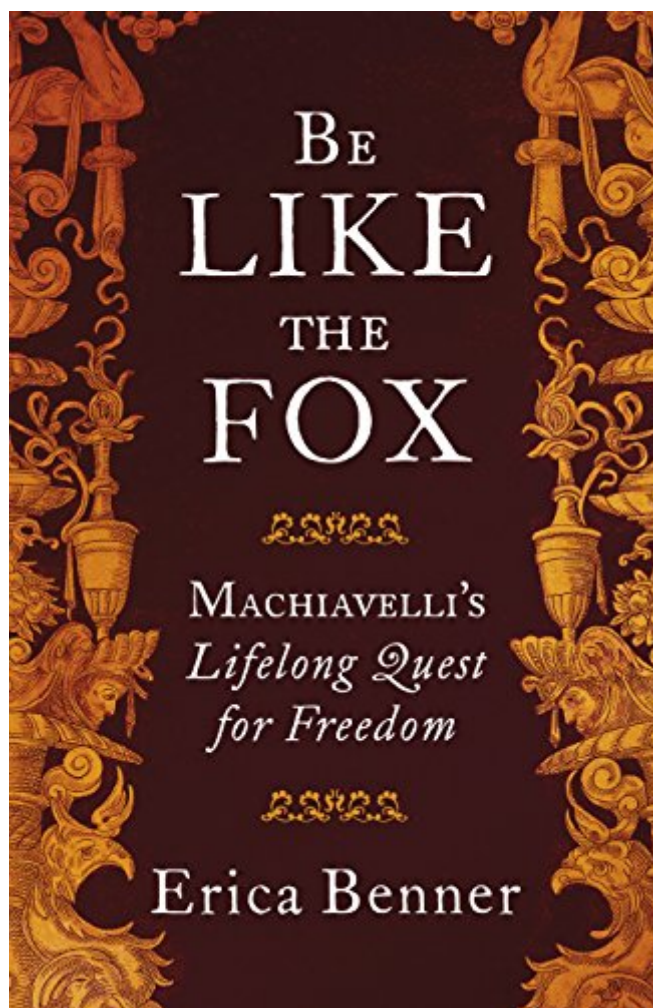


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Be Like The Fox: Machiavelli's Lifelong Quest For Freedom



Synopsis

BBC RADIO 4 BOOK OF THE WEEK 'A rich, vivid and endlessly surprising portrayal of the man and his times' Tracey Borman, BBC History Magazine 'Splendidly colourful ... does a wonderful job of bringing to life Florentine society - the world of the piazzas, the courts, the battlefields' Catherine Fletcher, Literary Review 'Enthralling and moving' Rosamund Bartlett author of Tolstoy: A Russian Life Niccolò Machiavelli lived in a fiercely competitive world, one where brute wealth, brazen liars and ruthless self-promoters seemed to carry off all the prizes; where the wealthy elite grew richer at the expense of their fellow citizens. In times like these, many looked to crusading religion to solve their problems, or they turned to a new breed of leaders - super-rich dynasties like the Medici or military strongmen like Cesare Borgia; upstarts from outside the old ruling classes. In the republic of Florence, Machiavelli and his contemporaries faced a choice: should they capitulate to these new princes, or fight to save the city's democratic freedoms? Be Like the Fox follows Machiavelli's dramatic quest for political and human freedom through his own eyes. Masterfully interweaving his words with those of his friends and enemies, Erica Benner breathes life into his penetrating, comical, often surprising comments on events. Far from the cynical henchman people think he was, Machiavelli emerges as his era's staunchest champion of liberty, a profound ethical thinker who refused to compromise his ideals to fit corrupt times. But he did sometimes have to mask his true convictions, becoming a great artist of fox-like dissimulation: a master of disguise in dangerous times.

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Customer Reviews

"Machiavellianism" is an undesirable word. It portrays dishonest public officials, of the sort Machiavelli termed most notably in *The Prince*. Machiavelli called dishonest behaviour, such as deceitfulness and the killing of innocents, as being regular and in effect in political affairs. Machiavelli was born in 1469 in Florence, one of the many city-states of Renaissance Italy. Some of these states were republics. *Be Like the Fox*, tells Machiavelli's life story. Its title refers to his instruction that by being like the fox one can avoid snares. The author Benner shapes Machiavelli's own words into a discourse, which gives clarification, as to how her protagonist makes his way through his the encounters with the church, with Cesare Borgia, cruelty and being an outcast. At the book's conclusion, his later years of writing, Benner also makes a somewhat contentious, case for a third way of looking at the reading of Machiavelli, suggesting that his true views were often concealed for reasons of political expediency and that "a prince who actually followed *The Prince's* advice was doomed to failure. Machiavelli's sayings make *Be Like the Fox* an innovative, lively and comprehensible book. It makes for a very appealing narrative, nonetheless this method to storytelling confines the prospect of seeking the advance of Machiavelli's thought.

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