# MACHIAVELLI AND REPUBLICANISM IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

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**ABSTRACT:**
The purpose of this succinct work is to present N. Machiavelli's classic republican view from his proposition of an inevitable paradox, the founding of an expansionist republic, difficult to govern, or the founding of a stable, but small and weak republic. Such a paradox, according to Machiavelli, should direct and condition all the constitutive devices of the republic when choosing what will be its destiny as a political body. The model of republic preferred by the Florentine will be the expansionist model of Rome, leading him to assume all the devices that gave this republic its power. From this presentation of the Machiavellian proposition, we will analyse the assimilation of republican thought in England from the Elizabethan period, as well as the political-social scenario that exists there. This itinerary will allow us to understand, in general, why classical republicanism was received on English soil from the perspective of establishing a mixed, stable government, thus favouring the spread of the Venice myth as a serene republic and delaying the use, even that mitigated, of the republican presuppositions expressed in the Machiavellian work that directed towards a Roman model.

**KEYWORDS:** Machiavelli; Republicanism; England; Venice; Elizabethan period.

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**Introduction**

Classical republicanism had its main revival period during the Humanist Renaissance, more centrally from the works of several Italian authors that can be listed from Petrarch to Guicciardini, passing, obviously, through Niccolò Machiavelli. However, Machiavelli's work was very different from the way other humanists assimilated and theorized the classic republican assumptions. Innumerable works were written to praise the issue of the freedom of cities, the civic virtues necessary for the construction of a republic, in addition to the praise for the popular and participatory spirit that evoked the notion of a republican government.

Machiavelli, however, directed his theorization to questions that were more conditioned by the need to think of a republican government that would respond to the needs imposed by its own time. He saw his homeland being slaughtered by foreign forces, his republics weakened or even transformed into extremely closed principalities. In view of this, the Machiavellian theorization of the republican question turned to the aspects that made the republic of Rome exceptional, its power, its freedom, more than that, the civic love for freedom that each citizen showed.

In his process of analysing and theorizing about the classic republican question, Machiavelli established one of the most difficult paradoxes to be resolved by the theorists of this political current. He proposes the inevitable existence of two distinct types of republics, an expansionist one, strong, yet difficult to govern and prone to conflicts and dissensions. On the other hand, a type of stable, orderly, but weak, little expansionist republic and subject to being dominated at any time by a more powerful government. All the Machiavellian construction, especially its theorizing about classical republicanism based on the Roman model, will be guided by this paradox.

When analysing the assimilation and apprehension of classical republican thought on English soil, especially in the Elizabethan period, it can be seen that the most widespread model was exactly the one presented by Machiavelli as stable and orderly. The myth of Venice as a '*serenissima*' republic was dominant in the main theoretical assimilations of republicanism in England during the 16th century. The republican aspects that gave Rome its character of expansion and freedom will not be further explored by English republicans until at least the second half of the 17th century. Even so, after this period, the assimilation of Machiavelli's theorization will appear to be mitigated, attenuated, mainly in its most radical propositions.

In view of these considerations, our itinerary in this succinct work will be the following: first, we will try to demonstrate how Machiavelli presents the paradox of the types of republic, focusing on the opposition between Rome and Sparta, in antiquity, and Venice in modernity. We will also present the way in which a myth of ordering and stability was formed around the figure of Venice and how it served for an ideological dispute between the Italian republics. At this point, we will highlight Machiavelli's predilection for the Roman model and the devices used there; in the second moment, we will analyse how the English political-social scenario was established in which the reign of Elisabeth I begins and unfolds, the tensions that exist there, and mainly, the way in which the Venice myth was gaining admirers among the theorists of English republicanism.

As indicated, our focus of discussion is the Elizabethan period, however, at the end of the second moment, we will succinctly seek to indicate how the Machiavellian work will be further developed from the period 1649, but even so, in a lessened way and not assuming for complete the propositions on the Roman model. Our analysis is part of a broad field of discussion that encompasses several different views and propositions, in view of this, we do not expect to present a fixed, inflexible thesis, but rather, to indicate possibilities for a more comprehensive reading.

**The Machiavellian paradox of the classic republican conception**

The paradox to which we refer is proposed by Machiavelli in order to structure an analysis of the best form of republic to be adopted. Such Machiavellian analysis turns to the fundamentals of constitution of a republic taking into account two possible paths, namely, expansion or stability as follows:

> This is seen in every human thing, who examines it well, that one inconvenience cannot be remedied without causing another. In this way, if you want a warrior and numerous people, expanding the possession of the republic, you need to give it a character that will make it difficult to govern, instead wanting to restrict it within narrow limits, or disarm it for the better control him, he will not be able to preserve his achievements, or he will become so cowardly that he will be easy prey for the aggressor. (Discorsi I, 6)[2]

Within this paradoxical perspective imposed by the Florentine, the founder of such a political organization must, from the beginning, establish what the fate of his people will be, expand or remain stable, but reduced in number and strength. The Florentine is also adamant in stating that "necessity, in turn, compels us to undertakings that reason would make us reject. So, after founding a republic adapted to remain without conquests, if the need arose to make it grow, it would soon collapse, for lack of the necessary base."(Discorsi I, 6). To illustrate his theory, Machiavelli brings as opposite examples the republics of Rome and Sparta in the past, as well as the republic of Venice in his present.

Pedullà(2017) makes an interesting proposition, with which we agree, in demonstrating that the dichotomy between Rome and Venice is a purely machiavellian creation, in opposition to G. Sasso's thesis, he seeks to demonstrate that there was no pro-Venice florentine aristocracy. Following his path, he points out that this dichotomy led to several errors of interpretation and the erroneous propagation of theses about a possible anti-Roman and other anti-Venetian philosophy in the Italian Renaissance. Rome is an example of an expansionist republic, active, difficult to govern, but belligerent and eager for conquests. The stable governments of Sparta and Venice are examples of closed, stable and strictly constituted republics.

The two primary factors that contribute to the definition of the future of a type of republic and its opposite are: social belonging and the body of laws. In the first factor, social belonging in a stable republic, the restriction of the right to belong to the political body, as well as the restriction of social recognition, are decisive for keeping the republic stable and secure. In the second factor, the body of laws, the centrality is in the constitution of laws that guarantee freedom, the balance between social classes, maintaining, in the case of the stable republic, the guard of this freedom in the hand of the elite, as will be seen more forward.

The republic of Sparta, shaped by Licurgo's prodigious mind, which established devices that restricted foreigners 'access to prominent political positions, as well as restricted foreigners' marriage and citizenship, is the first example of a successful republic in keep stable. (Discorsi II, 3). Similar restrictive devices were adopted in Venice at a given time, mainly in access to the most prominent public offices and those with greater political power. As Machiavelli indicates, Venice was formed by fugitive individuals from other regions, as the number of its inhabitants increased, older citizens proposed laws that would restrict the access of foreigners to the highest positions, in the author's words:

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[2] The quotations made in this text about the works of Machiavelli are in MACHIAVELLI, *Opere*. A cura di Mario Bonfantini. Milano/Napoli: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1954.

> […] and deliberating together in the city council, when the inhabitants seemed to be sufficient to establish a political life, they closed the way, for all the new inhabitants who arrived, to be able to participate in their governments. At that time, there were enough inhabitants outside the government to give reputation to those who governed, they were called *Gentiluomini*, and the others were called *Popolani*. In this way the republic was born and remained without tumults, because when it was born, everyone who lived in Venice was put in the government, so that none of them could complain. Those who later came to live there, finding the government closed and ended, had no reason or convenience to make tumults. (Discorsi I, 6)

Such a disposition created the first social division in the Venetian republic, the *Gentiluomini*, lords or nobles, and the *Popolani*, the people or plebeians. Venice was extremely dependent on this political-social arrangement, since its disposition as a political body was aimed at maintaining a stability that guaranteed both the privileges of the masters and the freedom of the popular. Thus, the possible social belonging to individuals who migrated to this city was only that of a citizen subject to the laws of the aristocratic government. At first glance, it may seem that Machiavelli is merely illustrating the beginnings of the Republic of Venice, without taking into account the changes that have taken place over the centuries. However, we understand that his intention is exactly to demonstrate that the configuration given to a republic in its early years will shape its history and development.

Despite being a republic focused on stability and not on expansion, this being the factor that allows it to remain safe for a longer time in relation to the alternations of government, but restricted in its power, Venice is not an impoverished city. Its wealth is linked to trade and maritime activity. Having a privileged geographical position, and due to its stable constitution, it apparently managed to satisfactorily compensate for the need to expand territorially, maintaining the character of an aristocratic republic. However, if Machiavelli is correct, sooner or later the need will cause it to expand or accept the influence of its new inhabitants.

To reinforce this understanding, what Machiavelli himself shows us, is that due to the ambition of Venice, mainly at the end of the 15th century, the King of France entered the Italian peninsula and gained power by helping the Venetians to conquer areas of Lombardy. (Il Principe. III). This shows that the Venetian ambition was focused on the search for new expansions, however, its companies were not so successful, given its constant need for the help of external forces. It can be argued that its political disposition, as an aristocratic republic, was not conditioned to an efficient expansionist process.

However, the highlight of Venice was the other model of the machiavellian paradox, the lack of internal conflicts in the republic, unlike what happened in Rome, according to Machiavelli, can be understood as the thermometer of the good constitution achieved by the Venetians. This constitution, however, was not given by an experienced legislator or a virtuous founding ruler. The republican arrangement that took place among the first Venetians demonstrates the way in which the institutions themselves were accommodated in the political and social organization, with no socially 'traumatic' episode. As Machiavelli argues: "It is luck, rather than the wisdom of its legislators, that Venice owes its form of government."(Discorsi I, 6). In this prism, the specificity of the Republic of Venice is the balance, in a way peaceful, that occurred between the two classes that were formed and the maintenance of customs, laws and institutions that preserved the mechanisms for maintaining this organization.

The Venetian legislative body was based on a social base of customs and traditions that, in turn, formed the foundation of the government. Once a legislative tradition was established, a

political model of government was also established that should be safeguarded in order not to undergo profound changes or to be unbalanced by internal disputes. This character was necessary to ensure that freedom was not corrupted by disputes between the desire to maintain the status quo, the fear of loss of privileges for the *Gentiluomini* and the desire for greater participation in power by the *Popolani*.

Machiavelli, when raising the discussion about which group would be the best guardian of freedom, affirms that for the defenders of the Venetian model this answer can only be answered in view of the primacy of the nobles, as follows:

> On the other hand, those who defend the Spartan and Venetian order say that, placing the custody of freedom in the hands of the powerful, they did two good works: one is that they more satisfied the ambition of those who have more part in the republic, by having this rod in their hands, they have reason to be more content; the other is that they take a kind of authority out of the restless moods of the commoners, which is the reason for infinite dissensions and scandals in a republic, capable of leading the nobility to some desperate act that in time produces harmful effects. (Discorsi I, 5)

Highlighting the defence that some commentators make of the expedient adopted by the Spartans and Venetians, Machiavelli reinforces the paradox that exists between the two possible types of republic, especially when following his explanation he points out that freedom among the Romans was left in the hands of the plebeians. Reaffirming the paradox of the types of republics, Machiavelli also stresses the idea that the disposition assumed by the Venetians seems to guarantee greater stability, whereas the disposition of the Romans seems to convey a greater love of freedom on the part of the people and institutions that allow a more expansionist character.

However, what interests us is to emphasize the aristocratic character that was outlined and consolidated in the Venetian republic since its beginnings, which Machiavelli highlights as an example of a stable constitution. "Thus the aristocratic character of the Venetian constitution, where the '*guardia alla libertà*' is in the hands of Gentiluomini and these alone have the right to administrative posts, has in fact guaranteed the city's *libertà* for a long time."(GUARINI, 1993, p. 37). In this aristocratic republican configuration, social belonging is strongly dependent on the adhesion and submission of individuals to the customs, laws and traditions that underpin the political body.

Despite all this aristocratic structure, the idea of freedom was present in the mythical construction that made Venice vibrant and flourishing, in this sense, the defenders of the Venetian model sought to highlight the participatory character of all classes, with the direction of the class aristocratic, but enabling popular participation. This defence seems to be deeply deliberate to justify the supremacy of the Venetian model over other models of republic, mainly the model of Florence. From this understanding, it can be said that the traditional restrictions of social belonging, implanted in the beginning of the republic and consolidated throughout its history, are softened by the ideal of social participation invoked in the construction of a democratic figure, even if with an aristocratic background, from the Venetian republic.

Within this configuration, the legislative arrangement is of vital importance, having a crucial role in guaranteeing the participation of individuals, those who had social recognition, political belonging, as well as the primacy of aristocratic classes. The legislative apparatus that sustains the political body is a reflection of the aristocratic organization, striving for the fervent maintenance of the devices that guarantee a '*serena*' freedom, that is, a freedom that answers the people's anxiety and that does not lead the nobles to use their power against them. The intrinsic

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dependence that existed between legislative construction and political organization was safeguarded by the uncompromising application of severe punishments to those who promoted some kind of disarrangement. The Florentine strives to emphasize this fine link between government and legislation by reaffirming the need to use force to support good laws:

> Those who ruled the Republic of Venice between 1434 and 1494 said, in this regard, that it was necessary to redo the government every five years, if it were to be maintained. 'Redoing the government', for them, was to revive the fear of punishment and respect for institutions in the minds of citizens, with the elimination of those who had done wrong[…]. (Discorsi III, 1)

He is very specific in pointing out the time lag to which he alludes, the sixty years in which Venice had a strong expansionist effort in which it sought to expand its power in Lombardy and other Italian regions, as already pointed out above. During this period, the battles against Milan, Florence and Bologna, as well as support for Pope Sixtus IV, led the city of Venice to several problems, mainly with the Pope's betrayal. However, his power was considerable and was privileged with French support at the end of this period. It is important, however, to note that it is the same period in which one can see the most complete political influence of the Medici in Florence.

The Venetian constitution, with all its load of aristocracy and class distinction, was taken, as an example of political and social arrangement, not only because of its lack of conflicts, as we have alluded to, but also because of its ability to adapt to the setbacks. that the republic faced. Thus, what can be said, unlike Florence, which lived more 'sensibly' the disputes between factions and the various internal and external political forces, is that in Venice, internal and external politics did not deviate from the traditionally imposed establishments. "The keynote of the Venetian nature was, therefore, that of a proud and even contemptuous isolation and, consequently, of a strong internal solidarity, to which contributed the hatred that was suffered by the rest of Italy."(BURCKHARDT, 2009, p. 91).

In view of these statements, it is important to note that the Venetian model was practically a mixed government, in which Doge had the role of a monarch, not hereditary, but elected – which will also be appreciated by the English Republicans – with the participation of several advices. Let us see what Martins instructs us on this theme:

> Generally speaking, the Venetian republic was presented as a regime that had a single ruler, the doge, a kind of elected monarch without the right to leave hereditary successors, who also could not leave the city and should carry out the determinations arising from the various councils; deliberative bodies formed by aristocrats, gentiluomini or patriziato – the government of some – that comprised the various councils (The Grand Council, the Council of Ten [council of justice], Council on Commercial legislation, etc.), from which the main decisions about political life in the city; and finally, the presence of the other social groups when they were called to elect representatives on these councils, in this case making up the government of many.(MARTINS, 2013, p. 62)

Such a constitution earned Venice from Machiavelli's time the graceful epithet of the '*serenissima*', giving basis to the so-called 'myth of Venice'. As will be seen in the case of the reception of classical republicanism in England, this myth of Venice as a most serene republic will foster an enormous interest in its constitution and a heated ideological use of its assumptions. "As has been shown elsewhere the influence of what has been called the myth of Venice, the idealised image of the history and the institutions of that republic, made a strong impact where

institutions and administration were to be defined more precisely."(MULIER, 1993, p. 253). The foundations that support this image are undoubtedly the clear classic republican dispositions anchored in the political and social recognition of individuals, in the strict foundation of laws in strong traits of tradition and customs.

The myth of Venice as a stable, just and flourishing republic will be a piece of propaganda, especially after the middle of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century. In this period, the intellectual, political, and even 'patriotic' dispute between Venice and Florence was strongly fierce. Both boasted of their Roman and Christian origins, merging a past of glory and holiness. In this scenario of ideological and political dispute, the assumptions that supported the representation of a classic republican heritage were more valid, especially with regard to political participation and stability. As Gilbert points out: "Only Venice and Florence had remained on the Italian scene as powerful and independent republics: republicanism created an ideological connection."(GILBERT, 1977, p. 126).

Starting from the dispute between Venice and Florence over the true republican heritage of the ancient Romans, bearing in mind the fact that Machiavelli was not one of the most passionate supporters of the Venetian model, we can intuit that the claim of stability could not be a claim of belonging Roman, at least not in the way employed by the Florentine. Since the Roman republic was expansionist, not stable, with constant social and political friction and a strong sense of attachment to freedom, Venice was not its natural successor. However, it was also not Florence, since it was unsteady and not attached to a truly expansionist spirit. Taking these points, it seems to us that Machiavelli sees no possibility of both, neither Venice nor Florence, being true heirs of the great Rome. However, Venice represented the classic type of republic that stood as opposed to the Roman model. Florence, on the other hand, could have had a tougher, more detached spirit, however, not only did it not have such a spirit, it also did not stand out for its stability.

It can be argued that Machiavelli is clearly establishing the Republican boundaries that define Venice, not agreeing with the praise of the Venetian myth of a perfect republic that can be taken as the true heir to Rome. However, he recognizes that these factors, stability and constancy, can be understood as a result of an arrangement won by 'luck' and by a strong attachment to tradition, customs and law enforcement. In this way, Machiavelli's Venice is an example of a republic that achieved its stability, having solidified a vibrant aristocracy, but also managing to adapt to an arrangement in which the other classes had a certain political participation, social recognition, even if based on restricted devices, constituting a stable political body capable of achieving economic, legislative prosperity and a certain political power.

However, it can be said that this model was not the favourite of the Florentine, nor could it be understood as the legitimate remaining model of the glorious Rome of the past. Unfortunately, we do not have enough space to deepen this discussion, nor to point out the factors that underlie the ideological dispute between Venice and Florence. However, we understand that Machiavelli sees in the arrangements conquered by Venice the traces of a type of classic republicanism that goes back to Sparta, these arrangements will be constitutive of the very myth of perfect Venice and will give rise to the apprehension of republicanism in Northern Europe.

The apprehension of the Venetian myth in the English tradition, and the republican arrangement that it represents, will not be directed by the Machiavellian criticism, much less by the paradoxical dispute between stability and expansion, it will rather be guided by the search for a mixed government model that allows a greater participation of aristocratic classes and a certain popular participation. In this prism, the central point of assimilation of republicanism in

the North, mainly in England, will be the proposal to build a government model that will limit the powers of the monarchy and guarantee a balanced participation in political life.

We will then continue the task of briefly discussing the process of apprehension of classical republicanism by English and Scottish politicians and thinkers in the Elizabethan period, as well as the assimilation of the myth of Venice as a perfect republic and the political objective of supporting the bases for a mixed government, more participatory and limiting the monarchical powers.

**Classic republicanism in Elizabethan England**

In order to understand the political and social scenario of the Elizabethan period, it is important to understand what was the political situation in England in the beginning of the 16th century. The English political-social configuration was traditionally guided by the hereditary monarchy, having a strong religious character after the first Protestant reforms. The hereditary monarchy, however, was not a consensus for all social strata of the English political body. The nobility showed a constant desire for greater participation and deep distrust of the unlimited powers that could make the monarchy a terrible tyranny.

Such a framework extends through the 16th century with King Henry VIII as its central figure, succeeding his father, Henry VII, he continues the Tudor monarchy, with the main challenge of expanding English power and consolidating the Tudor household as the legitimate heredity of the crown English. However, he will be one of the last Tudor, with his daughter Elisabeth as the last conductor of this household. Henry VIII was succeeded by Edward VI in 1547, after his death in 1553, Maria Tudor ascends to the throne, who reigns until her death in 1558. This year, Elizabeth, who had been imprisoned in the Tower of London, is crowned queen.

The important thing when analysing this process of succession of monarchs is to note that there was a strong religious tension between Protestants, mainly supported by Scots, and Catholics, supported by Rome and Spain. The path taken by Henry VIII had several political, religious and moral obstacles. However, our interest is in the political configuration that marked his reign in general, its importance for the consolidation of the Protestant reform and, mainly, the consequences of these events for Elisabeth's reign and the strengthening of republican ideas in the English scene. Henry's expectation of an heir to consolidate the Tudor household as a regent family led him to a true wedding pilgrimage. We will not dedicate too much time and space to resolve this issue, however, we are interested in exactly this point of need for any hereditary monarchy, the establishment of a line of succession. This theme will be strongly present in the reign of Elisabeth and will guide the discussions around republican ideals and the search for a mixed government.

In the period from 1521 to 1526, Henry joined the papacy and Charles V against the France of Francis I and Venice, initiating the Italian wars. It is important to note that in previous moments the Church had allied itself with Spain to gain power in Italy, but the scenario had changed and would change even more after the beginning of the 1530s. As pointed out, the need to establish a succession line led Henrique to several marital unions, and in one of these marriages, the rupture with the Church was definitive. In general, the situation of tension between the Roman Church and the king has dragged on since 1527, when his request to dissolve his marriage with Catherine was denied. However, only in 1534, with the Supremacy Act, did the Anglican Church become the official church of England and the king its sole and sovereign leader. In the sequence of these important movements and in the course of the monarchical successions,

Eduardo VI took the throne, still a child, after the death of Henrique VIII, having a Regency Council as tutor.

In this period the Anglican church was strengthened, mainly by the action of Tomas Cramner, which gave the characteristics of a Protestant Christianity and further removed England from the Roman Church. However, this situation did not last long, after Eduardo's premature death, his half sister, Maria Tudor, who reinstated the primacy of Catholicism in England and reversed the process of strengthening Anglican Protestantism. It can be argued, as already indicated above, that these abrupt changes, made more for political reasons than really theological or faith in the religious sphere, led to the creation of a state of instability in the English political-social scene after the death of Henrique VIII.

The pressure exerted by the Roman Church and the German Holy Empire, led to an increase in this situation of instability and fostered the scenario in which Elisabeth I will emerge and the strengthening of republican thought in England. Being a Protestant, Elizabeth I promoted a strengthening of the Church that Henry had created, however, it did not foster a very strong persecution of Catholicism, like that done during the period of Edward VI. However, in 1570 she was excommunicated by the Roman Church, which led to a growing fear of attacks on her life, mainly due to the spread of the theory of beneficial tyrannicide. The Roman Church was immensely interested in fostering such an atmosphere of animosity against the queen and, after her excommunication, decreed that it would be an act of faith to murder a tyrant, in Elizabeth's case, that would oppress the true 'body of Christ'.

The reception and assimilation of classical republican thought takes place in this scenario that covers a relatively long period, but which maintains two constant themes, first, the limitations of real power, second, the political participation of the other classes. In this sense, the first assimilation of republicanism will take place exactly through that first theme, as pointed out by Hadfield:

> If republicanism was somehow taken as clear and coherent doctrine in the mid-16th century in England, this was due to the intellectual conviction that it was necessary to control the power of the Crown by establishing means to ensure that a set of virtuous and servile advisers could always have the constitutional right to advise the monarch, and also to influence and control his actions within the limits of the law.(HADFIELD, 2005, p. 17).

The prospect of controlling monarchical power, keeping it at a 'safe' level, pleased the nobles and the new bourgeois class who saw the opportunity to increase their holdings in power and keep real performance under control. In this way, the threats to Elizabeth's reign did not come only from abroad, mainly from the Roman Church and Spain, she had to deal with an entire political-intellectual wing that was inspired by republicanism to lay the groundwork for proposing a mixed form of government.

In fact, it is possible to argue that this was the true intention of the individuals who solidified the republican discussion in 16th century England, the proposition and constitution of a mixed government in which the monarch's power was limited by the action of councils and chambers that could deliberate on matters relating to the community's own administration. From these statements, it is important to emphasize that it was first necessary to establish the equivalent of the term 'republic', not only in a philosophical or political sense, but in a sense that reflected the 'participatory' character that it should have, that is, integrating the entire political body, from the king to the people.

The term *"Res Publica"*, which belongs to the people, was translated into English as *"Commonwealth"* (*commonweal*), community, common wealth. However, this English term already carried an incipient idea of the State, as something separate from the citizens themselves or from the ruling dynasty. Following these considerations, the defenders of the assimilation of republican ideas in the construction of a mixed government looked for references in which they could anchor their propositions and establish clearly the construction of the government they wanted. It can be said that there was no solid republican tradition in the English-speaking world, in fact the great masters of republican thought were Latinos, mainly Italians.

Thus, it was necessary to resort to the 'basic' of the classic republican tradition, authors such as Tito Livio, Salustio, Cicero and others. However, the path was too long and the discussion was already advanced in the Latin world, so the necessary reference will be sought mainly by Italian and Neolatin authors. Despite this movement to assimilate classic republicanism through Latin and Italian interpreters and thinkers, the production of intellectual material based on the idea of community (*commonwealth*) was strongly important in building a republican identity in England and consolidating the idea of a government and the participation of society in power. The scenario favoured this perspective and the very uncertainty regarding the continuity of Tudor regency allowed a glimpse of the opportunity for change in the form of government.

The perspective of a community, a broader government, in which the monarchical model was supported on the basis of a mixed government, fostered the movement of intellectual production around the theme. Authors like Sir Thomas Smith, stood out in this process, always focusing on the theme of strengthening an English identity for emerging republican thought and its constitution of an idea of community. As Hadfield points out:

> Smith made a more substantial contribution to English political thought a few years later when he provided an English political anatomy, *De Republica Anglorum*: A *Discourse on the Commonwealth of England*. Like the previous *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, this work circulated widely in manuscript and had an important influence before its publication in 1583, at least 18 years after it was written.(HADFIELD, 2005, p. 20).

The need to establish the theoretical and political bases of an English-style republicanism would not exclude the constant search for parameters in the Latin tradition of interpreting the classic republican forms. In this way, the natural disposition was to be guided by models that corresponded to the desires of the aristocratic classes that sought to settle the paths for their greater participation in the English government. This whole discussion would not be restricted to the intellectual sphere, not even to the aristocratic circle, in a way, this movement was taking shape in several other social areas of the English community.

It seems correct to assert that the most educated individuals, intellectuals, thinkers, politicians and writers were familiar with this whole discussion and clearly reflected their apprehensions and positions. It could be argued that this whole discussion was detrimental to the status quo of the English monarchical government, so it seems natural to imagine that certain care was taken when presenting the assumptions of a mixed government, even a care to establish a more incisive way, more extreme reading of republican principles in the most prominent political and intellectual circles. This perception leads us to understand that the most explicit republican principles were discussed in a more cautious way, mainly turning to less prominent sectors. Let's see Peltonen's opinion:

> It is clear that classical humanist and even republican arguments were prevalent in the mid Elizabethan period. But in order to gauge the most thorough as well as the radical

> uses of these arguments in particular contexts, we have to move from the centre of Elizabethan politics to its margins. It is significant that the most pervasive and extreme employment of humanist and republican arguments occurred at the margins rather than at the centre of the political community and that they have been little known, at all. This is first an indication of the applicability of republican notions. (PELTONEN, 1995, p. 54)

Such indications can also refer us to the fact that in the middle of the sixteenth century, sectors such as theatre, literature, the arts in general, were one of the main tools for the propagation of ideas that often circulated in a veiled way in political and intellectual circles more prominent. As such, one can still support the idea that this discussion of republicanism and its principles of broad governability touched the dramaturgical authors of Elizabethan England, including Shakespeare. However, it is still necessary to understand what kind of republicanism will appear in this scenario, it is certainly not the paradoxical one proposed by Machiavelli, however, it will reflect the classic traits of social belonging, recognition and legal basis, identified by the Florentine in the composition of Venice.

The opposition between the model of the expansive republic and the model of the stable republic, indicated by the Florentine, was not part of this English assimilation of classical republicanism. More than that, it can be said that such a discussion about expansion or stability was undertaken in a heated way only in Renaissance Italy in the early sixteenth century, mainly from Machiavelli's own work. As Pedullà points out:

> The extraordinary attention that authors such as Guicciardini and Giannotti paid to the antithesis between these two models of republic – trying to offer solutions to what Machiavelli had posited as an unresolvable antinomy – should on its own be sufficient evidence of the turn that the alternative presented in Disc. I. 6 brought into Renaissance political thought.(PEDULLÀ, 2017, p. 109)

This aspect is important to understand how the theme of republicanism will be established in a purified way in Elizabethan England. The discussion will not take place in the process of establishing the best form of republican, expansionist or stable government, or the possible hardships and benefits that each one can bring. The discussion of the republic's expansive capacity or its aristocratic, or even more popular, constitution will not be part of the English apprehension of republican ideas, at least not in this Elizabethan period.

One cannot forget the fact that Machiavelli was already a known author in a derogatory way in several intellectual circles in northern Europe, mainly after the first movements of the Protestant reform. Thus, the discussion that he initiates about the expansion/stability paradox, starting with Discorsi, will not be part of the English theme. In reality, Machiavelli will be a figure both admired and repudiated on the English scene, either for his realistic stance or for his apparent aversion to religion. As we indicated at the beginning, the theme of religion was extremely important for the stability of the English political scene, or better, for the reduction of its tension. The establishment of a legitimation of the Crown itself depended on a religious vision that allowed to see the monarch with 'eyes of faith'.

Republican ideals could not take religion as a mere political instrument, much less expose a threat to the very existence of monarchical power. Recalling that the main objective of the individuals who promulgated the republican theme seemed to be the constitution of a mixed government, not the construction of a popular revolution. Thus, the discussion undertaken by Machiavelli, involving the search for the paradoxical definition between two types of republic, seemed too threatening for the English scene. Peltonen also comments on this:

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> Although Machiavelli was known in England at an early stage, his writings, the standard interpretation proclaims, met with a profound repugnance and dismay. This was so because the encounter between one dominated by 'an Augustinian universe' and another dominated by purely secular politics. Machiavelli's writings, we have lately been told, constituted a grave threat to the 'Elizabethan world picture' since they 'not only challenged but subverted all the premises of the early modern English 'commonweal'. (PELTONEN, 1995, p. 16)

Although Machiavelli was not taken as the main reference for the assimilation of republicanism in England, in the Elizabethan period, it can be said that he was well known, either by means of extreme criticism or veiled admiration, he was by no means none, neglected or went unnoticed. The writing of authors of Shakespeare's importance, makes several allusions to the 'bloodthirsty Machiavelli', which is another indication that his insertion in the English world was a mixture of love and hate, much to Shakespeare's taste.

For Elton, "Among Elizabethan theatre writers, it is Shakespeare who apparently provides the most numerous use of politics in the Machiavellian sense."(ELTON, 1994, p. 30). This view indicated by Elton, together with Peltonen's previous indication that the republican discussion, in its most radical terms, was left out of the official political scene, allows us to affirm that Machiavelli was not the central reference of English republicanism in the Elizabethan period, let alone your view of a paradox. As we tried to demonstrate in the previous topic, the Florentine seems to propose the paradox between the expansionist and the stable republic precisely to demonstrate that Venice was not heir to Rome and that, in the end, on impulse of necessity, it would be conquered. However, it is necessary to understand the repercussion of the 'myth of Venice' in Elizabethan England and its importance for the republican objective of its thinkers. Let us also take Peltonen's indication on this issue:

> Towards the end of the 1590s two remarkable continental republican treatises were translated and published in England. As is well known, Lewes Lewkenor's translation of Gasparo Contarini's *De magistratibus et republica Venetorum*(written in the 1520s and first printed in 1543) was published in 1599. The appearance in 1598 of The counsellor, a translation of the *De optimo senatore libri dvo*(first printed in 1568) by the Pole Laurentius Grimalius Goslicius(Wawrzyniec Grzymala Goslicki 1530 – 1607), has attracted less attention. Contarini and Goslicius were concerned with explaining and praising the merits of Venice and Poland respectively, and the English translations of their treatises can be partly understood as satisfying the intellectual curiosity about these countries.(PELTONEN, 1995, p. 102)

The whole construction of Venice as a stable, just, prosperous and participatory republic was propagated exactly because of the already treated desire to establish a mixed government in England. The aristocratic character, combined with the configuration imposed by the Doge's existence as an 'elected monarch' and a certain popular participation, was very pleasing to the defenders of a political opening in the government. Thus, an extreme wave of praise for Venice and the intense propagation of its existence as proof that the mixed government was the most just and fruitful, encouraged the production of several works on the subject. In Peltonen's words, an 'intellectual curiosity' was created on the subject of republicanism, mainly due to the mixed model incorporated in Venice and the possibility of its implantation in England. However, as already indicated on what machiavellian thought represented, we can also indicate that even this milder movement of propagating republican ideas, based on the praise of a mixed republic, brought not only discomfort, but a threat to the English crown.

The most important works on Venice, such as Contarini's, were written in Latin in the middle of the 16th century and published in English later, so it can be understood that first only the most cults, educated individuals would have access to works that, probably, they initially circulated only in literate environments. However, in the 1590s, these works were translated into English, not by haphazard, and taking the indication of 'intellectual curiosity' and the yearning for political participation and limitation of real power, this represented an even greater problem for the crown. As Hadfield still instructs us:

> It is certainly no coincidence that the work that contains the most sustained and positive representation of Venice is Gaspar Contarini's *De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum* (1543), being translated into English in 1599, when the criticisms against Elizabeth had reached epidemic proportions, as she became aware after the Essex coup. (HADFIELD, 2005, p. 41)

But, it would not be the 'Virgin Queen' who would see the most harmful, at least for the monarchy, the results of the influence of republican thought in England. Elizabeth's reign ends with her death in 1603, and from then on, the reign of James I began a period of expansion of the monarchy's power, unifying the kingdoms and setting a record with regard to the time of government. James I has 57 years of reign, of which, beginning in his reign only in Scotland, he remains 22 years as sovereign of the unified kingdom. This period of two decades of a unified reign did not cool the republican discussion on the English scene, on the contrary, it gave rise to new proposals and readings of the Latin classics that were being translated into the English language. As indicated so far, the Elizabethan period witnessed a timid assimilation in political terms, but warm in intellectual and artistic terms, of republicanism that came mainly from the Latin and Neolatin tradition.

This process had as its main figure the Republic of Venice and its fame as '*serenissima*'. However, the period following the reign of Jaime I, which is ruled by his son, Carlos I, sees a new wave of revival arising in the discussion of republican ideals and their possible insertions in the reality of a new English government. The scenario became extreme from 1641, when several absolutist and anti-popular actions by Charles I caused a civil war to break out in the United Kingdom. We will not go into the details of this period that stretches for a long seven years and culminates in the execution of Charles I in 1649, but it is necessary to emphasize the impulse that republican ideas took after this episode. Worden's observation about the period beginning in 1650 seems quite pertinent, as follows:

> The 1650's are the first and most fertile of the three stages of seventeenth-century English republicanism: the decade of the *Oceana* of James Harrington, the most original republican theorist of the century; of the republican editorials written for the government newspaper *Mercurius Politicus* by Marchamont Nedham; and of the influence of Algernon Sidney and of Henry Nevile in the Rump Parliament which Milton served. (WORDEN, 1993, p. 226)

The distance of almost half a century between the end of the Elizabethan period and the beginning of a republic, even if transitory, did not diminish the euphoria surrounding the theme of republicanism. On the contrary, as Worden pointed out, the real experience of the extinction of a monarchy and the establishment of a republic, further raised the discussion, fomenting an explosion of new constructions around the theme. However, Machiavelli will still remain a problematic author for the English republicans, even in the face of all the theoretical construction that took place from his work, the core of his thought remained overshadowed by the need for a

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republicanism that sought more stability than the proposition the important role that conflicts could play. In other words, it can be argued that a more radical republicanism, guided by the Machiavellian terms of expansion, conquest and the possibility of internal conflicts, would not be able to erase the vision of a more mitigated republicanism, aimed at the stability and maintenance of a participatory government, more like Venice than Rome.

The writings of Nedham, Harrington and other republican authors, were focused on the construction of a notion of republic that valued the participatory virtue of individuals, but that did not focus on the possibility of conflicts between two antagonistic classes that disputed the custody of freedom. In reality, what was in focus was the defence of the new model of government established since 1649, even though it did not have a very long life, it was an extremely remarkable experience. It cannot be said that either Nedham, Harrington or other Republican authors have put aside Machiavelli influence, on the contrary, as already indicated, they use numerous machiavellian theoretical frameworks, but at a mitigated level, say, with reservations. Let's see the opinion of Barros:

> Thus, if the arguments found in the *Discursos* are widely used by Nedham to defend the supremacy of the free state and the superiority of popular government, its foundations are not fully assumed, resulting in a formal language, without the assumptions that support them; and long before Machiavelli's republicanism appeared even more subdued in Harrington's work, it had already been widely reported in the editorials of the *Mercurius Politicus*, later reproduced in *The Excellencie of a Free State*. (BARROS, 2014, p. 37)

Machiavelli's work was, without a doubt, the most incisive in relation to the resumption of political elements that constituted the republican spirit of Rome. Such aspects were extremely interesting for the English republicans in the middle of the 17th century, however, the Anglophone tradition had already developed a predisposition, we will put it this way, for the stability aspects present in the Venetian model. This entire period after the events of 1649 is crucial for the development of a true republican tradition along the English lines, however, as we tried to present throughout this discussion, the Elizabethan period was responsible for the reception and assimilation of the republican discussion in England.

As we proposed in our introduction, our analysis would focus on the Elizabethan period, seeking to understand some aspects that guided the incipient assimilation of republicanism on English soil, privileging the model of a stable republic. The paradox imposed by Machiavelli based on the two types of republic may have determined the way in which the republican readings took place during the second half of the 17th century. The myth of stable, vibrant and just Venice seems to have been more 'affable' in the eyes of Republican enthusiasts who turned to the discussion of the topic during Elizabeth I's reign.

## Conclusion

The Machiavellian theorization of an inescapable paradox between two distinct models of republic caused controversy in its own time, in the discussion with its peers, and has also conditioned the way in which its work was assimilated in different historical moments. As we seek to defend in this work, in the course of the assimilation process of republicanism in Elizabethan England, the model of a stable, well-ordered and vibrant republic, represented by the figure of Venice, was preferred by English enthusiasts. The political-social scenario that existed during

Elisabeth's reign contributed to this disposition, mainly in view of the uncertainties surrounding her end.

The prospect of building a mixed government that would allow the influence of the noble classes, as well as the participation, albeit timid, of the population, aroused a keen interest in republicanism along the lines adopted by Venice. The characteristics of a more radical republicanism, prone to internal conflicts and aimed at expansionism, represented by the Roman model, did not interest the nobler classes who were looking for a way to limit monarchical power and consolidate their participation in the government. In this way, the most radical content of Machiavelli's theorization will remain on the sidelines, at least until the second half of the 17th century, when then, changing the political-social scenario, it will emerge as a reference, even if mitigated, for a valuable model of republicanism.

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