

ROBERT PENN WARREN'S *ALL THE KING'S MEN* AND NICCOLO

MACHIAVELLI'S *THE PRINCE*:

A FERMENTATION IN TIME

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By

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This thesis is for NITROE.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Well, Miss Dumonde had certainly opened the corral gate when she mentioned politics, and it was under the hoofs and swirl of dust from then on and I was sitting on the bare ground in the middle of it."

Jack Burden from Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men

Writers from Plato to Dickens have contributed to an ever-growing body of literature concerned with the moral dilemmas of governing and the plight of the governed. Two major pieces of writing in particular appear to communicate across time each reflecting and enlarging the moral and political dimensions of the other over the centuries. One of these two works began during the early sixteenth century in Florence where an Italian politician, Niccolo Machiavelli, desperate to regain political favor with the ruling Medici family, took pen to paper and wrote what became, and still remains, one of the most controversial commentaries on the nature of politics, *The Prince*. One of many Florentine politicians seriously concerned with the ongoing instability within his native republic, Machiavelli found himself, like his colleagues, wrestling with the issues of finding lasting and effective government. In the words of Anthony Grafton, author of the introduction to Machiavelli's timeless political treatise, *The Prince*, "Machiavelli's

political life, in other words, began and ended in invasion and revolution. No wonder he saw the political order as so fragile, and insisted that its preservation must take precedence over the scruples of tender, traditionalist minds” (xix).

Machiavelli’s political experience began in 1498 under the Soderini government, and it manifests a distinguished record of activity. For instance, as a fluent interpreter and producer of official correspondence, Machiavelli traveled abroad as a diplomat, getting to know “some of the most important rulers of his time,” all the while making himself into an “articulate, pungent critic of Florentine policies” often alluding to examples from Roman history which he carefully chose to shed light on the present (Grafton xviii). However, in 1512 the Medici family returned to power in Florence and Machiavelli fell under suspicion of “conspiracy against the returned Medici” and “after being arrested and tortured, retired from the city to his small farm in the country, a few miles away” (Grafton xviii). Machiavelli evidently reflected and drew upon his experiences with the Florentine government when writing *The Prince* which, though he also wrote *Discourses*, *Art of War*, *Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca*, a play entitled *Mandragola*, and a history of Rome, is the most pertinent of all his works to this ensuing study simply because it intensely embodies the spirit and explosive nature of the political theme set forth in the second work considered for this thesis, Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*.

Warren’s *All the King’s Men* captivatingly follows Machiavelli’s lead on illuminating the darker, more troubling dilemmas surrounding the nature of politics, such as the need to sacrifice one’s personal integrity in order to effectively combat government that neglects its purpose to serve the populace, or the practicality of espousing unethical

practices of bribery, blackmail, and extortion to preserve one's position of power. Consequently, *All the King's Men* further exposes these disturbing truths about politicians and politics that Machiavelli discusses in *The Prince*. Arguably the most prolific American writer to date, Robert Penn Warren weaves the long-standing ideals and values of the American south with the intricacies of the American political process and develops a novel that brilliantly renders and improves upon several of the most significant elements delineated in *The Prince*. Warren readily admits, during a 1976 interview with Bill Moyers, reading Machiavelli at the time he was working on *All the King's Men*: “[The novel] sort of grew out of circumstances. Grew out of a folklore of the moment where I was and I guess also because I was teaching Shakespeare and reading Machiavelli and William James. Everything flowed together. That was a world of melodrama, the world of pure melodrama” (197). In Harold Woodell's *All the King's Men: The Search for a Usable Past*, Woodell notes more specifically that Warren was reading *The Prince* while teaching Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (3). However, many of Warren's critics have only passively, at best considered the effect Machiavelli's treatise had on the writing of *All the King's Men*. When considered in conjunction, both *The Prince* and *All the King's Men* appear to converse across time about the most controversial of political themes while commenting on the complexities of politics, an exchange that catapults Warren's contemporary novel into the highest form of literary artistry.

There is more than an influential process at work here because there are several intriguing commonalities that exist between these authors. These mutual attributes fortify the foundation underlying the following study clarifying the genius that is Warren's

ability to adapt what he gleans from *The Prince*. Surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly for those who are familiar with both authors and time periods, Machiavelli and sixteenth century Florence have much in common with Robert Penn Warren and the 1930s American South, the setting for Warren's novel. For starters, at the time of composition, both regions were experiencing a Renaissance, periods in history in which the arts and sciences flourish unlike other at other times. More importantly, these two authors are likewise noteworthy figures because they both challenged mainstream thought concerning ethical political conduct by suggesting that perhaps political figures required an exemption from traditional morality when the greater good is at stake. While Machiavelli questioned the long-held humanistic beliefs of sixteenth-century Europe, and Warren disputed the twentieth century's demands for morally sound government, today both authors' words still generate a heightened sense of understanding about the complex dilemmas surrounding government. As a result, the thought-provoking insights contained within these works endure, their literary potency transcending time and place.

Furthermore, both Renaissance Florence and the rural south of 1930s America were steeped in traditions that consequently spilled over into their political ideology. Although a resident of sixteenth century Europe, a continent in which monarchical rule remained commonplace, Machiavelli and fellow Florentine citizens had become accustomed to a republican-based system of government. Likewise, Robert Penn Warren, who was born into and lived in the American South, knew a comparable form of democratic government. However, at some point, both of these republican governments became remiss in their duties to their constituents and consequently both Machiavelli's Florence and Warren's Louisiana, where he lived and taught at Louisiana State

University in the 1930s, displayed signs of severe civic disrepair. As Silvia Ruffo-Fiore asserts in her book on Machiavelli, the Florentine author witnessed first hand the “extravagance, opulence and gaiety,” of the ruling Medici court that disguised the “grim reality of disease, poverty and death” which together “operated as formative aspects in Machiavelli’s writings” (4). Similarly, Robert Penn Warren’s tenure as a professor at LSU provided him with the opportunity to scrutinize a strikingly analogous situation in the American South. In his article “*All the King’s Men* : The Matrix of Experience,” Warren poignantly remarks on the deeply divided opinions the public had of Huey Long. Most especially remarkable is his observation of what he considered an “obvious” failure on behalf of those against Long. In the same spirit of Machiavelli’s assessment of the Medici’s political ignorance, Warren likewise recognizes that “. . . if the government of the state had not been marked by various combinations of sloth, complacency, incompetence, corruption, and a profound lack of political imagination,” Huey Long would never have been necessary (165).

These considerations have brought several critics¹ to erroneously accuse Machiavelli and Warren of championing tyrannical forms of government. What these critics and their supporters fail to realize is that both men successfully identified a historically based, fundamental flaw in governments, especially democratic ones, for corruption that devastates the general population and hampers their individual freedoms. The novelty in the idea that crippling forms of duplicitous politics exist and that they must be controlled lies in these two authors understanding of the manner in which human nature responds to this inherent problem. According to Grafton, Florentine officials periodically discussed the volatile situation facing Florence and often clandestinely

concocted and championed many of those ideas set forth in *The Prince*. Thus, “Machiavelli made these radical innovations in political theory. . . to a considerable extent simply by transferring the accumulated Florentine experience of politics from the private sphere of governmental discussions of policy to the public one of political writing” (Grafton xxii). Machiavelli is thus credited with becoming one of the first to write these ruthless ideas down so that they were accessible to more than the elite. In other words, he brought the controversial ideas out of the dark halls of exclusive government offices and gatherings and into public consciousness. Again, Ruffo-Fiore’s study further clarifies Machiavelli’s position, contending that Machiavelli “recognized that the nature of the Italian and Florentine political climate required extraordinary and uncommon practices not otherwise acceptable to him in view of his republican sentiments” (29-30). Therefore, to suggest that Machiavelli’s *The Prince* is merely an endorsement of dictatorial government is to seriously misread this work, just as it is equally unjust to assume that Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men* simply glorifies the politics of Huey Long.

What these two men understood, and what some readers often fail to grasp, is that immorality is a major aspect of predictable human behavior that has its place in the societal “big picture.” Robert Penn Warren himself states it best when he says, “What I care about is the pattern of the human struggle,” the “pattern of human possibility” (Watkins 98). Arguably, at the center of this human struggle, whether one lived in sixteenth century Florence or in twentieth century America, is the political machine. Machiavelli and Warren were compelled enough by what they witnessed throughout their own lifetimes to scrutinize this troubling “pattern” that delves into inept forms of

democratic government. Once a democracy no longer serves and protects its citizenry, it becomes subject to being supplanted by a successful demagoguery. The idea that a dictatorial ruler could benefit a populace more than a republic of free citizens strikingly goes against indoctrinated democratic ideals, yet Machiavelli, and then successively, Warren, demonstrate in their respective works that episodes of tyrannical rule can be a temporary necessity within the overall pattern of the human political struggle.

At the heart of this disturbing “pattern” of human behavior is another issue that both Machiavelli and Warren converge upon, and that is mankind’s inherent depravity. Most of Robert Penn Warren’s readers are familiar with his idea of attributing a natural state of sinfulness to man: this notion appears in both his poetry and his prose often in the form of “original sin.” For example, one of the most popular quotations found in *All the King’s Men* centers on the Boss’s repetitious words, “Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud” (72). Warren’s use of this well-known phrase seen in terms of the novel’s message, coupled with Machiavelli’s influence, enriches Warren’s insights within the body of the work. Turning again to Machiavelli, even a perfunctory reading of *The Prince* allows a basic understanding of his candid assumption that all men by their nature have the capacity for corruption. More specific attention to this topic will be given later in this study; however, it is necessary to establish this correlation early on because it forms a significant basis for both works.

The intimate manner in which a person’s natural proclivity for immorality is connected with history serves as yet another point where Machiavelli and Warren share a significant connection. In Anthony Grafton’s introduction to *The Prince*, Grafton

acknowledges the commonplace influence that early humanist writers attributed to Roman history and discusses the importance political statesman writers placed on the former's use of archetypical examples in which the ideal prince "needed above all to be good: to pursue virtue, in the traditional sense" of ethics; their writings often used "classical examples of good and bad conduct, which they drew from ancient biographers and historians" (xx-xxi). Furthermore, in Ruffo-Fiore's examination of Machiavelli's life and works, she contends that the sixteenth century statesman related his view of man to his view of history because the latter "documents his ambition, greed, and envy as motives in historical events," and also that the "baseness of man's passions in society and politics is unalterably consistent throughout all peoples, in all nations, and in all times" having a determining effect on the outcome of politics and consequently, "the survival or destruction of a people" (43-44). Machiavelli's staunch position about the relationship between man's imperfect nature and history finds a strong kinship with Robert Penn Warren. Being a conscientious southern writer of the 1930s, Warren espouses in many ways what has become known as the Southern literary tradition in his works. These traditions, like those of Machiavelli's day, include an equally significant reverence for history, or the past, and the importance contained therein is reflected throughout Warren's novel. In an interview in 1976, Warren asserts, "the sense of a human being's effort to be human and to somehow develop his humanity, that is what history's about" (199). Hence this imperfect progression of human development and the inevitable pitfalls along the way are magnified in the political arena where the largest portions of humanity are affected. These intrinsic deficiencies throughout human nature take on complex characteristics when the business of administering laws and the welfare of the

greater good are at stake. Moreover, as this particular study unfolds, frequently romanticized terms like “virtuous,” “good”, “ethical”, and “ideal” which resonate within both *The Prince* and *All the King’s Men*, find their worth often subverted in favor of less morally righteous expressions that become the unspoken standard for political figures. Machiavelli proclaimed that a “prince could not be constrained by the demands of normal morality if he hoped to do his job properly . . . in short, [he] confronted his reader . . . with his realization that straightforward efforts to master and apply the tenets of traditional morality would not produce an effective ruler. Politics must have its own rules” (Grafton xxii). Just how this understanding complicates a politician’s balance of living a personally moral life versus a public life that promotes the best interests of the people as understood by Machiavelli and then expanded upon by Warren will further illuminate the focus of this study.

Finally, one last consideration with which to contend before delving further into this study centers on the sources of inspiration for Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Warren’s *All the King’s Men*. Oftentimes, the source of inspiration for a piece of fiction offers an intriguing facet outside of the work itself. Both works discussed here focus on one man’s far-reaching authority and the social advancements generated through him. Machiavelli and Robert Penn Warren both came across contemporary political figures that piqued their imaginations enough to develop these individuals into meta-historical personas. During his diplomatic missions, Machiavelli came to know Cesare Borgia, who “heightened for him the strident contrast between the ineffectiveness of his own state and the intimidating, determined actions of the duke” (Ruffo-Fiore 14). Borgia then served as the main catalyst in *The Prince*, for he was the closest living example of what

Machiavelli regarded as the ideal type of leader who could help Florence emerge from its state of disorder. As for Robert Penn Warren, he readily admits that had he never gone to Louisiana and had Long not existed, “the novel would never have been written” (*All the King’s Men* : The Matrix of Experience 161). However, this is not to say that Warren simply writes biography, for he clarifies, “what Louisiana and Senator Long gave me was a line of thinking and feeling that did eventuate in the novel” (*All the King’s Men*: The Matrix of Experience 161). These thoughts and feelings are of much broader scope and consequence as we will see in the ensuing pages.

This thesis sets out to demonstrate the genius that is Warren’s ability to capture contemporary issues germinated in history and bring meaning to the reader in a way that makes the discovery a true journey of highest literary merit. Meanwhile, the commonalities between *The Prince* and *All the King’s Men* are such that they are worthy of exploration in that we witness Warren’s interpretation and validation of what he extricates from the sixteenth-century treatise on politics. For instance, both Machiavelli and Warren undertake an avant-garde position commenting on the impracticality of indoctrinated attitudes that demand ethical government at all costs. Both authors seem to ascertain that an intrinsic bond exists between man’s natural depravity and his subjectivity to corruption; however, this bond can become an instrument for leaders to bring about the betterment of the greater good. If a democratic society finds itself in the throes of inefficacy and the desire arises to regain a stable and effective government, Machiavelli and Warren convey the notion that often it becomes necessary that a central figure of authority sacrifice a personal life of virtue in order to restore a government that provides for the greater good.

The fact that Machiavelli and Robert Penn Warren share several interesting associations beyond the political subject matter treated in *The Prince* and *All the King's Men* lends more depth to this thesis because it speaks to both authors' joint beliefs concerning the immutabilities of human nature which Machiavelli explicates throughout his historical studies and also to those "patterns" of human behavior Warren explores in his writings. That they also valued history and preferred democracies rather than totalitarianism deepens the sentiments presented in these two works. While Machiavelli's treatise of political "truths" is often dry and abrasive, Warren transforms even the most severe material into a fulfilling work of literary art. Warren's three-dimensional characterizations and his examinations of complex predicaments that are essential to politics build on Machiavelli's foundation to formulate a classic novel as timeless as his Italian predecessor's sixteenth century words. As the following study unfolds to reveal Warren's validation of Machiavelli's precepts, we witness more than a basic source study. Whether the material considered be pleasant or disturbing, it is important to bear in mind that the similar social circumstances Warren and Machiavelli knew allowed the former to experience in an extremely personal way the latter's words allowing him to reinvigorate the true spirit in which *The Prince* was written. Rather than eschew the darker tendencies found in human nature, Warren embraces those shortcomings and persists in trying to create a pleasurable and satisfying event out of seeming distastefulness.

¹ Robert B. Heilman's article "Malpomene as Wallflower, or, the Reading of Tragedy" found in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of All the King's Men*, ed. Robert H. Chambers, Prentice-Hall, 1977, Heilman names and explains the misreadings of Warren's novel.

CHAPTER 2

MACHIAVELLI AND WARREN ON MAN'S TRUE NATURE

One of the most significant parallels between Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* concerns the emphasis on man's true nature, a nature replete with imperfection. Briefly discussed in the introduction was Machiavelli and Warren's mutual agreement that man has a proclivity for immorality; however, the manner in which this assumption extends into the texts has yet to be explored. At the center of both works lies a dilemma concerning the compatibility between effective politics and ethical politicians. The two works pose this question: how can one expect morality to reign within a system that is inherently corrupt, since at its core, government is an institution built on people who are naturally fallible?

Throughout *The Prince* and *All the King's Men*, we encounter several situations in which characters are confronted with this conundrum. Ultimately, Machiavelli's advice, evidenced with historical examples, suggests that princes should skillfully embrace their immoral inclinations in order to thwart self-serving politicians who run their selfish agendas at the expense of the populace's welfare. Robert Penn Warren, in accordance with Machiavelli's suggestions, creates the character Willie Talos,¹ who at first, is a

¹ All subsequent references to *All the King's Men* conform to Noel Polk's restored edition. Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*, Restored Edition, Harcourt Inc., 2001

tee totaling, morally driven, ineffective political candidate and becomes a dictatorial, unethical, yet highly effective, governor. Willie's transformation begins and ends in this problematic atmosphere in which man's natural depravity and his desire to benefit the greater good equally compete for his attentiveness.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli lucidly asserts that "many have dreamed up ideal republics and principalities which have never in truth been known to exist" (49). These utopias, he claims, fail to accurately portray reality; he concludes that "the gulf between how one should live and how one does is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done moves towards self-destruction rather than self-preservation" (49). Willie's first attempts to enter the political arena end in frustration, disappointment and border self-destruction. Could his initial failures be attributed to his desire to remain ethical in the traditional sense? Willie's early political experience offers a prime example of Machiavelli's pragmatic views on the shortcomings of idealism.

At the beginning of the novel, Jack, the narrator, recalls meeting Willie in the back of Slade's pool hall, where Alex walks in with the future Boss, or as Jack phrases it, "Only it was not the Boss. Not to the crude eye of the *homme sensuel*" (19). There stands Willie in his "Christmas tie" patiently enduring Tiny Duffy's crude remarks about his wife and kindly refusing the repeated offers to drink beer. Then, at the beginning of chapter two, Jack recalls Willie as the "one-man leper" in Mason City serving as County Treasurer. Willie's political isolation and resultant ineffectiveness stems from his inability to convince the people to hear his views in regards to the ill-fated school house. Although he stands on a street corner scribbling on papers trying to explain to the constituency his reasoning, Jack notes, "[F]olks don't listen to you when your voice is

low and patient and you stop them in the hot sun to do arithmetic” (86). Ideally, people would be receptive to someone speaking to them about important local issues when approached in a calm and “patient” manner; however, realistically, people don’t like to be bothered, especially not with matters that don’t appear pressing or if they lack a sense of immediacy.

Willie is even unable to obtain cooperation from the local newspaper, the *Mason County Messenger*: “Then he wrote up a long statement of the case as he saw it about the bids, and tried to get the *Messenger* to print it on handbills in their job printing shop, paid for, but they wouldn’t do it” (86). So, after going into the city to have them printed and hiring a couple of boys to hand them out, and after one is beaten up by some other “big boys,” Willie himself persists in handing them out, traveling from town to town with hardly anyone ever listening. Despite Willie’s determination and honest, hard work, “He [doesn’t] dent the constituency. The other fellow [is] elected” (87). To all this, Willie recognizes that they “tried to run it over on me like I was dirt” (87). Taking the moral high road and playing by the rules leaves Willie distraught, un-elected and relegated to peddling “Fix-It Household” kits to make a living. Machiavelli contends, “The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous” (49-50), and so it appears that Warren too recognizes the validity of that contention.

Moreover, there are three other examples of “virtuous” characters in *All the King’s Men* whose full potential to benefit the greater good becomes stifled the way Machiavelli predicts as they chose to operate within the confines of traditional morality. In Warren’s novel, Cass Mastern, The Scholarly Attorney, and Adam Stanton all

demonstrate the stagnating effects of adherence to a strict moral code. Cass's brother's intentions to make him rich and "put him into politics" was at first a "flattering and glittering prospect, and one not beyond reasonable expectation for a young man whose brother was Gilbert Mastern" (238). However, this glittering dream meets an unfulfilled end when Cass's affair with Annabelle Trice turns deadly, and he collapses into an existence of self-deprecation. After Cass recovers from a knife wound, he considers himself the "chief of sinners and a plague-spot on the body of the human world," and after contemplating suicide, returns to the plantation where he "read the Bible, prayed, and strangely enough prospered almost as though against his will" (257). Moreover, his decision to free his slaves enrages Gilbert, who tells him, "Get out of this country and take up law or medicine. Or preach the Gospel and at least make a living out of all this praying" (258).

Cass comes to further grief after one of his freed slaves is shot and killed; and then another is whipped. Finally, the decision to live virtuously above all else comes full circle when Cass is upon his death bed: "I have lived to do no man good, and have seen others suffer for my sin" (264). This desire to "do good," arguably a determining factor in separating humans from other animals, seems to end in angst for those choosing a life of rigid ethics in a secularized world of inherently flawed people. Machiavelli offers, "I know everyone will agree that it would be most laudable if a prince possessed all the qualities deemed to be good. . . But, because of conditions in the world, princes cannot have those qualities, or observe them completely" (50). In other words, man's imperfect nature should therefore exempt noble-minded leaders from compliance with total morality because it places them at a disadvantage when confronting those with purely

self-centered motivations, in that it severely limits the avenues of recourse for the ethically bound.

Gilbert Mastern's suggestion that Cass take up law or medicine is interesting because it represents both areas of public service in which we find the Scholarly Attorney and Adam Stanton attempting to "do good." The Scholarly Attorney's experience again demonstrates Machiavelli's perception that a person cannot effectively serve the greater good and adhere to complete morality. Ellis Burden, who Jack has believed to be his father, parallels Cass Mastern's decision in that he pursues a life of religious ministry after leaving behind a life of "sinfulness." Jack's investigation into Judge Irwin's past brings him to seek out his father, Ellis Burden, whose residence he locates above a Mexican restaurant. After Jack inquires if a hanging religious sign belongs to the elder Burden, the woman answers "si," and adds, "es como un santito" (273). The Mexican woman suitably likens Ellis to a "santito," a saint, thus symbolizing someone who has chosen to relinquish human nature's darker tendencies in an attempt to live a life of complete propriety in accordance to God's laws and not man's. When Jack prompts the Scholarly Attorney about Judge Irwin, Ellis retorts, "The sinful man I was who reached for vanity and corruption is dead. If I sin now it is in weakness and not in will. I have put away foulness" (283). The former lawyer- turned minister- gives up his secular profession of seeking justice for people in man's courts of law and dedicates himself to saving souls, which is an entirely different realm of service. His character reiterates the incongruence between religious devotion and tending to fallen man's worldly needs. Ellis Burden's capacity for being an effective lawyer is thus compromised by his binding moral conventions.

When the conversation between Ellis Burden and Jack escalates to reveal that Jack has asked about Irwin's past because Jack is working an angle for the Boss, the old man admonishes that it is all "foulness." Jack's telling response follows: "[D]id you ever stop to think what a mess your fine, God-damned, plug-hatted, church-going, Horace-quoting friends like Stanton and Irwin left this State in? At least the Boss does something, but they--they sat on their asses" (283). Warren ingeniously demonstrates here what Machiavelli tries to explain all along, that politics and the individual private world of citizens are significantly different creatures.

A careful reflection on the conversation between Jack and the elder Burden reveals that they are in fact speaking about two different issues. Ellis focuses solely on the unethical aspect of Governor Talos's actions, and Jack focuses on the end result of these practices, which is the overall betterment of the citizens of the state. Ruffo-Fiore best clarifies Machiavelli's understanding of the disparity between wanting to "live virtuously in every way," stating: "[Machiavelli] believed that Christian asceticism impeded social and political progress by encouraging men to endure suffering rather than to rebel against tyrannous and subjugating systems" (37). Therefore, honorable people in positions of power, or those who strive to "do good," find themselves in a constant state of conflict between trying to promote the welfare of the public while devising methods with which to defeat those few who seek to prosper to the detriment of the many.

The third character to fulfill Machiavelli's contention about exclusive virtuosity is Adam Stanton. Jack's insightful depiction of Adam's apartment and medical practice convey the doctor's honorable decision to provide a public service in the purest sense of the words. Jack recalls that Adam would

let me sit in a shabby over-stuffed chair in his shabby apartment. . . I used to wonder why he lived the way he did when he must have been having quite a handsome take, but I finally got it through my head that he didn't ask anything from a lot of the folks he cut on. He had the name of a softie in the trade. After he got money, people took him for it if they had a story that would half-wash. (142)

Adam's selfless devotion to his work is right in line with Machiavelli's notion of living "virtuously in every way." Moreover, when Jack's initial attempt to get Adam to run Willie's hospital is met with opposition, Jack charges that the Boss understands that Adam is the "best around" who doesn't exploit his abilities and also that "[Willie] knows [his] secret" (332). Jack continues the assault on Adam's resistance, saying not once, but twice, "You want to do good" (332). During the course of his attack, Jack assures Adam that his inability to resist putting his hands on a sick person and wanting to fix him is "eccentric," or "a kind of super-sickness," but it is in no way a "disgrace." At the point that Adam looks at Jack "like an enemy," he counters, "[The Boss] knows your weakness, pal. You want to do good, and he is going to let you do good in wholesale lots" (332). Adam's response to Jack is predictably, "[G]ood—that's a hell of a word to use around where he is" (333). This statement shows Adam's inability to comprehend the complexities of human nature and an unwillingness to concede that there are "gray areas" in which much of humanity functions. Jack argues, "A thing is good in itself—if it is good." (333) The circumstances surrounding how the "good" thing came to be are of little or no importance. The strict "black and white" distinctions between "good" and "bad" by which Adam defines life contradict man's true nature, and this provincial characteristic serves to bring about his downfall (to be discussed in depth later as it

encompasses yet another Machiavellian aspect). Nevertheless, Warren's dynamic portrayal of Adam's eccentric desire to "do good" parallels that of the Boss with the critical distinction that Adam's motivations begin and end in idealism, whereas Willie's also begin idealistically but evolve into a Machiavellian-based realism.

Finally, at several different instances throughout *The Prince*, Machiavelli emphasizes the darker side of man's nature, at one point claiming that "One can make this generalization about men: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and deceivers, they shun danger and are greedy for profit; while you treat them well, they are yours" (54). The grim outlook this statement conveys about man's inherent variability embodies the underlying personal flaws the characters contend with in *All the King's Men*. Machiavelli refers repeatedly to the "wretched creatures" men are and to his belief that, if all men were good, then his precepts in turn would not be (56). Likewise, whenever Jack voices doubt at finding scandal in Judge Irwin's past, Willie repeats his mantra, "Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud" (72). The Boss gives this notion a more striking image when Irwin acknowledges someone "dug up some dirt" on Masters, causing him to withdraw his endorsement. Willie philosophically explicates:

Dirt's a funny thing. . . Come to think of it, there ain't a thing but dirt on this green God's globe except what's under water, and that's dirt too. It's dirt makes the grass grow. A diamond ain't a thing in the world but a piece of dirt got awful hot. And God-A-Mighty picked up a handful of dirt and blew on it and made you and me and George Washington and mankind blessed in faculty and apprehension. It all depends on what you do with the dirt. (66)

The dual nature of man is illustrated splendidly here because it encapsulates the most important theme found in both *All the King's Men* and *The Prince*: the ability to create “good” out of the “bad.”

Nowhere is man's capacity for ruthlessness more consequential than in the world of politics, where the flaws of the human condition are magnified on a grand scale. A government that serves itself selfishly can have dire effects on the public. Machiavelli therefore suggests that if a prince “wants to maintain his rule he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need” (50). Turning then to Willie, who tells Jack, “Yeah, I'm Governor, Jack, and the trouble with Governors is they think they got to keep their dignity. But listen here, there ain't anything worth doing a man can do and keep his dignity. Can you figure out a single thing you really please-God like to do you can do and keep your dignity? The human frame just ain't built that way” (57). The Boss's perspicacity is quite un-idealistic, when compared to his early attempts to win political office in which he approached the task from a strictly moral stance.

While politics is the main consideration for both *The Prince* and *All the King's Men*, Warren draws upon two other professions, doctors and lawyers, to strengthen the argument that the moral dilemma reaches any area that deals primarily with the “greater good.” Cass Mastern, Ellis Burden, and Adam Stanton all represent figures whose choices incapacitate their personal abilities to contribute to the greater good because they cling to idealistic forms of morality. Nevertheless, the implications of man's true nature, both honorable and flawed, complicate the process by which men try to establish rules and order over their world. Politics presents a problematic system in which there is an ongoing struggle between the well-intentioned politician seeking to better his society and

those who see political power as an opportunity to exploit the populace to serve their personal means. In approaching this dilemma of morality in government, Machiavelli and Robert Penn Warren both demonstrate a profound understanding of man's complex nature. In turn, they translate this knowledge into a multifaceted appreciation for those leaders who nobly pursue influential political offices and the difficulties they must overcome in order to foster societal advancement.

CHAPTER 3

MACHIAVELLI AND WARREN ON MARTYRDOM AND VICE

Now that it has been ascertained that Machiavelli and Robert Penn Warren allow for an innate flaw in man's natural disposition, we must consider how this imperfection in man's nature is accounted for in practical politics. Recalling the volatility of Machiavelli's Florence, Ruffo-Fiore writes, "Italy had become like all corrupted states incapable of regaining order and stability without the leadership of this Savior man who would employ extreme measures (*debiti mezzi*, 'suitable means') to reanimate and redirect its political and social course toward the common good" (35). Similarly, the fictitious American southern state of Warren's novel faces the same sense of desperation. Jack Burden often remembers the incompetence and complacency that plagued the state before Willie Talos becomes governor: "If the Government of this State for quite a long time back had been doing anything for the folks in it, would Talos have been able to get out there with his bare hands and bust the boys?" (175). Furthermore, Willie also illustrates the human side of the often unsentimental principles set forth in *The Prince* through his emotional displays of confusion, might and weakness. If Machiavelli insists upon a martyr-like character to fulfill the role of an effective prince, then Warren delivers with a twentieth century American equivalent.

Before a “prince” can even aspire to be beneficial to his people, he must first be willing to break the rules as necessary to secure his rule. Once his rule is secure, he can then devote himself to addressing the needs of the people without fear of being ousted. Machiavelli says, “[I]f a prince wants to maintain his rule, he must be prepared not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need” (50) and also, “he should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but he should know how to do evil, if that is necessary” (57). It can be argued that in light of Machiavelli’s notions, Willie’s early political strategies and actions, centered on his desire to remain ethical, prevent him from fully recognizing his political potential. Warren creates a turning point in the novel in which we witness a metaphorical death and rebirth during Willie’s first gubernatorial sham as a vote-splitter for MacMurfee. The reader witnesses an overnight transformation of Willie Talos, ethical candidate into the future Boss who symbolically assimilates immorality in his decision to become intoxicated and emerges a speaker-of-truth able to rally a crowd. All the while, Warren maintains Willie’s steadfast intentions to be a “good Governor.” Warren brilliantly portrays Willie’s conversion into the character that would become “the Boss” as the events are marked by Machiavelli’s belief that to espouse immorality enables a ruler to effectively lead the populace. In her study on Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, Ruffo-Fiore offers, “The common good and public realm must have priority, and although the prince should wherever possible follow ethics even in politics, his responsibility as leader demands he be ready to abandon it, and even the salvation of his soul, if constrained by political necessity” (45-46).

The serious implications of sacrificing one’s soul for the greater good abound in Warren’s novel and are apparent in both the diction and the action of the episode that

surround Willie's transformation into a Machiavellian archetype. Jack suggests that the difference between Willie's run for office in Mason City versus his first run for the governorship lies in the circumstances surrounding the bid for office. If he were to run in Mason City, Jack assesses, "[Willie] would have taken a perfectly realistic view of things and counted up his chances" (97).

However, the notion of attaining the highest political position in the state holds for Willie idealistic qualities in-line with his still wholesome view of politics. His idealism, coupled with Tiny Duffy's "summoning" combine to set the stage for the transformation ahead. Jack recalls, "For [Willie] to deny the voice of Tiny Duffy would have been as difficult for a saint to deny the voice that calls in the night" (97). Likening Willie to a "saint" implies the seriousness with which Warren's character undertakes this opportunity. In other words, Willie is compared with a religious person who heeds a call to dedicate himself to a higher cause and who willingly sacrifices his human state for the benefit of the greater good. Jack further adds, "[Willie] was bemused by the very grandeur of the position to which he aspired. The blaze of light hitting him in the eyes blinded him" (98). This confusion and blindness again coincides with images of biblical inspiration that often symbolize an approaching epiphany.

Jack acknowledges that Willie knew "something" about human nature after spending all that time around the county court house: "It was, perhaps, a knowledge not of human nature in general but of his own nature in particular, something deeper than the mere question of right and wrong. He became a martyr, not through ignorance, not only for the right but also for some knowledge of himself deeper than right or wrong" (98). Warren's decision to use the word "martyr" here is critical because equating Willie's

character to one who dies for his beliefs is of great consequence. Willie must suffer a death of personal scruples and put aside his personal salvation, so that he can best serve the people of his state. Jack contends that at this juncture in Willie's rise to political power, "something now came between him and that knowledge" of human nature (98). That "something" is perhaps the inklings of realization that his duty as governor comes at the expense of his own private integrity.

Willie's transformation from idealism to realism culminates in his first run for Governor. The future Boss preoccupies himself with grandiose speeches that fall on uninterested audiences: "Nobody would listen to his speeches, including [Jack]. They were awful. They were full of facts and figures he had dug up about running the state" (100). Willie's determination and idealism finally begin to surrender to the reality that he won't win the race. Jack describes the look on Willie's face as the realization of his defeat becomes apparent: "as I looked at his face now I didn't see the thin-skinned, boyish face, but another face under it, as though the first face were a mask of glass and now I could see through it to the other one" (109). This description evokes a sense of impending change. The "boyish face," symbolic of naivety, hope, and even idealistic optimism, begins receding into another countenance yet to be determined.

The emergence of Willie's "new" persona is balanced by his determination to better the public welfare. He tells Jack that he could have made a "good Governor. . . a lot better than those fellows" while he proceeds to outline the state's need for tax reform, education reform, and better roads (110). Like a father frustrated with his disobedient children, Willie declares that the citizens "deserve to grabble in the dirt and get nothing for it but a gut-rumble. They won't listen" (111). Jack is surprised that in spite of these

admissions Willie doesn't even "look sore," perhaps because like parents who always want the best for their children even when they rebel, Willie understands they sometimes have to learn the hard way. Willie goes on to admit, "Whatever happens I'm not asking you or anybody else for sympathy. . . I'm not asking anybody in the world for it, not now or ever" (111). These remarks, while lost on Jack, seem to foreshadow his impending "sacrifice." Jack's observations serve to further imply imminent change for Willie, who at that moment looks like a "a big dog coming out of the wet, or waking up" (111). This image portends that Willie is on the verge of "shaking-off" a symbolic wetness, perhaps an allusion to his baptism and hence his personal commitment to morality, or even that he is "waking-up" from the dream that is idealism.

The final blow to Willie's idealistic nature and his descent into vice comes when Sadie Burke reveals her assumption that he knew about his role in the race. Sadie blurts that Willie is a sap who was framed and continues, "Oh, you let 'em, because you thought you were the little white lamb of God. . . . Well, you're the goat. . . you're the sacrificial goat. You are the ram in the bushes. You are a sap. . . . Oh, no, you were so full of yourself and hot air and how you were Jesus Christ. . ." (114). Sadie's use of biblical imagery echoes Jack's earlier uses of the blinding light and "martyr" images because they signify Willie's inner struggle to choose either personal integrity or service for the greater good. Warren filters an intense situation such as Willie's coming to terms with what he is facing through Sadie's mockery instead of just forcing the gravity of the circumstances on his readers through Willie's commentary alone. Hence, the idea of Willie's "sacrifice" becomes more palatable through Sadie's ridicule because it indirectly, yet powerfully conveys Willie's private turmoil.

After Jack confirms Willie's set-up, he recollects, "Well, it hit him. There was no denying it. His face worked as though he might try to say something or bust out crying. But he didn't do either one. He reached over to the table and picked up the bottle and poured out enough in a glass to floor the Irish and drank it off neat" (114-115). Willie, who just seven pages before had chosen water to drink over Jack's "bottle of red-eye," dives impetuously into drinking alcohol. Rather than come up with words to express what had just been revealed to him, or cry over being duped, he symbolically chooses to embrace vice and thus aligns himself with Machiavelli's directive that requires a ruler to be able to behave un-virtuously.

The dialogue that ensues carries with it a possibility of *double entendre*. Jack says to Willie, "Hey. . . take it easy, you aren't used to that stuff (115). At first this remark seems simply that Willie isn't used to drinking alcohol and should ease into the situation. However, after Willie downs another drink, Sadie shoves the bottle in his direction and says, "You better get used to it" to which Willie again pours and imbibes another drink and upon deliberately setting the glass down replies, "I better not. I better not get used to it" (115). The bottle of alcohol becomes symbolic of the vice with which Willie will have to contend and which he will have to "get used to" as the future leader of his state. His reluctance to "get used to it" conveys the strain of having to choose between a personal life of morality and a public one mired in corruption. Here, Willie's political future as a "good Governor" hangs ominously over him as he considers the decision to embrace vice and martyrdom and become the savior of his state or cling to virtuous behavior in favor of personal salvation.

Willie's eruption into a repetitious chant of "I'll kill 'em" culminates in a more determined-sounding harangue to Sadie about how he's going to do "big things." These forceful vocalizations reaffirm the notion that throughout his transformation from idealism to Machiavellian realism, Willie's desire to "do good" for the people remains constant. Upon Jack's return to his hotel room he says, "For a second or two I thought that Willie had left. Then I saw the finished product. It was lying on my bed" (116). The phrase "finished product" suggests that Willie's transformation is near completion, and Warren's continued use of death-imagery furthers the feeling that a part of Willie's character endures a metaphorical demise. Jack recounts, "I walked over to the bed and inspected the item. It was lying on its back. The coat was pushed up under the armpits, the hands were crossed piously on the bosom like the hands of a gisant in a cathedral" (117). The image of a lifeless "item" on its back poignantly captures the symbolic end of Willie's naivety, and the cathedral image subsequently indicates his martyrdom and likewise the possibility of resurrection, or new-life. Furthermore, Sadie instructs Jack to write a letter to "Mamma Lucy" in which he should ask where to "ship the remains," meaning Willie, to which Jack in turn, also uses the term "remains" in his narration to refer to Willie.

After a narrative aside on Sadie's character, Jack again reverts to death imagery when he concludes, "I tell it in order that it may be known who Sadie Burke was who stood by the bed meditating on the carcass as I laid my hand on the switch. . ." (119). Warren's repeated use of these death-associated words and phrases is apparently deliberate and coincides with the proposition that even a noble-minded politician is

required to make the ultimate sacrifice of abandoning personal salvation if his intention is to benefit the greater good.

The morning after Willie's death-like slumber, he emerges a changed man, as, Warren's diction indicates: " 'I'm going to the barbecue,' he announced from the spirit world, his eyes still fixed on the ceiling" (122). The use of the phrase "spirit world," in conjunction with the preceding death images, evokes a sense of Willie's mystical rebirth. Again, Jack notices, "[Willie's] face had a high and pure and transparent look like a martyr's face just before he steps into the flame" (123). Here we begin to witness Willie's reemergence onto the political scene with an unshakeable faith in his noble belief that he can "do good." Likewise, the symbol of vice also reappears as Jack warns Willie to go easy with the flask of alcohol: "But he had it to his mouth by that time and the sound of it gargling down would have drowned the sound of my words even if I had kept on wasting them" (124). Rather than shun the source of his hangover, Willie accepts the consequences of his actions and forces himself to build his tolerance for alcohol, thus paralleling his decision to embrace unethical behavior if it is going to further his honorable political cause. One last, yet highly effective, biblical allusion arises when Jack explains to Duffy Willie's drunken state: "He never touches the stuff. . . It's just he's been on the road to Damascus and he saw a great light and he's got the blind staggers" (125). This allusion to St. Paul speaks to the earlier commentary in which Jack equates Willie with a "saint" who is called upon to serve a higher cause. Moreover, Saul of Tarsus, who becomes St. Paul, undergoes an extraordinary life-altering conversion, and so, as does Willie when he becomes "the Boss."

At the end of the novel, Jack reflects on his notion of the “theory of the moral neutrality of history,” asserting that “process as process is neither morally good nor morally bad. We may judge the results but not the process. The morally bad agent may perform the deed which is good. The morally good agent may perform the deed which is bad. Maybe a man has to sell his soul to get the power to do good” (548). Perhaps Willie’s deep knowledge of himself allows him to see this reality at the critical moment in Upton when he decides to start drinking alcohol. When the element of “bad” becomes de-stigmatized in Willie’s mind, his potential to bring to fruition his reforms for the state are realized. Jack presses, “The theory of moral neutrality of history. . . Maybe it took a genius to see it. To really see it. Maybe you had to get chained to the high pinnacle with the buzzards pecking at your liver and lights before you could see it. Maybe it took a genius to see it. Maybe it took a hero to act on it” (548). In Warren’s novel, Willie becomes the “hero” in the Machiavellian sense of an overriding dedication to the welfare of the state at all costs, most especially the personal expenses.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli matter-of-factly states that in order to become a stable and effective ruler, one must be willing to act immorally. However, the decision to embark on such a journey can prove bewildering as witnessed in Willie’s early political setbacks. If the greater good is at stake, the resolution to espouse unethical behavior whenever necessary becomes one of immense personal sacrifice. Robert Penn Warren takes into consideration the complexities of human nature when considering what Machiavelli proposed in one succinct phrase and then demonstrates the sheer personal drama one man endures while grappling with the option to become akin to vice in order to pursue the height of political influence, or shun immorality to ensure his personal

salvation remains intact. With Willie's decision to embrace his propensity for corruption, symbolized by his decision to drink alcohol, comes the equally daunting task of abandoning his previous methods of ideal behavior and adopting a more realistic, oftentimes ruthless, approach to politics.

CHAPTER 4

MACHIAVELLI AND WARREN ON ATTRIBUTES AND ETIQUETTE OF EFFECTIVE RULERS

Once a ruler decides to sacrifice his personal salvation for the greater good, it remains to be considered how his attributes and etiquette are then fashioned to accommodate his new role. To serve the greater good most effectively, Machiavelli presents specific guidelines on how a prince should administer his office within the framework of a fallible institution, specifically, government. Machiavelli's distinctive treatment of his suggestions again lies in skirting "political correctness," opting instead for a realistic approach claiming, "how a prince must regulate his conduct toward his subjects or his allies. . . I draw up an original set of rules. . . . I have thought it proper to represent things as they are in real truth, rather than as they are imagined" (49). The leader who abides by Machiavelli's instructions embodies heroic qualities because he is willing to place the welfare of the state before his own. Interestingly, reflecting upon Machiavelli's suggestions, we can find in *All the King's Men* Warren's application of these directives. Several passages reveal Willie Talos's personification of Machiavelli's heroism. This heroic quality is described in *The Prince* as the leader who "can command and is a man of courage, who does not despair in adversity, who does not fail to take precautions, and

who wins general allegiance by his personal qualities and the institutions he establishes” (33-34).

One of Machiavelli’s key precepts focuses on the intellectual training of the prince. He contends that a “prince must read history, studying the actions of eminent men to see how they conducted themselves during war and to discover the reasons for their victories or their defeats, so that he can avoid the latter and imitate the former. . . [taking] as their model some historical figure who has been praised and honoured; and always kept his deeds and actions before them” (49). The importance of history rises in *The Prince* as a valuable tool to perfect a ruler’s leadership skills, providing him with copious historical examples of the successes of past distinguished leaders. Similarly, in *All the Kings’s Men*, Jack recalls Willie’s college years when he “buckled down to his books pretty seriously” (94). Warren dedicates the better part of two pages detailing Willie’s days of book study. Jack divulges that Willie didn’t just read law books; he “wanted to know the history of the country. He had a college text book, a big thick one. Years later, showing it to me, he prodded it with his finger and said: ‘I durn near memorized every durn word in it. I could name you every name. I could name you every date’ ” (95). In addition to his near memorization of the college textbook, Jack notes that there was a “big cloth-bound ledger, in which [Willie] wrote the fine sayings and the fine ideas he got out of the books” (95). The explicit detail here in which Warren seems to be imitating Machiavelli’s instruction on intellectual training is rather intriguing. Using Machiavelli’s advice as a measure, Willie thoroughly equips himself with knowledge that will allow him to imitate greatness and therefore better serve the needs of his populace. Moreover, Willie asserts that the “fellow” who wrote the textbook “didn’t know a God-

damned thing” about the way things were, proposing instead: “I bet things were just like they are now. A lot of folks wrassling round” (95). Willie’s ability to recognize that “things,” or human nature, are currently the same as they were in the past shows his ability to find consistencies in human behavior, an idea that goes to the heart of Machiavelli’s counsel and also speaks to Warren’s belief that there are discernible “patterns” of the human experience.

That Willie’s intellectual training occurs before he is elected governor brings up another of Machiavelli’s criteria he manages to fulfill before he enters the governor’s office. Willie’s ability to gain respect after the Upton fiasco fuels his future run for office because he adapts Machiavelli’s suggestion that “A prince also wins prestige for being a true friend or a true enemy, that is, for revealing himself without any reservation in favour of one side against another. This policy is always more advantageous than neutrality” (72). Instead of choosing to withdraw completely from the political scene, Willie uses the eye-opening Upton incident to his advantage. He chooses to side with MacMurfee, “I’m resigning in favor of MacMurfee. By God, everything I’ve said about MacMurfee stands and I’ll say it again, but I’m going to stump the state for him. Me and the other hicks, we are going to kill Joe Harrison so dead he’ll never even run for dog-catcher in this State” (131). Warren improves here on Machiavelli by bringing accountability into the mix, for Willie says, “Then we’ll see what MacMurfee does. This is his last chance. The time has come” (131). Willie’s willingness to fully endorse one candidate over another and then demand that the populace “crucify” the governor who doesn’t deliver, allows him to set up his future comeback. His avoidance of neutrality enables him to remain in the public eye as he campaigns for MacMurfee across the state

with noteworthy results; “MacMurfee was elected. Willie had something to do with it, for the biggest vote was polled in the sections Willie had worked that they had any record of” (135). This exposure proves valuable because Willie makes it a point to acknowledge that while he is dropping out of the race to endorse MacMurfee, “When I come back to run for Governor again, I’m coming on my own and I’m coming for blood” (131). Hence, when Willie does run for governor, he already has the respect of the people who remember him as a man of decisive mind and action.

Once Willie is elected, he embraces Machiavelli’s contention that a prince “should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, kind, guileless, and devout. . . But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how” (57). Willie Talos personifies the attributes outlined in this excerpt from *The Prince*. In the opening pages of the novel descriptions abound that parallel Machiavelli’s pronouncements. For instance, Jack describes a “picture about six times life-size” of Willie hanging above a drug-store’s soda fountain with a caption that reads, “*My study is the heart of the people*” (9). Then there’s “Old Leather-face” Malaciah, who Willie calls on by name, and also inquires after his son who Willie discovers is in jail. Willie posits, “My, God. . . what they doing round here, putting good boys in jail?” and concludes the short, but telling, conversation with, “Glad to seen you. . . Tell your boy to keep his tail over the dashboard” (9). Later, in the Cadillac, shortly after Willie and his entourage leave the drug-store, the Boss commands, “Jack, make a note to find out something about Malaciah’s boy and the killing. . . . Find out when the trial is set and get a lawyer down. A good one, I mean a good one that’ll know how to handle it and let him know he God-damn well better handle it, but don’t get a guy that wants his name in lights” (30).

Between the larger- than- life poster of Willie, his conversation with Malaciah, and then his swift action to come to the aid of “Old Leather-face,” we certainly get the impression early on that Willie’s behavior is clearly consistent with that of a “compassionate” and “devoted” governor.

Machiavelli further states, “To those seeing and hearing him, he should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, a kind and religious man” (57). After the attempt to impeach Willie is foiled, his speech to the crowd gathered in front of the capital echoes this Machiavellian precept, but it also carries a distinctive difference. Warren’s character not only “appears” to be concerned with his constituents, but his genuine sincerity gives deeper meaning to the “martyr’s” sacrifice because Willie becomes more human to the reader. It is important for a character like Willie to exhibit redeeming qualities to offset his sometimes brutish behavior. Hence Willie’s character becomes more complex and life-like, and less of an arbitrary figure. Moreover, Willie’s speech subtly evokes images of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount where he delivers the eight beatitudes, thus fulfilling Machiavelli’s religious sentiment. The Boss tells the gathered crowd, that responds in roars of approval for their governor,

They tried to ruin me because they did not like what I have done. Do you like what I have done. . . . I tell you what I am going to do. I am going to build a hospital. The biggest and finest money can buy. It will belong to you. Any man, or woman, or child who is sick or in pain can go in those doors and know that all will be done that man can do. To heal sickness. To ease pain. Free. Not as charity. But as a right. It is your right. Do you hear? It is your right!. . . . And it is your right that every child shall have a complete education. That no person

aged and infirm shall want or beg for bread. That the man who produces something shall be able to carry it to market without miring to the hub, without toll. That no poor man's house or land shall be taxed. That the rich men and the great companies that drew wealth from this State shall pay this State a fair share. That you shall not be deprived of hope! (365)

A witness to Willie's speech, Anne Stanton asks Jack if the governor really intends to do as he proposes, to which he replies, "He's done a good deal of it already" (365). Jack's acknowledgement augments Willie's redemptive quality, showing that Willie is truly intent on "doing good" for the citizens of his state.

The end of this great speech addresses the other part of Machiavelli's belief that "his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite [of kind and compassionate], he knows how" (57). Willie promises,

"I will do those things. So help me God. I shall live in your will and your right. And if any man tries to stop me in the fulfilling of that right and that will I'll break him. I'll break him like that!" He spread his arms far apart, shoulder-high, and crashed the right fist into the left palm. "Like that! I'll smite him. Hip and thigh, shin bone and neck bone, kidney punch, rabbit punch, upper cut and solar plexus. And I don't care what I hit him with. Or how!" (366)

Jack's descriptive narration is important to include here because it provides a visual that emphasizes the violent imagery of Willie's words that peak when, with his arms stretching over his head, coat sleeves drawn tight exposing his shirt sleeves, and his hands spread and clutching, he screams, "Gimme that meat-axe!" (366). Willie's speech begins on a conciliatory note in which he compassionately outlines the people's needs he

intends to satisfy and concludes aggressively with rapacious threats against anyone who intends to prevent him from accomplishing his objectives. This scene overtly encompasses the dual nature of Machiavelli's ideal leader, and it also allows Warren to reiterate the importance of why Willie must be both compassionate and ruthless. Willie concludes, "Your will is my strength. . . Your need is my justice. . . That is all" (366). Willie relinquishes his personal salvation so that he can be devoted to the needs of the greater good, thereby requiring him to employ any means necessary, immoral or otherwise.

A similar Machiavellian stipulation that involves a ruler's "appearance" charges, "Men in general judge by their eyes rather than their hands; because everyone is in a position to watch, few are in a position to come in close touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experience what you really are" (58). There are three major instances in *All the King's Men* that appear to pay direct tribute to this notion, and they involve the Boss's public image as represented in circulated photographs. The first of these photo opportunities, when Willie and family return to his father's farm, illustrates the necessity to provide the public with images portraying serenity and contentment. The photographer thinks it would "be the nuts" to capture the governor alone with his aging dog, Buck. When Buck doesn't cooperate, Willie tells Jack, "get the hairy bastard up here and make him look like he was glad to see me" (39). Jack internalizes, "I knew what I was paid to do. . . . I was paid to do a lot of different things, and one of them was to lift up fifteen-year-old, hundred-and-thirty-five-pound hairy, white dogs on summer afternoons and paint an expression of unutterable bliss upon their faithful features as they gaze deep, deep into the Boss's eyes" (39). This scene humorously, yet effectively,

depicts the importance placed on contriving the ideal picture to circulate among the constituency to promote the appearance of normalcy and wholesomeness within the governor's personal life.

A second noteworthy example of Willie's attentiveness to how the public perceives him occurs shortly after the impeachment scandal. By this time, Lucy, distraught over Willie's corrupt behavior, leaves him to go to Florida, and it is reported she leaves for health reasons. Even upon her return to the state, she resides on a poultry farm, out of town, with her sister. Nevertheless, "The Boss himself used to go out to the poultry farm now and then to keep up appearances. Two or three times the papers ran photographs of him standing with his wife and kid in front of a hen-yard or incubator house. The hens didn't do any harm either. They gave a nice homey atmosphere. They inspired confidence" (222). Both Machiavelli and Warren understand that a need exists in the general populace to see "evidence" that all is well with their leader because it encourages feelings of security no matter the reality behind the perception.

In the third and final example concerning appearance versus reality, there is a noticeable escalation in the seriousness of this contrived act. Whereas the first instance comically involves the manufactured affection between the Boss and his old dog, this final instance shows a more complex interplay between the voters and the governor. Late in the novel, and again referring to the poultry farm pictures, Jack notes, "Yes, those pictures were an asset to the Boss. Half the people in the State knew that the Boss had been tom-cating around for years, but the pictures of the family and the white leghorns gave the voters a nice warm glow, it made them feel solid, substantial and virtuous" (457). Jack clarifies that the voters would justify his infidelity as one of Willie's perks.

As a governor, he should be entitled to have both a wholesome wife and mistresses. The Boss's immorality "seemed a mark of the chosen and superior," and it wouldn't be held against him (457). The interesting twist here is what Jack contends the voter would hold against the governor: divorce. Jack explains, "[Divorce] would have been very different, and would have robbed the voter of something he valued, the nice warm glow of complacency, the picture that flattered him and his own fat-or-thin wife standing in front of the henhouse" (457). These telling lines reveal a truthful, yet disturbing account of the balance a leader must attain between the way he is perceived and his constituency. Machiavelli and Warren both have a firm understanding of how appearance can significantly influence the capricious relationship between a ruler and his citizens, and that it can often hinge upon something as superficial as his public image.

A less superficial rule Machiavelli establishes in *The Prince* is his contention that "There is no doubt that a prince's greatness depends on his triumphing over difficulties and opposition" (69). Although Warren's novel contains several examples of Willie's triumphs over "difficulties," perhaps the most captivating is the impeachment attempt. MacMufee's camp seizes an opportunity to endeavor to remove the Boss from office, thinking "they could get him dead to rights on the business of attempting to corrupt, coerce, and blackmail the Legislature, in addition to the other little charges of malfeasance and nonfeasance" (207). Rather than retreat, Willie undertakes a two-fold offensive position. One plan of attack occurs in the public's eye as he crisscrosses the state confronting the charges saying, "Folks, there's going to be a leetle mite of trouble back in town. Between me and the Legislature-full of hyena-headed, feist-faced, belly-dragging sons of slack-gutted she-wolves" (207). He indicts his accusers with insulting

the populace's political judgment: "They're saying you didn't have bat-sense or goose-gumption when you cast your sacred ballot to elect me Governor of this State" (208).

Willie steps up his effort to ensure he has the backing of his citizens through this ordeal when he demands: "I want an answer before God and under the awful hand of the Most High. Answer me: Have I disappointed you? Have I?" (208). These public appearances during this tumultuous time of his political career give Willie the benefit of reconnecting with the voters, ensuring that they remain supportive of him and his position.

The second method Willie employs to secure his victory over the impeachment proceedings operates on a more sinister level, making it all the more Machiavellian. Jack describes the Boss "sitting in the Cadillac, all lights off, in the side street by a house, the time long past midnight. Or in the country, by a gate. . . . saying low and fast, 'Tell him to come out. I know he's here. Tell him he better come out and talk to me. . . And then there would be a man standing there with pajama tops stuck in pants, shivering, his face white in the darkness'" (209). Other times Willie is in a room full of smoke telling the culprit "slow and easy," "This is your last chance," and then not so slow and easy; "God damn you, do you know what I can do to you?" to which Jack comments in an aside, "And he could do it, too. For he had the goods" (209). These intimidating tactics can initially appear underhanded until one considers that Willie is simply invoking his Machiavellian privilege to act unethically in safeguarding his position, and consequently, the welfare of the state.

Warren's narrator also shares inside knowledge of the exploit that topples the impeachment proceedings. Jack encounters Lowdan, the MacMurfee group's king-pin, in his hotel room and plays a hand in sealing the opposing faction's capitulation. Once

Lowdan realizes Jack has a statement signed by all of the “heroes,” MacMurfee’s henchmen, in which they hold that “the impeachment proceedings are unjustified and will vote against them at all pressure,” Lowdan levels charges of “bribery,” “coercion,” and “blackmail” against Willie (212). Jack justifies the Boss’s actions, admonishing, “MacMurfee ought not to elect legislators who can be bribed or who have done things they can get blackmailed for” (213). This scene illustrates Willie’s outstanding leadership abilities in which he fights corruption with corruption in order to protect his position. Consequently, the impeachment never comes to a vote and Willie appears before the crowd assembled on the capitol’s lawn to victoriously inform them that he will remain the governor of the state. Subsequently, Willie is elected to a second term “with a vengeance. There had never been a vote like it” (221).

Finally, in addition to overcoming difficulties and opposition, an effective leader also has direct duties to his constituents. Machiavelli advocates, “A prince should also show esteem for talent, actively encouraging able men, and honouring those who excel in their profession” (74). The idea here is that by recognizing and promoting a state’s talented citizens a leader will be able to re-circulate their contributions within the state thereby protecting and strengthening the welfare of the populace. By far one of Machiavelli’s most ethical propositions, this suggestion is perhaps one of the most intriguing links between *The Prince* and *All the King’s Men* because it serves as the basis on which the Boss and Adam Stanton come to interact. The Willie Talos hospital symbolizes the height of Willie’s desire to provide the greatest good to the people of his state, free and complete health care. Likewise, Adam’s talent and selfless devotion to his profession has earned him a distinguished reputation as a doctor. During a tirade over the

idea of Gummy Larson getting Willie's hospital contract, the Boss exclaims, "I'm not going to let those bastards muck with it. . . And I'm going to get me the damned best man there is to run it. Yes, sir! The best there is. Yes, sir, up in New York they told me to get him, he was the man. . . . Dr. Adam Stanton" (327). Willie then enlists Jack to persuade Adam to accept the position of hospital director thus setting in motion the course that will fatally tie together the fates of the "Man of Fact," Willie, and the "Man of Idea," Adam.

Machiavelli's realistically based constructs that direct a ruler's conduct and image find validation in Warren's *All the King's Men*. This chapter's discussion of Warren's adaptation of Machiavelli highlights the most fascinating similarities between what the sixteenth century statesman advocates as a prince's appropriate behavior and Warren's twentieth-century imitation of that prototypical leader. Warren also makes Machiavelli's often brazen sentiments appealing through humor and his exceptional humanization of Willie. The Boss's emotional displays of frustration, confidence, and sincerity combined with his driven conviction to "do good" mitigate the instances he behaves roguishly and lend a of balance to Machiavelli's instructions.

CHAPTER 5

MACHIAVELLI AND WARREN ON PERSONAL STAFF AND FLATTERERS

Although Machiavelli and Robert Penn Warren characterize their prince and governor respectively as sacrificial individuals determined to promote the betterment of the greater good, they also recognize that his dependence on a personal staff, while necessary, also becomes a point of significant vulnerability. A personal staff is an integral part of any leader's organization because its existence is essential in not only implementing his ideas for governing, but also serves as an intimate advisory panel. Machiavelli asserts, "The choosing of ministers is of no little importance for a prince; and their worth depends on the sagacity of the prince himself" (75). Machiavelli discusses this notion and also warns of the detriment self-serving ministers can bring to his leadership.

In *All the King's Men*, the Boss surrounds himself with "ministers" whose own character flaws notably impact the course of his rise and fall as governor. Warren seems to contemplate the feasibility of Machiavelli's assertion that "a man entrusted with the task of government must never think of himself, but of the prince, and must never concern himself with anything except the prince's affairs" (75). Willie's personal staff, comprised of characters such as Jack Burden, Sadie Burke, Tiny Duffy, Sugar-Boy, Hugh Miller, and Byram White, seems to reflect an incongruity between Machiavelli's advice

and what both he and Warren have established to be man's true nature. One by one, all of the above-named ministers to the Boss are unable to disassociate their personal regard for themselves from their duties and thus contribute in bringing about their governor's demise.

Although their characters may be considered minor to the novel, both Byram White and Hugh Miller represent, in extremes, the difficulties with which Willie must contend as he goes about the business of trying to accomplish serving the common good. Miller and White are extreme in their personal drives; Hugh Miller resigns in favor of preserving his personal integrity, and Byram White jumps headlong into corruption as a means to further his individual wealth completely disregarding the greater good in the process. Interestingly, the Boss's handling of the Byram White affair prompts Hugh Miller's resignation. Willie must respond to and resolve both dilemmas to the best of his ability without weakening his authority.

Machiavelli holds that "when you see a minister thinking more of himself than of you, and seeking his own profit in everything he does, such a one will never be a good minister, you will never be able to trust him" (75). The Boss's impeachment scandal arises on the heels of another scandal involving his State Auditor, Mr. Byram B. White. Byram's "nice little scheme to get rich" with Hamill from the Tax Lands Bureau goes awry when another person who wants to be "cut in" is excluded because Hamill and Byram "wanted it all to themselves" (191). Hamill escapes to Cuba, and Byram endures the Boss's wrath once his mischief is discovered. A compelling scene unfolds in which Willie confronts Byram about his scheming ways. Jack arrives midway through the lashing to hear the Boss saying to Byram,

--and you can just damn well remember you aren't supposed to get rich. . . if God-a-Mighty had ever intended you to be rich he'd done it long back. Look at yourself, damn it! You to figure you're supposed to be rich, it is plain blasphemy. . . You're supposed to stay pore and take orders [sic]. I don't care about your chastity. . . but I mean its poverty and obedience and don't you forget it.

Especially the last. (188)

Here, the Boss summarizes the expectations he has of his "ministers." Interestingly, Willie's requisite of poverty and obedience coincides with monastic vows; in other words, just as he has "martyred" his personal salvation, the Boss expects that members of his staff will likewise sacrifice and obey him. After all, they are supposed to be there to help him fulfill a higher purpose.

Willie then gets Byram to write and sign an undated letter of resignation; the Boss orders him to leave the date blank because he "can fill that in when [he wants]"; he intends to keep it on file. Before dismissing Byram, the Boss reveals, "why I didn't get one of those undated resignations from you from the start I don't know. I got a stack of 'em. But I misjudged you" (190). Willie recognizes he "misjudged" an earlier opportunity to thwart this problem, yet his response for Byram White's indiscretion finds precedence in *The Prince* where Machiavelli asserts, "If a prince has the discernment to recognize the good or bad in what another says or does, even though he has no acumen himself, he can see when his minister's actions are good or bad, and he can praise or correct accordingly; in this way, the minister cannot hope to deceive him and so takes care not to do wrong" (75). Of course, Machiavelli's "wrong" implies wrong against the prince and what he stands for, and not "wrong" in the traditional moral sense. The Boss's

ability to recognize Byram's underhanded behavior, in addition to exercising his unethical, yet highly effective intimidation tactics, allows Willie to preserve his stature and, consequently, his service to the citizens.

On the other hand, once Byram is dismissed, Jack and Willie await the arrival of Hugh Miller, Attorney General. Jack contends Miller won't approve of Willie's actions with Byram and notices that a preoccupied Willie "had something else on [his mind] now. He had Hugh Miller, Harvard Law School, Lafayette Escadrille, Croix de Guerre, clean hands, pure heart. . . on his mind;" (193) Hugh Miller, who before his stint as Attorney General, had no "political past." The distinguished military record of Hugh Miller alerts us to the fact that while he may once have been a willing combatant, he is yet unable to grasp the intricacies of the type of "warfare" the Boss wages on those who would abuse political power for personal gain. Ironically, although he undoubtedly killed enemy soldiers as a member of the Lafayette Escadrille, Hugh Miller's hands remain "clean" in his service to the state. Miller demands, "You are saving White's hide, aren't you?" (193). Willie's explanation that he's "saving something else" evades Miller's understanding, for he ignorantly retorts, "He's guilty" (193). Again, Willie tries to elucidate, "My, God, you talk like Byram was human! He's a thing! You don't prosecute an adding machine if a spring goes bust and makes a mistake. You fix it. Well, I fixed Byram. . . Hell, Byram is just something you use, and he'll sure be useful from now on" (194). The Boss's description of Byram's role in his administration speaks to Machiavelli's phrase that a minister's "worth" hinges on the "sagacity" of the ruler. Willie is shrewd enough to admonish Byram's behavior and astute enough to preclude future insubordination through his undated, yet signed letter of resignation.

Unfortunately, Miller's desire to retain his personal integrity blinds him to the grim, dilemma-plagued reality of Willie's political world.

Looking at the wall beyond the Boss rather than his face, Miller announces his resignation. Willie wonders and asks Miller why it took him so long to resign, a question Miller is unable to answer, but Willie insightfully offers:

You sat in your law office for fifteen years and watched the sons-of-bitches warm chairs in this State and not do a thing, and the rich get richer and the pore get porer. Then I came along and slipped a Louisville Slugger in your hand and whispered low, "You want to step in there and lay round you a little?" And you did. You made the fur fly and you put nine tin-horn grafters in the pen. But you never touched what was behind 'em. The law isn't made for that. All you can do is take the damned government away from the behind-guys and keep it away from 'em. Whatever way you can. You know that down in your heart. You want to keep your little Harvard hands clean, but way down in your heart you know I'm telling the truth. . . (196)

This passage ties together the current consideration with several of the other Machiavellian precepts explored thus far, including the unending battle against incompetent government and the personal decision to either save oneself by "keeping clean" or using "whatever" means necessary to preserve and protect the welfare of the state. In spite of Willie's valiant attempt to appeal to Miller's sense of truth, Jack notes that the latter had a "puzzled expression" as "though he were trying to read something in a bad light, or in a foreign language he didn't know very well" (196). Most of the

characters opposite Willie tend to share in Miller's bewilderment of the Boss's justifications for his behavior.

There seems to be an overwhelming inability to comprehend that there is a distinction between following a code of ethics that applies to the individual and another set of principles a ruler uses when providing for the general welfare: "Evil committed or prolonged for personal gain is unacceptable in Machiavelli's system of political ethics. . . . It would be 'sinful' to reject necessary evil out of qualms of conscience, or even worse, to do nothing at all. . . . Machiavelli suggests that the practice of the Christian ideals of mercy, charity, forgiveness, etc., leads to political ineffectiveness, if not total impotence" (Ruffo-Fiore 46). Willie's future discussion with Adam about Hugh Miller further iterates Machiavelli's idea:

Well, [Hugh Miller] was in with me—yeah, Attorney General—and he resigned. And you know why?. . . . He resigned because he wanted to keep his hands clean. He wanted the bricks but he just didn't know that somebody has to paddle in the mud to make 'em. He was like somebody that just loves beef-steak but just can't bear to go to a slaughter pen because there are some bad, rough men down there who aren't animal lovers. . . . He was one of those guys wants everything and wants everything two ways at once. . . . he never learned that you can't have everything. That you can have mighty little. And you never have anything you don't make. (358-359)

The concept Willie tries to explain here evades those who unjustly accuse him of senseless corruption. In the political world, there can be no progress without "fighting

fire with fire;" in other words, corruption in politics often has only one effective remedy, a type of mitigating vice that is directed at perpetrators who seek selfish ends.

Machiavelli indicates that in addition to deciphering whether a minister's conduct is conducive to a prince's ends, he must also be aware that there are three kinds of intelligence where they are concerned: "one kind understands things for itself, the second appreciates what others can understand, the third understands neither for itself nor through others. The first kind is excellent, the second good, and the third kind useless" (75). I offer that in his novel, Warren implicates Jack Burden, Sadie Burke and Sugar-Boy as representatives of the three types of intelligence to which Machiavelli refers. Jack Burden by far proves the most beneficial minister to the Boss, consistently assisting, defending, and advising Willie throughout the novel from the inception of their relationship at Upton, to its end upon Willie's death. Sadie Burke's firebrand personality supplies the Boss with the second type of mediocre intelligence; and finally Sugar-Boy, whose lack of intelligence initially appears "useless," is transformed it into a meaningful characteristic with its own purpose.

Jack Burden touts himself, more than once, as a student of history and this is evidenced by his attempt, however incomplete, to pursue a doctorate in history. His academic background is significant in his role as the Boss's most important minister because Machiavelli and Warren both acknowledge that leaders greatly benefit from a keen knowledge of history, and, therefore, Willie's most trusted advisor can likewise be expected to be an asset for him as they can both approach the duties of governor and minister from a common mindset. Machiavelli's notion that "excellent" intelligence comes from one who can comprehend things for itself finds a home in Jack Burden's

cynicism. His ability to assess “things” from a more or less unbiased standpoint makes him a valuable minister as well: “For [the Boss] knew I was thorough. I was a very thorough and well-trained research student. And truth was what I sought, without fear or favor. And let the chips fly” (302). Furthermore, Jack’s confident comment to Anne Stanton regarding his ability to persuade Adam to direct Willie’s hospital reflects the harmony between Jack and Willie’s thinking: “Yes, I am a student of history, don’t you remember? And what we students of history always learn is that the human being is a very complicated little contraption and that they are not good or bad but are good-and-bad and the good comes out of the bad and the bad out of the good, and the devil take the hindmost” (347).

Jack’s vision of humanity, consistent with the Boss’s, accounts for his ability to be the only true advisor on whom Willie can rely. Machiavelli suggests that a “shrewd” prince chooses wise men for his government “allowing only those the freedom to speak the truth to him, and then only concerning matters on which he asks their opinion, and nothing else. But he should also question them thoroughly and listen to what they say; then he should make up his own mind” (76). Jack is the only character to enjoy this classification of “wise” counsel in the novel. After Byram White leaves Willie’s office and Hugh Miller resigns, Jack and the Boss engage in a conversation that remarkably denotes Machiavelli’s advice. The Boss asks Willie, “You think I ought to thrown White to the wolves?” (197), Jack’s response of “It’s a hell of a time to be asking the question” is countered with Willie’s persistence, “You think I ought?” (198). Jack explains that “*Ought* is a funny word. . . If you mean, to win, then time will tell. If you mean, to do right, then nobody will ever be able to tell you” (198). Willie’s “thorough” questioning

continues, “What do you think?” (198). This relentless pursuit of Jack’s personal opinion shows Willie’s high regard for his minister’s knowledge of his affairs. Jack offers, “Thinking is not my line. . . and I’d advise you to stop thinking about it because you know damned well what you are going to do. You are going to do what you are doing” (198). Jack serves to remind the Boss that “thinking” along these lines of what he “ought” to do will lead to the circular dilemma of doing what is ethical or corrupt and hence is basically an irrelevant consideration given Byram’s situation.

However, we discover that it is Lucy’s ultimatum to Willie that has him concerned, “She said if I took care of Byram White she would leave me,” and Jack matter-of-factly replies, “Looks like everybody is trying to run your business for you” (198). This remark brings Willie back to the frustrating realization that most people cannot begin to grasp the contradictory workings of the political machine; he says, “God damn it!. . . they don’t know a thing about it, they don’t know how it is, and you can’t tell ‘em” (199). This example, only one of many in the novel, best illustrates the candor and ease with which Willie and Jack are able to communicate and how the two exemplify Machiavelli’s contention that an ability to see things for what they are is the best intelligence for a leader to seek in a minister. Jack’s character compliments Willie’s in that the former often reiterates for the latter the realities of his “business.” Willie describes their shared realism when he says, “You work for me because I’m the way I am and you are the way you are. It is an arrangement founded on the nature of things. . . . It’s not an explanation. . . There ain’t any explanations. Not of anything. All you can do is point at the nature of things. If you are smart enough to see ‘em’ (269).

Jack's involvement in "the Case of the Upright Judge" alienates him from the Boss and signals the first of several events that result in Willie's fall from power. After calling his first research project, Cass Mastern, a failure, Jack remarks about the second one, it "was a sensational success. . . . a perfect research job, marred in its technical perfection by only one thing: it meant something" (268). This too personal connection with finding incriminating information on Judge Irwin results in Jack's discovery of his true parentage and Irwin's suicide. While he successfully completes Willie's request, Jack recounts, "So the story of the Boss and MacMurfee, of which the story of Judge Irwin had been but a part, went on, but I had no hand in it. I went back to my innocent little chores and sat in my office" (492). In the manner of Hugh Miller, Jack chooses "innocent" jobs leaving him "out of the swim of things" where he sits in his office reading "books and monographs on taxation, for now [he] had a nice clean assignment to work on: a tax bill" (501). It is important to note that Willie always respects his minister's decisions to abandon their posts in favor of remaining "clean" and "innocent" as he does in both Hugh Miller and Jack's situations.

Sadie Burke, another of the Boss's ministers, represents the second, or "good," kind of intelligence Machiavelli outlines. She is the one who "appreciates what others can understand." Early in Willie's political career, notably his first run for governor, she is able to understand the role Joe Harrison's outfit sets up for Willie--at the time she works as a minister for his ally, Sen-Sen Puckett. She is the one who brazenly details for Willie the reality that he was used: "I hit him where he lives. I finally got across to him the kind of sap he is" (117). When she becomes a minister to Willie, although unable to understand the Boss and his true motivations the way Jack can, she does recognize the

value of his work. Unlike Jack's, Sadie's loyalty is vacillating, dependent on who is in charge, so her services are inferior to Jack's but yet superior to Duffy's and Sugar-Boy's. Jack comments about Sadie, "She had probably taken [Sen-Sen] up because he was good looking, and then, again according to rumor, she had put him into political pay dirt. For Sadie was a very smart cookie. She had been around a long time and she had learned a lot the very hard way" (104). Sadie's tenacity, perhaps rooted in her difficult childhood, allows her to persevere as one of Willie's ministers.

Sadie is the one who keeps Willie's operations running, often manning the phone and putting in calls to round up the "boys" Willie seeks to "bust." For instance, Jack recalls, "Sadie was just about to say something, when the telephone rang and she sprang at it as though she'd strangle it with her bare hands, and snatched up the receiver. As I walked toward the inner door, I heard her saying, 'So you got him. All right, get him down here.—to hell with his wife. Tell him he'll be sicker'n she is if he don't come'" (187). Her effectiveness lies mostly in her ability to efficiently carry out direct instructions. Willie never calls on her for advice or engages in the deep conversations he does with Jack. Hence, her "good" intelligence, as the Boss's minister, resides in her perceptiveness, appreciating Willie's authority because she notices the populace's staunch support of his office and is fully aware of what "others can understand."

The third type of intelligence Machiavelli observes concerns an inability to understand for itself nor through others. Sugar-Boy, Willie's loyal attendant, brings to mind this precept. Sugar-Boy's stuttering conveys a political futility: unlike Jack or even Sadie, he is no pundit nor does he have the sophisticated knowledge of political warfare they possess. However, Sugar-Boy's character evokes an endearing sense of non-

threatening fidelity in the midst of all the corruption. Jack repeatedly acknowledges that for all his lack of intelligence, Sugar-Boy is “dependable”. During a conversation with Congressman Randall in which the Boss is giving him “play- by- play” instructions on how to behave when the Milton-Broderick Bill is presented Jack observes, “The instructions were pretty frank, and the Congressman kept looking nervously at Sugar-Boy. The Boss noticed him. ‘God damn it. . . you afraid Sugar-Boy’s finding out something?. . . He knows more about this State than you do. And I trust him a lot farther than I’d trust you. You’re my pal, ain’t you Sugar-Boy?’” (458). It almost seems as if Warren is proposing that yes, Sugar-Boy may be a useless minister in the sense that he is unable to further the Boss’s political agenda, but he does have value. Jack divulges,

[Sugar-Boy] had been the runt the big boys shoved around in the vacant lot. . . .

But somehow, sometime, he had learned what he could do. Those stubby arms could flip the steering wheel of a car as clean as a bee-martin whips round the corner of a barn. Those pale blue eyes, which didn’t have any depth, could look down the barrel of a .38 and see, really see for one frozen and apocalyptic instant, what was over yonder. (587)

Sugar-Boy’s fidelity to Willie is almost childlike: “He could t-t-talk so good. . . .

Couldn’t nobody t-t-talk like him. When he m-m-made a speech and everybody y-y-yelled, it looked l-l-like something was gonna b-b-bust inside y-y-you” (586). Sugar-Boy’s admiration ingenuously focuses on the Boss’s public speaking abilities rather than reflecting on Willie’s contributions to better the State, perhaps because he cannot see beyond those characteristics he himself wishes he possessed. Ironically, Sugar-Boy in his “innocence” is the only minister willing to kill for the Boss, first gunning down Adam

Stanton, and secondly, eagerly expressing his willingness to kill whomever Jack names as the person behind Willie's assassination. Although childish in his devotion to the Boss, Sugar-Boy represents another aspect of dependability, disregarded by Machiavelli as "useless." On this point, Warren agrees that there are those who cannot understand things for themselves or through others, but disagrees with Machiavelli's notion of complete "uselessness" in this respect because he finds a practical solution for the loyalty that comes with someone of Sugar-Boy's lower intelligence.

The final minister to be considered is Tiny Duffy, who represents Warren's conception of Machiavelli's "flatterer." The Florentine states, "There is one important subject I do not wish to pass over, the mistake which princes can only with difficulty avoid making if they are extremely prudent or do not choose their ministers well. I am referring to flatterers, who swarm in the courts" (76). Tiny Duffy's crudeness and arrogance toward Willie, portrayed early in the novel, are soon replaced with a deceitful flattery that results in the Boss's entrance into his first gubernatorial election. Nevertheless, after he is elected governor, Willie decides to keep Tiny Duffy in his service. Jack asks Willie why he keeps "that lunk-head," Tiny Duffy, around, and the Boss replies, "I keep him because he reminds me of something. . . Something I don't want to forget. . . That when they come to you sweet talking you better not listen to anything they say. I don't aim to forget that" (137). Again, Warren demonstrates a connection with Machiavelli, providing the Boss's "court" with a "flatterer," and he also incorporates aspects of human nature whose significance becomes another element in the governor's downfall. Jack suggests that Willie took a "kind of pride" in his power over Duffy: "He had busted Tiny Duffy and then he had picked up the pieces and put him back together

again as his own creation" (137). This passage gives a striking image of Willie's God-like supremacy over his untrustworthy subordinates, attributing to him the ability to destroy and re-create to his own specifications. However, unlike God, the Boss is human and is still subject to man's flaws, including hubris.

Consequently, Willie's relationship with Duffy becomes precarious, for the Boss must always retain the upper hand, or he risks becoming the object of Duffy's vengeance. The Gummy Larson deal conveys the great tension between the Boss and Duffy. Jack is unable to figure out why Willie becomes so enraged at Duffy for suggesting the hospital contract go to Larson because Jack finds his proposal logical and consistent with Duffy's character, but finds the Boss's reaction to Duffy inconsistent with his. Judge Irwin's suicide forces the Boss into a serious predicament. Irwin was one of only two weapons Willie had to use against MacMurfee; the other was Larson. The Boss's realization of his quandary forces him to play into Duffy's scheme, awarding Larson the general contract and opening up one of Willie's new points of vulnerability: "Yeah, everybody is happy. . . Except me. Except me. . . For I'm the one said to Tiny, hell, no, I won't deal with Larson. For I'm the one who wouldn't let Larson come in this room when Tiny got him here. For I'm the one ought to driven him out of this State long ago" (503). The last line of this passage brings to mind the situation with Byram in which the Boss also remarks that he "ought to" have precluded the problem "long ago." Then, after Willie throws a drink in Duffy's face, he says, "I ought to done it long ago. I ought to done it long ago" (505). These moments of recognition signify the Boss's human limitations as he is unable to foresee and prepare for every possible obstacle in his administration; it is only upon reflection that the dangers become visible.

Duffy's role as minister begins in flattery and ends in betrayal. Willie refers to Duffy as the "Judas Iscariot" during his speech at Upton, thus foreshadowing the Boss's death: Duffy is the one who puts the call into Adam Stanton revealing the affair between Anne and Willie. On the other hand, Sugar-Boy's ministry to the Boss serves to demonstrate loyalty and dependability in its most basic form. Sadie Burke's ability to "appreciate what others can understand" is compromised because she and the Boss become physically intimate, another erroneous judgment to be discussed in the next chapter. Jack's relationship with the Boss, based on a mutual understanding of human nature, makes him the most effective minister until the suicide of his father disenfranchises him from Willie's sphere of influence. Byram White and Hugh Miller together epitomize the political struggle between those who would use their positions to benefit the greater good, and those who abandon their obligations to the populace in favor of their own personal gain. Willie's personal staff remarkably resembles the standard outlined in *The Prince* and Warren's adaptation of Machiavelli's principles once again splendidly depicts the struggles an all-powerful leader, who desires to serve the common good, encounters.

CHAPTER 6

MACHIAVELLI AND WARREN ON HATRED AND FANATICS

In spite of his political prowess as governor, Willie Talos becomes the victim of Machiavelli's most significant caveats delineated in *The Prince*. The development of Willie's demise, as it relates to Machiavelli, provides one last interesting area to discuss. Thus far we have seen the general correspondence between Machiavelli's advice and Willie's actions. However, we will now explore how Warren treats the Boss's defiance of Machiavelli's advice. Machiavelli states that a prince should "determine to avoid anything which will make him hated or despised. . . He will be hated above all if, as I said, he is rapacious and aggressive with regard to the property and the women of his subjects" (58). As Willie's philandering ways become second nature to his character once he is governor, it goes unpunished until the moment his affair with Anne Stanton is made known to Adam. Moreover, Machiavelli also warns of the lethal "fanatic" against whom there is no real protection: "princes cannot escape death if the attempt is made by a fanatic, because anyone who has no fear of death himself can succeed in inflicting it" (65). In this chapter, I suggest that Robert Penn Warren magnificently blends these Machiavellian admonitions, via Adam Stanton's traceable evolution into a "fanatic," to produce a dramatic turn of events that results in the Governor's assassination. It is interesting to note that the Boss is not brought down by the rival MacMurfee outfit on

which he has waged political warfare for years, but is defeated by a culmination of his own actions, as well as the decisions and interactions of those who were closest to him.

Often a target for criticism from other characters, Dr. Adam Stanton's peculiar disposition plays a pivotal factor in Willie's demise. A close examination of Jack's description of Adam's character across various moments throughout the novel reveals a person whose eccentricities suggest that he may be on the verge of psychotic fanaticism. Adam's tendencies toward extreme moments of explosive emotion and deep introversion assume additional oddness when viewed in conjunction with his decision to live lowly for a man of his talent and professional reputation. The doctor's obsessive preoccupation with distancing himself from anything he deems unethical deserves further investigation. Furthermore, this fervent devotion to idealism prevents Adam from ever co-existing with an immoral, complex character like Willie.

One of the more troublesome aspects of Adam's character is his inconsistent demeanor. During one get together at Burden's Landing where Adam, Anne and Jack meet to spend an evening together, Jack questions Adam about Irwin's past when the Judge had been broke, and Adam, to Jack's surprise, makes light of the conversation. However, Jack soon remarks, "once in about five years [Adam] would break out in a kind of wild free, exuberant gaiety like a flash flood streaming down the gorge and snatching the trees and brush. . . His eyes would gleam wild and he would gesture wide with an excess of energy bursting from deep inside" (297). The images of a flood's destructive path, of "wild" eyes, and of pent up energy being released all point to the possibility of an underlying volatility within Adam's nature. A flood "snatching" up trees and brush in its path, although indiscriminate, is dangerous and destructive nonetheless. Jack concludes,

“But that didn’t come often. And it didn’t last long. The cold would settle down and the lid would go on right quick” (298).

Jack’s attributing a “cold” quality to Adam’s behavior occurs more than once in the novel. For instance, the first time Jack tells Adam that Willie wants him to be the director of the new hospital, Adam responds with few words, but provides a rather telling facial expression. After Adam smiles, Jack recalls, “I did not feel that shy warmth as of the winter sunshine which I had always felt before when he smiled, but suddenly felt something else, which I don’t have a name for but which was like the winter itself and not the winter sunshine, like the stab of an icicle through the heart” (330). Jack, who has remained Adam’s close friend since childhood, notices a significant change in the doctor’s typical aloofness. Whereas before, Adam’s taciturnity managed to convey a sense of warmth and hence reassured Jack of their friendship, that assurance was now absent and replaced with an austere foreboding.

Jack’s assessment of his childhood friend’s remoteness continues as the novel progresses. After weeks of trying to figure out how Anne knew about Willie’s proposal to Adam when he hadn’t told her, Jack finds himself at Adam’s apartment intent on finding out if the doctor was the one who told Anne. Jack remarks, “So I went to see Adam, who was deep in work, his usual practice and teaching, and in addition, the work on the hospital plans. . . [his] eyes fixed on me glacially out of a face now thin from sleeplessness” (368). Adam’s frigid gaze further hints at the notion of the surgeon’s growing detachment from personal affection. Moreover, Adam snaps his answer to Jack that he didn’t tell Anne about the directorship proposal and then he says, “I’m sorry, Jack. I’m on edge. . . . Not been getting enough shut-eye. . . I’m really sorry, Jack—talking that

way—but I didn’t tell Anne anything—and I’m sorry” (368). Jack tells him to “Forget it,” and Adam’s response is, “‘I’ll forget it,’ he agreed, smiling wintrily, tapping my arm, ‘if you will’” (368). Superficially, it appears that Adam’s behavior can be explained by his “workaholism,” but it doesn’t adequately explain his “wintry” smile or the previous instance when Jack feels an icicle stab to his heart; something more sinister must be transpiring below Adam’s exterior.

One final example of Adam’s wintering demeanor occurs when Jack returns from going “out West” and decides to pay Adam a visit. Jack recounts that by that time, Adam “was more deeply involved than before in the work of the medical center, more grimly and icily, driving himself. . . . and as I sat there he would seem to be drawing deeper and deeper into himself until I had the feeling that I was trying to talk to somebody down a well and had better holler if I wanted to be understood” (440). Adam’s withdrawal is marked by the revealing adjectives “grim” and “ice.” Undoubtedly, the “icy” manner with which Adam is driving himself speaks to Jack’s previous recognition of the “wintry” smile and that other indescribable feeling he begins to associate with Adam. It is unlikely that Warren would take the time to make repeated references to the good doctor’s “chilly” demeanor if it was insignificant.

Perhaps Adam’s lack of release from the pressures of his life further exacerbates his deteriorating mental condition. Much attention is given to the importance of Adam’s piano playing, which appears to be one of his only outlets. Again, going back to the time Jack visits Adam to ask if the latter informed Anne about the hospital directorship, Jack points out that “[Adam] hadn’t been able, he said, to touch the piano in almost a month” (368). Adam plays his piano with such vitality that Jack once describes it as a “wild burst

of music” that was “louder than the baby’s crying, shaking the mortar out of the old brick work. It was Adam’s piano” (335). Similarly, after the Boss pays a personal visit to Adam to speak to him about his role in the hospital, Jack remembers hearing from the car “the burst of music from the apartment house. The window was open and the music was very loud. Adam was beating the hell out of that piano, and filling the night air with racket like Niagara Falls” (363). These two instances occur after Adam must contend with Willie’s encroachment upon his life. Notably, the first “wild burst” happens after Jack first informs Adam that Willie wants him to direct the hospital, and the “Niagara Falls racket” follows the Boss’s visit to Adam after he accepts the proposal. As his time is consumed more with his practice, teaching and the hospital, he has less time for the stress-release the piano offers, which in turn leaves him to function like an un-feeling machine.

Jack is not the only one to notice Adam’s ongoing transformation. Anne’s ultra-close relationship with her brother proves insightful as well. In a critical episode in the novel, Anne and Jack meet up at the Crescent Cove and leave there shortly after arriving because Anne insists that they need to talk. She reveals to Jack that, during a visit, she tried to discuss with Adam Willie’s proposal to be the hospital’s director. Anne claims that she wasn’t sure whether her brother should accept the position until she saw him: “When I saw how he was. . . I knew. I just knew. Oh, Jack, he was all worked up—it wasn’t natural—just because he’d been asked. He has cut himself off from everything—from everybody. Even from me. Not really, but it’s not like it used to be” (343). Anne’s recognition of her brother’s unnatural state resonates with Jack’s commentary on Adam’s growing coldness.

That the two people with closest ties to Adam are noticing his troublesome transformation strongly suggests an impending calamity. Anne continues, “There’s just something driving him—driving him. It’s not merely money and it’s not reputation and it’s not—I just don’t know what. . . . and I shouldn’t say it—I shouldn’t—but I almost think that the work—even the doing good—everything is just a way to cut himself off” (344). Jack’s recurring descriptions of Adam’s withdrawal and now Anne’s accusations of his desire to “cut himself off” insinuate a growing problem between Adam and his interaction with reality. Anne relates more of the conversation to Jack adding that she told him if he really wanted to “do good” that this would be his opportunity:

But he just froze up and said he wouldn’t touch the thing. And I accused him of being selfish. . . of putting his pride before everything. Before doing good—before his duty. Then he just glared at me, and grabbed me by the wrist and said I couldn’t understand anything, that a man owed himself something. I said it was his pride, just his pride, and he said he was proud not to touch filth. (344)

As readers we again encounter a familiar situation with a significant twist. Before, it was Willie who must decide to put aside his pride at Upton and must choose whether or not to embrace “filth” so that he can later serve effectively as governor. In the Machiavellian sense, the Boss places his “duty” before everything, forsaking his personal morality. Now, we see in Adam an equally devoted public servant whose neurotic refusal to become morally tainted deprives him of his sanity as the world of “corruption” closes in upon his idealistic outlook.

Anne asks Jack why her brother irately refused to consider Willie’s offer and Jack explains,

To be perfectly brutal. . . it is because he is Adam Stanton, the son of Governor Stanton and the grandson of Judge Peyton Stanton. . . and he has lived all his life in the idea that there was a time long back when everything was run by high minded, handsome men. . . It is because he is a romantic, and he has a picture of the world in his head, and when the world doesn't conform in any respect to the picture, he wants to throw the world away. Even if it means throwing the baby out with the bath. (345)

On the surface, Jack's explanation to Anne appears adequate, but it again falls short of explaining the fanaticism with which Adam embraces his own morality. Although Machiavelli warns about the "fanatic," he fails to address any details that might alert a ruler to the behavior that precedes such a threat. On the other hand, Warren obliges us in exposing the character behind the Florentine's ominous warning. Adam's progression into a cold-blooded assassin highly contradicts his evolving medical profession; as he approaches the pinnacle of his medical career, his capacity for reason dangerously plummets. Warren also shows how human it is for close friends and family to overlook signs and symptoms of a troubled mind when it is shrouded in good deeds and an overblown sense of principles.

Ironically, Anne pushes Jack into persuading Adam to accept Willie's offer because she is certain it will save him. Jack asks how much she desires Adam to accept it, and she replies, "As much as I want anything. . . I mean it. He's got to. To save himself. . . For himself. As much as for everybody else. For himself" (346). Anne's belief that this job will "save" her brother, coupled with Jack's determination to persuade him to do so, combine to bring about the end of both the Boss and the doctor. Anne and

Jack's coercive actions to save Adam and the Boss's determination to have the best doctor become a symbolic microcosm for Willie and Adam's collision course. Both men, obsessively driven by their capacity to "do good," meet their respective demises as a result of their collaboration.

Before Adam is made aware that the Boss wants him to become the new hospital's director, Jack and Willie have a discussion about the prospect. The Boss informs Jack that he wants Adam because he is the best there is, to which Jack frankly replies, "Adam is an old pal of mine. I know him like a brother. And I know he hates your guts" (327). This admission on Jack's part speaks directly to Machiavelli's notion advising that a ruler must avoid being hated. However, Willie misses the significance in Jack's statement and insists that he isn't asking for Adam, or anyone else for that matter, to love him; he is simply "asking him to run [his] hospital" (327). Willie has proven to possess an above-average ability to separate personal emotions from the business of government to this point. However, this ability later changes, and it lays the final path for his assassination. Nevertheless, Adam makes no effort to separate his emotions and morality from his work, and consequently his inability to do so pushes him closer to the edge of insanity.

Jack recalls the first time he speaks to Adam about the hospital, and the doctor shakes his head at him and smiles "with the smile which did not forgive [him] but humbly asked [Jack] to forgive him for not being like [Jack], for not being like everybody else, for not being like the world" (329). This idea of not being a part of the norm is indicative of isolation and is reflected not only in Adam's character but also in Willie's. While both approach their positions from extremely different ethical philosophies, both

the Boss and Adam become alienated in their disconnection with the mainstream majority. This isolation allows them great effectiveness in their public service, but severely undercuts their potential for staying power. Extremism, as Machiavelli and Warren present it, can be a highly effective means to an end, in that a leader's authority can be limitless through immoral behavior, or it can become severely bound by ethics. Hence extreme authority is then vulnerable to supplanting when practiced because its potency is eventually diluted as it repeatedly encounters a morally moderate society.

Adam's "otherworldly" dedication to morality is disrupted when Anne presents him with an incriminating photostat of their deceased father, the former Governor Stanton. The shock of his father's corruption causes the doctor to withdraw for three days, and, upon his reemergence, he decides to accept the Boss's proposal. The reader is left to ponder the reasons for Adam's change of heart, but can surmise that it was partially motivated by the reality that his own father would stoop to "touch filth" in order to save a friend. Upon hearing he accepts the directorship, the Boss pays a personal visit to Adam's apartment and the conversation that unfolds shows Willie attempting, yet again, to explain the nature of politics. Adam becomes defensive at the Boss's suggestion that he would not interfere with hospital administration, but that he may fire the doctor. Adam counters that his unfavorable opinion of the Boss's administration will continue to be public knowledge. Willie retorts: "Doc, you just don't understand politics. . . . but one thing I understand and you don't is what makes the mare go. I can make the mare go" (358). Willie goes on to discuss Hugh Miller and the notion of creating good out of bad. Adam inquires, "How do you ever recognize the good?" (359). Willie claims that one simply makes it up: " 'So, you make it up as you go along?' Adam repeated

gently.” This is a telling line because Adams’s “gentle” repetition shows that his fanaticism may be subsiding enough that he can understand a different point of view.

Willie enters into a profound monologue centered on society versus the individual:

That’s why things change, Doc. Because what folks claim is right is always just a couple of jumps short of what they need to do business. Now an individual, one fellow, he will stop doing business because he’s got a notion of what is right, and he’s a hero. But folks in general, which is society, Doc, is never going to stop doing business. Society is just going to cook up a new notion of what is right. Society is sure not ever going to commit suicide. At least not that way, and of a purpose. And that is a fact. (360)

As a doctor with a private practice, Adam can be likened to the individual doing business who can be a moral hero, and on the contrary Willie, who is in the business of making policies that suit a wide variety of needs for society, can only become a hero of the greater good. If only Adam had lived to direct the hospital, he would likely have encountered his own ethical dilemmas on a scale comparable to Willie’s; however, we are left to only speculate on that possibility. Nevertheless, at this point in the novel, Adam’s fanatical behavior outwardly subsides as he enters into business with the one person, Jack claims, he hates.

Adam’s fanaticism violently resurfaces when Gummy Larson sends Hubert Coffee to persuade Dr. Stanton to use his influence to get Willie to give Larson the basic medical center contract. Jack divulges that Coffee got as far as explaining that there would be a pay-off for Adam “before he finally touched the button which set off the explosion” (447). Anne recalls that upon entering the living room, she sees Adam “very

white in the face,” nursing his right hand with his left across his stomach” and saying, “I hit him. I didn’t mean to hit him. I never hit anybody before” (447). Jack concludes that “Anyway, he stood there nursing his split knuckle and wearing an expression of blank incredulity on his face. The incredulity, apparently, was at his own behavior” (447).

This event can be seen as another step towards Adam’s final psychotic episode.

Warren’s use of language indicates that Adam’s once suppressed volatile interior is beginning to permeate his exterior. Adam’s recognition at his own capacity for aggression astounds him as he had never before resorted to violence to quell an argument.

Afterwards, Adam writes up, but never mails, a letter of resignation. Anne

knew from looking at his face that there wasn’t any use in talking. In other words, he must have been in the grip of an instinctive withdrawal, which took the form of moral indignation and moral revulsion, but which, no doubt, was different from either, and more deep-seated than either, and finally irrational. . . . He seemed almost gay, Anne said, as though he were about to bust out laughing. He seemed happy that the whole thing happened. . . . He sat there and beat [the piano] for more than two hours in a breathless July night, and the sweat ran down his face. Anne sat there, afraid, she told me, and not knowing what she was afraid of. (448)

Adam’s “instinctive withdrawal” bears exploration here because Jack notices that it is often a disguise in the form of “moral indignation.” Here we see Adam’s troubles are deeper than his ethically charged outward behavior would lead us to believe and that maybe all this time his “do good” nature is only a cover for his disturbed mental state. He becomes “irrational” and odd to those who know him best, and his inappropriate

laughter, often considered a form of hysteria, foreshadows Adam's approaching breakdown because the reader knows that Anne's undisclosed fear must be in part based on her undisclosed affair with the Boss.

Finally, Jack begins calling Adam "crazy" outright. Anne calls Jack to have him again persuade Adam to abandon his desire to resign from his position, and Jack admits, "It'll be hard. . . because he is acting perfectly crazy. . . . I can only prove to Adam what he would already know if he hadn't gone crazy. He just has the high cantankerous moral shrinks. He does not like to play with the rough boys. He is afraid they might dirty his Lord Fauntleroy suit" (451). Again, Warren brilliantly depicts humanity's short-sightedness when it comes to recognizing danger in those who are considered non-threatening. Although Jack says Adam is crazy, his jibe about Adam's "Fauntleroy suit" indicates he doesn't really grasp the truth of his own assessment. However, an astute reader will notice all of the signs that point to an impending mental crisis within Adam's character.

Now that we have traced the progression of Adam's mounting psychosis, we can once again turn to Machiavelli. As earlier stated, he warns that a leader must avoid becoming hated and that he should also avoid becoming "rapacious" with the citizens' property and their women. Machiavelli also contends that "there are two things a prince must fear: internal subversion from his subjects; and external aggression by foreign powers. Now, as far as his subjects are concerned, when there is no disturbance abroad the prince's chief fear must be a secret conspiracy" (59). Willie appears to have thwarted "external aggression" from MacMurfee in his awarding Larson the medical center

contract; however, a personal family tragedy forces him to abandon his adherence to Machiavellian considerations.

Tom's physical paralysis parallels the Boss's political paralysis in that the latter begins reverting to his pre-Upton morality. Willie's decision to once again embrace morality brings about the last of Machiavelli's precepts to be considered: "the prince should restrain himself from inflicting grave injury on anyone in his service whom he has close to him in his affairs of state" (65). Willie manages to almost simultaneously "gravely injure" Sadie Burke, Tiny Duffy, and Adam Stanton. After the Boss is dead, Jack goes to visit Sadie, who reveals, "all right, I killed him. He was throwing me over. For good. I knew it was for good that time. For that Lucy. After all I had done. After I made him. I told him I'd fix him, but he turned that new sick smile of his on me like he was practicing to be Jesus and took my hands in his, and asked me to understand" (571). Sadie's long-held, yet distorted, belief that she is responsible for Willie's success was undoubtedly reaffirmed by her ongoing affair with him. Hence, the Boss's decision to return to his wife severely damages Sadie's ego and heart so that in her rage she calls Tiny Duffy to secretly conspire against Willie. Tiny Duffy is likewise "gravely injured" because after Tom's paralysis is absolute, the Boss reneges on the Gummy Larson contract and makes Duffy deliver the news to Larson.

With Duffy in a frenzy over losing the Larson deal, and Sadie in a fury over Willie's return to Lucy, Sadie informs Duffy of Anne Stanton and the Boss's affair, and in turn, Duffy puts in a telephone call to Adam Stanton. Consequently, Adam is the third person with close ties to the administration whom Willie "gravely injures." The truthful information he receives about his sister's relationship with Willie, combined with the

false information that he was made the director of the hospital only because of Anne, is the final blow to Dr. Stanton's psyche; he transforms into a full-blown maniacal assassin. Warren brilliantly portrays Adam's final descent into psychosis: "It was Adam Stanton. I saw that his clothes were soaked and that mud and filth were sloped up his trousers half to the knees" (551). Symbolically, Adam has immersed himself in "filth," and now abandons the world of logic and reason and enters a world of destruction as he performs humanity's foulest act, the murder of another human being.

The deaths of Adam and Willie, tied together by Machiavellian considerations, illustrate another aspect of human nature's complexities. Adam's psychosis evolves throughout the novel, and goes undetected by both his could-have-been twin sister, Anne, and his closest friend since childhood, Jack. Although Machiavelli's warning against a fanatic haphazardly addresses this problem, Warren masterfully weaves the progression of Adam's disturbed character into his novel, giving a comprehensive account of the Italian's most treacherous threat to a prince's rule. Moreover, Willie becomes the target of hatred when he seriously batters the emotions of three of his closest colleagues. When Tom's accident leaves him paralyzed, Willie sees an opportunity to return to his previous upstanding nature and seizes this chance to the detriment of his political career.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE FAMILIAL FACTOR: ASPECTS UNANSWERED BY MACHIAVELLI

One soon realizes that there is an important area Machiavelli fails to consider, once all the advice he presents in *The Prince* that is pertinent to *All the King's Men* has been carefully reviewed. In his novel, Warren recognizes this overlooked realm to include, along with the Machiavellian precepts, the family dynamic. More often than not, most political leaders will have their own families, particularly wives and children, and the role they play in a ruler's effectiveness is worthy of exploration. Rather than make his "prince" a bachelor, Warren gives Willie a morally devout wife, and a rather incorrigible son, Tom. These two characters contribute as much to Willie's rise and fall as do any of the other characters in the novel.

We can only speculate why Machiavelli does not consider the family realm in *The Prince*. Perhaps, recalling that his work was intended specifically for Lorenzo de Medici, he may have felt it unwise to address such a sensitive issue as the relation between family members without casting a bad light on any one particular person. Nevertheless, Warren seizes the opportunity to delve into the realm of interpersonal relationships among family members. This undertaking serves to further enrich the value of Warren's novel through its inclusiveness. Warren proposes that in addition to the outside dangers noted by

Machiavelli, there are equally threatening dangers lurking within a leader's immediate family.

Willie's wife, Lucy, remains constant in her role as wife and mother, although she threatens to leave her husband at the time of the impeachment crisis. When Jack responds to Lucy's letter requesting a visit, Jack knows she wants to talk about Tom's entanglement with Marvin Frey's daughter, Sibyl, who claims to be expecting Tom's child. Before Jack and Lucy talk, he describes the governor's wife:

The soothing contours of her face weren't girlish anymore. . . for now there was a hint of weight, of the infinitesimal downward drag, in the flesh, the early curse and certain end of those soft, soothing faces which especially when very young, appeal to all our natural goodness and make us think of the sanctity of motherhood. Yes, that is the kind of face you would put on the United States Madonna. . . it is the kind of face they try to put on advertisements. . .good, honest, wholesome, trusting, courageous, tender. . . (466)

Lucy's physical and spiritual wholesomeness provides an important balance for all the debauchery found within the novel. Without her to offset the darker moments of the tale, it would risk becoming too morose and hence many of the important aspects contained therein would be lost to the reader. More significantly, her loyalty to Willie enables him to succeed in his position; as was noted before, the voters would look unfavorably on a divorce. Therefore, she too makes a personal sacrifice when she remains in the marriage in spite of her husband's neglect and philandering.

It would be easy to criticize Lucy as a naïvely complacent, stereotyped female character; however, I believe that there are several instances that point out that she is a

bright, informed woman who knows more than it would appear. During the Byram White scandal, Jack ponders, “What did Lucy Talos know? I don’t know. As far as you could tell she didn’t know anything. Even when she told the Boss she was going to pack her bag, it was, so he said, because he hadn’t thrown Byram B. White to the wolves. . . . She didn’t pack because she was too honorable, or too generous, or too something, to hit him when she thought he was down” (207). Lucy’s decision to remain with Willie is extremely critical because she holds great power over the direction of her husband’s career. Around the time of this scandal, Willie is coming up for re-election and if she was aware of the circumstances surrounding White, she must have been aware that a divorce at that point would have jeopardized her husband’s future as governor. It is also vital that no one can say for certain what Lucy knows about her husband’s dealings, because she therefore cannot be accused of either acting, or failing to act, in any particular way and consequently the spotlight remains on the Boss. Fortunately for the Boss, he has a devoutly religious wife who may also be reluctant to divorce him because of her vow to remain with him “for better or for worse.” Had Warren characterized Lucy any other way, the Boss’s story would have indeed been a much different one, and so Willie owes his success to his wife as much as to following Machiavelli’s precepts.

Whatever Lucy’s exact reasons for her steadfastness, she too, justifies her behavior by a desire to “do good.” Again recalling the meeting between Jack and Lucy when she wants to discuss Tom, she envisions a simple solution to rectify Tom’s indiscretion with Sibyl Frey: “There’s just one right thing. . . . He’ll—he’ll marry her” (466). Jack submits that it is more complicated because there were boys involved other than Tom, and that there’s also a political angle involved, and Lucy laments, “Politics. . .

Oh, God, in this too" (467). Between her suggestion of marriage and the revelation of MacMurfee's involvement in the situation, we can detect a shift in position once politics is mentioned. I think that Lucy is, perhaps, next to Jack and Willie, the only other character who truly understands the ins and outs of political warfare, for she states, "It had to be this way, I guess. I have tried to do right but it had to be this way, I guess. . . Oh, Jack, I tried to do right. I loved my boy and tried to raise him right. I loved my husband and tried to do my duty" (467). Her once staunch position to marry Tom to Sibyl is overruled by the fact that politics is involved. Lucy's acceptance yet again, and her willingness to forgo her own moral convictions because of Willie's political fight shows her devotion to his cause for at the end of the discussion she says, "Yes, [Willie]'ll think of something, it'll be all right" (468). For Lucy at any time to doubt or distrust her husband's ability to make things "all right" would spell disaster for the Boss's leadership because her lack of confidence in him would become obvious and it would likely carry over to the populace.

Lucy's astuteness is also seen when she talks about the innocence of Sibyl's unborn child: "It's just a little baby. It's a little baby in the dark. It's not even born yet, and it doesn't know what's happened. About money and politics and somebody wanting to be Senator. It doesn't know about anything—about how it came to be—about what that girl did—or why—or why the father—why he-- . . . Oh, Jack, it's a little baby and nothing's its fault. I would love it" (468). Lucy's monologue reiterates that she is able to make a distinction between the tainted world of the adult and the uncorrupt one of a baby. Feeling a strong need to nurture, her offer for love is also an offer for protection from the illicit circumstances surrounding the baby's coming into being. If given the opportunity

to care for Sibyl's child, Lucy's protective nurturing would focus on an individual whereas her husband's focus is on safeguarding the state for the greater good.

Willie ultimately benefits from his wife's understanding of sacrifice. She clearly understands the way in which a mother must often sacrifice herself to protect a child. As a result, because she is able to somehow adapt this understanding to her husband's politics, she is able to see her husband as a "great man." After the Boss's assassination, Lucy tells Jack that she named Sibyl's baby Willie Talos and concludes, "Oh, I know he made mistakes. . . bad mistakes. Maybe he did bad things, like they say. But inside—in here, deep down. . . he was a great man" (593). This passage reiterates Lucy's sense of duty to her husband. Again, we are left to wonder what she really knew about Willie's practices; however, her resolve to stick by him proves invaluable for the Boss's capacity to benefit the greater good.

While Lucy's behavior aids in solidifying Willie's power, their son Tom's conduct gradually weakens his father's effectiveness as governor to the point of devastation. Lucy and Willie's inability to agree on how to raise Tom results in the latter's destructive habits. The tension between Lucy's and Willie's parenting is seen after the impeachment fails and Willie gives one of his biggest speeches. The Boss is disappointed that his wife doesn't wait up for him after the speech and locks herself in her room. Tom prevents Willie from waking Lucy, saying, "She's got a head-ache, and she don't want to be bothered" (219). The reader is well aware of her disapproval of Willie's behavior; yet she decides to remain present and expresses her objections privately.

Then, Jack and Willie discuss the idea that “if any man tried to run things the way they want him to half the time, he’d end up sleeping on the bare ground. And how would [Lucy] like that?” (219). Jack replies, “I imagine Lucy could take it” (219). The conversation topic quickly becomes about Tom: “[Lucy] could take it. Lucy could sleep on the bare ground and eat red-beans, but it wouldn’t change the world a damned bit. But can Lucy understand that? No, Lucy cannot. . . she could sleep on the bare ground. And that’s exactly what she’s going to raise Tom to do, if she has her way” (219). Willie fails to see that Lucy does understand, in her own way, his duty as governor. She easily could have dismantled his administration if she publicly came out against him and his practices; more important, she never divorces him and even participates in the family photo-shoots.

The Boss also misunderstands the manner in which his wife wants to raise Tom: “but she’s going to ruin him. Make him a sissy. Looks like I say a word to the boy and you can just see her face freeze. I called up here tonight to get Tom to come down and see the crowd. . . But would she let him go? No, sir. Said he had to stay home and study” (220). Lucy’s protective mode is well placed: she doesn’t want Tom around politics, much less attending a rally in which his father’s power could intoxicate a young, impressionable boy. On the other hand, Willie deems his wife’s actions as a slight and, as a result, works extra hard to prevent his son from turning into a “sissy.” Ironically, it is Willie’s permissive parenting that ruins his beloved son’s future.

When Tom makes the “mythical All Southern Eleven” football team, his celebration ends in a car wreck that leaves his passenger, Caresse Jones, permanently disfigured, while Tom escapes unscathed. Tom’s drunken driving evidence is disposed of by a highway patrol officer, but Caresse’s father “was less obliging. He stamped and

swore that he was going to have blood, and breathed indictments, jail, publicity, and law suits” (321). Mr. Jones’s ranting is soon squelched when someone informs him that his trucking business “ran on State roads and that truckers had a lot of contacts with certain State departments” (321). For the first time, Tom’s reckless behavior severely endangers Willie’s administration. Lucy advises Willie that he “must stop” Tom’s antics, and eerily adds, “I would rather see him dead at my feet than what your vanity will make him” (322). Rather than heed his wife’s advice, the Boss ignorantly proclaims, “Hell, let him be a man. I never had any fun growing up. Let him have some fun! I want him to have some fun. I used to see people having fun and never had any” (322). Willie’s parenting philosophy fails to recognize the real harm his unruly child can inflict upon his administration; he erroneously chooses to focus on spoiling Tom with the kind of youth he has missed out on.

Tom’s arrogance and sense of invincibility brings his father more grief in the form of Sibyl Frey and her child. Jack recalls Willie telling him that at first Tom denied it all, “Then he admitted everything, looking the Boss in the eye, with a what-the-hell’s-it-to-you expression. . . [Willie] had only one small comfort, that from the legal point of view. . . But aside from the legal point of view, that fact made the Boss madder. Tom’s being one of a platoon. . . it seemed to hurt the Boss’s pride” (461). This incident escalates when Willie is forced to act against MacMurfee without Judge Irwin’s help, for he commits suicide, and Willie’s only means of protection against MacMurfee results in his giving the medical contract to Larson. Tom’s irresponsible behavior complicates Willie’s plans for his beloved hospital because the political circumstances surrounding his son’s situation force him to reluctantly hand over the general contract to Larson.

In spite of Willie's ability to head off the fallout from his son's insolence, the Boss finds temporary solace in Tom's football heroism. Nevertheless, Tom's impertinence begins to take its toll on Willie's work: "The sportswriters said [Tom] was better than ever. Meanwhile he was making his old man sweat. The Boss was dour as a teetotalling Scot, and the office walked on tiptoe and girls suddenly burst out crying over their typewriters after they had been in to take dictation" (498). Here we begin to see a significant breach in Willie's authority come from a surprising source, Tom Talos. It isn't MacMurfee's henchmen who are weakening the Boss's efficacy, but his own flesh and blood. Jack remarks that "Tom was not doing a thing to make up to the old man for the trouble he caused" (499). After Tom and his father quarrel about Tom's slacking-off in training and his row with coach Martin, the youngster sneers, "What the hell's it to you, or Martin either, so long as I can put 'em across? . . . I can put 'em across and you can big-shot around about it. That's what you want, isn't it?" (499). Jack notices that Willie is "shaken" after their harsh exchange of words, yet the Boss still fails to rectify his son's disobedience, to his own detriment.

Shortly before Tom's fateful football game, Willie seethes about giving the medical center contract to Larson exclaiming, "For they made me, they made me do it" (507). The ever forthcoming Jack asserts, "Tom Talos had something to do with it," and, Willie, still unwilling to acknowledge his son's damaging behavior says, "He's just a boy" (507). Jack insightfully reasons, "Tom Talos may have been just a boy, as the Boss said, but he had a good deal to do with the way things were going. But, then, the Boss had had a good deal to do, I suppose with making Tom what Tom was" (509). Here

Warren illustrates the unstated potential for disaster in which family dynamics plays a significant role, a significant aspect Machiavelli leaves un-assessed.

Although Jack notes that Tom appears to be a mirror image of his father, he profoundly explicates the major difference between father and son:

Back in those days the Boss had been blundering and groping his unwitting way toward the discovery of himself, of his great gift. . . nursing some blind and undefined compulsion within him like fate or disease. Now Tom wasn't blundering and groping toward anything, and certainly not toward a discovery of himself. For he knew he was the damnedest, hottest thing there was. Tom Talos, All American, and there were no flies on him. . . . Oh, he was the hero, all right. . . . He knew he was good. So he didn't have to bother to keep all the rules. (510)

Unfortunately, Willie neglects his duty as a father to foster within his son a sense of respect for authority and boundaries. Tom's privileged life leaves him lacking the self-restraint that comes with the maturity one receives after paying his or her debts to society in the form of disappointment and struggle. Perhaps Willie's own involvement in corruption blinds him to the warning signs Tom exhibits, and thus his reliance on a false sense of indestructibility extends to include his own son.

Only after his son is critically injured in the hospital does Willie begin to reconnect with the notion of mortality and even the limits of his own authority. When Dr. Stanton suggests that Willie go home and rest, the Boss refuses. Adam reiterates, "You can do no good by not lying down. You will only waste your strength. You can do no good" (523). This passage seems to indicate more than it initially portends. The doctor's remarks seem to hold a deeper meaning for Willie, whose reaction, as Jack

notes, is, “ ‘Good,’ the Boss said, ‘good,’ and clenched his hands as though he had tried to grasp some substance which had faded at his touch and dissolved to air” (523). Willie appears to be awakening to the idea that his tenure as the charismatic leader of his populace is approaching an end.

Willie’s decision to return to his wife and his decision to renege on the Gummy Larson contract are greatly influenced by the final outcome of Tom’s surgery. Willie returns to the governor’s office, where Jack tells him that he can continue to kick Tiny Duffy around but warns that Larson is a “different kind of cookie,” to which the Boss says, “You got to start somewhere” (540). Although ambiguous, this hints at Willie’s return to the more ethical politician he once was when he used to be “Cousin Willie.” He finally appreciates his wife’s continuity and maybe even realizes his shortcomings as a father to Tom. Unwilling to sacrifice his personal integrity any longer, Willie barely begins to make reparations for his past actions when he is gunned down in the capital by Adam Stanton.

The family dynamic observed between Willie, Lucy and Tom deepens the Machiavellian connection because Warren takes his predecessor’s ideas one step further by exploring the vital role of a leader’s familial relations. Lucy’s dedication to her duty as wife and mother, and Tom’s waywardness, exist in harmony with Machiavelli’s considerations rather than compete for primacy in Warren’s novel. Warren’s adaptation of what he elicits from the sixteenth century treatise is further enhanced in that he elaborates on the human aspect of those ideas. Willie Talos isn’t an arbitrary figure whose desire to make a difference in the lives of his constituents comes easily. He learns the cruel truth of the political world in Upton the first time he runs for governor and

resigns himself to a life of debauchery in order to be better equipped to administer the needs of his people.

Because Machiavelli and Warren are united in their belief that man's true nature has a proclivity for immorality, they both demonstrate how this innate flaw creates problems for a well-intentioned ruler who wishes to strictly adhere to morality when facing self-serving politicians. Warren presents us with a detailed description of the struggles Willie endures as he sacrifices personal salvation for the greater good, while emphasizing the Boss's humanity through his emotional displays of confusion, anger and even joy. We are also introduced to a multifaceted group of characters whose behaviors encapsulate the purely ethical, the totally corrupt, and the deeply disturbed, all qualities that bring complications to the one charged with the political welfare of the state. How does a ruler reconcile all these different characteristics while securing his position and influence? Machiavelli offers a predetermined set of behaviors that will ensure a ruler's success and Warren applies them to Willie's situation, often elaborating upon these notions.

For all of the parallels seen between *All the King's Men* and *The Prince*, Warren's most direct tribute to Machiavelli occurs at the end of the novel when Jack is waiting in his hotel lobby in the moments leading up to the Boss's assassination. When he picks up *The Chronicle* and reads an editorial criticizing Willie's policies. Jack says,

Every time the Boss had cracked down—income tax, mineral extraction tax, likker tax [sic], every time—it had been the same thing. The pocket book is where it hurts. A man may forget the death of his father, but never the loss of the

patrimony, the cold-faced Florentine who is the founding father of our modern world said, and he said a mouthful which is not a mouthful of mush . (547)

This passage epitomizes the ongoing struggle between the two basic types of government, those who would use government to make themselves wealthier and those who truly want to improve the lives of the populace. Jack's suggestion that Machiavelli is the "founding father" of contemporary society is an important tribute. Machiavelli's desire to present things as they really are found a strong kinship in Robert Penn Warren's Willie Talos, whom Warren guides using the late Florentine's advice. Nevertheless, Warren also realizes that to adhere to Machiavelli's precepts means a ruler's immorality can still be an injustice against man, and as Hugh Miller points out to Willie in their discussion of the moral neutrality of history, "History is blind, but man is not" (606).

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