unlikely that France, already exhausted by the European conflict, could employ any troops or a fleet to attack Tuscany. Furthermore, Livorno, with its modern fortifications, was much better defended than Genoa. Nevertheles, it was still imperative to resolve the situation as quickly and as peacefully as possible. The Grand Duchy had already openly hindered French plans and ambitions, both in the Palatinate and in Italy. Consequently, refusing to give satisfaction to Louis XIV in the Plowman case could be interpreted by the French as an explicit act of hostility. Furthermore, a war with France would have broken Tuscan neutrality, irreparably damaged Livorno's trade, and almost certainly meant the ruin of the country. There was also no doubt that Plowman had betrayed the trust granted to him by the Grand Duke, and that he should be punished for his behaviour. Above all, it was necessary to publicly demonstrate that no one could easily break a promise with the Tuscan sovereign. Thus, about a month later, on 8th October 1696, Ambassador Salviati informed Phélypeaux that Plowman would be prosecuted for his actions once he arrived in Tuscany, and that he would compensate the French merchants he had damaged.[162] The French minister declared with satisfaction that 'everything was fine', and that he expected a quick solution to the dispute.[163]

Relations between Tuscany and France had progressively worsened since 1688. The marriage between Maria Luisa of Medici and the Elector Palatine, the recognition of William III as the legitimate ruler of England, the refusal to participate in a league of Italian princes, the cause for the inheritance of the Duchess of Guise and finally the

[161] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[162] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 8 October 1696.
[163] A.S.F., M.D.P., f. 4685, Averardo Salviati to Francesco Panciatichi, 8 October 1696.

question of Tunisian wheat, procured that, in 1696, the relations between France and Tuscany had reached an all-time low. The Plowman case was used by the French as a pretext to threaten the neutrality of the Grand Duchy and to force Cosimo III to distance himself from England and the imperial coalition. In fact, an objective of the French was precisely that of cracking the relations between Tuscany and England. The port of Livorno was in fact of fundamental importance for the English, both from a commercial and military point of view. If the French would have managed to create the conditions for a conflict between England and Tuscany, they could have achieved significant results, that is, attracting Tuscany into the French orbit, and above all preventing the English from entering the port of Livorno. We will see later in this work how this almost became true at the apex of the Plowman case, when England and Tuscany were on the brink of war.

The origins of the controversy with England

The French government used the Plowman case as a pretext to accuse Tuscany of having broken its neutrality in the Nine Years' War. However, the French ministers accepted the compromise offered by the Tuscan ambassador Salviati to arrest Plowman and oblige him to compensate the French merchants: he was captured in Rome on 23rd January 1697. In this section, after having reconstructed Plowman's arrest, it will be shown how the English community residing in Rome, with the support of the imperial and Spanish ambassadors, unsuccessfully wrote a petition to the pontiff, contesting the reasons for Plowman's arrest and demanding his release. However, the Tuscan ambassador to Rome, taking advantage of the enormous political influence of Cosimo III at the Roman court, had the English petition rejected and also had Plowman quickly transferred from Rome to Florence. The second part of this section will then analyse the impact of Plowman's arrest on the community of English merchants residing in Livorno.

The analysis of the sources will highlight the contradictions and fragility of the personal relationships of that community of merchants. In fact, it will be seen how Plowman's capture pushed his partners, his friends and the rest of the Livorno merchants, to act selfishly to protect their safety and their interests. It will also be seen how Plowman's arrest had not only damaged the relationship that bound the English merchant to his closest friends, but also how it created a profit opportunity for competing merchants. Plowman's company, in fact, went bankrupt a few months after his arrest. According to the pamphlet published in 1701, the bankruptcy of the Rigby&Shepard was deliberately engineered by the Grand Duke's ministers with the aim of damaging the English trade in the Mediterranean. It will be shown that the bankruptcy was not actually caused by the Tuscan government, but was rather actively procured by other English merchants of Livorno, who saw, in the difficulties of the Rigby&Shepard, the opportunity to get rid of an uncomfortable commercial competitor.

When Plowman arrived in Naples, in early October 1696, the Tuscan government was already informed in detail of his Mediterranean raids and probably the English merchant knew that he was a wanted man.[164] The Tuscan ministers were worried that Plowman, feeling in danger, might flee elsewhere, and therefore wrote to him that if he returned to Tuscany he would do it as a free man: the Grand Duke would guarantee him the possibility to explain his actions and would judge him fairly.[165] Plowman did not respond to these invitations, and on 20th January 1697 he left Naples to go to Civitavecchia, with the intention of reaching Rome.[166] The available documents do not allow us to determine exactly what his intentions were. It is possible that he left Naples and reached Rome with the idea of going to Tuscany, or he may have been planning to

[164] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, from the French consul in Cyprus to the French consul in Livorno, 15 September 1696.
[165] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696; *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 7.
[166] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 7.

escape elsewhere. The Tuscan ministers believed the second hypothesis more probable. As soon as news arrived in Florence that Plowman would be staying in Rome, Secretary Panciatichi immediately sent an urgent courier to the Tuscan ambassador to the Pope, Anton Maria Fede, giving him precise instructions to arrest the English merchant.[167]

'Mr. William Plowman', wrote the Secretary of State, 'not having kept what he promised to the Grand Duke, that his ship *Philip and Mary* [...] would not attack or take French ships [...], had placed 'His Highness in annoying embarrassment with His Most Christian Majesty [...] [and] gave just reason to His Highness to demand satisfaction'.[168] The Grand Duke, Panciatichi continued, had 'just reason to think that remorse of conscience [prevented Plowman] from setting foot in [Tuscany]' and therefore ordered the English merchant to be arrested in Rome 'in any way'.[169] The Tuscan ambassador had the faculty to address important members of the Roman curia and should also have informed the Pope[170] that the arrest took place by express order of Cosimo III.[171]

When Plowman arrived in Rome, he was completely unaware of the plot that was brewing against him. The merchant peacefully spent a couple of days in the city until, on 23rd January, he received an invitation to dinner from Giacomo Nattucci. The latter was a Roman banker and was also an old acquaintance of Plowman because he had long been a correspondent for the Rigby&Shepard company. Nattucci was, therefore, familiar to the English merchant, who gladly accepted the invitation. Dinner was halfway through when, suddenly, the Pope's guards broke into the banker's house, caught Plowman, chained him and threw him into a dungeon.[172] The action, fast and well planned, was carefully organized by ambassador Fede, with the complicity of Nattucci himself. In fact,

[167] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696.
[168] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696.
[169] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696.
[170] The pontiff, Innocent XII (1615-1700), had been apostolic nuncio to Tuscany from 1652 to 1660.
[171] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696.
[172] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 7.

the latter, as well as being a correspondent of the Rigby&Shepard, was also an informant of the Grand Duke, and had had no qualms, at the request of ambassador Fede, to set a trap for his old friend Plowman.[173]

The English merchant was accused of piracy, a crime for which the punishment was death. According to the pamphlet of 1701, the merchant 'obtained permission' from the prison warden to write a letter to inform his friends in Rome of his arrest.[174]

In his letter Plowman portrayed his imprisonment as a blatant injustice. The English merchant argued that the charges brought against him were completely false, that the ship he was sailing on had a legitimate letter of marque, and that he was just a passenger with no title of command aboard the *Philip and Mary*.[175] Plowman declared that he asked for nothing but the possibility of proving his innocence in whatever court the Pope deemed fit for the purpose.[176] As we saw earlier, Plowman's claims were completely false: not only did the ship not have a valid letter of marque, but above all it was the English merchant who was the real commander of the expedition. Plowman had conveniently adapted his story to get help from the English community in Rome. Even his declaration that he was willing to be judged by a tribunal of the Pope was a clever ploy. On the one hand, asking to be judged gave him a certain air of innocence, while, on the other, to be judged in Rome would have kept him away from Tuscany and from the resentment of Cosimo III.

On 26th January, Plowman wrote a letter also to Francesco Terriesi, Proveditor of the Customs of Livorno. The English merchant wrote that, coming back from Naples, he had 'the very firm intention to bring himself to the feet of His Serene Highness' when suddenly he had been arrested and now he was writing 'from a prison, a really abominable

[173] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 7.
[174] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 8.
[175] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 8.
[176] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 8.

place'.[177] Plowman told Terriesi that he wished to be freed to avoid 'those commitments that may arise when my friends, who are of first class, will seek my liberation'.[178] The language used in this letter and, in particular, the reference made by Plowman to his first-class friends, is instructive. It seemed that the merchant was threatening the Tuscan minister, arguing that if he remained in prison there would be consequences. It is not clear to which friends Plowman was referring to, that is, it is not clear whether these 'friends' were the same people who actively supported his cause against the Grand Duke in the following years. Surely Plowman must have had some influential support in Rome because, as soon as the news of his arrest spread, the English community reacted with outrage and immediately wrote a petition to Innocent XII. The English community asked the Pope 'to order the Examination of the motives for the seizure [...] of William Plowman', and to immediately free the merchant 'seeing he is a Subject of His Majesty of Great Britain'. [179] Furthermore, the petition was supported by the 'ambassadors of the Emperor and of Spain' who 'were resolved [...] to assist the subject of His Majesty in alliance with their sovereigns'.[180]

Plowman's arrest thus became a public matter and the root of a lot of rumours in Rome. The Papal Secretary of State, Fabrizio Spada,[181] summoned the Tuscan ambassador Fede to clarify the matter. It was, however, a purely formal meeting, since in the days before, ambassador Fede had informed in detail numerous and influential members of the Roman curia that the arrest took place by order of the Grand Duke. The question was resolved very quickly, especially since the Tuscan envoy had also informed the Pope, who had personally approved Plowman's arrest.[182] Therefore, despite the

[177] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Francesco Terriesi, 26 January 1697.
[178] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Francesco Terriesi, 26 January 1697.
[179] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 50.
[180] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby*, p. 8.
[181] Fabrizio Spada (1643-1717), Secretary of State from 1691 to 1700.
[182] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 3411, Francesco Panciatichi to Anton Maria Fede, 28 December 1696.

intervention of the English community, the interest of the 'first class' friends of Plowman and the support of the ambassadors of the Empire and of Spain, the petition was rejected and Plowman was immediately sent to Florence. As mentioned in the introduction, the relations between the Grand Duke and the Holy See must not be reductively interpreted only on a confessional basis, or as an expression of the Grand Duke's exasperated devotion but must also be interpreted on a political basis. Therefore, the careful planning of Plowman's arrest, the complicity of the papal government and even of the Pope are a small example of how wide and discretionary the power of Cosimo III at the Roman court was.

Plowman arrived in Florence on 20th February 1697. As we have seen above, the English merchant, in an attempt to get out of Roman prison, had largely falsified the reality of the facts, adapting his story in the manner most convenient for him. However, Plowman was certainly not the only one trying to bend the facts to his advantage. Indeed, through the comparative analysis of archival documents, it is clear that almost all those involved in the affair tried, through omissions and lies, to protect their interests, regardless of the consequences of their actions.

As word of Plowman's arrest spread, the relationships of work, friendship and loyalty he had with other people immediately ceased. The merchant community of Livorno knew that Plowman had displeased the Grand Duke and, since 'no one wanted to be askew to a Prince', all those who had personal relations with the merchant tried to quickly distance themselves from him.[183] From that moment on, everyone began to behave according to what they considered to be their closest interest, trying to plan not only strategies that would allow them to survive, but also, if it were possible, strategies that would guarantee them some economic advantage.

[183] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Jack Crookshanks to Pietro Angeli, 18 May 1697.

This is immediately evident in the first meeting between judge Pietro Angeli and William Plowman.[184] On 21st February 1697, Angeli went to the Bargello prison,[185] to question the merchant. The magistrate had been instructed by Secretary Panciatichi to hear 'from Plowman what justifications he would address to show that he had not breached the word given to His Highness'.[186] Plowman replied to him 'not knowing he had any commitment, but that he simply confided to His Highness the thought that he had to go with his ship to trade in coffee'.[187] This answer was surely unpleasant to auditor Angeli because Plowman alleged that the Grand Duke was a liar. Angeli told the English merchant to be indeed sure 'that he had spoken of other things' and repeated the question 'with beautiful manners'.[188] Plowman replied 'not having said memory, but that if the Grand Duke had said that, he would be prepared to confirm it and everything else His Highness would say as true, considering the assertions of His Highness for infallible truth'.[189] However, Plowman argued, even if he had given his word, he could not have prevented the captain of his ship from attacking other vessels because he was not 'the Master, but just a simple passenger and charterer thus he wouldn't be able to stop him'.[190] According to Plowman, all the blame was to be attributed to the voracious rapacity of Captain Broom. The merchant declared that he had done 'his best to divert the captain from such undertakings', although, unfortunately, without success.[191] Examining this

[184] Pietro Angeli was the first judge of the *Council of Grace and Justice* of the Grand Duchy and the Grand Duke had already tasked him with delicate missions. Indeed in 1691 Angeli went to Milan to negotiate with Marshal Carafa the contributions that Tuscany had to pay to the Empire for the war. The fact that this experienced magistrate was chosen to take care of the Plowman case shows the importance that the Tuscan government attributed to the affair.
[185] The Bargello is a building located in the centre of Florence and built in 1255. In the fifteenth century it became the seat of the court and in 1574 it became the seat of the Bargello, the head of the guards of Florence. In the structure there was also the Florentine prison.[186] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Francesco Panciatichi to Pietro Angeli, 18 February 1697.
[186] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Francesco Panciatichi to Pietro Angeli, 18 February 1697.
[187] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Pietro Angeli to Francesco Panciatichi, 21 February 1697.
[188] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Pietro Angeli to Francesco Panciatichi, 21 February 1697.
[189] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Pietro Angeli to Francesco Panciatichi, 21 February 1697.
[190] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Pietro Angeli to Francesco Panciatichi, 21 February 1697.
[191] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Pietro Angeli to Francesco Panciatichi, 21 February 1697.

passage it is evident that Plowman was not only consciously altering the reality of the facts, but above all he was trying to divert all the responsibility on Captain Broom, despite their friendship and the plan they had to flee together to Ireland.

However, little did Plowman know that when he was talking to judge Angeli he had already been betrayed himself. Indeed the magistrate had not revealed to Plowman that he was in possession of evidence that irrefutably proved his guilt, namely the letter that Plowman had sent to Crookshanks on 2nd July 1696.[192] It is not clear how this letter arrived in the hands of the Florentine judge, but most likely it was Jack Crookshanks himself who gave it to the magistrate. When the news of Plowman's arrest spread in Livorno, Crookshanks felt endangered. He could not be sure of what his friend would tell the Florentine magistrates, and he thus faced the Prisoner's Dilemma.[193] Would Plowman betray him, or would he keep silent about his involvement? Crookshanks decided that the most convenient strategy was to collaborate with the ongoing investigations and he delivered the letter to Angeli. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the abundant correspondence between Crookshanks and judge Angeli. In these letters Crookshanks not only revealed to the magistrate numerous details about Plowman's financial situation, but he completely diverted the responsibility for what had happened on his friend, concluding one of his letters by saying: 'May God forgive Plowman who was originally the cause of these inconveniences'.[194]

At the same time Rigby and Shepard as well, were distancing themselves from their disgraced partner. Judge Angeli asked them to draw up a balance sheet of their company, in order to understand how much money Plowman had. In a long and detailed memoir Rigby and Shepard argued that they owed almost nothing to their partner and that

[192] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.-
[193] Michael Doebeli, Christoph Hauert, 'Models of Cooperation based on the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Snowdrift Game', *Ecology Letters*, 8:7 (2005), pp. 748-766.
[194] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Jack Crookshanks to Pietro Angeli, 17 April 1697.

his claims against the company amounted to about 1,146 pezze.[195] Plowman, in contrast, claimed to have a credit on the company of 30,000 pezze.[196] The disparity between the two figures suggest that both Plowman and Rigby and Shepard were trying to take advantage of the situation. The English merchant increased the credit he had with the company in an attempt to transfer the cost of his Mediterranean adventures on to his partners, while Rigby and Shepard said they owed nothing to Plowman, because this allowed them to appropriate the money they actually owed to their partner.

However, both Plowman and his associates had to deal with a much more pressing problem, namely, trying to save their company from bankruptcy. When the news of Plowman's arrest reached the other English merchants of Livorno, they glimpsed an economic potential in the situation. If the Rigby&Shepard were bankrupt not only would the merchants lose a competitor, but they could appropriate its market share. Thus, the most enterprising and unscrupulous English merchants, such as John Horsey, had concocted a plan to take full advantage of the situation. They first started spreading false rumours artfully conceived to undermine Rigby&Shepard's credit and reputation: Plowman was in chains convicted for piracy; the merchants of the City had broken off all their relationships with Rigby&Shepard; Rigby&Shepard was on the verge of bankruptcy so much so that the Bank of England had suspended its credit to it; Plowman had been sentenced to death and beheaded.[197] As a consequence of these rumours all those who had any business with the Rigby&Shepard hurried to retrieve their capital. The rumours spread by the English merchants caused a kind of 'bank run' and the company suddenly found itself without cash and would almost certainly have gone bankrupt.

[195] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Memorial from Rigby&Shepard to Cosimo III, 26 March 1697.
[196] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 12 April 1697.
[197] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 27 April 1697.

At this point the second phase of the plan devised by the English merchants started: the purchase of the debt. Since the Rigby&Shepard ran out of cash, whoever was holding a company bill of exchange or a letter of credit had in his hands a piece of waste paper. The creditor might have hoped to recover something after the company went bankrupt, but they would certainly recover just a small portion of their money. Thus, the English merchants began to buy the letters of credit of the company, offering those who owned them much more than they could obtain from the bankruptcy. They were carrying out a kind of 'factoring' operation,[198] buying merchants' credits towards the Rigby&Shepard to become the company's main creditors. In this way the merchants would have become masters of the company's fate because they could have bankrupted it as they pleased. In other words, the other English merchants, instead of 'feeling some sympathy'[199] for Plowman and for his company 'not only were aiming at their legs, but they were also buying their debt to cause them more harm. They also put doubts in the heads of the captains so that they would take away their ships […]'.[200]

What was happening in Livorno, however, would have had a negative effect on the Tuscan Government because the bankruptcy of Plowman's company would have hindered his ability to repay the French merchants. Since Plowman's incarceration was the main argument that the other English merchants were using to damage Rigby&Shepard's credit, it would have been convenient for the Tuscan government to free the merchant. It was clear, however, that neither the Grand Duke nor his government trusted releasing Plowman on parole as the danger that he would flee was indeed very high. Thus, Judge Angeli decided that Plowman could be placed under house arrest in his home in Livorno as long as his freedom was secured by two guarantors and by a bail of

[198] Factoring is a financial transaction in which a company or a business sells its credit to a thirt party at a discount. The third party then takes the risk related to that credit, i.e. that the credit could not be paid.
[199] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 27 April 1697.
[200] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 27 April 1697.

14,000 pezze.[201] As soon as he received the good news Plowman hastened to write to those people who, according to him, would immediately come to his aid, namely his partners Rigby and Shepard and the English consul in Livorno, John Burrows.

'To get out of these miseries,' Plowman wrote to his associates on 12th April 1697, 'it is necessary to place [the 14.000 pezze] in the hands of the ministers of the Most Serene Grand Duke [...]. It also seems that to facilitate my release it will be necessary for you to be my guarantors. […]. I know that this request of being my guarantors is bold, but knowing how much love you have always shown me, I hope you will not deny me this too, in order that I will not stay in prison'.[202] The same day Plowman wrote to the English consul, although his choice of words and the tone of the letter were rather different. 'Having no other true friends than you', wrote the merchant, 'I hope you will not deny me to be one of my guarantors, of which I will be very obliged, and I will reserve my thanksgivings in voice (when I will embrace you). I'll await your grateful reply on this particular. Please keep secret what I am writing to you'.[203]

Plowman's letter to Burrows is particularly revealing in its informal language and affection, something which suggests that their relationship was intimate and probably long-standing. However, the friendship between Plowman and Burrows seems to be in contradiction with their respective confessional and political positions. Not only was Burrows a Protestant and Plowman a Catholic, but above all Burrows was the consul of William III, while Plowman was the consul of James II. So, at least apparently, the two men were on completely opposite positions.[204] What, then, tied Burrows to Plowman?

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[201] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Rigby&Shepard, 12 April 1697; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Da Pietro Angeli a Jack Crookshanks, 14 April 1697.
[202] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 12 April 1697.
[203] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to John Burrows, 12 April 1697.
[204] It was not uncommon for consuls or agents of competing sovereigns to work together. On this topic see Steve Murdoch, 'Des reseaux de conspiration dans le Nord? Une étude de la franc-maconnerie jacobite et hanovrienne en Scandinavie et en Russie, 1688-1746', in *Politica Hermetica*, 24 (Sorbonne, 2010). Pp. 29-56.

John Burrows had become the English consul in Livorno in 1695 after Lambert Blackwell returned to England. In the Tuscan port, as well as in any other port of the time, each 'nation'[205] elected a representative to defend the interests of the community with the sovereign authority of the place. The Grand Duke recognized the elected person the right to represent his compatriots and also granted him certain privileges, such as free admittance to the audience with the sovereign. The consul was not a full diplomatic representative as he did not enjoy any of the typical immunities of an ambassador.[206] However, he was still a representative figure, who performed an important intermediary function between the economic interests of the merchants and those of the sovereign authority of the port. The functions of the consul were wide. The consul had to provide accommodation for his fellow countrymen, assist them in case of illness, take care of the business of a colleague when he was away from Livorno, set up an emergency fund for the nation, and usually also had the task of judging and liquidating the prizes of privateers.[207] The consul also had to present requests and petitions to the Grand Duke to defend the interests of his compatriots. The consul was, in short, a mix between a highly representative figure and a fixer, to whom the merchants could entrust, for an adequate remuneration, several duties and specific tasks. In the consul, therefore, representative and economic functions were intertwined, and the office guaranteed the owner a

[205] A 'nation' was a group of merchants who recognized themselves by belonging to a state or to a particular ethnic group. In Livorno there were the French, Spanish, German, English, but also the Jewish or the Armenian nation. Each 'nation' enjoyed a series of privileges that were negotiated directly with the sovereign authority of the place. The privileges of the nations were therefore not only different from each other but also different from place to place.

[206] Paolo Castignoli, 'Aspetti Istituzionali della Nazione Inglese a Livorno', in *Atti del Convegno Gli Inglesi a Livorno e all'Isola d'Elba* (Livorno: Bastogi, 1980), p. 113. On the consulate and on the functioning of the factory of Livorno: Michela d'Angelo, 'The Scale or Magazin of an Universall English Trade', in *Rapporti diplomatici e scambi commerciali nel Mediterraneo moderno*, ed. by M. Mafrici (Salerno: Rubbettino, 2004), pp. 327-349; Michela D'Angelo, 'The British Factory at Leghorn: A King of Chamber of Commerce *cum* Consulate', *in Consolati di Mare and Chambers of Commerce: Proceedings of a Conference held at the Foundation for International Studies (Valletta, 1998)*, ed. by Carmel Vassalo, (Malta: Malta University Press, 2000), pp. 113-125.

[207] Maria Grazia Biagi, *I consoli delle nazioni a Livorno*, in *Atti del convegno Livorno ed il Mediterraneo in età medicea* (Livorno: Bastogi, 1978), p. 364.

considerable income. For example, in 1699 the English consul in Livorno earned from his office about seven thousand *scudi* per year, the Spanish eight thousand, the Dutch six thousand.[208] The prestige and money that came from the office of consul were highly coveted and, since the beginning of the seventeenth century, most of the great European states tried to abolish the direct election of the consul and to impose representatives of their choice.[209] Often, however, given the delicate and fiduciary nature of the affairs managed by the consul, the merchants refused to recognize the person selected by their government and elected their representative anyway. Thus, in some cases, in Livorno there were two consuls, one appointed from the crown, and the other chosen by the merchants.[210] This could generate conflict not only between the two consuls but also between the merchant community and their government, precisely as it happened when the English government tried to impose a consul to the English community of Livorno. For now, however, suffice to say that the position of consul, for its economic and social benefits, was highly desired.

Already Plowman's father, Matthew Plowman, tried to be elected consul in 1687, when the outgoing consul, Thomas Platt, was about to leave office.[211] However, the English community was fiercely opposed to him and Plowman senior withdrew from the competition.[212] Plowman junior never stood for election to take Blackwell's place as consul, as his openly Jacobite position meant he would probably not have achieved the necessary consensus. Instead, Plowman sought access to the office in a covert manner. As mentioned above, the position of consul guaranteed significant economic benefits to

[208] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1815, Memoire de l'Etat present de Ligourne et de son Commerce année 1699.
[209] Tristan Stein, *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade 1660-1748*, Ph.D Thesis (Harvard University, 2012), pp. 97-113.
[210] Maria Grazia Biagi, 'I consoli delle nazioni a Livorno', in *Atti del convegno Livorno ed il Mediterraneo in età medicea*, Livorno, Bastogi, 1978, p. 364.
[211] Stefano Villani, 'I consoli della nazione inglese a Livorno tra il 1665 e il 1673: Joseph Kent, Thomas Clutterbuck e Ephraim Skinner', in *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, 9 (2004), p. 21.
[212] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4245, cc. 275-276; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4245, minuta di risposta 12 September 1687.

its owner and many were willing to pay to obtain it. Thus, when a consul retired, he often sold his support for the election to the candidate who was willing to pay him the most. Having the support of the outgoing consul was essential because the latter, thanks to the knowledge accumulated over the years of his mandate, could influence the outcome of the election. This was exactly what Plowman had done, when he had bought 'the consulate from Mr. Lambert Blackwell in half with John Burrows' for the total sum of 16,000 pezze.[213] The pact between Burrows and Plowman was that the first would be the public face of the operation and the other a covert financier, who would then receive fifty percent of the money Burrows would earn from his consulate. No one else, apart from Blackwell, knew that Plowman was involved in the deal: the money changed hands and Blackwell named Burrows his successor, to the full satisfaction of the unsuspecting English community of Livorno. Almost five years had passed since then and still 'there [was] no person in the world' who knew that Plowman and Burrows were 'companions in many respects'.[214]

This secret pact was, therefore, the reason which bound these two men who should have been opposed for both confessional and political reasons. This agreement with Burrows was also the reason why Plowman wrote to him asking him to be guarantor for his release. In fact, the English merchant hoped that Burrows, mindful of their ancient pact, would come to his aid, using his authority as consul to obtain his release.

Plowman's arrest preoccupied Burrows as well. We saw earlier in this section how some of the English merchants in Livorno were trying to put the Rigby&Shepard out of business. At that moment for Burrows, getting Plowman out of prison would have meant openly taking sides with him against the other merchants. Furthermore, if it became known that Plowman had financed Burrows in purchasing the consulate, the latter's

[213] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 3 April 1697.
[214] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Pietro Angeli, 3 April 1697.

position would have been irremediably compromised. The merchants would have certainly demanded his resignation and his career would be over. By contrast, facilitating the merchants' unscrupulous operation to bankrupt the Rigby&Shepard would have enlarged Burrows's support and strengthened his position. Finally, if Plowman remained in prison, Burrows could appropriate, not only all the income of his consulate, but also the 8,000 pezze that Plowman had lent him. Burrows, therefore, following his own interest, distanced himself from Plowman. 'The Consul of England', Judge Angeli wrote to Secretary Panciatichi on 17th April 1697, 'has received the letter written [from Plowman but] he did not want to reply'.[215] Burrows did, however, send one of his secretaries to the Tuscan magistrate, 'to let Plowman know his good heart' and offered to pay four hundred and fifty pezze as a contribution to his release.[216] From the analysis of this passage it is evident that Burrows had not sent a written response because that could always be used as evidence against him, but had preferred instead to send a message through his secretary. Furthermore, it is also clear that neither Burrows' 'good heart' nor the four hundred and fifty pezze that he offered to pay (compared to the 14,000 requested by the Grand Ducal government) would have contributed in the least to freeing Plowman. Even Burrows had thus abandoned the English merchant to his fate, preferring to keep his power and his position as consul rather than help his partner in difficulty.

In this section we have seen how Plowman's arrest had a great impact on the English community in Livorno. The merchants had no qualms about organizing an elaborate plan to destroy the Rigby&Shepard and Plowman had been abandoned by all his friends, who preferred to betray him rather than risk being caught up in the consequences of his arrest. Furthermore, the ambiguous relationship between Plowman

[215] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Da Jack Crookshanks a Pietro Angeli, 17 April 1697.
[216] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, Da Jack Crookshanks a Pietro Angeli, 17 April 1697.

and Burrows is representative of the social, political and confessional uncertainty of the English society of the time, which will be extensively analysed in the following chapter.

Conclusions

This chapter shows that the motivations that led William Plowman to become a pirate had political roots. Plowman was a Jacobite, but the defeat of France in the Nine Years' War and the failed plot to assassinate William III removed the prospect of James II's return to the throne. The exiled monarch was no longer able to guarantee Plowman an adequate reward for his services, and so the merchant decided to find a shortcut to his retirement. Although Plowman's actions were nonetheless private in nature, they received a public response. France instrumentally used the merchant's piracy to threaten Tuscan neutrality. Relations between France and the Grand Duchy had progressively worsened from 1688. Cosimo III had first married his daughter Maria Luisa with the Elector Palatine Johan Wilhelm (1691), and had then officially recognized William III as King of England (1694). The Grand Duke had also refused to join a league of Italian princes in support of France therefore directly thwarting French hegemonic ambitions. This analysis demonstrates the weakness of the historiographical paradigm that described Tuscany at the end of the seventeenth century as a weak state and subject to the great powers of Europe. On the contrary, the political decisions taken by the Tuscan government show how the country had the strength to openly confront much more powerful states such as France and England. The Plowman case also demonstrates the political and economic centrality of the Mediterranean at the end of the seventeenth century. The actions of a private citizen like Plowman quickly transformed into a complex international controversy due to the enormous political and economic interests that gravitated around Livorno. It will be clearly seen in the next chapters how the Tuscan port was the main

strategic asset of the Grand Duchy, and how the great European nations were willing to do anything to obtain privileged access to Livorno.

It was also seen in this chapter how the English community of Livorno was deeply divided, and how the news of Plowman's arrest had prompted everyone to act to exclusively protect their own interests. In the next chapter, we will see how British society had undergone many regime changes in less than fifty years: from Civil War to the Glorious Revolution, each passage had been traumatic and had greatly weakened the country's social cohesion. In the course of this work it will be seen not only how the effects of the regime change would be clearly perceptible throughout the development of the Plowman case, but also how the Tuscan government would take advantage of the division of English society to victoriously conclude the dispute.

Chapter II: The Plowman Case and the Glorious Revolution

The arrest of William Plowman highlighted the instability of the personal relationships that characterized the English community of Livorno. Indeed, after the merchant was imprisoned, everyone adopted the strategies that he considered most appropriate to protect their interests, without dwelling on the moral consequences of their actions. However, the opportunistic behaviour of Plowman's friends and associates is only the most evident expression of the frailty of the cohesion of English society of the time.

This chapter will analyse the relationship between the government, its representatives and its citizens, and it will demonstrate that the regime change that followed the Glorious Revolution had greatly weakened the social cohesion of English society. It will also be argued that the regime change had severely damaged England's international prestige, and it will be shown that one of the objectives of the new diplomatic mission sent by William III in Italy was to restore the reputation of the state. However, the new regime was forced to choose its ministers more on the basis of their fidelity and their political affiliation, rather than their competence and experience. This, combined with the weakness of the ties that bound the institutions to their representatives abroad, constituted one of the major obstacles to English diplomatic ambitions. By analysing the figure of the English consul in Livorno John Burrows and of the ambassador to Tuscany Lambert Blackwell, the chapter will highlight the institutional frailty of the new Williamite regime. It will be seen how both John Burrows and Lambert Blackwell deliberately misinformed the Secretary of State regarding the Plowman case, either by omitting significant details or by lying explicitly. The lack of competent ministers in fact allowed both John Burrows and Lambert Blackwell to arbitrarily manage the information that reached the government, which was thus completely unaware of what was really

happening in Livorno and in Tuscany. Through the analysis of the correspondence of the consul and of the English ambassador, the climate of mutual distrust and suspicion that reigned in those years between the crown, its representatives and its citizens will emerge. It will be seen how the institutional frailty and the lack of social cohesion of English society allowed Tuscany to manage the diplomatic game to its own advantage.

The economic and political situation in England after the Glorious Revolution

This section will place the Plowman case in the English political context and it will show the link between the case and the Glorious Revolution.[1] The Glorious Revolution has been extensively studied in its confessional,[2] political,[3] and, economic aspects.[4] However the impact that it had on English diplomatic capabilities and on the

[1] On the birth and use of the term 'Glorious Revolution' see: Ulrich Niggemann, 'Some Remarks on the Origins of the Term 'Glorious Revolution'', *The Seventeenth Century*, 27:4 (2012), pp, 477-487.
[2] *England's Wars of Religion Revisited*, ed. by C. W. A. Prior and G. Burgess (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); Craig Rose, *England in the 1690s: Revolution, Religion and War* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); W.A. Speck, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Englishmen and the Revolution of 1688* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. by Tim Harris, Mark Goldie, Paul Seaward (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
[3] Geoffrey M. Hodgson, *1688 and all that: property rights, the Glorious Revolution*, in Journal of Institutional Economics (2017), 13:1, pp. 79-107; Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University, 2009); Steven Pincus, James A. Robinson, 'What Really Happened During the Glorious Revolution?, in *Institutions, Property Rights, and Economic Growth: The Legacy of Douglass North* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 192–222; J. R. Jones, *Liberty Secured? Britain Before and After 1688* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); John Morrill, 'The Sensible Revolution', in, *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact*, ed. by Jonathan I. Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 73–104; *Politics and Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain*, ed. by Howard Nenner (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997). D. C. North, B. R. Weingast, 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Economic History*, 49**:**4 (1989), pp. 803–832; Melinda S. Zook, *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Richard L. Greaves, *Secrets of the Kingdom: British Radicals from the Popish Plot to the Revolution of 1688-1689* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).
[4] On this topic: Dwyryt W. Jones, *War and Economy in the Age of William III and Marlborough* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (London: Routledge, 1989); Henry Roseveare, *The Financial Revolution, 1660–1760* (London: Longman, 1991); Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660–1720* (Oxford: Oxford Unversity Press, 2001); Anne L. Murphy, *The Origins of English Financial Markets: Investment and Speculation before the South Sea Bubble* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620–1720* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Bruce G. Carruthers, *City of Capital: Politics and Markets in the English*

prestige of England abroad has been often overlooked.[5] The analysis of the Plowman case will highlight the difficult diplomatic position of England after 1688, and will also show how the Glorious Revolution had damaged England's international prestige. This section will highlight how the Glorious Revolution created a fundamental problem of trust between the administration and its representatives: the new regime of William III almost completely replaced government officials and diplomats on the basis of their political affiliation, even if they completely lacked experience. We will see how these elements combined constituted one of the major obstacles for the diplomatic success of the new regime.

In December 1688, a few days after the flight of James II, a mob in the throes of anti-Catholic fervour attacked and set fire to the homes of the Tuscan envoy to England Francesco Terriesi and the Spanish ambassador Don Pedro de Ronquillo.[6] With this blatant act, the diplomatic relations that England maintained not only with the Mediterranean countries, but also with most of the Catholic countries of Europe, came to an end. The news quickly made the rounds of European courts, inflicting a severe blow to the already fragile English prestige. It must in fact be considered that in 1688 England was a second-rate military and political power, a country torn by deep internal divisions, with few resources, and on the verge of bankruptcy.[7] Indeed, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was just the latest episode of institutional instability that had characterized the

Financial Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Stephen Quinn, 'The Glorious Revolution's Effect on English Private Finance: A Microhistory, 1680–1705', in *Journal of Economic History*, 61:3 (2001), pp. 593–615; John David Angle, 'Glorious Revolution as Financial Revolution', *History Faculty Publications*, 6 (2013). Accessible at: https://scholar.smu.edu/hum_sci_history_research/6.

[5] For an overview of the evolution of historiography regarding the Glorious Revolution see: David Onnekink, 'Primacy Contested: Foreign and Domestic Policy in the Reign of William III', in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000*, ed. by W. Mulligan and B. Simms (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 32-48.

[6] Stefano Villani, 'Note su Francesco Terriesi (1635-1715)', p. 68.

[7] Bruce G. Charruters, *City of Capital: Politics and Markets in the English Financial Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 27-52.

British Isles for the previous fifty years.[8] Since the 1640s, England had undergone numerous regime changes: from the Civil War, to the beheading of Charles I, from Cromwell's protectorate to the Glorious Revolution. Each of these events had damaged the country's prestige and international credibility, which had been further damaged by the weakness of its economy.[9] Political instability and the war resulting from the Glorious Revolution accelerated the phenomenon of 'clipping'[10] so much so that in 1690 the weight of the coins had reduced by 50%, generating increasing inflation.[11] By 1696 the situation had become so alarming that the English government decided to attempt a radical remedy, that is, to completely recoin all the currency.[12] The project failed miserably: it was not possible to mint enough coins to replace the old ones and therefore a large part of the population found itself without money, or with worthless coins. This generated a bank run and soon the banks, trapped by the government's manoeuvre, suspended payments. The liquidity crisis was total: 'payment of wages became impossible, and much domestic commerce essentially came to a halt'.[13] Thus, for the

[8] On this topic: *The Experience of Revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland*, ed. by M. J. Braddick and D. L. Smith, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011). In particular the essay of Glen Burgess, 'Religion and Civil Society, the Place of the English Revolution in the Development of Political Thought', in *The Experience of Revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland*, ed. by M. J. Braddick and D. L. Smith, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 270-290.

[9] Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: the Restoration and Revolution Monarchy 1660-1714* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). In this volume Sharpe illustrates the difficulties of the various English regimes in adapting the sovereigns to the taste of public opinion. Sharpe stresses, for example, that one of the causes of the Glorious Revolution is to be identified in the failure of James II's 'image campaign'. On the economic instability before the Glorious Revolution see: Moshe Arye Milevsky, *The day the King Defaulted*: *Financial Lessons from the Stop of the Exchequer of 1672* (Toronto: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Henry Roseveare, *The Financial Revolution 1660–1760* (London: Longman, 1991).

[10] 'Clipping' was the process by which the edges of a coin were filed to recover part of the precious metal contained in it. In this way the coin lost weight but kept its face value intact.

[11] To give an example: if with a coin it was possible to buy certain goods, in 1696, when the quantity of metal was reduced by 50%, two coins were needed to buy the same amount of goods. This meant that the purchasing power of the coin had been reduced by 50%, and also that prices had doubled, therefore generating a strong inflation. Richard A. Kleer, *Money, Politics and Power: Banking and Public Finance in Wartime England, 1694-1696* (London: Routledge, 2017), Digital Ed.

[12] This manoeuvre, known as The Great Recoinage, was as desperate as it was ambitious. In fact, it meant declaring the old clipped coins illegal, and at the same time minting a sufficient amount of new money to replace the old one. Brodie Waddel, 'The Politics of Economic Distress in the Aftermath of the Glorious Revolution', in *English Historical Review* 130:543 (2015), p. 323.

[13] Brodie Waddel, 'The Politics of Economic Distress in the Aftermath of the Glorious Revolution', in *English Historical Review* 130:543 (2015), p. 323.

second time in just over twenty years,[14] the British economies saw the spectre of bankruptcy.[15] Furthermore, when the government decided to recoin the currency, it kept the value of the pound at the same level as it had before the war. This caused severe deflation, which combined with the liquidity crisis and the collapse of credit threw the country into a terrible depression, so much so that at the end of April 1696 'the English government was close to total financial exhaustion'.[16] While Charles Montague, Chancellor of the Exchequer, bitterly complained that credit was now destroyed and that 'at present no bill or note will pass in payment',[17] the Paymaster-General of the Army wrote disconsolately to Secretary of War William Blathwayt that he had run out of money, concluding 'what can be done to relieve us in this fatal extremity I cannot see'.[18] These were the days around the 4th of May 1696,[19] a few days after William Plowman's departure from Livorno.

From a diplomatic point of view, 'the most important effect of the Glorious Revolution was that it brought to the English throne a man whose prime aims were centred, not in England, but in Europe'.[20] William III was in fact 'first and foremost a European', and he radically changed England's foreign policy objectives. The new ruler abandoned the isolationist policy that had characterized the reign of the late Stuarts and proposed England as one of the powers capable of maintaining the balance of power on

[14] England bankrupted in 1672.
[15] Richard A. Kleer, *Money, Politics and Power. Banking and Public Finance in Wartime England 1694-96*, (Routledge, 2017), Digital edition.
[16] Aaron Graham, 'Credit, confidence and the circulation of the Exchequer bills in the early financial revolution', in *Financial History Review*, 26:1, (2019), p. 63.
[17] British Library, Add. MS , fol. 34335, fol. 2r–v, Charles Montagu to William Blathwayt, 29 May 1696, as cited by Aaron Graham in 'Credit and Confidence and the circulation of the Exchequer in the early financial revolution', *Financial Historical Review* (2019), p. 65.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 66.
[19] This was the fixed limit for using old coins in payments. After this date the old coin would no longer be the legal tender of the country. William III, 1695-6: An Act for remedying the Ill State of the Coin of the Kingdome. [Chapter I. Rot. Parl. 7 & 8 Gul. III. p. 1. n.1.]', in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (s.l, 1820), pp. 1-4. Accessible at: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol7/pp1-4.
[20] Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age, England, 1603-1714* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 365.

the European continent.[21] The new British continental ambitions required an intense diplomatic activity to support William III's new international commitment and to show the renewed British power. However, the new English government had to face not only the negative effects that the regime change had had on the country's international prestige, but also the consequences that the revolution had had on the civil and social fabric of the nation.

From the point of view of the European states, the Glorious Revolution was just another political upheaval that the English kingdom had gone through: it seemed indeed that England could not find its institutional and economic balance.[22] In the years immediately following 1688 it was by no means clear whether the new regime would be able to survive, or whether it would succumb under the weight of France or of its own economic problems. Convincing the allies on the continent and the other European countries that England was a stable state and a reliable partner thus became one of the major diplomatic objectives of the new regime.[23] However, achieving this goal was made much more difficult by the consequences that the Glorious Revolution had had on the ability of England to maintain diplomatic relations with other European states.

When James II was dethroned and when Parliament recognized William III as sovereign, all the diplomatic missions that England had abroad and all those that foreign

[21] Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age, England, 1603-1714*, (London: Longman, 1994), p. 351. On the topic of foreign affairs under Charles II and James II see: Gabriel Glickman, 'Conflicting Visions: Foreign Affairs in Domestic Debate 1660-1689', in *The Primacy of Foreign Policy in British History, 1660-2000*, ed. by W. Mulligan and B. Simms (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 15-31; William A. Speck, *James II* (London: Longman, 2002); Jeremy Black, *A System of Ambition? British Foreign Policy, 1660-1793* (London: Longman, 1991); *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and Its World Impact*, ed. by J. I. Israel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[22] Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 29, 253.

[23] Jeremy Black in his *British Diplomats and Diplomacy, 1688-1800* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001) says that the arrival of William can be considered a turning point for British diplomacy. However, the historian, focusing on the development of British diplomacy after the Glorious Revolution, neglects to illustrate the difficulties that the new regime faced in establishing new diplomatic relations with many states of Europe.

states had in London immediately ceased their functions.[24] The new regime experienced therefore some kind of diplomatic blackout and thus had to face the unprecedented challenge of obtaining formal recognition from the other European countries. This task was facilitated by Dutch diplomatic support and the continental political situation.[25] In fact, the war started by Louis XIV with the invasion of the Palatinate made it essential for the great European countries to involve England in the anti-French league, therefore William III was recognized by the Emperor and by most of the German and northern European Protestant countries.[26] However, if the confessional element contributed to the recognition of the new regime by the other Protestant states, it was instead one of the major obstacles to the recognition of William III by the Catholic countries.[27] Furthermore, as mentioned above, the new regime appeared anything but solid and there were concrete possibilities that James II could return to the throne.[28] The looting and burning of the Spanish and Tuscan embassies then gave a tangible demonstration not only of the English anti-Catholic fervour, but also of the inability, or unwillingness, of the new regime to guarantee the diplomatic privileges of Catholic countries. It was indeed only after 1692, that is, after the suppression of the insurrections in Ireland and Scotland, that Catholic countries began to recognize the legitimacy of the new regime.[29] The first were, in 1692,

[24] An ambassador was a person who acted by name and on behalf of the sovereign and was a fiduciary envoy par excellence. For example, upon the death of a monarch the ambassadors and envoys automatically ceased their duties. Therefore after the dethronement of James all the envoys he had sent abroad and all the foreign representatives that resided in London could not exercise their functions anymore.

[25] Simon Groenveld, 'J'équippe sic une flotte très considérable: The Dutch Side of the Glorious Revolution', in *The Revolution of 1688*, ed. by R. Beddard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 213–245; Steven Pincus, *1688 The First Modern Revolution* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 49-91; 305-366.

[26] Lothar Höbelt, 'Imperial Diplomacy and the Glorious Revolution', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, vol. 11:1 (1991), pp. 61-67.

[27] Cromwell faced the same problem after the Civil War. David L. Smith, 'Diplomacy and the Religious Question: Mazarin, Cromwell and the Treaties of 1655 and 1657', *Revue d'etudes anglophones*, 11 (2014), pp. 1-35.

[28] Lothar Höbelt, 'Imperial Diplomacy and the Glorious Revolution', pp. 61-67. Indeed Höbelt shows how Emperor Leopold himself was rather dubious whether to continue to provide support to William III or to favour the return of James II.

[29] David B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 14.

Poland and Portugal, which were followed by Tuscany in 1694, and by Genoa and Venice in 1695.[30] However, full diplomatic relations with Catholic countries resumed only in 1697, after the end of the Nine Years' War and only after the formal recognition by Louis XIV of William III's sovereignty over the British Isles.[31] Thus, despite the efforts of William III, England's relations with many European countries remained uncertain and divided on a confessional basis for nearly ten years.

England emerged victorious from the war against Louis XIV, and also managed to overcome the terrible economic crisis of 1696. The new prestige acquired by the nation had to be then strengthened from a diplomatic point of view, mending those relations that were abruptly interrupted in 1688. However, the process of diplomatic affirmation of England was made more difficult due to the consequences that the Glorious Revolution had had on English social fabric, and in particular on the relationship between the government and its representatives.

When William III landed in England, the English parliament was faced with a significant legal dilemma, namely how to legally justify the dethronement of James II and the coronation of William III. The parliament argued that James II, fleeing abroad, had 'abdicated the government'.[32] Then legitimacy to the throne was somehow safeguarded by simultaneously crowning William III and Mary Stuart, the eldest daughter of James II. However, another extremely significant problem remained to be resolved, namely that of the oaths of allegiance given to James II.[33] With a law, parliament dissolved the oaths

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 15-21.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[32] The Bill of Rights, or *An Act declareing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Setleing the Succession of the Crowne*, 1688. Accessible at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/WillandMarSess2/1/2/introduction
[33] Regarding the importance and evolution of oaths, see: David Martin Jones, *Conscience and Allegiance in Seventeenth Century England* (Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 1999); Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2005); Howard Nenner, 'Loyalty and the Law: The Meaning of Trust and the Right of Resistance in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 48:4 (2009), pp. 859-870; Charles F. Mullet, 'Religion, Politics and Oaths in the Glorious Revolution, *The Review of Politics*, 10:4 (1948), pp. 462-474.

sworn to the former monarch and created new ones in line with the new regime. All the spiritual and temporal lords, all the holders of public offices or royal licenses were therefore forced to take the new oath, and this had created great conflicts in the consciences of many Englishmen.[34] Only a few had actually refused, but the government suspected that the loyalty of many of those who swore to William was still uncertain and that they had done so only for convenience.[35] A fundamental problem of trust arose between the government and its citizens and this is particularly evident if one observes the changes in the composition of the diplomatic corps after the Glorious Revolution. Indeed only two diplomats who were already in service under the Stuarts were reconfirmed in their post by the new Williamite regime.[36] The government, clearly fearing that the old ambassadors and envoys had secretly remained faithful to their old sovereign, replaced them with people that actively supported William, even if they completely lacked diplomatic experience.[37] The consequences of such a choice were that the English government suddenly lost the experience and diplomatic know-how accumulated in the previous thirty years, and was forced to rely on diplomats who, even if well-intentioned, did not have the qualifications and the expertise to fulfil their duties.[38] We will see later in this work how this situation impacted on the Plowman case when the English

[34] *An Act for the Abrogating the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance and Appointing Other Oaths*, Statutes of the Realm, vol. 6, 1685-94, (Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), pp. 57-60. On this topic see also: Edward Vallance, *Loyalty, Memory and Public Opinion in England 1658-1727* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Conal Condren, *Argument and Authority in Early Modern England: The Presupposition of Oaths and Office* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[35] Rachel Weil, 'National Security and Secularization in the English Revolution of 1688', in *After Secular Law*, ed. by W. Fallers Sullivan, R. A. Yelle, M. Taussig-Rubbo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 82.
[36] David B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 15, p. 107.
[37] M. Lane, 'The Diplomatic Service Under William III', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 10 (1927), p. 92.
[38] David B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 96. Jonah S. Brundage, 'The Social Sources of Geopolitical Power: French and British Diplomacy and the Politics of Interstate Recognition, 1689-1789', *American Sociological Review*, 83:6 (2018), pp. 1254-1280.

ambassador to Tuscany, Lambert Blackwell, was chosen for his political positions rather than for his competence.

The problem of loyalty affected the administration as well. Even in this case the new regime was forced to choose ministers which were considered loyal, rather than competent ministers. Furthermore, the Glorious Revolution enhanced the role and powers of Parliament and political affiliation became another important criterion to select secretaries and government officials.[39] As Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax, wrote in 1694: 'formerly after a man had discharged a commission in foreign parts was called home and made a Secretary of State, but that matter is a good deal altered. [...] [The appointment of the Secretaries of State] is directed by some consideration at home more than by their skills in business abroad'.[40] No significant changes in the process of selecting new ministers appeared with the reign of Queen Anne, whose secretaries were chosen on a political basis rather than for their competence. In 1704 the Tuscan ambassador Iacopo Giraldi, commenting on the appointment of the new Secretary of State, drew up a harsh judgment of the English administration: 'the new Secretary of State finally blossomed, [he] is Sir Robert Harley [Speaker] of the House of Commons, that having served the court well in that place was chosen for this, although [his appointment is incompatible] with his talents [...] who appear simple for foreign affairs, having seen no other world than this island, nor speaking any other language than the natural'.[41] Especially the fact that the new Secretary of State spoke no foreign language would have been 'of great inconvenience to the foreign ministers, many of whom, after my lord Nottingham's [resignation] already complained of the mediocre understanding that Mr.

[39] Robert McJimsey, 'A Country Divided? English Politics and the Nine Years' War', *Albion a Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 23:1 (1991), pp. 61-74.
[40] Cited in David B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 106.
[41] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 30 Maggio 1704.

Hedges had of the French'.[42] This appointment, Giraldi continued, 'makes the oddness of this government even more evident, because only the political interest is considered, and no attention is paid to the skills and the capacity of the people employed'.[43]

The employment of inexperienced ministers and diplomats damaged the administrative efficiency of the state and this is particularly evident when analysing the sources concerning the English Secretary of State. In England, there were two Secretariats of State: the 'Secretary of State for the Northern Department' and the 'Secretary of State for the Southern Department'. However, although there were two secretariats, there were no formal boundaries of their respective spheres of authority. Approximately it can be said that the Secretary of the Northern Department was in charge of managing relations with the Protestant states of Europe, while the Secretary of the Southern Department 'embraced France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey and the Barbary States'.[44] Theoretically it should therefore have been the Secretary of the Southern Department to deal with Italian matters, however the sources show that it was sometimes the Secretary of State of the Northern Department who was concerned with the Plowman case. If this uncertain division could lead to confusion of competences and therefore to administrative inefficiency, this had certainly been increased by the fact that, between 1696 and 1704, seven different Secretaries alternated in both departments, and none of them had had previous diplomatic experience. The confusion was then amplified by the fact that, sometimes, a Secretary could move from one department to another, and then return to his previous position.

[42] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 30 Maggio 1704.
[43] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 30 Maggio 1704.
[44] Catalog of records assembled by the State Paper Office, including papers of the Secretaries of State up to 1782, https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C248.

Table of the Secretaries of States of both departments 1694-1706:

Year/Office holder	**Northern Department**	**Year/Office Holder**	**Southern Department**
1694-1695	Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury	1695-1698	Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury
1695-1697	Sir William Trumbull	1698-1699	James Vernon
1697-1700	James Vernon	1699-1700	Edward Villiers, Earl of Jersey
1700-1701	Charles Hedges	1700-1702	James Vernon
1702	James Vernon	1702	Charles Montagu, Earl of Manchester
1702-1704	Charles Hedges	1702-1704	Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham
1704-1708	Robert Harley	1704-1706	Charles Hedges

The fact that the Secretaries passed from one department to another, or the fact that they left their posts only to resume them shortly after, forced the diplomatic personnel into a perennial condition of uncertainty. Sometimes the letters from the ambassador to Tuscany were addressed to both secretaries: evidently the envoy was not entirely sure who was currently in charge of affairs, therefore he sent his letters to both of them. Furthermore, sometimes there were three secretaries at the same time (the outgoing one, the incoming one and the one from the other department) dealing with the same matter, generating even more confusion. It is evident that this administrative disorder could constitute an obstacle for the government and, if taken to the extreme, could also endanger its foreign policy objectives.

Thus, in the years following the Glorious Revolution, the new Williamite regime found itself facing a series of unprecedented crises. Economic turmoil, difficult diplomatic relations and the fragmented social situation combined to form a major obstacle to the political and diplomatic ambitions of the new regime. This is particularly

evident from the analysis of the documents of the Plowman case which reveal not only the lack of experience of English ministers and diplomats, but also the climate of division and political uncertainty that reigned within the English administration. The constant turnover of the secretaries of state prevented the government having control over its diplomats, on whose honesty and personal integrity the management of the affairs of the state were entrusted. As we will see in this chapter, it was precisely this ambiguous administrative situation and the poor control that the crown had over its representatives abroad, which constituted one of the greatest obstacles for the English government during the Plowman case.

The Merchant, the consul, the secretary

By the end of 1696, the Plowman affair had become an international case. However, in England it did not receive much attention until the end of 1699, since the English government had been only marginally informed by its own representatives abroad of what had happened and was therefore unaware of the real extent of Plowman's actions.

The correspondence between the English consul in Livorno John Burrows and the English Secretary of State show how the consul sought to protect his own interests by misinforming the English government about the real nature of Plowman's expedition and neglected to inform it about the accusations of piracy. The government was then completely unprepared to confront the political consequences of Plowman's actions. Indeed, the English merchant's capture of several French ships in Turkish waters provoked a reaction from the Ottoman Empire, which threatened to suspend the privileges of the Levant Company. Burrows, by withholding information and lying to the government, jeopardized the economic interests of the nation and also the diplomatic relations between England and the Sultan.

Before 1699 Plowman's name appeared only sporadically in the consular correspondence, and he does not seem to have had a different role, nor deserve more attention, than any other of the many English merchants who resided in Livorno. However, as we saw in the first chapter, Plowman had arrived in Livorno in 1676, and had founded his trading house in 1690. The absence of Plowman from the official English documents could be interpreted considering his ambiguous nature: he was a Catholic and consul of James II, yet he had also bought half of the English consulate together with John Burrows, probably with the approval of Lambert Blackwell. Thus, his absence from official documents could be explained as the first sign of weakness of the ties that bound the crown to its representatives abroad. In fact, Blackwell and Burrows might not have considered it appropriate to let the government know that in Livorno there was an agent of James II with whom they were in business. Moreover, as shown in the previous section, their choice to overlook Plowman's presence was also a political ploy: at least until 1696 the Williamite regime was far from stable, and therefore maintaining a friendship with a person like Plowman, who was linked to James II, could be useful in the case of the return to the throne of the exiled ruler.

Regardless of what the reason that had led Burrows and Blackwell to overlook Plowman in their correspondence was, they were already failing one of the most important tasks of their role. Indeed, one of the main duties of the English consuls was to gather information and keep the Secretary of State updated on the news of the place where they resided, on their fellow residents, on enemy movements, on market trends and on the price of goods. Furthermore, the consulate of Livorno also used to forward letters and orders from the English government to the most distant and less frequented ports in the Mediterranean. A tartane built in Livorno, renowned for being a very fast and safe ship, and which rightly carried the name of *Velocità*, had been chartered by the English

government and was always kept at the consul's disposal.[45] This vessel was used to carry urgent messages to the English fleets in the Mediterranean, to send dispatches to the other English consuls, or for espionage and surveillance activities, especially around the French ports of Marseille and Toulon.[46]

It was the *Velocità* that provided the first news of Plowman's adventures. In March 1696 John Burrows, who had just succeeded Lambert Blackwell as consul in Livorno, wrote to the Secretary of State, the Duke of Shrewsbury, that 'Capt. Broom is the chief director of three privateers now fitting with English colours out of this port (Livorno), who pretends to be going to Newfoundland, but have other designes'.[47] Indeed, Plowman, perhaps in an attempt to mislead his competitors, had spread the rumour that his expedition was set to cross the Atlantic. However, as it was seen in the previous chapter, the French merchants, as soon as they heard of the armament of Plowman's ships had vigorously protested to Cosimo III, arguing that this was a flagrant violation of Livorno's neutrality. The Grand Duke, after speaking with the English merchant, had reassured the French that Plowman's enterprise would not cause them any harm and had allowed the merchant to leave. The first interesting fact to note in this regard is that in the consular correspondence no mention is made of this first controversy. Indeed, Burrows informed Secretary Shrewsbury that three privateer ships were being armed *out* of the port of Livorno, implicitly stating that the operation did not violate the port's neutrality. Burrows also identified Captain Broom and not William Plowman as the 'chief director' of the operation. In short, the consul voluntarily omitted three relevant pieces of information: the dispute with the French, the involvement of the Grand Duke and the identity of the real organizer of the expedition. The vigorous French protests and the

[45] *Calendar of Treasury Books*, 'Minute book: April 1695, 11-25', *Volume 10, 1693-1696*, ed. William A Shaw (London, 1935), pp. 1365-1369. Accessible at: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-treasury-books/vol10/pp1365-1369.
[46] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, various letters from Lambert Blackwell and John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury.
[47] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 19 March 1696.

relationship between Burrows and Plowman suggests that the true intent of the expedition was well known to the consul. However, Burrows carefully avoided providing Shrewsbury with detailed information, remaining very vague even about the true nature of the 'designes' of the English ships. Evidently Burrows thought that it was not necessary to inform the Secretary of State in detail and presented Plowman's expedition as a regular enterprise. In fact, it was rather out of the ordinary for three ships 'with English colours' to be armed in the port of Livorno, given that the Grand Ducal Bando of 1683 prohibited the arming of privateers in the port without the explicit permission of the sovereign.[48] It might indeed seem strange that the consul himself did not boast of this extraordinary concession obtained by the Grand Duke, perhaps presenting it as the first success of his new office. Burrows, however, had good reason to be discreet, especially considering that he had become consul with the financial aid of Plowman. In the complicated sea of crossed loyalties that was the merchant's world, the economic ties had first place: it did not matter if the interests of the government were damaged.

On the 14th May 1696 Burrows informed the Secretary of State of the early successes of the expedition taking care, however, to keep omitting Plowman's name:

> 'Privateer Broom, who went hence (Tunis) 21 April with three ships, on the Barbary shoar tooke a French vessel with Allum, Wool and Hides from Constantinople and sent her to Porto Farina. His companion Pickering tooke a barque with corne and carried to Porto Longone. Both of them narrowly escaped the French man of War (the Serieux) who chased and had nigh come up with one of them, but by favor of the night he got away'.[49]

[48] Bando granducale, 24 May 1683.
[49] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 14 May 1696.

However, the tranquillity of the English consul was short-lived. The Duke of Shrewsbury had come to know that none of the captains of the English ships had a legitimate letter of marque. From the available sources it is not clear how the Secretary of State learned about it, nor was it possible to find the letter that Shrewsbury had sent to Burrows. However, the tone of the English consul's reply suggests that the Secretary of State was really displeased to discover that Plowman's ships had no legal authorization. 'I can't believe', Burrows wrote on 21st May, 'privateer Broom has any true commission for the ship he now goes in [...]. Nor I can tell that his companion Pickering, Wilson [sic] Plowman, and capt. Garland have any other commission save from the Duke of Savoy'.[50] Burrows' words convey surprise and dismay, however this was only a fiction: from the omissions of his previous letters it is in fact evident that the consul knew the details of the expedition, and therefore also knew that Plowman and the other captains did not have a valid letter of marque. The consul was trying to protect himself and this is even more evident when looking at the name of William 'Wilson' Plowman reported in his letter: it is not credible that Burrows did not know the real first name of his friend and business partner. Indeed, the voluntariness of the error is clear, since Burrows' calligraphy is generally very readable and in that point is particularly clear. It is likely that Burrows's 'innocent' spelling mistake, meant to protect his friend. Perhaps Burrows was trying to prove, in a rather clumsy way, that he had no connection with the merchant, so much so that he did not even know what his first name was. Regardless of what motivated Burrows to write 'Wilson', the consul continued to withhold important information from the Secretary of State.

Burrows also claimed that Plowman had a letter of marque from the Duke of Savoy, something that is not reported in any of the published pamphlets, nor in any other

[50] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to James Vernon, 21 May 1696.

official document. It is therefore almost certain that this was also a lie, conceived by the English consul with the aim of misleading the Duke of Shrewsbury. Savoy and England were allies in the Nine Years' War, therefore if Plowman had captured French ships with a Savoy letter of marque those prizes would have been legal and the French would have had no reason to protest against Cosimo III. Furthermore, if Plowman had an authorization from the Duke of Savoy, his actions would not have been the responsibility of the English government but that of Savoy. The analysis of the rest of his letter offers further support for the hypothesis that Burrows was lying about the Savoy letter of marque. 'When [Plowman] shall send any French prizes into this place with Savoy colors', the English consul wrote, 'the prize masters of that Duke will take them, and should the aforesaid put up, all of them, Bandiera of Savoy [I cannot] make them to pay'.[51] In this way Burrows was telling the Secretary of State that he could not interfere with Plowman's prizes, nor could he undertake any actions against the merchant, being him under the protection of Savoy.

However, it is likely that Burrows was feeling increasingly worried about Plowman's actions. Indeed, if it was relatively acceptable that Plowman had attacked French ships even without an English commission, it was quite another thing to capture neutral ships like those of Malta, or to chase French ships in Ottoman waters. Plowman's letter to Crookshanks on 2nd July likely arrived in Livorno at the most two months later, at the beginning of September. Thus, it is very probable that Burrows was already aware of Plowman's numerous captures and that he was increasingly concerned about the consequences his piracy could lead to. This is confirmed by the increased level of information that Burrows sent to the Secretary of State. On 3rd September 1696, the consul indeed informed the Duke of Shrewsbury that there was news from Toulon that 'four

[51] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to James Vernon, 21 May 1696.

French frigates gone out thence [...]. Two were seen yesterday cruising off this port (Livorno), which it's supposed are looking out for capt. Broom, who is said to have taken, in the Levant, some French vessels'.[52] A few days later, on 10th September the consul wrote again to Shrewsbury saying that 'some letters here are in town from Malta, that speak of a privateer nigh Cyprus taking a bark belonging to Malta (though believed she shew'd French colors)'.[53] Interestingly, what the English consul wrote is strikingly similar to what Plowman had written to his friend Crookshanks in July,[54] which support the hypothesis that Burrows was fully informed of Plowman's actions. However, the consul carefully chose what information to share, providing the Duke of Shrewsbury with only a partial and conveniently adapted version of the events: the most notable omission, once again, is the absence of Plowman's name. Evidently Burrows was trying to provide the Secretary of State with only the information useful to keep the true reality covert. This is particularly evident analysing the part of Burrows's letter which concerns the ship that Plowman had plundered and burned on the Turkish coast. The ship was carrying many Turkish goods and passengers, who immediately reported the incident to the authorities. The English consul indeed rapidly mentioned that 'some Turk passengers [...] informed the Pashaw who demanded from the English 8,000 pezze', but he hastened immediately to say that 'the barke was again restored and all quiett'.[55] It was quite unlikely that the ship had been returned, given that Plowman had burned it, and therefore this communication as well appears as a ploy used by Burrows prevent the Secretary of State from learning the whole truth.

John Burrows' mountain of inventions, half-truths and lies collapsed in November 1696 when some representatives of the Levant Company went to the Secretary

[52] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 3 September 1696.
[53] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 10 September 1696.
[54] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[55] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 10 September 1696.

of State to protest that a certain English privateer had captured and assaulted many French ships in the Sultan's ports. The Sublime Porte reacted with outrage and threatened to revoke some of the privileges of the Levant Company.[56] Evidently the situation was not at all 'all quiett' as claimed by the consul in Livorno, and the consequences of Plowman's actions had come to threaten one of the most important and lucrative institutions of the English kingdom.

Moreover, representatives of the Levant Company, a few days after the visit to the Secretary of State, made Sir Charles Hedges[57] issue an arrest warrant against Charles Pickering, commander of the *Charles,* for the capture of the French ship *Madonna del Carmine* in the port of Cyprus.[58] The arrest warrant was expressly sent to Livorno, and John Burrows had been tasked with taking the captain into custody. However, Captain Pickering prudently decided to anchor outside the port, well out of reach of the fortress' guns. Burrows thus informed Hedges that the captain refused to get off his ship and that therefore it was impossible to proceed with his arrest.[59] It is possible that the English commander had been warned by Burrows of the arrest warrant against him and that he had therefore decided not to enter the port. This fact also irritated the governor of Livorno, who was very worried that the captain, feeling hunted, could attack a ship entering or leaving the port, thus endangering the neutrality of the city.[60]

Burrows, to protect his own interests, had provided partial or false information to the Secretary of State for over a year. His omissions and lies were so extensive that, at the beginning of 1697, the Duke of Shrewsbury still had no idea of what Plowman had done, nor did he probably know that the English merchant was involved in the affair at

[56] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Thomas Chamberlayne to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 23 Dicembre 1696.
[57] Sir Charles Hedges (1650-1714), he was judge of the Admiralty, and Secretary of State from 1700 to 1701 and then from 1702 to 1706.
[58] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to Sir Charles Hedges, 18 February 1697.
[59] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to Sir Charles Hedges, 18 February 1697.
[60] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, John Burrows to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 18 February 1697.

all. Due to Burrows' lies the government was caught by surprise by the protests of the Ottoman Empire and of the Levant Company, which risked losing some of its privileges. Furthermore, the fact that Pickering remained out of Livorno jeopardized the neutrality of one of the fundamental ports for English trade. As seen in the previous section the Glorious Revolution damaged the relationship between the government and its representatives. Burrows filtered the information to the Secretary of State to protect his own interest and doing so he came to endanger the general interests of the nation and its diplomatic ties with foreign countries.

The ambassador

While the English consul was still trying to safeguard his position and his interests in Livorno, important changes were taking place on the international front. Already in early 1697 the plenipotentiaries of the powers involved in the war had met in the Hague and, in September of that year, they finalized the peace agreements. William was recognised as the legitimate ruler of the British Isles, and England was therefore ready to re-establish full diplomatic relations with all European countries.

The analysis of the correspondence of Lambert Blackwell, the English ambassador to the Republic of Genoa and to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, highlights the difficulties that the new Williamite regime encountered in re-establishing diplomatic relations with the Italian states. Both Tuscany and Genoa perceived England not only as a geographically distant country, but as a weak nation unable to impose its will abroad. In particular, Blackwell's correspondence shows how the greatest English strategic weakness in the Mediterranean was the lack of its own port there. England was indeed forced to supply her fleet in Genoa and in Livorno and this furnished those countries with an important diplomatic lever.

On the 20th September 1697 France and England signed the Treaty of Ryswick, officially ending the Nine Years' War. The treaty contained a very important element for England: the recognition of William III as the legitimate king of Great Britain.[61] This recognition was a fundamental step to restore stability to the English nation, to begin rebuilding its international prestige as well as to re-establish all those diplomatic relations that had been weakened following the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent European war. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cosimo III was the first Italian sovereign to officially recognize William III in 1694, although the Grand Duke had always refused to re-establish complete diplomatic relations by receiving an English ambassador in Florence. However, things changed with the end of the war and by the beginning of April 1697 the English government was considering who was the best candidate to represent the new and consolidated Williamite regime in Italy. The choice fell on Sir Lambert Blackwell who was consul of Livorno until the end of 1695, and who was therefore already an expert in the usages and customs of those areas.[62] In fact, as we will see later in this work, Blackwell was chosen more for his political positions than for his skills. Blackwell, whose family had already sided against the Stuarts during the Civil War, was a protegé of the Duke of Shrewsbury and during the Glorious Revolution had taken an open stand in favour of William III.[63]

On 22nd April 1697 Blackwell was appointed ambassador to the Republic of Genoa and Tuscany.[64] The embassy entrusted to Blackwell was rather delicate. He would

[61] 'The Most Christian King […] promises and agrees for himself and his successors, that he will on no account whatsoever disturb the said King of Great Britain in the free possession of the Kingdoms, Countries, Lands or Dominions which he now enjoys […]', in *The Act and Negotiations Together with the Particular Articles at Large of the General Peace Concluded at Ryswick by the Most Illustrious Confederates and the French King*, (London, Robert Clavel, 1698), pp. 106-107.
[62] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, Secretaries of State, State papers Foreign, Entry Books, Vol 89, Italian States, 1689-1702, from now on S.P. 104/89, Duke of Shrewsbury to Lambert Blackwell, 26 December 1695.
[63] D. W. Hayton, 'Lambert Blackwell', in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[64] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, William III to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 22 April 1697.

have to deal with several different affairs, mainly commercial and economic issues, which had been pending for several years. For the English government, Genoa and Livorno represented two indispensable bases both from a commercial and military point of view: many English merchants resided in both cities and the British war fleets usually chose one of the two ports to make repairs and provisions. It was therefore of paramount importance that Blackwell would bring to those states the voice of the renewed English power and stability. The envoy had received his instructions on the 22nd April 1697,[65] but had not arrived in Italy before February 1698.[66]

The ambassador first stopped in Genoa to discuss some business with the Republic. One of the thorniest issues concerned the English consul in Genoa, Thomas Kirke. Years before the consul deposited a large sum of money at Banco of San Giorgio, but the bank refused to return the sum. Numerous instances had been submitted to the Genoese courts and William III had written several letters to the Republic, without however obtaining any result.[67] The same thing happened to many other English subjects who were unable to collect their credits, or were unable to obtain justice in the Genoese courts.[68] The events following the Glorious Revolution and the prolonged absence of an ambassador had weakened the relations between the Republic and the English kingdom, and this was evidently reflected by the treatment that was reserved to British citizens: even a representative of the crown like Consul Kirke was subjected to humiliating harassment. One of Blackwell's missions was precisely to show Genova the newfound English political stability and to make that nation understand that such abuses would no longer be tolerated.[69]

[65] The day before, William III had sent Cosimo III a letter in which he told him of Blackwell's appointment as his ambassador in Tuscany. A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1029, da Guglielmo III a Cosimo III, 21 April 1697.
[66] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 15 February 1698.
[67] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell Genoese Senate, 18 February 1698.
[68] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to Genoese Senate, 18 February 1698.
[69] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to Genoese Senate, 18 February 1698.

The task, however, was not the easiest. Blackwell himself, writing to the Secretary of State, reported that the Republic's respect for England was rather poor. While the Genoese refused to comply with English requests with the most extravagant excuses,[70] and this attitude had never provoked any reaction, in contrast the French requests 'tho contrary to the constitutions of [that] Government'[71] were accepted without hesitation. In addition, many in the Genoese government 'had confidence to say that England [was] too far offe'[72] to take any retaliatory action against them. Further evidence of England's damaged prestige is the treatment received by Blackwell himself. He was formally received with all honours in the city, however the Genoese government did not give him any gifts, as was usually the custom with envoys of foreign princes, nor any allowance. Blackwell bitterly wrote to Secretary Vernon how French and Spanish envoys got 1,500 pezze a year from the Republic, while during his stay 'they make me pay the full dutye on every thing without any allowance att all'.[73] The issue of gifts in diplomatic practice has been widely studied and historians agree that the gifts conveyed a complex series of messages, which were carefully read and interpreted by those who assisted and who were aware of the exchange.[74] In this particular case, the lack of a gift is highly significant and was absolutely not accidental, but rather a precise diplomatic signal that the Republic addressed both to England and to all the other states whose representatives resided in Genoa. The diversity of treatment accorded to France and Spain publicly placed England in a lower diplomatic rank than the other two countries. Giving a gift also meant expecting one in return, or even expecting the consequences if the gift did not arrive or was

[70] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 22 February 1698.
[71] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 22 February 1698.
[72] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 22 February 1698.
[73] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 2 June 1698.
[74] Diana Carrio-Invernizzi, 'Gift and Diplomacy in Seventeenth-century Spanish Italy', in *The Historical Journal*, 51:4 (2008), pp. 881.899; Maija Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th centuries', in *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9:3 (2005), pp. 348-370; Christian Windler, 'Tributes and presents in Franco-Tunisian diplomacy', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 4 (2000), pp. 168–99.

considered inadequate.[75] Clearly the Republic believed that it was in a sufficiently solid position that it would not require English protection and, at least in the short term, nor did it seem to fear its reaction.

This is even more evident when the Secretary of State, clearly upset by Blackwell's reports, complained of the ambassador's unfair treatment to the Genoese envoy in England. The latter replied that, if the English government insisted, the Republic would have granted the 1,500 pezze, but in instalments, depending on how long the English ambassador would have actually resided in Genoa. This proposal was a real affront: it was, as Blackwell himself wrote, practically 'begging 400 or 500 pezze'.[76] Genoa's response to the English government's requests confirmed what Blackwell had written: the Republic did not seem to fear English power at all, nor did it seem to care about its friendship. Genoa's response was decidedly provocative since no distinction was made for the other ambassadors whether or not they resided in the city. Blackwell stayed for about two months in Genoa, without however being able to obtain a formal response to his requests.

Then Blackwell, as indicated by his orders, headed to Florence, where he arrived on 11th May 1698. The envoy was received with great pomp and was entertained for four days at Palazzo Pitti. He had a public audience with Cosimo III and officially assumed his role as ambassador of the King of England. On 27th May Blackwell had a long audience with the Grand Duke. Among the many topics discussed, the ambassador also touched on that of Plowman.[77] More than a year had passed since Plowman had been imprisoned in Florence, and the news of his arrest had finally reached England, where some of his friends and family had petitioned William III to intercede with Cosimo III to

[75] Maija Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th centuries', pp. 348-370.
[76] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 2 June 1698.
[77] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, William III to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 22 April 1697.

obtain his release. Blackwell's instructions simply commanded that he should employ his 'good offices to obtaine his liberty'.[78] The king also demanded that Blackwell should endeavour to free the British who were slaves in the Grand Duke's galleys. Overall, however, Blackwell's instructions focused much more on commercial and military issues. The English government asked for greater commercial access to the port of Livorno, the reduction of some taxes and, above all, Tuscan permission to freely supply its fleet in the Tuscan port.[79] The Plowman case had not yet turned into a real 'case'. The English government was showing interest in a subject who was detained in a foreign prison but seemed much more concerned in securing the supplying of its fleet in Livorno.

The welcome received in Florence and the benevolent disposition of the Grand Duke seemed to promise greater success than in Genoa, but the problem of weak English prestige was also perceived in Tuscany. The ambassador's correspondence with the Secretary of State illustrates that the Italian states wished to understand how stable the English political situation was and how determined, and above all capable, the English government was to significantly impose its presence in the Mediterranean. Blackwell was more than aware of the urgent need to give some demonstration to the Italian states of the renewed English cohesion, but he was also aware of the difficulties of restoring its diplomatic prestige. The ambassador wrote that the Grand Duke, before demonstrating a clear friendship for England, 'is wayting what success wee find att Genoa, that this is the time to regain our reputation in Itally, by bringing the Genovese to justice'.[80] According to Blackwell, if England had managed to impose its will on Genoa, it would have sent a clear message to all the other Italian princes that the new regime would not tolerate any disrespect. If England demonstrated strength with Genoa, respect would have come

[78] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, William III to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 22 April 1697.
[79] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, William III to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 22 April 1697.
[80] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, October 1698.

'naturally [...] from all other Itallian princes'.[81] From this passage it is clear that Blackwell was aware that the regime change had greatly weakened the prestige of the nation, especially towards the Catholic countries of the Mediterranean.

According to Blackwell, only a massive military presence could obtain 'justice and respect from these Itallian princes',[82] but the precarious economic situation of the country after such a long war, certainly did not allow the fleet to be deployed against Genoa for a diplomatic pique. The Genoese were right to say that England was 'too far offe' compared to Italy. Indeed, England had no port in the Mediterranean and in times of peace its war fleet only rarely ventured there. Furthermore, once the English ships were in the Mediterranean they would need a port to stop at, and the most convenient ports were in Genoa and Livorno. In essence, the English government found itself in an impasse: England had to prove that it was a nation capable of imposing its will on other states, and in this particular case on Genoa and Tuscany. This would have required a greater military presence in the Mediterranean which, however, was only possible by the availability of the ports of those states on which England was trying to impose itself. In some ways, therefore, the English government was in a deadlock in which on one hand it was trying to impose its presence in the Mediterranean, while on the other it was having difficulty in doing so due to the lack of an English port there.

The analysis of Blackwell's correspondence highlights how the regime change had severely weakened the diplomatic relations with the Italian states, which continued to regard England as a second-rate power. The English diplomatic difficulties in the Mediterranean derived from the fact that England did not have its own port there and was therefore obliged to use that of Livorno or Genoa. As will be seen in this work, one of the

[81] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, October 1698.
[82] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, October 1698.

recurring themes in diplomatic relations between England and Tuscany was precisely the possibility for the English fleet to freely supply in the Tuscan port.

Problems of trust

As mentioned in the previous sections, the Glorious Revolution had greatly weakened the cohesion of English society. The problems of loyalty and the political instability of the new regime led to the frequent replacement of secretaries and government officials, who were frequently inexperienced. Indeed, Blackwell as well had been appointed ambassador to Tuscany for political reasons and for his connection with the Secretary of State, the Duke of Shrewsbury.[83] The latter, however, in 1697 was accused of having participated in the Jacobite assassination plot against William III. Shrewsbury's involvement was never proven and even the sovereign seemed to disbelieve those accusations, however the duke, at the end of 1698, was replaced by James Vernon as Secretary of State.[84] The latter was a relative of Thomas Vernon, a London merchant who had lost money after the bankruptcy of Plowman's company: Secretary Vernon had a personal interest in the Plowman case and it was he who transformed the dispute into a state affair.

The analysis of the correspondence between ambassador Blackwell and the new Secretary of State, demonstrates how James Vernon placed pressure on the envoy to obtain the release of William Plowman. From this analysis it emerges that the relationship between the ambassador and the Secretary of State was characterized by a climate of mutual suspicion and distrust. It will also show how the dysfunctional relationship

[83] Shrewsbury was one of the seven signatories of the Invitation to William, the letter with which William III was officially invited to the English throne.
[84] Alan Marshal, 'James Vernon (1646-1727)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008).

between the English government and its representatives hindered the government's capability to pursue its diplomatic and political objectives.

By April 1699 more than two years had passed since Plowman's arrest, but the merchant was still locked up in the Florentine prison. William III had written two letters to Cosimo III to obtain the merchant's release, but without success.[85] In January 1699 the king wrote a third letter to the Grand Duke, asking once again to free Plowman. This letter never reached Blackwell's hands and therefore was never delivered. A copy of the letter, however, had also been sent to Plowman who, when the original letter was not delivered to Cosimo, wrote to James Vernon complaining of the English ambassador's inefficiency and lack of good faith. The Secretary of State wrote to Blackwell, reprimanding him. It was not possible to find Vernon's letter, but from Blackwell's reply it is clear that the Secretary of State used a harsh tone. 'I will not fayle with all the zeale imaginable', indeed replied the ambassador, 'to doo the very utmost for the release of this poor miserable man [...] and I have omitted nothing in my power towards procuring it'.[86] Furthermore, Blackwell continued 'I doo affirm with my oath that what I have acted att Genova and here, has been intirely as the justness of the concernes appeared to me, and what I judged for the King's honor and Nation's advantage [...]'.[87] The tone of Blackwell's words is dramatic. Vernon must have questioned not only his qualities but also his honesty, so much so that the ambassador had been forced to justify himself under oath that he had done his best for the benefit of the nation. The fact that Blackwell justified himself through an oath is extremely significant. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the oaths of allegiance to the sovereign had been one of the most serious problems faced by the

[85] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1089, from William III to Cosimo III, 10 August 1697; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1089, from William III to Cosimo III, 23 June 1698.
[86] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 May 1699.
[87] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 May 1699.

new regime.[88] Notwithstanding that Parliament had cancelled the old oaths sworn to James II and created new ones for William III, the issue remained very delicate in the conscience of the English.[89] Therefore, in this context, the fact that Blackwell justifies himself under oath acquires further significance: it was not only a highly effective rhetorical device, but it was symbolic language to which the ambassador appealed to reaffirm his loyalty to the new regime.

This episode reveals the impact that the new regime had had on the English administration. The very fact that a copy of the king's letter was sent to Plowman suggests how little the government trusted its ambassador: someone in the administration, perhaps Vernon himself, evidently doubted Blackwell's loyalty and had therefore decided to send a copy of the letter directly to Plowman. The informality with which the royal letters were treated must also be noted. Indeed, the copy that was in the possession of Plowman eventually came into Blackwell's hands, but in an extremely convoluted way. As Blackwell himself wrote to the Secretary of State 'my last accused receipt of his Majestie's letter for the Great Duke, sent me from Legorne by Mr. Burrows, who it seemes receive'd it from his Brother of London, being delivered him by Ms. Plowman, who had it from her husband'. [90] In short, this letter had made it back and forth from England to Tuscany at least three times before it was finally delivered into the hands of the ambassador, who should have been the first and only to receive it. Furthermore, the fact that Plowman had not delivered the duplicate letter directly to Blackwell, but had preferred to send it to his wife, also reveals that the English merchant did not trust the

[88] On this topic see: David Martin Jones, *Conscience and Allegiance in Seventeenth Century England*, (Rochester, NY, University of Rochester Press, 1999), p. 61; Edward Vallance, Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682 (Woodbridge, 2005); Howard Nenner, 'Loyalty and the Law: The Meaning of Trust and the Right of Resistance in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 48:4 (2009), pp. 859-870.
[89] *An Act for the Abrogating the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance and Appointing Other Oaths*, Statutes of the Realm, vol. 6, 1685-94, (Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), pp. 57-60.
[90] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 19 May 1699.

envoy at all. The whole affair was enveloped in an aura of mutual distrust and suspicion, which extended to every level of English society, from the administration to its citizens.

But what happened to the original letter? Blackwell, after being reprimanded by the Secretary of State, and wanting to get on top of the affair, had investigated where the king's letter might have ended up. After a thorough investigation Blackwell discovered that the letter had been held, together with three other packages of letters, in Lyon, where the postmaster demanded the payment of some taxes. Furthermore, the ambassador discovered that the king's letters were not entrusted to a courier or marked in any particular way and therefore 'the Post Master [in Lyon] throws them by amongst heapes of stranger's letters'. [91] Thus, the royal letters, even when they were officially sent, were treated in a surprisingly informal way. This must have surprised even Blackwell who wrote to the Secretary of State eagerly hoping that in the future the royal letters, 'being of great consequence', would be treated with greater care.[92] Eventually Blackwell, by resorting to the help of a French gentleman, and paying £22 out of his own pocket, finally managed to get hold of the coveted letter on the first of September 1699, that is, six months after it was sent.

The sources suggest that Blackwell was innocent and had done nothing to delay Plowman's release. Indeed, as soon as he received the copy of the letter of William III he hastened to deliver it to the Grand Duke, again renewing the request to set Plowman free. On 19th May 1699 he wrote to Secretary Vernon informing that he had used with Cosimo III 'all the arguments that were propper for me to use for Mr. Plowman's favor, and indeed I say soo much that His Highness thought me too pressing [...]'.[93] However, Plowman in a letter to his father gave a completely different version of what had happened: 'upon

[91] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 1 September 1699.
[92] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 1 September 1699.
[93] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 19 May 1699.

receipt of his Majesty's letter the Great Duke was pensive, but our Envoy here instead of doing his duty and shewing that his Majestie's honour was engaged, told His Highness that the Secretaries for interest etc. write what they pleased, and took an occasion to present the same when the King was going a hunting or the like, so that he seldom knows what he signed'.[94] Significantly, Plowman's letter is preserved in the papers of the Secretary of State. Evidently the father of the English merchant, who feared that Blackwell was hindering his son's release, had delivered it to the Secretary of State. Vernon thus had to decide whether his ambassador was indeed reliable, or whether his reports were false and his loyalty actually lay elsewhere.

The third letter of William III to the Grand Duke had no better fate than the previous ones and it was ignored. Blackwell, in October 1699, delivered to the Grand Duke a long memorial written by Charles Hedges, with which the English government again firmly requested Plowman's release.[95] Tension was rising and the Grand-ducal government was showing more and more impatience to the insistence of the English envoy, arguing that the Grand Duke 'rather hoped that England [would recognize] the meekness and fairness that were practiced with Plowman'.[96] The English government sent a harsher reply, maintaining that it was in Cosimo III's best interest 'immediately to comply with the King's demands, that upon refusal such methods should be taken, as the Laws of Nations will warrant, and His Highness may only blame his owne ministers for not counseling him better in an affair his Majestie procured with such moderation'.[97]

Cosimo III had appointed on 7th July 1699, Cavalier Iacopo Giraldi as his ambassador to England. The Tuscan government, in fact, now considered it essential to have its own envoy to London, in part to protect the Tuscan interests there, and in part to

[94] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, William Plowman to Mattew Plowman, 2 June 1699. Plowman sent his letters by land 'under cover of our usuall good friend', but never specifies the name of this mysterious friend.
[95] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 9 October 1699.
[96] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 4 October 1699.
[97] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 26 September 1699.

have an envoy who could convey the Grand Duke's interests directly to the English government. In fact, according to the Tuscan government, the facts relating to the arrest of the English merchant 'had not been presented in their true being, but perhaps altered by the partiality of some Plowman's enthusiasts'.[98]

However, suddenly everything seemed to change, and William Plowman was released. Secretary of State Montemagni informed Blackwell that 'being well known to the Most Serene Grand Duke, the concern with which your Excellency took an interest in completing the Plowman affair, His Highness commands me to bring you news that since yesterday evening he ordered his release'.[99] 'His Highness', Montemagni continued,

> 'has greatly enjoyed that the last concerns of His Britannic Majesty have arrived in time […] to reveal the passion that His Highness nourishes to second his taste, having sacrificed [to the King] all those just resentments that should have been practiced towards the person of Plowman for the crimes committed against the dignity of His Highness [...]'.[100]

The change of attitude shown by the Tuscan government had been sudden and Blackwell was extremely surprised at this. The ambassador discovered that the French consul Gibercourt had been in prison talking to Plowman and this led him to assume that the merchant had reached a private deal with the French.[101] Blackwell had spoken to Secretary Montemagni about his suspicions but the latter had replied that the Tuscan government was not aware of any agreement being reached between the French and

[98] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 14 September 1699.
[99] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 9 October 1699.
[100] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 9 October 1699.
[101] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 9 October 1699.

Plowman. The Tuscan Secretary of State on the contrary insisted that the merchant's liberation had been obtained only thanks to the intercession of William III.[102]

Blackwell then sent one of his secretaries to congratulate Plowman and to find out why he had not yet gone to the ambassador's home, where he would be safe at last.[103] Plowman replied that he had been released from prison but that he had given his word to remain there until a dispatch from the French consul arrived, who meanwhile had left early that morning for Livorno. Blackwell's suspicions were becoming more and more concrete and it seemed that something about the affair was rather 'obscure'. Anyway, late in the evening of 9th October, Plowman showed up at the envoy's home.[104]

The next day Blackwell, perhaps in an attempt to discover something, asked for an audience with Cosimo III, who once again repeated to him 'that out of respect to the King he had sacrificed his resentments for the offence done by Mr. Plowman against his dignity and was glad of the opportunity to obey his Majestie's comands'.[105] Blackwell interrogated Plowman who professed 'a sincere gratitude of the Great Duke's compliance'. The merchant wished for an audience with Cosimo III, from whom he was 'very favorably received'.[106]

Everything therefore seemed to have finally been resolved for the best except that the newly freed English merchant complained that the French consul 'by threatenings, and indirect means, exacted from him in prison effects and obligations to the value of 60,000 French livers for damages done during the late warr'.[107] Plowman

[102] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 9 October 1699.
[103] The homes of the ambassadors enjoyed what today would be called extraterritoriality and were considered inviolable. On this topic: Edward R. Adair, *The Exterritoriality of Ambassadors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Longmans, 1929); Linda S. Frey, Marsha L. Frey, *The History of Diplomatic Immunity* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Keith Hamilton, Richard Langhorn, *The Practice of Diplomacy: its Evolution, Theories and Administration*, (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 48-56.
[104] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 9 October 1699.
[105] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 13 October 1699.
[106] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 13 October 1699.
[107] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 13 October 1699.

asked again for the king's protection to obtain the restitution of what the French had taken. Blackwell hastened to write both to the French consul Gibercourt and Ambassador Dupré to immediately suspend the requisition of those assets until a fair determination was reached. Blackwell discovered that Plowman had signed a contract with Consul Gibercourt, but he complained to the French that when Plowman had made that agreement he was in prison and therefore the contract could not be valid.[108] With some bitterness, however, the English ambassador discovered that a good part of Plowman's assets were already in French hands and there was little he could do little to recover them.

It had certainly not been a coincidence that Plowman had been released only after signing the contract with the French and it seemed impossible that the Grand Duke's ministers knew nothing about it. Day by day the English envoy became more convinced that the intrigue must have been artfully conceived unbeknownst to him and then everything had been perfected within a few days, making it a fait accompli. The ambassador thus began to investigate the dynamics of Plowman's liberation and finally, after two weeks, he came to realise the true course of events. On 6th October the Grand Duke had obtained 'a discharge from the French consull for all pretentions of damages done by Mr. Plowman',[109] while the contract between Plowman and the French consul was dated on the 8th October. Although Plowman had only been released on the 9th, prison records showed that he was actually released on the 8th, just in time to allow him to sign the contract as a free man.[110]

Thus, Cosimo III had released Plowman only after receiving a document that relieved the Duke of any responsibility for the merchant's actions, but he disguised his action as if it had been genuinely inspired from the desire to please the king of England.

[108] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 20 October 1699.
[109] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 20 October 1699.
[110] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 20 October 1699.

The ambassador at that point realised that he had been an unwitting pawn in a game already planned by others, and that after all, both the Grand Duke and the French had mocked him, and above all, had mocked the English crown.

The loss of the royal letter, the tense relationships between the ambassador and the Secretary of State and the distrust shown by Plowman underline the social, institutional and administrative frailty of the new Williamite regime. Tuscany taking advantage of the divisions within the English government, was indeed able to manage the Plowman case at its will. Once again, the lack of trust between the government and its delegates, between the citizens and their representatives, had damaged the English ability to act promptly and effectively to protect and support its prestige abroad. It is indeed very likely that if Plowman, the ambassador and the Secretary of State had acted in a coordinated and united manner, instead of accusing each other and wasting precious time (the copy of the royal letter sent back to England by Plowman is exemplary) they could have achieved a different result, certainly more favourable to the interests of the English nation. Blackwell, perhaps too busy defending himself from the accusations that came from the Secretary and Plowman, had not noticed what was happening before his own eyes, and the prestige of the crown was again damaged.

The government, the ambassador, the consul and the merchants

In the previous sections we have seen that there was a fundamental problem of trust between the government and its representatives. Consul Burrows by falsifying his reports and omitting essential information had endangered the nation's commercial and diplomatic interests. Blackwell, on the other hand, was suspected of obstructing Plowman's release, and was treated with extreme distrust by the Secretary of State. But

how right was the Secretary of State not to trust Blackwell? How different was his attitude, and how much stronger was his loyalty than that of Burrows?

This section will analyse the relationship between the English merchants residing in Livorno, the consul and the ambassador, demonstrating how the regime change had damaged the trust between the citizens and their government. It will also be seen how the relationship between the merchant community and their representatives was seriously compromised. Indeed, the merchants wished to replace Burrows with a man of their choice but had to clash with Blackwell's opposition. The tension within the community rose to the point of provoking two attempted murders. It will also be seen that the English government was completely unaware of what was happening in Livorno, as both Burrows and Blackwell provided the Secretary of State with distorted or false information.

Blackwell left Livorno in 1695, leaving his post as consul to John Burrows. In May 1696 the English Factory of Livorno sent a petition to the king, asking John Horsey, one of the most prominent merchants in the city, to be appointed consul.[111] However, when Blackwell was appointed ambassador in 1697, he also obtained the investiture for the consulate of Livorno, combining the two posts. The English community of Livorno did not like being completely ignored by the government nor that Blackwell appointed John Burrows as his 'deputy consul'. The merchants wrote another petition to the Secretary of State, complaining about a series of abuses carried out by Burrows and arguing that he was in no way suitable for the post.[112] In this dispute Blackwell defended his deputy, thus finding himself in open conflict with the English community residing in Tuscany. The ambassador, to discredit these protests, wrote to Secretary Vernon that 'the Factory of the English att Legorne have beene always famous with their penns and are

[111] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Petition from the English Factory at Legorn to William III, May 1696.
[112] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.

biassed as interest governs them, without considering further, [...] therefore in future will not be creditted'.[113] What Blackwell said was not entirely false: as it was seen in the previous chapter, interest and convenience were the only things that really mattered for the English merchant community. However, by attacking the credibility of the merchants, Blackwell also avoided explaining to the Secretary of State what the reasons for the discontentment of the English citizens residing in Livorno were. It is also interesting to note that the correspondence of the ambassador seldom mentions the merchant community, except to provide information of little relevance. This lack is significant because the English community of Livorno was one the largest and richest community of English merchants residing abroad and it is therefore strange that the information concerning it in the ambassador's correspondence is so scarce.[114] The lack of news was actually a symptom of the fracture between the merchants and their representatives. However, as it was mentioned in the introduction, the fiduciary nature of the consul's duties required the holder of the office to enjoy the trust of the merchant community: a royal patent was in fact a worthless title if the person who held it did not meet the approval of the most authoritative members of the community.

The consul carried out several delicate tasks of an economic nature on behalf of the other merchants and trust was a fundamental component of their relationship. One of the things that could happen when the merchant community disagreed with the consul appointed by the government, was that the merchants could elect a consul of their choice who enjoyed their trust. Thus, the English merchants of Livorno, dissatisfied that their requests had been ignored by the government, elected another person to represent them: James Wheley. The consulate was officially in Blackwell's hands, but there were now

[113] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.
[114] For the importance of the English community in Livorno see Corey Tazzara, *The Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 171-180.

two deputies. John Burrows enjoyed the official rank of 'Deputy-Consull', while John Wheley was the unofficial title of 'Vice-Consull'. Therefore, the reason Blackwell reported so little news about the merchant community was that he received very little information about them. The English merchants of Livorno effectively divested the representatives of the Crown and were now relying on Wheley to represent them. This also meant that the English government was almost completely unaware of what was happening in Livorno and what the sentiments of the English citizens residing in the city were. It will be seen later in this work how the lack of information on the side of the English government will play a fundamental role in the evolution of the Plowman case. For now, it will suffice to say that the English community of Livorno was increasingly dissatisfied with its representatives and felt neglected by its own government.

At the end of the 1700 Blackwell left Florence to spend a period in England. Since residing in the foreign country was one of the indispensable requirements for the consulate, Blackwell necessarily had to transfer his office to another person. John Burrows came forward immediately and on 22nd September 1700 he wrote to the Secretary of State proposing himself as Blackwell's replacement. In conclusion of his letter Burrows wrote that 'if there should be occasion of any ffriends to appeare in my behalf will bring severall of the most eminent merchants to give such satisfaction as may be required, but in regard I have already had his Majesty's comission […] I doe suppose there will be no obstacle'.[115] Interestingly enough, Burrows, instead of listing his supporters to bolster his candidacy, was rather vague as to who these 'most eminent merchants' were. Burrows claimed to enjoy the full support of the English community of Livorno but considering their petitions to the king against him, it is very likely that many of the merchants would have fiercely opposed his appointment as consul.

[115] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, John Burrows to James Vernon, 22 September 1700.

There were two potential opponents of Burrows, the 'vice-consull', James Wheley, and once again John Horsey. The latter especially, known for his activity and resourcefulness, was explicitly opposed to Burrows and wrote to the Secretary of State pleading his case. In December Blackwell wrote a letter to Secretary Vernon to support Burrows' candidacy. The consul's activity, wrote the ambassador, 'chiefly consists in appearing for commanders of ships (for the merchants doe on all occasions apply to the Envoy) [...] and therefore him nor any other consull att Legorne can have the good word of all the merchants'.[116] According to Blackwell, in fact, when conflicts arose between the commanders of the ships and the merchants 'the consull is obliged to appeare for these latter, and in doing them justice, many times the merchants are disobliged, a thing very natturale where interest byasses, and more particularly att Legorne where such number of shipps appeare'.[117] 'This argument', the ambassador finally concluded, 'will I am sure be duely considered by your Honor, should any of the merchants residing there oppose Mr. Burrows'.[118]

This passage in Blackwell's letter was intentionally constructed to provide the Secretary of State with only a partially true and conveniently adapted version of the consul's functions. First of all the duties of a consul were not limited to those described by Blackwell, but also included several other functions that concerned only the merchants, such as drawing up bills of credit, granting temporary transport licenses, issuing official certificates, witnessing insurances, etc.[119] It is possible that during the

[116] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.
[117] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.
[118] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.
[119] On this topic see: Tristan Stein, *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade 1660-1748*, Ph.D Thesis (Harvard University, 2012), pp. 96-113; Stefano Villani, 'I consoli della nazione inglese a Livorno tra il 1665 e il 1673: Joseph Kent, Thomas Clutterbuck e Ephraim Skinner', in *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, 9 (2004), pp. 11-34; Maria Grazia Biagi, *I consoli delle nazioni a Livorno*, in *Atti del convegno Livorno ed il Mediterraneo in età medicea* (Livorno: Bastogi, 1978), pp. 95-114; Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish kin, commercial and covert association in Nothern Europe, 1603-1746* (Leiden, Brill, 2006), pp. 148-161; Michaela D'Angelo, 'The Scale or Magazin of an Universall English Trade' in *Rapporti diplomatici e scambi commerciali nel Mediterraneo moderno*, ed. by Mirella Mafrici, (Salerno: Rubbettino,

period in which Blackwell was resident in Tuscany, the consul's activities had somehow divided in two, namely that the captains, the sailors and the 'lower' part of the English population residing in Livorno referred to the Consul, while merchants and illustrious citizens referred to the ambassador. However, Blackwell was leaving therefore there would only be a single representative of the crown, the consul, to whom everyone, merchants and captains, would have to refer to. Furthermore, Blackwell pre-emptively wrote to the Secretary of State, 'should any merchant residing there oppose Mr. Burrows', therefore giving justifications which had not been requested of him.[120] *Excusatio non petita, accusatio manifesta*: what, then, was the accusation against Blackwell?

On a cold evening in February 1700 James Wheley was returning home when he received 'a dangerous stab in his back from an unknown person who immediately made his escape'.[121] The wound did not fatally injure the vice-consul. Fortunately, at that moment he was carrying his coat on his shoulders, and the rigid fabric partially deflected the blow. The first suspect was John Burrows, who Wheley indicated as the only person to have a valid motive in his desire to become consul. Burrows denied this accusation, but, suddenly, 'he abandoned his house and business and secretely embarked on a ship bound for England, hiring the captain with a good reward to set him ashore at Nizza, in the Duke of Savoy's country'.[122] Burrows remained in the Duchy of Savoy until he knew that Wheley had recovered. The fugitive then returned to Livorno 'and was received into the protection of the English Envoy, whose Deputy-Consul he was, and upon his

2004), pp. 327-349; Michela D'Angelo, 'The British Factory at Leghorn: A King of Chamber of Commerce *cum* Consulate', in *Consolati di Mare and Chambers of Commerce: Proceedings of a Conference held at the Foundation for International Studies*, ed. by C. Vassalo (Marsa: Malta University Press, 2000), pp. 113-125.

[120] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.

[121] *The Answer of the Merchants Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn, to the Account of Damages Layd to the Charge of the Great Duke of Tuscany by Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard and William Plowman Together with their Reply* (London, 1704), p. 91.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 91.

publickly declaring he did not believe him guilty, in deference to Sir Lambert Blackwell, all further search after the author ceased'.[123]

The violent race for the consulate, however, was not over yet. The English government seemed indifferent to the fate of the consulate in Livorno and when Blackwell left for England no one had been officially appointed as his successor. Only James Wheley remained in Livorno, who continued to act unofficially as English vice consul. The merchant community knew, however, that Blackwell, once he had arrived in London, had continued to support John Burrows as consul. The English merchants thus wrote a letter to the Secretary of State and submitted a third petition to the king in favour of John Horsey.[124] The Secretary of State seemed to be once again disinterested in the consulate issue: the petition was not accepted but the government did not appoint John Burrows and the matter remained pending.

On 21st October 1701, John Horsey was in Pisa. It was late in the evening and the merchant was returning to his inn when he received 'a violent blow on his head from a fellow that passed by him, of whom he got some glimpse after he recovered from the stunn, the ruffian at a small distance standing to see if he fell'.[125] The confusion in the street attracted the attention of a woman who lived in one of the adjacent houses and showed up with a candle at the door, causing the attacker to flee. John Burrows was again suspected of being responsible for the attack.[126] Horsey reported the incident to the Tuscan authorities who, after a thorough investigation, arrested a porter identified by Horsey as his attacker. The criminal confessed that he had been hired by Burrows to assassinate Horsey. Burrows, however, had fled Livorno a second time 'leaving his house, business and partner without any knowledge whither he was gone' and it was only

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[124] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Petition from the English Factory at Legorn to William III, 27th June 1701.
[125] *The Answer of the Merchants Petitioners*, p. 93.
[126] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

sometime after that 'some English gentlemen travelers found him in a convent at Rome'.[127] John Burrows never returned to the Tuscan port: in 1704 he was still in Rome and then all traces of him were lost.

These episodes reveal how the relationship between the government, its representatives and citizens were fragile and dysfunctional. The English government seemed to ignore the importance of the consulate and also seemed indifferent towards the needs of the English merchants of Livorno. The consequences of the fracture between the administration and its citizens abroad are evident if one considers that the merchant community effectively divested Blackwell and Burrows of their functions and independently elected James Wheley. The government thus had to rely on the reports of envoys who were in conflict with most of the local community, a situation that weakened the crown's authority, its prestige and its ability to act towards its subjects. The fiduciary relationship between the official representatives of the government and the administration was also largely compromised. When Blackwell, after Wheley's first attempted murder, took John Burrows under his protection, he did so as ambassador of the King of England. Out of respect for Blackwell's function, the Tuscan authorities ceased to investigate the attempted murder and Burrows remained a free man. The ambassador had used his prerogatives to protect his associate, but he had done so by exploiting the credibility of the crown for an exclusively personal purpose. Furthermore, in Blackwell's official correspondence there is not the slightest mention of Wheley's attempted murder. Evidently the envoy had not deemed it necessary to inform the government of this episode and had indeed continued to support Burrows' appointment as consul. This also explains the reason why Blackwell had decided to act pre-emptively by defending the name of his candidate 'should any of the merchants oppose him. [128] Blackwell perhaps feared that

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[128] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 12 August 1698.

rumours of the attempted murder would reach London, and he tried to show that it was an unfounded accusation. Blackwell's attitude did not change even after the second attempted murder, which is not mentioned in the official correspondence as well. The Secretary of State, relying on false reports, was therefore completely unaware of what was really happening in Livorno and above all ignored the growing discontentment of the English community residing there.

Conclusions

The Glorious Revolution has been extensively studied in its political, economic and confessional aspects. However, the impact that the events of 1688 had on the prestige of England abroad and on its diplomatic capabilities has often been overlooked. The analysis of the diplomatic correspondence shows that one of the greatest challenges that England faced after the Glorious Revolution was to restore its prestige abroad. This was made more difficult because the new regime replaced most of its diplomatic representatives with people chosen for their political positions rather than for their competence.

The analysis of the documents also allows us to demonstrate how the regime change significantly affected the relationship between the government, its representatives and citizens. The government, whose ministers had also been chosen more for their political position than for their competence, seemed completely disinterested in the English community residing in Tuscany. John Burrows and Lambert Blackwell arbitrarily managed the information that reached the government, which was completely unaware of what was really happening in Livorno.

The English diplomatic weakness clearly emerges from the analysis of the documents relating to the Plowman case. Blackwell's embassy in Genoa did not get any

results, while the Tuscan government managed the dispute at its will, completely neglecting English requests. It will be seen later in this work how the lack of trust between the administration and its representatives, the lack of accurate information and the unpreparedness of its officials, will have an extremely negative impact on the ability of the English government to act appropriately and in a timely fashion to achieve its objectives.

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Chapter III: The Novelty of Tuscan Neutrality

The confrontation between England and Tuscany became increasingly tense after the start of the War of Spanish Succession and became critical between 1702 and 1704 until the two states were on the brink of war. It was imperative for the Grand Duchy to avoid a conflict that would break its long tradition of peace and neutrality. The issue of neutrality will be central to this chapter, which will begin by demonstrating that Tuscany was the first European country to apply a long-term neutrality policy, that is, to make neutrality the fundamental objective of its foreign policy. The escalation of the Plowman case into a clash of sovereignty with England risked compromising the Grand Duchy's neutrality, forcing the country into the European conflict which could have serious potential consequences for its future and independence. England, by contrast, sought to instrumentally use the Plowman case to obtain privileged access to the port of Livorno. This would have fulfilled a long-term English political ambition of having an English port in the Mediterranean.

The disproportion of forces between the two contenders compelled Tuscany to use all its political acumen in an unprecedented diplomatic conflict that was fought at all levels. Despite its disadvantages Tuscany managed to defend its neutrality and therefore its independence. The chapter will consequently analyze the strategies by which England sought to impose itself on Tuscany and those adopted by the Grand Duchy to protect its sovereignty. This chapter will also highlight the weakness of the category of 'small states' by emphasizing how a nation's contractual capacity depended not only on its military resources, but also on particular political conditions and economic assets.

Neutrality: methods and definitions

In September 1700, while the English community in Livorno was fighting for the consulate, on the international front things were evolving rapidly. Charles II of Spain's health was worsening, and it seemed now certain that, upon his death, there would be another European general war.[1]

At the end of October Lambert Blackwell obtained a license to temporarily leave Florence to travel to England. The envoy was about to leave when the long expected news of Charles II's death arrived in the city. In his will the Spanish sovereign had declared Philip Duke of Anjou, nephew of Louis XIV, as his heir, provided, however, that Philip renounced all his claims to the French throne. For Charles II, as for the other European monarchs, it was of fundamental importance to prevent the peril of a union between the crowns of France and Spain. However, Louis XIV had immediately taken advantage of the situation, and of the kinship with his nephew, to deploy French troops to the Spanish Low Countries, thereby giving concrete proof that he would not respect the will of Charles II.

War was all but inevitable and the alignments were being defined: France, with the uncertain support of Portugal and the part of Spain loyal to Philip of Bourbon, would once again face a coalition formed by the Empire, England, the Dutch Republic, and other minor states. Thus, as early as January 1701 the envoys of the main European powers had sent their emissaries to the Italian princes to try to secure their support. In Florence, the imperial and French envoys had visited the Grand Duke's court a few days apart. The

[1] Wouter Troost, 'Leopold I, Louis XIV, William III and the Origins of the War of the Spanish Succession', *History*, 103:357 (2018), pp. 545-570; John C. Rule, 'The Partition Treaties 1698-1700. A European View', in *Redefining William III. The Impact of the King-Statholder in International Context*, ed. by E. Mijers and D. Onnekink (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 258-325; George Clark, 'From the Nine Years' War to the War of the Spanish Succession', *The New Cambridge Modern History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp, 381-409.

first to reach Florence was Cardinal Johann Philip von Lamberg,[2] who had 'several audiences with His Highness'.[3] A few days later Cardinal d'Etré arrived with orders to 'negotiate in favor of France'.[4] The English envoy, like all his colleagues residing at the court of Florence, had carefully observed these meetings and sought to understand Cosimo III's inclinations. However, Blackwell concluded in a report to the Secretary of State, 'the Great Duke knows how to excuse ingaging himselfe and seemes resolved to remayne neutral'.[5]

Today concepts of 'neutrality' and of 'international law' are widespread and the relations between countries are governed by a series of laws and rules, partly codified and partly referring to customs and usages that have been in force for centuries. The term 'neutrality', which belongs to the conceptual category of law, and especially of international law, has also spread and has become relatively common. But how common and widespread were these concepts in the second half of the seventeenth century? How common was it for a state to decide to remain neutral in a European conflict? In the following pages it will be shown that at the end of the seventeenth century the concept of neutrality had just emerged from the newborn international law and that the policy of neutrality of the Grand Duchy represented an absolute exception in the European diplomatic landscape. As it will be seen in the chapter, this exceptionality was allowed by a series of geographical, political and economic conditions enjoyed by the Tuscan state. However, it also had to be fiercely defended using great political and diplomatic acumen. Neutrality was, therefore, an active political choice, which was consciously upheld by Tuscany as a means of protecting its independence.

[2] Johann Philip von Lamberg (1652-1712), he first studied in Passau and then obtained a doctorate in civil and canon law at the University of Siena (1673). He was appointed imperial councilor and imperial ambassador. Lorenzo Cardella, *Memorie storiche de' cardinali della Santa Romana Chiesa*, vol. VIII, (Roma, Stamperia Pagliarini, 1794), pp, 73-74.
[3] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 11 January 1704.
[4] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 11 January 1704.
[5] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 11 January 1704.

The studies that have been devoted to neutrality are usually linked to particular historical moments, that is, to periods of great conflict, in which the international community had shown a renewed interest in the subject. For example, studies of neutrality flourished in the era of the American Civil War, the First World War, and during the Cold War, and these studies naturally focused on problems contingent to their specific context.[6] These studies have explored the rights and duties of belligerents towards neutrals and vice versa, thus focusing on the technical-legal aspect of neutrality. They have, however, often neglected the importance of the historical dimension of the phenomenon. Recently scholars have shown a renewed interest in the theme of neutrality, but their works focused mainly on the 18th century onward.[7] Nevertheless, these studies have created some useful categorizations to define neutrality, which can also be applied to the early modern period and therefore will be adopted for this work. In particular, Maartje Abbenhuis in her *An Age of Neutrals* (2014) distinguishes three types of neutrality, the 'occasional', the 'long-term voluntary' and the 'permanent'.[8] Abbenhuis calls 'occasional' those neutrals who only sporadically decided to remain neutral in a conflict, without affecting their future foreign policy, or their future commitments in other conflicts. The 'long-term voluntary'

[6] I mention only a few recent works from a very large literature on neutrality in the twentieth century: Stephen Neff, 'Disrupting a Delicate Balance: the Allied Blockade Policy and the Law of Maritime Neutrality during the Great War', *European Journal of International Law*, 29:2 (2018), pp. 459-475; Ubaldo Morozzi, Carla Sodini, 'La Prima Guerra Mondiale e le origini della neutralità americana (1914-1917)', in *La Neutralità 1914-1915. Situazione diplomatica, socio-politica, economica e militare italiana* (Roma: Ufficio Storico dello S.M.D., 2015), pp. 389-436; Alonso Illueca, 'International Coalitions and Non-Militarily Contributing Member States: A Perspective from Panama's Practice and the Law of Neutrality', *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*, 49:1 (2018), pp. 1-18; Peter Ruggenthaler, *The Concept of Neutrality in Stalin's Foreign Policy 1945-1953* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015); Richard H. Owens, *The Neutrality Imperative* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009); John F. Ross, *Neutrality and International Sanctions: Sweden, Switzerland and Collective Security* (New York: Praeger, 1989); Thomas Fischer, Daniel Möckli, 'The Limits of Compensation: Swiss Neutrality Policy in the Cold War', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 18:4 (2016), pp. 12-35.

[7] *War, Trade and Neutrality: Europe and the Mediterranean in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries*, ed. by Antonella Alimento (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2011); Eric Schnakenbourg, *Entre la guerre et la paix: neutralité et relations internationales, XVIIe—XVIIIe siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013); *Trade and War: the Neutrality of Commerce in the Inter-State system*, ed. by Koen Stapelbroek (Helsinki: Collegium, 2011).

[8] Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals, Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

neutrals, by contrast, are those states that decided to apply neutrality as the primary characteristic of their foreign policy, thus attempting to remain neutral in all conflicts. Finally, the 'permanent' neutrals are such by virtue of international recognition through a treaty signed by the major powers.[9]

In addition to the important work of Abbenhuis, two scholars have helped to explore the historical perspective of neutrality, namely Efraim Karsh in his *Neutrality and Small States* (1988) and recently Leos Müller with his *Neutrality in World History* (2019).[10] The works of these two historians both have the merit of considering neutrality eminently a political phenomenon, and in particular as an instrument available to small states to maintain their independence. Karsh also gives great attention to the definition of the concept of 'small state', which is very useful for adequately analysing the situation of the Tuscan state and its specificity with respect to other states of the continent. Drawing on Robert Rothstein's studies, Karsh maintains that it is fundamental, to effectively understand and analyse the phenomenon of neutrality, to consider that a 'small state' is not 'a large state writ small', but it is rather 'an autonomous entity with its own characteristics and modes that distinguish it from large states'.[11] This in fact means that the 'smallness of the state, i.e. its limited power, generates a substantive difference between the problems and constraints, the alternatives and policy options faced by a small state as opposed to the large one'.[12] Leos Müller also argues that in the context of the "great" European history, 'the role of small states, even European ones, has too often been explained away or ignored. But an exclusive empire or great-power perspective on world

[9] Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals, Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 15.
[10] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History* (London: Routledge, 2019).
[11] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p. 3. See also Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and small powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.1.
[12] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 3.

history makes it incomprehensible why small states have survived, and indeed thrived'.[13] In particular, the scholar stresses that the first neutrals were small countries with large maritime interests that saw, in international law and neutrality, effective tools to defend their privileges, their security and their independence.[14]

Tuscany not only falls into this category of states which, due to their small size and commercial interests, decided to undertake a neutrality policy, but it was the first European state to apply a long-term neutrality policy. It will therefore be possible to demonstrate not only that seventeenth-century Tuscany was a 'long-term voluntary' neutral *ante litteram*, but that it was also the first state to attempt to become a 'permanent' neutral, by having its condition recognized through international treaties.[15]

'Neutrality? I do not get it. There is nothing to it.'[16]

The novelty of the Tuscan choice is evident in the fact that at the end of the seventeenth century neutrality was a 'new' concept. Historians concur that the birth of modern international law must be traced back to the works of scholars between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with particular reference to that of Alberico Gentili (*De Legationibus*, 1585 and *De Jure Belli*, 1598) and Hugo Grotius *(De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, 1625). Grotius was indeed the first to give a legal definition to the current concept of 'neutrality'. That is not to say that there was no neutrality practice, especially related

[13] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 20.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[15] This had happened for the first time in 1691 with the signing of the Articles of Neutrality of Livorno in which England, France, Spain and Holland officially recognized the neutrality of the port. These articles were renewed periodically and the neutrality of Livorno was definitively recognized in 1721.
[16] This is how King Gustav Adolph of Sweden answered the ambassador of Brandenburg about its neutrality. See Mikael af Malborg, *Neutrality and State Building in Sweden* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), p. 28; Axel Gotthard, 'Zwischen Lutherum und Calvinismus (1598-1640)', in *Preussen Herrscher: von den ersten Hohenzollern bis Wilhelm II*, ed. by. Frank-Lothar Kroll (Munchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2006), p. 90; *Unimpeded Sailing. A Critical Edition of Johann Gröning's Navigatio Libera*, ed. by Leos Müller and Steve Murdoch (Leiden, Brill, 2018), p. 8.

to the mercantile world, or that there have been no cases in which a state has remained "neutral" in a conflict in medieval Europe, but certainly the legal concept of neutrality did not exist.[17]

In the Roman world, and later in the Middle Ages, the right of war was based, in fact, on the concept of '*bellum iustum*'. War should not only be declared by those who had the power to do it (*legitima auctoritas*) and fought in a traditional and customary way (*debitus modus*), but also, and above all, war should be declared only for just reasons (*iusta causa*). This was the obligatory and necessary trait for every war, that is, the fact that there were 'just' reasons to fight it. These could vary from defending themselves from aggression, to exact reparation, to preventively attacking a tyrant who intended to conquer the country. It is evident that these "just" reasons were extremely vague and adaptable, but useful to find a moral justification for the alteration of the natural state of peace.[18] The 'just cause' and, therefore, the '*bellum iustum*' meant that, in a conflict, morality and justice were necessarily on one side. It was, therefore, technically impossible for anyone not to participate in a war that, by definition, was just: everyone should take a position not so much in support of one of the two contenders but rather of justice itself. It is also evident that in this system of clear division between "good" and "evil" there could be no room for the concept of neutrality: whoever did not fight in the war, in fact, would declare himself an enemy of justice.[19] For this reason neutrality has always been perceived with moral disapproval, as a serious sin of excessive greed accompanied by fundamental cowardice and fearfulness. After all, the neutral was not only the one who

[17] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 15.
[18] It was indeed believed that nature tended to a state of peace, which was only temporarily interrupted by war. Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 26.
[19] On the concept of 'just war' see: *Just War Theory*, ed. by Thom Brooks (Leiden: Brill, 2013); James T. Johnson, *Ethics and the Use of Force: Just War in Historical Perspective* (Milton: Tayolor & Francis, 2011).

does not take a position during a conflict, but rather is the one who usually profits from the bloodshed of others.[20]

From a semantic point of view, then, the word *neutralitas* is a relatively late neologism.[21] The authors, ancient and modern, who have dealt with this theme agreed that the terms '*neutralis*' and '*neutralitas*' are 'barbarisms that are not found in any classic author'.[22] Cicero in *De officiis* expresses the concept of impartiality using the combination of the words *neuter* + *pars* but the word *neutralitas* does not appear in the vocabulary until much later, around the middle of the fifteenth century.[23] It seems that the first to use the new word in the modern sense of the term was Nicola Cusano, to express the neutrality of the German princes towards the schism derived from the Basel Council of 1438.[24] The term later became more common and can be found in some famous works, such as Macchiavelli's *Il Principe*.[25] At the beginning of the seventeenth century the word was slowly entering into use, as evidenced by some treaties of the first half of the century, such as the works of Johann Wilhelm Neumayr and Cristoforo Besoldi.[26] The word was,

[20] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 15; *Unimpeded Sailing. A Critical Edition of Johann Gröning's Navigatio Libera*, ed. by Leos Müller and Steve Murdoch (Leiden, Brill, 2018), p. 8.
[21] Eric Schnakenbourg, *Entre la guerre et la paix: neutralité et relations internationales, XVIIe—XVIIIe siècles* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 9-16.
[22] Giuseppe Sandonà, *Trattato di diritto internazionale moderno* (Firenze: Giuseppe Pellas Ed., 1870), p. 409; Ferdinando Galliani, *De' diritti e dei doveri dei principi neutrali verso i principi guerreggianti e di questi verso i neutrali*, 2 vol, (1782), pp. 1-2.
[23] Marco Tullio Cicerone, *De Officiis*, Liber II, 19; and also Liber III, 20: "[…] neutram in partem effici possunt", "neutram in partem moveri". The meaning of the first expression is "neither in one way nor another" and also the second has a similar meaning of "being indifferent", and they are similar to the modern concept of "neutral".
[24] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 600, c. 101 v. "*Tractatus de Neutralitate"*, "*Quod recedere de neutralitate seu ultralitate sit necessarius*". Accessible at: https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_pal_lat_600.
[25] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, Cap. XXI. The Florentine politician, however, in line with the dominant morality of his time, had a negative opinion of neutrality and indeed advised never adopting it as a political strategy. According to him it was always preferable to take a clear position, even if this would result in a defeat. 'A prince is also respected when he is either a true friend or a downright enemy, that is to say, when, without any reservation, he declares himself in favour of one party against the other; which course will always be more advantageous than standing neutral'; […] 'He sent envoys to the Achaeans, who were friends of the Romans, exhorting them to remain neutral'[…]; 'it will always happen that he who is not your friend will demand your neutrality, whilst he who is your friend will entreat you to declare yourself with arms'.
[26] Johann Wilhelm Neumayr, *Von der Neutralitet und Assistentz*, (1620); Cristoforo Besoldi, *Dissertatio Politico-Juridica de Foederum Iure ubi in simul de Patrocinio et Clientela ac item de Neutralitate*, (1641).

therefore, spreading, but this did not mean at all that the very concept of neutrality was clearer or had found a certain legal definition. Grotius, for example, in *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (1625), did not use it, but preferred the expression '*medii in bello*' to define a state of neutrality in a conflict.[27] This makes it easy to understand, given the importance of Grotius, how much uncertainty there was at the time about the use of the word 'neutrality'. The concept of neutrality was closely linked to that of free navigation, and to the consequent right of 'neutral' countries to continue trading freely with the warring nations.[28]

It is indeed necessary to distinguish between maritime neutrality and terrestrial neutrality in the early modern period. The first refers to the desire that countries with large maritime and commercial interests, but usually territorially *distant* from the conflict, had to continue trading peacefully during the war. The second refers to small countries *close* to the conflict which, in fear of losing their independence and sovereignty, tried to stay neutral to avoid being involved in the war. Despite endless debates, controversies and diplomatic incidents the trade of maritime neutrals was relatively recognized and respected.[29] Territorial neutrality was instead considered practically impossible to achieve.[30] In fact, how could a small state hope to avoid a conflict that took place on its own borders? The disparity in strength between the large countries involved in the war, and those smaller countries that tried to avoid it, meant that if the great power decided to

[27] Ugo Grozio, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis*, (Amsterdam, Janssonio Waesbergios, 1701), Liber III, XVII, p. 828.
[28] For an overview of this topic see: *Unimpeded Sailing. A Critical Edition of Johann Gröning's Navigatio Libera*, ed. by Leos Müller and Steve Murdoch (Leiden, Brill, 2018), pp. 5-10.
[29] On this topic see the case of Swedish maritime neutrality: Steve Murdoch, 'Neutrality at Sea. Scandinavian Responses to 'Great Power' Maritime Warfare, 1651-1713', in *Ideologies of Western Naval Power c. 1500-1800*, ed. by J-D. Davies, A. James, G. Rommelse (New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 244-261; Steve Murdoch, 'Breaching Neutrality: English prize taking and Swedish neutrality in the First Anglo-Dutch War, 1651-1654', *Mariner's Mirror*, 105:2 (2014), pp. 134-147. On this topic see also: Eric Schnakenbourg, *Entre la guerre et la paix: neutralité et relations internationales, XVIIe—XVIIIe siècles*, (Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 75-125; Christin Simons, "*The Law is open on both sides"*; The contrasting British and Swedish interpretations of the *Law of Nations* and its impact on the role of perceptions and reputations in the East India trade of the 1730s-1740s. (PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2021).
[30] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 15.

violate the neutrality of a small state, the latter could do nothing to prevent it. Georg Wilhelm, Duke of Prussia and Elector of Brandenburg, had experienced it well when he tried to declare himself neutral during the Thirty Years's War. The result had been disastrous. First the dukedom was invaded by Wallenstein's army, later it was ravaged by the Swedish troops. Georg Wilhlelm sent an ambassador to Gustav Adolph, trying to persuade the monarch to spare his capital, but the Swedish sovereign allegedly declared 'neutrality? I do not get it. There is nothing to it', and occupied Berlin. Neither the imperials nor the Swedish had any interest in keeping Brandenburg neutral in the conflict and the small country did not have the force to stop them.[31]

During the War of Spanish Succession, Lorraine too tried unsuccessfully to be recognized as neutral. Despite Duke Leopold's consistent efforts to preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of his state, first the French took its capital Nancy and then the Imperial Army occupied the western territories of the country. Therefore Leopold, in vain attempt to spare his state the horrors of war, had actually caused its occupation and dismemberment.[32]

The difference between seventeenth-century neutrality and modern concepts of neutrality is precisely the fact that today neutrality is framed and protected by specific laws and by a long customary tradition. In the case of controversy a state can cite precedents, particular cases, and universally accepted rules of law. In short, the state that chooses to adopt neutrality operates in well-known waters. In the seventeenth century this regulatory infrastructure was almost completely missing: international law was still in its infancy and the concept of neutrality was emerging with difficulty from its embryonic state. In applying a policy of neutrality since 1642 Tuscany was a pioneer nation in this

[31] Mikael af Malborg, *Neutrality and State Building in Sweden* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), p. 28; Axel Gotthard, *Zwischen Lutherum und Calvinismus (1598-1640), Preussen Herrscher: von den ersten Hohenzollern bis Wilhelm II*, ed. by. Frank-Lothar Kroll (Munchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2006), pp. 87-91.
[32] Phil McCluskey, 'Louis XIV, Duke Leopold I and the Neutrality of Lorraine, 1702-1714', *European History Quarterly*, 45:1 (2015), pp. 34-56.

particular area of diplomacy, and an absolute exception in the European landscape. But what were the peculiar characteristics that allowed Tuscany to be neutral in a world that considered neutrality morally regrettable and practically impossible to uphold?

The case of Tuscan neutrality

Long-term neutrality was by no means an easy or obvious choice for a small state. For a great power to remain neutral in a conflict it is just a question of costs and benefits, while for a small state its very existence may depend on this choice.[33] Furthermore, a small state had a far more modest deterrence capacity (both military and political) than a large nation. The latter's greater military power not only allowed it to effectively defend its sovereignty, but also made other nations aware that violating its neutrality could have extremely high political, military and economic costs.[34] The most obvious choice for a state of modest resources was to forge alliances with more powerful countries in order to protect itself from the hostile intentions of others. Of course, these unbalanced alliances have a cost in terms of freedom and independence of the minor state, but it was still preferable to give up a part of one's independence rather than risking annihilation. The small state that instead decided upon neutrality therefore made a politically courageous choice, that is to rely solely on its own strengths.

Remaining neutral, a small state could hope to maintain its sovereignty and independence, but in a conflict it could find itself without allies, as exactly happened to Brandenburg or Lorraine. Trying to apply a long-term neutrality policy was therefore an ambitious political choice, a challenge that, as Efraim Karsh writes, 'compels the small state [...] to exploit fully its political acumen in order to pursue a neutral policy which

[33] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 4.
[34] *Ibid*., p. 4.

satisfies both belligerents'.[35] This was also the case of Tuscany, which however, unlike other European states, could rely on some particular geographical, political and economic assets that facilitated upholding a neutrality policy.

From a geographical point of view, the Grand Duchy was located in a relatively peripheral area of Europe, and its borders were almost exclusively with the State of the Church. The papacy, and also the other small neighbouring states such as the duchy of Parma, that of Modena, or even the Republic of Genoa, somehow served the Grand Duchy as 'buffer states'. Anyone who wanted to march on Tuscany would have to pass through other countries, and this offered Tuscany both political advantages (the invader would have to deal with the states he would like to cross) and strategic advantages (the time taken by any invasion force to get to Tuscany would allow the Grand Ducal forces to organize for defence). This strategic advantage was also increased by the fact that the Tuscan borders were mainly mountainous and the Grand Dukes kept the passes that crossed the Apennines usable, but nothing more than that, just to slow down the eventual advancing of the enemy troops and especially of their artillery.[36]

The second Tuscan asset was, paradoxically, its complicated political situation. The Grand Duchy was formed by the aggregation of former states, in particular from the union of the domains of Florence and Siena. The Florentine state, however, was an imperial fiefdom, while the Sienese state was a Spanish fiefdom. This put the Grand Dukes in the very uncomfortable position of having divided and often opposing feudal loyalties. Tuscany was also at the center of the delicate Italian political balances in which the other great European contender, France, played a role of primary importance. The Tuscan sovereigns had, therefore, to be careful to balance with these three powers through

[35] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 4.
[36] Niccolò Capponi, 'Le Palle di Marte: Military Strategy and Diplomacy in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany under Ferdinand II de' Medici (1621-1670), *The Journal of Military History* 68:4 (2004), p. 1133.

an extremely complex political game. To complete the picture, the Medici developed close dynastic relationships with the Bourbons and the Habsburgs (both from Austria and Spain), precisely with the aim of maintaining and strengthening these close interdependent relationships with the largest European countries.[37]

The Tuscan rulers understood that if on the one hand these opposing bonds of loyalty could be an obstacle, on the other they could be used to their advantage. For example, if the Empire wanted to force the Grand Duchy to embrace a specific foreign policy, Tuscany would have moved closer to France, and the possibility that Tuscany could end up under French influence would have been an excellent reason for the Empire to desist from its intent. It will be seen later in the chapter that this is exactly what happened when England attempted to violate the Grand Duchy's neutrality: Tuscany moved increasingly towards France, until it threatened to become allied with Louis XIV. This was one of the reasons which prompted Britain to reconsider its position and desist from its intents.

Furthermore, in the hundred years that passed from the coronation of Cosimo I (1569) to that of Cosimo III (1670), the power balance between the European nations had changed. In the second half of the sixteenth century a medium-sized state like Tuscany could aspire to have a leading role in the international political order. By the late seventeenth century, however, the balance of power had relentlessly shifted in favour of larger states, which had more resources and a larger population. For example, at the end of the Seventeenth century France maintained an army of over 400,000 soldiers and the siege of Narmour involved 100,000 men.[38] In 1700 the Tuscan army, called 'Bande Granducali' numbered about 55,000 men, an important figure considering the small size

[37] Gregory Murry, *The Medicean Succession: Monarchy and Sacral Politics in Duke Cosimo dei Medici's Florence*, (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2014); Giorgio Spini, *Cosimo I e l'indipendenza del Principato Mediceo*, (Firenze, Vallecchi, 1945); Roberto Cantagalli, *Cosimo I de' Medici Granduca di Toscana*, (Milano, Mursia, 1985).
[38] John Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV: 1667–1714*, (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 233.

of the state and its population.[39] However, only one fifth of them were professional soldiers regularly employed in service: most of the others had other jobs and trained only once a month. Although Tuscany was not a small state (there were in Europe many much smaller states than the Grand Duchy) it was evident that it could not anymore compete with the great states of the continent.

Furthermore, the military experience accumulated over the years had taught the Medici sovereigns that war and active participation in European conflicts were not advantageous for Tuscany.[40] For example, Cosimo II's costly participation in the Thirty Years' War did not produce any tangible result for the Grand Duchy.[41] A few years later, in 1642, Ferdinand II had found himself obliged to declare war on the Pope to protect the Farnese duchy of Castro, which was on the border with the Tuscan state. Although the Grand Duke emerged victorious he gained nothing except debts. It was, therefore, much more prudent for the Grand Duchy to avoid active participation and to exploit its political and geographical advantages. It was convenient to try to be friends with everyone, or at least to be no one's enemy. In short, the best political-diplomatic strategy was to remain neutral.

But Tuscan neutrality was made possible mainly thanks to economic reasons and these concentrated on the port of Livorno. As Quincy Wright effectively pointed out, a neutral's ability to stay out of a conflict depended primarily on the interest that the belligerents had that it remained so.[42] Through the Plowman case it will be possible to demonstrate that Livorno was the cornerstone of the neutrality system of the Grand

[39] A.S.F., M.d.P, f. 1812, *Nota distinta tanto di cavalleria che di infanteria delle milizie delle Bande di Sua Altezza Reale*, 1700.
[40] Regarding the participation of Tuscany to the Thirty Years' War see: Carla Sodini, *L'Ercole tirreno. Guerra e dinastia medicea nella prima metà del'600* (Firenze: Olschki, 2001); G. Bandini, *Un episodio mediceo della guerra dei Trenta Anni,* (Firenze:Seeber, 1901).
[41] Niccolò Capponi, Le Palle di Marte: Military Strategy and Diplomacy in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany under Ferdinand II de' Medici (1621-1670), *The Journal of Military History*, 68:4 (2004), pp. 1105-1141.
[42] Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 136.

Duchy, precisely because the interests that focused on the port, especially in wartime, meant that it was not desirable for any of the nations involved in a war to induce or force Tuscany into the conflict.

As was highlighted in the previous section, in the seventeenth century there existed a fundamental difference between maritime and terrestrial neutrality. For many merchants war was always a major calamity, although some could profit from it. Originally it was the desire to find a legitimate way to trade during a conflict that formed the basis for the development of the concept of neutrality.[43] Neutral trade, within certain limits, was tolerated by warring states.[44] They knew well that through neutral trade they could obtain goods and merchandise that the conflict had made scarce, and that, therefore, neutral trade partially compensated for the damages of the war itself. The belligerents then had to decide whether it was better for them to tolerate the neutral nations or to force them to take an active part in the conflict: it was all a matter of convenience. This scenario concerned the trade *by ship* that a nation in peace did with one in war.

The case of Livorno was, however, quite different. It was not so much the ships from Livorno trading with the countries at war, it was rather the countries at war trading *in* Livorno. Here the situation was reversed and, at least officially, it was Tuscany that *allowed* the exchanges to take place in its port. Moreover, in Livorno trade was not only between neutral merchants and merchants from countries at war but the greatest volume

[43] Before Grotius' fundamental contribution on the topic with his *Mare Liberum* (1609), already the *Consolato del Mare* (chapter 177) cites provisions concerning ships and their cargo, distinguishing whether the ship was of an ally and the merchandise of enemies, or vice versa. The Consulate of the Sea is the oldest collection of maritime laws and customs, first printed in Valencia in 1485. The oldest surviving manuscript is from the early 14th century but its provisions date back to at least the year 1000, if not before. The *Consolato del Mare* became the reference text for all trade in Christendom, and was widely used until the mid-nineteenth century. Giuseppe Maria Casaregi, *Il Consolato del Mare con le spiegazioni di Giuseppe Maria Casaregi, Auditore di Ruota e Consigliere di Stato di S.A.R. il Granduca di Toscana*, (Firenze, 1719).
[44] In particular on the relations between England and Sweden regarding Swedish neutrality: Steve Murdoch, 'Neutrality at Sea. Scandinavian Responses to 'Great Power' Maritime Warfare, 1651-1713', in *Ideologies of Western Naval Power c. 1500-1800*, ed. by J-D. Davies, A. James, G. Rommelse (New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 244-261; Koen Stapelbroek, 'The Rights of Neutral Tade and its Forgotten History', in *Trade and War: The Neutrality of Commerce in the Inter-State System*, ed. by K. Stapelbroek, (Helsinki, Collegium, 2011), pp. 1-11.

of business was concentrated among the merchants of the nations at war. Livorno's neutrality was truly the ideal solution for everyone. For example, during the numerous Anglo-French conflicts of the Seventeenth century both nations declared a mutual embargo. This meant that France no longer had access to English woollen cloths, while the British Isles were deprived of French silk or wine. Of course, smuggling compensated a small part of these inconveniences, but it was a dangerous and above all costly affair.[45] In Livorno, however, English and French merchants could trade and exchange the goods without interference by the authorities and all the other impediments caused by the war.

Studies of Livorno have underlined that the success of the port was due to the fact that it was a free port, that is, that it had extremely low taxes and duties on goods.[46] Corey Tazzara, in his recent *The free port of Livorno and the transformation of the Mediterranean World* (2017), argues that it was the declaration of Livorno as a free port that constituted the essential component of its success. Although this was one of the reasons of its success, this work argues that it was certainly not the fundamental one. Livorno was by no means the only free port in the Mediterranean, and other cities like Marseille tried to copy its model.[47] Livorno, indeed, had a characteristic that no other Mediterranean (or Atlantic) port could claim: it was a *neutral* port. Furthermore, it was a port positioned in a state that offered the political framework for it to *remain* neutral. The foreign policy of the Medici family was in fact a further guarantee as they had remained neutral since 1642 and in all probability they would have remained so in any other war to come. This encouraged the merchants to move part of their activities to the Tuscan port

[45] The ban on French products did not theoretically involved Scotland, whose ships were granted passes to commerce in that product. However the small number of Scottish merchant ships could not compensate the commercial damage of the war. On this topic see: Steve Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas? Scottish Maritime Warfare, 1513-1713* (Leiden, Brill, 2010), pp. 310-312.
[46] Lucia Frattarelli Fisher, 'Livorno 1676: la Città ed il Porto Franco', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, ed. by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli, M. Verga (Firenze, Edifir, 1993), pp. 45-66.
[47] Corey Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 5.

so that, in case of war, they could safely continue their activities through the port of Livorno despite the conflict.

For example, according to a letter that Blackwell wrote to the Earl of Manchester, after the outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession, British merchants residing in Barcelona, Cadiz, Messina and Naples were expelled, in a more or less civilized manner, by the Spanish government from those areas. They relocated to Livorno and they brought their business with them.[48] It was evident that in a century marked by continuous wars, in which trade was inevitably hampered and seriously damaged, a place where exchanges could continue (almost) undisturbed was very convenient for everyone. For Tuscany this situation represented an extraordinary political asset. The Grand Duchy, leveraging on the port of Livorno, could in fact transform maritime neutrality into terrestrial neutrality, which was at the time considered impossible.[49] If Tuscany were attacked by one of the great powers, Livorno would obviously not have been neutral anymore, and the aggressor would have been excluded from its trade. As Livorno's trade was so extensive the damages that the aggressor would suffer would be greater than any gain made from having Tuscany involved in the war. Therefore, Tuscany had made its neutrality convenient for everyone. In addition, the fact that trade was so developed meant that the goods and money deposited in Livorno were more than a sufficient guarantee for the Grand Duchy to guard against possible attacks: the aggressor could in fact expect to see its assets requisitioned as retaliation.

Tuscan neutrality was possible thanks to a delicate political-economic apparatus, but it was also necessary to be prepared to defend it militarily. Indeed, neutral nations usually invested considerable resources in their defense capabilities.[50] The defense of

[48] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to the Earl of Manchester, 24 June 1702.
[49] As the cases of neutrality of Brandenburg and Lorraine mentioned just above in the chapter have shown.
[50] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History*, p. 15.

Livorno, on which the whole system of neutrality of the Grand Duchy was based, was considered a priority and the Grand Dukes had spent a fortune on the fortification of the city. The walls and ramparts had been reinforced several times, compared to the original layout planned by Buontalenti, to adapt to the evolution of military strategy. Cosimo III had contributed by equipping Livorno with a new imposing fortress, fortifying the lighthouse, and expanding the coastal batteries. By the end of the seventeenth century the city was surrounded by a wall of star-shaped bastions, by a moat and a double embankment. The city was guarded by two fortresses, three forts, and multiple batteries of cannons (there were 164 in the fortresses and on the walls of Livorno), facing not only towards the sea but also towards the land.[51] The peacetime garrison amounted to 1,500 men, but could easily be doubled in case of need, and in wartime the fortresses could house more than eight thousand soldiers.[52] Thus Tuscany, while remaining peaceful, was ready to defend itself, making its neutrality even more effective.

[51] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2356, ins. 3, Inventario delle artiglierie in Livorno, 1700.
[52] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 1815, Memoire de l'Etat present de Ligourne et de son Commerce année 1699.

The fortifications of Livorno in the year 1700. A.S.F., Scrittoio fortezze e fabbriche, 79/2.

Military maps of the same period preserved in the National Library of France describe Livorno as 'the best port and the best fortified town of all Italy'. B.N.F., Nicolas de Fer, *Livorne our Ligourne, l'arsenal et le sejour des galeres du Grand Duc*, IFN-8490788.

A personal matter

The Plowman case is closely linked to two European wars and, more generally, to a dynamic of conflict. The case began in 1696, during the Nine Years' War, experienced a period of stasis between 1699 and 1700, and fiercely resumed during the War of Spanish Succession. As shown in the previous chapter the matter seemed concluded, especially after the liberation of Plowman (1699). William III seemed disinclined to pursue the matter and thanked Cosimo III for the clemency shown towards the English merchant.[53] The situation changed, however, just after the outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession and after the death of William III. The English monarch had in fact passed away on 8th March 1702, just as Blackwell was travelling back to Tuscany after having spent a year in the British Isles. Queen Anne, daughter of James II, who had ascended the English throne, had renewed, in her new instructions to Blackwell, the demands in favour of Plowman and his associates Rigby and Shepard.

These new instructions received from Blackwell were practically an exact copy of what had been written for him in 1697. For example, the orders reiterated the request to the Grand Duke to remove some taxes from the *lazzaretto*, which had already been granted in 1698.[54] The crown again requested the removal of the ban on the importation of English woollen cloth to Florence, which had been sharply refused three years earlier with ample justification. The only substantially different part concerned the Plowman affair. While in the instructions of William III the Plowman case had only occupied a few lines, in those of Queen Anne the case a significant part of the document was dedicated

[53] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 21 July 1702.
[54] T.N.A., SP104/89, Anne I to Lambert Blackwell, instructions for his ambassadorship, 1 May 1702.

to the case, referring to the specific events and reasons for the discontent of the English government.[55]

England's renewed interest in the case should be seen within the context of the change of monarch and of the dangerous war with France. When a monarch died, a series of personal ties ended, such as appointments to ambassadors. An ambassador was a person who acted by name and on behalf of the sovereign and was a fiduciary envoy par excellence. Therefore, upon the death of a monarch the ambassadors and envoys automatically ceased their duties.[56] Thus, when William III died the English government had to provide new credentials to its representatives abroad. It was essential for England to have ambassadors able to fully perform their duties, especially in a challenging political situation of renewed European war. It is not surprising, then, that Blackwell's new orders, needing to be rushed through, had been copied from the old ones and consequently contained requests that had already been satisfied. The only part of Blackwell's instructions that were significantly expanded concerned the Plowman case. This demonstrates the interest that the English government had in the matter, but also that it had formally provided its ambassador with all the tools necessary to use the case as leverage against the Tuscan government.

The tone of the orders had also changed, and while at the beginning of the controversy William III had asked Blackwell to use his 'good offices'[57] to procure the release of Plowman, the Queen now commanded that the ambassador represent these complaints 'in the name and on behalf of' the sovereign and to use his 'utmost endeavours'[58] to obtain satisfaction from the Grand Duke. Even from a formal document

[55] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, Anne I to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 1 May 1702.
[56] Blackwell himself stated that 'the Great Duke could not treate with me upon business, [until] receive new Credentialls'. T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Earl of Manchester, 12 May 1702.
[57] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, William III to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 22 April 1697.
[58] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, Anne I to Lambert Blackwell, Instructions for his ambassadorship, 1 May 1702.

such as this one it can clearly be perceived that the Plowman affair had not only politically transcended, but had become a personal matter. In fact, the matter had become "personal" for the English government, which in previous years had failed to obtain from the Italian princes anything but affronts exquisitely seasoned with respectful compliments, such as in the case of Genoa, and especially in that of Tuscany.

The matter had also become personal for Blackwell himself because his embassy could hardly be defined as a success. He had managed to get discounts on some taxes and duties in Livorno, but the English trade in that port was already flourishing before his arrival and the matter had gone almost unnoticed in London. What had not gone unnoticed was his sensational failure to handle the Plowman case, which had cost Blackwell his appointment as ambassador to Venice. In fact, before his departure from Florence, the envoy was flattered with the prospect of the ambassadorship for the Republic of Venice as well.[59] Through this appointment Blackwell would have become an envoy plenipotentiary of the English crown for the entire Italian peninsula: an important promotion that would have brought honour and benefits. Upon his return to Italy the ambassador was discussing the details of his salary with the Secretary of State, when Blackwell was suddenly informed that 'Her Majesty does not think fit at present to come to a resolution about employing you at Venice'.[60] It was very probable that this sudden slowdown was due to his failure in handling the Plowman case. Yet the Crown did not completely close the door on the idea of appointing Blackwell to Venice, but had voluntarily left the matter pending, making it clear to the ambassador that any hope of promotion resided in the future course of English affairs in Tuscany.

For Cosimo III the Plowman case had been a personal matter from its very beginning. In fact, the Grand Duke was furious that the English merchant dared to break

[59] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Manchester, 18 April 1702.
[60] T.N.A., S.P. 104/89, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 28 July 1702.

a promise made to him, and he liked even less that Plowman's actions had embarrassed him in front of half of Europe. After years of strenuous negotiations it seemed that the controversy had finally ended, but instead the English, taking advantage of the new tensions generated by the War of Spanish Succession, once again renewed demands for damages for what Plowman had suffered. Furthermore Plowman, in agreement with his old partners Rigby and Shepard, had published a pamphlet on the controversy in which claimed that Cosimo III had acted in bad faith, and had fabricated the case against the English. Although not explicitly the pamphlet labelled the Grand Duke and his ministers as liars and dishonest.[61].

The Grand Duke, however, was aware that the political situation in 1701 was very different than when the case started in 1696. The Plowman controversy had in fact arisen at the end of the Nine Years' War, and it was the imminent conclusion of the hostilities that induced Cosimo III to risk a little more.[62] The War of the Spanish Succession, on the other hand, had just begun. It would quite likely continue for some time, and the outcomes could have substantially changed the European balance of power. The Tuscan sovereign was well aware that he had to pay close attention to keeping a balance between France and England (and in general with the whole imperial coalition) so as not to compromise the position of Tuscany and not allow any of the warring nations to have an excuse to violate the neutrality of the Grand Duchy. The diplomatic game had just begun and seemed to look like a war with no holds barred.

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[61] *The case of Sir Alexander Rigby, William Shepard and William Plowman setting forth the Damages the have suffer'd by the Imprisonment of William Plowman, Seizure of their effects, and other Proceedings of the Grand Duke of Toscany*, (London, 1701).

[62] In 1696 the war was stalling and the peace conference was already being organized. However, the war had enormously increased the price of some goods, in particular wheat and coffee. Plowman had not only proposed to go to Alexandria to buy coffee but had expressed his intention to go to Tunis to trade in wheat. The English merchant was already carrying out a complex negotiation with the Bey there to secure a monopoly on the export of wheat. The Tunisian wheat would have passed through Livorno benefitting not only the general trade of the port, but also the Grand Duke himself, who was the most important grain merchant in Tuscany. These economic reasons were sufficient to convince Cosimo III to grant permission to arm the small English fleet, although this could have been interpreted as a violation of the neutrality of the port of Livorno.

A role-playing game

This war began precisely with the publication of Plowman's pamphlet: the content of the booklet was so offensive to Cosimo III that it was on its own a serious diplomatic incident. Furthermore, the Tuscan government knew well, thanks to the information received from the envoy to England Iacopo Giraldi, that that publication had met the approval of the English government.[63] The publication of the pamphlet and above all the fact that the English government had tacitly approved its contents, making it the basis for its new claims for compensation, could already have given Tuscany sufficient reasons to file an official protest, or even to take more severe actions: after all the Grand Duke's honour had been questioned.

Instead, although the news of the publication of this pamphlet, and a copy of it, had arrived in Florence several months before, the Tuscan government had made no mention of it, nor given any visible sign of discontent. Indeed, when Blackwell received his new credentials from the Queen, Cosimo III bestowed him with honours. The Grand Duke hosted him again at Palazzo Pitti for three days, ordered impressive refreshments and lavishly entertained the ambassador as if the envoy had just arrived in Florence to assume his office. The pomp had been so extraordinary that Blackwell wrote to the Secretary of State in London that 'it must be sayd that the Great Duke is very splendid and generous in his entertainments', also adding that Cosimo III had publicly declared that he could never do enough to demonstrate the high esteem and reverence he had for the British Queen.[64]

[63] Blackwell wrote in a letter to Nottingham as 'I doe remember when I was in England that the booke was presented to every one of the Lord Justices […]'. T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 30 September 1702.
[64] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 July 1702.

The confrontation between Tuscany and England had just begun and both countries adopted different diplomatic strategies to achieve their goals. The imbalance of forces between the two contenders obliged the Grand Duchy to resort to a prudent and refined diplomatic strategy to protect its interests. It was imperative not to provide the English with any pretext for war and, at least apparently, maintain the best possible correspondence with them. For this reason, Cosimo III wanted to host Blackwell with such pomp stating publicly the respect and reverence he had for the Queen of England. A diplomatic game had begun in which there was a substantial difference between what was positively said, its real meaning, and the actions that were taken. As it will be seen further on in the chapter, the quality of the relations between Tuscany and England must be sought, not only in major events or in public declarations, but precisely in the ambiguity of words, gestures and attitudes. England on the other hand, being the strongest state, could afford to use a less cautious and more aggressive strategy to achieve its goals. It was a game in which England played on offense and Tuscany necessarily was playing on defence.

Just after his glorious reception in the Grand Duke's palace Blackwell immediately requested an audience with Secretary of State Montemagni to discuss the Plowman affair 'with all the demands that are particularized in their printed booke'.[65] It was the English envoy who first mentioned the pamphlet and this was exactly what the Tuscan government must have hoped for. The fact that nobody in Tuscany had complained about the publication had not been complacency, but rather a diplomatic strategy. The Tuscan government had preferred not to make any mention of the pamphlet because even expressing a complaint, or questioning the content of the booklet, would have implicitly meant recognizing its existence and in some way its validity. Instead, it

[65] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 July 1702.

would have been much more convenient if the English envoy had nominated it first. Therefore, the Tuscan government had left the burden of recognizing the validity of the pamphlet to the English government, and thus it was able to react as the insulted party and seek an advantage in the negotiation.

The response of the Tuscan secretary, evidently carefully prepared for some time, had been fulminating. The pamphlet was defined as 'brazen and reckless' as well as 'offensive to the honour and dignity of a Prince of the quality of the Grand Duke'.[66] The Grand Duke, the Secretary of State continued, 'could only be admired [...] in being reminded of [Plowman's name] and in hearing pretensions that have no other support than that of [Plowman's] only malice and usual lies, especially when the Majesty of King William of glorious memory showed acquiescence to the just determinations of His Highness'.[67] The Grand Duke, moreover, could not believe that Blackwell's orders to present new petitions in Plowman's favour were based on the pamphlet, considering that it was unimaginable that 'Her Majesty may have been inclined to bring to the Grand Duke a destructive disfigurement of all the graces she had done to him'.[68] The Grand Duke's response focused not so much on the essence of the matter, that is, on Plowman's requests, briefly defined as malignant and false, but on the fact that the Queen could have believed such unfounded accusations. Tuscany was attempting to shift the focus of the matter to the fact that Plowman's book, and above all the approval that the English government had given it, had harmed the Grand Duke's honour and given him a just cause to take offense. It was clear that such an answer had been prepared in advance and that the Tuscan government had expected nothing more than the right opportunity to try to gain moral superiority in the negotiation.

[66] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 21 July 1702.
[67] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 21 July 1702.
[68] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 21 July 1702.

Blackwell's first move was effectively counteracted, but the English ambassador had certainly not given up. His orders admitted no uncertainty and his future hung on the success of the affair. He had thus written a memorial 'in the most respectable manner possible',[69] together with a copy of the eighteen articles of requests contained in Plowman's pamphlet, and he had presented it to the Grand Duke on 24th July 1702. The memorial was in fact expressed in a very respectful way. The Grand Duke was asked to take into consideration the requests made by the English government claiming that 'the main foundation of these appeals is deduced from the imprisonment of Plowman that prejudiced many other people so that the damage has to be considered public and national'.[70]

This passage contains a fundamental element to evaluating the evolution of the Plowman case. From 1696 to 1699, in fact, the English government had considered itself extraneous to the Plowman affair. The English government had not acted as the first party but had rather tried to intercede on behalf of Plowman, and its role had been that of a third-party mediating between its citizen and the Tuscan government. The role of the English government was transformed and it now considered itself *directly* involved in the affair whose damages were in fact considered *public and national.*[71]

This is a useful indicator to understand how the case had evolved to become a real state matter. This was also fully understood by the grand ducal government. The Plowman case had turned into a direct clash between England and Tuscany and the consequences that could derive from it were likely to be serious. A confrontation with England would have in fact risked endangering the neutrality of the Grand Duchy and, therefore, also its independence.

[69] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 29 July 1702.
[70] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Cosimo III, 24 July 1702.
[71] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Cosimo III, 24 July 1702.

Having at that point tested what the true English intentions were, the Tuscan government modified its strategy, opting this time for a delaying tactic. Instead of responding to Blackwell, the Tuscan government had sent instructions to its ambassador to England to respond directly to the Queen.[72] By these means the Tuscan government could achieve three objectives. First, the negotiation would have taken much more time, given that the letters from Tuscany had to reach England and vice versa. Secondly, bringing the case to England reversed the prospect of the proceedings and the burden of responding was no longer upon the Grand Duke, but on the Queen. Thirdly, the case was effectively removed from Blackwell's hands who, according to what he himself wrote to the Secretary of State, could no longer deal with the topic 'till her Majestie's pleasure were further shown about that affaire'.[73] When the Tuscan government approached the Queen, it temporarily prevented Blackwell from having the competence to deal with the matter. In fact, it was unthinkable that an ambassador, despite being a representative of the crown, could answer in place of the sovereign when a question was presented directly to the sovereign.

Furthermore, once the matter was in the hands of the Tuscan envoy to England, he could present the case in the best way for the Tuscan interests. Indeed, in a meeting with Secretary Nottingham, Giraldi was quick to say that Blackwell had spoken to the Grand Duke about the pamphlet published by Plowman at the behest of the English government, presenting it 'as the state of the case'. Therefore, the ambassador added, considering that 'this book contains many things reflecting upon the honour of His Highness, has given him just occasion of offense'.[74] Nottingham was not particularly

[72] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 28 July 1702.
[73] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 5 August 1702.
[74] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 11 August 1702.

pleased at the news and had assured Giraldi that he would immediately write to Blackwell asking for a detailed account of the matter.[75]

The Secretary of State had in fact written to Blackwell accusing him of having explicitly used the book as the basis for his requests. The ambassador was very surprised by this reprimand. Indeed, although his orders did not explicitly state he should use the pamphlet, they neither explicitly forbid it. Considering that he had been asked to use his 'utmost endeavors' he had acted in the manner he deemed most effective. Blackwell was, therefore, rather resentful about the reprimand which he thought unjustified, and replied to Nottingham that 'I doe remember when I was in England that the booke was presented to every one of the Lord Justices, and tho there may be some powerfull and home explanations of it (touching upon the Great Duke) yett it was thought that Mr. Plowman's hard usage was without example and merrited his Majestie's protection'.[76] The close exchange between the ambassador and Secretary Nottingham on the one hand reveals that there was no coordinated and common strategy regarding the use of Plowman's book. On the other it reveals that the divisions within the English administration had survived William III and continued to constitute a significant obstacle for British diplomacy. By moving the Plowman case back to England the Tuscan government was just trying to exploit these divisions in an attempt to gain an advantage in the negotiation and the results seemed to be encouraging.

A tight negotiation

In the complex scenario of the War of Spanish Succession the Tuscan and English governments were not only confronting each other on the Plowman case, but

[75] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 11 August 1702.
[76] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 30 September 1702.

simultaneously on many other topics of great political and strategic importance. On the one hand, Tuscany was most keen, since the outbreak of hostilities, to once again obtain the international recognition of the neutrality of its port by renewing the Articles of Neutrality that had been stipulated in 1691 with the major European powers. Indeed, as mentioned above, the international recognition of the neutrality of Livorno was one of the pillars on which the entire Tuscan neutrality system was based and it was therefore of fundamental importance that the four major maritime powers (France, England, Spain and the Dutch Republic) agreed to recognize Livorno's unique and privileged status of a 'neutral port'.

On the other hand, England sought the concession to supply its war fleet in the port of Livorno. The outbreak of the war had once again highlighted a fundamental strategic weakness of England in the south of Europe, that is, the lack of a British port in the Mediterranean. Livorno was certainly not the only large port there, but in wartime it was one of the very few ports that could offer British ships what they needed. First of all, the port had to be accessible.[77] Then it needed to have enough stock capacity to supply a fleet that would need provisions for thousands of men for many months.[78] The port also needed to have a logistics infrastructure that would allow the warships that arrived there to find ready and in quantity what they needed.[79] Only two ports in the Mediterranean could serve the British fleet in wartime: Genoa and Livorno. However, the Republic of Genoa due to its greater geographical proximity to France, was much less willing to grant

[77] During the Spanish Succession War, most of the great Mediterranean ports, that is, the Spanish, French and those of the Kingdom of Naples (a Spanish dominion) were naturally closed for English ships.
[78] Venice could have supplied British ships, but it was in an inconvenient geographical position, and it imposed very high duties on foodstuffs and naval supplies.
[79] Just to give an example of the logistical complexity of this operation: to obtain barrels of salted meat (one of the foundations of the robust diet of sailors) one had to first be able to buy large quantities of salt, then to buy many cows or pigs, therefore one would need a place where to slaughter the aforementioned animals, then it was necessary to have large quantities of barrels suitable for the purpose available and finally it was necessary that the place had the know-how to complete the process by assembling the ingredients to obtain the coveted barrel of salted meat (which had to be kept in a suitable place, for which, of course, large warehouses were also needed.

favours to the British.[80] Indeed, Blackwell realized that the Republic had granted enormous privileges to the French.[81] 'There is not a day passes', wrote Blackwell, 'but French shipps arrive here loaden with provisions and ammunitions for service of Mons. Vaudaume's army,[82] and all enter custom free'.[83] In addition, the French had large deposits of wheat and other supplies just outside the city 'which they transport by mules and horses to the army in Lombardy'.[84] What happened in Genoa risked damaging enormously the British interests in Italy and even the general progress of the conflict. It was evident that if the French remained masters of the Mediterranean they could easily continue to supply their army in Lombardy, obtaining a considerable advantage over the imperial coalition. It was also clear that the Genoese, having already granted so much to the French, would not have been as generous with the British and that, therefore, the British fleet would have been very unwelcome (and unsafe) in Genoa.

Another important consequence of the pro-French position of the Republic was that the British did not have a choice: the fleet would necessarily have to supply in Livorno. The lack of choice, therefore, gave Tuscany a great diplomatic advantage over England. If Blackwell had not been able to obtain free access to the Tuscan port, the English government would have had serious difficulties deploying its forces in the Mediterranean.

The English ambassador became aware of the Tuscan advantage as soon as he pushed forward the request to make 'provisions for her Majestie's men-of-warr att Legorne free of customs'.[85] The Tuscan government hinted that it would not give any

[80] The memory of the bombing suffered in 1684 was still very vivid in the mind of the Republic.
[81] Blackwell was still ambassador to Genoa.
[82] Louis Joseph of Bourbon (1654-1712) Duke of Vendome, he was Marshal of France and one of the most successful generals of his time.
[83] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 29 September 1702.
[84] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 29 September 1702.
[85] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 19 August1702.

response until England would sign the Articles of Neutrality of Livorno.[86] But after Blackwell obtained permission and signed the treaty, the Tuscan response still proved unsatisfactory. The Tuscan Secretary of State, Montemagni, wrote that 'the English Envoy can be sure that in the event of the coming of his Nation's warships in Livorno, 'His Highness will do all those facilities that will be practicable and could be granted without bewilderment' of his state.[87] Indeed, most of the goods considered vital (salt, wheat, meat, but also naval equipment, gunpowder, ammunition, etc.) were subject to state monopoly and the purchase and accumulation of large quantities of these goods required the explicit permission of the sovereign. In light of this, it was understood that the response of the Tuscan government, as Blackwell himself acknowledged, was 'in such general terms' which did not offer the least guarantee.[88] The envoy knew all too well 'that a Magazino att Legorne [was] absolutely necessary'[89] and there was nothing left but to keep trying to obtain a more explicit permission from the Grand Duke. To the new requests presented by Blackwell, Cosimo III still vaguely replied that 'whatever was possible to permit for her Majestie's service should be done, according to the conjuncture'[90], so much so that the ambassador wrote to Nottingham that 'unless such a squadron of frigates come into the Mediterranean, as to make us masters of these seas, the priviledges enjoyed last warr must not be expected'.[91] Blackwell's words clearly highlight England's strategic impasse. To impose its will England had to send the fleet, but how could England send the fleet if she did not have a port to supply it?

The matter was also generating a certain nervousness in London. Nottingham summoned ambassador Giraldi, and the Secretary personally requested that the fleet be

[86] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 12 August1702
[87] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 26 August 1702.
[88] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 2 September 1702.
[89] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 2 September 1702.
[90] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 2 September 1702.
[91] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 2 September 1702.

supplied at Livorno, claiming that since the French had that privilege, the request was perfectly consistent with the neutrality of the Grand Duke.[92] Nottingham, perhaps exasperated by the unsatisfactory responses from Tuscany, had also come to threaten the Grand Ducal envoy that if the fleet did not have 'a very speedy permission' to supply in Livorno 'her Majesty in all probability would not suffer her merchants to have magazines of anything else at Legorne but [would] recall them'.[93]. The English secretary then abruptly added that 'no answer is plain and clear but yes or no' and dismissed the Tuscan ambassador.[94] Despite these threats, Grand-ducal permission was kept pending for several months, and did not arrive until the 10th of December 1702.[95]

The analysis of the abrupt reaction from Secretary Nottingham is revealing of many interesting aspects of this controversy. First, it underlines the importance and urgency of obtaining permission to supply the fleet. As mentioned above, this was a matter that required extensive logistical preparation. In fact, it took time to accumulate the right supplies and to make them ready for when the ships arrived in port. In particular, some supplies such as barrels of salted meat, one of the fundamental components of the sailors' diet, took several months to prepare.[96] Tuscany had to give its consent promptly otherwise there would not be enough time to prepare the necessary supplies and England would have enormous difficulties employing the fleet to the Mediterranean.[97]

England was undoubtedly militarily and economically more powerful than the Grand Duchy, yet a series of geopolitical factors, such as the absence of an English port in the Mediterranean and the unavailability of Genoa, allowed the Grand Duchy to

[92] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 6 October 1702.
[93] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 6 October 1702.
[94] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 6 October 1702.
[95] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 10 December 1702.
[96] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 26 August 1702. In this and other letters, the envoy insists that it takes a long time to prepare this type of supplies.
[97] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 6 October 1702. When the British fleet was about to arrive in Livorno Blackwell ordered the preparation of '24.000 pound more of bisquitt'. T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 17 November 1703.

exercise considerable leverage. In the context of rising tensions between England and Tuscany and in the complicated context of the War of Spanish Succession, it is clear that if England had been able to find a satisfactory alternative solution to supply its fleet it would immediately have done so. It must in fact also be considered that supplying the fleet in Livorno would certainly not have been free of charge. Indeed, although naval supplies for war fleets were generally granted 'gabel free', these represented a huge bonus for the Tuscan coffers. Most of the goods required by the fleet were in fact subject to a state monopoly, therefore, even if supplies were sold tax-free, they would have been highly profitable for the grand ducal treasury. Furthermore, supplying the fleet would have increased the general trade of the port of Livorno, and also this would have meant an increase in Tuscan tax revenues. Thus, it seems clear that in an already diplomatically tense situation resulting from the Plowman affair, if England could have supplied its fleet elsewhere it would have done so. This would have stopped Tuscany profiting, but above all, it would have prevented its military operations from being effectively conditioned by Tuscan permission.

This episode also allows us to answer another question, that is, why was Tuscany behaving in this way? If the diplomatic situation was already tense and if supplying the fleet would have meant good profits, why had the Grand Duchy not tried to be more accommodating, perhaps in the hope of easing the tension deriving from the Plowman case? The first answer to this question could be found in the personal nature of the Plowman affair. When the pamphlet on the case was published, and especially when the English government recognized its validity, the matter transcended. The fact that Cosimo III's honour had been questioned had influenced the diplomatic position of Tuscany, making it much more rigid.

Moreover, the confrontation between England and Tuscany was, in fact, a clash of sovereignty. As seen in the previous chapter England wished to assert its political and

military role in Europe and the Mediterranean after the turbulence of the Glorious Revolution. England tried to use the Plowman case in such a way as to gain an advantage over Tuscany. In the first round of the controversy, between 1696 and 1699 England attempted to prove that the Grand Duke did not have the power to judge an English citizen in his state, thereby attempting to limit the sovereignty of Cosimo III. Now that the second round had started, England was trying to use the case as a lever to obtain privileged concessions in Livorno, directly threatening the neutrality of Tuscany and therefore its independence.

In this context, however, affirming its political and strategic importance was also one of the objectives of the Grand Duchy. Indeed, the very fact that Tuscany was a small state pursuing a long-term neutrality policy, required that it be extremely attentive to all matters concerning its sovereignty. The initial refusal of the Grand Duchy to grant permission to the British fleet to supply in Livorno had shown England's strategic weakness and at the same time the importance and contractual strength of Tuscany. Therefore, the Grand-Ducal resistance to the demands of the English government can be interpreted not only as a response to the English challenge to Tuscan sovereignty, but also as a way to reaffirm its independence and its political and strategical centrality.

The concession finally arrived (and just in time to salt the meet needed to supply the fleet, and therefore to allow the lucrative business to go on), but Tuscany had kept the English government waiting for months. The Grand Duchy had shown that it could dictate conditions and diplomatically this was a success. Furthermore, the controversy over the supplies had allowed the Tuscan government to test English resolve. In particular, the threat of ordering the English merchants to leave Livorno must have been well noticed: with this detail, England had made it clear that it was also willing to go to war. In fact, the only reason why it would have made sense to order English merchants to leave the city would be if England had wanted to attack Livorno as it would have been unthinkable

to bomb the city when thousands of British citizens resided there with their goods. If instead the city had been abandoned the government could have taken military action without fear of harming them. As we will see later in the chapter Nottingham's threat was therefore an important detail which must have certainly given the Tuscan government much to think about.

A difficult correspondence

The dispute between Tuscany and England was fought on several levels, and on several fields. Both countries knew well that they were now involved in a diplomatic and political conflict that could have evolved into a real military one. They, therefore, tried to test the limits of the opponent in the hope of identifying a weak point that could be used to their advantage. In such a tense situation England and Tuscany were fighting over many issues. Sometimes these were great challenges and provocations such as the Tuscan resistance to the supply of the English fleet, other times they were more subtle matters and it is precisely the apparently more insignificant details that give valuable insight on the state of relations between the two nations.

When Blackwell returned to Florence and was lavishly entertained at Palazzo Pitti, the Grand Duke entrusted him with a letter to Queen Anne to be sent to England. This was certainly not a novelty or something out of the ordinary. Cosimo III had sent several letters to William III by the hands of the English envoy and these had always been favourably received.[98] The Grand Duke's letter to the Queen, however, was returned. As Nottingham wrote to Blackwell, the superscription[99] of the letter 'alla Sacra e Real Maestà

[98] T.N.A., SP98/18, Cosimo III to William III, 18 March 1697; T.N.A. S.P. 98/18, Cosimo III to William III, 20 July 1698.

[99] In the original documents the title written on the outside of the letter sent to the Queen was called 'superscription', therefore the same term will be used in this work.

della Regina Anna d'Inghilterra' (to the Sacred and Royal Majesty of Queen Anne of England) was incorrect. According to the Secretary of State, the sovereign's name should have been omitted and 'the difference is very plain and so very materiall', Nottingham wrote, 'that I have by her Majesty's command return'd the letter unopen'd to the envoye of Florence here'.[100] The English government had deemed the superscription to be inadequate because in their opinion it did not offer enough respect to the Queen of England. This act sent a very clear diplomatic signal. Returning a letter, asking one to adapt the superscription, in fact meant placing oneself in a position of superiority with respect to the sender of the letter, as otherwise the letter could not be received and therefore its content read and appreciated.[101] Yet, the Tuscan Secretary of State had used the form of addressed used hitherto. Indeed all the letters between Cosimo III and William III were addressed 'alla Sacra e Real Maestà del Re Guglielmo III della Gran Brettagna' (to the Sacred and Royal Majesty of King William III of Great Britain).[102] Why suddenly was the superscription used for years now considered incorrect? In the context of a tense clash of sovereignty England sought to acquire supremacy over Tuscany. Complaining about the superscription of a letter between the Grand Duke and the Queen meant trying to impose a hierarchy between the two sovereigns. England's diplomatic signal was quite clear. The sovereignty of the Queen was greater and preceded that of the Grand Duke, just as the sovereignty of England was greater and preceded that of Tuscany. Furthermore, such a pretext could also be read as a provocation, as a trap set by England to further exacerbate the confrontation, in the hope of provoking an abrupt reaction from the Grand Duchy.

[100] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 3 July 1702. The English Secretary clearly specifies that the superscription should have been 'alla sacra real maestà della regina d'Inghilterra'.
[101] On this topic see: Yegana Aliyeva, 'Some Stylistic Features of Formal Diplomatic Correspondence (Theoretic and Applied Aspects)', *Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 1 (2016), pp. 108-114.
[102] T.N.A., SP98/18, Cosimo III to William III, 18 March 1697; T.N.A. S.P. 98/18, Cosimo III to William III, 20 July 1698.

The Tuscan envoy Giraldi immediately informed Florence of the fact that the Grand Duke's letter had not been accepted because the superscription was considered inappropriate. The Tuscan government responded to this provocation by entrusting Blackwell with another letter for the Queen, addressed with the same superscription. The matter was becoming embarrassing and Nottingham was displeased to see that Tuscany had completely ignored the English request. The frustration of the English secretary was directed, however, towards Blackwell himself who Nottingham evidently considered responsible for the failure of this diplomatic spite. 'As it is not usuall for any prince to send a letter to be delivered to the Queen but by his own minister', Nottingham wrote to Blackwell, 'you should have been most particularly carefull not to have received any which were not addressed with usuall and just respect due to her Majesty'.[103] The point was, however, that Blackwell would not have been able to notice any mistakes in the superscription because the Tuscan government addressed the Queen in the 'usual' way (that is as William III was always addressed), and until then the English government had never complained about it. Blackwell was not informed of any change of policy regarding superscriptions and therefore found himself in a very uncomfortable position. On one hand he had to relay again to the Tuscan government that the letter had been refused, and on the other he had to excuse himself with the English government which had held him responsible for that failure. Blackwell, however, was not wholly responsible. Unlike Tuscany, England did not maintain a courier to communicate quickly with its ambassador. Instead, the letters were sent by ordinary mail and travelled much more slowly. As we saw in the previous chapter, this had already caused numerous inconveniences and even led to the loss of a letter from William III. Blackwell had recommended two years earlier that mail should be handed over to a safer medium but his appeal had evidently gone

[103] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 11 August 1702.

unheard.[104] This generated significant information asymmetry between England and Tuscany. Indeed, it obliged both the English government and its ambassador to rely on information that was weeks or months old, while Tuscany could always count on recent reports, which was a truly significant advantage. For this reason, Blackwell, by the time he was given the second letter, did not yet know that the first had been refused and had so unwittingly fallen into the trap set by the Tuscan government, which instead was well informed of what had happened in England.

The fact that Tuscany had sent a second letter with the same superscription shows that the Grand Duchy must have well understood what the true English objective was, that is, to establish the pre-eminence of the English crown over that of Tuscany. However, Cosimo III had fought fiercely for years to obtain the 'royal treatment'. The Pope and the Emperor, and recently the King of Spain, had recognized that privilege (1699 and 1702) and certainly the Grand Duke was not willing to give it up easily.[105] It is clear then why the grand ducal government responded to the English provocation by sending a second letter with the same superscription. It was a way to reaffirm its dignity and sovereignty with respect to England. When the English government sent the second letter back, the Tuscan reaction was simply to ignore what had happened, without bothering to send a third letter, therefore refusing to comply with the English government's demands.

Yet, the superscription of the Grand Duke's letter to the Queen was different from that used for William III in one crucial respect. Anne was called 'Regina d'Inghilterra' (Queen of England), but William III had always been called 'Re della Gran Bretagna' (King of Great Britain). The English Secretary of State did not seem to notice, or want to give importance, to this difference. When Nottingham wrote to Blackwell, his

[104] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to James Vernon, 1 September 1699.
[105] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to Shrewsbury, 16 April 1699.

recrimination focused solely on the name of the sovereign, leaving out the title that had been attributed to her. After all, Nottingham was an Englishman and perhaps he thought that there was nothing wrong with defining Anne as 'Queen of England', since that was in fact one of her legitimate titles (but together with Queen of Scotland and Ireland).

But how should one interpret this change of superscription on the Tuscan side? It does not seem credible, in light of the prudence and diplomatic cunning of the Tuscan government, that the difference in the title is attributable to carelessness or to a material error. The explanation could be quite simple. In Italian 'England' and 'Great Britain' are in fact synonymous, and England represents all the British Isles par excellence. Although the two terms can be interchangeably used, the word 'Great Britain' is still more precise than the word 'England' because it indicates with certainty *all* of the British territories. It also remains the fact that the more precise term had always been used for William III, but was suddenly abandoned for Anne. The difference in the title can then be explained in a much more political way. First of all, we must consider that the succession to the English throne was, in the 1700s, far from certain. William III had no children and upon his death the throne would theoretically have gone back to James II, or to his son James Francis Stuart. The idea that a Catholic ruler could again return to the throne of St. James prompted the English parliament to approve the Act of Settlement (1701) which guaranteed the succession to the throne of England and Ireland only to the Protestant heirs of the royal house. The kingdom of Scotland, however, had not been initially included in this provision because the Act of Settlement of 1701 had been approved by the *English* parliament and therefore only concerned the jurisdiction of that parliament, i.e. England, Wales and Ireland.[106] This left a political and juridical vacancy that could be exploited to restore the Stuart line on the Scottish throne. Then, we must consider that the change in

[106] This situation was corrected only with the Act of Union of 1707, which extended the Act of Settlement also to Scotland.

the title used to address Anne came after the death of both King William III and James II. As Daniel Szechi clearly demonstrates in his *Britain's Lost Revolution? Jacobite Scotland and French Grand Strategy, 1701-8* (2016), this was a major game-changer for the Jacobites' ambitions in Scotland, especially since the country was in deep unrest in those years.[107] The factionalism and the interference of Westminster in the affairs of the Scottish parliament,[108] the famines that hit the country from 1695 to 1699,[109] and the deepening economic recession stemmed from the Nine Years' War[110] created a fertile environment for the Jacobites.[111] As a result the Scottish Parliament elected after the accession of Queen Anne did not have a build-in majority in favour of the government.[112] Although the Jacobite party in Parliament was a minority they were now not only supporters of the Stuarts but, more generally, they 'became in practice a thoroughly Country/patriotic party that was intrinsically hostile to contemporary modes of political management and suspicious of the workings of government more generally'.[113] This make them politically much more 'palatable', especially in the context of the severe social conditions stemmed by the famine and economic recession of Scotland, now worsened by the War of the Spanish Succession.

Furthermore, also the confessional aspect changed since the death of James II. King James was tainted by the broken promises of his reign, but his son James III

[107] Daniel Szechi, *Britain's Lost Revolution? Jacobite Scotland and French Grand Strategy, 1701-8* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 116.
[108] P. W. J. Riley, *King William and the Scottish Politicians* (Edinburgh: Donald Publishing, 1979), pp. 50-120; 125-140.
[109] Karen J. Cullen, *Famine in Scotland – the 'Ill Years' of the 1690s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 10-29; Rosalind Matchinson, *A History of Scotland* (London, Routledge, 2002), pp. 224-225.
[110] Rosalind Matchinson, *A History of Scotland* (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 232; Jenny Wormald, *Scotland: a History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 143; Karen J. Cullen, *Famine in Scotland – the 'Ill Years' of the 1690s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 29; 54.
[111] Daniel Szechi, *Britain's Lost Revolution?*, p. 110; '*Scotland 's Ruine': Lockhart of Carnwath's Memoirs of the Union*, ed. by Daniel Szechi, (Aberdeen, Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1995), p. 17.
[112] Daniel Szechi, *Britain's Lost Revolution?*, p. 111.
[113] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

represented a 'fresh start'.[114] The Jacobite presented themselves as 'patriots looking to rescue the nation' and they wanted to do this only 'on condition of prenegotiated securities for Scotland's Protestant religious settlements and guarantees of Scots laws and liberties' and indeed James' mother, Mary of Modena, was indeed willing to grant the most ample guarantees of religious toleration to Scotland.[115] In those years the main goal of the Jacobites, and of the exiled English court in France, was to make James III king of Scotland, because, as Mary of Modena put it 'it would be better to be king of Scotland alone than to remain without a kingdom'.[116]

Therefore, the Tuscan government's decision of changing the style used to address the English sovereign must be read in the context of Scottish politics and its international dimension. Tuscany was openly supporting the Jacobites and this is evidenced by the constant donations Cosimo III made for the maintenance of the former British king in exile in France; donations that suddenly increased precisely in 1701, when they reached the very substantial figure of £40,000.[117] James, however, used only what was essential for the maintenance of his court, and 'what the king can spare is reserved to be sent to Scotland',[118] without doubt to prepare the ground for a possible return to the country.

By gathering the available elements, it can then be assumed that the change in the title used in the superscription of the Grand Duke's letter to Queen Anne was not casual, but rather reflected a precise political position of Tuscany. Only the title of England was recognized to the Queen because it was implicitly claimed that the Scottish title still

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[114] Daniel Szechi, *Britain's Lost Revolution?*, p. 116; Daniel Szechi, 'Negotiating Catholic Kingship for a Protestant People: 'Private' Letters, Royal Declarations and the Achievement of Religious Detente in the Jacobite Underground, 1702–1718', in *Debating the Faith: Religion and Letter Writing in Great Britain 1550-1800* (London: Springer, 2013), pp. 107-122.
[115] Daniel Szechi, *Britain's Lost Revolution?*, pp. 117-118.
[116] Daniel Szechi, *Britain's Lost Revolution?*, p. 111. Original footnote: Correspondence of Colonel N. Hooke , ii. 403: Hooke's 2nd report, [Versailles] 28 June/9 July 1707 ('qu'il vaudroit mieux être Roy d'Ecosse seulement que de rester sans royaume'). See also: Original Papers , i. 676: Middleton to Torcy, [St Germain] 19/30 May 1704.
[117] T.N.A., S.P. 32/12, Col. Hussey to James Vernon, 10 February 1701. To make a comparison, Louis XIV that year had tripled James II's annual income to 150,000 pounds.
[118] T.N.A., S.P. 32/12, Col. Hussey to James Vernon, 10 February 1701.

belonged to James II and his heirs, perhaps also taking advantage of the regulatory vacancy left by the Act of Settlement which was law only in England, Wales and Ireland. The investment of substantial amounts of money by Cosimo III, and the change of the title used with Queen Anne, could show how Tuscany was directly involved in the attempt to restore the Stuart Catholic line on the English throne and would deserve a more in-depth analysis which, however, will not be possible in the context of this work. In any case, this episode must be taken into consideration and used not only as an additional element to explain the growing tension between Tuscany and England, but also to show the impact and role that a 'small state' could have in the European political landscape.

Transversal messages

As we have seen, England was struggling to demonstrate its superiority, and Tuscany to defend its prestige and independence. The diplomatic confrontation between England and Tuscany was now an open dispute, which was fought on the terrain of politics, cunning but also of image. This battle was taking place on the international political stage and in front of the attentive gaze of many other states. Consequently, even events that did not directly involve both sides served to define and reaffirm their positions. This was the case of Philip V's visit to the city of Livorno on 8 and 9 June 1702, which Tuscany transformed into a media event as a means of reaffirming its prestige and its role among European countries.

In the spring of 1702 Blackwell reported in a note that 'the Great Duke's pallace [in Livorno] is fitting up for the King of Spain in case he should put up into this port'.[119] Philip V, nephew of Louis XIV, was returning to France after a year-long sojourn in

[119] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 5 May 1702.

Naples. For Tuscany it would have been a very important diplomatic recognition if the King of Spain would have decided to stop at Livorno on his journey to Marseille, and the Grand Ducal government had spared no effort to achieve this. In fact, important dynastic ties linked the Medici to Philip of Bourbon. Cosimo III was the king's cousin. Violante of Bavaria, the heir prince Ferdinand's wife, was the aunt of the Spanish sovereign as sister of Philip V's mother, while the brother of the Grand Duke, Filippo Maria was cardinal protector of France and Spain. From a dynastic point of view, the arrival of Philip V in Livorno would have allowed not only the strengthening of those ties, but also the consolidation of the royal treatment that the Spanish sovereign had recently granted to the Grand Duke (and that England was trying to question through the Grand Duke's letter controversy).

In the context of the War of Spanish Succession, Philip V's visit to Livorno placed Tuscany at the centre of the highest international scenario. Ambassadors, ministers and foreign aristocrats flocked the city so as not to miss one of the society events of the year.[120] This was an extraordinary marketing opportunity for the Grand Duchy and the event had to be prepared with every care. The sovereign's arrival in Livorno would for one night transform it into one of the capitals of Europe.

At the beginning of May Cosimo III received confirmation that Filippo wished to stop in Livorno. The Grand Duke sent his brother, Cardinal Francesco Maria,[121] to meet the king with three of the Grand-ducal galleys to escort him to the Tuscan port. The Spanish sovereign was accompanied by a fleet of seventeen galleys (plus the three from Tuscany) and arrived in Livorno on the 8 June 1702. As soon as the fleet was near the port, the Old Fortress began 'with the cannon to greet His Catholic Majesty, and

[120] Filippo Bernardi da Firenze, *Storia dei Conventi Cappuccini Toscani dalla Fondazione al 1704*, ed. by Ubaldo Morozzi (Firenze: Florence University Press, 2017), p. 255.
[121] Francesco Maria de' Medici (1660-1711), brother of Cosimo III, he was Cardinal Protector of France, Spain and of the Empire.

subsequently the whole wall surrounding the pier, with its forts, made its greetings with a triple royal gun salute with 393 cannon shots'.[122] As soon as the royal galley anchored

> the Grand Duke, the Grand Prince and the Grand Princess with a large following of Knights and Dames who came from Florence and other cities of Tuscany, went together to compliment His Catholic Majesty. They were all dressed in sumptuous clothes and they were travelling on feluccas gilded to the oars, and covered with gold-fringed crimson damask curtains. Both in ascending and in descending from the Royal galley, His Highness was greeted by all the Spanish royal galleys and from those of Tuscany [...] with 180 cannon shots. Again the fortresses and forts replied with two royal salutes to thank the King of the honour he granted to the Grand Duke'[123].

The celebrations for the arrival of the king, however, were far from over. The king received many gifts from the Grand Duke[124] and as soon as Philip V went to dinner he was greeted again with a double royal salute. Later the governor of Livorno, general Tornaquinci, 'went to pray to His Catholic Majesty to give the name, as it is customary,

[122] This account was written by Filippo Bernardi of Florence, a Capuchin friar, former secretary of the Minister General of the order Bernardino d'Arezzo. Filippo Bernardi was very well placed politically: he had personally known Charles II of Spain, Louis XIV, Leopold I, James II and most of the European monarchs. His presence in Livorno demonstrates the importance of the event and his testimony is considered particularly significant precisely because of his intimate knowledge of the political and diplomatic environment of the time. Filippo Bernardi da Firenze, *Storia dei Conventi Cappuccini Toscani dalla Fondazione al 1704*, ed. by Ubaldo Morozzi (Firenze, Florence University Press, 2017), p. 255.

[123] Filippo Bernardi da Firenze, *Storia dei Conventi Cappuccini Toscani dalla Fondazione al 1704*, pp. 255-256.

[124] It would be too long to list the gifts received by the sovereign. Just to cite a few examples Cosimo III had given Philip V a ring worth 20.000 scudi, the great princess Violante had given the king for his wife a 'bouquet of jewels' worth 10.000 scudi. In addition, the Grand Duke had donated to the fleet food for a value of 25.000 scudi 'and it is to be noted that all the crates, and boxes in which the gifts were, were gilded and silvered, up to the holds that contained the birds, which they had the silvered beak, and also the quadrupeds, [they had] their horns silvered'.

for the guard duties and sentinels of Livorno, [and the King named them] San Filippo and Fiorenza, with the Grand Duke's greatest pleasure'.[125]

On the pier, a hundred 'well-dressed grenadiers placed in beautiful ordinance' were guarding the Royal galley.[126] In the harbour square, in front of the Quattro Mori statue 'a noble battalion of soldiers stood guard in good order', while from the Porta Colonnella, up to the whole Piazza d'Arme 'stood squadrons of soldiers in orderly formation, which with their insignia and with the sound of drums cheered the sight no less than the hearing'.[127] Meanwhile, the city was festively decorated and a large *luminara* had been organized.[128] All the fortresses 'made a great pomp of themselves [...], the Community building was illuminated by 30 torches, and that of the Grand Duke by 80, and there being plenty of such illuminations it seemed that the darkness of the night had suddenly changed into the clarity of the day'.[129] Cosimo III had spared no expense and his palace had been sumptuously adorned, with brocade, gold cloth, Damascus crimson with gold harness, and enriched with superb furnishings, such as rock crystal chandeliers, tables inlaid with precious stones, beds with truly real silver curtains, great mirrors, very excellent paintings of great value, silver cabinets and gold pottery'.[130] Attracted by this spectacle, 'many people and courtiers of the king came down from the royal galleys, among whom there were many grandees of Spain who declared themselves very satisfied, particularly for the view of the Grand Duke's palace decorated with such magnificence'.[131] The evening and the celebrations were proving to be a success: 'it is not credible to those who didn't see it, the prodigious quantity of foreigners of every sex,

[125] Filippo Bernardi da Firenze, *Storia dei Conventi Cappuccini Toscani dalla Fondazione al 1704*, p. 256.
[126] *Ibid.*, p. 256.
[127] *Ibid.*, p. 256.
[128] This word is used to describe a festive event that takes place at night in which torches and candles are lit on windowsills and doorsteps across the city.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[131] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

grade, condition, both from the state and from outside, who arrived in those days in Livorno only to see the Majesty of the King'.[132] The next morning the galley fleet was ready to sail and as soon as the royal galley had raised the leaving signal 'the fortresses began to greet the King with the cannon in eight salutes for a total of 1084 cannon shots'.[133]

The first thing that stands out when analysing this account is precisely the fact that the Spanish sovereign decided to stop in Livorno. Philip V, in fact, could have gone directly to Marseille, without losing two days in the Tuscan port. There were no technical or logistic reasons that forced him to stop in Tuscany, and even if there were, the sovereign could have stopped in one of *his* ports (such as Porto Santo Stefano or Porto Longone[134]) instead of in the port of a foreign state. Thus if the king had decided to stay in Livorno this was the result of a voluntary and politically significant choice. the visit of Philip V is therefore a useful clue not only to assess the importance of the port, where many Spanish merchants also resided, but above all the political prestige of Tuscany.

Philip V's reception in Livorno was organized to make evident the flourishing economy and military preparation of Tuscany. Indeed, the rich adornment of the ships 'glided to the oars', the city's decorations, the splendour with which the Grand Duke's palace was decorated and the precious gifts that were prepared for Philip V demonstrated and underlined the refinement, wealth and opulence of the Grand Duchy. This complex and expensive apparatus showed that the Medici house still possessed those characteristics that had made it so famous, and also that Tuscany was a thriving nation with no economic problems. However, in a politically tense moment such as the War of Spanish Succession, it was important for a neutral country such as Tuscany to show that

[132] *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[133] *Ibid.*, p. 256.
[134] The Spaniards owned in Tuscany the *Presidios*, that is, the area of Monte Argentario, Orbetello, the principality of Piombino and a large part of the Island of Elba.

it also possessed the resources and capabilities to defend itself. The massive military demonstration that had been organized not only contributed to the pomp of the celebrations but made clear that the Grand Duchy was a militarily prepared nation.

In particular, the Tuscan government wanted to emphasize that the most important strategic asset of the state, namely the port of Livorno, was very well defended. The incredible number of cannon shots fired for Philip V had been possible thanks to the large amount of artillery pieces placed on the walls of the fortresses of Livorno,[135] and also that there was a sufficient number of trained men to handle them. In addition, firing thousands of cannon shots, even just to make salutes, consumed an incredible amount of gunpowder and this meant that there was plenty of it available.[136] The number of soldiers deployed was so huge that they not only filled the port square, but stretched from Porta Colonnella to Piazza d'Arme, meaning that there were at least several hundred men lined up in the city.[137] This display and, finally, the fact that Philip V had been invited to name the guard duty of the city underlined the martial aspect and the military efficiency of Livorno.

This impressive array of men, means and resources was not prepared for Philip V alone, but also for all the but also for the benefit of all spectators, particularly 'prodigious quantity of foreigners' who had come to the city, among them dignitaries, ministers and ambassadors of foreign powers come to pay homage to the King of Spain. This crowd of foreigners had also been shown that Spain recognized the prestige due to

[135] As already mentioned, the artillery pieces on the walls were 164, of which those facing the sea were 137.

[136] The chief engineer of Livorno stated that a cannon uses as much gunpowder as 2/3 of the weight of the ball. The medium caliber of the cannons of Livorno was 30 pounds (the caliber was at the time measured by the weight of the ball), thus a normal shot would have required 20 pounds of gunpowder. If we assume that the salutes were made with less gunpowder (15 pounds) and we assume that the total number of shots was 1600, the total consumption of gun powder would have been 24,000 pounds. ASF, M.d.P., f. 2356, Ins. 3, Inventario delle Artiglierie di Livorno.

[137] Via Ferdinanda, today via Grande, which leads from Porta Colonnella to Piazza d'Arme, today Piazza Grande, was about four hundred metres long, while the square itself was more than two hundred metres long.

Tuscany. The 180 cannon shots with which the Spanish fleet greeted the Grand Duke fully recognized his royal treatment, sanctioning the political and diplomatic prestige of the dynasty. This massive marketing operation was, therefore, a transversal message that addressed all European countries. Tuscany, especially in the context of growing tensions with England, wanted to show that it was not only a flourishing state, but above all that it was an independent and sovereign nation, militarily ready to defend itself in case of need.

Diplomacy between broken flasks and traffic jams

The confrontation between the Grand Duchy and England was taking place at all political and diplomatic levels. From the clash that took place at the state level, such as the one concerning the permit to supply the English fleet in Livorno, they were fighting also with diplomatic subtleties as in the case of the superscription of the letters between Cosimo III and Anne. But even the finest and highest diplomacy was made up of men and women and the confrontation between the two states also continued at a much lower, but not less important level. Even seemingly trivial episodes involving some of Blackwell's servants,[138] such as the delivery of a letter, the payment for some broken wine flasks or even a messy traffic jam of coaches could become a diplomatic tool useful for pursuing a specific political purpose.

One day Giovanni Battista Baci, Blackwell's 'home spender', went to the Florence post office to collect a package that had arrived from Livorno for the ambassador.[139] One of the post office employees handed him the bundle, but told him that seven *paoli* had to be paid for delivery. Blackwell's servant objected to the payment and

[138] The 'family' of an ambassador included not only his relatives but all his servants (who formed the staff of the embassy), and they were extended the privileges and above all the respect that was due to the ambassador himself.
[139]The one who took care of keeping expenses for the embassy and who administered the money for the household and therefore a medium-level employee.

the two men started arguing. In the end the mail clerk 'saying a word that in the Italian language has a very bad meaning, which out of respect for the people who will see this writing will not be explained', angrily snatched the package from Baci's hands and disdainfully threw it into a chest, shutting the door in the face of the ambassador's servant.[140] Baci, once back at the Blackwell residence, again encountered the same mail clerk who 'in a room of the said house' declared that if Baci 'would have ever gone to the post again for the ambassador, he would not have given him anything'.[141]

A few days later Baci went to the Grand Duke's cellarman 'to get the usual wine that is given to the home of foreign envoys'.[142] The cellarman demanded Baci to pay for some broken flasks before he delivered the wine. Perhaps the tone of the cellarman was too harsh, but for whatever reason the two men started arguing. Baci claimed to have returned the flasks while the other refuted this. Eventually Blackwell's servant declared that he would be willing to pay for the broken flasks only if the cellarman issued him a receipt. The latter refused and 'with insulting words' told him that he would not ever give him a single drop of wine again.[143]

The third and most striking episode featured Blackwell's coachman and the captain of the Grand Duke's guard. Cosimo III was returning to Palazzo Pitti after spending a period outside the city and the streets of Florence were crowded with coaches. Ambassadors, ministers and nobles were in fact rushing towards the palace to welcome the prince and in no time the narrow streets of the city centre were congested. Meanwhile, a group of soldiers on horseback was coming behind the long line of coaches that were moving slowly. It was the personal guard of Cosimo III, who preceded the Grand Ducal carriage by a few minutes. When the sovereign's carriage was approaching, all the other

[140] T.N.A., SP98/19, affidavit of Giovan Battista Baci to Thomas Kirke, 21 October 1702.
[141] T.N.A., SP98/19, affidavit of Giovan Battista Baci to Thomas Kirke, 21 October 1702.
[142] T.N.A., SP98/19, affidavit of Giovan Battista Baci to Thomas Kirke, 21 October 1702.
[143] T.N.A., SP98/19, affidavit of Giovan Battista Baci to Thomas Kirke, 21 October 1702.

coaches that were in the street were required to pull over on one side and give precedence to the Grand Duke's carriage. It was precisely for this reason that guards always led the carriage of the sovereign, so that whoever was in the street was warned and could stand aside. At that moment, however, thirty or forty carriages crowded the street, all trying to make way and chaos ensued. It is easy to imagine the confusion that reigned at that moment, with the coachmen and the guards of the Grand Duke yelling at each other to move forward or further back or more to the side, to the great enjoyment of passers-by and of the numerous people that were looking out the windows enjoying the show. Cosimo III's carriage was now close and a voice rose louder than the others, it was that of the captain of the Grand Duke's guard, belonging to the noble Ricasoli family. The captain was addressing Blackwell's coachman with a thunderous voice, saying 'abruptly' and with 'gestures that showed displeasure' to move forward because the ambassador's carriage hindered the road.[144] The scene had been blatant and 'had been noticed by many who accompanied the Grand Duke'.[145]

These three episodes may seem trivial quarrels between low-ranking employees, but they conceal much more than what appears on the surface. The first interesting thing to notice is precisely that a trace of these 'trivial' episodes survived. Blackwell had evidently felt the need to have three affidavits drawn up (one for each episode) that illustrated in detail what happened and in fact these documents are the only ones, in the ambassador's correspondence, that directly concern events that occurred to his servants. It is very likely that if the ambassador wanted to record the incidents, these had been considered extraordinary compared to the normal routine, and to the small misunderstandings that can occur in everyday life. How was it that suddenly the servants of the English ambassador had become the target of some Tuscan officials' hostility?

[144] T.N.A., SP98/19, Affidavit of Jean Majou, 21 October 1702.
[145] T.N.A., SP98/19, Affidavit of Jean Majou, 21 October 1702.

Blackwell was in the uncomfortable position of being the ambassador of a nation that was becoming increasingly hostile towards Tuscany. The defamatory pamphlet published by Plowman had been sensational and the fact that the Tuscan government had not initially recognized its existence did not mean that it was not known, especially in the Florentine court. When Blackwell mentioned the publication to Secretary Montemagni the latter clearly made him understand the 'displeasure' that the Grand Duke had had in learning about the existence of the book.[146] The 'displeasure' of the prince was the most feared thing in a court: it could in a flash change the lucky fortunes of a man to the lowest and most abject misery. Blackwell, as ambassador of England, was immune from the immediate effects of Cosimo III's resentment, but he also lived in the microcosm of the court and he was subject to the same laws of gravity as the other courtiers who orbited the Grand Duke. Publicly the Tuscan government, for diplomatic convenience, had not shown the slightest resentment towards the English envoy (indeed Cosimo III had overwhelmed him with honours), but as soon as the news had spread that the prince had much resented the actions of the ambassador, the court had immediately become hostile towards him. A first indicator of this hostility can be seen from the dramatic drop in the invitations that the English envoy received from Tuscan nobility, who kept avoiding him until he was left completely isolated.[147] However, there were no striking episodes that directly affected Blackwell. As ambassador of England everyone had to show him every respect possible. Then, what had happened to his servants could be read as a more practical demonstration of the court's hostile attitude towards Blackwell. It must be considered that the post office clerk, the cellarman and the captain of the guard were all employees of the Grand Duke and that their actions can be interpreted as part of the

[146] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 July 1702. '[the Tuscan Secretary] used soe severe expressions, which he told me were the Grand Duke's resentments'.
[147] T.N.A., SP98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

reaction of the court in defence of its lord. Since no one could afford to be directly disrespectful towards Blackwell, his servants became a natural focus of hostility and they were targeted to make the ambassador's life less enjoyable.

However, these episodes may also have a deeper and more subtle explanation. It could even be assumed that they had been artfully designed to provoke a precise reaction in the ambassador and then use it for the benefit of the Tuscan cause. It is interesting to note that the protagonist of the first episode, that is the post office clerk, had been a waiter of Secretary of State Montemagni for many years and had left his service only a few months before 'being preferred by him to that employment at the post office'.[148] It may indeed seem a little suspicious that a person who had been in the service of the Secretary of State for years, and who therefore had to be familiar with the diplomatic environment, had inadvertently mistreated one of the servants of the English ambassador. It seems even stranger that the aristocratic captain of the Grand Duke's guard, that for his role and ancestry certainly knew how to deal with a foreign minister, had been disrespectful to Blackwell. Even according to the ambassador, Ricasoli's attitude had been fully voluntary: 'I have reason to conclude', Blackwell wrote to Nottingham, 'that Mr. Ricasoli designed my coachman should have putt me in the commitment of doing a disrespectfull action to his Highness'.[149] Whether these episodes were voluntary or not, Blackwell complained to Secretary Montemagni who promised to harshly reprimand his former subordinate and to give a warning to the cellarman too. As for the captain of the guard, the Secretary of State told Blackwell on behalf of Ricasoli (who had disdainfully refused to receive Blackwell's secretary to give explanations) that the captain had spoken that

[148] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 October 1702.
[149] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 October 1702.

way not out of disrespect but because that was 'his usuall rust way of treating all persons'.[150]

Blackwell, however, did not bring these incidents to the attention of Secretary Nottingham. His reports to the Secretary of State had indeed made no mention of what had happened. Instead, it was the Tuscan ambassador Giraldi, informed by Montemagni himself, who fully acquainted Nottingham of the unpleasant events. Of course, Giraldi presented the matter with great humility, trying to make Nottingham understand that none of these episodes, none of these negligible quarrels between servants, could have been conceived as a deliberate affront to Blackwell. In an artistically paradoxical way, the Tuscan government sought the mediation of the English Secretary to make Blackwell understand that he should not take what had happened so seriously. One can well imagine Nottingham's embarrassment when he discovered that his ambassador, instead of forcefully pursuing the Plowman case, or hastily obtaining permission to supply the fleet in Livorno, was wasting his time complaining of mundane and meaningless incidents. 'Mr. Giraldi', wrote furiously Nottingham to Blackwell, 'tells me you have made some complaints, but in matters so little and triviall that without his assertion I could not have believed them, and I do yet wish that there may be some mistake, because they are very unsuitable to your Character'.[151]

The ambassador was then in the difficult position of justifying himself on details which, compared with the much more serious controversies between England and Tuscany, must in fact have seemed rather insignificant. Candidly the envoy admitted that he had dealt discreetly with those incidents with the Secretary of State 'who seemed obliged that I desired it might not come to the Great Duke's ear'.[152] Clearly the

[150] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 October 1702.
[151] T.N.A., SP104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 3 September 1702.
[152] T.N.A., SP98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 22 October 1702.

ambassador's discretion had been misplaced. Blackwell had been played and whatever excellent justification he might have furnished to Nottingham the damage to his reputation was done.

It is not possible to establish with absolute certainty whether the incidents in which Blackwell's servants were involved had been mere casualties or if they had been artfully designed, but the available clues point in this direction. What is certain is that, in the increasingly harsh political struggle between Tuscany and England, the Grand-ducal government had cleverly taken advantage of the poor relationship of trust between the English government and its representatives to insinuate doubts about the quality of the ambassador's work. Undermining Blackwell's credibility meant diminishing England's diplomatic effectiveness and thus obtaining an advantage in the struggle with England.

Conclusions

Historiography has almost completely neglected the topic of Tuscan neutrality. The studies concerning neutrality in the modern era have focused on maritime neutrality and neutral trade from the eighteenth century onwards. Terrestrial neutrality, on the other hand, was perceived as a phenomenon relating to the last two centuries. This chapter demonstrates that Tuscany was the first European country to apply a long-term neutrality policy, that is, to make neutrality the fundamental objective of its foreign policy. Although in the seventeenth century terrestrial neutrality was in fact considered impossible, the Grand Duchy possessed a series of geographical, dynastic and economic characteristics that allowed it to remain neutral with respect to the major European powers. The greatest asset of Tuscany was undoubtedly the port of Livorno. The impressive literature on the Tuscan port, and also the most recent contributions on the subject, have attributed the great success of Livorno to the fact that this was a free port.

In fact, this chapter shows that the real reason for Livorno's success was that it was a neutral port, positioned in a state that offered the political framework for it to remain neutral. In a continent perpetually devastated by war, Livorno had thus become the paradise of commerce, a truly free port where merchants from warring nations could meet to trade despite the ongoing conflict. For the great European powers, the economic benefits that derived from having access to the Tuscan port were so great that no one had an interest in involving Tuscany in a conflict. The Tuscan government used this strategic advantage to progressively strengthen its neutrality, imposing first in 1691, then again in 1702, on the European powers the stipulation of an international treaty that guaranteed the neutrality of Livorno and, by extension, of Tuscany. Thus, following the categories of Habbenuis, Tuscany became not only a 'long-term voluntary neutral', but a 'permanent' neutral.

Tuscan neutrality was endangered by the Plowman case. England was in fact using the controversy as an instrument of pressure against the Grand Duchy, and between the two states a complex political and diplomatic confrontation had begun. However, England's need of the port of Livorno greatly limited both its capacity for action and its capacity for retaliation. The confrontation thus remained exclusively diplomatic and Tuscany, making use of all its political acumen, and taking advantage of the English institutional weakness, was effectively managing to defend its neutrality and independence from English ambitions.

The policy of Tuscan neutrality was also celebrated through artistic production. This medal depicts on the obverse the bust of the Grand Duke, while the reverse shows an allegory of neutrality. The personification of Tuscany, seated in front of the temple of peace, holds a perfectly vertical archipendulum. Cosimo III indicating the instrument and the motto *sic stabis* clarifies that Tuscan neutrality is a voluntary and determined political choice. Medal of Cosimo III, O.N.B., Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung, n. 57558/02.

Chapter IV: The System of Tuscan Neutrality

From 1696, the year in which the Plowman case began, the level of conflict between England and Tuscany had steadily increased. Over the years, the controversy evolved from a mild commercial confrontation into a diplomatic dispute, to then become a clash of sovereignty. Between 1703 and 1704 the conflict had spread to every sector, from politics, to diplomacy, to trade, until the two states were on the verge of war.

While the previous chapter analysed the political and economic infrastructure that allowed Tuscany to be the first state in Europe to apply a long-term neutrality policy, this chapter will instead show what the practical strategies adopted by the Grand Duchy were to be able to uphold its neutrality. Using the contemporary game theory models as an interpretative tool for the Plowman case the chapter will show how Tuscany's best intelligence capability had allowed it to gain a fundamental strategic advantage over England.[1] The Grand Duchy, in fact, having access to confidential information of the English government, was not only capable of predicting its moves, but also adopting more effective strategies that allowed it to maintain its neutrality.

At that time England was experiencing political turmoil. The two dominant parties, Whig and Tory, were competing fiercely to gain control of the government and political divisions became so bitter that they involved every aspect of public life.[2] This chapter will additionally identify what motivated the English government to declare the

[1] On Game Theory and Chicken Game theory see: *Game Theory and Experimental Games, The Study of Strategic Interaction*, Andrew M. Colman (ed. by) (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), pp. 47-73; Gary Bornstein, David Budescu and Shmuel Zamir, 'Cooperation in Intergroup, N-Person, and Two-Person Games of Chicken', in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41:3 (1997), pp. 384-406; Ken Binmore, 'Game Theory: A Survey', in *Economic Organizations as Games*, ed. by K. G. Binmore and Partha Dasgupta (Oxford, 1986); Richard K. Hermann, 'Perceptions and Image Theory in International Relations', in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed. by L. Huddy (Oxford, 2013).

[2] Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power, Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p. 334. On this topic see also the '*The economic and political situation in England after the Glorious Revolution*' in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Plowman case a 'public and national matter'.[3] It will show how the dispute with Tuscany was used by the parties as a tool to gather consensus among the population for short-term political objectives. It will demonstrate how the political divisions within the English government made the administration inefficient, and how these divisions were exploited by Tuscany to its own advantage to obtain information and seek allies to support its neutrality.

The Articles of Neutrality

As we have seen in the previous chapter the English strategic weakness in the Mediterranean had allowed Tuscany to impose on England the signing of the Articles of Neutrality. At the height of the War of Spanish Succession, the Grand Duchy was therefore protected by an international treaty that guarded the neutrality of its port and, by extension, of all its territory. But how significant was the result achieved by the grand ducal diplomacy? At the end of the seventeenth century the concept of neutrality had not yet found a clear semantic and legal definition. From a practical point of view, maritime neutrality was hardly tolerated, while territorial neutrality was considered impossible.[4] Scholars of this topic also agree in stating that a small state could hope to preserve its neutrality only if this was *convenient* for all the other powers involved in the conflict.[5] The analysis of this treaty and of the forms in which it was stipulated will highlight the practical mechanisms by which Tuscany could maintain its neutrality.

[3] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Cosimo III, 24 July 1702.

[4] As we have seen in the case of Brandenburg and Lorrain: Axel Gotthard, Zwischen Lutherum und Calvinismus (1598-1640), *Preussen Herrscher: von den ersten Hohenzollern bis Wilhelm II*, ed. by. Frank-Lothar Kroll (Munchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2006); Phil McCluskey, 'Louis XIV, Duke Leopold I and the Neutrality of Lorraine, 1702-1714', *European History Quarterly*,45:1 (2015), pp. 545-570.

[5] Leos Müller, *Neutrality in World History* (New York and London, Routledge, 2019); Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals, Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1988); Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and small powers*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

The Articles of Neutrality represented a unique case in the juridical-diplomatic context of the time. They were the first example of an international treaty signed by the major powers that recognized and protected the neutrality of a small state. This consideration allows us not only to identify Tuscany as a 'long-term voluntary neutral', but even as a 'permanent neutral'.[6] In fact, 'permanent neutral' states have the fundamental characteristic that their neutrality is recognized and guaranteed through an international agreement between the major powers. But this type of agreement presupposes that there is a common legal and customary substrate in which some concepts, such as those of 'international law' or 'neutrality', are clearly defined and, above all, unanimously accepted. In fact, the first examples of 'permanent neutrals' (such as Switzerland or the Dutch Republic) are usually traced back by scholars to the beginning of the eighteenth century, but they were formally recognised as so only at the end of the century, with the first peace conferences.[7] Instead, between the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century the concept of neutrality had just emerged from its embryonic state, which makes the case of Tuscany the first example of neutrality conceived in the contemporary sense of the term, and therefore a unique and extraordinary example in the European legal and diplomatic landscape.

What is even more exceptional is the fact that nations which were in constant competition, and that were involved in a great European conflict, such as England, France, Spain and the Dutch Republic, were willing to sign a common treaty to protect the neutrality of Livorno. This clearly demonstrates that the strategic and commercial

[6] As seen in the previous chapter, the descriptive categories described in Maartje Abenhuis's essay have been adopted in this work: Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals, Great Power Politics, 1815-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[7] Neutrality in the modern sense of the term found its formal definition only with the Hague Peace Conference of 1907. As regards Switzerland, the first declaration of neutrality made by the Diet dates back to 1674, but its formalization was recognized only with the Congress of Vienna in 1815. On this topic see: Maartie Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral, The Netherlands in the First World War* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 23; Rubin Alfred P., 'The concept of neutrality in international law', *Denver of International Law and Policy*, 16:2 (1988), pp. 353-375.

interests that focused on the Tuscan port were so great that its neutrality was considered *convenient* for everyone.

It was certainly convenient for the European nations to have access to Livorno's vast commercial network, especially since, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Tuscan port was a neutral free port in which they could continue to trade with each other regardless of the ongoing war. It was consequently convenient for these states that their numerous national communities residing in Livorno, and their estates, were well protected and safeguarded by the grand ducal authorities. Above all, it was convenient for everyone that none of the other powers could obtain privileged access to the Tuscan port and to its trade. It was, therefore, this extraordinary convergence of interests that gave Tuscany such a powerful contractual lever as to propose and obtain the signature of a treaty such as the Articles of Neutrality.

The greatest strength of the treaty was the fact that it was not conceived as a simple bilateral agreement between Tuscany and each of the four major warring powers, but that it was simultaneously signed by each of them.[8] The joint signature of the treaty served as a mutual guarantee and deterrent for all countries involved in the treaty. In fact, if the Articles had been signed in the form of bilateral agreements between the Grand Duchy and each of the warring powers, it would have been relatively easy for any of the signatories to break the treaty. To do so it would have been enough just to find a legitimate pretext (for example a supposed violation of neutrality by Tuscany) to declare the treaty null and void and therefore to be free to act against the Grand Duchy. Instead a multilateral treaty like the Articles could not be broken easily because doing so would mean breaking an agreement that had been agreed with the other powers. In short, the fact

[8] The treaty was in fact simultaneously signed by the consuls of England, France, Holland and Spain in the name of their sovereigns. T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 10 December 1702.

that the treaty was simultaneously stipulated by the four great powers meant that the signatory states became, even if not explicitly, the reciprocal guarantors of Tuscan neutrality. Each of these states in protecting their own interests, guaranteed that none of the others would violate the neutrality of Livorno: whoever would do so would in fact be exposed to the legitimate reprisals of the other powers.

Another strength of the treaty was that it was signed by nations in constant competition with each other, and usually lined up in opposing alliances. Consequently, if one of the two opposing sides wanted to break with Tuscany, the other would have certainly opposed it. Furthermore, in the hope of obtaining a commercial advantage, it would have offered protection to the Grand Duchy. As we will see, this is exactly the situation that emerges in this case study. When England expressed its intention to wage war on Tuscany, France immediately offered the latter guarantees and promises of help.

However, even the fact that some nations were in the same alliance did not mean that they were not in competition with each other anyway. For example, during the War of Spanish Succession, the Dutch Republic and England were allies, but nevertheless they remained commercial competitors.[9] Indeed it will be seen later in the chapter that, as England showed increasingly aggressive intentions towards Tuscany, the Dutch not only tried to thwart English plans, but explicitly stated that any action England wished to take would not involve the whole alliance. This meant that in the event of a conflict between England and Tuscany, the Dutch would continue to trade in Livorno, effectively acquiring the English market share as well. It was a threat of no small importance: England would in fact risk losing one of its major trading centres to the Dutch. But this possibility brought another and more serious consideration with it. Indeed, if Dutch interests in the Tuscan

[9] Andrew van Horn Ruoss, *Competitive Collaboration: The Dutch and English East India Companies and The Forging of Global Corporate Political Economy (1650-1700)*, Ph.D. Thesis (Duke University, 2017); *The Dutch and English East India Companies, Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia*, ed. bu Adam Culow and Tristan Mostert (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018); Alison Games, 'Anglo-Dutch Connections and Overseas Enterprises', *Early American Studies*, 9:2 (2011): 435-461.

port increased, the Netherlands would certainly not have tolerated England endangering them. Therefore, a unilateral English action against Tuscany risked turning into a total fiasco, not only from an economic point of view, but also from a military one. Indeed, the Netherlands would probably never have allowed its large national community residing in Livorno, and especially its enormous commercial interests, to be jeopardized by English actions. The Articles of Neutrality, precisely because they were based on the convenience of all the signatories, therefore constituted a safety net for the Grand Duchy which, if carefully managed, could prove truly formidable.

It was no coincidence, then, that England was the last of the powers to sign the Articles of Neutrality and that it did so only after Tuscan threats not to supply the English fleet in Livorno. England, in fact, was now bound by the legal, diplomatic and commercial constraints imposed by the treaty. Therefore, to overcome this stalemate, the English had no choice but to attack Tuscan neutrality head-on: the goal was to convincingly demonstrate that the Grand Duchy had first violated the treaty. In this way, the English government would have had a sufficiently strong motivation to justify its exit from the Articles of Neutrality and finally be able to use force to win the Plowman case. On the contrary, the Grand Duchy had the primary purpose of defending the treaty which was the only instrument that would effectively allow it to defend its neutrality and independence. The defence of neutrality was the battleground of the third and most acute phase of the dispute, in which the two countries were on the brink of war.

Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur[10]

At the beginning of 1703 England, determined to win the Plowman case, had initiated a mighty diplomatic offensive against Tuscan neutrality. London had first tried to force Cosimo III to personally become guarantor of the neutrality, that is, to assume himself the damages eventually suffered by the English following a violation of neutrality.[11] Then the English government strongly protested about some incidents that had occurred in Livorno in relation to the arrival and departure of some French warships and merchant ships, arguing that the Tuscan government had shown open partiality towards them.[12] Finally, the London government had filed numerous complaints concerning the English sailors present in the port, regarding their treatment and their right to embark at will on any British ship.[13]

The importance of these episodes is not so much their concrete nature, but rather the languages, the ways and the strategies which England and Tuscany employed to win this last and tougher battle. In fact, as the Tuscan ambassador in London Giraldi later wrote, 'reason [...] is not what takes place in this cause'[14] and, indeed, the conflict had transcended to such a level that it could be defined as 'ideological'. On the one hand, England had then used too much political and diplomatic capital in this affair to withdraw without losing face and without giving the impression of having been 'defeated' by the Grand Duchy. On the other hand, Tuscany was fighting a struggle for survival and had

[10] This aphorism of Thomas Aquinas literally means 'what is received is received according to the nature of the recipient' and derives from the consideration that the understanding of what is communicated depends mainly on the willingness to understand of whoever receives the message.
[11] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 27 November 1702.
[12] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 12 November 1702; T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 2 March 1703; T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 9 March 1703.
[13] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 13 April 1703; T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 15 June 1703.
[14] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1704.

no choice but to firmly resist. Yielding to English requests would in fact seriously compromise its sovereignty and independence.

The game that was played between England and Tuscany was therefore fought on the ground of neutrality. Britain acted to make a breach in that of Tuscany, while the Grand Duchy fought to be able to maintain it. As we saw in the previous chapter, neutrality was by no means an 'easy' or obvious choice for a small state. A neutral state had far fewer foreign policy choices available than a 'normal' state. Indeed, if a small state was threatened by a great power, it could openly seek alliances with other countries willing to protect it. But a state that wanted to preserve its neutrality could not make such a choice because this would have meant, in fact, abandoning its neutrality. Thus Tuscany, to defend itself from the English attack, could not openly seek alliance with France, or with other European countries, because this would have provided England with the pretext for breaking the Articles of Neutrality and free it to attack the Grand Duchy. This section will show how the Tuscan government had to act less explicitly, through a series of diplomatic actions and signals which, while not compromising its neutrality, could create the conditions for effectively defending its sovereignty.

On 14 January 1703 Blackwell wrote to London that 'Cardinall de Medici, as protector of France for what relates the Church, hath putt up the King of France's Picture on the right hand of the King of Spayne's under his Baldachino, and taken down the Emperour's'.[15] The episode might seem a trivial issue, but such an act was a diplomatic signal. Francesco Maria of Medici was in fact not only cardinal protector of France, but also cardinal protector of Spain. When Charles II had died, most of the independent Italian principalities, and in particular the Papal States and the Grand Duchy, had recognized Philip V as the legitimate king of Spain and maintained their position even after the

[15] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 14 January 1703.

outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession. However, the fact that the Cardinal publicly held under his baldachin the portrait of Philip V alongside that of the Emperor, despite the two being at war, meant that he wanted to show his impartiality towards both the coalitions. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Cardinal Francesco Maria, brother of Cosimo III, was a senior figure in the Roman curia and had also made important diplomatic missions on behalf of the Grand Duke.[16] He was an expert in politics and diplomacy and he must certainly have known that an action such as removing the Emperor's picture to put up Louis XIV's one certainly could not go unnoticed. But why had the cardinal made such a public demonstration in favour of France?

Tuscany, as a neutral state, could not show open sympathies towards any of the warring countries, nor could Cosimo III make explicit declarations that he was getting closer to France. However, different means could be used to communicate to Europe that the position of the Grand Duchy was changing. Indeed, Leopoldo's action was not casual or personal, but rather a voluntary action designed to send a political and diplomatic message in the name of Tuscany. The Grand Duchy, goaded by the English threats, abandoned its perfect equidistance between the two warring coalitions and was starting to move closer to France. The message that Cardinal Medici had sent was clear: if England (and by extension the imperial coalition) persisted in attacking Tuscany, the latter would not have any choice but to place itself under the protection of France.

This episode also reveals the importance of the confessional element in diplomatic relations of the early eighteenth century. The Catholic faith not only constituted a common basis from an ethical, customary and linguistic point of view, but could also be a useful and tangible exchange currency.[17] In fact, a couple of months later

[16] As seen in the previous chapter, Francesco Maria was sent by Cosimo III as Ambassador Extraordinary to the King of Spain to convince him to stop in Livorno during his voyage to France.
[17] On this topic: *Confessional Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by R. Anderson and C. Backerra (New York: Routledge, 2021); *Conversion and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Germany*, ed. by D. M. Luebke, D. C. Ryan, D. W. Sabean (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

Blackwell wrote that 'I have news from Paris that Cardinall de Medici [...] has an abbatie [abbey] given him by the King of France of 20,000 pezze per annum'.[18] This was obviously a lavish reward that Louis XIV gave to Cardinal Medici for his public display of affection, but it was also a response to the diplomatic message sent by Tuscany: if the Grand Duchy wished to abandon its neutrality, France would generously welcome and protect it.

The English government understood that signal very well and did not like it at all. Nottingham in fact immediately wrote to Blackwell telling him that 'her Majesty would not have you make any visit to the Cardinal de Medici' and had then ordered the ambassador to increase the pressure against the Tuscan government.[19] The English government had spent too much energy to retreat in front of such a message, therefore the diplomatic battle continued.

At the end of 1702, Francesco Terriesi, Superintendent of the Customs of Livorno, had proposed on behalf of the Grand Ducal government to the consuls of France, Spain, England and the Dutch Republic, a prohibition on privateers and their prizes entering the Tuscan ports. Terriesi argued that this provision was of 'common benefit' not only considering the damage that the privateers caused to the trade, but above all considering the numerous 'complaints that for reasons of privateers are received each day by the parties [i.e. the four major powers], concerning infringement of neutrality'.[20] The proposal was immediately accepted by France and Spain, for which it was clearly convenient. These two nations, in fact, possessed numerous ports in the Mediterranean where their privateers could travel comfortably, and the impact of such a decision would only have benefited them, effectively freeing the Tuscan sea from the privateers of

[18] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 30 March 1703.
[19] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 14 March 1703.
[20] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Terriesi to Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 12 Dicembre 1702.

England and the Dutch Republic. These last two nations, which did not have any ports in the Mediterranean, would have faced problems in supplying their vessels.[21] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Livorno was in fact the only Mediterranean port they could go to and, therefore, for the Netherlands and England the acceptance of such a proposal would have represented enormous economic damage. Blackwell, as soon as he received Terriesi's letter, had in fact immediately written to London that 'it would be great weakness in the English, and Dutch to deprive themselves voluntairly of the onely ports they can depend upon in the Mediterranean'.[22]

But why did the Tuscan government conceive a proposal that had no hope of being accepted? By examining the different reactions of England and the Dutch Republic, it will be seen that the real goal of the Grand Ducal government was not to close Livorno to privateers, but rather to clarify a fundamental point, namely that Tuscany had the faculty and strength to close their ports to whomever she wanted.

The Tuscan government proposal was also sent to the Tuscan envoy Iacopo Giraldi, and he officially forwarded it to the Earl of Nottingham, who reacted furiously. The English Secretary 'with an air of indignation' defined the proposal as 'unjust and unreasonable', and concluded that 'such a proposition would never be allowed'.[23] Nottingham spoke in a tone and used words 'so spicy' that the Tuscan ambassador, who almost lost his temper by preventing the heat from 'giving the expense to [his] brain',

[21] On the importance of privateering for England and the Dutch Republic see: Virginia Lunsford, *Piracy and Privateering in the Golden Age of the Netherlands* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); David J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the 18th century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001); *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by D. J. Starkey, E. S. van Eyck, J. A. de Moor (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997); Gijs Rommelse, 'Privateering as a Language of International Politics: English and French Privateering against the Dutch Republic, 1655-1665', *Journal of Maritime Research*, vol. 17:2 (2016), pp. 183-194; Goncal L. Nadal, 'Corsairing as a Commercial System: the Edges of Legitimate Trade', in *Bandits at Sea: a Pirates Reader*, ed. by C.R. Pennell (New York: New York University Press, 2001), pp. 125-136; William R. Meyer, 'English Privateering in the War of the Spanish Succession, 1702-1713', *Mariner's Mirror*, 69:4 (1983), pp. 435-446.

[22] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 23 December 1703.

[23] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1703.

barely managed to control himself.[24] Giraldi replied that he was 'extremely surprised to see a proposition made by a prince of the quality of the Grand Duke with no other view than to prevent disturbances and be able to continue in a quiet correspondence with this crown, treated in this way'.[25] The ambassador then added that if the proposal was considered too prejudicial to the interests of England 'which has almost no refuge in other ports than in those of the Most Serene Master' it was necessary, precisely for that reason, 'to respect them more and not give the opportunity to complaints and disturbances'.[26] From this passage it is clear that the real reason why the proposal was made was not to have it accepted, but to provide a hint to the English government. Giraldi explicitly referring to the 'complaints and disturbances' communicated that Tuscany was neither willing to bow to English threats nor to tolerate being continually harassed by their complaints. The message was crystal clear: since the Tuscan ports were so important, they should have been 'more respected', otherwise they would be closed. The threat was by no means an empty one and the recent understanding between France and Tuscany after the episode of Cardinal Medici made it even more credible.

Comparison with the Dutch reaction to the proposal underlines the message Tuscany sought to convey to Britain. The Dutch ambassadors in London, meeting with the Tuscan one, kindly replied that 'the proposition was considered disadvantageous but that nothing less would pass to the reflection of the States General'.[27] The beginning of the bargaining shows already a significant difference compared to the English reaction. Nottingham had not only scornfully defined the Tuscan proposal as unjust and unacceptable but had explicitly stated that it would have never been accepted. In other words, Nottingham had told Giraldi that the proposal was so inadmissible that the English

[24] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1703.
[25] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1703.
[26] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1703.
[27] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 9 Marzo 1703.

government would have refused even to consider it. But the request of a sovereign prince, duly submitted with all the formalities, had to be taken into consideration regardless of its content, otherwise the dignity of the sender would be infringed. The reaction of the Secretary of State had, therefore, been a real diplomatic affront and it was this that had almost made Ambassador Giraldi lose his temper.[28]

The more diplomatic Dutch reaction showed instead that the Grand Duke's proposal, although it was considered disadvantageous, would still have been considered with dignity, and voted upon by the States General. To this Giraldi replied that 'the Most Serene Master did not intend to do anything that would be prejudicial to their Republic, whose friendship and correspondence was too esteemed by His Royal Highness, but wanted above all to make known how convenient [for the Dutch Republic] the ports of His Highness were'.[29] The Dutch shipowners, the Tuscan ambassador added, 'would have made a bad profit from the good encounters they had in the Mediterranean without the asylum in Livorno and the protection and justice they had found there'.[30] Giraldi had finally concluded that he firmly believed that not only the Dutch Republic '[should] keep this capital, but [should] also show gratitude for it'.[31]

The message that the Tuscan ambassador transmitted to the Dutch was exactly the same which he had forwarded to Nottingham: if the Netherlands wished to continue to have access to the Tuscan port, the neutrality of Livorno would have to be scrupulously respected and the Tuscan government relieved of any harassment. Once again the reaction of the Dutch diplomats differs from that of the English Secretary of State. In fact, not only had they listened kindly to what Giraldi had to say but also assured him 'of the perfect will that was in them and that [was] no different in their compatriots' to respect the

[28] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 23 December 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1703.
[29] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 Marzo 1703.
[30] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 Marzo 1703.
[31] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 Marzo 1703.

neutrality of Tuscany.[32] Furthermore, they also added that they would immediately send orders to their consul to enforce neutrality as established by the Articles and to 'confer with the ministers of His Royal Highness to prevent disorders'.[33]

What appears clear from the analysis of this episode is that, in diplomacy, but in reality in any situation in which two subjects are communicating, the ability to understand depends not only upon the clarity of the message, but on the willingness to understand it. Both nations had perfectly understood the true meaning of the Tuscan proposal but had had two completely different reactions. England, in the hope of inducing the Grand Duchy to take some action that could breach its neutrality, tried to turn the proposal into an affront, directly insulting the dignity of the Tuscan government. The Netherlands, on the other hand, accepted the essence of the message in its deepest meanings. In fact, as mentioned earlier, if one of the signatory states of the Articles of Neutrality intended to declare war on the Grand Duchy, it would have to face not only the nations with which it was already at war, but also its own allies. This was precisely the case of the Dutch Republic and England.

When the Dutch ambassadors heard the Tuscan proposal, they perceived a potential in that situation. They were certainly aware of the growing tension that was mounting between the Grand Duchy and Britain, and the fact that Tuscany hinted that she would close the port of Livorno told them that they were close to breaking point. But it was certainly not convenient for the Dutch to go along with the English initiative. If England had in fact managed to prevail over Tuscany, it would probably have obtained privileged access to the port of Livorno, and this would have undoubtedly damaged the Dutch commercial interests. Although formal allies, England and the Dutch Republic

[32] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 Marzo 1703.
[33] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 Marzo 1703.

were nevertheless fierce commercial competitors.[34] Exactly fifty years earlier, in 1653, they had fought a battle to determine who had supremacy in the Mediterranean and it was no coincidence that the clash took place right in front of Livorno. the Dutch Republic, therefore, had every interest in making Tuscany understand that its position was very different from that of England. The Dutch ambassadors in fact immediately hastened to clarify their 'perfect will' to prevent future disturbances to the neutrality of the port and sent the Grand Duke a grateful letter thanking him for the favours and protection granted to the Dutch community. In reality, the most convenient scenario for the Netherlands would have been for England to break unilaterally with Tuscany, so that they could appropriate their market share. This situation was also very clear to the Tuscan government, which for its part had forwarded this proposal precisely with the aim of putting the two allies in competition. As Giraldi wrote a few months later, 'the Dutch will never be in favour of the British complaint against His Royal Highness being very good bursars of their own traffic'[35] and indeed 'they will enjoy seeing the British relations with Livorno altered, leaving all the profits to them'.[36]

Thus Tuscany, which could not openly seek allies against England without breaking its neutrality, sent a series of diplomatic signals that had been perfectly understood by both France and the Dutch Republic. The economic interests that revolved around Livorno were used by the Grand Ducal government as an effective shield against

[34] Gijs Rommelse, 'The role of mercantilism in Anglo-Dutch political relations, 1650–74', *Economic History Review*, 63:3 (2010), pp. 591-612; David Omrod, *The Rise of Commercial Empires. England and the Netherlands in the Age of Mercantilism 1650-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Ralph Davies, *English Merchang Shipping and Anglo-Dutch Rivalry in the Seventeenth Century* (London: H.M.S.O., 1975); Douglas A. Irwin, 'Mercantilism as Strategic Trade Policy: the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry for the East India Trade', *The Journal of Political Economy*, 99:6 (1991), pp. 1296-1314; Jonathan Israel, 'Competing Cousins: Anglo-Dutch Rivalry', *History Today*, 38:7 (1988), pp. 15-22; Alexander Hamilton, Alexander H de Groot and Mauris van der Boogert, eds., *Friends and Rivals in the East: Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Levant from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[35] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 22 February 1704.

[36] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 14 December 1703.

the pressures and threats of England, which now found itself facing not only its archenemy, but also its own allies. In fact, we will see later in the chapter how it was the Dutch who constituted one of the greatest obstacles to the English ambitions over Tuscany.

A Game of Chicken or Intelligence(s) Compared

The confrontation between England and Tuscany was becoming increasingly intense and the two countries seemed inevitably on a collision course. For both, in fact, the struggle could not be more vital. The Grand Duchy was defending its sovereignty, neutrality and independence, and yielding to the English would have meant recognizing its subordinate position in the European political context. England was instead trying to gain a prominent place among the great powers. The English kingdom had overcome the crisis of the Glorious Revolution, had won the Nine Years' War, and its colonies were constantly expanding. England was building the conditions for the rhetoric of power and exceptionality that would be the basis for the foundation of its empire. It would therefore have been inconceivable for the English government, which had declared the Plowman case a 'public and national' affair,[37] to withdraw in front of a small state like Tuscany. Any other outcome that was not an absolute victory would have appeared, in the eyes of public opinion at home and in the international community, as a defeat. In the seven years that had passed since the beginning of the controversy (1696), the unexpected Tuscan resilience had forced England to constantly raise the level of confrontation and now, when almost all diplomatic ammunition had been exhausted, she only had her strongest card to play: the military one.

[37] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Cosimo III, 24 July 1702.

The situation was already critical by the end of 1702, when Secretary Nottingham wrote to Blackwell that 'it may very soon be our turn in like manner to insult our enemys, and the trade of Legorne will not be very valuable to the Great Duke if her Majesty should give such instructions to her Men-of-warr and privateers'.[38] The English government, therefore, seemed to have reached its limit, but how much force was it *really* willing to use against Tuscany? How willing was England to risk starting a conflict that would have caused her more harm than good? And in the same way, how much was Tuscany willing to risk, considering that a war against England would have meant not only the breaking of its long neutrality, but the concrete possibility of annihilation? Since a conflict would have been extremely damaging for both nations, why did they not try harder to find a more convenient solution? It will be demonstrated that the clash between England and Tuscany can be perfectly described as the *game of chicken* of game theory. The use of this example will allow us to analyse more accurately the situation which England and Tuscany were in and will also allow us to highlight the choices that the two states had at their disposal and the strategies they could apply.

The *game of chicken* is a conflict model of game theory, which is applied between two subjects that use a common resource.[39] One of the most typical examples of this situation is that of two people (A and B) who launch their car towards a precipice, challenging each other not to swerve first: the winner is whoever gets closest to the precipice without swerving. The game is based on the credibility of both competitors' commitment not to swerve, i.e. both must be able to convince the opponent that they will

[38] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 27 November 1702.

[39] See on this topic: *Game Theory and Experimental Games, The Study of Strategic Interaction*, Andrew M. Colman (ed. by) (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), pp. 47-73; Gary Bornstein, David Budescu and Shmuel Zamir, 'Cooperation in Intergroup, N-Person, and Two-Person Games of Chicken', in *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41:3 (1997), pp. 384-406; Ken Binmore 'Game Theory: A Survey," in Economic Organizations as Games', ed. K. G. Binmore and Partha Dasgupta (Oxford, 1986); Richard K. Herrmann, "Perceptions and Image Theory in International Relations," in The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, ed. Leonie Huddy, 2. ed. (Oxford, 2013).

not swerve first. In this scenario, there are only three possible outcomes: A swerves first, B wins; B swerves first, A wins; neither A nor B swerve and they both die. The best strategy to win is the one exactly opposite to that applied by the other player (for example, if A swerves B should go straight and vice versa). Each of the players has the same order of preference regarding the outcome, i.e. they both want to win, but still both prefer to swerve to avoid dying. It is clear that the most logical and reasonable choice for both would be simply to swerve, as the possibility of losing in the game seems far preferable to that of dying. But if for both players winning is imperative, they could both decide not to swerve at all, in the belief that the other will do it first. In this situation, therefore, none of the players should change strategy until the other does.

If the game of chicken model is superimposed on the situation between England and Tuscany, it can be said that the common resource used by both players was Livorno. For both contenders, in fact, Livorno was an asset of fundamental importance, from a political, strategic and economic point of view. The precipice was instead represented by an explicit declaration of war: indeed, as had been demonstrated, this situation would be extremely damaging to both states. The challenge had begun in 1696 and now, in 1703, the precipice was very close indeed. Tuscany and England had in fact progressively raised the level of the confrontation hoping that the opponent would be reasonable, deciding finally to swerve avoiding the fatal outcome. But in an international conflict such as that between Tuscany and England, what represented the action of swerving? Considering that for both countries the order of preference of the outcome was the same (both would have liked to win, but both would have preferred to avoid war anyway), on what basis did the two states decide whether to continue towards war, or whether to withdraw to avoid the worst? It was mentioned above that the best way to win the game is to adopt a strategy opposite to that of the opponent. In this case if one of the two contenders had access to more accurate information, they would gain a huge advantage. The player with the most

information would in fact be able to *predict* the strategy of the other, adjusting himself accordingly and applying the opposite strategy: this information advantage would therefore allow them to win the game. This was precisely the situation in which England and Tuscany found themselves. In fact, it will be demonstrated how the Grand Duchy, relying on more qualified diplomatic personnel and better intelligence, was able to collect and process information that allowed it to acquire a consistent strategic advantage over England, and therefore to 'win' the Tuscan Contest.

Ambassadors were key figures in collecting and processing information. Their ability to create contacts, to perceive and understand the environment in which they lived was one of the fundamental qualities they had to possess to successfully carry out their profession.[40] This section will therefore compare the Tuscan and the English ambassadors, highlighting the different ways they had of exercising their office and what their strategies of action were. It will be then shown how the intelligence gathered by the Tuscan ambassador were indispensable for the Grand Duchy to develop an effective strategy against England.

Lambert Blackwell, whose exact date of birth is unknown, was the son of John Blackwell, a merchant and later captain of Cromwell's army.[41] Lambert was 'trained as a merchant' in the Turkey Company and moved to Tuscany in the 1680s.[42] He had considerable commercial success and after the Glorious Revolution he was appointed by

[40] On the topic of ambassadors, which will be further explored in the next chapter, see: Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716); Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603); Timothy Hampton, *Fiction of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Catherine Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Reinassance Rome: The Rise of the Resident Ambassador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Marie-Héléne Côté**,** 'What Did It Mean to be a French Diplomat in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries?', *Canadian Journal of History*, 45:2 (2010), pp. 235-258; Madeline Bassnet, 'All the ceremonyes and civilityes': The Authorship of Diplomacy in the *Memoirs* of Ann, Lady Fanshawe, *The Seventeenth Century*, 26 (2011), pp. 94-118; Daniela Frigo, 'Prudence and Experience: Ambassadors and Political Culture in Early Modern Italy', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38, (2008), pp. 15-34.

[41] G. E. Aylmer, 'Blackwell John', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008). Accessible at: https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37197.

[42] D. W. Hayton, "Lambert Blackwell", in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

William III as consul in Livorno, and then, in 1697, envoy extraordinary to Tuscany. In the same year he also obtained the investiture as a baronet and the appointment as knight harbinger.[43]

Iacopo Giraldi was born in Florence on 30th June 1663, the sixth son of the count palatine Giacomo Giraldi and the noblewoman Anna Maria Capponi.[44] He was hired at the Secretariat of State in 1693, where he became familiar with the diplomatic environment. Giraldi had a rather rapid career, so much so that he was first appointed Secretary for the affairs of Siena and finally, in 1699, envoy extraordinary to England.[45] Shortly before his departure he was made knight of the Order of Santo Stefano.[46]

Their biographies reveal some fundamental differences between Blackwell and Giraldi. While the first had 'bourgeois' origins, the second belonged to one of the oldest Florentine families. Furthermore, while Blackwell was educated as a merchant and had then practiced in the Turkey Company, Giraldi had probably obtained a higher education and had then found employment at the Secretariat of State. On the contrary Blackwell was a merchant, who had ascended to diplomatic roles following the Glorious Revolution. Blackwell was in fact a protégé of the Duke of Shrewsbury,[47] and the choice fell on him for the active participation of his family in the revolt against the Stuarts at the time of the Civil War and of the Revolution of 1688. Therefore, Blackwell was not chosen for his

[43] D. W. Hayton, "Lambert Blackwell", in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002). The knight harbinger was a minor post in the Royal Household. Blackwell kept this post until 1701.
[44] Stefano Tabacchi, 'Giacomo (Iacopo) Giraldi', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 56 (Roma, Treccani, 2001). Accessible at: https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giacomo-giraldi_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/.
[45] T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 7 July 1699.
[46] The Order of Santo Stefano was the dynastic order of the Medici house. It must be said that Giraldi's investiture as knight of the order of Santo Stefano did not happen in 1688, as indicated in thte Dizionazio Biografico degli Italiani, but between the 11th and 17th of October 1699. T.N.A., S.P. 98/18, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 20 October 1699.
[47] The duke was one of the main supporters of William's ascension to the throne, as well as one of the signatories of the *Invitation to William*, the letter in which seven greats of the kingdom of England invited the Prince of Orange to assume the English throne.

competences, but rather for political reasons.[48] By contrast, Giraldi was a professional diplomat who, before obtaining the post in England, was trained for several years in the Tuscan government, acquiring familiarity with the diplomatic environment and valuable experience in the field.

This difference particularly stands out if we analyse the different style of the reports of the two ambassadors. Blackwell's reports tended to be rather brief, and almost schematic, usually limited to giving a succinct account of his actions, and of the results obtained. They almost never contained personal considerations on the most important issues he was dealing with, and just as seldomly did they include advice to assist the Secretary of State in his decisions. The level of information was, therefore, quite basic and, surprisingly, Blackwell never used ciphers in his letters, even when dealing with delicate and important matters. One thing that stands out particularly is that his reports tended to neglect completely the context in which the ambassador found himself: there are no references to other envoys, to ministers or to personalities of the court. The only Tuscans mentioned assiduously in Blackwell's dispatches are the Secretary of State Montemagni and Cosimo III. But even about these there are but a few comments regarding their character, their personal interests or the attitude they showed towards the ambassador. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, from these documents one gets the clear impression that the English ambassador had not been able to build a network of useful relationships and that he therefore lived isolated from the Tuscan court, in which he could not count any friends or allies.

This situation had two consequences. First, without a friend within the Tuscan government, Blackwell had to rely solely on his own strength to achieve his goals, and this certainly greatly limited his ability to obtain what he wanted. Second, the lack of

[48] D. W. Hayton, "Lambert Blackwell", in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

court contacts greatly diminished the quantity and quality of information he could access. Consequently, this also limited the intelligence that was available to the English government, which therefore had to base its decisions on partial and incomplete information.

By contrast, ambassador Giraldi's reports tended to be quite long and detailed. They often contained reflections on current affairs, with extensive reasoning and advice for the benefit of the Secretary of State. Giraldi's letters then provide an extremely precise context to the actions of the Tuscan diplomat, who often describes the political situation of the kingdom, the climate in parliament, or the affairs that were discussed in the government.[49] Giraldi, unlike his colleague, often encrypted his letters and one can distinctly perceive a certain circumspection he had in dealing with delicate issues that could have been compromising if read by other people. In fact, his dispatches contain numerous personal references, with notes on the character of ministers, on the attitudes of the government, on personal tastes and on the private lives of the most important personalities.[50] Ambassador Giraldi, in the three years he had lived in London, had been able not only to fit perfectly into the court, but was also able to create numerous friendships among the most prominent characters of the kingdom. This gave him access to highly confidential information that allowed him to be a fundamental link in the decision-making process of the Tuscan government.

A further element that stands out when comparing the ambassadors is their different relationship with their respective Secretary of State. As we saw in the second

[49] In this and in the two notes below, only a few of the many documents that contain reflections on the political situation, on the character of the ministers, on their tastes, are cited by way of example. A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 16 February 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 20 August 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 May 1704.

[50] On their character: A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 13 April 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 25 March 1704. On their personal tastes: A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 3 August 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.

chapter, the relationship between the English administration and its representatives was heavily damaged by over fifty years of civil wars and also by the political upheavals following the Glorious Revolution. The ministers and their envoys looked at each other with mutual suspicion and distrust, so much so that first Consul Burrows and then Blackwell had no qualms about falsifying their reports to the Secretary of State. The ministers, as will be shown later, were not frank in their relations with their delegates, and indeed acted against them for political reasons. It is, therefore, clear that such a dysfunctional relationship between the government and its representatives greatly hindered the interests of the state. The fact that Blackwell only rarely expressed personal opinions and advice for the benefit of the Secretary of State meant that the latter was deprived of the political, diplomatic and strategic considerations of the most informed person at his disposal. Similarly, the fact that the ambassador looked with suspicion at the instructions that came to him from the secretary, or the fact that these were deliberately vague, inaccurate or misleading, prevented him from carrying out his work efficiently.

On the contrary, the relationship between the Tuscan Secretary of State and his ambassador was very different. From the analysis of the documents it emerges how the Secretary of State and the ambassador acted in concert, deeply respecting each other's roles and abilities. Giraldi very often gave his explicit advice about matters, suggesting also the best strategies to adopt. In return the Secretary of State responded with equal openness, expressing opinions and providing clear orders. We will see later how the union of intentions and the mutual trust between the ambassador and the Secretary of State will constitute a major advantage of the Tuscan system.

As we have seen, at the beginning of 1703, England seemed on the brink of declaring war on Tuscany. Nottingham, with a 'disdainful', 'proud', and 'spicy' tone had provocatively defined the Tuscan government's proposal to close Livorno to privateers

as inadmissible.[51] Shortly after he took advantage of a small incident in the port to ask for the governor of the city to be publicly punished.[52] The governor of Livorno was not only one of the most important ministers of Cosimo III, but he belonged to one of the most illustrious families of the Grand Duchy, formerly related to the Medici family. Nottingham knew very well that such a request was a real affront, just as he knew equally well that Tuscany would never agree to punish Governor Tornaquinci. The English position was becoming increasingly uncompromising, and this suggested that a rupture was imminent.

Ambassador Giraldi was understandably very concerned by these signals. Thus, immediately after his conversation with Nottingham, he 'wanted to see more clearly [in these matters] to protect the Most Serene Master as much as possible'.[53] The envoy thus turned to the Duke of Malborough[54] 'begging him to steal a quarter of an hour from his continuous applications to listen to me'.[55] The duke 'politely granted the time and place to speak at his convenience' and Giraldi asked him to 'sincerely tell him if this government was unsatisfied or had reason to doubt the conduct of the Great Duke or if [Giraldi] did well in playing the parts of [his] office'.[56] The duke 'with the most desirable humanity' told him that 'far from looking for quarrels with the Most Serene Grand Duke, [the government] would have studied all the means to maintain his esteemed friendship'.[57] 'England', Malborough added, 'did not want to make more enemies than it had and that, above all, it would always have cultivated those princes that can help to preserve its trade [...] on whose ports they were depending on to maintain the traffic with

[51] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 14 March 1703.
[52] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell to, 6 April 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 20 April 1703.
[53] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.
[54] John Churchill, Duke of Malborough (1650-1722) was one of the most influential figures of the English court and government. A general of extraordinary tactical skills, he was instrumental in ensuring the success of the imperial coalition during the War of Spanish Succession.
[55] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.
[56] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.
[57] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.

the Levant'.[58] The duke also promised 'some office with milord Nottingham, not approving of the tenor he practiced with [Giraldi]', but advised the ambassador 'not to take it too seriously' because Secretary of State had 'his head too stuffed with a mess of thorny affairs that troubled it'.[59]

The first observation that emerges from this episode is that the Tuscan ambassador, unlike his colleague Blackwell, had managed to build important friendships in the government to turn to in case of need. These contacts were able to provide him with high-level confidential information through which Giraldi could build a more accurate idea of what the political and diplomatic situation between England and Tuscany really was. Indeed, Malborough had given him two pieces of information of fundamental importance. The first was that England would do everything to maintain friendship with Tuscany 'on whose ports they were depending on to maintain the traffic of the Levant'.[60] The second, and perhaps the most important, was that the English government was deeply divided. Therefore, if the Tuscan ambassador managed to gather information on what the internal rifts in the English administration were, he could have profited of them, obtaining a substantial strategic advantage.

Thus Giraldi, making use of his 'more partial and loving' friends, had begun to gather information that would allow him to understand what was happening within the English administration.[61] The task was far from easy as the English political situation of the time was, in fact, extremely complex.

As is well known, England was the first nation in Europe to experiment with a form of democracy. But it was in the years following the Glorious Revolution, and precisely in the years around the Plowman case, that British society decisively moved

[58] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.
[59] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.
[60] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.
[61] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 March 1703.

towards an increasingly representative model of democracy. The Whig and Tory parties were born at this time, and the population was personally involved in the political debate. But the concept of 'representation' necessarily raised the question of whether the 'representation' made by the political subject is true and realistic, or false and unlikely. This is the main topic of Mark Knight's study, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain* (2005). The scholar underlines how the years between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'witnessed an experiment in representation but also, in the eyes of many contemporaries, one in misrepresentation through slander, political lying, and partisan fictions'.[62]

Representation and mystification are fundamental concepts especially in understanding the political motivations behind the Plowman case. It is no coincidence that Giraldi wrote to Florence that 'reason is not what takes place in this case', this is because, in fact, the case had been transformed into a matter of image and public opinion.

The Tory and Whig parties were divided into currents that were captained by members of the court, ministers, or personalities of the economic and commercial world.[63] Each of these small groups had their own ideology and their own particular agenda. It goes beyond the objective of this work to describe in depth the English political situation of those years,[64] but to give an idea of its complexity we should consider that the election of 1702 led to the House of Commons 'two hundred members [that] belonged to no recognizable group […], There were about thirty government members, who voted

[62] Mark Knight, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 3.
[63] On this topic see: Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (Longman, 1993).
[64] On this topic see: Melinda Zook *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London: Longman, 1993); Tim Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts, Party Conflict in a Divided Society, 1660-1715* (London: Longman, 1993); *Politics and Political Imagination in Later Stuart Britain*, ed. by Howard Nenner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1993); S. Reed Brett, *The Stuart Century 1603-1714* (London: George Harrap, 1961); George Clark, *The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).

with the ministers […], there were larger or smaller groups who followed the court peers, Churchill [i.e. Malborough] and Godolphin commanded one numbering about a dozen [...], and the combined strength of the Rochester and Nottingham connexions accounted about sixty'.[65] The conflict and political division in those years became so strong that 'it truly seemed to contemporaries that it was threatening to rend apart their whole society'.[66] The elections of 1702 had given the Tories a majority in parliament, but they were engaged in a struggle within the party that pitted some of its most distinguished members against each other. This internal conflict caused many changes inside the government eventually favouring the opposition party (Whig) which by 1710 had managed to obtain a majority in the Commons.

The Tuscan ambassador had, therefore, to move in an extremely multi-faceted political environment with very blurred lines. In fact it was not easy to understand, especially for a foreigner as the Tuscan envoy was, what the real political affiliations of the members of the government and the principal ministers were. As mentioned in the second chapter, it must be considered that at the time the concept of 'political affiliation' in the modern sense of the term did not exist. The parties were in fact extremely elastic and indeterminate structures that had no form of control over their members. These in fact often voted and made political decisions based on their own interests or conscience, regardless of what the directives of the party leaders were. Therefore, caution must be exercised in examining and interpreting the ambassador's documents concerning political issues. Indeed, sometimes Giraldi seems to confuse the internal currents of the Tories with the Whigs, and the ambassador generally speaks of 'opposite party' when referring to an opposition within the government. This does not mean, however, that what Giraldi

[65] George Clark. *The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 222.
[66] Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power, Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p. 334.

wrote was wrong, but rather reveals that the party structure of the time made it difficult to establish which party or political current a person belonged to, and it was extremely common for a minister or a politician to take sides from time to time with different currents or parties.

Giraldi identified in particular the Duke of Buckingham as one of the main supporters of Plowman's cause.[67] Personal and party interests made up the support given by some ministers to this controversy. On the one hand, the prospects for earnings from winning the Plowman case were considerable and this must have been very attractive especially for the Duke of Buckingham whose economic situation, at the end of the 1690s, was described as 'much embarassed'.[68] Giraldi would have definitive proof of the eminent character's personal interest a few months later, when the ambassador informed Florence that Buckingham '[had] openly sold himself to these bankrupts [Plowman and his associates] for a portion of what this clique think they can exact with their threats from His Royal Highness'.[69] On the other hand the Plowman case, due to the increasingly political connotations it had acquired over the years, had become a delicate matter and could be effectively used in a political way to embarrass one's opponents. In fact, some members of the government, as Marlborough had already demonstrated, were aware of the economic interests that revolved around Livorno, and they were willing to find a peaceful compromise with the Grand Duchy. However, if these ministers had publicly shown that they wanted to give up these claims against Tuscany, their opponents (i.e., both rivals of their own party and of the Whig party) could easily have accused them of

[67] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 March 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 22 February 1704.
[68] Furthermore, in early 1704 the Queen had suspended payment of his pension of 3,000 pounds a year, which must have worsened his financial situation even further. Edward Irving Carlyle, *Sheffeild, John (1648-1721)*, in Dictionary of National Biography, vol 52, p. 249; Margaret D. Sankey, *Sheffield, John, first duke of Buckingham and Normandy*, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25297.
[69] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 22 February 1704.

weakness, and of wanting to put the interests of a foreign state above the honour of the crown of England. Giraldi had discovered that it was precisely for this reason that Nottingham was being so hard and uncompromising about the Plowman case. According to the ambassador, in fact, 'all his rigor proceeds more than anything else from an affectation of zeal, which keeps himself [Nottingham] as covered as possible from the attacks of his enemies who are many and which target him constantly to throw him out of the niche he occupies'.[70]

The government was in fact perfectly aware of the importance of Livorno for English trade, just as it knew that a war with Tuscany would have meant more losses than gains. However, some prominent ministers persisted in advocating Plowman's cause not because this was convenient for the nation, or because they *really* wanted a war with Tuscany, but because it was politically advantageous for their own short-term political interests. By applying with caution and awareness a very recent political category, it could be said that the attitude of some of the ministers was a 'populist' attitude, which tended to seek support in public opinion through arguments that were not always true, or rational, but that were emotionally strong and engaging.[71] We will see later in the chapter how public opinion, carefully sensitized to the consequences that a war with Tuscany would produce, will play a fundamental role in resolving the Plowman case.

For the moment, however, it will be enough to say that the Tuscan ambassador was getting a clearer idea of the political climate that reigned in the government. Giraldi was above all understanding that the political motivations that pushed the English government to insist so much on the Plowman case were mainly of a local and domestic political character. But if the case was used to maintain or obtain consensus, the government would have never gone so far as to declare war on the Grand Duchy because

[70] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 29 June 1703.
[71] Mark Knight, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain*, p. 89, 235

this would have had devastating economic consequences and therefore devastating political consequences. Thus, the information that the ambassador was able to gather showed that the Tuscan position was much less serious than it might have seemed.

Meanwhile, the government was fitting a large war fleet for the Mediterranean with the primary purpose of protecting a large merchant convoy and to show strength. At the beginning of April Giraldi learned 'from [his] friends of the court of admiralty' that this fleet would consist of 'twenty ships of the line and four frigates of this crown and twelve Dutch', whose command would be entrusted to admiral Shovell.[72] Giraldi had also discovered, as always through his 'friends in the council', that Blackwell had been given new instructions, ordering him to exert even stronger pressure and present new demands to the Tuscan government.[73] The Tuscan ambassador's contacts within the government turned out to be once again a valuable source of confidential information as Nottingham, who perhaps hoped to surprise the Grand Ducal government, had not given him 'the slightest word' of these new requests.[74] Giraldi could thus advise 'that His Royal Highness should prepare himself to sustain these new attacks, which I am sorry to foresee will be annoying at the last sign'.[75] However, the ambassador continued, 'it is true that while I have reason to imagine that they will charge, and repeatedly, with the greatest vigour, I do not think they want to go to the extreme, being too useful and necessary, above all in the present contingencies, for the trade of this nation the friendship and correspondence of His Highness'.[76] The ambassador advised responding to Blackwell's new demands in the 'most succinct and firm' way possible, because 'if they see it

[72] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 13 April 1703.
[73] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 15 May 1703.
[74] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 15 May 1703.
[75] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 15 May 1703.
[76] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 15 May 1703.

impossible to make a breach now with the heat of the fleet destined for these parts [...], if they do not resolve to give up from their unjust claims they must at least cool down'.[77]

Giraldi did not change his opinion even when he learned, again through his useful contacts at the Admiralty and in the government, that the instructions of Admiral Shovell contained some orders to support the English claims for satisfaction.[78] The news might have seemed quite worrying: the admiral in command of the powerful fleet of thirty-six ships could have indeed posed a serious threat even to the well-defended fortifications of Livorno. But the ambassador, now aware of what the political climate was and what the divisions that reigned in the government were, was not much impressed. "I, with a light of this nature', wrote Giraldi, 'in any other government but this one I would have been more alarmed that I am not [...], but considering this system of government there is no reason to take it seriously, [considering] that too often the people and the merchants of this court require indulgences and favours completely incompatible with reason'.[79] From this passage it is evident that the Grand Ducal envoy had understood that the dispute with Tuscany was used by the government, and in particular by some ministers and members of the opposition, as a tool to obtain cheap popular consensus. Therefore, the threats of England were much less consistent, and real, than might have seemed at first glance. Now, the ambassador wrote, 'one can see first-hand what I have written so many times in this regard, that especially in these circumstances there is nothing to show but firmness'.[80] Indeed, he added, it would not have been wrong if 'His Highness would show some vigour in defence of his honour and the rights of his sovereignty' in response to English provocations.[81] After all, concluded the ambassador

[77] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 25 May 1703.
[78] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 June 1703.
[79] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 June 1703.
[80] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 June 1703.
[81] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 June 1703.

> with Shovell's squadron [...] comes several merchant ships and the major part of them are loaded for Livorno and as these would be safely arrived there, they would not waste a minute of time and they will haste in putting the merchandise in the warehouses of the place, the value of which will rise to a considerable sum. This, and being the port not to be easily insulted, persuades that the public has to prevail over the private interest, and that the said Admiral would not endeavour too much for the benefit of a few miserable bankrupts.[82]

Evidently Giraldi, once he understood the political game behind the Plowman case, who the actors were and what motivations and objectives they had, concluded that the possibility of a declaration of war against Tuscany was quite remote. Furthermore, the fact that the English fleet was accompanied by many merchant ships, almost all headed for Livorno, showed once again that if England had wanted to break with the Grand Duchy it would have exposed itself to enormous economic damage. Finally, what would public opinion in England ever have said if the fleet had started bombing thousands of its citizens and the extraordinary wealth they had accumulated in the Tuscan port? In short, the ambassador, through refined intelligence work, had managed to discover that England's threats were nothing but bluff. Therefore, if Tuscany had shown firmness and patience, the English would have been the first to withdraw.

The different capacity of English and Tuscan intelligence is evident if we compare the results and information gathered by Giraldi with those of his colleague Blackwell. While Blackwell, isolated from the court and friendless, continued unsuccessfully to pressure the Tuscan government, Giraldi had managed to build a

[82] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 June 1703.

network of relationships that allowed him to gather valuable information. Thus, while the English government worked out its strategies without having any clue as to which were the Tuscan ones, the grand-ducal government was able to build its own based on first-rate information obtained directly from English ministers.

As demonstrated at the beginning of this section, the situation which England and Tuscany were in can be interpreted through the *game of chicken* of game theory. As we have seen, the best way to win the game is to apply the opposite strategy to that of the contender and if one were able to predict the competitor's strategy it would therefore be very easy for them to win the game. The Tuscan government, thanks to the intelligence gathered by its ambassador, was now able to predict the English strategy and could apply the opposite one, that is, the one that would allow it to win the game. It is no coincidence, in fact, that Giraldi advised the Grand Duke to 'show vigour in defence of the rights of his sovereignty'.[83] Indeed the ambassador possessed information that indicated with certainty that England would be the first to 'swerve', thus the ambassador advised the Tuscan government to apply the opposite strategy, namely that of 'going forward without fear'.[84] In the mad race towards the precipice of war, information superiority had thus been transformed into a tactical superiority. It will be seen indeed that even when the powerful English fleet was in front of the port of Livorno, the Tuscan government was able to defend its prerogatives and preserve the neutrality of the port and the state.

In the Ocean of Politics

From the beginning of the war in 1701 the English government thought of sending the fleet to the Mediterranean and, as we saw in the previous chapter, Blackwell

[83] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 June 1703.
[84] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 6 July 1703..

struggled to obtain permission to supply British ships in the port of Livorno. Almost two years had passed since then, and none of Her Majesty's ships had yet visited the Tuscan port, nor passed the Pillars of Hercules. In mid-April 1703 the envoy Giraldi informed Florence that the fleet was actually in preparation and would consist of twenty British and twelve Dutch ships of the line.[85] However, the squadron would not leave the Channel before mid-July and would arrive in Livorno only at the end of September.

This section will show how the English government struggled to find the political consensus regarding the primary objectives of the fleet. Due to the deep ideological divisions within the administration, two completely different and conflicting sets of orders were finally written and sent to admiral Shovell. These orders, which were the outcome of the various political orientations of the government, were conceived not only as a military instrument for the service of the state, but rather as a political instrument for gaining consensus at home. These, therefore, were months of political and diplomatic tension: while the government was debating what the purpose of the fleet should be, the Grand Ducal ambassador was looking for allies to support the Tuscan cause.

As mentioned, the squadron that was supposed to visit the Mediterranean was mixed, that is, made up of British and Dutch warships. The English squadron had been fitting out since March, and by mid-May it was ready to sail. On the other hand, there was no trace of the Dutch fleet. The fact that the ships of the United Provinces had not yet arrived put the British expedition in jeopardy. The weather was in fact an essential component of naval operations: sailing was already dangerous enough in spring and summer, but could become prohibitive in winter, especially in a sea, such as the Mediterranean, where the British had no ports where it could take refuge in case of storms. Ideally, the fleet would have had at least five months of warm weather for its mission.

[85] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 March 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 13 April 1703.

This would have enabled it to return to the Channel before the beginning of the autumn storms.[86] On 8th June there was still no trace of the Dutch and Giraldi wrote that if they delayed any longer, the expedition would be 'impracticable'.[87] 'This delay', continued the ambassador, 'is not at all coincidental, since the Dutch do not find any advantage in this expedition, they want to make it fail like that of America'.[88] As mentioned above in the chapter, England was the first commercial competitor of the Dutch Republic and therefore the latter was rather reluctant to support actions that could strengthen the English position in the Mediterranean. In addition, the Dutch had enormous interests in Livorno and were certainly not willing to put them at risk for a controversy like the Plowman case, which concerned only and exclusively England.

Therefore the Dutch Republic, which had already shown particular interest in Tuscan affairs, was an important ally on which the Grand Duchy could rely on to find support in the confrontation with England. Thus Giraldi, in the frequent meetings he had with the Dutch ambassadors, had vividly described the possible consequences that the Dutch Republic and its trade would suffer in the event of a war between Tuscany and England.[89] As Giraldi knew well, the Dutch were 'too good bursars of their own traffic' to be insensitive to matters that directly affected their business and their wallet. In fact, during these meetings the ambassador found 'such a disposition and discretion' that he went so far as to ask his Dutch colleagues if they would personally intervene with their government and with the English one in support of Tuscany.[90] It was no small request.

[86] *Calendar of State Papers*, Domestic Series of the Reign of Anne, preserved in the Public Record Office, from now on C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol. 1, 1702-1703, (London, 1916), Memorandum on sending the fleet to Naples, March 1703, p. 660.
[87] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 8 June 1703.
[88] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 8 June 1703; C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Nottingham to the Duke of Malborough, 16 March 1703, p. 633. Nottingham, in a letter to the Duke of Malborough expressed concern over the Dutch delay 'The time prefixed for the Mediterranean squadron has elapsed, and we do not hear that the States will concur with us in this design, though we depend upon it'.
[89] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 22 February 1703.
[90] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 20 July 1703.

the Dutch Republic and England were allies and it would not have been strange if the envoys of the United Provinces had pulled back. Instead, the Dutch ambassadors, far from refusing, promised 'not to neglect the opportunity of such a just office, since everything that can contribute to an excellent harmony between the Grand Duke and all these allies is of mutual convenience'.[91] As explained above, the interests revolving around Livorno were such that anyone who thought of disturbing the tranquillity of the port would have clashed with the opposition of the other powers involved in the trade of the Tuscan city. Thus Giraldi, relying on the opposing British and Dutch commercial interests, had secured the support of the United Provinces which, through their delays, were already concretely proving to be a precious ally for the Tuscan cause.

Meanwhile, the English government had been discussing for months what the objectives of the fleet in the Mediterranean should have been and what orders should be entrusted to Admiral Shovell. As we have seen above, Giraldi suspected that 'the cabal of these evil [supporters of Plowman] [had] made the greatest effort [...]' and had succeeded in obtaining that special orders concerning the Plowman case and the neutrality of Livorno were inserted in Shovell's instructions.[92] It therefore seemed that the supporters of Plowman had managed to obtain the majority within the government and had managed to prevail over the more reasonable positions of their colleagues such as Malborough.

The preparation of the orders for Shovell must have been particularly long and painful, so much so that in the archive at least five different versions are preserved, one subsequent to the other. However, the different drafts followed two very different political and strategic lines. The first concerned war manoeuvres to be carried out against the French, and a mission in Sicily and Naples: in this type of draft no mention was made of

[91] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 20 July 1703.
[92] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 1 July 1703.

Livorno or its neutrality.[93] The second type instead ordered Shovell to negotiate an alliance with some cities of North Africa (Tunis, Algiers and Tripoli), made no mention of the mission in southern Italy, but contained specific orders regarding the neutrality of Livorno and the Plowman case.[94] The two different types of orders chased each other becoming progressively more specific and detailed. Finally, it seemed that the second typology should have prevailed in the government, so much so that on the 4th of May 1703 Nottingham had sent its instructions to Shovell. The admiral was also ordered to 'detach two or more ships to Legorn with orders to the commander to take or destroy any of the enemy's ships going into or coming out of that port, notwithstanding any agreement made by our Consul for the neutrality of the said port, declaring the reason for your action to be that the French have not observed the same neutrality, and that the Great Duke has not done right to our subjects; as you will be fully informed by our Envoy, Sir Lambert Blackwell'.[95] They also asked for the removal of the governor of Livorno from his post and the immediate satisfaction of the Plowman case: in the event of refusal, the admiral could have demanded it 'by all means'.[96] It seems clear that if these really were the orders sent to Shovell, a declaration of war between Tuscany and England would have been inevitable. The Grand Duchy would never have bowed to such requests and Tuscany, having no other choice, would have entered the war in favour of France.

At this point something unexpected happened. On the 10th of May 1703, Charles Hedges, the second Secretary of State, sent alternative orders to Shovell, which instead referred to the first type, and therefore did not contain any provisions regarding Livorno or Tuscany. In fact, the admiral was ordered to proceed to the Mediterranean to escort the

[93] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, 1 Januay 1703, p. 528.
[94] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, date not clearly expressed but subsequent to the 1 of January 1703, p. 528.
[95] T.N.A., S.P. 44/209, Nottingham, Further Instructions to Cloudesley Shovell, 4 May 1703.
[96] T.N.A., S.P. 44/209, Nottingham, Further Instructions to Cloudesley Shovell, 4 May 1703.

merchant convoy to Lisbon, Genoa and Livorno, and then to proceed to France and the kingdom of Naples for some war missions.[97]

It is very surprising that an admiral in command of a powerful fleet, especially during a European general war like that of the Spanish Succession, could receive, within a week, two completely different sets of orders. In fact, it must be immediately specified that in the orders of May 10th there is not a formula that cancels or integrates the previous orders. The instructions that had come from Hedges, just like those that Nottingham had sent, were structured as if they were the only orders the admiral was supposed to receive. One can only imagine the embarrassment and bewilderment of poor Admiral Shovell when he saw that the orders delivered to him were in stark contrast with each other.

These two different and opposing types of orders can be explained through a political key, especially if we consider the divisions that reigned within the English government. The fact that there are so many drafts, and above all that they were divided into two clearly different types, suggests that the drafting of these orders generated a furious debate within the government. In fact, the two types of orders seem to correspond well to the different political attitudes of the two souls of the government. In fact, the first, which contained no indications against Tuscany, can be attributed to the more moderate elements of the government. Instead, the second typology, with its aggressive tones, can be interpreted as an expression of those ministers like Nottingham and Buckingham who had made the Plowman case one of their strong points. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that the second typology also contained orders regarding the Republic of Venice. In fact, Shovell was ordered to 'destroy any French ships which may be in the Venetian ports' and to ask the Venetian authorities for satisfaction of an English ship that the French had burned in a Venetian port. If the Venetian Republic refused,

[97] T.N.A., S.P. 44/208, Hedges, Instructions to Cloudesley Shovell, 10 May 1703.

Shovell had the order to 'take reprisals'.[98] The orders also commanded the release of English citizens detained in Venetian galleys and prisons, and if this was not promptly executed the admiral was authorized 'to take such Venetian subjects as he can out of their ships and keep them till ours are delivered up or bring them to England'.[99]

Venice was neutral in the War of Spanish Succession, but if England was so aggressive and attacked French ships in its ports, or even began kidnapping Venetian citizens, the Republic's response could only have been a declaration of war. Indeed, while reprisals where a legal instrument available to sovereign states, seizing citizens of a neutral nation was contrary to the law of nations.[100] But what could have been the advantage in seeking war not only with Tuscany but also with Venice? In fact, if the English had broken with the Grand Duchy, they could have at least continued to trade with Venice. This would have been much more difficult both for the geographical position of the Republic and for the high duties it imposed on many goods, but it would have saved what little remained of the English trade. Furthermore, Venice, although neutral, was for geographical and political reasons closer to the imperial cause than to the French one, and certainly the other allies of the coalition, primarily the Emperor, (but also the Dutch, for economic reasons) certainly would not have appreciated Venice being pushed into the arms of Louis XIV. So why did a part of the English government insist on adopting such a rigid line, but so unseemly from an economic and political point of view?

A convincing answer to this question can be found by analysing the language and tone of the orders, which in the second type of drafts were much more aggressive.

[98] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, 4 May 1703, p. 716.
[99] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, 4 May 1703, p. 716.
[100] Indeed, while reprisals where a legal instrument available to sovereign states, another thing was to willingly seize citizens of a neutral nation. On reprisals see: Grover Clark, 'The English Practice with regard to Reprisals' in *The American Journal of International Law*, vol.27, no.4 (Oct., 1933), pp. 694-723; Steve Murdoch, *The Terror of the Seas? Scottish Maritime Warfare 1513-1713* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp.79-110; N.A.M. Rodger, 'The Law and Language of Private Naval Warfare' in *The Mariner's Mirror*, 100:1 (February 2014), pp. 5-16.

Indeed, the focus was on demanding reparations for various wrongs suffered by England and the main justification for these requests was that Tuscany or Venice, 'has not done right to our subjects'.[101] It seems clear that these orders were not really expected to be implemented, but rather they wanted to build arguments politically useful to the ministers to demonstrate that they had done everything to do justice to their citizens. In fact, the idea of England kidnapping Venetian citizens was rather embarrassing (as well as contrary to the law of nations), and above all the government knew very well what catastrophic economic damage England would suffer if she entered the war with Tuscany and with Venice at the same time.[102] But as noted earlier in this chapter, the division within the government was such that some ministers, such as Nottingham, were 'constantly targeted to be thrown out of their niche'.[103] Thus their strategy was to try to gain popular support by showing themselves as defenders of the rights of their citizens, while their opponents bowed to the economic and political interests of other countries.

This hypothesis is further strengthened if we analyse the chronology of these documents. The instructions that were first sent to Shovell (i.e. those containing orders against Livorno) were followed by two integrations: all these documents were signed by the Queen, countersigned by Nottingham and sent to Shovell on the 4th of May. On the other hand, the orders relating to the first type (i.e. those with no instruction for Livorno), contained in a single document, were signed by the Queen and countersigned by Hedges on the 7th of May, and then sent to Shovell on the 10th. These last instructions seem to completely replace the instructions of May 4th, but they do not contain any specific

[101] This sentence, expressed in a similar way, is present in all the drafts: C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, 1 Januay 1703, p. 528; C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, date not clearly expressed but subsequent to the 1 of January 1703; p. 528.C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Notes of instructions to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, 4 May 1703, p. 716.
[102] On the economic relationship between England and Venice see: Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean. The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England, 1450-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
[103] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 29 June 1703.

disposition regarding the other set of orders, and it is not clear whether the previous instructions were still valid or not. Only later were some of the provisions contained in the orders of May 4th explicitly cancelled. Indeed, Shovell was commanded 'notwithstanding anything in our instructions of May 4th' not to attack Venice, but to strive to obtain 'in a friendly manner redress for any injuries sustained by our subjects'.[104] Some Tuscan sources and some letters from Shovell himself show that the instructions against Livorno and Tuscany had also been cancelled in the same way, although it was not possible to find the original document in the archive.[105]

It therefore seems that a more moderate line eventually prevailed in the government because England, as the Duke of Malborough had reasonably said, 'did not want to make more enemies than it had and that above all it would always have cultivated those princes that can give hand to preservation of its trade […] on whose ports it was counted on to maintain the traffic of the Levant'.[106]

The complicated political context, and the internal rifts in the government had consequences not only in the diplomatic position of England but also in its military affairs. On July 13, the fleet finally sailed, and Admiral Shovell must have been glad indeed to finally leave the swamp of politics to enter the more dangerous, but certainly more honest, ocean expanses. The senior officer could for the moment breathe more freely but the games of politics would chase him up to Livorno where he himself would decide the fate of relations between Tuscany and England.

[104] T.N.A., S.P. 44/209, Additional Instructions to Cloudesley Shovell, 3 September 1703.
[105] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125; T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[106] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 23 February 1703.

The Fleet of Intrigues – Part I

The English fleet had therefore left the Channel for the Mediterranean, but it did not arrive in Livorno until the end of its expedition, on the 30th September 1703.[107] The stay of the English squadron in the Tuscan port was short, just long enough to get the necessary supplies to be able to return home, but in those few days tensions were high.

This sections, which has been divided into two parts, will show how Ambassador Blackwell, in an attempt to use the fleet as an instrument of pressure to impose on the Tuscan government the English demands regarding the Plowman case, had concocted a series of diplomatic incidents which, if successful, would have risked definitively destroying the already fragile Anglo-Tuscan relations. It will also show that the Dutch Republic played a fundamental role in defusing Blackwell's plans and averting the possibility of an armed confrontation between England and the Grand Duchy. In this section we will try furthermore to analyse what the more subtle and profound personal and political reasons behind these incidents were.

The Anglo-Dutch fleet, which left Spithead in mid-July, had a quiet and fortunate mission. Shovell managed to negotiate treaties with the African cities of Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers, he captured some French ships, and successfully supplied the coalition contingents operating in Spain.[108] The last thing that Shovell had to do was go to Livorno. The fleet had been at sea for several months and needed to be supplied before they could return to England. Furthermore, his instructions ordered him to go to the Tuscan port to contact an envoy of the Duke of Savoy to eventually agree on some actions in support of

[107] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 13 July 1703; T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Coriolano Montemagni to Lambert Blackwell, 1 October 1703.
[108] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125.

the allies.[109] As explained above it is likely that Shovell's instructions for Livorno had been updated like those of Venice, that is, that the admiral had been ordered not to take any hostile action against the Tuscan port, but he was instead commanded to obtain redress for the damage suffered by England 'in a friendly manner'.[110] In any case, given the enormous political conflict that had developed around the Plowman case, a visit to Livorno still remained a very delicate matter.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the Dutch had shown themselves to be more than friendly towards the requests for help presented by ambassador Giraldi. They even promised to intervene both with their government and with the English in favour of Tuscany. When Shovell, on the 11th of August expressed his intention to go to Livorno, the Dutch admiral Philips van Almonde[111] immediately 'produced his instructions and declared they obliged him to be with his ships in the Dutch Republic by the 20th of November, that his ships were victualled for no longer, and therefore he did believe it was time for him to look homeward'.[112] Shovell must have been very surprised by the words of his colleague and pointed out that not only did his orders provide for the fleets to remain together at least until 20th September, but above all that if the two fleets separated they would risk becoming easy prey for the French. The Dutch admiral replied that in his opinion 'there was little expectation of our doing any service here this year'[113] and Shovell had to exercise all his persuasive skills to keep admiral van Almonde with

[109] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125.
[110] T.N.A., S.P. 44/209, Additional Instructions to Cloudesley Shovell, 3 September 1703.
[111] Philips van Almonde (1644-1711), was a Dutch admiral who became famous during the Third Anglo-Dutch War. During the Glorious Revolution he commanded the rear of the invasion fleet of William III and played a fundamental role in the Battle of Vigo Bay (1702). Admiral van Almonde left a report of the expedition of 1703, preserved at The Hague. See: https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/onderzoeken/archief/1.01.02/invnr/9339/file/NL-HaNA_1.01.02_9339_0006. His report mentions only briefly the stay in Livorno, while analysis of the Tuscan and English documents reveal that he had a fundamental role in the Tuscan port. On this see also: J.C. de Jonge, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche zeewezen Van het jaar 1695 tot aan den Utrechtschen Vrede Ao. 1713. Dl. 4.2, Part 4*, pp. 609-610.
[112] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125.
[113] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125.

the English squadron. Shovell had to finally promise his colleague that they would only stop in Tuscany if they had a favourable wind to get them to Livorno by 30th September: indeed Shovell preferred 'rather than separate our fleets, turn my head homewards'.[114] But the wind held, and therefore the Anglo-Dutch fleet arrived compactly in the Tuscan port.

The sudden desire to return home shown by the Dutch admiral, which appeared only after Shovell expressed his intention to go to Livorno, can be interpreted as a tangible sign of the help that the Dutch Republic had promised to Tuscany. In fact, if Admiral van Almonde's plan had been successful, the fleet would never have arrived in the Tuscan port, and any danger of conflict would have been removed. This hypothesis will be further supported later by analysing the fundamental role played by the Dutch admiral in defusing some dangerous situations between the fleet and the Tuscan government.

Meanwhile, the Grand Duchy had prepared for the arrival of the English fleet. The Livorno garrison had been doubled, and the artillery on the walls moved in the most convenient position to defend the port from an attack from the sea.[115] Indeed the fleet, which had been integrated with other vessels up to almost fifty ships of war, could represent a serious threat to the port and therefore the Tuscan government had taken all the necessary precautions to be ready for any eventuality. The large squadron then arrived in sight of Livorno on 30th September, bringing with them a convoy of seventy merchant ships.[116] The sight of the commercial ships must have already slightly eased the tension because it was clear to the Tuscans that if the English fleet had hostile intentions they would certainly not have brought with them such a large number of merchant vessels, which would only constitute an impediment in a battle. Thus, while the merchant ships

[114] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125.
[115] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 13 July 1703.
[116] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 30 September 1703.

were on their way to peacefully enter the port, the fleet anchored at the beach, that is, in that shallow stretch of sea that once existed in front of the New Fortress of Livorno.[117]

Any sense of relief on Governor Tornaquinci's part was short-lived as a thorny controversy arose over the gun salutes. Blackwell, who had already arrived in town a few days earlier, immediately went aboard the flagship, the *Triumph*, and brought back a message from Shovell. The latter stated that he expected a salute to the royal standard from the fortress 'with six cannon shots and twelve *mascoli*', and that 'if this request was not satisfied, he would be forced to use violence in the port and in the state of His Royal Highness having to uphold the honour of the Queen'.[118] The admiral's request was in contrast with the ceremonial, which provided that the national flag be greeted by five cannon shots, to which the flagship would have to respond with an equal number of shots.[119]

Greetings were an extremely delicate matter, because they represented the tangible expression of the hierarchy that existed between states.[120] The salute to the English flag by the fortress of Livorno meant the formal acknowledgement of the respect that Tuscany paid to England, and in the same way the salute given by the flagship to the

[117] In the three centuries that have passed until today, the level of the earth has gradually risen, and the sea has retreated by several hundred meters.

[118] The *mascoli* cannons were loaded from the breech. A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.

[119] There are a few contemporary accounts of this episode. They all dismiss the incident of the salutes as a neglible matter, but we should take into consideration that two of these publications are posthumous accounts of Shovell's live and therefore tend to magnify the Admiral's successes and minimise his failures. On the contrary primary sources from The National Archives and from the Archivio di Stato di Firenze show how the moment of the gun salutes was pivotal in the stay of the English fleet in Livorno. On this see: Anon. *The Life and Glorious Actions of Sir Cloudesly Shovel* (London, 1707), p. 4; Abel Boyer's *The History of the Life and Reign of Queen Anne* (London, 1714), p. 85; John Campbell, *Lives of the Admirals* (1748), VI, p.28. Also two more recent studies mention only briefly this episode: Julian S Corbett*, England and the Mediterranean: A Study in the Rise and Influence of British Power Within the Straits, 1603-1713* (Cosimo Inc., New York, 2007 reprint of 1917 original), pp.501-508; Simon Harris, *Sir Cloudesley Shovell*, (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2001), pp. 240-245.

[120] David Onnekink, 'Symbolic Communication in Early Modern Diplomacy: Naval Incidents and the Third Anglo-Dutch War', *The English Historical Review*, 135:573, pp. 337-358; Jakob Seerup, 'Danish and Swedish Flag Disputes with the British in the Channel', in N.A.M. Rodger, *et al*., eds, *Strategy and the Sea: Essays in Honour of John B. Hattendorf* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016); T.W. Fulton, *The Sovereignty of the Sea* (Edinburgh and London, 1911), p. 473.

fortress represented the respect that England had for the Grand Duchy. Instead, the fact that the shots fired were in equal numbers meant that the two nations recognized each other as equals, that is, they explicitly showed that neither of them was subordinate to the other. The admiral's request completely upset this system. If the governor had given the salute requested by the admiral, this would have created a dangerous precedent in which Tuscany would have implicitly recognized England's precedence and greater importance.

Blackwell himself seemed surprised by the request even declared to the governor that he wanted to return aboard the *Triumph* to persuade the senior officer to desist from his demand. The governor, reassured by these words, thus replied to Shovell that 'in this city of His Royal Highness the flag of the Queen's Majesty was revered with all due respect' and that he was certain that the admiral 'would be content with the [salute] practiced until now'.[121] However, the governor also wrote to the Secretary of State in Florence that 'I cannot believe that [the admiral] will carry out any attack, but in any case that he would violently think at night time to burn the French ships that are in port or even make other affronts to this place, I would believe that we should defend the insulted and maintain respect for the port'.[122] The presence of merchant ships and above all the fact that the fleet was anchored under the fortress made Tornaquinci suppose that Shovell would never have put his threats into action. In fact, attacking from the position he was, that is exactly under the fortress' guns, would have been suicidal. Moreover, the governor could have retaliated against the numerous merchant ships that had just entered the port and on the many goods that the English had in their warehouses in the city. However, the strength of the fleet was such that it could not be underestimated, and the governor had kept the garrison on alert all night.

[121] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.
[122] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.

The Grand Duchy, which had made the Plowman case a battle for the defence of its own sovereignty, was not willing to surrender on gun salutes and after an initial detente the climate had become very tense again. In fact, it must be considered that, beyond their diplomatic and political significance, salutes were also a sign of friendship. A ship that entered the port and greeted the fortress declared that it recognized the sovereign authority of the place, and therefore also manifested its friendly intentions. The fact that the English fleet and the fortress had not greeted each other left their relationship ambiguous, and this was a clear and understandable signal to all the citizens of Livorno that something was wrong. The night was surely long and passed anxiously both on board the English ships and behind the battlements of the fortress of Livorno, but the arrival of dawn did not bring the hoped-for comfort.

On the morning of 1st October Blackwell, accompanied by the captain of the port and accordingly to what he had said to the governor, went aboard the *Triumph* to convince the admiral to change his mind regarding the gun salutes. Blackwell, after being alone with Shovell for more than an hour, told the captain of the port that 'the admiral was waiting for the salute'.[123] It seemed that the ambassador managed to resolve the situation and the governor therefore greeted the British flag with five cannon shots. Immediately afterwards, Tornaquinci sent several Tuscan officers to the *Triumph* to compliment Shovell: the minutes passed but the flagship had not yet returned the salute. When the Tuscan officers pointed out that the salute made by the fortress was for the flag, implying therefore that they expected the British to do the same, they were told by Blackwell that 'the Admiral would not have received that salute for not being adequate to his character'.[124]

[123] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.
[124] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.

The offense was very serious: the fortress had greeted, but the fleet did not respond. If not exchanging salutes in port left ambiguity about what the reciprocal relations were, not responding to the salute was an unequivocal sign of hostility. But how was it possible that such a situation had come about? Was it not Blackwell himself who said that the admiral was waiting for the salute, suggesting that he was content with the five shots required by the ceremonial? Indeed, from the analysis of some Tuscan documents it emerges that the Grand Ducal government was convinced that the salute incident had been organized by Blackwell himself in order to cause a rift between Tuscany and England, but was it possible that the envoy had really set out to do this?[125]

Over the long years spent in Tuscany, the position of ambassador Blackwell had become increasingly difficult. He had failed to achieve significant results of any kind and, as we saw in the previous chapter, his failure to handle the Plowman case had already cost him his appointment as ambassador to Venice. The last few months had been particularly frustrating. Blackwell had in fact filed numerous petitions for the resolution of the dispute, used strong expressions and even threats, but had obtained nothing.[126] The Tuscan government seemed unshakable and the personal position of the envoy had become increasingly weak and isolated. The Grand Ducal court became ever more hostile towards him and the tone of his dispatches to the Secretary of State in London shows that the antipathy was mutual. Blackwell knew that if he did not soon manage to obtain some tangible results, his reputation at home would be irremediably compromised and therefore it would be very difficult for him to find employment after the end of his embassy in Tuscany. The presence and the threat of the fleet could have been a useful and effective tool to force the Tuscan government to accept the requests for reparation imposed by

[125] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti a Mario Tornaquinci, 3 October 1703.

[126] Between January and June Blackwell had had several meetings with secretary Montemagni and with Cosimo III, in which he had again made requests for the Plowman case and presented memorials, but his actions did not achieve anything significant.

England. However, Blackwell needed to create the right conditions to force the Tuscan government to surrender, and therefore he devised a cunning and malevolent plan.

If we examine the chronology of the events of the greetings incident, it is clear that the Tuscan suspicions were quite well founded. In fact, it was Blackwell who first went to the admiral and it was he who brought the note with the salute request to Governor Tornaquinci. When the governor had pointed out to him that the admiral's requests were contrary to the ceremonial used up until then, Blackwell, instead of supporting what Shovell had claimed, declared that he was 'well capable and informed of it and that he had already told it to the admiral that [the salute] could not be as he demanded'.[127] The ambassador had then offered his good offices to 'see if the admiral could be satisfied with what has been so far practiced'.[128] It was also Blackwell himself who returned aboard the Triumph and hinted to the captain of the port that the admiral had changed his mind and would accept the regular five shots as a salute to the flag. Blackwell was the only intermediary with Shovell and probably, instead of seeking a compromise in his private meetings with the admiral, he had instead convinced the officer to persist in his requests. Thus, the English envoy managed to create a perfect diplomatic incident in which the admiral, by not responding to the salute to the flag, directly offended the honour of the Grand Duke. But the Grand Ducal government had long been warned by ambassador Giraldi to prepare for Blackwell's hostile initiatives and the Tuscan diplomat was quite right when he predicted that these would be 'annoying to the last sign'.[129]

However, an unexpected event had upset Blackwell's careful plan. The Dutch consul James Calkbenner, together with an officer of the Dutch fleet, visited the governor to let him know that 'the Dutch admiral was ready to salute the fortress first' with the

[127] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.
[128] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.
[129] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 15 May 1703.

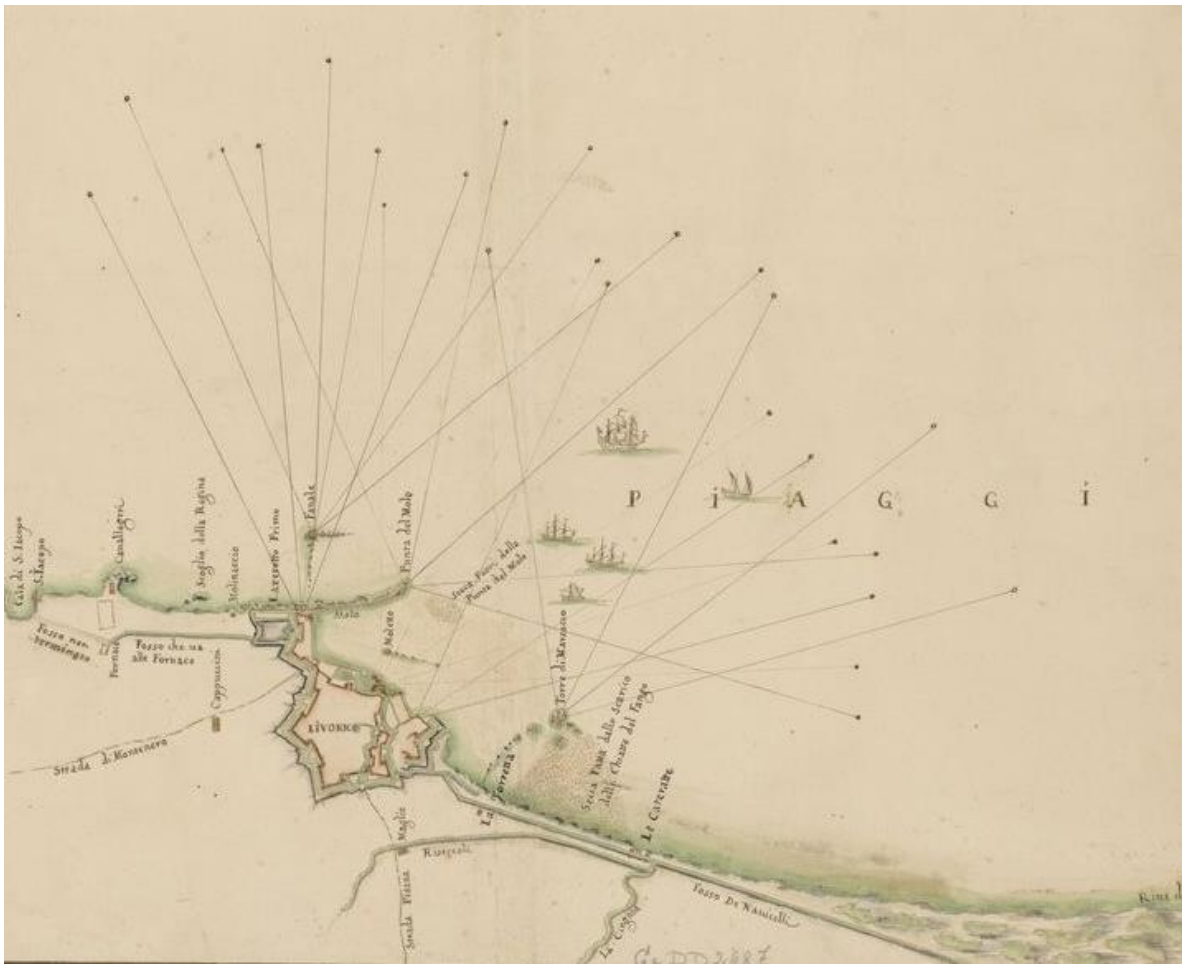
only condition that the Tuscans should reply with as many cannon shots as he would have fired.[130] It is clear that admiral van Almonde wanted to let the governor know that he had no hostile intentions and that, as a sign of friendship, he was ready to greet the fortress first. By acting in this way, the Dutch admiral had sent a message not only to Tuscany, but also to his British allies, making it clear that whatever action Shovell wanted to take against Livorno, he would take it alone. The intervention of the Dutch thus broke the unity of the fleet, and proportionally reduced the threat the city was facing. The Tuscans now knew that they were no longer dealing with fifty ships, but with thirty, since the twenty Dutch ships, through the declaration of their admiral, had in fact declared themselves friends. Indeed, from a strategic point of view, Shovell's position had changed dramatically. He not only lost nearly 50 per cent of his firepower, but he also could not be sure how the Dutch would behave in the event of a military confrontation. Would they simply stand by, or would they stand in the way to protect their many fellow citizens living in Livorno and their economic interests?

The uncertainty of the Dutch position must have weighed on Shovell's decisions and further removed the possibility of an armed confrontation. However, the controversy dragged on until 5th October, when a compromise was finally arranged. The admiral demanded eleven shots for the salute, but had promised to honour the fortress and the Tuscan flag with another eleven shots.[131] Shovell thus obtained his satisfaction, while the Tuscan government was able to defend his sovereignty, demanding a salute that had the same number of shots as the one that was offered. As soon as the greetings between the fortress and the English fleet were over, the Dutch flagship began firing, saluting first the Medici flag with another eleven shots.[132] Van Almonde kept his word to salute first and

[130] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 1 October 1703.
[131] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 5 October 1703.
[132] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci a Montauti, 5 October 1703.

his greeting was interpreted as a particular compliment, especially after the troubles the Tuscans had had with the English fleet. With this gesture, in fact, the Dutch Republic publicly confirmed the friendship it had for Tuscany, strengthening the close commercial and political bond that united the two nations.

The incident organized by Blackwell did not meet with the desired result, but the resources of the envoy were far from exhausted. The Tuscan government, now suspicious of the activities of the English ambassador, feared that the latter could still exercise 'sinister impressions' on the admiral.[133] We will see in the second part of the section how this suspicion materialized in an exchange of letters between Shovell and Cosimo III who once again risked causing an armed conflict between Tuscany and England.



[133] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti a Mario Tornaquinci, 3 October 1703.

The map shows the shooting angles of the Livorno guns from the sea side. The description accompanying the image specifies that the distance of the cannon shots marked on the map is that which the guns reached at zero elevation, but that by giving them elevation they would have reached 'much further'. From the map it is clearer what the strategic

The Fleet of Intrigues – Part II

Blackwell was in a difficult position and the fraught political climate at home made the situation even more complex for him. The ambassador was in fact caught between the internal clash in the government, and his failure to obtain satisfaction for the Plowman case threatened to create enemies on both sides. But what was the official position of the English government, and what were the instructions Blackwell had received from the Secretary of State?

'In all these matters', Nottingham had written to the ambassador, 'you must therefore renew your instances with the Great Duke and tho' you must do it with respect due to his Highness, yet with a pressure suitable to her Majesty's expectations of having right done to her own honour and her subjects' interests'.[134] Furthermore, Nottingham continued, considering that 'her Majesty's fleet will soon be in the Mediterranean, and that her Majesty is very desirous to preserve a good correspondence with the Great Duke so very necessary to his Highness' true interest, the more earnest you are in requiring a just satisfaction to these demands, the more real will be the service you do him'.[135]

It is easy to understand how these instructions were conceived to be a masterpiece of ambiguity. In fact, while on the one hand Blackwell should have shown respect to the Grand Duke, on the other he should have been firm enough not to disappoint the Queen's expectations. Similarly, Nottingham warned Blackwell that the fleet would arrive, and therefore surreptitiously suggested to the ambassador to use it as a means of pressure to demand 'just satisfaction', but in the same sentence the Secretary of State also said that the Queen wanted to keep the friendship with Cosimo III. In essence, the ambassador was not given any direct and precise formal order: everything he had done

[134] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 15 June 1703.
[135] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 15 June 1703.

would have been by interpreting the instructions received in his own way. It is clear that such vague instructions were the result of the same political climate that had made the writing of Shovell's orders so difficult. The vagueness of the instructions sent to Blackwell served Nottingham well in creating a political alibi to protect himself from the attacks of his opponents. If the result of Blackwell's choices were not considered adequate, the Secretary of State could always have blamed the incompetence of the ambassador. As the gun salutes episode shows, Blackwell must have evidently chosen to interpret his instructions as extensively as possible. His first plan failed but the ambassador decided to try one last shot.

On 5th October, just after the controversy over the salutes was finally resolved, the English admiral wrote a letter to the Grand Duke, asking for satisfaction for the Plowman case. The analysis of the tone and language chosen for this letter show that it was conceived with the aim of provoking a reaction of indignation on the part of the Tuscan government, again in an attempt to create a rupture in the diplomatic relations between the two nations.

'Most Serene Sir', Shovell began, 'finding that Sir Lambert Blackwell the Queen of Great Brittain my Royale Mistress' Minister att your Most Serene Highness' court has not been able to obtain from your Highness anything more than delaying answers to her Majestie's just demands, her Majesty has been also pleased to comand my acquainting your Highness that She expects immediate satisfaction'.[136] The admiral continued his letter asking for the removal of the governor of Livorno from his post and the satisfaction of a series of minor requests concerning the port. 'I am further directed to acquaint your Highness', concluded Shovell, 'that if these abuses be not redress'd, some extraordinary measures are to be taken in order to exact justice to be done to her Majesty's subjects and

[136] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Cloudesley Shovell to Cosimo III, 5 October 1703.

allyes, and if immediate satisfaction be not made to these her Majesty's just demands, will be added the charges of this fleet, and any other charges her Majesty shall be att, in exacting justice to be done to her Majesty's honour, and her injur'd subject. In expectation of your Highness' speedy answer […]'.[137] Significantly the letter superscription is incorrect. In fact, the title that per protocol belonged to the Grand Duke at the beginning of a letter was 'Most Serene Highness' and the simple word 'sir' was absolutely not adequate to address a sovereign prince like Cosimo III, especially when the sender of the letter was inside his dominions. In addition, if we analyse some of the terms used in the letter, we understand how the general tone of the document was extremely aggressive. The answers the Grand Duke until then gave to English demands were defined as 'delaying answers', the Grand Duke's actions were described as 'abusive [...] violent [...] arbitrary proceedings' and 'contrary to the law of nations'.[138] Shovell often uses the expression 'immediate reparation / satisfaction' and concludes by threatening that if this had not arrived, 'some extraordinary measures' would be taken.[139] The letter ends with just a dry 'in expectation of your Highness' speedy answer', and even such a closure was contrary to any protocol. In fact, however harsh the requests might have been, the person addressed was a reigning prince and the letter should have ended with some expression of courtesy that would leave the final decision on the matter to the will of the sovereign. The expressions, words and tone used in the letter are those that a superior would use with an inferior, but since the letter was addressed to a sovereign prince this makes it a true affront. In fact, the letter seems to have been conceived precisely with the aim of provoking a reaction of pride, and perhaps an even more brutal response.

[137] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Cloudesley Shovell to Cosimo III, 5 October 1703.
[138] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Cloudesley Shovell to Cosimo III, 5 October 1703.
[139] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Cloudesley Shovell to Cosimo III, 5 October 1703.

But as Giraldi wrote, 'for these inevitable accidents [...] one must arm oneself with firmness and patience where reason assists and move forward without fear'.[140] The advice must have been perfectly received, so much so that Cosimo III's response to Shovell's letter was extremely calm. Indeed, the Grand Duke's letter seems to be designed to be the exact opposite of Shovell's, and artfully constructed to pacify the situation as much as possible. 'The letter from your Excellency appeared to me this day', wrote the Grand Duke to the English admiral, 'and I have received it with that esteem which I must have of the character and person of Your Excellency, and I enjoy having this occasion to confirm also to you those sentiments of respect which I profess to the Majesty of the British Queen'.[141] 'I have seen', Cosimo III continued,

> what Your Excellency wished me to know, under the orders of Her Majesty in regard to the Plowman affair, about which I must reply that since several weeks I have ordered to that Minister of mine in London [Giraldi], to produce positively convincing reasons and documents to Her Majesty in justification of my proceeding in this business. Therefore [justifying my proceedings with you now], I would believe would be a lack of respect due to the Queen herself […]. But because I enjoy taking advantage of all the opportunities that are offered me to prove my devotion to Her Majesty, I gladly embrace this opportunity to openly show my reasons with Your Excellency [...] not doubting that Your Excellency will still find in them foundations such as to recognize [...] what my inclination and my partiality towards the English nation is, and assuring your Excellency that I increase more and more my partiality and my affection towards you, I wish to serve

[140] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 6 July 1703.
[141] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Cosimo III to Cloudesley Shovell, 8 October 1703.

> Your Excellency […] and I remain, at your service, the Grand Duke of Tuscany.[142]

Comparing the two letters it is evident that the tone, the arguments and the words used could not be more different. While Shovell had been deliberately provocative, Cosimo III had used only the best and finest expressions to describe the respect he had for Queen Anne and for the admiral himself. Furthermore, the Grand Duke had once again used a diplomatic tactic which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, had already proved successful some time before with Blackwell. Cosimo III did not directly reply to the issues for which the admiral demanded satisfaction, but instead declared that he had already forwarded the answers to his ambassador in England to submit the question directly to the Queen's judgment. In this way, the Grand Duke had effectively ousted the admiral who certainly could not take the authority, nor the responsibility, to answer in the place of his sovereign. The one adopted by the Grand Duke was now really a 'delaying answer' but against which Shovell could not reply. After all, Cosimo was widely informed by Giraldi that the English threats were just a bluff and it was this information superiority that gave him the confidence to conceive such a calm response to a letter as harsh and outrageous as that of the admiral.

But what made Shovell write in such a way? What could the ambassador on board the English ship have said to persuade the admiral to write such a harsh and disrespectful letter?

Knowing what was going on aboard the *Triumph* was nearly impossible, but the Tuscan government had an informant who could give them a detailed, first-hand account: Blackwell's own secretary. The latter reported to Leon del Chiaro, a well-known

[142] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Cosimo III to Cloudesley Shovell, 8 October 1703.

Florentine merchant who had a trading house in Livorno, that 'his Excellency [Shovell] had a strong repugnance to write the aforementioned letter, nor did it take less to induce him than the continued battery made him for six continuous hours by Mr. Blackwell'.[143] Finally the admiral, 'almost raped',[144] had given in, but the letter was written by the ambassador's secretary 'at the dictation of his master [Blackwell]'.[145] This is the reason why the letter was written in such a provocative way. The words chosen were not casual at all, but instead had been carefully chosen by Blackwell who, drawing on his diplomatic experience, knew very well what the most suitable expressions could be to provoke and to create a 'perfect affront'.

From the documents at our disposal it is not possible to deduce whether Blackwell's secretary had been passing information on to the Grand Ducal government for some time or whether it was an isolated episode. In fact, this is the only example in which a Tuscan document explicitly states that information derived directly from the secretary of the English ambassador. In any case, comparing the handwriting of the letter sent by Shovell to the Grand Duke with those written by Blackwell's secretary it is clear that they are of the same hand. This confirms that the ambassador's secretary, perhaps in exchange for a fair sum passed through Del Chiaro, had actually acted as a spy for the Tuscan government, transmitting vital information. Indeed, through this account, the Grand Ducal government learned that the letter was conceived by Blackwell and that Shovell was practically obliged to sign it. This meant that the admiral was not personally convinced of the correctness of the letter's content and therefore would never put his threats into practice. Furthermore, the fact remained that the Dutch had now declared themselves friends of the Tuscans and had explicitly made it known in several ways that

[143] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[144] Litterally translated from the Italian 'quasi violentato'.
[145] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

they would not have liked any disturbance of the tranquillity of Livorno. Therefore, it was for all these reasons that Cosimo III had responded in such a calm, and even understanding way to a letter as harsh and offensive as the one sent to him by Shovell. The Grand Duke knew that it was not the admiral who had written it, but Blackwell himself, who after the failed attempt of the salutes had concocted this new plan to take the relations between Tuscany and England to the extreme.

Admiral Shovell was thus placed in a difficult position. After the confusion that he met in London regarding the drafting of his orders, the political issues had chased him to Livorno, where he had found himself trapped in a very unpleasant situation. Blackwell continued to pressure him to write another letter in response to Cosimo III's, while the Dutch admiral had renewed again his threat to leave alone with his ships if Shovell wanted to stay longer in Livorno.[146] Certainly the idea of returning to the sea must have been very welcome to the admiral who actually left Livorno just two days later, on the 12th October, 'although the weather did not [seem] too good'.[147] Before leaving, Blackwell had managed to get the admiral to sign another letter in which he repeated the same requests and threats of the first letter in the same tone and words. However Shovell 'had the discretion to send it in time of his departure', so when the letter reached Cosimo III the great Anglo-Dutch fleet had already sailed from Livorno, and with it the immediate danger of a war between Tuscany and England.[148]

[146] C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol 1, Sir Cloudesley Shovell to Charles Hedges, 24 September 1703, p. 125.
[147] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Mario Tornaquinci to Montauti, 12 October 1703.
[148] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

Conclusions

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the theme of Tuscan neutrality has been largely overlooked by historiography. The extraordinary commercial interests that France, England, Spain and the Dutch Republic had in the port of Livorno allowed the Grand Duchy to create a system of neutrality that was unique in the European landscape. Tuscany had in fact succeeded in convincing the four powers to enter into an agreement, the Articles of Neutrality, in which they pledged to respect the neutrality of Livorno and, by extension, that of Tuscany. The novelty of this treaty was precisely the fact that it had been signed jointly by all the great European countries, which thus became mutual guarantors of the neutrality of the Grand Duchy. This meant that if one of these powers had tried to violate Tuscan tranquillity, it would have been faced with the opposition of the other three countries. Therefore Tuscany had effectively managed to become not only a 'long-term voluntary neutral' but also the first 'permanent neutral' country in Europe.

The Plowman case put a strain on the Tuscan neutrality system. England had in fact started an all-out diplomatic battle to prove that Tuscany had violated its neutrality. The Grand Duchy had then appealed first to France and then to the Dutch Republic to obtain protection from English threats. Both countries had responded positively and this constituted a major obstacle to English ambitions. In particular, the Dutch Republic turned out to be a precious ally of the Grand Duchy. In fact, although the Dutch Republic and England were allies in the War of the Spanish Succession, they still remained major commercial competitors. The Tuscan government, relying on the opposing economic interests of the two countries, had managed to divide them and the Dutch Republic had explicitly taken the side of Tuscany. This is particularly evident during the visit of the Anglo-Dutch fleet to Livorno, when Admiral van Almonde completely disassociated

himself from Shovell's aggressive actions, thus defusing Blackwell's plans to cause a diplomatic incident between the fleet and the Tuscan authorities.

The episodes that occurred in the Tuscan port show how the English political division and above all the lack of trust between the government and its representatives. constituted one of the main obstacles to England’s ambitions of supremacy and power. This chapter indeed demonstrated that the Tuscan government, being able to count on a more qualified diplomatic staff, and managing to obtain confidential information, had accumulated a strategic advantage that had allowed it to protect its neutrality even in the face of the large English fleet that arrived in Livorno. We will see in the next chapter how Tuscany will be able to take advantage of this situation to further damage Blackwell’s position and create the conditions for finally concluding the Plowman case.

Jan Frans van Douven, *Portrait of Cosimo III de Medici*, (1700), National Museum of Warsaw, M.Ob.793.

Chapter V: Diplomacy and Public Opinion

The short stay of the English fleet in Livorno, between 30 September and 12 October 1703, represented one of the tensest moments of the Plowman case, as well as one of the greatest dangers that the Grand Duchy had ever faced. The powerful war fleet eventually sailed back to England and Tuscany managed, albeit with difficulty, to keep its neutrality intact. However, the fact that the Tuscan government managed to defuse Blackwell's plans did not at all diminish the tension between the two countries and 1704 marked the height of their conflict.

Tim Harris, in his *Politics under the later Stuarts*, underlines how the conflict in English politics reached 'a new intensity in the eighteenth century under Queen Anne. [...] Party rivalry was so intense' that England became 'a divided society'.[1] Studies on this issue have mainly focused on describing the effects produced by the incandescent political climate on the relations between the citizens, the government, the Parliament and the Crown.[2] However, these studies have overlooked the impact that the deep political divisions of the English government had on its ability to act effectively in the diplomatic field. In fact, this chapter will further show how the Tuscan government managed to take advantage of the political fragmentation of the English government, discrediting ambassador Blackwell with the aim of removing him from his post. In particular a letter from the Tuscan government against Blackwell will be analysed and compared with

[1] Tim Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts. Party Politics in a Divided Society 1660-1714* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2, 221.
[2] Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain. Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Melinda Zook *Radical Whigs and Conspiratorial Politics in Late Stuart England* (Philadelphia: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power, Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London: Longman, 1993); *Politics and Political Immagination in Later Stuart Britain*, ed. by Howard Nenner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1993); S. Reed Brett, *The Stuart Century 1603-1714* (London: George Harrap, 1961); Henry Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977); George Clark, *The Later Stuarts, 1660-1714*, (Oxford, 1955).

printed sources of the period regarding the role and duties of ambassadors. Through this comparison it will be demonstrated that Tuscany discredited Blackwell by questioning his integrity and casting doubt on his ability to fulfil his role.

The ethnographic concept of 'culture shock', although widely used in anthropology and cultural studies,[3] has hitherto been little used in historiography,[4] despite being extremely useful for describing the process of integration and adaptation of an individual to a foreign society. Indeed, the concept of culture shock will prove most useful in describing the difficult process of adaptation of the Tuscan ambassador to a completely different cultural context as the English one. This analysis will show that Giraldi's initial misunderstanding of the English political and social system led him to make some errors of judgement that actually permitted the Plowman controversy to evolve into a state affair. It will, therefore, demonstrate the extent to which the Tuscan ambassador had slowly adapted to the new cultural system, to the point of understanding its most subtle mechanisms of operation. This awareness would allow him to identify a winning strategy in the Plowman case: the ambassador indeed understood that the only way to conclude the controversy was to involve English public opinion and to shift the popular consensus to the side of Tuscany.

[3] Eunkyong Lee Yook, *Culture Shock for Asians in U.S. academia* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013); Yuefang Zhou et al., 'Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation', *Studies of Higher Education*, 33:1 (2008), pp. 63-75; James W. Neuliep, 'Culture Shock and Re-entry Shock', *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp. 1-9; Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*. *International Differences in Work-Related Values* (London: Sage, 1984); Young Yung Kim, '*Cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory'*, in *International and intercultural communication annual, Intercultural communication theory*, vol. 19, ed. by R. L. Wiseman (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 170–193; Alfred Presbitero, 'Culture shock and reverse culture shock: the moderating role of cultural intelligence in international student's adaptation', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 53 (2016), pp. 28-38.

[4] Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2007); Edward Dutton, 'The Culture Shock of Saint Patrick', *Estudios irlandeses*, 6:6 (2011), pp.125-131.

Check to the Ambassador

As we have seen in the previous chapter Blackwell, whose family had actively supported the Glorious Revolution, was chosen as ambassador to Tuscany for political reasons. In fact he was elevated to the post as protégé of the Duke of Shrewsbury, but the latter's self-exile (1700-1705) and then the death of William III (1702) had deprived the ambassador of his most important political patrons.[5] In addition, the failure of his mission in Tuscany, especially after the departure of the English fleet from Livorno, undermined the reputation of the envoy, who was in growing difficulty. Indeed, Blackwell after having left himself exposed in his attempt to use the fleet as leverage against Tuscany now found himself alone in an environment that was completely hostile. Surprisingly, however, the most immediate danger for Blackwell did not come from the Tuscan government, but from the English one.

Secretary Nottingham was for political reasons eager to remove Blackwell from his position as ambassador and was deliberately undermining the envoy's reputation. Blackwell's removal was also in the interest of the Grand Duchy and, on this occasion, Nottingham and Giraldi became allies in the common intent of removing Blackwell. This section will highlight how the political divisions within the English government were instrumentally used by Tuscany to gain an advantage in the dispute. This section will also analyse the methods through which both the English Secretary of State and the Tuscan government tried to damage Blackwell's image. A Tuscan letter of accusation in particular will be analysed and compared with coeval publications regarding the role and duties of ambassadors. Through this analysis it will be possible to demonstrate how the

[5] Immediately after the departure of the Duke of Shrewsbury, Blackwell was stripped of his post as Knight Harbringer at the English court. This clearly demonstrates how, by losing the protection of the duke, Blackwell had already lost some of his credit with the government and the court. Furthermore, the death of William III and the return to the throne of the Stuarts with Anne removed another of the reasons that led to Blackwell's appointment as ambassador, namely the need to strengthen the Williamite regime.

Tuscan letter was carefully conceived to demonstrate that Blackwell did not possess the characteristics that were considered at the time indispensable for a diplomat.

Several months had passed since the Tuscan ambassador had begun to suspect that something was wrong in the relationship between Blackwell and Nottingham. Giraldi asked the Secretary of State many times if the harsh tones and threats used by Blackwell in Florence stemmed from direct orders received from the government 'but the minister had never approved or disapproved [of Blackwell's behaviour] [while] other important people that knew of it have condemned it'.[6] Too often the Secretary of State had been vague in answering the questions that the Tuscan ambassador asked him about Blackwell, and this made Giraldi suspicious: it seemed to him that Nottingham did not want to expose himself to defend Blackwell's initiatives. Giraldi decided to investigate and discovered that 'Mr. Blackwell is not at all dependent from him [Nottingham] and is here protected by the leaders of the opposing party, and considering that I have every reason to believe that my lord [Nottingham] has the intention of planting a creature of his there [in Tuscany], embarrassing Mr. Blackwell can facilitate [Nottingham's] design'.[7] Giraldi therefore began to suppose that the reason why Nottingham was so intransigent in handling the Plowman case was not only 'for the convenience of the nation' but also to embarrass Blackwell, 'for ultimately having an honourable pretext to get rid of him'.[8]

This discovery threw new light on the internal relations within the English administration, which were even more fragmented than the Tuscan ambassador could have imagined. Giraldi especially understood that this was a situation that Tuscany could

[6] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 March 1703.
[7] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 29 June 1703. Nottingham's motivation for replacing Blackwell was also purely political. Indeed Giraldi a few months later wrote 'everyone here serves more the faction and the party rather than [the interest of the nation], and the subordinates do not care or esteem their superiors who are not of equal [political] principles, and this is what obliges the Secretaries and Ministers of State to put creatures of theirs more they can in the [public] employments'. A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 7 December 1703.
[8] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 July 1703.

use to its advantage in order to finally end the long dispute with England. Indeed, Blackwell had been a thorn in the side of the Grand Ducal government for many years. His aggressiveness in the Plowman case had made him extremely unwelcome to Cosimo III, who had not failed to express his annoyance at the tones and attitudes that the English ambassador had held with him. The incidents that occurred in Livorno and finally the matter of the letter sent by Shovell, but maliciously written by Blackwell, had been the final straw. The Grand Duke and the Tuscan government wanted nothing more than to get rid of such a poisonous opponent, but up until that moment there had not been much that could be done to remove the envoy from his position. However, the fact that the English Secretary of State also wanted to get rid of Blackwell changed the situation completely.

Thus, Giraldi and Nottingham, now united by the desire of damaging the reputation of the English ambassador in Tuscany, became, at least on this front, allies. Indeed, once the Tuscan ambassador understood what the situation was, he began to provide the English Secretary of State with additional information that would have more effectively helped him to damage Blackwell's reputation. Whenever Giraldi had a meeting with Nottingham, he never failed to express some criticism against Blackwell, implying that he was not reliable, or capable, or trustworthy. Phrases such as 'if his information were faithful and exact [...] there would not be so much reason to dispute: we can clearly see that these alterations arise because the facts were not clearly explained by Mr. Blackwell', or similar allusions, became in fact quite common in the meetings between Nottingham and Giraldi.[9]

Nottingham, meanwhile, was playing his part by sending Blackwell deliberately unclear instructions in the hope that the ambassador might make some mistake. In one of

[9] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 July 1703.

his dispatches, for example, the Secretary of State ordered the English envoy that 'for the future you should give the memorials [to the Tuscan court] in any language but Italian, which is their own and gives them too great an advantage'.[10] Blackwell, perhaps driven by patriotic fervour or by the hope of causing discomfort and outrage in the Tuscan government, began to write his memorials in English. This was most unusual and Giraldi commented 'there is no minister of this crown who used or uses in foreign courts his natural language to put on paper the representations he is obliged to make, prevailing [among them] the Latin or the French language, which are the most common and received for the trade and correspondence between princes and powers of the world'.[11] Giraldi did not believe that the English government could approve that Blackwell 'made himself the author of such a curious distinction' and had therefore asked Nottingham for an explanation about that matter.[12] In fact, the Secretary of State had not told Blackwell to use English, but he had more vaguely ordered him to use 'any other language but Italian', leaving the ambassador to choose which language to prefer.[13] The fact that Blackwell made a mistake was exactly what Nottingham had hoped for and Giraldi, his precious accomplice in this affair, had faithfully brought back the information the minister needed to damage the reputation of the English ambassador. The Tuscan envoy for his part kept attacking Blackwell, making known to others in the government 'the improperness of Mr. Blackwell's procedures and how little they respond to the respect and attachment that His Royal Highness our Lord shows for [the English] crown and nation'.[14]

[10] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 14 May 1703.
[11] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 3 August 1703. On this topic see: Afgan Mehtiyev, 'The Language of Diplomacy', *California Linguistic Notes*, 35 (2010), Online ed.; Kamel S. Abu Jaber, 'Language and Diplomacy', in *Language and Diplomacy*, ed. by J. Kurbalija and H. Slavik, (Malta: DiploProjects, 2001), pp. 49-54.
[12] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 3 August 1703.
[13] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 14 May 1703. As seen in the previous chapter, Blackwell was raised 'as a merchant'. Therefore he probably knew Italian, and some French, but not Latin. It should also be remembered that Blackwell's secretary, Jean Majou, was French, and that he probably helped the envoy to read and write documents in French.
[14] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 21 September 1703.

The results of this curious alliance between Nottingham and Giraldi can also be seen in the evolution of their personal relationship. While at the beginning of the year (1703) Nottingham's attitude towards Giraldi was 'surly' and 'proud', by the end of September the Secretary of State always paid the Tuscan ambassador 'very kind and familiar compliments'.[15] Nottingham had even invited Giraldi 'to go and enjoy his hunts for a few days, which have the reputation of being the most beautiful and comfortable in the kingdom': this clearly demonstrates how the alliance they had made against Blackwell changed their relationship, which was now very friendly.[16]

Meanwhile, the operation to demolish Blackwell's credibility continued unabated. Giraldi, while continuing to have 'very pleasant' encounters with Nottingham, never missed an opportunity to show the 'extravagance of Mr. Blackwell's procedures' also to other ministers.[17] As mentioned before Nottingham had made the ambiguity of his orders to Blackwell a strategy. In fact, we have seen in the previous chapter how the instructions that the Secretary of State sent to the envoy shortly before the fleet arrived in Livorno were a masterpiece of vagueness: Blackwell was left with ample room for interpretation, and therefore for error. Despite his efforts, the ambassador failed to achieve anything significant, but the methods he had adopted exposed him once again to a great deal of criticism.

The incident of the gun salutes that occurred in Livorno had in fact been reported in every detail to Admiral Churchill, the highest ranking officer in the British navy and brother of the Duke of Marlborough.[18] Although he did not condemn Shovell's claim to an eleven gun salute, he nevertheless said that Blackwell's attitude on that occasion 'had

[15] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 28 September 1703.
[16] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 13 April 1703; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 28 September 1703.
[17] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 26 October 1703.
[18] The Lord High Admiral was the Prince of Denmark, consort of Queen Anne, but his rank was substantially formal.

been a great presumption and a great mistake'.[19] Churchill promised to 'give an exact account of everything to His Royal Highness [the prince of Denmark, husband of Queen Anne, had the title of Grand Admiral] and also to his colleagues of the admiralty 'in order to prevent such a notoriously surreptitious example from procuring any consequences'.[20] Giraldi approached 'everyone of the privy council' and showed them the letters that Blackwell had dictated to Shovell 'and everyone was surprised by such an excess of extravagance'.[21] The favourable reception of these insinuations pushed Giraldi to be even more direct, to the point of blatantly stating 'that it was a great disgrace of His Highness [Cosimo III] to have [as ambassador in Tuscany] a person who not only gave him the least justice […] but that always gives to his actions the most sinister interpretation'.[22]

To complete the work of demolishing Blackwell's credibility, Giraldi recommended that the Tuscan Government spread rumours against his English colleague among the British citizens in Livorno because this would be 'greatly useful and it would go together with the other practices introduced by me to facilitate his removal'.[23] In fact, the idea of undermining Blackwell's reputation among his compatriots residing in Tuscany would have contributed to the success of the strategy adopted by Giraldi and in this way the Grand Ducal government intended to achieve two objectives. The first was that the merchants would certainly inform their correspondents in London of the ambassador's irregular procedures. This would have helped to increase the number of those who had a bad opinion of the envoy, thus making the news already spread by Giraldi in the government and at the court more credible. The second was that the Livorno merchants would have lost faith in their ambassador and consul: this would have further isolated the English envoy, considerably reducing his ability to act, to the advantage of

[19] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 November 1703.
[20] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 November 1703.
[21] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 November 1703.
[22] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 26 October 1703.
[23] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 November 1703.

the Tuscan government.[24] We will see later in the chapter how effective this strategy would prove, but for the moment it will be sufficient to say that Giraldi and the Grand Ducal government, with the complicity of Nottingham, had set up an all-out, no-holds-barred offensive against Blackwell.

The analysis of one letter in particular, written by the first secretary Panciatichi to Giraldi at the end of October 1703, will highlight how broad and how refined the attack against Blackwell was. Comparing this document with some publications of the time regarding the figure and duties of an ambassador, will allow us to clearly identify the Tuscan strategies to undermine Blackwell's reputation, and to establish what effect these accusations provoked within the English government. An element of further interest in the analysis of this source is that Panciatichi's letter is the only original Tuscan document present in the section of The National Archives examined for this work.

The letter was prepared to provide Giraldi with a summary of the most significant elements that could damage Blackwell's reputation. The document was approved by Cosimo III in person who ordered the Tuscan ambassador to go 'expressly and promptly to My Lord Nottingham, putting all this story before his right reflection'.[25] But Giraldi did even more. In fact, the ambassador had already developed such a close relationship with Nottingham that he delivered the letter in full to the Secretary of State.[26] This once again shows how strong the alliance between them was and how integrated their strategies to remove Blackwell from his position had become.

Panciatichi began the letter by retracing the actions of Blackwell during the stay of the English fleet in Livorno, underlining his 'voluntary dissimulation' towards governor Tornaquinci and highlighting the effect 'of that poison [...] that snaked in his

[24] Blackwell also held the consulate for Livorno.
[25] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[26] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 7 December 1703.

soul' which had disseminated 'fruits so prejudicial to the veneration of His Royal Highness [Cosimo III] towards the Majesty of the Queen and to the common interest and good correspondence of this nation [of England] with the subjects of the Grand Duke'.[27] The Tuscan Secretary of State then underlined the 'violent' nature of Blackwell's operations who, moved by a 'poisoned rancor', had often 'raised his hand to threats', invented 'scams' and sowed 'discord', to organize 'new attacks' and to 'weave new subterfuges', clearly showing that he has 'no other object, no other glory than to distress the Grand Duke'.[28] By now, Panciatichi continued, the envoy 'who made a habit to threats' used them with 'unprecedented arbitrariness' against Shovell himself, even sacrificing 'the very word of an Admiral of England to boast the arrogance that he assumes over the British Queen's most authoritative and qualified ministers'.[29] After the harsh indictment against Blackwell, the Tuscan Secretary of State wondered 'where could this irreconcilable enmity of the envoy with the nobility and with the country have originated, while at the beginning of his employment here things passed with mutual harmony'.[30]

Panciatichi claimed that it was precisely on his return from London that Blackwell showed 'a new height, a new way and a certain contempt for the nobility, which retired from treating with him, not seeming to them to have his consideration'.[31] After all, the Tuscan secretary continued,

[27] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[28] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[29] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[30] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703. Blackwell's embassy, although uninterrupted from a formal point of view, can in fact be divided into two periods. After the first period spent in Tuscany (1696-1700), the ambassador spent a year in England, returning to the Grand Duchy at the beginning of 1702.
[31] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

> 'since one could not force anyone to have confidence with another, we thought fit to overlook this situation. There are nuncios and envoys here from France, Spain and other princes, some of whom have secured the affection of all, and they are masters of the country, and others always remain isolated because they have not adapted to the customs, manners and genius of the public, as precisely it followed with Monsieur Fouchez, predecessor to the present Monsieur Dupré [the French ambassador to Tuscany], to whom no one ever went'.[32]

'Over time' Panciatichi added 'it was figured that Blackwell came from England with the impulses of the interested parties and with promises of reward if he did conclude the business of Plowman according to their advantage'.[33] The Tuscan secretary concluded the letter by declaring that with Blackwell having now 'taken off his mask', the Grand Duke could no longer have any 'confidence or openness of heart' towards him, and therefore the Tuscan sovereign hoped to be freed 'from this harassment'.[34]

This letter obviously represents only a partial and conveniently adapted account of the true reality of the facts. However the truth was almost irrelevant in a context like the diplomatic one, where it was much more important what people *thought was true*, rather than what was *actually* true. Giraldi and Nottingham were participating in a game in which it was therefore essential not so much to use true arguments, but rather to use *the right* arguments to damage Blackwell's reputation. The letter of the Tuscan Secretary of State was based on several criterion, which can be compared with some contemporary publications on the role of ambassadors, their duties, behaviour, and the qualities they

[32] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[33] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[34] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

had to possess. In particular, Jean Hotman's *The Ambassador* (1603) and Francois de Calliere's *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes* (1716) will be examined.[35]

These are not the only publications of the time on the subject: from 1625 to 1700, 176 works relating to diplomacy were published. [36] Many of these were written in Latin and concerned the technical-legal aspect of the negotiations, such as the extension of the authority of sovereigns or of the law that governed relations between states.[37] The work of Hotman and that of de Calliere, considered by scholars particularly important and representative,[38] deal instead with the figure of the ambassador, focusing on the practical aspects of the diplomacy.[39] Hotman's work was very popular[40] and many of the subsequent authors based their work on that of the French diplomat.[41] The work of La Calliere was widely disseminated, and is considered a classic of the literature on the subject, which influenced diplomatic practice up to the twentieth century.[42] Both works

[35] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603); Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716).
[36] Vladimir E. Grabar, *De Legatorum Jure Tractatum Catalogos*, (Dorpat, 1905), pp. 229-304.
[37] Maurice Keens-Soper, 'Francois de Callieres and Diplomatic Theory', *The Historical Journal*, 16:3 (1973), p. 497.
[38]Other contemporary publications were: Balthasar Gracian, *The Art of Wordly Wisdom* (1647), which describes the path of transformation of a courtier into a diplomat; James Howell, *Proedria-vasilike a discourse concerning the precedence of kings […] and a separate treatise on ambassadors* (1664), which offers a treatise on the privileges and functions of an envoy; Abraham Wiquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (1681), which, however, more than describing the abstract functions and qualities that an ambassador, refers to the practical experience of the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia. On this work in particular, see: Maurice Keens-Soper, 'Abraham de Wicquefort and diplomatic theory', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 8:2 (1997), pp. 16–30. For a perspective on the evolution of the figure and the perception of the role and duties of the ambassador, see: Maurizio Bazzoli, 'Ragion di stato e interessi degli stati. La trattatistica sull'ambasciatore dal XV al XVIII secolo', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 86 (2002), pp. 283-328; *De l'ambassadeur: Les écrits relatifs à l'ambassadeur et à l'art de négocier du Moyen Âge au début du xix siècle*, ed. by S. Andreatta, S. Pequignot, JC. Waquet, (Rome, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2015).
[39] Daniela Frigo, 'Prudenza politica e conoscenza del mondo: un secolo di riflessione sulla figura dell'ambasciatore', in *De l'ambassadeur: Les écrits relatifs à l'ambassadeur et à l'art de négocier du Moyen Âge au début du xix siècle*, ed. by S. Andreatta, S. Pequignot, JC. Waquet, (Rome, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2015), p. 4; Aurélien Colson, 'The Ambassador between light and shade: the emergence of secrecy as the norm for international negotiation', *International Negotiation*, 13:2 (2008), p. 182.
[40] Franco Barcia, 'La figura dell'ambasciatore nei trattati di Charles Paschal e Jean Hotman de Villiers', *Trimestre. Storia, politica, società*, 36:1-2, (2003), pp. 25-42.
[41] It was precisely inspired by Hotman that the Spanish Juan Antonio de Vera in 1620 wrote *El Enbaxador*, a book which, although not having great differences with that of the French author, enjoyed a great success to the point that it was translated into French in 1635 and then into Italian in 1649.
[42] Aurélien Colson, 'The Ambassador between light and shade: the emergence of secrecy as the norm for international negotiation', *International Negotiation*, 13:2 (2008), p. 180.

were written by two professional diplomats, and therefore allow us to understand not only what the expectation was that sovereigns, governments and the public had of these figures, but above all what was the idea, or at least the ideal, which diplomats had, and tried to convey, of themselves, their profession and their role.[43] For both Hotman and Calliere diplomacy is an art capable of mediating between the conflicting interests of states and therefore represents 'an unavoidable activity necessary to the well-being of the state'.[44] Both authors start from the belief that 'the pursuit of state interests is presumed to be compatible with civilized behaviour', and in fact in their works they underline how an ambassador must always behave in a moral and honourable manner.[45]

For both authors, the main task of an ambassador was to 'confirme and to entertaine the amitie (sic.) of the prince or people to whom he is sent'[46] and to 'negotiate there the affairs of his own Prince'.[47] Furthermore, an ambassador 'if there be any misunderstanding between [the sovereigns], must do his endeavour to remove it, […] he is to protect and defend the interests which the subjects of his prince have in that country; he is to encourage their trade there, and to maintain a good correspondence between them and the subjects of the prince to whom he is sent'.[48] Above all, an ambassador had to avoid 'every thing that may give occasion to new disputes, and to govern himself in such a manner, as he may be no ways blamed for having contributed to them'.[49] Similarly for both authors an ambassador 'ought to found chiefly the success of his negotiations on the

[43] Daniela Frigo, 'Prudenza politica e conoscenza del mondo: un secolo di riflessione sulla figura dell'ambasciatore', *De l'ambassadeur: Les écrits relatifs à l'ambassadeur et à l'art de négocier du Moyen Âge au début du xix siècle*, ed. by S. Andreatta, S. Pequignot, JC. Waquet, (Rome, Publications de l'École française de Rome, 2015), p. 42.
[44] Maurice Keens-Soper, 'Francois de Callieres and Diplomatic Theory', *The Historical Journal*, 16:3 (1973), p. 499.
[45] Maurice Keens-Soper, 'Francois de Callieres and Diplomatic Theory', *The Historical Journal*, 16:3 (1973), p. 499.
[46] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), p. 46.
[47] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 80.
[48] *Ibid*., p. 84.
[49] *Ibid*., p. 85.

uprightness and integrity of his own proceeding'[50] as 'lying and dissimulation are assured marks of an ignoble hart, and of a man of basely borne'.[51] In fact 'to lie, to deceive, betray' or 'to weaken and trouble the estate [of a sovereign prince], especially in time of peace, and under color of amitie and alliance' was an act considered 'directly against the commandement of God , against the law of nature, and of nations. It is a violating of the publicke faith, without which human societie and finally the frame of the world would be dissolved'.[52]

The second function of an ambassador was that '[to] discover what passes in the court, and in the council of the country where he resides. [...] He ought to cultivate a friendship with the acquaintances of his predecessor and ought to procure new ones if he thinks that the former are not able to give him all the information he wants'.[53] To do this, an ambassador had to be 'very assiduous in giving his attendance at the prince's court, and must endeavour to make himself as familiar there as he can [...] and by that means be always in the way of discovering what passes'.[54] A capable ambassador therefore had to be able 'by his civilities and his presents' to earn the friendship of those 'of greatest esteem, and who are most capable of diverting the resolutions that are prejudicial to the interests of his master, and of favouring his designs'.[55] Above all, an ambassador had to avoid falling 'into that gross error of some foreign ministers, who being to live in a court for several years, render themselves unacceptable and suspected to the prince and his ministers […]'.[56] Such a thing was 'such a want of judgement, that is inexcusable in a minister, and yet it is what we see a great many fall into, who interest themselves passionately, without knowing for what reason, in the general affairs of Europe; and

[50] *Ibid*., p. 80.
[51] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), p. 62.
[52] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), p. 110.
[53] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 90.
[54] *Ibid*., p. 94.
[55] *Ibid*., p. 94.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 147.

whose indiscretion proceeds so far as to show an impotent evil will to the interests of the court where they reside'.[57] Furthermore, if an ambassador behaved in this way just to satisfy 'his own private passions they thereby give proof of their incapacity, or want of fidelity, by sacrificing the interests of their master to their own humours. And a prince who is well advis'd ought to recall those ministers who fall into this error; because a passionate man gives usually false relations of the state of the court where he is; and false relations make the prince who receives them to take false measures'.[58]

Comparison of Panciatichi's letter with these two publications reveals the sophisticated and organized nature of the attack on Blackwell. The letter not only targeted Blackwell's lack of the fundamental qualities that an ambassador should have possessed, but above all it underlined the public's expectations of those qualities.

If the task of an envoy was to 'entertaine amitie'[59], to 'remove [...] any misunderstanding', to avoid 'anything that would give occasion to new disputes' and, above all, if the envoy had to behave in a way 'he may be no ways blamed for having contributed to them'[60], it quickly becomes clear, considering the events in Livorno, that Blackwell's embassy had been a complete failure. In fact, the Grand Ducal government accused the English ambassador of not only having 'disseminated fruits prejudicial to the veneration of His Royal Highness towards the Majesty of the Queen and the common interest and good correspondence' between Tuscany and England, but even of having 'invented new scams', 'armed new attacks' and 'weaved new subterfuges', with the sole purpose 'to surround the Grand Duke with bitterness'.[61]

Therefore, already in the first paragraphs of the letter the Tuscan government aimed with extreme precision at the very heart of what was considered to be the first duty

[57] *Ibid*., p. 148.
[58] *Ibid*., p. 148.
[59] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), p. 62.
[60] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 46.
[61] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

of an ambassador, demonstrating that Blackwell's actions were incompatible with his role. But Blackwell had not simply acted against the Tuscan government. He had disseminated his 'subterfuges' through 'voluntary dissimulation', 'sowing discords', due to a 'poisoned rancour' that 'snaked into his soul'.[62] Blackwell had not sought the success of his negotiations through 'the uprightness and integrity of his own proceeding',[63] but through deception, a thing that was considered 'assured marks of an ignoble hart, and of a man of basely borne'.[64] The Tuscan government placed extreme attention on this point, in order to irreparably damage the honour and credibility of the English envoy. The whole letter of Panciatichi is in fact pervaded not only by terms that pertain to the sphere of deception, but Blackwell's actions and his way of behaving are compared, through the frequent use of words such as 'poison' and 'snaking', to the deceiving and traitor animal par excellence: the snake. But if Blackwell had evidently failed in his main task and had indeed proved himself to be a poorly honourable person, he had also failed in his other duties as ambassador.

In fact, it was mentioned above that one of the main tasks of an ambassador was to 'discover what passes in the court, and in the council of the country where he resides […], to cultivate friendships [...] especially those of of greatest esteem, and who are most capable of diverting the resolutions that are prejudicial to the interests of his master'.[65] But how could Blackwell do all this if he had demonstrated 'a new height, a new way and a certain contempt for the nobility' so much so that the Tuscan aristocracy 'had retired from treating him'?[66] In a very explicit way, Panciatichi made the example of some successful ambassadors 'who with their manners conciliated the affection of all and were masters of the country', and he then cited others who 'have not adapted to the customs,

[62] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[63] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 81.
[64] Jean Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), p. 62.
[65] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 90.
[66] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.

manners and genius of the public and have always remained isolated'.[67] The comparison was clearly a rhetorical device to surreptitiously demonstrate not only Blackwell's complete isolation, but also his total ineffectiveness, since a person 'to whom nobody went to' could certainly not be 'master of the country', nor in any way he could worthily serve the interests of his own nation.[68]

Blackwell, for his 'unruly passion'[69] had therefore fallen 'into that gross error of some foreign ministers, who being to live in a court for several years, render themselves unacceptable and suspected to the prince and his ministers'.[70] Above all, the English envoy, whose subterfuges had not only failed but had also been discovered, clearly demonstrated 'an impotent evil will to the interests of the court where [he] reside'.[71] But the worst of it was that Blackwell had done all this for his own interest. Indeed, the final thrust was aimed at Blackwell's loyalty to the interests of the government and to the honour of the English crown. In fact, he was openly accused by the Tuscan government of having sold himself to Plowman and his associates 'for promises of rewards if he concluded the business according to their interest'.[72] But when an ambassador sacrificed 'the interests of [his] master to [his] own humor' he would have given 'proof of [his] incapacity, or want of fidelity'.[73] If one had ever come to this point 'a prince who is well adivis'd ought to recall those ministers who fall into this error, because a passionate man gives usually false relations of the state of the court where he is; and false relations make the prince who receives them to take false measures'.[74] In fact, we have already seen in previous chapters how Blackwell falsified his reports to the Secretary of State and how

[67] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[68] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[69] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[70] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 147.
[71] *Ibid*., p. 147.
[72] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[73] Francois de Calliere, *The Art of Negotiating with Sovereign Princes*, (London, 1716), p. 148.
[74] *Ibid*., p. 148.

this hindered the capacity of the English government which, based on false reports, actually took wrong decisions.

Panciatichi concluded the letter by declaring that he had 'strong confidence that a Queen so great, so benign, so just and assisted by ministers of such supposition, and of such rectitude would not allow that a prince as the Grand Duke, who has given so many proofs of his veneration and his respect for Her Majesty, would be sacrificed to the unruly passion of Mr. Blackwell'.[75] The conclusion of the letter, although expressed in very respectful terms, was the last thrust and the necessary logical conclusion of the whole discourse. Panciatichi said that, Blackwell now having 'taken off his mask' and having revealed himself to be a person without honour, it was now the primary interest of a 'Queen so great and so just', assisted by ministers 'of such rectitude', to remove him from his post.

Panciatichi's letter was delivered to Nottingham in mid-November 1703, and no doubt the minister used it among his colleagues and perhaps even with the sovereign herself, as an effective tool to damage Blackwell's reputation. From the analysis of this document, it is clear that the attack of the Tuscan government was specifically designed not so much to damage Blackwell by contesting his actions, but by questioning his honour. The Tuscan Secretary of State did not choose arguments that concerned the truth of the facts, which is barely mentioned in the letter, but he chose arguments that could generate impression, bewilderment and moral reproach. Blackwell was described not only as an incompetent, but as a dishonest incompetent who, with his actions, demonstrated 'the arrogance he [assumed] over the most authoritative and qualified ministers of the British Queen'.[76] Therefore, the Tuscan government sought once again to capitalise on divisions in the English government in order to win the Plowman case. These insinuations

[75] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703.
[76] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Francesco Panciatichi to Iacopo Giraldi, 20 October 1703

were indeed the right tool to break through and cause turmoil in the febrile English political climate, where the government was deeply fractured and where public opinion had such an important role. The Tuscan government initiated a battle for English public opinion with its attack on Blackwell. We will see later in the chapter how the most decisive battle of the Plowman case will be fought on the ground of public opinion.

The Rules of the Game

The Tuscan ambassador was able, in 1702 and 1703, to elaborate successful diplomatic strategies in the Plowman case. However, his ability to act with ease and effectiveness were the result of a long process of acculturation to English society and politics since his arrival in London at the beginning of April 1700. In the first months of his residence Giraldi was in fact catapulted into a completely new world with social and cultural rules which were totally different from those to which he was used to. Although it is clear that history is made by men, often their feelings, emotions, and personal difficulties emerge little in historical analysis. Sources, especially diplomatic ones, by their very nature tend to show a world in which thoughts and decisions had already been developed and taken, and only rarely describe the difficult personal cognitive and emotional paths that developed those thoughts and led to those decisions.

This section will reconstruct the Tuscan ambassador's adaptation to English society. Upon his arrival in England Giraldi suffered a strong culture shock that generated in him feelings of disorientation and hostility. His misunderstanding of some English political and social dynamics had significant consequences on the development of the Plowman case. Yet, through a slow process of cultural understanding and assimilation, Giraldi configured himself with the English political and social environment, to the point of penetrating its most subtle mechanisms of functioning. Only at the end of this long

process of adaptation the ambassador was able to develop a strategy which, advantageously using some institutional peculiarities of the English system, finally allowed Tuscany to victoriously conclude the Plowman case.[77]

It is not easy to reconstruct the intellectual, cultural and emotional path of a person who, more than three hundred years ago, found himself living an alienating cultural experience.[78] Historical sources, and especially diplomatic sources, are rather ungenerous with information regarding intimacy, and the deep thoughts of those who wrote them. When Giraldi drew up his reports he concentrated on specific events and facts which he considered relevant, in order to provide the Tuscan government with useful information. But precisely because the purpose of those documents was to provide an analysis that should have been as lucid and rational as possible, the emotional component was carefully repressed: not only would it have been inconvenient to express personal emotions in an official report, but this could also have suggested to the Tuscan government that the ambassador was having difficulty discharging his duties. Despite this, it must be considered that the topics reported in the ambassador's dispatches were in any case the result of a choice, between what he considered important to report, and what he instead considered superfluous. Nevertheless emotions also played a part in this choice, because it is clear that Giraldi was more likely to report what seemed to him interesting, unusual and that impressed him most. The coherent series of sources concerning the Tuscan envoy extending from 1700 to 1705 provide an in-depth

[77] Some specific personality traits are also important in assessing the impact of culture shock on an individual, such as 'cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility'. Indeed Giraldi's path of adaptation to English society shows that he possessed those qualities, which helped him to cope with the culture shock. On this topic: Karen van der Zee, Jan Peter van Oudenhoven, 'Culture Shock or Challenge? The Role of Personality as Determinant of Intercultural Competence', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 44:6 (2013), pp.928-940.

[78] The concept of culture shock, widely used in anthropological and cultural studies, is not frequently used in historical research.: Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations*, (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 2007); Edward Dutton, 'The Culture Shock of Saint Patrick', *Estudios irlandeses*, 6.6 (2011), pp.125-131.

perspective on the actions of the ambassador and allow the reconstruction of his adaptation to English society and politics.

Iacopo Giraldi was appointed ambassador in 1699 and reached the British Isles in the spring of 1700. Giraldi had never been to England and therefore the Tuscan Secretary of State provided him with a detailed report concerning the system of government, customs and usages of English society. This report had been put together by integrating old information collected thirty years earlier by Cosimo III during his trip to England, with the most recent news coming through the Tuscan merchants residing in London and the English ones residing in Livorno. The purpose of this extensive report was to prepare the envoy to carry out his assignment to the best of his ability, but there was no report that could truly prepare Giraldi to concretely operate in English society. In fact, it was one thing to read information about a distant land, and quite another to actually find himself living and acting in a world that was completely different, in terms of language, customs, traditions, religion and political order, from that to which the envoy was used to.

Culture is not something innate, but something that is acquired through learning, and which is characteristic of the society in which an individual is born and grows up. Culture is therefore extremely difficult to define precisely because, as Geert Hofstede wrote, 'culture consists of the unwritten rules of the social game'.[79] When an individual moves to a foreign country, he brings with him all the values, beliefs, behaviours, prejudices and emotions that distinguish and belong to his culture. Therefore, depending on the degree of similarity between the original culture of the individual and that of the host country, he can experience a 'culture shock', which is defined as 'a natural reaction

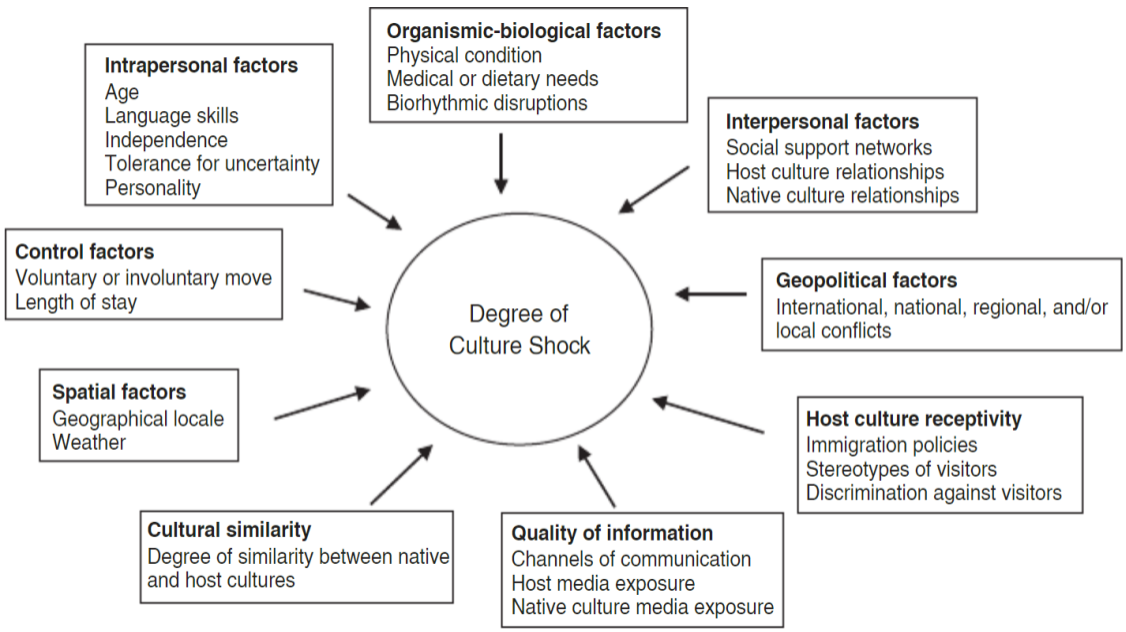
[79] Geert Hofstede et Al., *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), p. 6.

to the clash and collision of cultural order'.[80] Culture shock represents the difficulty that the individual has in configuring and adapting to live and operate in a cultural context other than his own, and the symptoms of culture shock can be disorientation, confusion, incomprehension and hostility towards the new environment. Scholars usually identify four stages in the process of impact and consequent adaptation resulting from culture shock. The individual will first experience a 'honeymoon' phase, that is, enthusiasm for the new culture, whose differences from his own are taken with a sense of curiosity and interest. This phase is usually quickly followed by the real 'culture shock' phase, in which the person feels a sense of crisis, hostility and frustration. This phase, which can last up to a year, is followed by an 'adjustment' phase, in which the individual begins to recover and positively confront with the new cultural context, until reaching the last phase of 'adaptation', in which he has completely adapted to the new environment.[81]

[80] James W. Neuliep, 'Culture Shock and Reentry Shock', *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*, (Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons, 2017), p. 2. Further readings on this topic: Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*. *International Differences in Work-Related Values* (London: Sage, 1984); Young Yung Kim, '*Cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory'*, *International and intercultural communication annual, Intercultural communication theory*, vol. 19, ed. by R. L. Wiseman (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 170–193.

[81] Michael Winkelman, 'Cultural Shock and Adaptation', Journal of Counseling and Development, 73 (1994), p. 122.

As shown in the diagram below, the level of culture shock depends on a number of specific factors.[82]



In Giraldi's experience it is difficult to identify the 'honeymoon' phase. If the ambassador had had any enthusiasm or expectations for his trip to England, these had quickly dissipated during the long and tiring winter journey, which lasted two months and had taken him across all of Europe to reach the British Isles.[83] Giraldi had left Florence at the end of January and the ambassador, passing through the Alps and crossing Germany, arrived in London at the beginning of April.

One of the primary factors to be taken into consideration in assessing the degree of culture shock is that of the 'control factors', that is, to what extent the transfer to the foreign country is voluntary and how long the stay in that place is expected to be. When

[82] The diagram is from: James W. Neuliep, *Intercultural Comunication, a Contextual Approach*, (London: Sage, 2018).

[83] Giraldi left Florence at the end of January and arrived in London at the beginning of April. He took the road to Bologna, and then passed through Parma and Trento. Crossing Germany he stopped in Frankfurt and then in Dusseldorf, where he met the Elector Johann Wilhelm and the Electress Maria Luisa, daughter of Cosimo III. Giraldi then proceeded to Amsterdam and embarked for England in Rotterdam. The path chosen by the ambassador was about 2.000 kilometers long and he travelled an average of 33 kilometres per day.

Giraldi was offered the post of ambassador he could certainly have refused, but this would have meant the end of his career. In fact, it was unthinkable, in a political context such as the Tuscan monarchy, that refusing a prestigious position would be without consequences for one's future. Giraldi was also aware that the appointment as ambassador would mean leaving Tuscany for many years, and that he could only return with the explicit permission of the Grand Duke. In fact, not only did it take time to move to a new country, but above all it took time to create a network of friendships, relationships and useful acquaintances that made an ambassador so important in collecting and processing information. Thus this can be considered the first concrete factor of culture shock suffered by the ambassador, that is, his fundamental lack of alternatives in accepting or not the position he was offered and the awareness that he would have left his native country for many years.

Another aspect highlighted concerning culture shock are the 'spatial factors', that is, the factors that refer to the geographical and climatic differences between the country of origin and that of the new residence. Florence and London were very different urban centres. Florence had 70,000 inhabitants at the time, while London had a population of over 500,000 people.[84] On arrival in the English capital, the Tuscan envoy therefore found himself catapulted into an immense metropolis, which alone accounted for more than two thirds of all the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy.[85] The impact of such vastness, and of the swarming crowd that populated it, must have been quite significant on the envoy: even just orienting himself in such an immense context could easily have caused him a sense of disorientation and even of fear. The weather also played its part in the culture shock of the Tuscan ambassador, since there is no doubt that the London climate was very different from the Mediterranean and the Tuscan one.

[84] Vanessa Harding, 'The Population of London, 1550–1700: a review of the published evidence', *The London Journal*, 15:2 (1990), pp. 111–128.
[85] The population of the Grand Duchy was 700.000 people. Paolo Malanima, 'Demografia ed economia in Toscana: il lungo periodo (secoli XIV-XIX)', in *Prezzi, redditi, popolazioni in Italia: 600 anni (dal secolo XIV al secolo XX)*, ed. by M. Breschi - P. Malanima (Udine, SIDES, 2002) pp. 109-142.

Another aspect that has a fundamental impact on the level of culture shock is the 'host culture receptivity', that is, how much the new society is willing to welcome foreigners and whether specific prejudices or discrimination exist against them. When Iacopo Giraldi arrived in England in the early 1700s, he was the first Grand Ducal ambassador to set foot on English soil since 1691, when the last resident minister of the Grand Duke, Francesco Terriesi, left the island after the people, in the throes of anti-Catholic fervour, had burned down his house. Thus the last memory of the Tuscan diplomatic mission was of a violent and traumatic nature, and this must have already had an impact on the expectations of the Tuscan ambassador.

Giraldi had not even had time to settle in his new home in London when he was informed that Parliament had just passed a law that awarded a 'reward of one hundred pounds to anyone who denounces an occult [Catholic] priest', who once discovered would be 'irremediably punished with perpetual prison'.[86] The same law then provided that every citizen at the age of eighteen should be asked 'whether he intended to remain Catholic or to become a Protestant, threatening those who will hold onto the first party the deprivation of all their assets and possessions'.[87] The ambassador was understandably troubled by the 'very ominous' consequences that this provision could generate 'to the cause of the poor Catholics of this kingdom', but the surprises were far from over.[88]

Just a few days later, on the 4th April, which was Easter Sunday, Giraldi paid a visit to the envoy of Portugal. In the home of the Portuguese ambassador, Giraldi found the Catholic bishop of London, now in his eighties, 'who, along with many other

[86] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 April 1700. The law was titled: 'An Act for the Further Preventing the Growth of Popery' e fu approvata il 25 Marzo 1700. William III, 1698-9: An Act for the further preventing the Growth of Popery, in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (Great Britain Record Commission, 1820), pp. 586-587. Accessible at: Accessible at: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol7.

[87] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 April 1700. On this topic see: Colin Haydon, 'Parliament and Popery in England, 1700-1780'. *Parliamentary History,* 19:1 (2008), pp. 49–63; *Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland 1600-2000*, ed. by C. Geeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

[88] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 9 April 1700.

clergymen, finds himself taking refuge in the envoy's house to hide from the present fierce persecution'.[89] 'It really moves to compassion', commented Giraldi, 'to see a gentleman of so much zeal and so much goodness bound to live on the run and obliged to beg asylum for his life in someone else's house'.[90] Giraldi therefore suddenly found himself in a world in which some fundamental and identifying values of his culture, in this case his religious affiliation, were openly persecuted. In fact, the ambassador was not only a Catholic, but he came from a country, Tuscany, which not only had very strong political and institutional ties with the papacy, but whose ruling dynasty had given Rome three popes. Of course, Giraldi was not naive and was aware of the persecution of religious minorities elsewhere. Now, however, Giraldi found himself on the wrong side of the confessional divide. In fact, as a Catholic, he went from being a member of an undisputed majority to being part of a persecuted minority and this must certainly have had a significant impact on him. The widespread anti-Catholic sentiment present in England extended to all levels of society. The year 1700 had been declared by the pontiff, as is customary for the renewal of the century, a jubilee year. Cosimo III had taken advantage of the opportunity to pay a visit to Rome, partly to satisfy his own devotion and partly to personally demand the royal treatment that had recently been granted by the Pope to the Medici house. The news of the Grand Duke's visit to Rome had made the rounds of the European courts and had also reached London. On a public occasion at court William III had personally asked Giraldi 'if it was true that his Highness went to Rome, how he had made his journey, and how long he had stayed there'.[91] When the king asked

[89] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 16 April 1700. On religious intolerance against Catholics in England see: Alexandra M. Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); Alexandra M. Walsham *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[90] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 16 April 1700.
[91] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 24 June 1700.

his question he was surrounded by various ministers and great nobles of the kingdom and Giraldi found himself forced 'to cut as short as possible, being that of Rome, of Jubilee and of Devotion, in the place and in the group in which I was, matter rather of laughter than of edification'.[92] From these words it is evident the embarrassment, and also a sense of painful estrangement, felt by the ambassador in that moment, when his Catholic faith and his sovereign's devotion could even have been ridiculed by the English protestant ministers and nobles. Furthermore, the use in his dispatches of some terms such as 'persecution' or even 'extermination', that is, terms that refer to the emotional sphere of fear, are in fact revealing signs of the impact that being part of a minority had on the envoy.

With regard to the religious aspect, we can appreciate the first sign of the ambassador's adaptation to the new culture. The first period of 'culture shock' is demonstrated by the fact that Giraldi's letters contain many comments regarding the religion and the condition of Catholics in England. A few months later these comments diminished, and then disappeared almost completely in the following years. Giraldi had certainly not changed his opinion on his religion, nor had the confessional element become less significant for him. Indeed, the ambassador had several priests sent from Tuscany (a foreign minister was prohibited by law from employing Catholic priests who were British subjects)[93] to celebrate mass in a chapel built inside his house. This small chapel, completely decorated at the expense of Cosimo III, was theoretically supposed to serve only for the private use of the ambassador and his family. However, the diplomatic inviolability that was guaranteed to the house of Giraldi allowed many English Catholics to use the chapel for their religious functions. The Tuscan priests were also used (as well

[92] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 24 June 1700.
[93] An Act for the further preventing the Growth of Popery, in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 7, 1695-1701*, ed. John Raithby (Great Britain Record Commission, 1820), pp. 586-587.

as those of other Catholic ambassadors) to keep the Catholic faith alive in London.[94] They were in fact enrolled as members of the Tuscan ambassador's family, and therefore enjoyed all the privileges and diplomatic immunities of Giraldi: in this way, the Tuscan priests could freely go to the homes of English Catholics to celebrate sacred services.[95] Therefore the fact that in Giraldi's dispatches the confessional element slowly disappeared can only mean that the impact that the religious element had in the way in which the ambassador related to English society had progressively diminished. Giraldi, that is, had begun a process of understanding, assimilation and adaptation to the new reality in which he found himself living.

But the differences between English and Tuscan society were not limited to religion. Indeed, another fundamental factor for establishing the impact of culture shock derives from 'culture similarity', that is, the degree of similarity between the society of origin and the host one. Tuscany and England were also extremely different from both politically and institutionally. The former was an absolute monarchy, the latter was a constitutional monarchy, in which the power of the sovereign was limited by a series of laws and customs. However, such a 'simplistic' statement risks being alien to its historical context and therefore of neglecting the complexity of consequences that such an institutional difference generated, not only in the way in which citizens dealt with the state and its institutions, but above all in the way citizens pictured themselves within the political space of the state. This difference is even more relevant when evaluated in the context of the Tuscan ambassador, who was actually operating in an alien political environment, whose mechanisms he had difficulty understanding. We will see later how

[94] On the rights of diplomats in England at that time see: Edward Coke, *The Fourth Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (1694), p. 153. On diplomatic immunity: Edward R. Adair, *The Exterritoriality of Ambassadors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: Longman, 1929); Linda S. Frey, Marsha L. Frey, *The History of Diplomatic Immunity* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999); Keith Hamilton, Richard Langhorn, *The Practice of Diplomacy: its Evolution, Theories and Administration* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 48-56.

[95] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 24 June 1700.

Giraldi's initial misunderstanding of some dynamics of English politics will have significant consequences on the development of the Plowman case.

An absolute monarchy like that of Tuscany can be described as a static system with a rigid hierarchy, where it was very clear for most of the subjects who held the power and what the chain of command was. The Medici dukes in particular had been extremely long-lived. Ferdinand II reigned for forty-nine years (1621-1670) and in 1700 Cosimo III happily celebrated the thirty years of his reign. Grand-ducal ministers also remained in office for a very long time, usually until their death or until old age prevented them from carrying out the duties of their office. They often survived even the death of the Grand Duke who had appointed them, continuing to serve the next sovereign in the same post. Francesco Panciatichi, for example, took office as Secretary of State with Ferdinand II in 1664, and continued his career with Cosimo III, first becoming Secretary of War and finally First Secretary, a position he held at least until 1705.[96]

From 1621 to 1700 the reigns of Ferdinand II and Cosimo III had therefore covered eighty years. At the time the average life expectancy was around forty years, and this meant that in that period of time several generations were born, raised and died under the same Grand Duke. The memory that one generation passed on to another was therefore representative of a world that had an extremely slow pace of political and institutional change, or that just did not have any kind of change at all.[97] In Tuscany, authority was firmly in the hands of the monarch, who exercised it through his ministers, and only a very small number of people had influence on the government of the nation.

[96] The *Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Inventario Sommario* (Roma, Ministero dell'Interno, 1966) and Vanna Arrighi, *Giovanni Panciatichi*, in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, Vol. 80 (Roma, Treccani, 2014) erroneously report the date of death of Francesco Panciatichi to 1696. However, the documentary investigation carried out for this work shows that Panciatichi continued to hold his posts in the Secretariat of State at least until 1705.

[97] On the link between memory and identity, see: Remo Bodei, 'Memoria e Costruzione della Persona', *Iride*, 60 (2010), pp.339-350; Nadia Urbinati, 'La Memoria è nel Presente: Lontananza e Identità', *Iride*, n. 60 (2010), pp. 393-408.

A strict censorship of the press kept the arguments that could be open to public debate under control, which however was never political because the administration of the state was not perceived as the prerogative of the people, but as the territory of exclusive action of the monarch, of his ministers and a small circle of aristocrats.

If we compare the English institutional framework with that of Tuscany, the situation could not have been more different. From 1649 until 1702 the English kingdom had in fact passed through many political experiences and had undergone many regime changes. From the execution of Charles I (1649) to the Commonwealth period (1649-1660), from the Restoration to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, finally with the accession of Queen Anne to the throne (1702),[98] in just fifty years the British political and institutional system had been subjected to constant revolutions. Each of these regime changes had also resulted in the replacement of ministers and public officials, chosen from time to time with the aim of strengthening the current regime, and changed as political conditions changed. This meant that the memory that generations passed on to each other was a memory of fierce debates, of change and of revolutions, bloody or 'glorious' as they were. In few words, the British subject was used to an idea that was very difficult for a Tuscan subject to understand, that is, that the political and institutional system could change, and that it could do it quite rapidly. On the contrary, the world in which Giraldi lived until his arrival in England was a static world, where change not only occurred slowly, but was institutionally viewed with extreme suspicion. The fundamental difference between the two systems was above all that the British subject had always been involved, sometimes in spite of himself, in the civil wars and in the institutional changes

[98] In reality, the death of Anne's only son in 1700 had already opened up the problem of succession again. Eventually the house of Hannover would inherit the throne in 1714.

of his country and in the 1700s he considered that he had the right to express his opinion in matters concerning the political order of the state.[99]

In fact, the progressive expansion of the power of Parliament against that of the Crown had brought with it the admission that the state was not the exclusive prerogative of the sovereign and of the highest ruling class, but that it was a common good. The parliament that limited the sovereign's authority was in fact an expression of the population, and its task was, at least theoretically, precisely that of adopting policies that represented the true interest of the people and of the nation. In addition, the elective system and the search for votes and popular support by politicians had increased the relative importance of the subject-elector, who thus felt more and more legitimately part of a national debate that involved every aspect of public life. Thus, the regime changes, and their political, social and moral consequences, had created in England what Habermas called the 'public sphere', which was almost completely absent in Tuscany.[100]

Considering and keeping in mind these differences, we can more adequately understand what the impact and what the culture shock suffered by Giraldi was, when he was confronted with a social, political and institutional system which was so different from the one he was used to. As a Tuscan, he was in fact devoid of all those political categories which were now a relatively common prerogative for a fairly high percentage of English citizens. It was the constant debate that reigned in the English society that particularly stunned the Tuscan envoy. For Giraldi, in fact, the idea that a common subject

[99] The growing number of petitions and "loyal addresses" presented to the crown during the second half of the seventeenth century are an indicator of citizen participation in state politics. On this topic see: Mark Knight, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 127-136.

[100] Jurgen Habermas, Sara Lennox, Frank Lennox, The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964). *New German Critique*, 3 (1974), pp. 49-55. On the expansion of the concept of 'public sphere' in historical analysis see: Peter Lake, Steve Pincus, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 45 (2006), pp. 270–292; David Randall, 'Epistolary, Rhetoric, the Newspaper and the Public Sphere', *Past & Present*, 198 (2008), pp. 3-32; Laura A. M. Stewart, 'Introduction: Publics and Participation in Early Modern Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 56 (2017), pp. 709-730; Tim Harris, 'Publics and Participation in the Three Kingdoms: Was There Such a Thing as "British Public Opinion" in the Seventeenth Century?', *Journal of British Studies*, 56 (2017), pp. 731-753.

could discuss what the monarch's religion, or the institutional order should be, or that could even propose changes or innovations to the political regime, was simply inconceivable: not only such a thing would never have been allowed in Tuscany, but it would almost certainly have been punished. Instead in England everyone felt the right to express their own idea and the need to take a position on any issue considered relevant. From religion, to succession to the throne, from commerce, to fiscal and commercial policy, the debate, especially in London, was almost universal and the resulting political division was so strong that 'it truly seemed to contemporaries that it was threatening to rend apart their whole society'.[101]

These debates and the way in which they were carried out highlight another important element for evaluating culture shock: 'quality information', that is, the level of exposure to local media. Giraldi, once he arrived 'in the chaos of the great world of London', in fact found himself being submerged by an enormous amount of information.[102]

It has been mentioned above that one of the characteristics of English society was the level of involvement of the population in the debates that concerned every aspect of the civil, political and economic life of the country. These debates were carried on through an impressive amount of publications, pamphlets, leaflets and posters[103] that were distributed for free or for a few coins in the squares, pubs and cafes.[104] It was not

[101] Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power, Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (Longman, 1993), p. 334.
[102] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 24 June 1700.
[103] On this topic see: Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Joad Raymond, 'The newspaper, public opinion, and the public sphere in the seventeenth century', *Prose Studies*, 21 (1998), pp. 109–136; Pascal Verhoest, 'Seventeenth-Century Pamphlets as Constituents of a Public Communication Space: a Histprical Critique of Public Sphere Theory', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36:1 (2019), pp. 47-62.
[104] On the physical places where the political debate took place: Steve Pincus, '"Coffee Politicians Does Create": Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture', *The Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), pp.

uncommon to see crowds of people in the streets listening to the words of an agitator, or the preaching of a pastor, or the passionate speech of a member of parliament. The House of Commons, and the House of Lords, when in session, were a constant source of contradictory rumours, and the measures that were discussed were echoed through the streets of the city, giving new fuel to the uninterrupted flow of debates, leaflets and news. So much confusion must have been stunning for a person like the Tuscan ambassador accustomed not only to the rhythms of a provincial city like Florence, but who was above all used to an institutional system where political debate was completely absent, or that was confined within a small circle of people and enclosed behind the thick walls of the grand ducal palace. On the contrary, in England there was 'the custom of publishing everything that follows with prints, and therefore making it common to all sorts of people', and the fact that political debate was patrimony of the common man never ceased to amaze Giraldi.[105] The most difficult thing for the ambassador was above all to understand, in the chaos of information that rained down on him from everywhere, which news and which rumours were important and which were not. In short, he found himself confronted with a problem, which is very current nowadays, of understanding what really was significant news and what was not, so as to be able to distinguish concrete facts from the 'fake news' which fuelled the English political debate.

The dispatches of the first period in which the ambassador resided in London reflect his bewilderment and difficulty in understanding a social and political context so different from what he was used to. They tended to be very long, incredibly detailed and quite discursive. The ambassador, in fact, trying to keep up with the news from the court, the ministries, the two houses of Parliament and from the street, compiled in his

807–834; Vicky Hsueh, 'Intoxicated Reasons, Rational Feelings, Rethinking the Early Modern English Public Sphere', *The Review of Politics*, 78, (2016), pp. 27-57.

[105] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 30 July 1700.

despatches long lists of topics whose real importance and whose impact on the public life of the country however, remained rather obscure. The chaos of London and the fact that he came from a nation in which information was carefully controlled and conveyed through state channels, prevented him at first from distinguishing which of the many voices crowding the English capital was really important, or true, and which one was negligible or false.

What struck Giraldi was the fragmentation of British society and the different relationship that the subjects had with the institutions of their country. On 30th July 1700 the young William, Duke of Gloucester, and son of Anne Stuart, died. His death once again opened up the delicate issue of the English succession, because with him died the last legitimate and Protestant heir to the throne and this event, wrote Giraldi, 'gave, as it is easy to imagine, great substance to many and different discourses'.[106] But very few of these speeches showed even only an apparent sorrow for the premature death of the young prince, so much so that 'of the many factions in which now, as always, this country is divided, only those people who are attached to the court have suffered from this accident, while a good part of the rest of the people has viewed it with indifference, and those who call themselves Republicans, and the Jacobites have enjoyed it positively'.[107] Naturally, a few days after the duke's death, London was teeming with papers and pamphlets which, with their content, inflamed the already lively political debate regarding the succession. Among these publications one in particular struck Giraldi 'which contains nothing but a very spicy satire on the actions and the person of the King, and of the two mylords Abermarle and Portland'.[108] To his bewilderment, the Tuscan envoy noted that this satire was 'commonly sold at the stock exchange' despite being conceived 'with terms of

[106] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 12 August 1700.
[107] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 12 August 1700.
[108] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 12 August 1700.

supreme temerity'.[109] What left Giraldi really astonished, however, was the reaction of the authorities. 'What I understand', wrote the ambassador, 'is that the government do diligence to find out who the author is, but out of pure curiosity, however, to know him, not to punish him, as would follow elsewhere, while it is not usual in this country to pay much attention to this kind of occurrences'.[110]

Giraldi, who was catapulted into a chaotic metropolis like London, uneasy about the persecution of Catholics, bewildered by the political system and stunned by the continuous media bombardment, entered the acute phase of the culture shock, that is, the rejection of the host culture. In this period, which lasted about a year, until mid-1701, Giraldi expressed extremely negative opinions on the government and on English society. In fact, in his reports there are frequent references to the political fragmentation of the country, to the confusion of Parliament, to the inconsistency of the political positions of the ministers, to the fragility of the executive, and to the weakness of the crown. Then, as we have already seen concerning religion, with time the ambassador began his process of adaptation. His dispatches became more concise, focused and specific, referring only to things of objective interest and neglecting less significant topics. His ferocious comments on English society and government also lessened, eventually disappearing almost entirely as the ambassador began to acquire a more pragmatic attitude towards British politics. He also cultivated friendships with illustrious MPs and the court, such as Marlborough.[111] The gradual adaptation of the ambassador is demonstrated by his growing understanding of the mechanisms of the British government. As we have seen in previous chapters, in fact, Giraldi was able to develop effective strategies that used the divisions of the English government to the advantage of the Tuscan cause.

[109] The poem to which Giraldi is referring to is probably: J. Tutchin, *The Foreigners, A Poem*, (A. Baldwin, London, 1700).
[110] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 12 August 1700.
[111] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704.

But if Giraldi managed to come to terms with the British government system, it was more difficult for him to understand and accept the role the people, and therefore public opinion, had in the British political environment. It was this particular aspect that had a very important effect on the development and then on the resolution of the Plowman case.

The ambassador arrived in England almost at the same time as William Plowman.[112] The English merchant, at the time just released from grand-ducal prisons, had returned to London and immediately started 'at the stock exchange, and in other public places to exercise his ill talent, spreading very insolent complaints against the person and conduct of the Great Duke in the handling of his business'.[113] Giraldi, however, was not particularly worried about the merchant's brazen resourcefulness. On the contrary, the ambassador voluntarily neglected to act against Plowman in the belief that 'all his cackles are not only unable to make any impression here, but rather make him appear ever more as malicious'.[114] As we have seen in the first chapter, Plowman was in debt to Thomas Vernon, a merchant relative to Secretary of State, James Vernon. It was the Secretary of State who brought to William III the news of the imprisonment of the English merchant, and who encouraged the government's commitment in that controversy. So upon his return to London Plowman tried to convince Vernon 'with reckless cavillation' that he could repay his debt if the latter pledged for him 'to recovered from the Grand Duke one hundred thousand *scudi*, which, he says, from His Highness violently have been usurped'.[115] Even this news did not seem to worry Giraldi, who on 30th April 1700 informed the Tuscan Secretary of State that 'there is no one who lends Plowman any faith' and that indeed he was 'in a great desolation, and totally reduced to

[112] Giraldi arrived in London on the 9th of April 1700, while Plowman, who travelled by ship, had arrived about a month earlier.
[113] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 30 April 1700.
[114] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 30 April 1700.
[115] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 30 April 1700.

a state of no longer being able to cause, neither here nor there the slightest trouble'.[116] Evidently his prediction was very wrong. In fact, in a few months William Plowman was able to transform his controversy into a real case of state that risked having devastating consequences for Tuscany.

Giraldi's failure of judgement can be explained with reference to the institutional, political and social differences that existed between England and Tuscany and which have been highlighted above in this section. Giraldi, who on 30th April had just arrived in England a month before, reacted to Plowman's actions based on the experience that derived from his own culture. As Bart van Leeuwen underlines people base their actions on 'common sense', that is on criteria that are not completely rationalized and explicit, but which refer to the social coordinates of their culture.[117] However 'through cultural contact common sense loses something of its self-evident character, and certainties about what is normal are put to the test'.[118] Giraldi came from a strongly aristocratic society, from a nation in which incurring the displeasure of the prince not only meant the risk of suffering heavy corporal or pecuniary punishment, but above all meant social death. In fact, we saw in the third chapter how it was enough for Cosimo III to show disappointment towards Blackwell to ensure that he was completely isolated from the Tuscan nobility. Thus, when Giraldi learned that Plowman was spreading rumours about the unfair treatment he had received from the Grand Duke, he was not very worried because he considered that such discourses could never impress anyone. In fact, Giraldi considered the prestige of the Grand Duke too great and the figure of Plowman too small for the latter to ever cause any concrete damage: indeed, the ambassador believed that the more the English merchant spoke, the more he would make himself known 'as

[116] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 30 April 1700.
[117] Bart van Leeuwen, 'On the Affective Ambivalence of Living with Cultural Diversity', *Ethnicities*, 8:2 (2008), pp. 147-176.
[118] Bart van Leeuwen, 'On the Affective Ambivalence of Living with Cultural Diversity', Ethnicities, 8.2 (2008), p. 147.

malignant'.[119] The implicit reasoning made by the ambassador was that no one could ever compare the words and actions of a sovereign prince with those of a simple merchant, who furthermore was a 'miserable bankrupt'.[120] Moreover, Giraldi would never have dreamed of responding to Plowman's accusations precisely because this would have meant putting the Grand Duke on an equal foot with the merchant and this was considered by the ambassador ontologically impossible.

This reasoning would have been perfectly lucid and coherent in Tuscany, and perhaps also in another absolute monarchy, but it was completely wrong in England. Giraldi had not had yet the time to understand that English society, which in fifty years had gone through continuous regime changes, cutting off the head of a king and kicking out another, had a much less respectful relationship towards the despotic authority of monarchs. Giraldi had not yet understood what the level of English political division, nor what the fragmentation of the government was, nor how 'modest' the powers of the crown were. Giraldi above all did not understand what the role of the people and what the importance of public opinion was. Plowman, by publicising his story, also touched on sensitive topics for the English audience - that that he had been arbitrarily imprisoned and judged by a foreign despot who had the sole purpose of robbing him of his possessions. Plowman claimed to have been deprived of the fundamental right of Habeas Corpus, which was the subject of the fiercest debates and conflicts between the Crown and Parliament after the Civil War.[121] It mattered little to the public that this right did not exist in Tuscany, and that Plowman had in fact been condemned through the laws of the country where he had committed his crimes: as Giraldi would later write, 'reason [is not]

[119] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4215, Iacopo Giraldi to Francesco Panciatichi, 30 April 1700.
[120] Nor should we neglect the contempt that a society like that of Tuscany, whose ruling family and aristocracy with their mercantile origins, had of those who failed in their commercial enterprises.
[121] Helen A. Nutting, 'The Most Wholesome Law. The Habeas Corpus Act of 1679', *The American Historical Review*, 65:3 (1960), pp. 527-543; Amanda L. Tyler, 'A 'Second Magna Carta': The English Habeas Corpus Act and the Statutory Origins of the Habeas Privilege', *Notre Dame Law Review*, 91 (2016). p. 1949-1996.

what has place in this cause'.[122] Exactly as in modern 'trending' scandals, what really mattered was that Plowman's story was 'liked' and, supported by some politicians like Vernon, was making a impact on public opinion: in a circle that was self-sustaining the more his history became important to the eyes of the people the more it also acquired political importance. The publication, in 1701, of the pamphlet on the case enormously accelerated this process and finally the controversy was declared 'a public and national matter'.[123]

Giraldi at first found himself really caught off guard. A similar situation represented such a disruption of the established order of things that the ambassador struggled to keep up with what was happening. Then the situation slowly changed. The ambassador was overcoming the acute phase of culture shock and the more he understood the British system, the more capable he was of developing effective strategies that allowed the Tuscan government to adequately confront the British one. Thus Giraldi had finally realized that the true essence of the Plowman case did not lie in the truth of the facts, but in how many and which people believed that the story was true. Therefore, the Tuscan ambassador, at the end of the third year of residence in England, had understood the rules that characterised the English 'social game'. He in fact understood that the only way to end the controversy was to do exactly what Plowman had done a couple of years earlier, that is, to influence public opinion until it sided with Tuscany.

A Question of Opinions

When William Plowman and his associates Alexander Rigby and William Shepard printed their pamphlet *The Case of Sir Alexander Rigby in 1701, William*

[122] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi a Francesco Panciatichi, 14 Marzo 1704.
[123] T.N.A., S.P. 98/19, Lambert Blackwell to Cosimo III, 24 July 1702.

Shepard and William Plowman, Setting Forth the Damages They have Suffer'd by the Inprisonment of William Plowman, Seizure of Their Effects and Other Proceedings of the Grand Duke of Toscany, they turned an unknown controversy that had taken place in a distant country into a matter of public interest. By taking advantage of their connections with Secretary of State James Vernon, they were also able to take the case to the government: political interest, combined with public interest, had turned the controversy into a state affair. The popular support for the case then made it a useful political leverage that the most extreme factions within the government and the opposition used in an instrumental way to gain consensus. At that point the controversy further evolved and was no longer just a harsh confrontation between Tuscany and England, but also a clash between the political forces within the English kingdom. As we have seen in the previous chapters, this combination of factors was the reason why the level of confrontation between England and Tuscany progressively rose until the two states were on the brink of war. It seemed that the height of tension was reached at the beginning of October 1703, with the visit of the English fleet to Livorno but, despite the failure of Shovell's mission, the English government did not seem willing to give up on his requests. Indeed in the spring of 1704 the English government gave orders to the English merchants residing in Livorno to quickly abandon the city. The previous chapter demonstrated how the presence of thousands of British citizens in the Tuscan port, and the enormous economic interests that gravitated around them, was one of the major obstacles that the English government faced in using force against the Grand Duchy. It is therefore clear that the order that was given to the merchants to quicky leave Livorno could not be other than a prelude to a declaration of war.

This section will show how the Tuscan ambassador, having now grasped what the fundamental elements of the British political system were, realised that the only truly effective way to conclude the controversy would be to move the popular consensus to the

side of Tuscany. As in a modern political campaign, the Tuscan ambassador selected the most effective arguments to impress and thus mobilize English public opinion in his favour. At the same time, through a strategy agreed with the grand-ducal ministers in Florence and Livorno, he ensured that the same kind of information reach the community of the English merchants residing in the Tuscan port. It will be shown how Giraldi, through the mobilization of these specific interest groups, began to exert increasing pressure on the English government, which eventually found itself forced to yield. As Jason Pacey pointed out, the relationship between diplomacy, the press and news networks has not yet been thoroughly studied.[124] In fact, the scholar highlights not only how diplomats were interested in publications that came from foreign countries, but also how they actively tried to manipulate the information market for political purposes.[125] The analysis of the correspondence between ambassador Giraldi and the Tuscan Secretary of State will reveal how the diplomat tried to influence English public opinion and will contribute to exploring this phenomenon of the diplomatic practice.

On 23rd November 1703 Giraldi had a long meeting with Secretary Nottingham and once again the main theme was the Plowman affair. Giraldi claimed that Blackwell's lies and subterfuges showed the instrumental nature of the controversy and therefore he asked the Secretary of State to intervene to end it once and for all.[126] Nottingham replied confidentially and 'in terms of friendship' that the ministers 'for a party interest support the complaints of Sir Rigby and Plowman' and that 'neither he nor others who were well-intentioned [for the Tuscan cause] can contradict them by being against the plurality of the voices [...]'.[127]

[124] Jason Peacey, '"My friend the gazetier", Diplomacy and news in Seventeenth Century Europe', in *Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by J. Raymond and N. Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 421.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 436.
[126] It was probably during this meeting that Giraldi delivered to Nottingham the letter that Panciatichi had written against Blackwell and which was discussed earlier in the chapter.
[127] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 November 1703.

Giraldi began to concretely realize that the only way to counteract the action of Plowman and his supporters was to shift the direction of the sound of that 'plurality of voices'. In short, it was necessary to do what Plowman had done a few years earlier: it was necessary to make as much noise as possible in order to convince the excitable English public of the falsity of the accusations that had been levelled against the Grand Duke. According to Giraldi, however, it would not have been very useful to directly gainsay the slander spread by the English merchant, trying to prove that Plowman was a dishonest person, and that his accusations were false. The ambassador had by now understood that to win popular consensus, one did not need 'true' but 'the right' arguments: 'all that is reason', wrote Giraldi, 'does not breach and does not give the least advantage, being only the strength of number that really matters'.[128] Giraldi thus decided that to attract the interest of the population it was necessary to use a subject that was immediate, easily understandable and of clear general interest: money.

Giraldi then suggested to the Tuscan Secretary of State to begin informing the English merchants residing in Livorno 'the narrowness in which His Highness is placed by [the English] government due to the malign endeavours of Plowman and his followers, and the inconveniences that [this] might cause them, considering that His Highness is resolved to uphold His most righteous procedure at any cost'.[129] According to the ambassador, the merchants needed to understand 'that the Dutch, their own allies, instead of meddling in their affair, will enjoy seeing the English altering their relationship with Livorno, leaving all the profit to them'.[130] Giraldi's goal was to clearly show to the English community residing in the Tuscan port that the Grand Ducal government would never surrender to the threats of the English and that they would be the only ones to suffer

[128] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 December 1703.
[129] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 December 1703.
[130] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 December 1703.

the damage of a possible declaration of war. The English merchants knew very well that the Dutch 'were not people to let [profit] fall to the ground without picking it up' and so Giraldi tried once again, as he had done a year earlier, to use the commercial competition between the Dutch and the English to his advantage.[131] The ambassador was counting on the fact that the resident merchants in Livorno, frightened by the prospect of losing their lucrative business in the Tuscan port, would write 'something to their partners', while the ambassador would anticipate their letters 'by talking [in London] to whoever may be more sensible to things of this nature'.[132]

We saw in the previous chapter how Tuscany and England were competing in a game of brinkmanship. This was still in progress and the strategy of the Tuscan ambassador was always based on the 'utmost moral certainty' that the English government would never really go so far as to declare war on Tuscany and that the menacing tones used were once again nothing but a bluff.[133] 'When the English would be unconsidered with words and terms', wrote Giraldi, '[they will be] circumspect in the actions, because no one, whether he has good or evil intentions towards us, is persuaded that one can break with the Grand Duke'.[134] According to Giraldi, the reasoning that many English made was that the Grand Duke, being 'a peaceful and rich prince, would have always preferred an accommodation with money to a commitment to put himself in defence'.[135] So, according to the Tuscan diplomat, the most important thing to do was precisely to show the English 'they were deceiving themselves regarding the fear [of the Grand Duke], and regarding his ease in bowing to the powers and threats repeatedly advanced to him'.[136] The strategic situation was also fundamentally in favour of Tuscany.

[131] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 December 1703.
[132] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 December 1703.
[133] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 21 December 1703.
[134] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 21 December 1703.
[135] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 29 February 1704.
[136] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 29 February 1704.

First of all, that year, England would not have been able to send to the Mediterranean 'a fleet of the strength of last year' and furthermore 'one could count on the fact that the Dutch will never marry the British complaint against [Tuscany]'.[137] These considerations 'and the present state of the fortress of Livorno, very different from what it was in Cromwell's life [...] must encourage us not to fear them taking us by the scruff of the neck'.[138]

Coherently with the strategy implemented the previous year, the ambassador advised the Grand Duke 'to show that he was exhausted by such a long and annoying importunity [...] by pretending to take some measure with France, Spain and the Dutch Republic to ensure his own rest and that of his subjects'.[139] According to Giraldi, in fact, 'there is no doubt that a similar alarm in the English of Livorno, in their correspondents [in England] and in all those who trade with Turkey, who are the richest and most powerful [in London], it would make a marvellous effect in favour of His Royal Highness'.[140]

This 'marvelous effect' became evident just a few days later, on 28th December 1703, when the ambassador informed the Secretary of State that when the rumour that Tuscany was seeking the protection of France, Spain and the Dutch Republic spread, 'the merchants who trade with Livorno [were] alarmed and [were] set together to think and consult about their interest'.[141] In fact, this had already made so much noise that the London merchants had already requested a hearing with the government to explain their

[137] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[138] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704. The reference to Cromwell concerned an episode that occurred in 1655, when a small English fleet, threatening violence against the city, had managed to obtain a special gun salute from the fortress of Livorno. Plowman and his associates used this episode in their fake news campaign, trying to make people believe that military action against Livorno would be a rather easy undertaking. In reality, the city's fortifications had been enormously strengthened in the fifty years that had passed and, as seen in previous chapters, Livorno was now very well defended, especially to counter an attack from the sea.
[139] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 21 December 1703.
[140] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 21 December 1703.
[141] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 28 December 1703.

position.[142] The ambassador was therefore vigorously waging the battle to regain the favour of English public opinion and the first results were encouraging. However, the reaction of his opponents was not long in coming.

Plowman in fact went to the stock exchange saying that Giraldi had offered him 'an accommodation with the proposal of 10,000 pounds sterling' and then tried 'to subvert those merchants who are about to be heard [by the government] and demonstrated his bravado even more telling them not to be frightened, because when Livorno would have not been accessible anymore [he was negotiating] with the Genoese to make a free port in the Gulf of La Spezia'.[143] Giraldi never proposed such an arrangement, and indeed always firmly opposed the idea. As for the agreement with the Genoese, Blackwell had in fact attempted, in the spring of that year, to obtain favourable conditions for British ships in the port of La Spezia, but without success.[144] Thus, none of Plowman's claims were true, but this counted very little in terms of capturing public opinion. Plowman was spreading *fake news*, but in the battle waged against Giraldi any means was admissible to keep the popular favour.

Despite the countermeasures adopted by Plowman, the argument that Giraldi had spread among the merchants that war with Tuscany would have deprived them of the bulk of their income, was successful. The merchants prepared 'a strong plea signed by a good number of names of esteem and reputation' that on 11th January 1704 was presented to the Queen.[145] The fifty-one merchants who signed it, 'having many houses of business,

[142] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 28 December 1703.
[143] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 28 December 1703.
[144] T.N.A., S.P. 98/20, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 23 June 1703.
[145] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of your Majesty's subjects trading to Legorne, 11 January 1704. On the importance of petitions in forming and influencing public opinion, see: David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); David Zaret, 'Petitions and the "Invention" of Public Opinion in the English Revolution', *American Journal of Sociology*, 101:6 (1996), pp. 1497-1555; Richard W. Hoyle, 'Petitioning as popular politics in early sixteenth–century England', *Historical Research*, 75:190 (2002), pp. 365–389; Philip Loft, 'Petitioning and Petitioners to the Westminster Parliament, 1660-1788', *Parliamentary History*, 38:3 (2019), pp. 342–361.

and partners residing att Legorn and very large effects there of their own and of other your Majesty's subjects in their hands, and great debts standing out in that country' declared themselves 'astonished with the surprizing report of a rupture likely to happen, suddainly, betwixt your Majestie and the Great Duke of Tuscany'.[146] They especially showed bewilderment that this break was upheld 'on account of damages and ill treatment pretended to be sustained by a private person, one William Plowman, a Roman Catholick'.[147] The merchants wished to present to the Queen 'a true account of matters of fact which are in [Plowman's] book mistaken or misrepresented', producing testimonies from 'men of creditt and estates' who lived in Livorno in 1696, who were therefore 'eye witnesses' and knew exactly what had really happened.[148] The merchants added that if a war actually broke out between Tuscany and England

> not onely that the petitioners and many other English ffamilys are lyable to be ruined, but the Nation in generall will loose that beneficiall trade they enjoy by the consumption of our woollen manufactorys, fishery, and other products which in vast quantitys are exported from all parts of this Kingdom to Legorne, [which] is the only commodious port of trade that now remains to England in the Mediterranean Seas.[149]

The petition was, therefore, presented in extremely explicit terms. Not only did the merchants display the economic ruin of the country, but above all they highlighted one of England's greatest strategic weaknesses, namely the fact that Livorno was the only port in the Mediterranean where the British could trade. However, from an analytical

[146] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of your Majesty's subjects trading to Legorne, 11 January 1704.
[147] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of your Majesty's subjects trading to Legorne, 11 January 1704.
[148] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of your Majesty's subjects trading to Legorne, 11 January 1704.
[149] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of your Majesty's subjects trading to Legorne, 11 January 1704.

point of view, the most interesting aspect of the petition is the declaration that Plowman was a 'Roman Chatolick'. Such a reference was certainly not uncommon in a society like the English one, where Catholics were not only subject to widespread prejudice but, as seen above, were also actively persecuted. In this case, however, the reference to the confessional element takes on an additional value. This petition was in fact the result of Giraldi's manoeuvres, and certainly the ambassador played an important role in drafting it. As seen in the previous section, the envoy was not only a devout Catholic but, through his priests and the chapel built in his house, actively supported the clandestine survival of the Catholic faith in London. Then the fact that the ambassador tolerated the presence of such a reference on one hand shows Giraldi's complete adaptation to the English environment, to the point that he did not hesitate to use his religion in an instrumental way. On the other hand, a similar reference allows us to measure how intense the confrontation between England and Tuscany had become. The two countries were on the precipice of war and Giraldi knew very well that this was no time to hesitate, or to spare any blows. Thus even religion, regardless of any personal or moral consideration, had by then become an instrument in the struggle between England and Tuscany. Anti-Catholic prejudice was deeply rooted in English society.[150] Indeed Scott Sowerby identified in this prejudice one of the main reasons for the success of the Glorious Revolution,[151] and this theme remained widely used in political debate.[152] Therefore, the fact that prejudice against Catholics was strong and widespread made this argument one of the 'right' ones to turn public opinion against Plowman and to the Tuscan cause.

[150] Carys Brown, 'Everyday Anti-Catholicism in Early Eighteenth-Century England', in *Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland 1600-2000*, ed. by C. Geeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 55-72; Scott Sowerby, 'Opposition to Anti-Popery in Restoration England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 51:1 (2012), pp. 26-49; Robert Beddard, 'Anti-Popery and the London Mob, 1688', *History Today*, 36 (1988), pp. 36-40.
[151] Scott Sowerby, *Making Toleration. The Repealers and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambrigde: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 219-220.
[152] Jonathan Scott, 'England's Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot', in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. by T. Harris, P. Seaward, M. Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 108-118.

This battle, however, was far from over, and indeed was entering its most acute and violent phase. On 17th January 1704, during a fiery meeting of the ministers of the English government the Duke of Buckingham, who '[had] openly sold himself to these bankrupts for a portion of what the whole clique think to get with threats from His Royal Highness', declared 'that they should write to the envoy Blackwell to make new and more pressing requests for peremptory satisfaction […]'.[153] Despite 'the many oppositions', the duke also declared that 'when His Royal Highness continued in his firm and negative steadfastness, that Blackwell, in the name of the Queen, should order the Livorno merchants to begin to salvage their effects elsewhere'.[154] Plowman and his associates had raised the stakes again and such an order to the merchants could only be a harbinger of war. However, the alliances built by Giraldi within the government proved to be extremely useful in this case as well. Nottingham, in fact, together with the 'more temperate and well-meaning' ministers, obtained that before launching such an ultimatum it was necessary to carefully ascertain the sum of money requested by Plowman, which seemed unlikely.[155] The Secretary of State thus appointed two special commissioners, John Cook and John Pollexfen, to assess what the right amount of money to be asked of the Grand Duke was. Nottingham had also instructed Blackwell to collect further evidence in Livorno. Naturally, given the slowness of the post, to complete these calculations and to retrieve the information would have taken at least a couple of months, therefore by doing so Nottingham gave Giraldi 'the advantage of buying time'.[156]

Giraldi had then suggested to the Tuscan Secretary of State to take advantage of the opportunity to press further the English merchants residing in Livorno, insinuating that in the event of a military attack 'His Royal Highness will be forced to come to those

[153] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[154] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[155] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[156] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.

seizures and arrests that the laws allow'.[157] To strengthen the message and to impress the merchants, the ambassador also advised making 'some lively demonstration of imminent persecution by having some guards stop at their warehouses'.[158] Therefore, according to the Tuscan diplomat, the merchants would have been greatly encouraged 'to write to their correspondents and their interested partners fulminating letters against Plowman, his adherents and protectors'.[159]

Giraldi also immediately proceeded to spread the news of the possible break between Tuscany and England and 'the more it became known, it made a greater surprise in all the merchants and persons of interest [...] and everyone exclaims freely against the main authors [of the resolution approved by government]'.[160] The ambassador, taking advantage of the propitious moment, therefore sent 'all the merchants who are for us on the arms of the ministers [...] and by profiting of this popularity I understand that some show a willingness to abandon the protection of Plowman'.[161]

Meanwhile spring was approaching and the English government was fitting out a new fleet for a mission in the Mediterranean, which would be commanded by Admiral George Rooke.[162] In a situation of great tension such as that between Tuscany and England it was essential for the Grand-Ducal government to prevent the ministers in favour of Plowman from inserting precise orders regarding the controversy in the admiral's instructions. Thus, the Tuscan Secretary of State, on the direct order of Cosimo III, instructed Giraldi to appeal to the duke of Marlborough to prevent the most ardent supporters of Plowman from attempting something as they had done the previous year in

[157] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[158] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[159] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 February 1704.
[160] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 29 February 1704.
[161] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 29 February 1704.
[162] George Rooke (1650-1709) was a British admiral famous for the battle of Vigo Bay (1702) and the conquest of Gibraltar in 1704.

the orders destined for Shovell.[163] The mission was extremely delicate and of the utmost importance, but Giraldi had a perfect opportunity to speak privately with the duke. In fact, at that time the renowned Florentine painter, Domenico Tempesti, was in London as part of a tour of the courts of Europe.[164] Giraldi knew that Marlborough also wanted to be portrayed by the Florentine painter and once the duke had set the first appointment to pose for the painting, the ambassador offered to 'go and entertain him in that time and serve as an interpreter'.[165] Thus, taking advantage of that moment of absolute intimacy, Giraldi was able to talk to Marlborough about various delicate topics. In particular, the Tuscan ambassador asked the duke to use his influence to 'procure such instructions to those who will come to these seas [of Tuscany] with fleets, as to prevent the feared effects of the pride and animosity of Mr. Blackwell'.[166] Marlborough replied 'that he had never understood what purposes could Mr. Blackwell have in upholding a demeanour that does him no honour, and that does him bad here [in London] and not well there [in Tuscany], adding that he was sorry for the troubles caused [to the Grand Duke] on the occasion of the visit of the fleet and in word from Plowman'.[167] The duke declared that it was a 'common desire to keep the friendship and correspondence of His Royal Highness' and that he would therefore 'do the best he could' to satisfy the ambassador's request.[168]

This episode shows how art could be used as a diplomatic tool. The available sources do not reveal who actually paid for Marlborough's portrait, but it could be assumed that the intermediation with the talented Tuscan artist and the payment for the portrait itself were a diplomatic gift from Giraldi to the Duke to strengthen their friendship

[163] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704.
[164] Domenico Tempesti (1655-1737), author of numerous engravings and above all famous for his portraits. Niels Jeffares, Domenico Tempesti, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800*, (Unicorn Press, 2006).
[165] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704.
[166] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704.
[167] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704. It can be noticed in this passage that Marlborough's opinion regarding Blackwell had been influenced by the rumours that Giraldi had already spread about the envoy.
[168] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704.

and collaboration. The Medici dynasty had often used luxury products such as chocolate, coffee and wine as gifts for foreign dignitaries, and Nottingham and Marlborough themselves had already received a lot of Chianti as a gift from Cosimo III.[169] Thus, the portrait could also be considered part of these donations. This hypothesis is further strengthened when one considers that Tempesti began the portrait just as the English government was discussing the orders to be given to the fleet, and just when the Tuscans needed a big favour from Marlborough.

On 28th March 1704, the orders for Admiral Rooke had been prepared by Nottingham and signed by the Queen. The admiral was ordered to carry out various operations in the Mediterranean, focusing in particular on the coasts of Spain. The part that concerned Tuscany was reduced to a modest paragraph in which Rooke was ordered 'in case you proceed further up the Mediterranean, which you are to do if you see cause for it upon a Council of War of English and Dutch flag officers, you are to demand of the Grand Duke of Tuscany satisfaction and reparation for the injuries and losses of Plowman and our other subjects concerned in that affair, the state of which you will understand from our Envoy at Florence, unless he tells you that the affair is finally settled'.[170]

Evidently, Giraldi's meeting with Marlborough, and perhaps even the beautiful gift, had achieved the desired purpose and in fact the orders could not have been more different from those entrusted to Shovell the previous year. First of all, the admiral was

[169] Various letters from both Giraldi and Blackwell refer to gifts of wine that were given by Cosimo III to the two characters. On the meaning and importance of gifts in diplomacy: Diana Carrio-Invernizzi, "Gift and Diplomacy in Seventeenth-century Spanish Italy", in *The Historical Journal*, n. 51(4) (2008), pp. 881.899; Maija Jansson, "Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th centuries", in *Journal of Early Modern History*, n. 9(3), (2005), pp. 348-370; Christian Windler, 'Tributes and presents in Franco-Tunisian diplomacy', Journal of Early Modern History, 4 (2000), pp. 168–99; On the Medici diplomatic gift policy and on coffee in particular: A.S.F., M.d.P. Stati Esteri, Roma f. 3411, correspondence between Anton Maria Fede e Francesco Panciatichi, 1695-1696; on chocolate as a present: Ashley Buchanan, *The Politics of Chocolate: Cosimo III's Secret Jasmine Chocolate Receipe*, The Receipe Project, www. recipes.hypotheses.org.

[170] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 March 1704. *Calendar of State Papers*, Domestic Series of the Reign of Anne, preserved in the Pubblic Record Office, from now on C.S.P., Dom. Series, Vol. 2, 1703-1704, (London, 1916), *Instructions to Sir George Rooke given at St James*, 28 March 1704.

given the option to choose whether to go to Livorno, his decision depending on if the war operations would push him 'further up the Mediterranean'. Furthermore the choice to go to Tuscany was subject to the approval of the joint council of war with the Dutch officers. But the United Provinces had clearly shown themselves as being on the Tuscan side and it was therefore very likely that the Dutch admiral would have refused to the possibility of going to Livorno. But even if Admiral Rooke arrived in Tuscany, he was simply ordered to 'demand satisfaction', which no longer had to be 'immediate' or obtained 'by all meanes' as Shovell was ordered to.[171] Moreover, the fact that the orders regarding Tuscany ended with the phrase 'unless [Blackwell] tells you that the affair is finally settled' further reduced their importance. In fact, the admiral was induced to think that it was very likely that by the time he eventually reached Livorno the matter would already be resolved, and it was therefore pointless for him to hurry too much in that direction. This phrase could also reveal the mighty battle waged by Giraldi to obtain the support of public opinion. The ambassador had already written that the pressure of the merchants on the government caused 'a cooling in the protectors of Plowman and his adherents'.[172] Thus, that sentence inserted in Rooke's orders could be an index of the effectiveness of the ambassador's manoeuvres: as the public opinion for Tuscany increased, political support for Plowman's cause decreased, and the government began to accept the possibility of superseding on the matter.[173]

The new Tuscan strategy to win the favour of public opinion was bearing fruit and this also emerges from the tone and words used in Giraldi's dispatches, which expressed satisfaction and even a certain amusement at his successes. From mid-March onwards, Giraldi always calls the English merchants as 'our merchants', which highlights

[171] T.N.A., S.P. 44/209, Nottingham, Further Instructions to Cloudesley Shovell, 4 May 1703.
[172] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 14 March 1704.
[173] Admiral Rooke never arrived in Livorno. After the capture of Gibraltar (4 August 1704), the admiral stayed on the coasts of Spain and then returned to England.

not only the growing personal involvement of the Tuscan diplomat, but also a certain sense of belonging to the English community, or at least to that merchant community most favourable to him. In fact, the Tuscan ambassador had excellent reasons to feel satisfied. 'His' merchants, very displeased that their first petition had been completely ignored by the government, prepared 'another one more considerable, signed by more than a hundred of the chief manufacturers of the province of Exeter, who live on the trafficking of woollens with Livorno'.[174]

This petition, presented on 14th March, was longer and more complex than the previous one, but it was based on the same arguments. In particular the merchants of the county of Devon begged the Queen not to deprive them of access to the port of Livorno which was defined as 'the Magazine and Centre of all the Trade of those parts, from whence Spain, Naples and Sicily supply themselves with our manufactures'.[175] The petition ended dramatically by begging the sovereign to take 'into compassionate regard the merchants, Comvers, Spinners, Weavers, Futters, Dyers and many thousands others of all sort inhabitants […] who have their dayly bread and dependence upon the forreign exportation and consumption of the woollen manufactorys'.[176] This second petition was followed a few days later, on 25th March, by a third, presented again by the London merchants, but this time signed by one hundred and forty-five merchants of the City. This generated a huge impression in London and made the controversy 'boil more than ever'.[177] By now, wrote Giraldi, the 'noise of similar protests' was influencing 'a large part of this people, who are increasingly impressing themselves in our favour'.[178]

[174] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 25 March 1704.
[175] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of the merchants and other traders in and about the city of Exon and county of Devon, 14 March 1704.
[176] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of the merchants and other traders in and about the city of Exon and county of Devon, 14 March 1704.
[177] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 25 March 1704.
[178] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 25 March 1704.

Conclusions

Between 1649 and 1702, England faced numerous regime changes, which left the country significantly divided both from a political and a social point of view. The fragmentation of English society clearly emerges from the analysis of the Plowman case, especially in regard to the relationship between Blackwell and the Secretary of State. Indeed, although the controversy had now reached a critical point, Nottingham did not hesitate to ally himself with Giraldi to damage the reputation of the English envoy with the aim of removing him from his post. The Tuscan government took advantage of these divisions to attack Blackwell head-on, proving that he did not possess the qualities to adequately perform his duties.

The anthropological concept of culture shock has hitherto been little used in historical analysis, while it can be an important tool for understanding the dynamics of historical phenomena. Indeed we have seen how Giraldi suffered culture shock upon his arrival in England, and it was precisely the ambassador's initial inability to adapt to English society that transformed the Plowman controversy into a political case. We have also seen how Giraldi managed to develop a winning strategy only after a long process of adaptation to English culture, customs, and the political system. Finally, the ambassador understood that the Grand Ducal government could successfully conclude the dispute only if it brought English public opinion to the side of Tuscany. Indeed, the media campaign created by Giraldi, relying on the economic interests of the merchants and on the vast impact their activities had on the population, was enjoying considerable success in London. Yet, as the next chapter shows, his strategy depended as much on the English merchants in Livorno as it did on those in England.

Chapter VI: The People and the Plowman Case

As seen in the previous chapter, the Tuscan ambassador Giraldi had devised a strategy to shift the consensus of English public opinion in favour of the Tuscan cause. Numerous studies have focused on the importance of public opinion and the progressive expansion of the 'public sphere' at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,[1] however very few have included diplomacy in their investigation.[2] Indeed, diplomacy is still often interpreted as a secret dialogue between states, which took place far from the eyes of the population. For this reason, the relationship between diplomats, public opinion and the press is still largely to be explored. Previous chapters have shown how the controversy had become an issue of political image and public opinion. Giraldi indeed understood that the only effective way to conclude the case was to shift English popular consensus in favour of Tuscany. This chapter shows how the Tuscan ambassador, by leveraging on the economic interests that gravitated around Livorno, succeeded in involving the English merchants in the controversy: with their help, the ambassador published a pamphlet in response to the one Plowman had published in 1701. Through the press, the political debate surrounding the Plowman case became national and even questioned the legitimacy of the government.

[1] Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997); David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Joad Raymond, 'The newspaper, public opinion, and the public sphere in the seventeenth century', *Prose Studies*, 21, (1998), pp. 109–136; Pascal Verhoest, 'Seventeenth-Century Pamphlets as Constituents of a Public Communication Space: a Historical Critique of Public Sphere Theory', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36:1 (2019), pp. 47-62.

[2] Lucien Bély, 'Propagande et désinformation', in *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV*, ed. by Lucien Bély (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 262-286; Jason Peacey, '"My friend the gazetier", Diplomacy and news in Seventeenth Century Europe', in *Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by J. Raymond and N. Moxham (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Helmer Helmers, 'Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe', *Media History*, (2016), pp. 1-20.

The merchants, together with the pamphlet, published a *Humble Apology to the Queen*, in which they explained the reasons why they took sides in favour of Tuscany. Edward Vallance underlines how this kind of petitions and 'humble address' reached its peak in the years between 1700 and 1710, becoming a privileged political tool for defining the relations between the citizens and the government.[3] The analysis of this document is essential to understand how intense the political debate around the Plowman case had become. Indeed, through this *Apology* the London merchants sent a clear political message to the sovereign to intervene to moderate the decisions that the government had taken against Tuscany. On 30th April 1704 the government had in fact ordered the English merchants of Livorno to leave the city, but the latter explicitly rebelled against the Queen's command. The London merchants argued that their colleagues' decision was justified by the fact that the government was endangering the interests of the nation and its citizens. It will be shown how this appeal to the Queen had a fundamental impact in resolving the dispute.

The sources used for this chapter are not exclusively diplomatic or official documents. Among the papers of the English Secretary of State there are some extracts from the 'National Jornall' of the English Factory of Livorno, that is, the diary in which the most relevant events that occurred in the English community were reported. These unpublished documents are particularly interesting to analyse not only because they contain a detailed chronicle of events, but above all because, not being official documents, they are written with much more vivid style and language. These sources retain a truly unusual expressive energy and in some passages dialogues are even literally quoted. The use of these sources compared with official documents, in addition to offering interesting

[3] Edward Vallance, *Loyalty, Memory and Public Opinion in England 1658-1727* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), p. 94.

analytical insights, also allow us to faithfully and clearly reconstruct the path that led the English community of Livorno to rebel against its government.

The Merchants' Rebellion

Giraldi had devised a strategy to damage the reputation of his colleague Blackwell and then began a battle to win the favour of English public opinion. However, the ambassador was convinced that the operation could have been successful only if the English merchants of Livorno were adequately aware of the damage they would suffer in the event of a conflict between Tuscany and England. The Grand Ducal government had approved his plan and began to filter information to the English community residing in Livorno. The main vehicle for this information was the Proveditor of Customs Francesco Terriesi. The proveditor was, together with the Governor, the most important of the Grand Ducal ministers of Livorno: he oversaw the commercial activity of the port, controlling the incoming and outgoing goods and establishing the taxes that had to be paid. Terriesi was therefore not only an extremely familiar figure for resident merchants in the city, but due to his long stay in England as resident minister of the Grand Duke (1680-1691) he was also the most suitable person to dialogue with the English traders.

This section will demonstrate how Tuscany managed to leverage the economic interests of the English community to the point of inducing the merchants to openly oppose the initiatives of their own government. It will be seen how they not only effectively divested Blackwell of his powers as ambassador, but went so far as to rebel against a direct sovereign order of Queen Anne. The episode reveals the profound social

and institutional fragmentation that characterized English society at that time which, after fifty years of regime changes, had not yet regained its stability.[4]

Following the instructions given by Giraldi, the operation of making the merchants fully aware began at the end of November 1703. Terriesi first started spreading rumours against Blackwell saying that Cosimo III was very dissatisfied with the ambassador. The proveditor also complained that the English government supported the Plowman cause in spite of Tuscan goodwill and even despite the interests of its own citizens. Subsequently the ambassador began to circulate rumours that Blackwell and some ministers had sold themselves to Plowman in exchange for a part of the potential compensation he would get from the Grand Duke. In two months Terriesi had progressively released increasingly worrying news, artfully constructing a crescendo of tension designed to alarm the merchants of the city.

Finally, on 2nd February 1704, Terriesi summoned Francis Arundell, one of the wealthiest English merchants in Livorno, to inform him that 'letters from England sayd the court was resolved to have his Highness make good Mr. Rigby, Shepard and Mr. Plowman's pretentions, and that if his Highness would not comply, to use violence [and that] the citty of Legorne must be bombed'.[5] The proveditor then added that if this would be the position of the English government the Grand Duke 'must be obliged to declare for France, [because] he would never make good a toll'.[6] Terriesi hoped that the English merchants, now aware of the seriousness of the situation, would write to the English court in defence of Tuscany and against Plowman.[7] Terriesi then concluded by assuring

[4] This episode was also described by Tristan M. Stein in his doctoral thesis *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade* (Harvard, 2012). Stein, however, used the episode only as an additional element of his larger demonstration of the British government's inability to impose its sovereignty on its citizens abroad. Furthermore, Stein used mainly printed sources to describe this episode (in particular the various pamphlets published on the Plowman case) and only a small portion of the primary sources that I used to write this section.
[5] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 2 February 1704.
[6] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 2 February 1704.
[7] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 2 February 1704.

Arundell that if the merchants agreed to help the Grand Ducal government, even in the unfortunate case of a conflict '[the merchants] and their estates would be safe'.[8]

Arundell, understandably worried, immediately spread the news to all his colleagues and quickly the British community residing in Livorno was in fibrillation. On 5th February, many of the most important merchants, led by 'mr. Arundell, mr. Nolthorpe and mr. Horsey[9] agreed to goe to the Proveditor's att midd day'.[10] As soon as they arrived at Terriesi's house 'they were conducted into a room where chairs were sett for their reception, but seeing the proveditor stand, was thought advisable to stand alsoe. For sometimes every one looked at each other, att length mr. Arundell broke silence saying: "Sir we are all come to know what you'll please to have us doe in the affair of Plowman"'.[11] At that point Horsey 'made a long discourse, declaring himself a true Englisman, and sayd would prove the Great Duke did nothing to Plowman but justice, and make him appeare an ill man'.[12] Terriesi, after listening to these discourses, asked again the merchants to produce 'matter of fact' against Plowman and dismissed his hosts.[13]

This episode is revealing on many levels. When Terriesi spoke to Arundell on 2nd February, he presented him with a catastrophic situation. If England declared war on Tuscany, the Grand Duke would have been authorized to exercise the right of retaliation, and this could have meant complete ruin not only for Arundell, and for all the other merchants residing in Livorno, but also for their partners in London. In fact, in the event of war, they would not only lose the profits derived from trade but Cosimo III could in fact arrest them and seize their goods and possession. Arundell must certainly have

[8] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 2 February 1704.
[9] John Horsey was one of the most prominent merchants of Livorno. As we have seen in the second chapter he tried several times to become English consul in Tuscany but Blackwell always opposed his nomination.
[10] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 5 February 1704.
[11] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 5 February 1704.
[12] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 5 February 1704.
[13] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 5 February 1704.

breathed a sigh of relief when Terriesi assured him that if the merchants helped the Grand Duchy, they would be protected even in the event of a conflict. In exchange they were required to actively support the Tuscan government's efforts to discredit Plowman. Terriesi in fact presented Arundell with a situation in which the only convenient choice for the English merchants was to side with Tuscany. If their efforts to persuade the English government to desist failed, they could at least hope to save themselves and their possessions. By contrast, if their actions were successful, they would keep Livorno open to British trade and retain their market share in that port. It was precisely in this way that Arundell must have explained the matter to his colleagues, and they must have been looking forward with anticipation to the meeting with the proveditor scheduled for 5th February.

The merchants found Terriesi waiting for them in a room where enough chairs had already been prepared to host every one of them, but the fact that the proveditor had not sat down, nor had he invited the others to sit down, was an evident sign of the tension reigning at that moment. The moment was indeed of the utmost importance. The merchants, in fact, were not just deciding if and how to protect their own interests. The merchants were deciding whether to be loyal to their own government, and the step they were about to take could very well be interpreted as a culpable lack of loyalty and as a real betrayal. This is why, when the silence was finally broken, and the merchants had already expressed their support for the Grand Ducal government, Horsey needed to do a 'long discourse' stating that he, and everyone else in the room, were 'true Englishmen'.[14] The merchant with his speech was saying that he and his colleagues were not acting against their government for personal reasons, but in the name of justice: by doing so he was trying to save his honour and that of his community. But Horsey's declaration also

[14] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 5 February 1704.

had more personal reasons: in fact he not only had very close relations with the Grand Ducal administration but for his good services he was rewarded by Cosimo III with a pension.[15] Horsey had also volunteered to collect evidence against Plowman and to publish it in a book, which would have been a response to the one Plowman printed in 1701. It was also for these reasons, then, that he in particular felt the need to formally strengthen his reputation as a 'true Englishman'.

The merchants, as the best tradition of any conspiracy demands, after the meeting with Terriesi signed a pact between them to consolidate the common commitment, and appointed four 'trustees' who would speak on behalf of the entire community: Francis Arundell , Thomas Ball, Edward Nelthorpe and John Horsey.[16] Thus, with this meaningful act, the merchant community declared itself an ally of Tuscany and was preparing to demonstrate its alliance in a way that an astonished Blackwell defined as 'very extraordinary'.[17]

Cosimo III often visited and stayed in Livorno. When the monarch arrived in the city it was customary for the consuls or ambassadors to accompany the most important merchants residing in the port to an audience with the Grand Duke. This formal act of reverence was a way in which the various national communities residing in Livorno periodically strengthened their bond with the sovereign, to whom they presented gifts and petitions. Thus when Cosimo arrived in Livorno on 1st March, Blackwell sent vice-consul Wheley 'to the merchants to let them know that I might present them to the Great Duke as has always been practiced'.[18] However, the British merchants 'after a consultation' commissioned Thomas Ball to tell Blackwell that 'they thought not this a propper time to

[15] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 4 May 1704.
[16] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Francis Arundell, Thomas Ball, Edward Nelthorpe, John Horsey to Robert Ball, Edward Gould, Robert Western, Ralph Lee, 5 March 1704.
[17] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[18] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.

accompany [him]'.[19] Blackwell must have been stunned to receive such an answer and, perhaps not trusting Whiley, sent his secretary Majou 'to all the houses [of the merchants] and those that he found att home told him they had already given their answer by Thomas Ball'.[20] It did not take long for the ambassador to discover that almost all of his countrymen merchants had allied themselves with the Tuscans 'to overthrow Sir Alexander Rigby's and Mr. Plowman's pretentions'.[21] They believed that Blackwell '[had] pushed matters too farr' and this was the reason why they refused to accompany him to the Grand Duke.[22] The worst thing was that the merchants agreed to have 'a sepparate audience of the Great Duke' and even 'Mr. Chamberlayn, who was the late consull att Messina' joined their cause.[23] Eventually Blackwell went to the audience anyway, after managing to find three merchants, 'Sir George Davis, who was the late consull at Naples [...], Mr. Lambert and Mr. Wybard' who, notwithstanding the fact that they had signed the pact with all the others, agreed to accompany him.[24] The ambassador, perhaps in an attempt to save face, tried to pass off his companions as 'representatives of the English Nation', but the master of ceremonies, Tommaso del Bene, before introducing them into the audience room, did not fail to maliciously ask him 'the reason of their being so few'.[25] Nevertheless, the audience took place 'with the usuall ceremonys and respect' that were due to the ambassador.[26]

According to Blackwell the other merchants refused to accompany him because they were 'full of fear by reason of the message to them by Provveditor Terriesi' and

[19] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[20] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[21] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[22] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[23] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704. As we saw in the previous chapters, at the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession the English merchants in the Spanish cities and in the kingdom of Naples had taken refuge in Livorno. Among them were also the consul of Messina Chamberlayn and the consul of Naples Davis.
[24] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[25] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704.
[26] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704.

although he was ‘unwilling to aggravate matters being contrary to my temper’, he believed that ‘the merchants ought as good subjects to value their duty to Her Majestie more than their owne private interests [because they] are not in a capacitye to judge the Queen’s reasons […] upon this matters’.[27] From a formal point of view, Blackwell’s arguments were perfectly correct. A subject could not claim the right to judge what had been established by the monarch, and certainly could not decide whether to be loyal or not to the sovereign following his personal interest. But such reasoning did not apply to the English who, as we saw in the previous chapter, not only had a much less deferential relationship to the despotic authority of the monarchs, but were and perceived themselves as an active and integral part of the political system: this gave them the right not only to freely express their views, but also to make decisions to support what they believed to be ‘the national interest’. Furthermore Blackwell, having been a merchant in Livorno himself for many years, knew very well that the only thing that really mattered to those people was business. In fact, any sacrifice imposed on their interests in the name of allegiance to a monarch, who moreover was geographically very distant, and therefore unable to impose his will, would not only have fallen on deaf ears, but would have met with fierce opposition. Blackwell had argued in his report to Nottingham that the fact that the merchants had not accompanied him to the hearing ‘did not in the least lessen my character [...] for I had the same reception with or without them’.[28] Understandably, the envoy was trying to save what could be saved, but in reality things went very differently and the merchants did much more than only neglect to accompany him.

When the Grand Duke arrived in Livorno it was customary for the ships present in the port, both Tuscan and foreign ones, to greet his arrival with a gun salute: this was a way in which Tuscan subjects, but especially foreigners, formally recognized the

[27] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.
[28] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 3 March 1704.

sovereignty of the monarch over the city. The British had respected this custom throughout the reign of Ferdinand II and for a large part of the reign of Cosimo III.[29] However, when Blackwell became consul in 1689 changed this custom by ordering the ships to salute the Grand Duke when he and the English nation were in audience with the sovereign.[30] This meant that the greeting was postponed for at least one or two days and according to the merchants' community such a thing 'can be no other than a disrespect'.[31] In fact, it must be considered that in a crowded port such as Livorno, with ships continuously coming and going, dozens of greetings were exchanged daily between the arriving and departing ships and the fortress. In addition, cannon shots were fired to celebrate everything that was believed to have a particular meaning, such as the ascension to the throne of kings, their birthdays and those of members of the royal family, religious solemnities, or special occasions. Thus, in a port where many ships from different states resided at the same time, each of which had its own reasons for celebrating this or that anniversary, not a day went by without a loud series of gun salutes. But this meant that if the salute to the Grand Duke was made a day or two after his arrival in Livorno, it could be confused with the 'regular' salutes and therefore mistaken for something else: in this way the gesture would lose its symbolic importance. Hence the merchant community, eager now more than ever to renew 'the former custome and respect to His Highness the Grand Duke' decided to return to greet the sovereign upon his entry into the city.[32] Thus, although Blackwell had already established that the merchants ships should have saluted the Grand Duke the next morning after his arrival […] notice was sent to the captains [of the English ships] who, according to the ancient and usuall practice and respect due to a Sovereign Prince, began to fire in the mold while the Grand Duke was [on] the way from

[29] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 1 March 1704.
[30] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 1 March 1704.
[31] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 1 March 1704.
[32] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 1 March 1704.

the gate of the city to his palace [and were then] followed by the ships in the road'.[33] The fact was unprecedented: the English merchants, in contravention of a direct order from Blackwell, publicly disavowed him, and therefore effectively divested him of his role before the eyes of the Grand Ducal court, of the foreign ministers, and of all the merchants who lived in Livorno. This was therefore the first important public signal given by the merchants to Cosimo III to demonstrate their loyalty to him and the distance they took from Blackwell and from the position of the English government.

The merchants then requested an audience with the Grand Duke, specifying in their request that although 'they now went apart without the envoy Sir Lambert Blackwell, [this] should not be understood as any disrespect for his character'.[34] Cosimo III answered that 'he would never permit any disrespect to be shown to [Blackwell's] character, but that the English Nation should be very welcome'.[35] The audience was therefore granted for the afternoon of the 3rd of March and a large procession of forty-four merchants and captains appeared in front of the gates of the grand ducal palace. Once introduced to the audience hall Arundell 'made the compliment to His Highness in the name of the rest [of the merchants], which His Highness kindly accepted and added: "I thank you gentlemen for the zeal towards me in the affair of that povero miserabile Guglielmo Plowman al quale sono stato così clemente havendomi ingannato, spero che non haverà modo di ingannare la Regina mia signora"'.[36] To this sentence Arundell replied that 'the nation will perform their parts in acquainting her Majesty the truth' and Horsey had added: 'Serenissima Altezza, siamo tutti fedeli sudditi della Regina nostra

[33] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704.
[34] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704.
[35] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704.
[36] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704. Translation of Cosimo III's sentence: "I thank you gentlemen for the zeal towards me in the affair of that poor miserable William Plowman to whom I have been so gracious notwithstanding that he deceived me, I hope he will have no opportunity to deceive the Queen my Lady as well".

sovrana e buoni servitori dell'Altezza Vostra"'.[37] Cosimo III 'repeated his thanks' and dismissed the merchants, but the hall was so crowded that it would take some time for them leave it. So, after a few moments, Arundell 'excused the trobule given His Highness saying: "Serenissimo siamo di molti che tiene serrato il passo", and His Highness answered by him: "sono tanto più obbligato"'.[38] The friendliness and kindness of Cosimo III, and the fact that he wanted to leave the room only after all the merchants had left, were a tangible sign of the sovereign's appreciation for the precious help offered by the English community. However, even on this occasion the merchants were very careful to save some degree of formality. Indeed, when they asked to have a separate audience with Cosimo III, they specified that this should not be understood as a lack of respect for Blackwell's public and institutional function. An ambassador, especially when he was in the exercise of his duties, was a personification of the monarch and was to be treated accordingly. Thus highlighting that the merchant community '[went] soe angry with Sir Lambert Blackwell in person, which they distinguish from his character in his personal capacity' meant showing that the merchants did not disrespect the person of the Queen, but contested the man who had been chosen as her representative.[39] Even the Grand Duke was careful to reiterate the same concept, because in a delicate diplomatic situation such as that between England and Tuscany, a lack of formal respect could have constituted a pretext for retaliation. In any case, the Grand Duke declared the merchants 'very welcome' and they were able to officially sanction the alliance that now linked the English Factory with the Tuscan sovereign, who thanked them for the 'zeal' shown towards him. This event too was unprecedented: the merchants, beyond all formal

[37] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704. Translation of Horsey's sentence: "Most Serene Highness, we are all faithful subjects of the Queen our sovereign and good servants of your Highness".
[38] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, National Jornall of the English Factory, 3 March 1704. Translation of Cosimo III and Arundell's exchange: "Most Serene we are so many that you cannot pass through us" and Cosimo replied "I am even more obliged [for you being so many]".
[39] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 20 March 1704.

stratagems, sided against their own country and took the side of a foreign ruler. Of course, Horsey had once again tried to save face by declaring that he and his colleagues were 'all loyal subjects of the Queen', but it was evident that their actions clearly contradicted those statements.

For the Grand Ducal government, bringing the entire English community to its side, vice-consul of Livorno and consuls of Naples and Messina included, was an extraordinary success. These occurrences were now the only topic of conversation in Livorno. The merchants, who now felt stronger under the protection of the Grand Duke, freely spread all the rumours they learned from Terriesi in the past two months. Blackwell was 'really ashamed to write [to Nottingham that] they regard not how they vent their spleene against Her Majestie's servants, for they […] discourse that her Majestie's ministers are to have a proportion in the sum to be recovered from the Great Duke'.[40] 'It is impossible to express', Blackwell continued, 'how the French and Italians here do ridicule them [and] if some measures be not taken to silence [the merchants] [...] there will be no living amongst them'.[41] Somehow what had happened a few years earlier in London was now happening in Livorno: the Plowman case caused scandal, but this time the British subjects were loudly protesting against their own government.

Blackwell was now in a very difficult position. The Grand Ducal government had plotted behind his back until the merchant community turned against him and the envoy was now fighting against his own compatriots. What made the ambassador's situation even more complex was that peremptory orders continued to arrive from London for the conclusion of the Plowman case. In particular, on 8th February Nottingham wrote that the Queen demanded satisfaction for the damages suffered by Plowman and that this time the ambassador would not accept 'any other answer than a plain categoricall one that

[40] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 12 March 1704.
[41] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 12 March 1704.

[the Great Duke] will or will not do it'.[42] In the case of refusal Blackwell 'without expecting further orders' should have intimated to the merchants in Livorno 'that they should (to avoyd any future inconvenience) with all speed get in their debts due to them or their principals in the Great Duke's territorys and dispose of and withdraw their effects'.[43] Blackwell literally stood between a rock and a hard place and there was no choice that was without consequences. In a climate like the one that now reigned in Livorno, ordering the merchants to leave the city could prove catastrophic, but not obeying an order as explicit as that of Nottingham would have meant in fact giving up his position and admitting defeat. The ambassador, bound by his orders, presented a new memorial to the Grand Duke, renewing the requests for satisfaction for the Plowman case, but the Tuscan government, with a series of excuses, did not give him any response before 22nd April.[44] Even then, however, secretary Montemagni, far from giving Blackwell a clear and categorical answer, merely replied that the Grand Duke had appointed 'Count Roberto Zeffirini, gentleman of his Chamber as his extraordinary envoy to his Majesty [...] to make a more public and notorious testimony of his profound respect for such a sublime Queen […] and to justify with the voice of the same Count the reasons that have persuaded His Royal Highness to behave in the way he did until now'.[45] To this answer Blackwell protested vigorously, but the Secretary of State added 'in the Great Duke's name that I must expect no other answer'.[46] At that point Blackwell had no other option but to write to the merchants of Livorno:

> 'Gentlemen I am comanded by Her Majestie to intimate to you that you should (to avoid future inconveniences) with all speed you can, gett in

[42] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 8 February 1704.
[43] T.N.A., S.P. 104/90, Nottingham to Lambert Blackwell, 8 February 1704.
[44] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 10 April 1704.
[45] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Coriolano Montemagni to Blackwell, 22 April 1704.
[46] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Coriolano Montemagni to Blackwell, 22 April 1704.

> your debts due to you, or your principalls, within the G. Duke's territories, and dispose of and withdraw your effects. I have sent my secretaries on purpose with this intimation, and have ordered them to tell you the reason which hath induced her Majestie to come to this resolution, If I can any way be serviceable do you lett me know it, for I am with great truth, your most humble servant, ecc..'[47]

The die was cast. The ambassador knew that the operation was extremely risky, but he counted on the fact that, however much his relations with the English merchants residing in Livorno had deteriorated, they would never have dared to disobey a direct order from the Queen. He was wrong.

Some of the more moderate merchants declared that they were 'much obliged for sir Lambert intimation' and just ignored it, but many others commented on the order received in a much more explicit way.[48] Some, like Humbury and Paitfield, decided to show their astonishment by declaring themselves 'mightly surpriz'd att the intimation and wandered that the factory should be exposed for such a man as Plowman', while Nelthorpe, when he arrived at the part of the letter in which Blackwell offered his help, blurted out that 'sir Lambert might have serv'd them when 'twas time'.[49] Others, such as Ball and Horsey, chose instead to be more aggressive, explicitly stating 'that they were not oblig'd to believe what sir Lambert wrote, that they should have seen my Lord Nottingham's originall letter, and that for Sir Lambert's letter they would take no notice of it'.[50] Some others, like Arundell and Dormon, preferred to respond sarcastically. The first declared that 'he would have made of Sir Lambert's intimation the best he could',

[47] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to the English Factory of Merchants, 30 April 1704.
[48] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Answer of the English Factory of Merchants to the Intimation, 30 April 1704.
[49] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Answer of the English Factory of Merchants to the Intimation, 30 April 1704.
[50] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Answer of the English Factory of Merchants to the Intimation, 30 April 1704.

while the second replied 'that 'twas as easy for them to fly as remove their effects from Legorne'.[51] However, the climax was reached by [James] Lambert who not only replied 'that [he] did not believe any of the factory would stir' but also declared 'that they reckon'd themselves as safe att Legorne as at Whitehall'.[52]

Blackwell's letter therefore proved to be a total fiasco: half of the most important merchants just ignored it, while the other half had responded with varying degrees of insolence, to the point of questioning the ambassador's own word and making fun of the English government. The rebellion of the English Factory was now complete, both in substance and in form. If in Livorno the matters of the gun salutes, and then of the separate audience were sensational, the rebellion of the merchants to a direct sovereign order literally left everyone astounded and the news 'was instantly divulged throughout all the town'.[53]

The merchants had taken an extremely risky step. By contravening a direct order of the Queen they had renounced her protection, and therefore found themselves in a socially and juridically ambiguous position. However, in those months, the relationship between the merchants and the Grand Ducal government had further strengthened and by now their strategy was organized and united. The merchants appealed to the Grand Duke for protection and therefore, a few days after Blackwell's intimation, Livorno was covered with posters printed by the Grand Ducal government that reproduced a letter that Cosimo III had sent to Francesco Terriesi. The Grand Duke declared that

> [...] given the requests that these English merchants had made to you to have security from Us for their people, and for their effects existing in this

[51] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Answer of the English Factory of Merchants to the Intimation, 30 April 1704.
[52] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Answer of the English Factory of Merchants to the Intimation, 30 April 1704.
[53] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 30 April 1704.

> City for all the events that might occur in the present contingencies, you can reply that since We wish to give all the proofs of our respect to the MAJESTY OF THE BRITISH QUEEN [sic] and all the proofs of our affection for the English nation [...] that those who want to leave with their capitals from this city will be left in the fullness of their freedom to carry it out, and that the others who want to continue their abode there will find and enjoy, both for them and for their effects, that security and partiality that they have experienced up to now [...].[54]

With this letter, which was made public as a law would have been, Cosimo III respected his part of the agreement with the English merchants, guaranteeing them his protection. The Grand Duke left the English community maximum freedom: they could leave, or stay, and in any case both their people and their possessions would be safe: with such an act the Tuscan government proved that the English, of their own free will, wanted to stay and reside in Livorno and this would have a strong impact in England, further amplifying the visibility and resonance of their rebellion.

We saw in the previous chapter that Giraldi had the 'utmost moral certainty' that English menaces were just a bluff and that the English government would never have declared war on Tuscany. However, in a confrontation as dangerous as that between the two countries, and especially considering the disproportion of forces between them, the Grand Duchy could certainly not base its strategy exclusively on the belief that England would never take hostile actions against it. The risk was too great and therefore the Tuscan government organised itself also from a military point of view. Cosimo III ordered governor Tornaquinci to quickly complete the construction of a new bastion of the walls,

[54] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Cosimo III to Francesco Terriesi, 10 May 1704.

which had already begun, and to proceed swiftly with the substantial expansion of another coastal fortification. The new fort, located on a small island in front of Livorno, would not only have further strengthened the city's firepower towards the sea, but it would also have covered the north west side of the fortress which, 'hitting the beach and every other place that can be occupied by the enemy', aimed to prevent any troops landing.[55] The governor was ordered to carry out these works quickly but 'quietly, in order to save appearance'.[56] Meanwhile, the General Superintendent of the Fortresses, engineer Fantasia, had been ordered to go promptly to Livorno in order to agree with the governor 'the quality of the artillery that is deemed convenient to put' in the new fortification.[57] The Governor predicted that the new fortification would be ready within a month and that it would take 'eight or ten good-sized long range culverins' to arm it.[58] The foundries of Florence were working at full capacity and the Grand Duke ordered that another six hundred men of the Grand Ducal 'Bande' should reinforce the fortress of Livorno, whose garrison thus came to count over three thousand men.[59] Blackwell also informed the Secretary of State that the Tuscan government was adding 'soldiers to that garrison, and renewing the fortifications, severall pieces of cannon being sent from hence [Florence] thither [Livorno], and I am told the Grand Duke is resolved to compleate eight thousand menn to be in readiness on any occasion'.[60] The massive military preparations of the Tuscan government served two purposes. The first and most immediate was to make sure that the Grand Duchy was ready to defend itself in case of need. The second was to explicitly demonstrate to the English government, but above all to the English merchants

[55] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti to Mario Tornaquinci, 7 April 1704.
[56] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti to Mario Tornaquinci, 1 April 1704.
[57] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti to Mario Tornaquinci, 7 April 1704.
[58] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti to Mario Tornaquinci, 4 April 1704.
[59] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2224, Montauti to Mario Tornaquinci, 29 April 1704. 'Bande Granducali' was the name of the army of the Grand Duchy, which was organized as a territorial militia. At the time the 'Bande' numbered 40,000 men.
[60] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 6 May 1704.

in Livorno and London, that Tuscany would never yield to threats, and that it was ready to fight to defend its position. It was probably also by virtue of these massive military preparations that [James] Lambert had replied to Blackwell that the merchants 'reckon'd themselves as safe att Legorne as at Whitehall'.[61]

Meanwhile the rebel merchants, taking advantage of their ships constantly shuttling between Tuscany and England, organized a real information service that connected London with Livorno. This allowed them to communicate with the British Isles and vice versa much faster than Blackwell could, and this was a great strategic advantage both for them and for the Tuscan government. In fact, in this way the merchants in Livorno could coordinate their strategy with their colleagues in London, making it more integrated and effective. In the same way, the Grand Ducal government could constantly obtain and send information to Giraldi, who could thus also adapt his tactics in the most convenient way possible. Furthermore, to finance their operations, the Livorno merchants also imposed a new tax 'on all merchandise discharged from, or loaden on English shipps at Legorn, equivalent to about two shillings per tunn, which, upon so many vessels as discharge and reload att that port will amount yearly to severall thousands pounds'.[62] Strengthened by the formal protection obtained by Cosimo III, the merchants, acquiring fiscal and economic autonomy, had taken the last step towards their independence. In fact, by imposing the tax, they actually appropriated one of the main prerogatives of a sovereign power, thus completing their definitive emancipation from their country. Thus

[61] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Answer of the English Factory of Merchants to the Intimation, 30 April 1704.
[62] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, Lambert Blackwell to Nottingham, 5 July 1704. It must be considered that although the tax fell mainly on the merchants themselves, it also affected many other English merchants and citizens who shipped goods to Livorno. This data also makes it possible to estimate the volume of English commercial traffic in Livorno. In fact, considering the average value for 'several', that is 5,000 pounds, it can be estimated that the volume of goods loaded and unloaded annually by British ships alone amounted to 50,000 tons. [1 pound = 20 shillings. 5,000 pounds x 20= 100,000 /2 shillings per tun = 50,000 tuns] However, it should be noted that 'tunn' was a measure of volume and not of weight, which corresponded to approximately 950 litres.

at that point the merchants residing in Livorno could rightly and truly define themselves as an ‘English Nation’.

The Tuscan government, effectively implementing the strategy suggested by Giraldi, managed not only to completely isolate Blackwell, but also to bring the English merchants to its side. Their revolt had been dramatic and unprecedented and, as will be seen in the next section, had a fundamental impact in hastening the conclusion of the Plowman case.

The Tuscan Contest

Over the years the Plowman case transformed several times, steadily acquiring growing relevance from a diplomatic, economic and political point of view. The controversy was a crescendo of tension: Tuscany and England, for different reasons, were competing in a dangerous game of brinkmanship that could have very serious consequences for both states. The attention of the English public opinion had gradually focused on the case, which became, in an already incandescent social and political context as that of England, a pretext for passionate political discussions. When the news of what was happening in Livorno arrived in London it was as if someone had entered a gunpowder magazine with a lighted candle: the effect was explosive. The case reached its peak and the months that went from May to November 1704 were in fact incredibly intense. The final confrontation of the controversy took place simultaneously on all the various terrains on which England and Tuscany had already fought in previous years, from trade, to diplomacy, to politics, up to the point of questioning the legitimacy of Queen Anne’s government.

In this section, we will see how economic, political and diplomatic issues overlapped and intertwined in the final and most violent battle of the Plowman case. We

will begin by showing how the rebellion of the Livorno merchants raised the delicate issue of allegiance to the sovereign and how this was used in an instrumental way as a political lever against the government. It will be shown how the English merchants, now completely aligned in favour of Tuscany, declared themselves defenders in the first person of the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy. It will then be illustrated how Giraldi took advantage of these favourable circumstances to seek and obtain greater diplomatic and international support for Tuscany. It will therefore be demonstrated how the combined actions of the English merchants and the Tuscan ambassador finally forced the English government to renounce to its pretentions against Tuscany. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the question of loyalty to the sovereign had been one of the most delicate problems of the Glorious Revolution and had generated a fundamental problem of trust between the government and its citizens. Through the analysis of the political clash surrounding the Plowman case, it will be seen how the issue was current even after the accession of Queen Anne to the throne.

It was not the first time that the Livorno merchants had openly opposed the decisions of the English government. In fact, in the second chapter we have seen how the English merchants opposed the appointment of John Burrows as consul, and then, when the government ignored their protests, how they independently elected James Wheley as vice-consul, effectively divesting of power the representative chosen by the Secretary of State. However, what the merchants did now in Livorno, that is, disobeying a direct sovereign order from the Queen, was an action not seen since the Civil War.[63] What the English residing in Livorno did was very serious, especially because (almost) no one in England questioned the authority of the sovereign. Thus, the priority for the merchants

[63] In 1688, in fact, the population had not technically rebelled against James II: to bypass the problem of the allegiance the subject owed to the sovereign, it was considered that the sovereign, after he fled from London, had in fact abdicated. Thus, all the oaths and obligations owed to the monarch were formally annulled and with them the problems of conscience of a large part of the population were also solved.

now was to demonstrate that their actions, however extreme, were actually aimed at protecting the honour of the crown of England and the interest of the nation. The merchants had to prove, in short, that it had been Plowman, Blackwell and their associates who had betrayed the public faith and their Queen, thus creating the conditions for which the Livorno merchants had no choice but to rebel. The issue of allegiance to the sovereign was a very delicate issue for English subjects, who several times had been painfully forced to decide to whom their loyalty should go.[64] The events in Livorno awakened memories of a relatively close past, and the Plowman case turned also into a battleground between the various political souls of English society.

Plowman and his associates, as soon as they learned about what had happened in Livorno, immediately tried to demonstrate that the merchants' actions were a betrayal and 'an affront to the Queen'.[65] Blackwell, with the hope of saving what was left of his reputation and also with the aim of discrediting the English Factory, instead openly defined the merchants as 'rebels'.[66] However, such a word awakened painful memories and reopened old wounds in the consciences of many English people and the accusation of being 'rebels', instead of intimidating, had the exact opposite effect. 'Our merchants', wrote Giraldi, 'are not frightened by the outcries and they speak without fear in defence of the behaviour of their houses, and correspondents in Livorno, and considering that their number becomes larger and more united every day, it becomes in proportion ever more respectable'.[67] After what had happened in the Tuscan port the London merchants had no

[64] On this topic: Edward Vallance, *Loyalty memory and public opinion in England, 1658-1727*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2019); David Martin Jones, *Conscience and Allegiance in Seventeenth Century England*, (Rochester, NY, University of Rochester Press, 1999), p. 61; Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the National Covenant: State Oaths, Protestantism and the Political Nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge, 2005); Howard Nenner, 'Loyalty and the Law: The Meaning of Trust and the Right of Resistance in Seventeenth-Century England, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 48(4) (2009), pp. 859-870; *An Act for the Abrogating the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance and Appointing Other Oaths*, Statutes of the Realm, vol. 6, 1685-94, (Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), pp. 57-60.
[65] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 11 April 1704.
[66] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 11 April 1704.
[67] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 11 April 1704.

choice but to support the actions of their colleagues and had in fact instructed Edward Gould to present a memorial to secretary Nottingham explaining the reasons of the English merchants of Livorno.[68]

Gould began his defence by reiterating the concept that what had happened in Livorno should not be interpreted as 'any disrespect to [Blackwell's] character', because the merchants distinguished 'Lambert Blackwell in person from his character in his personal capacity'.[69] The merchant then listed the various reasons that justified the actions of the Livorno merchants. In particular Gould accused Blackwell of having employed 'in the consulship at Livorno persons disloyall to the Queen' which had been 'a vexation to us and disturbed our trade, for in the late Reigne wee did present a petition to mr. Vernon Secretary, to remove John Burrows, without redress'.[70] Then Gould claimed that Blackwell's most deplorable fault was that of keeping the English Factory in the dark about what was really happening in the Plowman case 'till wee were on the brink of destruction'.[71] Thus the merchants, once 'awakened from lethargy, [made] application to your Lordship [Nottingham] with our petitions, and soe wee must now [apply] to the Queen for a hearing in her Grand Council'.[72] It is immediately evident from the first paragraphs of Gould's letter that this, more than a document of defence and justification, is a document of attack and accusation. The general tone of the letter is in fact very aggressive and the language used is certainly not that of someone who, having committed a serious crime, humbly tries to justify himself, but that of someone who protests for having been wronged. Gould, by attacking Blackwell, was also directly attacking the government. The merchant indeed claimed that the English Nation of Livorno had tried to warn the Secretary of State that Burrows was 'disloyall to the Queen', but their petition

[68] Edward Gould was a wealthy London merchant, and one of the major exporters to Livorno.
[69] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.
[70] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.
[71] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.
[72] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.

to Vernon remained 'without redress'. The consul was thus able to keep his post, at least until, as we saw in the second chapter, he fled to Rome after having tried to murder his rivals Whiley and Horsey. Bringing up such a topic was indeed a real attack against the government, since, as it will be remembered, it was Secretary Vernon, whose brother was in business with Plowman, who gave political support to the controversy. However, Vernon left office years before, and Nottingham could easily have passed the blame on to the colleague who preceded him. But, according to Gould, it was the current government that had the biggest responsibility. We saw in the previous chapter that the merchants, after being 'awakened from lethargy', presented two petitions to Nottingham (11th January, 14th March 1704), but these too were completely ignored.[73] On the very day that Gould wrote his letter to Nottingham, the London merchants presented their third petition (25th March) which, however, risked being overlooked like the previous two. Therefore, this was the reason why Gould, in a threatening tone, informed the Secretary of State that the merchants were now determined to ask the Queen for 'a hearing in her Grand Council'.[74] The message that the merchant sent to Nottingham was very clear: since the government refused to listen to its citizens, they would bypass it, addressing the sovereign directly. But the arguments that Gould used up until now were only a prodrome to the most accusatory, most violent and most interesting part of this document.

According to the merchant Blackwell's most serious fault was that 'for his private quarrel with the [English] nation hath given them the odious names of Rebells'.[75] Gould was 'sensibly offended at Sir Lambert's expression of Rebells etc. in the persons of my partners at Livorno [...]' and continued by stating that 'I will vindicate myself with sir Lambert [because] my father was no Oliver's but a Zealous Royallist, as I profess, and

[73] T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of your Majesty's subjects trading to Legorne, 11 January 1704; T.N.A., S.P. 98/21, The humble petition of the merchants and other traders in and about the city of Exon and county of Devon, 14 March 1704.
[74] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.
[75] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.

did expose his life for the Royall Martyr [Charles I] and his cause before and after his death'.[76] The merchant added that 'my family had noe hand in [building] the scaffold on which the Royall Martyr King Charles I was executed [...]' and concluded by saying 'I desire no reward from the Crowne this time but to bee credited, in publique and private'.[77] As we saw in the previous chapters, after the Glorious Revolution, the new regime of William III needed to place in the ministries and in the administration people who were loyal to the new sovereign, or at least who were not supporters of the legitimacy of the Stuart dynasty. In fact, Blackwell was chosen first as consul and then as ambassador to Tuscany because his family had once been an active supporter of Cromwell, and had therefore supported the expulsion of the Stuarts in 1688. But what had favoured Blackwell at the time of William III was now a very uncomfortable and dangerous legacy. The Livorno merchants were addressed 'with the odious name of Rebells' but Gould completely reversed the perspective of the discourse. Indeed, when Gould claimed that his father 'was no Oliver's but a Zealous Royallist' he not only proclaimed his and the English merchants of Leghorn's absolute loyalty to the Crown, but directly attacked the political positions of Blackwell and of his family, which had evidently contributed to raise 'the scaffold on which the Royall Martyr was executed'.[78] The appellation of 'rebels' used by Blackwell had evidently awakened a subject that was still extremely sensitive in the consciences of many Englishmen. After all, just over fifty years had passed since the execution of Charles I, less than twenty since the Glorious Revolution, and only two since Anne had ascended the throne. The first two events profoundly marked the consciences of many English subjects and the recent death of Queen Anne's only son had once again rekindled the debate over who the legitimate king at the death of the sovereign would be.

[76] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.
[77] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.
[78] T.N.A., SP98/21, Edward Gould to Nottingham, 25 March 1704.

Loyalty was therefore not only a delicate subject, but an incredibly actual, significant and dangerous political topic. Indeed, the reference to Charles I was not exclusively a rhetorical device, but appealed to a symbolic language widely used after the restoration of 1660. With the accession to the throne of Charles II, his father was transformed into a 'king and martyr' and the date of his execution, 30th January, became an Anglican festivity.[79] Charles I had become a representative figure of the unity of the kingdom, and all subsequent monarchs presented themselves to the public as the direct heirs of Charles I.[80] William III as well 'as the Revolution became embedded and more secure [...] [claimed] the martyr as a supporter of the new regime'.[81] Anne did the same, and in the early eighteenth century the figure of Charles I was 'central in the party struggles in church and state'.[82] Above all Charles I had become a martyr of the Protestant faith, a symbol to be used against the Catholic danger.[83] Indeed Gould's harangue against Blackwell can therefore be read as a harangue against the government. The message was clear: in previous years the administration had not only trusted elements whose loyalty was far from certain (Burrows, Blackwell, Plowman) but had also completely ignored the needs of its subjects, until they, 'on the brink of destruction', were forced to take extreme measures to safeguard their own survival. The implicit question was: what would the government do now? Would it continue to support Blackwell and Plowman or would it trust those who were truly 'zealous royallists'?

These arguments were entirely instrumental. The English merchants might have perhaps been motivated by a genuine desire to preserve the honour of the crown, but mainly they were defending their interests. But, as we saw earlier in this work, in a debate

[79] Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule. The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy 1660-1714* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 40.
[80] Charles II, James II, William III and Anne always linked themselves directly to Charles I. Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule.* p. 123, 252,
[81] *Ibid*., p. 393.
[82] Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 5-6.
[83] Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*, p. 394.

involving public opinion it is not important to use 'real' arguments, but 'the right' arguments, capable of inflaming the passions of the population. Thus, also the argument of allegiance to the sovereign was used in an instrumental way to gain credibility and consensus. Gould's letter must certainly have given Nottingham and the other ministers much to think about. Gould, in fact, represented a group of interests that with his wealth and his contacts was not only able to influence the court, but also to massively mobilize public opinion.

The political battleground surrounding the Plowman case was therefore becoming progressively insidious and the government, after Gould's letter, established 'despite someone's opinion to reject [the petition of 25th March]' that it was not possible 'to His Majesty's credit to refuse the applicants the request they made to be heard'.[84] The result was very important, because it was the first time the government had officially questioned the Plowman case. Moreover, by admitting the merchants to an official hearing, the government was also forced to recognize that the Plowman controversy was no longer only between the English and Tuscan governments, but also between the English government and its own citizens.

The hearing was set for 25th April 1704. Thirty London merchants 'all people of name and credit' declared to the government commissioners that they wanted to make 'a defence of the Livorno traffic against the facts that appear in the book of Plowman and his adherents'[85]. They declared also that 'we wish to be heard as interposers in the difference between said Plowman and the Most Serene Grand Duke of Tuscany [...] and we caveat or protest that our procedures can be with a salvis iure [sic] to the honour and glory of the Queen [...] and of the sovereignty of the Grand Duke'.[86] The merchants

[84] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 18 April 1704.
[85] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 25 April 1704.
[86] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 25 April 1704.

continued by saying that 'everything that has been asserted by Plowman is factitious' and then they produced some evidence. First of all they showed the letter from Plowman to Crookshanks of 2nd July 1696, that is, the one in which Plowman told his friend of all his pirate accomplishments.[87] The letter 'made a great impression' on the government's commissioners, but they were even more impressed when they learned that Captain Broom, the commander of Plowman's ship, 'did not have a legitimate patent, and that consequently that Plowman's actions were piracy'.[88] Giraldi was extremely satisfied with the results so far obtained and commented that the intervention of 'our merchants', as the ambassador now amicably always called the English merchants, had been 'a good bucket of cold water on the fire of these unfortunates [Plowman and his associates]'.[89] By now the alliance between the English merchants and Tuscany was absolute: '[Mr. Horsey], Mr. Gould and Mr. Ball and all our other allies', Giraldi wrote, 'do not look at any expense, and do not avoid any difficulty, or spare any vigilance in supporting our common cause, which [could] never be brought to a successful conclusion without their union and their support to us'.[90]

Meanwhile, at that time, the government was undergoing a major reshuffle and many secretaries were substituted by the Queen. Nottingham resigned and Charles Hedges took his place.[91] It is not possible to determine the weight the Plowman case actually had in the government reshuffle, but certainly the media attention that focused on the matter could have contributed to the removal of some ministers such as Nottingham who had played an important part in the management of the dispute. These changes removed some of the political support from the case, so much so that at the beginning of May Plowman was arrested for debts. It was the wife of Captain Broom, to whom

[87] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 2674, from William Plowman to Jack Crookshanks, 2 July 1696.
[88] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 25 April 1704.
[89] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 9 May 1704.
[90] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 9 May 1704.
[91] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 9 May 1704.

Plowman owed 16.000 *pezze*, who filed the complaint, fearing that the merchant 'in case things going badly for him would go elsewhere'.[92] According to Giraldi, it was very likely that Plowman 'would put himself out begging for a bondsman', but despite this 'the mistrust shown by this woman does him notable prejudice as her example could be followed [by many others]'.[93] Public opinion was increasingly shifting to the Tuscan side and the government seemed far less willing than before to protect Plowman.

Meanwhile, however, the news that the Grand Duke had appointed as envoy extraordinary, the Count Roberto Zeffirini, reached London. The news was very unwelcome to Giraldi. From a personal point of view the ambassador probably saw this as a lack of trust in him and moreover he considered the gesture as a strategic error. In fact, according to the envoy, the arrival of a new minister, albeit temporary, would lead to many conjectures and ultimately weaken the position of Tuscany. A rumour, probably begun by Plowman, that Zeffirini was charged with bringing the Queen a compromise proposal by Cosimo III spread rapidly in London. 'This interpretation', wrote Giraldi, 'being at first sight so natural, it has been credited by the ignorants'.[94] Actually the main mission of Zeffirini was to pay a special compliment to the Queen and at the same time illustrate to her the reasons that led the Grand Duke to maintain his position in the Plowman case. Cosimo III sent Zeffirini to England with the intention of resolving the question 'from monarch to monarch' once and for all. The Grand Duke made that decision based on his own cultural and political categories: Cosimo III treated Anne as he would have treated any other European ruler, that is, having the conviction that the will of the sovereign could, if necessary, resolve any situation. The Grand Duke had not been able to understand and adapt to the British system as Giraldi had and therefore it was

[92] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 May 1704.
[93] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 May 1704.
[94] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 23 May 1704; A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 30 May 1704.

incomprehensible to him that the Queen did not have the necessary power to resolve such a situation. Giraldi had already tried to explain, albeit without success, that 'the [English court] does not have this despotic power to silence the complaints of the people whether they are just or unjust, and especially when they are supported by a strong party, such as [Plowman's] are, the court has to hear them, and support them as long as they are solved by accidents or by tiredness'.[95] After all, even the ambassador needed years to adapt to a completely different social and institutional system and it was very difficult to transmit to the Great Duke knowledge and awareness that were based on categories that, within the Tuscan context, did not exist. Thus Giraldi, resigned to his fate, had laconically commented 'the new Envoy will see well how difficult it is here to he heard, and how little they care about reasons, proofs and arguments'.[96]

Despite this small hitch Giraldi continued to gather diplomatic support and consensus in favour of the Grand Duchy. The ambassador had indeed several meetings with other colleagues of his, especially with those who represented England's allied countries, during which he asked them to intervene in favour of Tuscany. The ambassador argued that a war between Tuscany and England would force the Grand Duchy to side with France and that this would deprive many allied countries of the profitable trade they had with Livorno. Exactly as he had done a year before with the Dutch Republic, Giraldi was trying to use the economic and commercial interests that other countries had in the Tuscan port as a political and diplomatic lever against England.[97] Therefore when the news of the intimation given to the Livorno merchants to abandon the city reached London, Giraldi reported that 'the noise caused by such a clamorous order caught everyone's attention and particularly that of the ministers of the Allied Princes' who had

[95] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 9 October 1703.
[96] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 13 June 1704.
[97] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.

fear 'of seeing for this reason [the Grand Duke] enter into the interests of the Two Crowns [of France and Spain]'.[98] Indeed, the news that recently arrived in London of the striking order given to the merchants, and the Grand Duchy's massive military preparations could only be the prelude to a war. Thus, the foreign envoys were already well aware of this topic during their meetings with Giraldi, and they immediately took action, asking for audiences with the English government to discuss the matter.[99] They then requested other meetings with Giraldi and bombarded him with 'incessant questions'.[100] 'I', commented the ambassador, 'at the sight of all this movement, which is not at all disadvantageous for us, I keep myself firm and steady [...] and I say them that there are no mysteries, as all has happened is manifest'.[101] Giraldi also cunningly hinted that Zeffirini was not at all coming to England with a compromise, since 'that on the side of His Highness my Lord there is [nothing to] compromise', but rather he was the bearer of a final and definitive answer.[102] After Giraldi's answer the foreign envoys, fearing that Zeffirini would bring an ultimatum, 'clearly showed their opposition [with the English government], insisting on the consequences that were already known' that a war with Tuscany 'would have destroyed one of the best trades that remains to [England]'.[103]

The growing pressure exerted by the merchants, the sensational rebellion of its citizens in Livorno and now the insistences of foreign ambassadors placed the English government in a serious position. The English ministers had no choice but to reverse and immediately suspend 'the order [given to the merchants of Livorno], which was more frightening to the English themselves than to His Highness' and had 'dumped the blame on Mr. Blackwell'.[104] Secretary Hedges wrote to the English ambassador reproaching him

[98] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[99] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[100] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[101] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[102] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[103] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 13 June 1704.
[104] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 13 June 1704.

for having been ‘a little too quick in giving notice to the merchants in withdrawing their effects’ and ordered him to suspend all pressure on the Tuscan government.[105] By now Blackwell, whose reputation, as we have seen, had already been largely undermined by Giraldi and Nottingham, became the perfect scapegoat to get the government ‘out of the quagmire’ in which it found itself.[106]

Meanwhile the merchants, now galvanized by the results they had obtained, poured all their energies into the action against Plowman and his associates. Their book in response to the pamphlet published by Plowman in 1701 was almost ready, while Edward Gould managed to obtain a private audience with the Queen, to whom he would have presented an *Apology* in defence of the Livorno trade. The meeting with the sovereign guaranteed a moment of maximum media visibility and therefore the merchants, as in a modern marketing campaign, decided to print the *Apology* and to divulge it immediately after the audience among the population ‘as a preliminary to the book that will soon come out and that will be explosive’.[107]

However, this *Apology* was more than a simple ‘trailer’ of the case, and analysis of this document allows identification of some key points of the strategy implemented by the merchants. It is also illustrative of the extent and also to establish what the level of political and social tension that had focused around the Plowman case was. The document, which is addressed directly to the sovereign, is structured as a long paper divided into three main arguments.

The first argument began by saying that ‘among all the attempts of conspirators, and men of desperate fortunes, to weaken and destroy the government of sovereign princes, their first artifice is to break and dissolve their alliances with their confederate

[105] T.N.A., S.P. 104/91, Charles Hedges to Lambert Blackwell, 26 May 1704.
[106] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 13 June 1704.
[107] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 27 June 1704.

princes […] by false and slanderous accusation of intended injuries against them'.[108] According to the authors, this was exactly what Plowman did first with William III and then with Anne, who had been 'unhappily mislead, by an ill-suggested insinuating petition and also by a scandalous libel'.[109] His false accusations not only undermined the long friendship that 'for above these Hundred Years past' had characterized the relations between Tuscany and England, but also compromised the personal relationship that bound the English community to Cosimo III, who had always protected 'in an especial manner the merchants residing at Legorn, by redressing their Grievances, even when they have been without Envoys or Counsuls in that Great Duke's state, and have ever given them easy access to [his] Person'.[110] The Apology then listed various evidence against Plowman, who was especially accused not only of having entertained intimate relationships with several Jacobites, 'particularly with the late Queen at St. Germains and likewise with Her pretended son there', but also of being acquainted with the plot to assassinate William III.[111] The first argument concluded by considering that Plowman was 'a Roman-Catholick, he cannot take the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy, nor consequently the Sacramental-Test; and so he can never be on an equal foot of Loyalty to Your Majesty, as we your Protestant Subjects are'.[112]

The first point of the *Apology* focused on demolishing Plowman's credibility. It described him as a conspirator who had no other goal than to destroy the friendship that historically linked Tuscany and England. The main accusation against Plowman was, however, his Catholicism. As we saw earlier in this work, during that time in England there was fierce persecution towards Catholics, who were subject to widespread

[108] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn for Printing their Case*, (London, 1704), p. 1.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[110] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn for Printing their Case*, (London, 1704), p. 4.
[111] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[112] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

prejudice: one of the most common accusations against them was precisely that of plotting against Protestant monarchs.[113] Thus the reference to Plowman's relations with the English court in exile at St. Germaine and the reference to the plan to assassinate William III were means of proving to the reader something that he would already naturally suspect, namely that Plowman, being a Catholic, was also a conspirator. The merchants then closed their first argument by referring to the oath of allegiance. All people who were holders of public employment had to profess this oath, in which they not only swore allegiance to the monarch, but also received the sacraments according to the dictates of the Anglican church.[114] Plowman did not have, nor did he demand, any public office, but referring to an oath he cannot undertake meant surreptitiously demonstrating that his word could not be trusted. Moreover, the merchants explicitly concluded that for this very reason Plowman could never be 'on an equal foot of Loyalty to Your Majesty, as we your Protestant Subjects are'.[115]

In the second point of their Apology the merchants focussed on very concrete arguments concerning the Queen's tax revenues. Indeed, the authors argued that 'another Artifice of Conspirator and Men of Desperate Fortunes to ruin an Government is by weak'ning the Exchequer and Revenue of a Prince'.[116] 'The trade of Legorn', the merchants continued, '[…] is of the highest importance to Your Majesty and one of the

[113] In the late seventeenth century several pamphlets regarding 'popish plots' were published. Just to cite a few examples: *The Discovery of the Popish Plot* (1679); *The Popish Plot More Fully Discovered* (1679); *The Popish Plot and Plotters Considered* (1680); *The History of the Damnable Popish Plot* (1680); *The Popish Plot Taken out from Several Depositions Made in Patliament* (1680); *The Popish Plot a Fair Caution to Protestants not to Engage in a Popish Rebellion* (1715). On this topic see also: Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); John Gibney, *Ireland and the Popish Plot* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); John P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1972); John Coffrey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[114] Charles II, An Act for preventing Dangers which may happen from Popish Recusants, 1672, Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628-80, (Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), pp. 782-785; Marcus Walsh, 'Swift and Religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Swift* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 170.

[115] *An Humble Apology to the Queen on Behalf of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn for Printing their Case*, (London, 1704), p. 10.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

chiefest advantages to Your Kingdom of England and other Your Majesty's Territories and Dominions, which brings in a Profit to Your Exchequer by exportation and importation of about 300,000 pounds per annum'.[117] According to the merchants, a war between Tuscany and England would significantly reduce the revenues of the country and would therefore have been 'of the last and most fatal consequence to this Nation and People and indeed [to] all Europe'.[118] Furthermore, a war with Tuscany would have meant no longer being able to access Livorno. The Tuscan port was not only 'one of the greatest places of exchange in Christendom [...] as well as one of the Strongest Cities in Europe', but above all 'by the vast advantages redounding to your Majesty and the whole Nation [...] in point of trade and other conveniences, may properly be called *the Port of England* [sic], although the Great Duke hath the Honor to be the Sovereign Prince thereof'.[119]

The second point of the Apology therefore focused on likely economic consequences of an Anglo-Tuscan war. In particular, the merchants emphasised the commercial importance of Livorno which is described as *the* port of England. Furthermore, the reference to the fact that this was one of the 'strongest cities in Europe' highlighted the difficulty that England would encounter to attack or conquer the Tuscan port militarily.

The second argument, however, was mainly functional to the third and final point of the *Apology*. This began by declaring that 'the last desperate effort that Conspirators and Men of Close Intrigue make use of to weaken and (if possible) Ruin Sovereign States and Kingdoms is to divest them of the Love and Dutiful Affections of their Subjects'.[120] According to the authors of the *Apology*, the false insinuations of Plowman and his associates had convinced the Queen that a war with the Grand Duke

[117] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[118] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[120] *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

would be 'for the greater protection and security of Your subjects that are now residing at Legorn'.[121] The merchants, however, strongly stated that 'there is no ground nor occasion to use any Extremities at all: for the merchants at Legorn do not question his Most Serene Highness's Protection of them hereafter as well as they enjoy at present to their entire satisfaction'.[122] Indeed, the authors of the Apology argued that a war with Tuscany would be '*a stab at heart* [sic] to the Kingdom in general', as the English traders in Livorno 'employed their estates in purchasing manufactures of the growth of England, viz. in Woolen, Mineries of Lead, Tin, Fishery, Shipping, Eatable provisions etc, and even the two East-India Companies are considerably enriched by the Trade of [the merchants of Livorno]'.[123] According to the merchants, the trade with Livorno was so large that it was the source of income for 'about a million of people of your Majesty's Subjects [...] [and] if the Trade of Legorn should be destroyed or but for a time suspended, a great number of Your People would be ready to starve'.[124] The merchants concluded their Apology by warning that '[...] the horrid confusion that poverty causes in a Nation in making the People thereof desperate, does too frequently occasion tumults and insurrections and too easily tempt to fall in with Your Majesty's Enemies both at Home and Abroad: the dismal consequences of either, God in his Infinite Mercy avert from Your Majesty and Your Three Kingdoms'.[125]

The third point is the most dramatic and threatening of this document. In fact, the merchants, by claiming that as many as one million people were 'ready to starve' if the trade with Livorno was to be interrupted, underlined the very serious social consequences that could derive from a war with Tuscany. It must in fact be considered

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[122] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[124] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

that, in 1700, the population of England and Wales was about 5,200,000 inhabitants.[126] If we then suppose that the number quoted by the merchants were true, the situation would have been very worrying, because this meant that as many as 19.2% of the kingdom's population derived their livelihood from the trade with Livorno. It is impossible to determine whether the number quoted by the merchants was factual, and it is very likely that it was conveniently increased to create more effect on the reader. However, even if it were assumed that this number was conveniently doubled, meaning that only 500,000 people were dependent on trade with Tuscany, this would still have meant that they represented 10% of the English population. As the recent history of England demonstrated, the social consequences of poverty could easily be transformed into political ones. The Queen was in fact told very explicitly that such a large number of desperate people would easily have rioted and revolted, to the point of supporting 'Your Majesty's Enemies both at Home and Abroad'.

To correctly analyse the importance and significance of the London merchants' petition, it must be considered that petitions had two recipients: the institutional one, in this case the monarch, and the public.[127] Etiquette required each petition to begin with a declaration of loyalty, and also to be written in supplicating language, humbly requesting, rather than demanding the redress of grievances'.[128] However, as the commentators of the time already noted, flattering and formal language was used 'to dissimulate the real intentions of their promoters'.[129] In fact, although correct from a formal point of view, the merchants' petition was also specific in directly attacking the sovereign's government,

[126] There are no population censuses prior to 1800, but the numbers reported are estimates generally accepted by demographers. On this topic: M.W. Flinn, *British Population Growth, 1700–1850* (London: Palgrave, 1970); Hubert P.H. Nusteling, 'The Population of England 1539-1873. An Issue of Demographic Homeostasis', *Histoire and Mesure*, 8 (1993), pp. 59-92; Peter Razzel, 'The Growth of Population in Eighteenth-Century England, A Critical Reappraisal', *Journal of Economic History*, 53:4 (1993), pp. 743-771.
[127] Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 112.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

arguing that it was not pursuing the interests of the nation. Indeed, beyond the formalities, the language echoes the tone of the letter with which William III was invited to England: 'the people are so generally dissatisfied with the present conduct of the government, in relation to their religion, liberties and properties […] [that] people throughout the kingdom are desirous of a change […]'.[130] The petition does indeed contain references to each of these topics. The merchants in fact insist on the fact that Plowman is a Catholic, on his relations with James II and on his participation in the plot to assassinate William III. They then underline the damage that a war with Tuscany would cause to the 'flourishing trade' of many English subjects and their properties. In short, the merchants appealed to a language and topics extremely familiar to the English public.

Therefore, similar to Gould's letter to Nottingham, even the *Apology* to the Queen was a document of indictment. The merchants, after having amply demonstrated the very serious consequences that the country would suffer in the event of a war with Tuscany, did not hesitate to openly speak about revolts and insurrections. They clearly warned the monarch that if she continued in that direction, she would run the risk of being deprived of 'Love and Dutiful affection of [her] subjects'. This passage in particular recalled the first speech that the Queen had made in Parliament, in which she stated that 'I am firmly persuaded, that the Love and good Affection of my Subjects is the surest Pledge of their Duty and Obedience and the truest and justest Support of the Throne; and as I am resolved […] to protect you in the full Enjoyment of all your Rights and Liberties, so I rely upon your Care of me; my Interests and your's are inseparable; and my Endeavours shall never be wanting to make you all Safe and Happy'.[131] The task of a just and legitimate monarch was therefore to defend the freedoms and properties of their

[130] T.N.A., S.P. 8/1/224, *Invitation to William*, 30 June 1688.
[131] Queen's Speech to both Houses, 20 October 1702. 'The first parliament of Queen Anne, in *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons, Vol. 3, 1695-1706* (London, 1742), pp. 203-211.

citizens: if they had voluntarily acted against the interest of the nation, they would no longer have had the right to maintain their prerogatives. With their Apology, the merchants showed not only that 'there is no ground nor occasion to use any Extremities at all' with Tuscany, but that the war with the Grand Duchy would cause a great deal of damage to the state and its citizens. Therefore, the only choice that remained for the Queen would have been to avoid such a disaster so that her citizens would be truly 'safe and happy'.

The message sent to the sovereign was therefore extremely explicit. The Livorno merchants had already rebelled and the English ones were ready to do the same. The sovereign's government had already ignored three petitions, to the point of forcing the Livorno merchants, who had suddenly found themselves 'on the brink of destruction', to adopt extreme solutions to protect their interests. Now the English merchants offered the Queen serious matters for reflection so that she could correct the action of her government and honour her role as monarch, safeguarding the interests of the citizens and that of the nation.[132] After all, the merchants who wrote the Apology were children of the tumultuous experiences of the previous fifty years. Many of them had already been born at the time of the execution of Charles I (1649) and had experienced and survived various regime changes. For them, therefore, the figure of the monarch was no longer something immutable and untouchable but, on the contrary, it was a figure who was directly responsible towards their own citizens. It was in this spirit that the merchants therefore asked the Queen and her government to change direction and to drop the claim of satisfaction against Tuscany in the Plowman affair. The general tone of the Apology also reveals how much media attention and how much social tension had been focusing around

[132] On this topic see: Edward Vallance, *Loyalty memory and public opinion in England, 1658-1727*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2019). Vallance, while focusing specifically on 'Loyal Addresses', argues that the main function of the petitions presented to the monarch was precisely to correct and direct the government's political action.

the Plowman case, so much so that even the monarch was in the difficult position of being attacked by her subjects. The case experienced its last evolution and turned into a battleground between the various English political souls that composed England: both the government and the sovereign knew very well how dangerous this situation could be.

A few days after the Queen was presented with the Apology, John Cook and John Pollexfen, whom Nottingham had previously commissioned to establish exactly what was the damage suffered by Plowman and his associates, made their report public. They decreed that Rigby and Shepard had not actually suffered any harm from the Grand Duke and were therefore not entitled to claim any compensation.[133] As for Plowman, however, they established that the merchant was entitled to a refund of 50,000 crowns.[134] For Tuscany this was an extraordinary victory: the request for damages went from one million to just fifty thousand crowns, and this was the tangible sign of how uncomfortable the English government was now in promoting a controversy that was encountering such an intense opposition. This is further confirmed by a meeting that Giraldi had on the 8th July 1704 with secretary Harley.[135] The minister asked the ambassador why, now that the request was so sensibly reduced only to the damage suffered by Plowman, 'he would not try to satisfy him with some money'.[136] The Tuscan diplomat replied that he would 'never dare to make such baseness', not to mention that he could not trust the word of 'a man without honour like Plowman who has deceived anyone who has had anything to do with him'.[137] The minister's request was clearly an attempt to close the matter as quickly as possible, but now that the tide was in Tuscany's favour, Giraldi had no interest in accepting such a proposal.

[133]. A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[134] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[135] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 6 June 1704.
[136] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 8 August 1704.
[137] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 8 August 1704.

Meanwhile Zeffirini had arrived in England and, on 27th of August, he had his audience with the Queen. The event had a certain resonance and even the Gazette reported 'in unusual terms' the treatment received by the Tuscan envoy extraordinary.[138] Giraldi commented that the audience 'gave occasion to great reflections which as much as they are gratifying for us and our adherents, are equally displeasing to our antagonists'.[139] This was proof, continued the Tuscan ambassador, 'that in the heart of Her Majesty and of those who have more influence in the government there are only feelings of esteem and good correspondence with His Royal Highness'.[140] After all, Giraldi concluded, the crown and the government could no longer support the Plowman case 'with the opposition they have of all the trader of [the London] stock exchange, who openly speak of the wrong that the Most Serene Grand Duke receives from it, and of the damage it causes to the trade of this nation'.[141]

Support for the Plowman case was waning dramatically. In fact, on the 11th of November Giraldi had the satisfaction of writing to the Tuscan Secretary of State 'about the resolution taken by this Majesty to recall Mr. Blackwell [...]'.[142] The Tuscan ambassador was particularly proud of this result which he considered an important personal achievement given that 'in so many ways I had hoed the soil under such a displeasing minister'.[143] This was an important result because Blackwell was not only one of the main supporters of the controversy, but also a minister particularly unwelcome to

[138] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 September 1704. This episode is cited in the Gazette of the 24th of August 1704: 'Windsor 27 August. This day Count Zeffirini, Envoy Extraordinary from the Great Duke of Florence had a private audience with Her Majesty and H.R.H. the Prince, by whom he was gratiously received, being introduced by Sir Charles Cottrel, Master of Ceremonyes'. Audiences are usually reported in the Gazette in a much more concise manner, and the adjective 'gratiously' was used only on special occasions, to emphasize the satisfaction that the sovereign had of a certain situation or her appreciation for a particular person. The fact that Zeffirini was introduced by the master of ceremonies himself and not by one of his substitutes was also a sign of the special treatment that was reserved for him.
[139] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 September 1704.
[140] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 September 1704.
[141] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 12 September 1704.
[142] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 11 November 1704.
[143] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 11 November 1704.

the Grand Duke and his removal was a main signal of détente. The new ambassador, Dr. Henry Newton, was carefully chosen and Giraldi painted a rather flattering picture of him. Until his appointment as envoy to Tuscany, he was a lawyer at the Admiralty court and chancellor of the diocese of London.[144] Giraldi wrote that 'his reputation among lawyers is one of the best, and they describe him as learned, sociable, of principles of honour and justice. [...] He is not too versatile in foreign languages, but he will soon be, because he knows of Latin, and has a good tincture of French and a little of Italian. His age is well-measured fifty years, of an indifferent constitution, and he is very short sighted. [...] Discretion and reasonableness predominate in him and moreover he satisfied our merchants several times, who consulted him on various points in the Plowman's case'.[145] It is clear that Newton was chosen with very different criteria to Blackwell. He was a cultured man, a doctor of law, and moreover his experience as a lawyer at the Admiralty court would certainly have been very useful to him in settling the many disputes that occurred every day in Livorno. Furthermore, Newton was a person extremely welcome to the merchants because he was the one who proved that captain Broom did not have any valid patent and that therefore Plowman's actions were piracy.[146] The replacement of Blackwell with a person who had openly sided with Tuscany was the last and most important indicator that the English government perfectly understood the message contained in the Apology and had in fact renounced its claims.

[144] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 November 1704.
[145] A.S.F., M.d.P., f. 4216, Iacopo Giraldi to Montauti, 22 November 1704.
[146] *The Answer of the Merchants-Petitioners and Trustees for the Factory at Legorn to the Account of Damages Laid to the Charge of the Great Duke of Toscany*, (London, 1704), p. 78.

Conclusions

It had been eight years since the Plowman case began. What began as a simple commercial dispute evolved into a diplomatic confrontation that brought England and Tuscany to the brink of war. Finally, the Plowman[147] case evolved further, becoming a political and social phenomenon within Great Britain. Giraldi's[148] idea of attacking Blackwell[149] and involving the English public in defence of Tuscany proved successful: the enormous interests that revolved around the port of Livorno attracted so much attention that influential groups of English citizens had both formally and practically rebelled against the decisions of their own government, to the point of questioning the legitimacy of the actions of their sovereign. The weight of public opinion had been decisive in allowing Tuscany to emerge victorious from this controversy which, having reached its peak in 1704, then quickly lost importance. The English government never formally renounced its claims, but these became only a formal reminder and no longer had any concrete influence on the relations between the two countries. The English community residing in Livorno expanded further and the Tuscan port remained, thanks to the British merchants, for a long time, 'the Magazine and Centre of all the Trade' of the Mediterranean.

[147] It has not been possible to establish what happened to William Plowman after the controversy ended. The Tuscan diplomatic papers still mention him sporadically until 1707, but then he completely disappears.
[148] Iacopo Giraldi remained ambassador to England until 1714. Back in Tuscany he was appointed Councilor of State. After the death of Cosimo III (1723) he held important diplomatic posts to negotiate the Tuscan succession with the Spaniards. On the death of Giangastone de' Medici (1737), he was appointed to the Tuscan Council of Regency. He died the 19th of January 1738.
[149] Lambert Blackwell left Florence in February 1705 and no longer obtained any diplomatic post. In 1708 he ran for Parliament and was elected for Wilton, a post he held until 1710. He continued his business as a merchant and financier and in 1710-1711 lent 60,000 crowns to the government. In 1715 he became one of the directors of the South Sea Company and was subsequently involved in the 'South Sea Bubble' scandal, one of the most famous economic bubbles in history. Although Blackwell claimed he had never had anything to do with the company's fraudulent operations, some of its assets were confiscated. He died on the 27th of October 1727.

Conclusions

The Plowman case is a small episode in European history, which concerns a single person, and which takes place in a relatively limited period of time (1696-1704). However, the uniqueness of the case lies in its 'connective' capacity, that is, in its ability to connect to numerous significant and little-explored topics of the history of this period. The extraordinary abundance, quality and consistency of the sources that have been preserved allow us to analyse the diplomatic and commercial relations that linked Tuscany and England from a privileged perspective. Above all, the wealth of the sources makes it possible to underline the complexity of the relations that linked the two countries and how the two states regulated them.

While William Plowman was chasing one of the many French ships he captured, was he wondering what the consequences of his actions might be? Plowman was an experienced man and he must have known that he was walking on thin ice. This emerges from the most intimate and private document of the English merchant, i.e. the letter he sent to his friend Jack Crookshanks in July 1696. Plowman, after having listed his captures, so encouraged his friend: 'dear Jack, be brisk'! This affectionate exclamation seems to be addressed as much to Crookshanks as to himself. After all, the merchant knew that he had committed piracy and he also knew that the law of the sea was merciless with pirates. Moreover, Plowman knew that he had betrayed his commitments with Cosimo III and with James II. Thus, that exclamation seems to express his anxiety, his concern and his hope for the success of his reckless undertaking. After all, during the Glorious Revolution the merchant had remained faithful to James II and in the following years wished for a Jacobite restoration. However, the disaster of the Irish insurrection of 1690-92, the failure of the plot to assassinate William III in 1696, and the defeat of France in the Nine Years' War wrecked all his hopes. Plowman had therefore decided to attempt

'the last big score' because he perceived that the world around him was changing, and that that change was not favourable to him.

Indeed, the analysis of the Plowman case allows us to have a unique perspective on the social situation of England after the Glorious Revolution and on the functioning of the English administration of that period. Although the regime change has been widely studied, less has been done on the impact it had on English diplomacy and diplomatic capabilities.[1] British society had undergone many regime changes in less than fifty years: from Civil War to the Glorious Revolution, each passage had been traumatic and had greatly weakened the country's social cohesion. This is evident if we consider the ambiguity of the relations between Plowman and Burrows, who should have been opposed for both confessional and political reasons, and instead devised a strategy to profit from each other. The fragility of the new regime is also evident from the idiosyncratic relations between Blackwell and the Secretary of State, and in the fierce political divisions of the English government. The contradictions of English society then strikingly emerge when the merchants of Livorno rebelled against a direct order from their sovereign, and when the English merchants of London threatened to revolt if the government did not immediately abandon its project of a war against Tuscany. The analysis of these episodes allows us to evaluate both the institutional difficulties of the new Williamite regime and the personal difficulties of the citizens who lived in a strongly divided and conflictual society.

[1] M. Lane, 'The Diplomatic Service Under William III', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 10 (1927), pp. 87-109; David B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 96. Jonah S. Brundage, 'The Social Sources of Geopolitical Power: French and British Diplomacy and the Politics of Interstate Recognition, 1689-1789', *American Sociological Review*, 83:6 (2018), pp. 1254-1280.

Historiography has represented Tuscany at the end of the seventeenth century as a provincial, weak and decadent country.[2] On the contrary the analysis of the Plowman case clearly demonstrates not only how the Grand Duchy was deeply involved in the highest politics and diplomacy of the period, but also that it was strong enough to openly confront a powerful country such as England. The theme of Tuscan neutrality has been completely overlooked by historiography. This work demonstrates that Tuscany was not only the first European country to make neutrality the fundamental objective of its foreign policy. Tuscany was above all able to build a 'system of neutrality', which allowed it to avoid being involved in any European conflict. The enormous economic interests that gravitated around Livorno made it inconvenient for any European nation to attack the Grand Duchy, because its commercial losses would have been much greater than any gains obtained from the war. As has been shown, the policy of neutrality was by no means an 'easy' policy but required constant caution in managing the country's diplomatic position in order to satisfy both belligerents.[3] However, this did not mean that the Grand Duchy was forced to be submissive towards other European states. On the contrary, the fact that the conflicting interests of European countries were concentrated in Livorno allowed the Grand Duchy to take decisive positions, as happened in the confrontation with England. The economic interests of other countries, and above all the interest they had in keeping Tuscany neutral, constituted an extremely effective protection against the

[2] Riguccio Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana* (Firenze: Cambiagi, 1781); Francesco Inghirami, *Storia della Toscana compilata ed in sette epoche distribuita* (Fiesole: Poligrafia Fiesolana, 1843); Antonio Zobi, *Storia Civile della Toscana dal 1737 al 1848* (Firenze: Molini, 1850); George Frederick Young, *The Medici* (Dutton, 1909); Harold Acton, *The last Medici* (London: Methuen & Co., 1932); John Rigby Hale, *Firenze e i Medici* (Milano: Mursia, 1977); Maurice Andreaux, *I Medici* (Milano: dall'Oglio, 1963); Gaetano Pieraccini, *La stirpe dei Medici di Cafaggiolo* (Firenze: Nardini, 1986); Furio Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana, I Medici* (Torino: UTET, 1976); Emilio Grassellini, Arnaldo Fracassini, *Profili Medicei. Origine, sviluppo, decadenza della famiglia dei Medici attraverso i suoi componenti* (Firenze: SP44, 1982), Giovanni Ciappelli, *Memory, Family, Self. Tuscan Family Books and Other Egodocuments (14th-18th centuries)* (London: Brill, 2014); Troes Kardel, Paul Maquet, *Nicolaus Steno, Biography of and Original Papers of a 17th Century Scientist* (Berlin: Springer, 2013); Patrizia Urbani, *I vestiti nuovi del quasi Granduca Cosimo III*, ZoneModa, 8:1, (2018); Gaetano Greco, *Storia del Granducato di Toscana* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2020).

[3] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, (New York and London, Routledge, 1988), p. 4.

aggressive initiatives of individual states. The political acumen necessary to manage such a delicate system of balances also demonstrates the efficiency of the state and its ruling class. In particular, the case allows us to demonstrate how Cosimo III, who has always been portrayed as an inept and bigoted ruler, had instead a decisive personality and was able to keep the country in peace for more than fifty years. The study of the controversy also makes it possible to effectively question the concept of 'small state', showing how the strength and importance of a nation depended not only on its military resources, but also on particular political conditions and economic assets.

Analysis of the Plowman case also demonstrates the importance of symbols in diplomacy.[4] Indeed, the thesis shows how the relations between England and Tuscany were brought forward through the use of symbols that were placed in different areas of their diplomatic relations. The symbolic related the words and tone used in a letter, the superscription of a missive, the number of cannon shots to greet the national flag, but could also relate apparently 'trivial' details, such as quarrels between servants, the precedence of coaches, or broken wine flasks. The understanding and reaction to these symbols was one of the methods through which England and Tuscany affirmed their position and intentions, both mutually and in the eyes of the international community.

A further element that emerges from the analysis of this case is the importance that the Mediterranean had for 'Atlantic' states such as England. After the discovery of America, Anglophone historiography and in particular the British one, perceived and described the 'old' Mediterranean as a decadent secondary reality.[5] The analysis of the

[4] On this topic see: Alisher Faizullaiev, 'Diplomacy and Symbolism', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 8 (2013), pp. 91-114; Michael Walzer, 'On the Role of Symbolism in Political Thought', *Political Science Quarterly*, 82:2 (1967), pp. 191-204; Juyang Zhang, 'Public Diplomacy as Symbolic Interaction: A Case Study of Asian Tsunami relief campaign', *Public Relation Review*, 32 (2006), pp. 26-32; Christer Jönsson, 'Diplomatic Signaling in the Amarna Letters', in *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* ed. by R. Cohen and R. Westbrook, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 191-211.

[5] Tristan Stein, PhD Thesis, *The Mediterranean in the English Empire of Trade* (Harvard, 2012), p. 6.

Plowman case clearly shows how the Mediterranean continued to be of major importance for England. Furthermore, the case shows that the British success in Europe largely depended on its presence in that sea. In particular, the case shows also the importance of Livorno which was not only a commercial port for English trade but was also a fundamental strategic support base that allowed the English fleet to operate in the Mediterranean.

The Plowman case has many ramifications and not all of them have been explored in the thesis. Other topics would deserve particular attention, such as the role played by English merchants in promoting diplomatic relations with the states of North Africa, or the role played by Tuscany in favouring the survival of the Catholic religion in London. Another interesting aspect that remains to be explored is the relationship between Tuscany and Scotland and the role of the Grand Duchy in supporting the Jacobite cause. Above all, the issue of Tuscan neutrality deserves further analysis and study. The analysis of the case has in fact revealed the uniqueness of Tuscan neutrality in the European political landscape, and how the system of neutrality of the Grand Duchy was strong enough to withstand the confrontation with a much more powerful state like England. However, the Plowman case was only one of the challenges that the Grand Duchy had to face to defend its neutrality. It would therefore be extremely interesting to analyse Tuscany's 'path of neutrality', from its origins in 1642, to its definitive international recognition in the Treaty of London of 1721. Indeed, this research promises to be fundamental in tracing the development and application of the idea of neutrality in European culture and diplomacy.

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