Introduction

The Florentine vernacular used in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a dry proverb to underline that a man, knowing that he did everything he could to sort out a problem, could not blame himself anymore: “fa che dei, sia che può”. Lorenzo de’ Medici at the end of the fifteenth century changed, softened and polished the old dictum and by absorbing it into an intimate self portrait he altered definitively its popular and formulaic nature into a much more sophisticated, personalized and intellectual discourse about his natura. His discourse introduces a fine analysis of the balance between feelings and reason, and between self representation and reality: “pure io non sono apto a disperarmi per questo, perché, facto che ho quello che debbo, tu sai che non sono di natura che pigli troppa molestia di quello che adviene”.

Lorenzo de Medici represents a milestone in research and imagination on the Italian Renaissance: the edition of Lorenzo de Medici’s letters was inaugurated in 1955 “with the hope that a less romanticized portrait of him would result”. Ironically, rather than painting a more ‘realistic’ portrait of Lorenzo, recent research is discovering instead that “it is not possible to separate the man from the aura of legend and that the latter constitutes an indissoluble aspect of his historical character”. Lorenzo’s image-making was a political as well as a psychological necessity of the day, and his correspondance offers insight into his ‘character’ and into the subtlety of his public style, at the same time illuminating the political reality of late fifteenth century Italy, its discursive resources, and the psychological adjustments it required.

In this context, today I will read Lorenzo’s letters looking for ‘emotions’, that is aiming to find out which words and expressions in his diplomatic and political writings reveal some emotionality, and when, and why he chose to resort to them, or to let them filter in his letters, in relation to different kinds of linguistic, textual and rhetoric discoursive resources. An ‘emotional turn’, as Ferente recently said, is in fact entering the medieval studies on...
Lorenzo de Medici’s Letters (1460-1489/92), still on their way to a complete edition by an Anglo-American-Italian pool of scholars at first led by Nicolai Rubinstein, represents a very peculiar documentary ensemble: their edition gathers all the surviving letters written by Lorenzo during his life, and encompasses in wider circles family, economic associates, officials and ambassadors, Florentine and non-Florentine statesmen, clients and friends. The edition adopts a chronological order, mixing diplomatic and political dispatches, and personal and public letters. The fourteen volumes already available cover Lorenzo’s epistolary production between 1460 and 1489, and collect around 1700 texts: the surviving letters represent the two-third of the letters actually written and sent. 8

These letters constitute an epistolary collection whose largest fraction has a strong political and diplomatic content and has been exchanged with ambassadors or diplomatic agents. 9 In this sense, the hypothetical gulph between ‘public’ i.e. ‘formal’, and ‘private’ i.e. politics. 5 Different sources and ages are increasingly investigated from an ‘emotional’ point of view, aiming to answer to various questions mostly related to the debate on political languages. 6 However, late medieval diplomatic practice and political letter writing – still mostly seen as institutional tools and political narratives – have been little investigated so far from this point of view, even though they represents a field potentially very promising thanks to the vividness and the abundance of the sources. 7


8 Lorenzo, Lettere, for a cross-check, see I protocolli del carteggio di Lorenzo il Magnifico per gli anni 1473-74, 1477-92, ed. by M. Del Piazzo, Florence 1956.

9 The edition of Lorenzo’s letters has provided endless materials for diplomatic and political research: R. Fubini, “L’edizione delle “Lettere” di Lorenzo il Magnifico nel quadro della ripresa di interesse per la storia politico-diplomatica del Quattrocento”, Bollettino dell’Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 110 (2008), pp. 97-101; almost every editor of one of the volumes (Butters, Mallett, Bullard, Pellegrini, Böringer) has used the letters for some detailed research on the same years: see – amongs many – H. Butters, “Florence, Milan and the Baron’s war (1485-1486)”, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, Studi, ed. by G. C. Garfagnini, Florence 1992, pp. 281-308; M. Pellegrini, Coniglio di Romagna. Lorenzo de Medici e il duplice tirannicidio a Forlì e Faenza nel 1488, Firenze 1998. The letters have provided a deeper insight also of the Florentine internal balance of power: see, among his many essays, F. W. Kent, “‘Lorenzo [...] amico degli uomini da bene’: Lorenzo de Medici and Oligarchy”, in Lorenzo il
‘personal’ writing loses more than ever any useful meaning. Moreover, Lorenzo’s nature and personal role give a peculiar feature to the exchanges: the complex nature of Lorenzo’s personal hegemony over the Medicean regime and the city of Florence partially concealed his monopoly of the decision-making process, and the institutional dynamics were further complicated by the interference of his more personal, patron-client based network.¹⁰

Nevertheless, through his intense, and sometimes frantic correspondence, Lorenzo entered the heart of the peninsular diplomatic negotiation system and day-by-day wove a communication network on the Italian and European level crucial both to the survival of Florence and to the strengthening of his pre-eminence over the city. The Lettere reveal the sheer complexity of day-to-day diplomatic practice, offering to scholars at the same time a powerful insight into the multi-layered political dynamics behind the diplomacy.¹¹ Moreover, even if Lorenzo could scarcely be considered an average Italian statesman, his letters offer as well a full range of textual, linguistic and rhetorical resources available to the Florentine and Italian elites in the second half of the fifteenth century.¹²

**Emotions**

As we have seen in these days, dealing with emotions in past ages could prove itself to be a difficult task. Moving forward from the first grand narrative of the medieval emotionality formulated by Huizinga and his vision of the Middle Ages as the ‘childhood of man’ through recent research about social constructionism and cognitive psychology, a largely widespread idea is nowadays that the expression of feelings is, at its most, a mediate, formular and strategic language, an effective political tool.¹³ For Gerd Althoff, amongst others, medieval emotions were ‘performed’: above all, they responded to the need to communicate power relations.¹⁴ Today, I will try to verify a different perspective: the generic term of ‘emotions’ will be taken to encapsulate the whole gamut of affective reactions, granting them – as William Reddy argues – not only a descriptive, but also a performative – i.e. transformative – value.¹⁵ Emotional exchanges – in this case, their written records – will be understood here not only as constative expressions, that is as efforts to describe feelings, nor as statements deliberately included in a strategic performance, but rather as utterances able to modify and possibly create feelings. The idea is to avoid trivializing medieval emotions by explaining them only in functional terms, in order to recognize their polyvalent

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meaning and uses. As Rosenwein resumes it, “this turn is needed to avoid both to freeze the meaning of the signals […], and to deprive emotions of any inner meaning”.

To discover and describe emotions, we need to analyze a group of texts in which emotions and feelings have a place, and to identify how emotions function and figure within differing communicative contexts. The complex textual dossier represented by Lorenzo’s Lettere offers to such an investigation a wide range of materials. The use of emotions is directly linked to Lorenzo’s personal assessment of the political realities of fifteenth century Italy: his interpretation of reality drove him to use creatively the available rhetorical instruments, and to transmit significant changes both in reality and in its written expression by configuring innovatively his own political language. The inner peculiarity of these texts – their ‘personality’, so deeply linked to the character of the man and the twists of the interwoven political discourse and individual analysis – give to most of Lorenzo’s letters an unusual non-standardized form.

Men

Lorenzo was unquestionably a man of considerable intelligence and of distinguished culture, but personal talent or sophisticated education alone can not adequately account for his personal role in the Italian political system. Considering that in Italian late medieval society letters were a critical instrument to build a relationally defined self, the social ties bound by Lorenzo were constructed, managed and maintained by means of the cultural work involved in the daily discursive practice of letter writing. Lorenzo therefore wrote about political choices and diplomatic strategies in different ways whilst performing different roles (official and unofficial) and thinking and talking with different people who in turn temporarily exercised public functions and private duties. The first circle of his interlocutors consisted of public authority, both in Florence and abroad. In this institutional dialogue, style and linguistic resources are conditioned by formalised formulae and hierarchical rigidity. The distance between Lorenzo and his princely allies forced Lorenzo to subtlety: his opinions and comments were biased by the difficult task of dealing with stubborn and often unstable allies of a higher rank:

“Loderei bene che'l signor Ludovico, quando si vuole dolere di noi, non lo facessi in presenti a d'altri, perché questo toglie reputatione a lui et a noi. Tra sé et noi dica et faccia quello gli piace, perché siamo apiti a sopportare quanto richiede questa nostra amicitia, la quale anchora mi fa forse presumptuoso a ricordare liberamente quello mi occorre, la qual cosa pigli S. E. in buona parte, et se vi è bene, l'accepti, se non, per l'amor di Dio non se ne turbi, maxime in presentia d'altri. Basta solamente che dica 'io non voglio', 'io non posso farlo', o 'non mi pare'”.

17 Rosenwein, Thinking historically, p. 830.
18 Bullard, Anxiety, pp. 73-79.
19 And “for the fame that surrounded him in Italy and abroad even in his lifetime”, Bullard, Anxiety, p. 45.
22 Lorenzo, Lettere, IX, ed. by H. Butters, Florence 2002, l. 793 to Francesco Gaddi in Milan, 14 Oct. 1485. The relationship with the Sforza is particularly revealing: in front of the dukes of Milan, Lorenzo was limited by an insurmountable distance of rank: “Illustrissimo et excelentissimo signor mio, questo di ho havuta la lettera di Vostra Excellentia di sua mano propria, et prima io lo ringratio dello havermi scripto di sua mano et havere usato meco tanta umanità; di poi, havendo bene pensato a quanto quella mi scrive, et a messer Philippe
The daily exchange with the Florentine members of the Medici regime who were at the same time public officials of the Commune was also bound by formality and self-control: in both cases, irony was Lorenzo’s privileged way of bypassing the institutionalised rigidity of the dialogue, and to let his own concerns and reactions come to the surface (we will come back to this). At a further level stand all the circuits of familiarity: the family, kinship, friends, allies and supporters within the regime and in the city, the partì and the broader territorial patron/client system (both inside and outside Tuscany). With his chancellors and his most faithful collaborators, Lorenzo’s tone is shaped by a revealing mixture of confidence, personal authority and political leadership, like in the case of the tried and tested relationship with Niccolò Michelozzi:

“Tu dovresti essere chiaro per l’altrì mie che io non ti ostriggerò all’andare a Milano, et però dattene pace, et un’altra volta non mostrare la tua pertinacia in disubidirmi insino che non sè chiaro di quello che ti comando”.

Words

Dealing with emotions in past times, one further problem must be faced: the terms that come under the umbrella of the category ‘emotion’ have changed over time, and the words that expressed them varied as well. Today, I will choose amongst a first workable list of words few samples of the emotional field linked to political and personal conflict and antagonism, aiming to find significant recurrences, common patterns, and personal uses. Lorenzo’s letters provide us with an almost infinite variety of linguistic, stiltic and rhetorical nuances. An emotional state can filter into a text in a direct way, mostly through the more or less conscious use of words apt to express or to modify the feelings of the author and of the addressee, or thanks to finer and less direct discursive strategies: the intentional intrusion of different languages; the use of metaphors, and of literary or biblical quotations, or historical

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[Sacramoro] suo oratore, ho fatto con detto messer Philippo quella risoluzione che intenderà vostra Excellentia [...]” (Lorenzo, Lettere, II, R. Fubini [ed], l. 171, to Galeazzo Maria, 6 Aug. 1474). Galeazzo Maria’s way was very different: “Lorenzo, tu vedrai quanto ve montrerà messer Philippo. Pensa bene: quello accordo te piacerà, piacerà ad nui, et fazalo chi se voglia, Advisandoti ch’io non me ne voglio impazare [...]” Galeaz Maria de manu propria” (Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Lorenzo, Milan, 11 Aug. 1474, Ibidem, p. 8).


24 Salvadori, Dominio e patronato.


27 Rosenwein, Thinking historically, p. 832-833.

28 Such words are often linked together, as to represent ‘scripts’ in White’s model (White, The Politics of Anger), but I would be cautious because of the non-standardized character of Lorenzo’s letters. More appropriate here seems Rosenwein’s concept of ‘emotional community’: “exploring an emotional community means looking beyond ‘emotionality’ in general and, indeed, beyond any single emotion” (Rosenwein, Thinking historically, p. 832). Hatred, anger, alteration, despair did not come alone.

29 A much wider emotional palette has been considered in I. Lazzarini, “Discours émotionnel, discours argumentatif dans les échanges diplomatiques de l’Italie bas- médiévale. Quelques réflexions autour des correspondences florentines du XVè siècle”, at the seminar Les émotions dans la négociation, orgs. S. de Franceschi and S. Péquignot, Paris, EPHE (June 2010).
reminiscences; the recourse to proverbs; the irruption of calls to God (per l’amor di Dio) into the formally regulated written text. In such a textually complex framework, words are only one of the available elements of an articulated discourse, in which “practical cultural building blocks” combine with a highly developed personal attitude in taking multiple sides in a discussion that could switch from personal/emotional notes to political reasoning, and from a subordinate to a dominant role within the traditional frame of the letter.30

1. Hatred

Lorenzo writes rarely about hatred: in two cases, however, the context, both ‘private’ and ‘public’, is very revealing. The first occurrence is linked to the troubled aftermath of the Pazzi conspiracy: in 1478 Lorenzo is not only physically menaced, injured, nearly killed, but also politically shaken and personally threatened.51 His overall emotional regime is troubled and he lets his temper flow and be seen more than ever. A single episode deeply upset him: desperately needing money to face his internal difficult situation, he discovers that he can not count on the Bruges branch of the Medici’s bank because of the disloyal behaviour of one of his father’s clients, Tommaso di Folco Portinari.32 In a letter to Folco di Aldrovando, Tommaso’s nephew, Lorenzo expresses vehemently his feelings towards the old friend, guilty not only of not sending to Lorenzo any money from Bruges, but also of hampering Lorenzo’s efforts to recover the money of the Milanese branch of the bank, previously directed by Pigello di Folco, Tommaso’s late brother. The situation degenerates into one of the most controversial feud of the whole epistolary collection. The letter to Folco is built around the basic dichotomy between loyalty and bad behaviour: this last attitude generates “tali scompigli, dispiaceri e rincrescimenti” that Lorenzo can not prevent himself from telling to Folco the whole truth “perché i modi suoi [of Tommaso] ti vengano in odio, come sono venuti a me”. Lorenzo ends his letter by recognising that “Somi un poco sfogato techo”, but he states clearly that “né ho però parlato sopra ira, la quale non mi suole durare tanto quanto è che Tommaso mi cominciò a dar cagione di adirarmi. Non ti ho detta cosa che non sia vera et che non venga da animo riposato”.33 Lorenzo usually, when it comes to the writing, is not overwhelmed by anger: or, at least, he wants his reader not to overestimate the effect of the offence on him by saying that he writes with a ‘animo riposato’. Nevertheless, the letter vehemently – ‘somi un poco sfogato’ – displays all the feelings linked to a serious offence: the bad behaviour against loyalty and faith causes anger, but anger does not last long; the definite result, apparently without passion, is hatred, that can only be shown in a display of controlled confidence meant both to create a shared feeling towards the offender and to warn against such a situation in the future.

The second recurrence of hatred is in a completely different context: we are in 1482, in the midst of the war of Ferrara. Three days after the defeat suffered near Rome by Alfonso, duke of Calabria and Florence’s most powerful ally, Lorenzo sends his faithful Niccolò

30 McLean, The Art of Network, p. 5; on Lorenzo’s personal skills as a poet, and on the cognitive effects that such a talent could have had on his perception on reality, see Bullard, Anxiety, p. 74 and n. 110; on the Florentine literary landscape in Lorenzo’s days, see at least M. Martelli, Letteratura fiorentina del Quattrocento. Il filtro degli anni Seicento, Florence 1996, and now F. Bausi, Umanesimo a Firenze nell’età di Lorenzo e Poliziano. Jacopo Bracciolini, bartolomeo Fonzio, Francesco da Castiglion, Rome 2011.


Michelozzi to Milan with the aim of pushing Ludovico il Moro to action.\textsuperscript{34} To convince his reluctant Milanese ally, Lorenzo does not hesitate to resort to the whole rhetorical arsenal at his disposal: being at stake “la libertà di tutta Italia”, Florence and Milan should face the enemies’ violence with the energy and strength of their already rather legendary ancestors: “è tempo a non dormire: debbesi ricordare la exc. Sua ch’è figliuolo del duca Francesco, et che bisogna habbi heredità della virtù et magnanimità sua”. The pope and the Venetians will in fact take advantage of the favorable situation: “non lasceranno di proseguirla né per volontà, né per potenza, perché sono et ambitiosissimi et pieni di passione, di ira et di odio”\textsuperscript{35}

This is a very rhetorical text: a political discourse carefully built uses a crescendo of powerful emotions in a strategic, but also performative way. Lorenzo suggests to Niccolò passionate words to inflame the vacillating Ludovico, but at the same time he is captured within the enchantment produced by his own language.

\textbf{2. Perturbation/passion/turmoil}

Antagonism and conflicts feed themselves on a wide array of feelings linked to the idea of ‘perturbation’: alterrate/passione/turbamento, that is of an alteration of the natural balance of mind and temper both individual and collective because of an immoderate desire, a concern, or even an outburst of anger. The effect of this upheaval of the originary balance of feelings on the individual basis is resentment, but it turns out to generate a series of concrete consequences (scandoli/pericoli/ruine) if the anxiety and passion become collective feelings.\textsuperscript{36}

The meaning of the words alteratione or turbamento goes from expressing a dangerous personal attitude close to a sin, that one can minimize and control thanks to the sistematic recourse to patience and tolerance, to indicating an ungovernable collective attitude, at the same time feared, difficult to control or available to use, but definitely political. Alteratione in an individual sense is quite traditional and close to turbazione: this sense of the word generates a group of very interesting semantic variations.\textsuperscript{37} If the personal offence is too hard, or the sensibility of an offended individual is underestimated, the deriving ombra – literally shadow, metaphorically resentment and rancour – can provoke some potentially dangerous reactions and concrete consequences like scandoli, pericoli, ruine.\textsuperscript{38} The perturbed man can enter into a more unbalanced state and get desperate (desperatione): this evolution must be avoided at any price, because a desperate man can react in a totally uncontrolled way, provoking inconvenienti, unexpected and sudden events potentially very dangerous, and not only for him but for many:

“ma non observando pagamenti, né pure havendo buone parole, et tenendosi con tucti ‘e modi sinistri et strani che si tengono, ognuno si mette in desperatione, et cotesto stato e perde


\textsuperscript{35} Lorenzo, Lettere, VII, ed. by M. Mallett, l. 583, instruction to Niccolò Michelozzi, 28 Aug. 1482: historical comments on the events at pp. 38-41.

\textsuperscript{36} Rosenwein, Emotional communities, pp. 2-3; Smail, Hatred, pp. 90-93.

\textsuperscript{37} A first basic meaning for alteratione is ‘change’, mostly in the sense of a dangerous one: when the duke of Milan in 1486 changes his mind about the number of ambassadors that Florence should send to Venice, this does not like to Lorenzo nor to Florentines. Ludovico’s proposal “non poteria esser dispiaciuta qui più” et “dopo la electione facta questa alteratione non serve a nessuno buono proposito et questa città ne resta pur in qualche carico” (Lorenzo, Lettere, IX, l. 820, to Jacopo Guicciardini, 14 Jan. 1486). A second meaning of alteratione in an individual sense is quite traditional: the word means anger or indignation “Io ho dispiacere assai che messer Cecch [Simonetta] habbi preso alteratione della lettera gli scripsi [...] non vorrei si credessi lo facessi come adirato” (Lorenzo, Lettere, IV, l. 377, to Giovanni Morelli, 5 March 1479), p. 19.

\textsuperscript{38} “Quando si habbi a stare in questa ambiguità, mostrare quanto questa cosa sia mortale et apta a generare non solo ombra ma scandoli, pericoli et ruine” (Lorenzo, Lettere, VIII, l. 729, to Niccolò Michelozzi, 3 Jan. 1485).
The individual perturbation from *alteratione* becomes then passion, *passione*, transforming itself therefore in an emotional state very close to an affection, but with a rather pathological meaning, inimmoderate and sometimes painful: “cognosco che io ci ho tanta *passione* che male mi posso consigliare”. The word ‘passion’ has a multi-layered semantic significance in late medieval Italian world, and we have no time to investigate it fully, but at least one of its more important meanings is related to the world of factions: the *passioni* are also the factions and the political parties. The unbalanced adherence to a political coalition, or a party, that is in this case partisan loyalty, is close to a perturbed – almost pathological – emotional state; and the other way round. In this case, if the *alteratione* becomes a collective emotion, that is a change in the mood of a collectivity, let it be the Medicean party, the regime or the whole city, it turns into a political feeling, both dangerous if uncontrolled and useful if tightly directed.

**Irony, Self Representation, Reality: Concluding Remarks**

As we have seen, emotional talks, gestures and expressions fill Lorenzo’s letters: however, he works on emotions – and on their complement, rationality and argument – in a very peculiar way. In a sense, his correspondence could be interpreted as a multi-layered, rational effort to evaluate events and make political decisions through the interpretation of the psychological ground of political interaction. His personal emotional style, and the expressions of other people psychological reactions, are deeply conditioned by a constant effort of rational reshaping, even when the anxiety about losing grip on reality actually alters Lorenzo’s mindset and perceptions. In a world in which it becomes increasingly difficult to fill the widening gap between the sense of reality and the use of traditional language, a most effective tool to master the dangerous border between rationality and emotionality is irony. The awareness of the ironical dimension of the political discourse reveals how subtle is the swing between performative and constatative functions in writing about emotions: an altered physical condition, as well as an ironical and complementary self-image as a man prone to raving, fantasizing or daydreaming because of his physical weakness, helps Lorenzo both in metabolize anger and disillusion, and in promoting and diffusing his carefully built image of a man in control, far from being dominated by passions: “Io vi ho fatto lungho discorso et, restandomi ancora un poco di febre, non è maraviglia se...”

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42 Lorenzo’s self image making works endlessly on this: “Credo essere conosciuto per *homo intero* et di *buona fede*, et posso essere creduto dal Duca [Alfonso] quanto huomo del mondo per *sincerità* e per essere senza *passione*, perché se ho facto cosa che li sia grata [non] l’ho facto per speranza alcuna né di stato né di condicta, ma di mia volontà e con ragione” (Lorenzo, *Lettere*, X, l. 909 to Baccio Ugolini, 3 Dec. 1486). In such a deliberate attitude, since his first years of rule his model was Cosimo the Elder: “el modo che andava per la mente a Laurenzo è questo per seguire li modi del avolo suo, che era di fare tali cose *cum piu civilità si potesse*” (Sagramoro da Rimini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Florence, 3 July 1470, quoted in Rubinstein, *The government*, p. 178, n. 28: see Bullard, *Anxiety*, p. 50).
un poco io farneticho”43 and playing once again with his precarious health conditions: “Io ho inteso la resoluzione de cotesti Signori Dieci et altri circa quanto scrisi a Pier Filippo di mano propria, la quale direi non fussi molto a proposito delle presenti occorrente, se non che mi pare da anteporre el giudicio di tanti savi huomini a quello de uno infermo, perché il mio si può più tosto chiamare farneticho che indicito”.44

In this effort to control both reality and language, Lorenzo’s letters are increasingly rich in ‘self portraits’, that is in explicit assessments and descriptions of his personal ‘nature’, his character, his habits in reacting to reality, in order to steady himself and his self image at the same time, “for representing and constructing an independent self”.45 “sopra la fede mia io mai cerchah simile cosa, né ho fatto di ciò opera né pensiero alcuno, perché la vendetta non mi è molto naturale, e tu che mi conosci lo sai”.46 Lorenzo’s nature – according to his own words – is therefore far from ‘passions’: he is not inclined on vendetta, nor ambition; he is not so passionate about his private interest to forget the public honour or the personal rectitude; he is not prone to desperation nor to pessimism. Such a finely articulated nature steadies itself over time: “se parlo troppo, correggiate, ché io per me non posso mutare natura”.47 Was this image ‘real’, or, better, was this portrait congruous with the image perceived by external observers? Are we facing in these texts the first symptoms of the emergence of “a new kind of self, capable of either revealing itself to, or concealing himself from, the outside world”?48 If we turn to the correspondences of the foreign ambassadors who lived in Florence, the picture in fact looks different. Lorenzo emerges from these letters as a man lacking measure and self control, often prey to sudden emotions unusual and inappropriate for a statesman of his standing.49

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43 Lorenzo, Lettere, IV, l. 426, to Girolamo Morelli in Milan, 18 Sept. 1479.
44 Lorenzo, Lettere, VIII. 740, to Niccolò Michelozzi, 17 Apr. 1485.
45 McLean The Art of Network, p. 208.
46 Lorenzo, Lettere, X, l. 910, to Piero Alamanni, 19 Dec. 1486. More examples can be found: “io non sono di natura ambitioso” (Lorenzo, Lettere, IX l. 885, to Jacopo Guicciardini, 10 Oct. 1486); “io sono di natura che difficilmente credo el male, et di questa hesitazione de Conte do qualche colpa alla lungheza nostra; ma spero [che] tuc[to s’abbi] a rassettare: et dire’lo absolutamente et mettere’lo per certo, difficilmente credo el male, et di questa hesitatione del Conte do qualche colpa alla lungheza nostra; ma spero [che] tuc[to s’abbi] a rassettare: et dire’lo absolutamente et mettere’lo per certo, difficilmente credo el male, et di questa hesitatione del Conte do qualche colpa alla lungheza nostra; ma spero [che] tuc[to s’abbi] a rassettare: et dire’lo absolutamente et mettere’lo per certo, difficilmente credo el male, et di questa hesitatione del Conte do qualche colpa alla lungheza nostra; ma spero [che] tuc[to s’abbi] a rassettare: et dire’lo absolutamente et mettere’lo per certo, difficilmente credo el male, et di questa hesitatione del Conte do qualche colpa alla lungheza nostra; 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On the other hand, Lorenzo was absolutely conscious of the sheer eloquence of gestures, silences, acts, and consequently of the crucial need to master their use (that is, the ‘performed’ nature of these expressions, as Gerd Althoff puts it). Writing to duke Galeazzo Maria, he told him that he asked the Milanese ambassador in Florence to tell him “quando intende le persone che parlano, el modo et come si muovono.” 50 Is therefore the emotional transparency displayed in front of non neutral witnesses such as the foreign ambassadors a strategic game? We know that Lorenzo was able to play subtly and effectively with emotions and to use them deliberately.51 So, what can we conclude, if conclude we must? We began our communication in presenting our attempt to interpret emotions in Renaissance Italy’s political and diplomatic correspondences as performative statements; at the next bend we analysed the different levels of Lorenzo’s political interactions, and some of the very different and varied regards of emotions as regard to the semantic field of hatred, perturbation, and sorrow. We then tried to interpret the ‘emotional style’ of Lorenzo and its uses.

This preliminary investigation, still a work in progress, has revealed the existence of an emotional style in Lorenzo’s letters, an emotional set of words and expressions that turn around some basic concepts about socio-political interactions and their representation. This representation resorts to a complex political language rooted in classical, biblical and literary texts, and Latin and vernacular traditions, and participates to a civic culture centered around a urban political society whose survival resides in its skill in adapting to new negotiating and communicative patterns and a new territorial framework, both innovative and fragile. In this sense, Lorenzo’s letters witness a deep transformation. First of all, they reveal a more sophisticated attention to linguistic nuances and options by comparison with the previous decades: not only were the men of Laurentian generation able to refine their understanding and analysis of events thanks to the use of a wider array of argumentative strategies, but also the intensity of the confrontation and the variety of the available discursive resources gave voice to emotions so structural to the dynamics between the actors to alter the formal nature of the diplomatic and political dialogue.52 This increasing linguistic and discursive variety however no longer hid the fact that language can both contain and be void of real meaning, and that words were becoming much more ambiguous.53

If language is truly a reliable indicator of change, the combination of emotional expressions and rational hypothesis, and – at the emotional level – the hiatus between an instrumental use of emotions and their nature as performing statements, multiply and

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50 Lorenzo, Letters, I, l. 200, to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 5 Sept. 1475.
51 Just one example: when Lorenzo wanted to get rid of Lionetto de Rossi, his brother-in-law and the unreliable administrator of the Medici bank in Lion, he concocted with his agent Francesco Sassetti an actual play to induce Lionetto to return confidently to Florence, as Lorenzo tells to Michelozzi: “Resta come ce habiamo a governare con Lionetto. Io sarei de opinione di fare vista di crederli a cagione che si transferissi qua [...]. Per questo [...] lo confermerai della venuta sua, più presto che puo, con parole dolce et di qualità che havesse cagione convincere la fede in me, et non lo inseirete [...] in questi effecti scriverremi, piglando partito di sopportarlo. Quando pure fussi da venire con lui a ropta, mostrerem indignazione, non havendo lui ubidito del venire, et con questo giustificherei ogn'altra cosa”. Lionetto receives Lorenzo’s letter, ‘bevesela tutta’, and comes back to Florence, just in time to be immediately shut in the Stinche, the Florentine prison for debts (Lorenzo, Lettere, VIII, l. 738, to Niccolò Michelozzi, 31 March 1485; the second quote is from a letter sent by Francesco Sassetti to Lorenzo, 4 Apr. 1485, MAP, XXXIX, 422, ibidem p. 150, n. 5).
complicate the meanings of diplomacy and politics at the crossing of different projects and conflicting plans. A growing consciousness of human nature and social interactions, and a sophisticated ensemble of discursive resources proved increasingly ineffective in explaining political dynamics and in interpreting timely a growing amount of diplomatic information. More strikingly aware of these ambiguities than most of his contemporaries, Lorenzo then not only enhanced his personal image making as a result of the growing anxiety, but also – despite the emphasis on his ‘natural’ distance from passions – inserted, absorbed, and used emotional expressions, talks and gestures – both written (controlled) and enacted (manifested) – within the argumentative framework of his political discourse.