# Virtù on the Stage:

## Tracing the Presence and Representation of Machiavelli

## In Early Modern Comedy

By Sally Vermaaten

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**Abstract**

In my thesis, I consider how the Elizabethan period was thinking about Machiavelli and about pragmatic, secular, and humanistic doctrines in general. I do this by demonstrating how Machiavelli's comedy *Mandragola* is essentially a microcosm of his larger political philosophy made famous in works like *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. Then, I compare the *Mandragola*, placing special emphasis on its uses of deceptions and disguise to similar instances, themes, and characters in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, *Eastward Ho!* by Ben Jonson, George Chapman, and John Marston, and *All Fooles* by George Chapman. I try to distinguish both the means and ends of the deceptions used by the characters in all the plays, and then I evaluate what the moral judgment of Machiavellian devices in the plays says about the playwrights, their beliefs, and the political atmosphere of their time.

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## Introduction

In 1485, shortly after Henry VII won the English crown, he began to centralize the powers formerly invested in many feudal lords. He was quickly forging England into a nation-state under one absolute monarch, whose power could supposedly be traced back and justified by divine origins.[1] Twenty-three years into Henry VII's reign, the well-know Florentine political thinker and dramatist, Niccolò Machiavelli, would finish his comedic masterpiece *Mandragola.* Almost eighty years later, in 1584, John Wolfe would be producing copies of two treatises, *Il Principe* and *I Discoursi*, in his London printing shop but falsifying the printing location of the copies to be in Italy, for fear of the censors. Forty-one years after Wolfe's publications, the Puritan Revolution and had begun and England would soon be without a king. When the monarchy was to return, the king's powers were to be seriously curtailed and a strong Parliament had been established.

Though it may not be immediately obvious what the connection between these both grand and mundane moments in history is, these events plot out some of the major points in development of the political thought of Early Modern England. History, like drama or poetry or poetry is about influence. The process of understanding history or drama is a process of drawing a web of epistemological connections between events; it is an attempt to follow the influence of recurring thoughts, emotions, or questions.

In order to understand how these events fit within the stream of changes that were occurring in England, in order for them to be significant events, we must understand how the lonely office of a London printer is relevant to a mass political movement or the

termination of a civil war. Our task is to connect the dots and determine how manuscript copies of plays and discourses, stuffed into coat pockets and pouches from Italy both change and reflect the shifting political tide in Early Modern England.

Machiavelli represented one polar end of political opinion in the Early Modern period. His study of politics was a departure from all previous texts about governments. Machiavelli dissected politics in a secular, behavioral way that focused on manipulation, and power relationships. He expressed in a radical way a humanist perspective that was already beginning to gain momentum in Itay in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Machiavelli's philosophy of political relationship and human relationships in general is finely nuanced. However, his basic principles were simple: Machiavelli believed that a leader (or as I will argue later, any person) must be willing to act with virtù and step outside of the conventional moral codes of his or her time. He focused, unlike Plato, on the worldly, pragmatic measures that would make human life better. Therefore, the thing which Machiavelli prized above all, was the stable state, and preferably, the stable republic. Since Machaivelli knew that humans needed law and guidance in order to live together peacefully and prosperously.

Machiavelli's doctrine in this light sounds non-controversial, but the story of John Wolfe shows, it was found highly contentious and blasphemous. Machiavelli's glorification of ancient (and even biblical) leaders who had committed violent acts, used religion as a manipulative tool, or otherwise stepped outside of the bounds of what was (and to a large degree, still is) considered "good," led people to associate Machiavelli with the beguiling devil. And because Machiavelli's theory is pragmatic and focuses

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[1] "The Sixteenth Century," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* ed. M. H. Abrams, 6th ed. (New York, Norton & Co., 1993) 395-396. Hereafter cited in the text as NAS.

upon the external behaviors that can help a prince to be effective, his writings focus heavily on how to maintain appearances that please other people (i.e. the appearance of virtue) yet still be an effective leader. Therefore, Machiavelli has been long associated with disguise and deception.

Because of radical quality of Machiavelli's graphic and blunt philosophy caused, he seemed to polarize political opinion. If we could discern what influences or what reactions Machiavelli's work caused in Early Modern England, we could effectively measure the tenor of political thought.

Many scholars such as Felix Raab and C. Morris have tried to follow the reception of Machiavelli by researching and comparing individual reactions of scholars and government officials who took the time to write about Machiavelli or whose opinion on his political works was recorded. Yet it is in the drama of the period, I believe that we can understand the general English populace's opinions about Machiavelli and therefore, politics, best. *Mandragola*, Machiavelli's comedy offers the political philosophy that his works such as *The Prince* and the *Discourses* in an artistic format.[2] From comparing classical Machiavellian devices of manipulation in the highly political drama *Mandragola* to similar devices in English Elizabethan dramas I hope to fix a barometer on the political assumptions and thoughts of the English in this interesting period in England's development.

## Chapter 1:
## *Mandragola* and the Collision of the Public and Private

[2] Another reason that I particularly wanted to focus on Machiavelli's drama is that I feel Machiavelli's drama has been largely passed over because of the overwhelming gravity and fame of his political treatises. *Mandragola* is a wonderful display of Machiavelli's playwright skills just in how it so intricately weaves his subtle political philosophy into the fabric of the narrative.

"All states, all dominions that have held and do hold empire over men have been and are either republics or principalities. The principalities are either hereditary, in which the bloodline of their lord has been their prince for a long time, or they are new. The new ones are either altogether new...or they are like members added to the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them...Dominions so acquired are either accustomed to living under a prince or used to being free; and they are acquired either with the arms of others or with one's own, either by fortune or by virtue."[3]

These are the first words of the small volume Niccolò Machiavelli completed in 1513 that would make both famous and infamous.[4] In this masterpiece known as *Il Principe* or, *The Prince*, Machiavelli introduces fundamental concepts on which his found his revolutionary political study. Of these concepts, one of the most critical is the idea of virtue.

The word "virtue" (or "virtù," as it is alternately spelled[5]) carries an immense amount of social, moral, and political meaning. When a modern speaker uses the word "virtue," she, more often than not, intends the word in a religious or moral sense. She is referring to what the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality; voluntary observance of the recognized moral laws or standards of right conduct" (OED).

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[3] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey Mansfield, 2nd ed. (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1998) VII. Hereafter cited in the text as "P" with the relevant chapter number.

[4] Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford UP, 1981) 23-25. Hereafter cited in the text as QS.

[5] *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*. ed. John Simpson. 2003. Oxford UP. 29 Jan. 2003. <http://www.oed.com>. Hereafter cited in the text as OED.

This, however, is clearly not the meaning of "virtue" that Machiavelli had in mind when he composed his many texts, as quickly becomes obvious:[6]

> Agothathocles the Sicilian became king of Syracuse not only from private fortune but from a mean and abject one. Born of a potter, he always kept to a life of crime at every rank of his career; nonetheless, his crimes were accompanied with such virtue of spirit and body that when he turned to the military, he rose through its ranks to become praetor[7] of Syracuse (P VIII).

The meaning that the word "virtue" had for Machiavelli was not at all theological or moral. Rather, it referred to the more ancient connotations of the Latin "virtus" which meant, "manly spirit," "excellence of character or mind," or "valour."[8] Virtù is the resource that all princes and politicians must have in order to maintain control over their states. Leaders need virtù to do what the moment requires for the greater good of the populace and to overcome the snares and hurdles that Fortune will inevitably throw in their way.[9] In short, virtù is the quality that makes political leaders effective in building and sustaining a prosperous state. For Machiavelli, virtù is the most valuable quality is a man could ever possess.

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[6] I will henceforth use the Italian spelling virtù to distinguish Machiavelli's usage from the common modern English usage.

[7] Praetor: "One holding high civic office, as a mayor or chief magistrate. In 17th-18th c., the title of the chief magistrate, or mayor, and of the podestà, in various parts of Italy" (OED).

[8] I. Glare, P. G. W., ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (New York: Oxford UP, 1982) 2073-2074.

[9] Fortune is another key term in Machiavelli's writings, and as the quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, it is often counterposed to virtù. Fortune is essentially a natural force:; it is a shaping, random force (positive or negative) that no amount of human reason can anticipate. While Fortune is certainly out of human hands, Machiavelli certainly does not believe that we are in a deterministic state and that our lives are simply a process of being moved by Fortune. Humans still create their own lives with their virtù, but Fortune may dip down into our self/socially-constructed lives to help or hinder us.

Virtù is at the very center of Machiavelli's political theory. Therefore, it should not be surprising that this concept, so essential in *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, should inform Machiavelli's drama as well. Indeed, virtù is at the very heart of Machiavelli's comedy, *Mandragola.*

In *Mandragola*, the main character, Callimaco, lusts after the beautiful but wedded Lucrezia, who is also a model of Christian morality. In order to satiate his desire, Callimaco must resort to trickery. He must deceive Lucrezia's husband and then Lucrezia herself into believing that an adulterous relationship would be morally acceptable. However, Callimaco is not up to this challenge by himself, and he wisely hires the poor but deviously shrewd Ligurio to hatch a trick to remedy the problem. Ligurio's plan manipulates the one desire of Lucrezia and her husband (Messer Nicia)—their desire to produce an heir. [10] The remedy that Ligurio gives to Callimaco's lust and Nicia's longing for a child is literally the mandrake root (or mandragola, in Italian): a plant which ambiguously skates between what Christian morality defines as good and evil.[11] Like the mandrake root, which is the physical root of the deception, the trick is a

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[10] Niccolò Machiavelli, *Mandragola*, trans. Mera J. Flaumenhaft (Prospect Heights, Illinois, Waveland P, 1981). Hereafter cited in the text as M.

[11] The biblical story connected to the mandrake root shows how the plant acquired its loaded reputation, and how this plant is an excellent symbol for Machiavelli's comedy. In Genesis 30, Leah and Rachel, who are essentially in a "conception war," fight over sexual access to their husband, Jacob. To try to get the leading edge, they also fight over a bundle of mandrake roots, which are supposed to aid fertility: "In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, 'Give me, I pray, some of your son's mandrakes.' But she said to her, 'Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?' Rachel said, 'Then he may lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes'" (Genesis 30.14-15). According to other lore, however, the plant is also poisonous. This reputation of the plant as having both good and evil qualities is analogous to Machiavelli's belief that the best solutions to problems are not always the moral ones. Often, the good solution is the one that get the problemsolver's hands dirty: "The fable is called *Mandragola.* / I imagine that you'll see the reason / when it is performed" (M Prologue).

fruitful poison—a "dirty" means to what the play represents as a mutually acknowledged "good" end.[12]

Ligurio devises a scheme in which Callimaco will disguise himself as a medical doctor and, specifically, a fertility specialist. "Dr." Callimaco promises Messer Nicia a child, if Lucrezia drinks a potion made of the mandrake root. Callimaco claims that the potion guarantees conception, but that the first person to sleep with Lucrezia after she has taken the mandrake potion will die. Therefore, another man must be "forced" to sleep with Lucrezia after she takes the mandrake. Nicia is fairly readily convinced this solution is the answer to their prayers, but convincing Lucrezia is another matter. She adheres to a strict moral code, which she stubbornly refuses to violate. Therefore, the true focus and major obstacle of the play is Lucrezia's morality. The plot centers on the trickery required to persuade her that this un-Christian remedy to the couple's infertility is acceptable and even in accordance with God's will. [13] The trick works, and because of it, a new and happy order is established. Lucrezia and Callimaco not only sleep together once, but also begin an ongoing relationship that will most likely produce a male heir for Nicia.

Even from this bony sketch of the play's action, I think any reader of Machiavelli's political treatises will begin to hear familiar echoes. In fact, the characters and plot of *Mandragola* form a microcosm of Machiavelli's public, political philosophy.

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[12] I place the quotation marks around the words "dirty" and "good" in this sentence precisely because what Machiavelli does is to complicate and blur the line between good and evil.

[13] Robin Kirkpatrick, alternatively, locates the central obstacle or impediment to Callimaco's love in her husband's jealousy, despite the fact that Messer Nicia's qualms are overcome by the ingenuity of Ligurio and Callimaco in Scene II. Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature From Dante to Shakespeare: A Study of Source, Analogue and Divergence* (New York, Longman, 1995) 208. Hereafter cited in the text as K.

This very personal story, which involves private emotions and the desires of the individual, expresses the same ideas (and emotions) as Machiavelli's political works that explicitly focus on the public sphere. This mapping of a public philosophy onto a private world is not only comedic, but it also bears interesting and important implications.

The public-private dynamic of *Mandragola* is very complicated. Through the play, Machiavelli destabilizes the conventional boundaries between what is public and what is personal, and these seemingly clear-cut lines begin to evaporate. For example, the "private" world that we see in the play is and was part of a public setting: the theatre. Machiavelli originally wrote *Mandragola* for a group of amateur actors to be presented to the citizenry and young aristocrats who frequented theatrical performances.[14] It is clear that *Mandragola* illustrates Machiavelli's pragmatic, humanist views on politics and the intricate relationship between the public and private spheres gives us a idea about the extent to which he intended his maxims to be applied.

By attentively reading the *Mandragola*, we can see how Machiavelli generated this completely original plot[15] and fueled it with the same principles that he presents in a more traditionally argumentative format in his famous treatises, *The Prince* and *The Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* (more commonly referred to as simply *The Discourses*).[16] Therefore, in this chapter, I will identify the presence of Machiavelli's

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[14] Mera J. Flaumenhaft, Introduction, *Mandragola*, by Niccolò Machiavelli (Prospect Heights, Illinois, Waveland Press, 1981) 3. Hereafter cited in the text as MI.

[15] *Mandragola* is the only one of Machiavelli's plays that wasn't based on an ancient formula (MI 3).

[16] I have used two editions of the *Discourses* for this paper:
Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago, U of Chicago P, 1996). Hereafter cited in the text as HDISC.
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. Leslie J. Walker, ed. Bernard Crick (New York, Viking P, 1984). Hereafter cited in the text as LDISC.

political and philosophic views in *Mandragola*. Keeping in mind the unique ending of the play, I will show how Machiavelli represents disguise, religion, morality, personal virtue, and virtù in *Mandragola*. Then we will consider what these representations allow us to conclude about Machiavelli and his views on human relationships.

***An Unusual Ending***

The most useful place to begin our observations of the political in *Mandragola* will be in its difficult and almost jarring ending. The difficulty of the ending lies in its strangeness and deviation from the usual form of comic endings. While most comedies end with an unmasking of any previous disguises or deceptions and also with a wedding, the ending of *Mandragola* is happy because it establishes a permanent adulterous relationship and assures the cuckolded husband's blissful ignorance. Since the ending is, in many ways, the most striking feature of the play, it makes sense to work our way backwards from this ending so that we may see how Machiavelli sets it up as an ideal situation. The ending, I believe, cannot be taken as a comment on corruption or degeneracy of society; Machiavelli is quite sincere about the perfection of this arrangement, and as a result, we must conclude that *Mandragola*, at least in part, defies conventional morality. [17]

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[17] Robin Kirkpatrick, in Chapter 5 of *English and Italian Literature From Dante to Shakespeare: A Study of Source, Analogue and Divergence*, comes to a different conclusion about the ending of *Mandragola*. While he admits that the ending allows a political interpretation which is a celebration of virtù in private citizens, he is unwilling to accept this radical conclusion as Machiavelli's intent. Instead, he goes on to argue for a more diluted conclusion, in which Machiavelli is trying to promote political skill while also condemning a morally bankrupt society, and trying to "create surprise or suspense [to] subvert the social or literary complacency of the audience" (K 211). I find this reading unsatisfactory on a number of points, especially in Kirkpatrick's characterization of Fra Timoteo as a flatly negative character used to exemplify "the decay of public standards" (K 210). He tries to bring his reading of *Mandragola* into accordance with his interpretation of Machiavelli as concerned with "not with private morality but with the good of the public realm," though, according to Kirkpatrick, later scholars would "misinterpret" his prescriptions to include the private sphere. Kirkpatrick misunderstands Machiavelli's concern for good ends (ends that sufficiently justify whatever "immoral" or deceptive means may be used to attain them) as a complete ban on any use of deceptive means by private citizens. However, Machiavelli never implies this sort of a ban in

The figure that represents this conventional Christian morality throughout *Mandragola* is Lucrezia. Lucrezia is the virtuous model of chastity, as her husband rather bitterly recounts, "She stays on her knees for four hours, stringing together Our Fathers before she comes to bed," (2.6). Since embodies Christian morality, Lucrezia is more concerned about the spiritual and metaphysical than the physical—she would rather attend to her prayers than fulfill any sexual desires. The only reason Lucrezia does not go to church daily is because a monk molested her in the early years of her marriage (M 3.2).[18]

Lucrezia's name itself implies virtue, since it associates her with the unqualified morality of Lucretia from Roman history, who was raped by the son of the tyrant Tarquin the Proud, and who. Because she had been violated, Lucretia committed suicide. While many, includingly Livy, praised Lucretia's virtue, Machiavelli sees her act as nothing more than an excuse for the disruption of a regime that would have been taken down anyways: "As has been seen in this history of ours, the excess done against Lucretia took the state away from the Tarquins," and also "If the accident of Lucretia had not come, as soon as another had arisen it would have brought the same effect" (HDISC 3.5, 3.26).

Taking up the banner of vengeance for this act, Junius Brutus and Collatinus overthrew the Tarquin tyrant, and the Roman Republic was founded, supposedly inspired by Lucretia's valuation of honor and unyielding morality. As Machiavelli scholar Harvey

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his writings, and he in fact implies the opposite, making his doctrine more radical than some scholars wish to accept.

[18] This added detail about the corrupt monk is, I think, jab at Christian morality by Machiavelli, who, in works like the *Discourses*, was fairly clear about the ways in which Christianity was a weak religion whose revered virtues were less beneficial to humanity than the cultivation of the pagan virtues (HDISC I.11-12). Machiavelli also refers to the corruption of the church at this time, which he bluntly makes clear in a chapter of the *Discourses*, which is entitled: "Of How Much Importance It Is to Take Account of Religion, and How Italy, for Lacking It by Means of the Roman Church, Has Been Ruined" (HDISC I.12)

Mansfield says, "Lucretia's sacrifice of her life for the shame done to her chastity was considered inspiration for a republic, a form of government that puts lawfulness or morality ahead of advantage and tyrannical passion."[19] The new republic was supposed to value morality in the same absolute fashion. In this way, Machiavelli binds Lucrezia's steadfast morality to the political world and equates the Lucretia's self-sacrifice of her body, life and virtue to the sacrifice of body and virtue that Lucrezia must make in order to establish a new and happy order in *Mandragola*. Therefore, the new order at the end of *Mandragola* is being implicitly compared to the Roman Republic that Lucretia's self-sacrifice instigated. For Machiavelli, who values the stable state and looks to the classical times of Roman Republic for the political inspiration, this comparison is great praise and undeniable proof that Machiavelli considered the ending of *Mandragola* an ideal situation (CIM 3-4).

As audience members, we are therefore asked to root for the tricksters who are out to deceive Lucrezia out of her morality because Lucrezia's absolute morality, rather than being valued by Machiavelli, is presented as selfish and the primary obstacle to the general good and utopian state that could be achieved if Lucrezia embraces the doctrine of virtù rather than virtue.

In an attempt to soften Lucrezia's objections, Callimaco and Ligurio send Lucrezia to her mother, Sophastra, who is sympathetic to Nicia's desire for children, and who is not hindered by the stubborn morality her daughter is.[20] She will attempt to

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[19] Harvey Mansfield, "The Cuckold in *Mandragola*," *The Comedy and Tragedy of Machiavelli*, ed. Vickie Sullivan (New Haven, Yale UP, 2000) 3. Hereafter cited in the text as CIM.

[20] Lucrezia's mother, Sostrata, is described by Callimaco as "good company" or, as alternately translated by Mera Flaumenhaft in a footnote, "a woman of easy virtue," (1.1). Her mother is more grounded in the

qualify Lucrezia's absolute morals.[21] But, according to Lucrezia's universal conception of morality, she must retain it wholly for it to be valid, because as soon as she begins to rationalize her morality, she has, in fact, completely rejected it. Her morality is an absolute doctrine, and rationalizing is the first step onto the slippery slope away from belief in it (CIM 20). It is this absolutism in religion that Machiavelli finds particularly inhibiting in life and in politics.

In *Mandragola* Lucrezia's adherence to Christian morals is so rigid that it will only be assuaged by a moral authority validating the proposed turn away from religion. Therefore, Ligurio and Nicia arrange for Lucrezia to go to Frate Timoteo, who is much less than absolutely moral.[22] He gives her arguments, supposedly from religious scripture, that ease her conscience and convince her that she should observe her husband's wishes and consent to the plan. Only then does she give up her absolute morality for the kind of morality that Frate Timoteo quickly tries to stitch together from divine command and natural desire and necessity (CIM 17).

This sort of shift or change in moral ideology is at the heart of Machiavelli's political thought. Chapter XV of *The Prince* deals directly with this sort of compromise of conventional moral principles, which Machiavelli sees as inevitable, necessary, and healthy for the politician:

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material world than the promised next world. For these reasons, Harvey Mansfield argues that Sostrata is the embodiment of prudence in the play. (CIM 17).

[21] Sostrata (Lucrezia's mother), it is interesting to note, gives Lucrezia a particularly gendered argument or rationalization for why she should consent to this scheme, namely that "a woman who has no children has no home" (3.11). suggesting that gender roles are, in the end, another power structuring or way of manipulating people into certain behaviors.

[22] We will return to investigate Fra Timoteo more thoroughly later.

> For a man who wants to make a profession of good in all regards must come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity (P XV).

While Machiavelli directly prescribes learning "not to be good" only for the prince in this quotation, he implies in the previous sentence that *any* human will be ruined by total obedience to traditional moral codes, which is as he sees it, irrational.[23] *Mandragola* is essentially a dramatic argument for this principle, which Machiavelli could only hint at in *The Prince*; *Mandragola* moves Machiavelli's political philosophy into the private realm. According to Machiavelli, deviations from morality are justified in private life as well as public if the ends are for the general good.

In *Mandragola*, there are two primary ends the main characters achieve by the adulterous union of Lucrezia and Callimaco. At first Callimaco's goal in crumbling Lucrezia's moral structure is just to satiate his burning sexual desire for the beautiful wife of Nicia. However, by the end of the play, Callimaco seems to genuinely care about Lucrezia with more than just sexual fervor. Though Callimaco came from France to Florence because of a lustful pining, his love seems to deepen to a real emotional attachment to her. Callimaco reveals his love for her when he describes to Ligurio what happened when he finally gets into the coveted bed of Lucrezia. Although he has wanted to make love to Lucrezia for quite some time, he does not enjoy the sex with her while he is still disguised as a randomly chosen lover absorbing the toxic effects of the mandrake:

> As I've told you my Ligurio, I stayed with a troubled mind until three o' clock and although I took great pleasure in it, it didn't seem good to me. But then I made myself known to her, and made her understand the love I bore for her, and how easily, on account of her husband's simplicity, we could live happily without any scandal, promising her, whenever God did otherwise with him, to take her for my wife (M 52).

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[23] For more on Machiavelli and the necessity of moral compromise in politics, see Michael Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2. (Winter 1973) 160-180.

In other words, his mind was not ease until he was assured that they would be able have an ongoing relationship, not just a "one-night stand."

Since Lucrezia's conception of a son and Callimaco's sexual and emotional fulfillment are (certainly to Machiavelli's eyes) ends or goals inferior to that of a stable republic, it may be argued that Machiavelli is simply using the case of Lucrezia as a metaphor, specifically a metonymy, for what sort of virtù is required of the politician operating in the public sphere. However, this sort of reading does not take into account the resonance *Mandragola* has with one of Machiavelli's fundamental political principles. Machiavelli contends that "one can say this generally of men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, pretenders and dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager for gain" (P XVII). Yet, even if we consider this doctrine a particularly extreme and a more rhetorical than genuine expression of human nature and take one of Machiavelli's softer claims about the nature of man, it is clear that he takes a pessimistic view of the average man's abilities and intentions.[24] By Machiavelli's thought, nearly all humans are primarily self-interested and you cannot trust them to be anything else.

Because of the pervasiveness of this human short-sightedness, it is not only the prince or the governor who needs to exercise virtù (for the state cannot advise a weak or corrupt man on his every action) but there also need to be private, virtùous citizens to help guide others in towards a general good.[25] Machiavelli portrays Lucrezia's departure

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[24] A gentler and probably more representative example of Machiavelli's opinion about humans occurs in Book I of the *Discourses*. He discusses the body of ten men that ruled Rome for a period and uses this to point out how all men tend toward quick and fundamental corruption. "One also notes in the matter of the Decemvirate how easily men are corrupted and make themselves assume a contrary nature, however good and well brought up" (HDISC 1.42).

[25] Machiavelli's fundamental belief in the republic as the best form of government also implies that Machiavelli thinks that these political strategies are not effective for princes only, because in the republic,

from absolute morality in the same urgent and positive light in which he paints a prince's necessary immorality. Machiavelli implies that traditional morality should be bent to accommodate pragmatic concerns. What matters more than strict adherence to a supposedly divine dictate are the real situations we encounter which strict morality cannot adequately or happily solve for us. Machiavelli, who many scholars argue is an atheist and whose religious faith is generally considered dubious, was in any case skeptical of claims about the divinity of moral codes. From his works, it seems that he may believe that religious doctrine is socially constructed for the ends of some powerful elite. Callimaco wanted sexual fulfillment, Messer Nicia and Lucrezia both wanted to conceive, and thereby establish sucessors, but morality was an obstacle to both of these goals and therefore the happiness of all three. By sleeping with Lucrezia, Callimaco gives Nicia and Lucrezia an heir and he obtains and offers a long-term, stable loving relationship with a woman he seems to love. In *Mandragola*, Machiavelli vindicates the use of deception and straying from traditional morality in the private sector, if that deception or "sin" leads to a greater good or greater happiness.

***Religion as a Tool***

The character of Frate Timoteo reinforces the particularly utilitarian-sounding Machiavellian view that a course of action is good if it maximizes a good end. We might expect the only religious figure in the play to stand for Christian values, but he instead shows us precisely how religion must also be subjugated to the material good and present and present happiness of humanity. If he were adhering to the doctrine of the Catholic Chruch, Frate Timoteo would be less concerned about the present happiness of mankind

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many ordinary would need to lead and ideally, all humans would act according to Machiavelli's handbook for virtùousness.

and look instead toward the afterlife.[26] In exchange for money, which will supposedly be distributed as alms, Frate Timoteo agrees to compromise the Catholic Church's moral positions on sexuality and even murder. He agrees with Ligurio's definition of "good" that is significantly closer to John Stuart Mill than to Thomas Aquinas: "...good is that which does good to the most, and that by which the most are contented" (3.4).

Frate Timoteo essentially agrees to contort the sacred texts and doctrine of his Church in order to gain material, worldly good for himself and the conspirators (and theoretically, the poor who will hopefully receive at least some of Callimaco's bribe money). He consults his books and tries to locate any wording or command which he might construe as an argument for Lucrezia to take the mandrake and sleep with another man: "Truly I have been at my books more than two hours studying this case, and after much examination, I find many things both in particular and in general, that work for us," (3.11). He takes messages from the bible and Christian principles, and then uses them as a tool in order to achieve worldly goals. Essentially, the friar bends his own religion and uses it as a deceptive tool in an attempt to gain what is good for the maximum number of people.

Machiavelli discusses the use of religion as a tool in both the *Discourses* and *The Prince*. He deals with religion as a political tool most explicitly in the *Discourses* (which, since they were not being given or dedicated to a relative of the pope, would probably make Machiavelli less cautious). He gives the example of Numa, a Roman ruler who told his people that he was advised in all matters by a nymph and by doing so, gained the

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[26] Frate Timoteo's devotion seems to more of a devotion to ceremony. He understands the social function of the religious minister and he takes great pains to uphold the appearances and comforting ritualistic elements of his religion, as we see in Act V, Scene 1.

reverence of the people and kept what was becoming an unruly and disorderly state under strict control:

> As he found a very ferocious people and wised to reduce it to civil obedience with the arts of peace, he turned to religion as a thing altogether necessary if he wised to maintain a civilization; and *he constituted it* so that for many centuries there was never so much fear of God as in that republic, which made easier whatever enterprise the Senate or the great men of Rome might plan to make [my italics] (LDISC 1.11).

Machiavelli seems to accept and advocate the use of religion as a strong tool for obedience. Machiavelli inscribes the proof of the effectiveness of religious authority into *Mandragola*. Religious authority is ultimately the means by which Nicia, Ligurio, and Callimaco convince Lucrezia to agree to their plot; it is their strongest persuasive weapon.

Like Machiavelli, Frate Timoteo actually makes a positive arguement against strict morality, saying that it causes fear of real human situations and denies the very real necessity of sometimes doing "wrong:"

> There are many things that from far away seem terrible, unbearable, strange, and when you get near them, they turn out to be humane, bearable, familiar; and so it is said that fears are worse than evils themselves; and this is one of those things (3.11).

In this moment, Timoteo uses religion as persuasive rhetoric and also explicitly accepts the pragmatic doctrine of Machiavelli's political philosophy.

In this way, an ending that might be represented as tragic in another play, is a manifestation of the qualified positive twist Machiavelli puts on "immorality." In fact, Machiavelli discounts the classifications of "good" and "evil" altogether and instead,

accepts that we should be worried about things being "good" and "evil" for appearances only.

***The Outward Show***

Machiavelli's exhortation to worry about the appearance of morality and externally aligning yourself with the traditional, rather than clinging to the really meaningless categories of morality is essential to understanding *Mandragola.* In *Mandragola* he extends into the private sphere an idea expressed in Chapter XV of *The Prince* as well as in the *Discourses*, where Machiavelli urges his potential leaders, to pay attention to appearance. He urges the leaders and private citizens to maintain respectability but not necessarily morality because, in the end, appearances are all we have in the world of politics and in all power-relationships[27]

Machiavelli argues that in life the appearances, behaviors, and statements made by one person are the *only means* by which the other people can know that individual, and that therefore, appearances count. [28] For Machiavelli, the masks we wear (literally or figuratively) are also social necessities. It is necessary to conceal yourself and your actual thoughts or motives in order to get what you want. He states this clearly in *The Prince* when he discusses traditional virtues:

> All men, whenever one speaks of them, and especially of princes, since they are placed higher, are noted for some of the qualities that bring them either blame or

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[27] Power relationships include any relations between people where there exists any kind of power disparities with respect to any type of disparity or inequality in authority (i.e. not just political, but also, as we will see later, intellectual, physical, etc.).

[28] Disguise is also the essence of the theatre. The theatre can be characterized, and has been, as a sort of disguised reality; though the actors are real people, what they are on stage are masks, and their importance is in their disguised roles within the play, not their real roles in the world.

> praise... And I know that everyone will confess that it would be a very praiseworthy thing to find in a prince all of the ... qualities that are held good. But *because he cannot have them*, nor wholly observe them, *since human conditions do not permit it*, it is necessary for him to be so prudent as to know how to avoid the *infamy* of those vices that would take his state from him, and to be on guard against those that do not [my italics] (P XV).

In other words, the ruler, and by extension all humans, must appear to have good qualities, but not necessarily possess them, since "human conditions do not permit" a leader to have all of these virtues. We must adapt ourselves to the sometimes gloomy facts of life, which are the subject of Machiavelli's political studies. Humans must be more concerned with the infamy or *reputation* of vice and virtue than the virtues themselves; it is the disguise that matters, not the "truth" or the "essence:"

> ...it is necessary to know well how to color this nature, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple and so obedient to present necessities that he who deceives will always find someone who will let himself be deceived (P 18).

The physical manifestation of the usefulness of appearance over "truth" or "essence" is shown in the *Mandragola*'s use of disguise. Disguise itself is a splitting of the inner and outer self, and a recognition that what is outside may not actually reflect what is inside. But since only appearance counts, the incongruity between external and internal simply doesn't matter. The happy ending of the *Mandragola* depends upon this principle that what true about us is not beneath our actions and reputation—it is just those external perceivable things. Callimaco is going to have to live a life of disguise, since he

is invited into the house of Lucrezia and Messer Nicia as "Dr." Callimaco. Yet, this disguise is necessary, useful and does not detract from the true happiness of Callimaco and the other characters. In fact, the disguise produces and propagates the ideal, stable order attained in the ending. Disguises are used in multiple layers and on multiple subjects in the play: in Ligurio's primary trick; in order to capture the supposedly random man who is to sleep with Lucrezia after she has taken the potion; Machiavelli even puts a disguise on religion, in the form of Frate Timoteo. Frate Timoteo is, as Harvey Mansfield points out, a disguise of a disguise (actually, he is a disguise of a disguise of a disguise, since he is disguised as a dressed up "Dr. Callimaco") (CIM 23-24).[29]

This use of disguise, which conventional morality would see as deceptive and immoral, is a statement of optimism on Machiavelli's part. It is a challenging and deeply positive statement of what human beings can achieve. The goals that would have been impossible had Messer Nicia, Callimaco, and the other characters (except Lucrezia—moral code is changed for her she did not realize what her real aim could have been until she had it presented to her) left their future up to Fortune or some divine recompense are attained by moving outside of the conventional moral paradigm. They are not stuck in their deterministic, tragic state; Callimaco is not the courtly knight pining after the lady he will never embrace. Instead, Machiavelli focuses on our power to act. If we do not attach ourselves to the millstone of an absolute ideology or morality and instead use our rational capabilities, humans can achieve great things, which is an incredibly positive philosophy expressed in this play. Human beings can control our own destinies if we take

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[29] Timoteo even goes so far as to say he is disguising his voice, in order to explain why his voice doesn't sound like Callimaco's. This masking of voice could be plausibly read as a comment on the real human origin and social construction of the voice of God (or, for that matter, of the author).

reasoned, bold, and virtùous action. As human beings, we can control our progress, our place in life is not solely determined by where we were born or what the gods decided for us; instead we move ourselves.

The focus on the potency of human reason is a strong expression of Machiavelli's humanism. He does not try to explain government in divine or theological terms; he recognizes that politics is a human art, and he uses strategic and almost psychological, game-theory terms to explain it. This is why someone who can advise how to predict and manipulate behavior is so critical to attaining order, success, and happiness (which, judging by the end of the *Mandragola*, seem to be the ultimate goals) in a social environment. This is Machiavelli's role, and it is also the role of Ligurio. They are both teachers of manipulation, who are uncorrupted and do not use their superior political skill for their own self-interest. Rather, they remain disinterested and advise the political or social actor for the good of the community. Ligurio formulates the action within the text just as Machiavelli is formulating the action of the text. Ligurio is the one who grasps that the key to shifting social conditions is decisive action, which is willing to step outside of the traditional codes. He guides all of the conspirators in the race to change Lucrezia's moral standards, and thereby allow Callimaco to consummate his love and to produce a succeeding generation (a son for Nicia). In this way, Lucrezia is like a nation (like the Florentine republic which traced its roots back to the Roman Republic[30] and like Lucrezia) whose ideas have to be shifted. Because just a few individual recognize the importance of virtù, the door is opened not only for the possibility of a succeeding

[30] Kirkpatrick points out that "where in the late Middle Ages, thinkers had tended to applaud the justice of the Roman Empire as a check upon disorder and tyranny, the dominant note in the political thought of the early Renaissance was a devotion to Ciceronian ideas of the Republic. Coluccio himself argued that Florence had been founded not under the Empire but under the Republic" (K 87).

generation's existence, but also for a succeeding generation to adopt with more ease the virtù their parents struggled to recognize. In this way, there exists a parallel between the action of the text and the social or materialist purpose of this drama as well as Machiavelli's other writings.

Machiavelli presented this text to the youth, the potential next leaders and princes of Italy as a theatrical production first performed around 1518 (QS 55) since theatre was one of the preferred "diversions" of the young aristocracy (MI 3-4). Machiavelli believed that the serious consideration and adoption of his methods could lead the world he lived, fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Florence. [31] It would be reasonable to assert that Machiavelli was simply using the play as a vehicle to convey his political doctrine to those who could use it most. In this light his drama can be seen as a hopeful demonstration to the youth of Florence, in the hope that the generation after his will become more personally and politically effective, and thereby be able to unite his beloved homeland, and restore Italy to a glory and stability comparable to that which it attained in the era of the Roman Republic. [32]

## Chapter 2:
## Machiavelli's Diffusion in England

[31] Machiavelli was exiled out of Florence to his country home in 1513, before he wrote his most famous works, but he still directed all of his efforts to help the political condition of his Florence and Italy (thusly why the Prince is dedicated to a member of the ruling Medici family).

[32] Machiavelli expresses a deep longing and hope that Italy will be united in the last few chapters of *The Prince*, and exhorts the prince to take his (Machiavelli's) practical suggestions and the lessons of his experience.

Before we move on to exploring Early Modern English comedies, it will be useful to give a very brief explanation of the social and political conditions in England when Machiavelli's philosophy would have been received.

While Machiavelli was formulating and inscribing his political philosophy in *Mandragola*, outside of Florence, England was grappling with a still-new economic and political structure. Just over twenty years before Machiavelli finished *Mandragola* in 1518 (P xxix), England was entrenched in a civil war. Though the war was fought to decide between the competing claims to the throne made by Richard III of the house of York, and Henry VII of the house of Lancaster, the entire kingdom was involved and feudal lords pitched their power toward one side or the other. Therefore, when in 1485, Henry VII defeated Richard II, the previously quite powerful lords were left weak and even if you were not a supporter of the new King, you could not fight this new monarch who centralized and concentrated power quickly into the kingship and thereby lessened the influence of the influential feudalistic lords. England, therefore, was on a track towards becoming a nation under one nearly absolute king with a divine origin (K 2-3). At the same time, England was moving away from the feudal economic system and toward the trade that would sustain it in coming centuries. The nation was stabilizing and becoming more productive than it was during the civil war that drained away the land's productivity (NAS 397, "The Middle English Period: The Fifteenth Century" 9-10).

By the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth century, it was common for English gentlemen to travel to Italy to witness the intellectual and cultural Renaissance in Italy. There, they might have and probably did have exposure to Machiavelli's works, most of which were written between 1510 and 1525 (P xxxi). By

1531 and 1532 printed copies of the *Discourses* and *The Prince* were available in Italy and both texts were circulating in manuscript beforehand. These early manuscript copies must have been relatively widespread, for by 1528, Henry Parker Lord Morely to recommend it to Thomas Cromwell, advisor to Henry VIII (Morris 417) who would in turn mention it to Cardinal Pole (Raab 32) who would subsequently read *The Prince* and write a scathing criticism of Machiavelli (Raab 31-33). [33]

In 1584, John Wolfe, in his London print shop published Italian editions of *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. This was not because of any publicly acknowledged growing acceptance of Machiavelli's doctrine by the Church or political leaders of England, but because there was, Felix Raab says, "a *demand* for Machiavelli's work—no one copies, translates and illicitly prints a writer if people are not interested in reading him" (Raab 52). By demonstrating this demand, Raab successfully argues that we may be certain that the Elizabethans were reading Machiavelli. And though *The Prince* and the *Discourses* would not be printed in English until 1636 and 1640, it is highly likely that the playwrights whose work we will be focusing on: George Chapman, John Marston, and Ben Jonson had come into contact with Machiavelli. [34]

As Machiavelli's writings were being distributed more and more widely in both manuscript and printed, English and Italian form, in the early to mid seventeenth century,

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[33] Some earlier scholars conjectured from the highly caricaturized and vicious attacks on Machiavelli on the stage and in print, that the Elizabethans got their information about Machiavelli from his detractors, particularly from Gentillet's *Contre-Machiavel*. However, most scholars during the last half of the 20th century have believed that Machiavelli's actual texts were read by Tudor and Elizabethan Englishmen and that the potent criticism written at the time was the response of individuals to works themselves (Morris 419).

[34] Daniel C. Boughner has done an extensive (if not very deep) study of how Ben Jonson's work, who according to Boughner, was "well known early in his career as 'Monsieur Machiavelli'" Daniel C. Boughner, *The Devil's Disciple: Ben Jonson's Debt to Machiavelli*, (New York, Philosophical Library 1968) 73.

England's status as a unified nation-state was solidified. Henry VIII accumulated and centralized the power of England even further when he split from the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church and formed the Church of England, of which he would be the head.

## Chapter 3:
## Disguise and Deception the English Way

Because many playwrights before and after Machiavelli's works, mused on many of the same questions about human behavior, politics, and struggled with the pragmatic approach versus the moral approach to life, that Machiavelli's writing attempted to resolve, many other plays touch on the same themes as Machiavelli and reply to his observations. Though their method of response is not in the form of a counter-argument, or a defense, many English playwrights expressed in their understanding of what Machiavelli and Machiavellianism meant by drawing particular representations and caricatures of his works. Through these representations, these playwrights critique and/or embrace Machiavelli's messages (or what they understood to be Machiavelli's message). Playwrights may not intend for the political world to be the primary subject of their work, but these opinions get conveyed their treatment of characters, their interactions, and their environment, a perspective on human nature surfaces and the play gleans political undertones or overtones. While perhaps not an intentioned projection of personal or period political views, these political opinions and assumptions nonetheless become involved and discernible when these playwrights begin represent and interpret a writer as controversial, radical, and honestly realistic as Machiavelli.

In order to try to understand how playwrights were representing Machiavelli's philosophy during the English Renaissance and to examine how these representations

betray the political feelings of the playwright and the period, I will focus on three comedies[35] from the period. I will try to examine in what ways the English plays are similar to and in what ways they differ from the comedy that embodies Machiavelli's political philosophy so well, *Mandragola*. I will look at both the characters and the plots of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, George Chapman's *All Fooles*, and *Eastward Ho!*, a combined effort by George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, to compare how they treat deception, disguise, power relationships, that run through them and *Mandragola*, and to try to determine whether they prize virtue or virtù.

One of the most crucial plot elements in *Mandragola*, which we have already touched on, is the use of disguise in the play. Disguises, as we have noted, are deceptions that literally mask a person. We one wears a disguise, what is important is not what is "essential" or "true" about the person, that is covered—what is important is the social function or face of the person; it is how the disguise works on others.

All the main characters in the *Mandragola* come to share Machiavelli's conclusion that disguise and deception are social necessities. Even Lucrezia, who was steadfastly Christian and the bastion of morality in the play, concedes by the end that it is the semblance of her honor and chastity that is more important than the actual retention of her Christian moral code, (M 52-53). And in the end, Callimaco does not need to be "unmasked" of his feigned identity as a doctor in order for the ending to be happy or complete; he goes on pretending to be the doctor, and Messer Nicia goes on being a happy cuckold. So how does disguise function in the plays of the English Renaissance? To what extent do the plays accept, reject, or otherwise treat the concept of disguise and

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[35] I may, in fact use another play as well, "A New Way to Pay Old Debts" by Philip Marston, but for now I'm just dealing with these three.

more broadly, appearance over identity? In order to answer this question, I think it will be helpful to point out not only all of the different manifestations and uses of disguise in these plays, but also to understand each disguise as a costume of some type of authority and group the disguises based on the authority or power allow the disguised person to have.

*i. The Doctors*

There are two instances of disguise in *Mandragola* and *Volpone* that are strikingly similar. In *Mandragola*, as we have already mentioned, the amorous Callimaco disguises himself as a medical doctor specializing in fertility in order to gain access to his beloved Lucrezia. In *Volpone*, the main character (who the play is named after) also disguises himself as a doctor of sorts. He assumes the guise a mountebank who is selling a miraculous oil which he professes to be the elixir of health, in order that he might lay eyes on the closely guarded wife of Corvino.[36] [37] Even though the earlier medical disguise in *Mandragola* may not have been the direct inspiration for the latter occurrence, there are many similarities to be observed in these two moments of disguise. The doctor possesses intellectual power, his specialized, higher knowledge gives him authority. Rather than assume that Jonson stole this idea of medical disguise for the purpose of gaining access to a desired female, it is more likely that both Jonson and Machiavelli realized that intellectual authority is one of the most useful disguises to assume if you want to persuade or manipulate people. Both playwrights recognized this fact about human behavior: in order for a person to do something you want, you will have to give

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[36] Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, *Ben Jonson: Four Comedies*, ed. Helen Ostovich (Singapore, Longman, 1997) 2.2.11-118. Hereafter cited in the text as VO.

[37] It is ironic to note that Volpone disguises himself as a physician in one scene, and as a diseased invalid in many of the rest.

them some claim of authority. You need to establish at least the perception that you hold some sort of power lacking in others. Authority can be religious (e.g. being able to interpret the will of god, etc.), political (having been elected by a majority, having been born into the right family, etc.), physical (being stronger or better armed), economic (being able to leverage more capital, pay more people to do what you want), and so on. Intellectual authority that a figure such as a physician has is equal in effectiveness to any of these types of power, as Machiavelli makes clear in his discussion of good counsel and wisdom in *The Prince*:

> For this is a general rule that never fails: that a prince who is not wise by himself cannot be counseled well, unless indeed by chance he should submit himself to one alone to govern him in everything, who is a very prudent man...So one concludes that good counsel, from wherever it comes, must arise from the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince from good counsel, (*Prince* 95).

Wisdom is so important that you need it even in order to be counseled well, or else you "submit" to the intellectual authority of the other. Jonson realizes the astuteness of this Machiavellian observation and understands that power to advise is inseparable from the power to rule.[38]

This guise of intellectual authority is particularly suited to the ends of Volpone and Callimaco, because intellectual authority is not dependent upon or closely allied with

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[38] The character Mosca in "Volpone" is the ultimate demonstration of this axiom (knowledge=power), and because of its importance, we will revisit the role of the advisor later.

traditional moral systems, and both of them are trying to achieve goals (sleeping with someone else's wife) that are considered immoral.

The disguise of a medical doctor is also a particularly apt mask of authority, because a doctor is an authority on the physical self and human needs. Their very physical goals of sexual access to Celia and Lucrezia are best met by an authority who has a right to advise on the body. The physician is also an appropriate choice of disguise because doctors focus on the pragmatic. Their goal is to learn about and fix the physical, the "transient body" rather than the metaphysical or immaterial and immortal soul.

The study of medicine signifies an intellectual alternative to clerical scholasticism, even though medicine at the time of Machaivelli and the English Renaissance was still deeply invested in traditional (and by Enlightenment standards, non-scientific) notions about the body. The physician's practical perspective on the human body is similar to Machiavelli's goal and philosophy, which is to focus on human behavior and human need, as opposed to the theological, which as far as Machiavelli's writings are concerned, doesn't matter (or at least is worthless to discuss in this context). Machiavelli pursues the study of the outward, not the inward. Therefore, the medical disguise is the most appropriate to illuminate the characters' pragmatic focus on the material.

One of the primary functions of these disguises in each of the stories' plotlines is to offer a remedy. Callimaco and Ligurio offer the mandrake root for fertility and Volpone offers a magical oil for health. These supposed remedies are manmade constructions that would demonstrate the generative and progressive power of human reason, if they were real. However, as fictitious remedies in each of the stories' plotlines,

they, somewhat ironically, become an even more powerful statement of the power of human thought. The remedies are only intellectual constructs, the actual substance given to the women has no power to do the work that the physician claims it will—and yet, a tangible, material goal is attained because of the belief in the remedy and the doctor who prescribed it. This is a troupe for the writings of Machiavelli itself—it is a remedy, which is not physical, but which, when applied, can effect material change and help to safeguard against the disasters Fortune can bring. It is an affirmation of the idea that our immediate, physical condition matters, and that we do not heal ourselves or our social situation by gazing into the heavens. However, if we act inventively and virtuously for ourselves, we have the solution.

This principle of the self-healing power of reason is illustrated in an especially literal way in *Volpone*. Volpone disguises himself as an invalid in quite a few scenes so that people will give him presents in anticipation of inheriting from him. The mountebank disguise thus literally offers the remedy to the invalid disguise and to the problem of having sex with Corvino's wife, by the feigned elixir's feigned curing of Volpone's feigned illness. So the remedy is not a cure for the disguise, as it is a disguise itself.

***ii. Words, Words, Words***

Though Mosca and Volpone dress themselves for the part of the mountebank, an essential element of both Volpone's and Callmacio's disguises that in truth clinches the ruse for both of them is their speech or linguistic/rhetorical power. They both use their linguistic trickery and prowess as their primary masking tools. Since Callimaco and Ligurio assume no physical disguise in deceiving Nicia, their "proof" of authority is based *solely* upon what they say and how their actions correspond with their speech.

Messer Nicia is persuaded to believe in Callimaco's medical authority only after Callimaco has impressed him with his knowledge of Latin and his no-nonsense way of speaking about the reproductive process that we have already identified as a mark of the pragmatic physician:

> **Callimaco**: …in order to satisfy your desire, it's necessary to know the cause of your wife's sterility, because there could be many causes. *Nam causae sterilitatis sunt: aut in semine, aut in matrice, aut in strumentis seminaries, aut in virga, aut in causa extrinseca.* [Flaumenhaft translation: "For the causes of sterility are either in the semen, or in the womb, or in the seminal organs, or in the penis, or in an extrinsic cause."]
>
> **Nicia**: (This fellow is the most worthy man one could find!) (M 22).

This scene highlights the fact that it is not only the content of the speech that matters, it is the also the form: the word choice and style, and in this case, the language, that matter. Latin was the language of the educated, and so in this case, the form speaks more loudly to Nicia than does Callimaco's appearance or what he is saying. Nicia gives over control of the situation (and Lucrezia) when he is one-upped linguistically. Nicia knows some Latin from his legal training, but his knowledge of it has mostly left him, so he seems lacking next to Callimaco (whose Latin is not perfect, as he himself admits to Ligurio, but better than Nicia's). The perceived power difference is concretely established when Nicia must lapse into his native, vulgar language to communicate.

Language is also an important element in Volpone's disguise as a mountebank. Volpone adopts the speech of the particular blend of entertainer and salesman that seems to have characterized the mountebank's performance. He uses rhetorical devices, such as

in the following passage, where he "puts down" the performers who are not up to the level of the mountebanks (literally and figuratively). These "inferior" performers act upon the ground (as opposed to the mountebanks, who perform on benches in St. Mark's Square). Volpone degrades these men as charlatans:

> "These turdy-facy-nasty-paty-lousy-fartical rogues, with one poor groatsworth of unprepared antimony, finely wrapped up in several scartoccios are able very well to kill their twenty a week, and play; yet these meager starved spirits, who have half stopped organs of their minds with earthy oppilations, want not their favourers among your shriveled salad-eating artisans, who are overjoyed that they may have their ha'p'orth of physic, though it purge 'em into another world, 't makes no matter." (VO 2.2.57-64)

The content of his language is very thin, but his rhetorical devices are thick. Firstly, Volpone uses the technical lingo of the trade (footnotes in the Ostovich edition explains antimony as a native trisulphide used in alchemical experiments, medicines, and cosmetics, and scartoccios as paper containers for spice or medication), just as Callimaco used anatomical references to impress Nicia. His use of these technical terms creates an appearance of superior knowledge.

Volpone also uses stylistic devices such as assonance and internal rhyme ("turd*y*-fac*y*-nast*y*..."), alliteration and consonance, ("*s*hriveled *s*alad-eating artis*ans*") and vivid, humorous imagery ("half stopped organs of their minds"). When he gives his sales pitch for his magic elixir, he includes linguistic imagery that alludes to luxury and exotic places to tempt his audience, as Nano's (the dwarf he keep for entertainment) song demonstrates: "No Indian drug had ere been famed,/ Tobacco, sassafras not named;/ Ne

yet of guacum[39] one small stick, sir," (VO 2.2:117-119). He also performs linguistic sleight-of-hand, by beginning his speech with the claim that he had nothing to sell, and then slowly shifting to prepare the audience for his pitch: "I have nothing to sell, little or nothing to sell," (VO 2.2.69).

It is through these wheedling words and promises about his feigned elixir that he attains the impossible: he lures Celia, the woman who is "kept as warily as is your [Volpone's] gold: / Never does come abroad, never takes air, / But at a window." (VO 1.5.118-121) to her window and is able to have a small interaction with her as she throws down her handkerchief to Volpone as a sign of her interest in his elixir.

> Volpone: ...Therefore, now, toss your handkerchiefs cheerfully, cheerfully, and be advertised that the first heroic spirit that deigns to grace me with a handkerchief I will give it a little remembrance of something beside, shall please it better than if I had presented it with a double pistolet...
>
> *Celia at the window throws down her handkerchief*
>
> Volpone: [Retrieving and kissing the handkerchief] Lady, I kiss your bounty...
>
> (VO 2.3.197-205)

This demonstrates of the importance of words in getting what you want: in these cases, to attain the seemingly unattainable female. As the playwright well knows, a person can literally be created through language and a clever person, prince or not, uses language to actively create him or herself.

Another instance of language as a disguise in Early Modern English drama can be found in a play which was the combined effort of three individually famous playwrights:

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[39] A footnote in the Ostovich edition tells us that this refers to a Guaiacum tree, native to the West Indies.

Jonson, Marston, and Chapman. In the very first line of the play, *Eastward Ho*, the upright, moral and bourgeois goldsmith, Touchstone asks his young apprentice where he is going that night: "And whither with you now? What loose action are you bound for? Come what comrades are you to meet withal? Where's the supper? Where's the rendezvous?" (EH 1.1.1-4) To these rhetorical questions, which are really closer to accusations, his apprentice, Quicksilver, responds with feigned innocence: "Indeed, and in very good sober truth, sir—" (EH 1.1.5). However, Touchstone is immediately enraged by Quicksilver's attempt to represent himself in humble, innocent, and temperate terms:

> 'Indeed, and in very good sober truth, sir—Behind my back thou wilt swear faster than a French footboy, and talk more bawdily than a common midwife, and now, 'Indeed, and in very good sober truth, sir!' But if a privy search should be made, with what furniture are you rigged now? Sirrah, I tell thee, I am thy master, William Touchstone, goldsmith, and thou my prentice, Francis Quicksilver; and I will see whither you are running. Work upon that now! (EH 1.1.6-15)

Quicksilver attempts to disguise himself in the language of a virtuous man, and Touchstone immediately "unmasks" him, so to speak. Though he may speak to his master in a subservient way, Touchstone can plainly see that Quicksilver's style of verbal communication does not correspond with his other means of expression, most notably, the style of his "furniture," or in other words, Qucksilver's apparel and personal belongings (EH 1.1.10). Quicksilver dresses like gallant, and thinks of himself as a courtier and therefore adopts all of vices that men of high-standing should have (such as gambling, wenching or whoring), though he is only the apprentice to a goldsmith.

Therefore, the very first action of the *Eastward Ho!* is an instance and exposure of linguistic disguise. As the opening scene, it reveals quite a bit about the characters, and in fact, serves as a kind of foreshadowing of outcome of the play, in which the ambitious, deceiving Quicksilver is put at the mercy of not only his honest, upright, and self-righteous master, Touchstone, but also at the feet of his pious fellow apprentice, Golding.

Just as the tricksters do in *Volpone* and *Eastward Ho!* the character Rynaldo of *All Fooles* also uses words as a cape to hide behind. However, he does not hide himself. Rynaldo creates a ruse to help both his brother, Fortunio, who has great affections for the closely-guarded daughter of Gonstanzo, and his friend Valerio (son of Gonstanzo) who has secretly married a girl of no social or economic standing:

> *Rynaldo*: ..you know what horror
> Would flye on your love from your [Valerio's] fathers frownes,
> If he should knowe it. And your sister here,
> (My brother's sweete hart) knows aswell what rage
> Would sease his powers for her, if he should knowe
> My brother woo'd her, or that she lov'd him.[40]

Rynaldo tells Gonstanzo that Fortunio has secretly married Valerio's actual wife, and asks Gonstanzo to stand by Fortunio when they confront their father with the news. Gonstanzo does not want to do this, and instead invites Fortunio and Gratiana (Valerio's bride) to live in his house for a while so that "reconciliation" can take place between the wayward, eloped son and his (in truth not-so-angry) father. In this way, Rynaldo's lie allows Fortunio to be in the house of the girl he intends to woo and enables Valerio to

live with his new bride, right under Gonstanzo's unknowing nose. However, it is not only Rynaldo's deceptive words that bring about this disguise, it is also brought about by fortune, the lucky chance that Gonstanzo invited them all over:

> Rynaldo: Peace, be ruld by mee,
>
> And you shall see to what a perfect shape
>
> Ile bring this rude Plott, which blind Chaunce (the
>
> Ape of Counsaile and advice) hath brought foorth blind. (AF 2.1:122-125)

In this sense, Rynaldo is in a situation similar to the prince Machiavelli describes, who has acquired a kingdom by Fortune, but must then keep it by his own virtù:

> Those who become princes from private individual solely by fortune become so with little trouble, but maintain themselves with much...States that come to be suddenly, like all other things in nature that are born and grow quickly, cannot have roots and branches, so that the first weather eliminates them—unless, indeed, as was said, those who have suddenly become princes have so much virtue that they know immediately how to prepare to keep what fortune has placed in their laps... (P 7)

In this case, Rynaldo laid the foundations of his power (matchmaking power though it is) with his lies, but the real reward of his trickery (Gonstanzo proposing that Fortunio and Gratiana live with them) was not brought about by his stratagem, but rather by a stroke of

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[40] George Chapman, *All Fooles, Plays and Poems,* ed. Jonathan Hudston (New York, Penguin, 1998) 1.2.91-96. Hereafter cited in the text as AF.

luck. In order to cash in on this generosity of fate, however, Rynaldo (and the pretending lovers)[41] must use his intellect and virtù to gain the reward or the happy ending.

***iii. Piety and Priestly Garments***

We have already discussed the ways in which adopting the guise of intellectual authority or shifting linguistic styles and content allow both Machiavelli's and the English playwrights' Machiavel tricksters to manipulate and maintain control over other characters in the plays. Yet the only deception in *Mandragola* that Lucrezia finally changes her moral code it is guise of moral authority of Fra Timoteo and the somewhat patchy scriptural evidence he gives to justify the use of the mandrake.

As we have seen, Timoteo takes a bribe from Ligurio on the condition that he in return will provide some sort of scriptural authority for their claim, he will "dupe her by her goodness," (M 3.9). He uses religion as a tool, and ultimately, it is the tool that works to make Lucrezia conform to what turns out to be the good of all.

Frate Timoteo is essentially renting out his monk's habit and the moral authority that go with it to disguise the seemingly uglier and morally unacceptable points of Ligurio and Callimaco's scheme. In this way, Frate Timoteo proves and disproves the dictum that Security affirms in *Eastward Ho*: "Culcullus non facit monachum," or "The cowl does not make the monk" (EH 3.3:201-202). He proves it in the sense appearances can be deceiving, but he also disproves it, by showing that to a large degree, it is only the outward appearance of morality that matters, because it is the *reputation* of morality gives you authority.

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[41] There is some interesting banter in *All Fooles* about the importance of advisor to the actors (Rynaldo) compared to the importance of the actors themselves (Valerio, Fortunio, etc.), which parallels the fine and fragile relationship in Machiavelli between the advisor and the prince.

The two-fold conclusion about the deceptive yet singly important nature of appearances is what Fortunio, Rynaldo, and Valerio of *All Fooles* also settle on. They struggle throughout the whole play to maintain the appearance of virtue and morality[42] to their fathers (Marc Antonio and Gonstanzo, respectively). While they all, like Valerio, "...canst skill of dice / Cards, tennis, wenching, dauncing, and what not," (AF I.1:153-154) they also realize that in order to maintain their domestic and economic security (i.e. their inheritances) they should keep such dangerous and condemned pursuits to themselves, because it is little more than their father's good will that ensures their future. Therefore, the illusion of morality will argue their case as good sons worthy of shelter, protection, and wealth, while the truth beneath this virtuous mask, could cause them to be cut off from the family.[43] Beliveing that Fortuntio has eloped with Gratiana, Gonstanzo advises Marc Antonio to:

> ..let him runne into the warre,
> And lose what limbes he can: better one branch
> Be lopt away, then all the whole tree should perish:
> And for his wants, better young want then olde;
> You have a younger sonne at Padoa,
> I like his learning well, make him your heire (AF I.1.312-318).

Another character in *All Fooles* who wraps himself in the cloak of morality to hide even more fundamentally immoral actions and ideas is Cornelio. Both we, as the

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[42] When I use the words "morality" and "immorality" in this paper, I mean that the behavior is conceived by traditional Christian morality systems, so a more precise but awkward equivalent might be "traditionally moral" or "traditionally immoral."

[43] Though, as it turns out, both of their fathers, particularly Marc Antonio, are understanding and forgiving of their vices.

readers/audience, and the characters in the play see Cornelio as a man who holds the virtue of chastity in high regard. He is always following his wife, Gazetta, around suspiciously, and is seems suspicious of and threatened by every man she even looks at:

> *Gazetta*: There's no mans eye fixt on mee but doth pierce
> My Husbandes soule: If any aske my wel-fare?
> Hee straight doubts Treason practis'd to his bed. (AF I.2.27-29)

Despite these impressions, and the near divorce that he brings upon his wife, we all discover at the end that Cornelio, in fact, orchestrated his wife's own affair with Dariotto, and then "made a shew of Divorce" (AF V.2:203). Cornelio claims he did this in order to "bridle her stout stomack,"[44] or, as I understand it, to secure her against any flightiness and circumvent feelings of moral guilt and shame she might otherwise have felt from her desires for other men (AF V.2.206-212).[45]

In the play *Eastward Ho*, there is an instance of a base form of moral disguise. One of the main characters of *Eastward Ho*, the vice-ridden young Sir Petronel Flash, (who in addition to all of his bad qualities isn't even a "real" knight, he bought his knighthood from the reigning monarch[46]) like Callimaco and Volpone, is taken with the

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[44] Cornelio also claims and seems to derive pleasure from the act of scheming and manipulating Dariotto.

[45] This sort of extreme suspicion or high valuation of chastity that soon turns out to be corrupt or bankrupted is paralleled in "Volpone," by Corvino, who is so harsh with his wife when she throws her handkerchief down to the disguised Volpone, but shortly afterwards, is trying to convince her to sleep with Volpone, that he may name Corvino as his sole heir (see II.7 &III.7). There is a basic difference between the two, however—Corvino's jealous actions at the beginning of the play are no show, they are not part of a larger design, whereas Cornelio's are carefully calculated parts of an elaborate scheme.

[46] Ben Jonson was imprisoned for the particularly harsh portrayal of this "new" knight which was seen as too critical of the monarchy's new practice of selling titles, which is essentially the exchange of hereditary political authority for economic authority, (Boughner). This is another double display of the power of language, that spans the fictional and the actual: Flash pays for a name, and Jonson's verbal critique of this practice is considered so dangerous that he is physically punished for it.

closely-guarded wife of another man. Sir Petronel wants to steal the wife of his business associate, Security, and whisk her away to America with him. In order to do this, Petronel leads Security to believe that he (Sir Petronel) posseses at least a basic respect and reverence for friendship, and that basic morality or ethics would keep him from abusing that bond. And so he gulls Security for his faith in Sir Petronel's fundamental sense morality. Flash makes Security believe that he wants another character's wife. Security suggests disguising this other character's wife as his (Security's) own wife, Winifred, in order to sneak her away. Therefore, when Security sees a masked woman dressed like his wife prepared to leave with Sir Petronel, he does not flinch, but instead feels a part of the great ruse being pulled over this other character who he supposes is about to be cuckolded.

Sir Petronel Flash of defies traditional morality in a very deep sense, as his disregard for the traditionally sacred institution of marriage clearly shows: "The best is, a large time-fitted[47] conscience is bound to nothing: marriage is but a form in the school of policy, to which scholars sit fastened with painted chains. Old Security's wife is ne'er the further of with me, " (VO 113-114). This quote shows the extent of his defiance and defines a belief central to all of the tricksters in our comedies: that morals are not universal, rather, they should be "time-fitted." In other words, Petronel gives the argument against an idea defined by Plato and adapted by the Christianity that we live in a world of shadows, and therefore should have no care about this life, but we should rather look towards and guide our actions based on the next life in which we will understand and fully comprehend all thing. Petronel argues that we should divest

[47] "Time-fitted" is explained by Van Fossen in a footnote as "suited to the times, adaptable." And is also by extension, promiscuous, (VO 113).

ourselves of these "painted chains" of universal time and morals and quit orienting our lives toward this "world of being", as Plato termed it. Instead, we should accept our lives as we live them, and focus on the seculum, the world of time in which we may not understand everything, but this is fact is acceptable.

***iv. Fame and Fortune***

The Early Modern English dramas focus even more markedly than does *Mandragola*, on economic or class disguises. The characters cover themselves and their primary motivations by pretending to hold a higher class or economic rank than they actually do. Callimaco does this in an indirect way in *Mandragola*. He does not need to feign wealth, because he already has it, but in his disguise as a reputed physician, he needs proof of the quality of his "remedy." He has already convinced Nicia of his authority, by means of linguistic and intellectual displays, but he needs to give his proposed remedy authority as well. Callimaco does this by posturing himself as a sort of "doctor to the stars." He touts his remedy as: "something I've tested two pairs of times and always found true; and if it weren't for this, the queen of France would be sterile, and countless other princesses of that state" and later, he asks Nicia why he is hesitating to do: "what the king of France, and as many lords as are there, have done?" (II.6) And this added bit of disguise does the trick—when Nicia consents to submit to Callimaco's direction, he specifically says: "I agree, since you say that the king and princes and lords have taken this way" (II.6).

One of the primary plots of *Eastward Ho!* revolves around a deceptive claim to riches. Sir Petronel Flash deceives Gertrude, son of the pious Touchstone, into thinking that he is that landed knight, and that after their marriage she will not only become a lady,

but she will be in charge of a great castle and fortune. In these hopes, Gertrude marries Petronel, gives over her piece of dowry land to the knight, and self-assuredly embarks (in a carriage—the only real piece of aristocracy or wealth that Petronel has) off to her new castle. However, Petronel has no castle, is quite bankrupt and immediately sells off Gertrude's dowry land so that he can charter a ship to Virginia. While Petronel is wise about the type of disguise that Gertrude will readily fall for (we will return to discuss Gertrude's ambition later), it is ironic that he entertains equally as naïve beliefs about how to "get rich quick." He believes all of the fables about Virginia being the land of milk and honey and grossly underestimates the effort it requires to get to there. Just as Gertrude leaves in a cocky, arrogant fashion to her imaginary castle, so Petronel leaves in a brazen manner on a silly attempt for Virginia. This play, more than any of the other English drama, truly sets up those taken in or using economic disguise to take a hard fall—that is, the characters that utilize disguise or focus on appearances in *Eastward Ho!* positioned by the plot to succumb to dramatic and disastrous forces.[48]

Volpone also uses an economic disguise of wealth. We have already discussed Volpone's disguise as a mountebank, but the more consistent disguise that Volpone wears and acts out, is that of a very sick, old rich man. He is not really ill at all throughout the course of the play, but when hopeful heirs come to visit him, he plays the near-death invalid. In this way, he gets these inheritance candidates to bring him gifts and money, since they believe their tokens will result in the favor of a very rich man. After a while, Volpone does not have to trump up his wealth, because he has amassed quite a fortune from playing the sick man. He expresses love for his riches, equating them to

[48] We will discuss this and other outcomes of disguise in greater detail in Chapter 5.

many of the powers we have already discussed—moral power: "Open the shrine, that I may see my saint. [*Mosca opens the treasure chest*] Hail, the world's soul, and mine," (I.1:2-3) linguistic power: "Riches, the dumb god that giv'st all men tongues—" (I.1:22), and everything besides: "...Thou are virtue, fame, Honour, and all things else!" (I.1.25-26).

Thus, Jonson consciously or unconsciously acknowledges a fact that the *Mandragola* implies, that every relationship is a power relationship: economic, academic, religious, civic, even personal relationships are colored by power struggle. Here, economic power is equated to linguistic power, religious power, class power, moral power, "and all things else." Therefore, if all relations are those of power, it is no surprise that these English playwrights, like Machiavelli, show their protagonists using the strategies Machiavelli recommends for princes and political leaders. This would make the very same methods that are politically effective and virtùous, equally effective (as the characters of these comedies demonstrate) in personal relationships. Machiavelli's presence is so strong in these comedies precisely because his recommendations reach beyond the world of the ruling classes and have everyday implications.

## Chapter 4:
## The Ends

We have thoroughly examined how the characters of *Mandragola* and the Early Modern English plays implement similar types of disguises and deceptions that fall into rubrics based on what authority the tricksters claim in the execution of their manipulative schemes. However, we have not addressed *why* the characters are using these disguises. We do know yet know what they trying to accomplish through deception. In other words, we have discussed the means the characters employ to achieve their desired goals, but we

have not examined the goals themselves. And so, in this chapter, we move our focus to these ambitions or ends that constitute half of Machiavelli's infamous maxim: the ends justify the means.

As we discussed earlier, there are two primary ends attained by the main characters of *Mandragola*: the establishment of a loving partnership between Callimaco and Lucrezia and the production of a child. These are the main goals, but there are as many goals in *Mandragola* as there are characters. Each character involved in the plot has one or more different motivations for backing Ligurio's mandrake scheme: some more or less admirable, though none harmful or completely selfish (Frate Timeteo wants to gain money, purportedly to give to the poor and help the church; Ligurio seems to only want a stable income and a few good meals; and Sostrata simply wants a grandchild). Still, the principal aims in *Madragola* are represented as both sound and unselfish, and as we discussed in Chapter 1, these ends do seem to be good enough to justify the use of disguise and deception for Machiavelli.[49] However, we will save our exposition of the moral judgments the playwrights make upon their characters until the next chapter, and concentrate here upon the goals (accomplished or unaccomplished) of the English plays' characters.

***Greed and Lust***

The intended ends or ambitions of the main deceivers in *Eastward Ho!* however, are quite different from Callimaco or Lucrezia's. As we have discussed, Sir Petronel Flash, with the help of Quicksilver, deceives his bride, Gertrude, into thinking that he is

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[49] We will discuss whether or not the playwrights and their contemporary audiences felt that the ends did justify the deceptive means used in the respective plays in the Chapter 5, since this is essentially a study how far Machiavelli's political teachings were accepted by this group of Early Modern English playwrights and, perhaps, their audiences.

of the hereditary landed gentry (when it seems that he actually purchased his knighthood and subsequently went broke) so that he can get his hands on her dowry property. His goal in this deception is simple: Sir Petronel wants to increase his personal wealth. Therefore, his is a selfish end—it does not profit anyone else in the play,[50] and it harms a great many people, most particularly Gertrude and her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Touchstone, who suffer both a loss in reputation and a financial loss.

The main characters in *Volpone* seem equally, if not more, concerned with material wealth. The whole point of Volpone's long-standing disguise as an invalid is to trick a set of hopeful heirs into giving him money and expensive gifts. Mosca's motivation in deceiving others seems, at the beginning of *Volpone,* to grow out of the financial generosity of his patron (for Mosca is "a parasite," or someone who functions as a friend and almost a servant who depends upon his lord for the means to live) and also loyalty and affection for Volpone. We as the audience, however, watch this facade of loyalty crumble in Act III of the play, where we hear a revealingly self-important speech given by Mosca on the deceptive power and virtù of the parasite:

> ...O! your parasite
> Is a most precious thing, dropped from above,
> Not bred 'mongst clods and clodpoles here on earth
> ...your elegant fine rascal, that can rise
> And stoop almost together, like an arrow;
> Shoot through the air as nimbly as a star;
> Turn short as doth a swallow; and be here,
> And there, and here, and yonder, all at once;
> Present to any humor, all occasion;
> And change a visor swifter than a thought! (Vol 3.1.7-29)

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[50] The only other person that one could argue benefits from Sir Petronel's scheme is the sea-captain who gets the sale-money from the dowry property in exchange for taking Sir Petronel and Quicksilver to Virginia. However, the sea captain loses his boat in the wreck of Act IV, so it cannot really be claimed that he gains anything from his transaction with Sir Petronel and his scheme.

The delight Mosca takes in the virtùous execution of the subtle tasks of a parasite (a pejorative term that Mosca proudly adopts for himself) exudes from every word in this speech. His profession as a parasite is of the highest order because of the virtù required to fulfill it. He is a divine creature, who is so guileful that he can accomplish or synthesize two seemingly antithetical tasks into one: "can rise / And stoop almost together." This particular phrasing only implies the cunning of the successful parasite, it implies the particular sort of actions that he must perform doubly. He must bow (submit to another's authority) while he is in fact rising in his own authority. He is the consummation or synthesis of the abilities that the natural world can bestow (shoot through the air like a star or comet, and instantly turn as a swallow does). The truly triumphant parasite can even be in multiple places at once, or at least seem it be through his clever deceptions. Most importantly, though, the good parasite has an almost preternatural ability to adopt just the right social mask or disguise for each situation he finds himself in: "change a visor swifter than a thought." The heavy emphasis on incredibly active, kinetic verbs likens the parasite to a warrior or well-trained athlete, and Mosca's comparison lauds himself in the same way that these figures were lauded in classical literature. His virtù, like theirs, is active and noble, but not because of actual physical exercise. The parasite's virtù is in his natural mental and social dexterity and especially in his well-honed skill to deceive and disguise.

This speech leads us to seriously doubt that Mosca cares about anyone but himself. That his service and friendship to Volpone is an exercise more of skill than of true loyalty is confirmed in the very next scene, in which we begin to see Mosca undermining Volpone's schemes. Since Mosca has set most of these schemes up himself,

we are led to conclude that Mosca is truly a grand schemer who sets up these elaborate plots with the sole intention of trapping Volpone when he dismantles them (i.e. when he reveals that he is actually rising while it seemed that he was stooping). Mosca's sole motivation or end in the play seems to be that of material gain.[51]

A secondary aim shared by both Volpone and *Eastward Ho!*'s Sir Petronel Flash is that of sexual fulfillment, which is often equated to wealth in each of these plays. Both create schemes (Flash by himself, Volpone with the "help" of Mosca) to woo the desirable wife of another character. Volpone expresses his sexual desire when he attempts to woo Celia, once he finally is granted private access to her.[52] When he makes an argument about why she should give in to his sexual advances, Volpone strikes on

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[51] Mosca explicitly expresses ambition for material wealth in the final scene, where he bargains with the powerless Volpone for his fortune. Volpone is believed dead at this point (because of his own scheme), but is disguised as a simple court officer or commendatore, and stands right beside Mosca, who everyone believes is now rich because he is Volpone's sole heir, as he addresses the judges or avocatore. Volpone begs Mosca to tell the judges that he [Volpone] is actually alive so that they can undo the trick. For in the situatioin, Mosca he does actually possess all of the the power that the Volpone's wealth formerly gave him, even though Volpone is still alive. Mosca has the key to Volpone's villa and locks him out, and since Volpone cannot reveal himself from his disguise without putting himself in assured legal danger (i.e. from imitating an officer, lying to the judges, and deceiving everyone is this cruel manner), he need Mosca to say that Volpone is alive, and then he could theoretically go back to his villa, put on his normal clothes and be alright. However, Mosca wants an assurance of at least half of Volpone's estate before he will give control back to Volpone:

> Mosca: ...Most reverend fathers,
> I had sooner attended your grave pleasures,
> But that my order for the funeral
> Of my dear patron did require me—
> Volpone: [*aside*] Mosca!
> Mosca: Whom I intend to bury like a gentleman.
> Volpone: [*aside*] Ay, quick, and cozen me of all...
> Mosca: [*aside to* Volpone] Will you give me half? (VO V:12.55-62)

[52] In this scene, Act II, Scene 7, Celia's husband, Corvino actually orders Celia to have sex with Volpone because he is led to believe by Mosca that Volpone has nearly recovered from his previous "illness" and all he needs to complete the cure is to sleep with a young woman (Vol II.6). By offering his own wife, the previously jealous Corvino believes he has the definitive way to ensure his inheritance of Volpone's estate. This act also shows how Corvino, like so many of the other English characters, is simply putting on a mask of Christian virtue when he scolds his wife for being immoral and immodest by appearing at a window in front of a crowd only a few hours earlier, when he is in fact motivated by more material concerns than virtue.

chords very familiar from Machiavelli's argument about the priority of reputation or appearance over actual "truth":

> [Volpone sings:] Why should we defer our joys?
> Cannot we delude the eyes
> Of a few poor household spies?
> Or his easier ears beguile,
> Thus removed by our wile?
> 'Tis no sin love's fruits to steal;
> But the sweet thefts to reveal,
> To be taken, to be seen,
> These have crimes accounted been. (VO 3.7.173-183)

Here, Volpone is seeking to sweeten Celia to the idea of sleeping together by trying to allay her anxieties about the "wrongness" of the act. He claims that the act that she views as "sinful" is not sinful at all. Yet Volpone does not dismiss the idea of "sinning" altogether. He declares that there is such as thing as sin, which essentially acknowledges the existence of a moral framework, but Volpone redefines it. Volpone claims that the moral framework is based on appearances. One sins only if one is revealed or discovered to be acting immorally by traditional standards. In other words, Volpone agrees that sin and virtue are relevant concepts, but only relevant in appearances. The moral code someone transgresses when they sin, for Volpone, is explicitly connected to reputation or appearances. In fact, by making appearances the standard of morality, Volpone, in a very literal way, equates appearance with truth. As we mentioned in Chapter 1, Machiavelli agrees with this sentiment, a person's perceived actions are the only way by which a person's morality can be determined, and therefore it would make sense for a virtuous person to cloak their virtù with virtue. Though Volpone differs from the characters in *Mandragola* because sexual fulfillment rather than love is the end of many of his deceptions and also because he does not reject the idea of a true moral framework, his

"morals" value appearance over "truth" and result in the same Machiavellian prescriptions that Nicia, Frate Timeteo, and Callimaco follow.

***For the Love of the Game***

Sir Petronel Flash's aims in manipulating people do not seem as credible nor as steadfast as those which Ligurio achieves in arranging the relationship between Lucrezia and Callimaco. While it is clear by the end that Callimaco really cares for Lucrezia, the playwrights of *Eastward Ho!* do not represent Flash as emotionally invested in Winifred (Security's wife, whom he attempts to steal). Rather, Flash's statements imply that he is chasing after Winifred mostly because she poses a challenge to him:

> Now Frank, go thou home to his [Security's] house,
> Stead of his lawyer's, and bring his wife hither,
> Who, just like the lawyer's wife, is prisoned
> With his stern, usurous jealousy, which could never
> Be overreached thus, but with overreaching, (EH III:2.282-286).

Flash makes no claim to love or even lust after Winifred. He focuses instead, in this and the few other passages that explicate their relationship, upon the great trick (over another savvy trickster) that is required to get to Winifred. Therefore, the authors of *Eastward Ho!* portray Flash's goal as not only economic wealth, but also as one-upmanship in subtly and stratagem. The deceptive stratagem (especially when it includes "overreaching" another trickster) is like a game and so Flash seems to see it as enjoyable and an end by itself.

The deception in Volpone is employed to achieve ends that resemble Petronel's. Though Volpone lusts after the beautiful wife of Signor Corvino and certainly loves money, by Act V it emerges that what he really loves most is playing the trickster. His ultimate end is the disguise and deception themselves. At the beginning of Act V, though he and Mosca have just narrowly escaped criminal punishment for their elaborate

schemes (particularly their scheme to get Celia to have sex with Volpone) thanks to Voltore and Volpone's other aspiring heirs, Volpone yearns to scheme again and grandly to gull the very men who just saved him from imprisonment (or worse). He claims that the trickery he and Mosca performed was satisfying: "O, more than if I enjoyed the wench! The pleasure of all womankind's not like it" (VO 5.2.10-11). Though Volpone strives for riches, he inevitably put everything on the line so that he may once again play the dissembler.

In fact, if we go all the way back to Act I of *Volpone*, we find that Volpone reveals this love of trickery from the very beginning. At the very opening of the play, Volpone gives a lengthy speech comparing riches to divine power and love, but he concludes this speech by making this telling statement: "...Yet I glory / More in the cunning purchase of my wealth / Than in the glad possession." (VO 1.1.30-32) He and Mosca then expand upon why trickery is greater than any other human occupation.[53] These passages make it clear that Volpone schemes for himself alone and not for the benefit of any other person or for some external and generally acknowledged good. Volpone engages in deception ultimately because of the internal and personal satisfaction he gains from disguising himself and tormenting his neighbors. This emptiness of a good and external aim does strongly suggest the judgment Jonson will make about Volpone's deception this very emptiness will be a part of the judgment, but we will save this

[53] Another strong piece of evidence that indicates Volpone's love of the scheme itself is the relish he takes in disguising himself. We have only discussed Volpones' disguises as a mountebank and invalid, but he also disguises himself as a commendatore in Act V. He takes so much pleasure in acting out his role that he unknowingly lets Mosca take advantage of him. We will discuss the significant moral implications this has in Chapter 5.

discussion for Chapter 5 and continue on to focus on the final motivation for disguise in *Mandragola* and the English plays.

***For Love***

Besides wealth, sexual fulfillment, and love of the disguise itself, the crafty characters of the Early Modern English dramas have one last category of goals for donning their various disguises. Fortunio and Valerio of *All Fooles*, like Callimaco, conceal their true actions and identities as married or wooing gallants from their fathers, partly because they fear their parents' reactions (i.e. they fear being disinherited and disgraced) to their immoral pursuits of gambling, drinking, and wenching. However, they primarily disguise themselves because Fortunio and Valerio think their cover-up will allow them to continue to freely love and, ultimately, to get their fathers to accept, their secretly-married wives. Like Ligurio, the young and clever Rynaldo aids Fortunio and Valerio in hatching and executing their deceptions after he chances into his first scheme. In Act I, Rynaldo succinctly describes motivation of Fortunio and Valerio in pursuing this masquerade:

> Valerio here's a simple meane for you
> To lye at racke and manger with your wedlocke,
> And brother [Fortunio], for your selfe to meet as freely
> With this your long desir'd and barred love (AF I:2.117-120).

The goal of the deception here is not simply the sexual fulfillment that Volpone or Sir Petronel Flash wanted. Instead, Fortunio and Valerio deceive their parents because they want to enjoy the steady love of their partners *and* their fathers.

It bears mentioning that although I think it clear that Fortunio and Valerio's primary reason for deception is love of their wives, they, like many of the characters in these plays and like people in real life, have more complicated motivations. It is very

likely, for example, that part of the anxiety they feel about losing the love of their fathers is closely connected is economic anxiety. They do not want to be disinherited by marrying without their fathers' consent. However, as they are willing to risk this, it seems that they are, above all, motivated by the genuine love of their partners.

Ultimately, Fortuntio and Valerio are motivated by not wanting to choose between their desires for the love of their spouse (and the sexual fulfillment that comes with it) and the love of their fathers (and the economic security that comes this love). Therefore, in a sense, Fortunio and Valerio's reason for deception is that they want to have their cake and eat it too. They try to reconcile their desires and roles as sons and husbands by using different "faces" for different characters in the play. In a way, this is one of the most realistic depictions of the personal, social necessity of the facades that Machiavelli advises rulers to wear in his political discourses. In order to please the older generation while still maintaining their position in their own generation and the social order within that, they use deception. This adds a new shade of subtlety to this example of deception. Fortunio and Valerio attempt to maintain their economic, social, and sexual powers as well as their loves with one action.

Another particularly suprising English character who tricks for love is Golding, the exemplar of Christian morality in *Eastward Ho!*. From the beginning of the play, Golding and Quicksilver are presented as foils to one another: they are both of about the same age and they are both apprentices to the goldsmith, Touchstone, but they have diametrically opposed moral beliefs. As Touchstone says: "one is of a boundless prodigality, the other of a most hopeful industry" (EH I:1.95-96) Golding is also opposed to Sir Petronel Flash because he and Flash each married one of Touchstone's two

daughters. And in Touchstone's mind as well as most reader's minds that explicitly states that he sees the

We have not yet discussed Golding's trick, because it is does not easily correspond with the other tricks and their representations in the play since Golding gains absolutely *no* personal benefit from the deception he pulls. Golding's only likely motivation for disguising himself is Christian love and forgiveness. In Act V, after Quicksilver, Security, and Sir Petronel Flash are all being held in Newgate prison, Golding goes to see them and witnesses their complete repentance. [54] The one who has legal complaint against these men, Master Touchstone, refuses to be moved to any pity and therefore does not even want to see the men in jail, lest his resolve melt. However, Touchstone has a great reverence for his son-in-law and former apprentice, Golding. Because of Touchstone's lack of mercy, Golding gives his ring and the message that he has been detained and needs bail to the prison warden to in turn deliver to Touchstone. For when Touchstone receives this message, Golding correctly assumes that Touchstone will come to the jail, and witness Flash, Quicksilver, and Security's sorrow and Touchstone will be moved to compassion.

Golding has no personal motivation in trying to gain the prisoners' freedom, he could just as easily enact his vengeance upon them, but instead he uses a deception in order to express his Christian love and forgiveness, as Wolf, the warden, explicitly reminds the audience in an aside: "(*To the audience*) See here a benefit truly done, when

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[54] The sincerity of Flash and Quicksilver's repentance is crucial to validating this instance of disguise (and as we will see in the next chapter, this deception is validated), and therefore the playwrights take great pains to make certain that the audience knows that the prisoners are truly and deeply sorrow in their hearts as well as their words. Because of this need to validate the deception, and not make it simply another scheme, we [the audience and readers] overhear a series of short conversations between two fellow

it is done timely, freely, and to no ambition" (EH V:3.130-131). So it seems that in this case, being virtuous (in the Christian sense) actually requires the moral character to transgress the Christian injunction against lying. Therefore, *Eastward Ho!* seems to imply that we should, in a very limited way, have a "time-fitted conscience."

## Chapter 5:
## Machiavelli on Trial:
## The Moral Judgement of Deception in the English Plays

In the Dedicatory Epistle preceding *Volpone*, Ben Jonson argues that comedy must sometimes end with punishments, "...it being the office of a comic poet to imitate justice and instruct to life, as well as purity of language, or stir up gentle affections" (Epistle VO). Just a few years prior, in 1595, Sir Philip Sidney writes that poets are those who:

> make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and to teach; and delight, to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved—which being to the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them (*The Defence of Poesy* 484).

This conception of poetry's primary function as educational or composed to produce some morally edifying effect on the reader is not only expressed by Jonson and Sidney, it seems to have been widely shared by writers during the Elizabethan period. While they certainly strove to create works of linguistic beauty, Early Modern poets and playwrights also wanted to reflect the world and to reveal some practical truth to their audience, who could then apply their poetic lesson. Given this objective, it seems likely that many Early Modern English playwrights meant for the messages or lessons in their plays to be taken

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prisoners and a visiting friend, who recognize Quicksilver and can attest to his and Flash's absolute moral turnaround. (EH 5.2, 5)

seriously. Therefore, how the plays end up judging (negatively or positively, immoral or useful) disguise is the lesson the playwrights feel that their audiences should gain from their play. Just as Ben Jonson said in defense of the ending of Volpone, "my special aim being to put the snaffle in their mouths that cry out we never punish vice in our interludes, etc., I took the more liberty, though not without some lines of example drawn even in the ancients themselves, the goings out of whose comedies are not always joyful, but oft-times the bawds, the servants, the rivals, yea and the masters are mulcted" (VO Epistle.97-101). Therefore, the moral judgments made on the characters who utilize disguise, deception and generally accept Machiavelli's doctrine were likely not only the result of subconscious reactions based on assumed but unexamined moral principles, but were in fact, consciously formed and quite deliberate. Though it makes little difference whether the judgments made by Jonson, Marston, and Chapman were conscious or unconscious, the fact that they were quite deliberately modeled so as to demonstrate certain principles and express a certain opinion or lesson about how to judge secular, means-ends doctrines such as Machiavelli's makes it even clearer how important these moral judgements of disguise and deception are if we want to get a feeling for how the English, and not just a select few political authors, but people writing for more popular entertainment, felt about Machiavelli and based on what sort of critiques they launch, we can identify their own political and moral assumptions, which were in flux as humanist ideas poured into England from the continent and their monarch established his own Church.

***A Horse, A Horse, My Kingdom for a Horse***

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Up until the end of Act III, the Machiavellian tricksters: naïve Security, gallant Quicksilver, and reckless Sir Petronel have come out on top of every situation. The first three acts of *Eastward Ho!* focus almost solely on their thus-far successful schemes. However, the last scene of Act III signals the turn of the play against the schemers—their downfall begins with Security's realization that his own fellow schemers have betrayed him and that his wife, Winifred, has been stolen from him. The very joy he took in Sir Petronel's schemes has come full circle to now punish him—he literally acts to aid his own punishment. Security's punishment therefore is brought about by naïve trust in his equally amoral companions, but it is also natural result of the crime. Because of his willingness to help Flash rob the lawyer of his wife, he has his own wife stolen.

It seems very clear that the collaborative authors of *Eastward Ho!* condemn Security for his dishonesty and his willingness to deceive for the sake of a friend. It seems that the penalty that the playwrights decide best "imitates justice" is Security's immorality to fold in on itself. This implies that the moral code by which all actions are judged is a part of the natural order of things. The moral system is so truthful, universal, and necessary that it is inscribed into the action itself so that the punishment comes from the act itself, not by any external means. The trickster is necessarily doomed as soon as he sets foot outside of the traditional moral system by deceiving.

In a magnificently apt parody, Security laments his empty house and now Virginia-bound wife: "A boat, a boat, a full hundred marks for a boat!" (EH 3.4.5-6) This phrase connects Security to the most famous Machiavellian character in English drama, Richard III, and like Richard, Security falls because of his own willingly deceptive nature. Security does not have to wait for the afterlife to be punished; he is punished by

his own choice, in this world. However, Security was the first of the deceptive characters in *Eastward Ho!* to be punished, since he was portrayed as the most innocent of the three.

And yet, if we remember what actually happens in the fiction of the play, Security regains his wife, safely, and presumably without having been cuckolded (though no account of Winifred's behavior is made for the time between when Security saw her earlier in the evening and when she lands at Cuckold's Haven). So is this punishment as necessary as the Dante-like "fitting punishment" would suggest? It would seem, by looking at the ending of *Eastward Ho!* that the deceiver is *not* immediately and inescapably doomed. This idea is born out by the fate of the other Machiavellian dissemblers of the play.

At the beginning of Act IV of *Eastward Ho!*, an entirely new, outside observer is introduced, through whose eyes we witness the punishment of the Machiavellians. Slitgut, the apprentice of a butcher, has climbed up upon a pole in Cuckold's Haven to affix a pair of ox horns to it as part of the traditional history of the place (which will be a real haven for the cuckold Security as he lands) and as a sign of his master's trade. From this high point, which ambiguously mixes the divine and the vulgar (it is a shrine to St. Luke, but it is a sign of the King's having cuckolded and then bought off a citizen—and it a point of higher ground, but it is capped by a pair of horns), Slitgut observes the great storm over the river where the Viriginia-bound tricksters passing. He describes this abstract fury in terms of the divine, which bears out the idea that the tricksters of *Eastward Ho!* are being punished by their own stupidity for going out into the storm: "What young planet reigns now, trow, that old men are so foolish? What desperate young

swaggerer would have been abroad such a weather as this, upon the water?" and by the divine fury of the tempest:

> ...heaven and Saint Luke bless me, that I be not blown into the Thames as I climb, with this furious tempest. 'Slight, I think the devil be abroad, in likeness of a storm, to rob me of my horns. Hark how he roars. Lord! What a coil the Thames keep! She bears some unjust burden, I believe, that she kicks and curvets thus to cast it (EH 4.1.12-16).

In its anger, the Thames, which might normally seem a tame river, domesticated by human industry, rises up and is wild and wreaking justice upon the tricksters who have had the presumption to leave during such bad weather. In their shipwreck into the wild Thames, they are, in a sense, rebaptized from the water and converted by a crisis. Therefore, the playwrights reject Security, Quicksilver and Flash's means-ends rationality that disregarded the traditional moral system that now rises to punish them, as Quicksilver laments:

> Accursed, that ever I was saved or born.
> How fatal is my sad arrival here!
> As if the stars and Providence spake to me,
> And said, 'The drift of all unlawful courses,
> Whatever end they dare propose themselves,
> In frame of their licentious policies,
> In the firm order of just Destiny,
> They are the ready highways to our ruins.'
> I know not what to do; my wicked hopes
> Are, with this tempest, torn up by the roots (EH 4.1.135-144).

In this passage, Quicksilver explicitly recognizes that God or "Providence" is speaking to him in the form of the storm, and telling him explicitly that it is all of the dishonest means and methods of getting his way and manipulating people that he has employed, no matter what justification or ambition he was trying to accomplish, no matter what "end they dare propose themselves" such transgressions against the natural and universal moral system are wrong. This appears to be a critique not of the characters' ambition for

wealth or social status or sexual pleasure, this is a condemnation of disguise and deception as opposed to universality morality.

At the beginning of Act IV, the real schemers are punished, not by other men, as Security was, but by the Divine itself, in the form of a terrible storm. Nature itself rises up to destroy their just departing ships and bring the tricksters to their "just rewards." And just as Security and Winifred land appropriately land at Cuckold's Haven, Quicksilver and Sir Petronel Flash land at the Isle of Dogs, "well known as a refuge for debtors; its name derives from the tradition that the early kings kenneled their dogs there" (EH 4.1.191-192).

The means-ends minded tricksters of *Eastward Ho!* are indeed punished, humbled before Mildred, Touchstone, and above all, Golding, the characters who chose the straight and narrow morally correct path. When in prison, it becomes clear that they are converted and repented, (see footnote above).

However, Security's receipt of his wife, apparently untainted, and Flash and Quicksilver's reprieve from prison (which should have been their legal punishment, as Touchstone correctly maintained) complicates matters, especially considering Golding's trick, which we have already discussed. Golding's trick in particular seems to contradict Quicksilver's revelation on the sand that any type of dishonesty is simply invalid and wrong. Rather, Golding, who represents, like Lucretia does in *Mandragola*, perfect morality, rejection of ambition, etc. uses a trick to good, Christian ends, and the play represents this as good. The happy ending only comes after Golding's trick to make Touchstone be merciful works, and it comes just because of that trick. Therefore, *Eastward Ho!*, in Act IV seems to be about vindicitive and harsh judgment and

punishment, it presents the natural fury of the divine and presents disguise and deception themselves as their own punishments. Act V, on the other hand relates Golding's trick, and ends with Touchstone's forgiveness of the multiple faults of Quicksilver and Sir Petronel Flash, and he forgives his own daughter, Gertrude's ambition. This story of ordering and storyline, while seemingly contradictory, seems to parallel the traditional Christian story of redemption—they have been the Thames, which is supernaturally powerful and equated with both heaven and hell, and seems, appropriately to function as a sort of purgatory. But Golding uses deceptive means to pull the tricksters out of their position of unsaved-ness; he is the Christ-figure of the play, the son of the Father (Touchstone) who is the more vengeful God of the Tanak or Old Testament who is able to make his father merciful and save the sinners. It is interesting however, that he does this by using the same type of means that the sinners used—he deceives Touchstone. So here, it seems the difference between Golding and Sir Petronel Flash or Quicksilver is a difference of ends. Both their intents (to go to Virginia, leave Gertrude, leave Sindefy) and their actually accomplished ends (selling Gertrude's property, stealing Security's wife for a short time) are selfish, harmful, whereas Golding's intent and ends in deceiving Touchstone are not at all selfish. Therefore, it seems that the Christian tradition is strongly reinforced in *Eastward Ho!* and that what ultimately emerges out of the text is a contradictory message. The text both condemns and approves of disguise and deception, but it resoundingly condemns any use of it to obtain "unlawful" or immoral goals. So despite its ambivalence about the moral status of Machiavellian deception and manipulation, *Eastward Ho!* fiercely attacks the motivations for their moral transgressions: their ambition for wealth, sexual fulfillment, and class status. Therefore,

*Eastward Ho!*, while it seems to denounce a view of the world like Machiavelli's in which deception is a necessary and acceptable social tool for accomplishing your goals, Machiavelli would not likely have approved of the goals of Sir Petronel Flash, Quicksilver, and maybe not even Security. And yet the method of bringing the tricksters to justice gives us a clearer picture of the play's relationship to Machiavelli and the *Mandragola*. In the *Mandragola*, there are absolutely no instances of punishment, while in *Eastward Ho!* there are very heavy penalties inveighed upon the trickster, that are only reprieved by the Christian forgiveness of Golding and later, Touchstone. Since, as we discussed this has such a strong correlation to the Christian suffering/repentance/ redeemed chronology, and such heavy overtones that suggest that just this process is going on, the play can be read as a triumph of the traditional moral system. It reinforces morality and the divine as the mechanism of punishment and reward, and essentially validates the Christian model of the universe—punishment is universal, but repentance and forgiveness always save. The *Mandragola* distances itself form such a reification of the absolute moral system of Christianity, and instead makes a positive statement, as we discussed about disguise, authority, and the power of human ingenuity. *Eastward Ho/* seems to be a negation—a lesson in what not to do. It is also interesting to note that the tricksters are essentially like the personifications of vices in the play, and that their attribute had been mixed with Machiavelli's new doctrine.

***Mortifying of a Fox***

In Act IV of *Eastward Ho!* the playwrights launch a strict critique and condemnation of disguise, so it comes as no surprise that Ben Jonson alone condemns deception. We have already mentioned how Ben Jonson defends the ending of his play,

in the Dedicatory Epistle to *Volpone*. He anticipated the reaction of his audiences when they discover that this comedy ended with the cruel punishment of the main characters. Upon hearing the sentence, Volpone plays upon the English meaning of his name: "fox," and simply states: "This is called mortifying of a fox" (VO 5.12.125). And that is indeed what it is. The final court scene is about the fall of the tricksters, and those who are ambitious and hold selfish goals.

Unlike the judgment in his collaborative effort, *Eastward Ho!*, Ben Jonson does not retract any punishments in an acts of allegorical or literal redemption, the tricksters of *Volpone* will experience the necessary punishment that is simply an extension of their immoral acts. That is, the characters in Volpone are punished in ways fitting for their crimes. Just as Security's wife was robbed from him because of his eagerness to help Flash steal another man's wife, so Volpone is sentenced to lie until he has all of the illnesses that he previously feigned, and his money is to go to a charitable hospital (VO 5.12.116-124). However, the fundamental difference between the execution of justice in *Eastward Ho!* and *Volpone* is that in *Volpone* an external, legal body must be the ones to pass judgment, whereas Nature (as the manifestation of God) or the immoral act collapsing into upon itself (as with Security) are what truly punish the tricksters in *Eastward Ho!*. It still seems, however, that Jonson is not trying to make the moral code is seem artificial or imply that the moral system is socially constructed, as Machiavelli might. The view that morality is arbitrary does seem not consistent with the actual ending if Jonson seriously considers this a comedy, which he certainly seems to in the Dedicatory Epistle, in which he claims he has promised a comedy, and that is what he has delivered (VO Epistle). Rather, Jonson by creating the bumbling, self-interested judges

(one is only concerned about if Mosca is single and if he is willing to marry his daughter (VO 5.12.50-51), seems to be making a statement about the human the human inability to carry out perfect judgments. So rather than being a statement about the power of the divine, Jonson seems to be making a cynical statement about humanity's natural defects an inability to know or follow what is good (which he, as the Epistle says, hopes to help remedy by his work of edifying drama).[55]

As we mentioned in our earlier discussion of ends, the emptiness of Volpone's primary goal, the deception itself, might be a part of reason why the judgment against him is so harsh. In this way, this may seems to make the judgment against Machiavellian means softer, since it could be reasonably asserted that it is ends which are being condemned in *Volpone* rather than the deceptive means and it could still be possible that Jonson would condone disguise and deception for the correct ends. However, by making Volpone's aim the scheme itself, it seems as if Jonson is launching an even more stringent critique against Machiavelli's doctrines and the kind of disguise that is used in *Mandragola*. By giving us a character so obsessed with the stratagems that Machiavelli dedicated so many years to studying, Jonson seems to be critiquing a figure like Machiavelli himself. The character of Volpone is a vote of "no confidence" in the ability of someone immersed in the world of politics and deceptive schemes to produce anything good or worthwhile at all. Instead, the person who implements these schemes degenerates from having external goals (as Volpone had in the beginning, even though they were selfish goals: he wanted money, and sexual fulfillment) to being simply consumed by the

[55] It is interesting to note that Jonson and Machiavelli seem to come to the same conclusion about human nature, mainly, that it is corrupt, though their opinions on how they are corrupt and what should be done about it differ entirely.

illicit "cloak and dagger" lifestyle and the thrills of disguising oneself. Although the source of punishment in *Eastward Ho!* suggests a stronger and more ingrained sense of morality such that the consequence and divine punishment is written into the act itself, the biting critique that *Volpone* gives of the character of the deceiver and the hopelessness of disguise and deception and the fact that the punishments in *Volpone* are never retracted and the tricksters never redeemed indicates a stronger adherence to the idea traditional concept of virtue. One of the sentencing judges expresses this degeneracy that deceptive means leads to in one of the last lines of the play directly to the audience:

> Let all that see these vices thus rewarded
> Take heart, and love to study 'em. Mischiefs feed
> Like beasts till they be fat, and then they bleed (VO 5.12.149-152).

***The Problematic Advisor***

Another aspect of Jonson's *Volpone* that also attacks Machiavelli and his methodology of studying human behavior is the problematic character of Mosca. Although Volpone loves of deception and the stratagem, he is not the most Machiavellian figure in the play. Volpone's "parasite," Mosca, a man who depends upon Volpone's patronage, is the brain behind all of Volpone's schemes is even more ruthless and clever than Volpone. Volpone is dependent upon the counsel of Mosca as he guides him both into the schemes that he loves performing and then (perhaps even more importantly) back out of the schemes.

Mosca feigns care for Volpone, but we slowly learn that Mosca's only interest in his own interest, and that he is just using Volpone to gain his wealth and power whereas

Volpone seems to truly care about Mosca and is hurt and surprised when Mosca locks him out of his own house and nearly betrays him to the panel of judges.[56] While it is true that Mosca is an advisor figure like Ligurio in *Mandragola*, hatching schemes for his powerful master, but Mosca is, in fact, a corrupted version of Ligurio.

In *Mandragola*, Ligurio is a vagabond who is paid by Callimaco to devise a scheme whereby he may be able to sleep with Lucrezia. Ligurio dutifully and carefully devises one for him, and actually arranges for more than Callimaco bargained for—it is Ligurio who first introduces the possibility of a long-term relationship with the lady. While Ligurio helps the conspirators along the way, he maintains a disinterested position, remaining merely an advisor to the actors in the plot, without wanting to become personally involved as one himself. Machiavelli paints Ligurio as intellectually superior, but content to remain in his lower place and accept a small salary and some meals as a reward, when he could press his advantage and blackmail Callimaco (any of the other characters) or make him pay any sum of money that he desired.

Mosca, on the other hand is not out to help his master; he wants to undo Volpone and take advantage of his wealth. He devises schemes for his master that are really part of a larger plot of his own. Therefore, the character of Mosca points out a difficulty in Machiavelli's philosophy: his hidden idealism. Machiavelli claims that a leader (public or private) must assume that human nature is fundamentally bad, and that many devices are required to reign others into deference, as human beings tend toward simple self-interest.[57] Yet, at the same time, Machiavelli admits in the character of Ligurio that authorities need assistance and posits the role of the disinterested advisor. Yet this is not

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[56] See discussion of Mosca's greed in Chapter 4.

possible in the world in which Machiavelli posits. Jonson has correctly identified a crack in Machiavelli's argument where his pragmatism about human nature contradicts his idealism about the power of man to master his desires. Though he prides himself on realism and dealing with the actual lived experiences of man, Machiavelli's advisor bears a great resemblance to Plato's philosopher-king, who is the only one who is supposed to be selfless in his rule.[58] The advisor would have to be a special type of man, for according to Machiavelli's generally cynical account of man, there simply could not be an advisor who overlooks his own interests and instead of the wealth and power that he could gain by using the prince as a puppet to do his or her own will, chooses instead to put the good of the prince and state first.

Machiavelli believes that can be such an ideal advisor figure, as he articulates both in his philosophic works and in *Mandragola*. This faith in the disinterested observer is very similar to the faith in the disinterested observer posited by later Enlightenment philosophers such as Bacon (who liked Machiavelli a great deal). This problem of the advisor shows early on one of the faults of scientific faith (which is essentially what Machiavelli holds—a faith in pragmatic, logical, empirical investigations.) No person can totally leave their own interests behind when considering a situation. All of our observations must be socially situated and are determined by who we are and what we desire. The critique that Jonson offers in the character of Mosca, then, is a critique of

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[57] See the quotations and discussion in Chapter 1 of the "Unusual Ending."

[58] Machiavelli's version is fundamentally different from Plato's and the difference can be illustrated by the example given at the beginning of Book VII of the *Republic* in which Plato describes humanity as being chained in a cave watching only shadows on the cave wall, while the philosopher-king leaves the cave and can see the true forms outside. In Machiavelli's world, there is no outside—the world is the cave and all we can ever see in life in shadows (our visible, emperical experiences are mere shadows). However, the advisor seems to be different in that he know how to manipulate the shadows and thereby, other men's perceptions. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A Grube (Indianapolis, Hackett, 1992) Book VII.

objectivity. Machiavelli assumes that the advisor can be objective, when, in fact, no human being can be entirely objective.

***Sympathy for the Trickster***

While Winifred does not seem to want to go with Sir Petronel, she doesn't verbally protest to be saved by her husband when she has the chance (it is a possibility that she already felt her dignity was so harmed that she didn't want to be revealed). In this case of disguise and in the case of Volpone disguising himself as the mountebank, the disguise is certainly a useful means for the characters who are disguising themselves or others. However, the light that the play casts their means and ends is totally different from the light in which Machiavelli portrays disguises in *Mandragola* and the results achieved by them.

In "Volpone," Volpone is represented as a devious and callous man and though we may root for him in his schemes because his sheer energy and love of deceit fascinates us, the court of Venice and the play itself inevitably rules against him. We relish and laugh with him in his schemes, but in the end we are forced to admit that Volpone is a bad man, and that his disguises, schemes, and ambition (to get more money by deception). The judges at the end of this comedy bring the play closure and restore everything to its rightful balance in the end (as is a requirement in a classic comedy). They decide that in order to achieve this harmony, Volpone must be punished harshly:

> ...our judgment on thee
> Is that thy substance [i.e. wealth] all be straight confiscate
> To the hospital of the Incurabili;
> And since the most was gotten by imposture,
> By feigning lame, gout, palsy, and diseases,
> Thou art to lie in prison, cramped with irons,
> Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed, (VO 223).

Likewise, in "Eastward Ho," Sir Petronel Flash's use of disguise (though it is another who is disguised, it is Sir Petronel who is really deceiving and using the disguise to his advantage) is not simply portrayed as useful means to the end of quenching his natural human desires. Rather, his kidnapping of Winifred is portrayed as disgusting to the audience, a consummately evil action by a character who seems to be capable of nothing else. [I expect to insert a quotation from the text here]. He, like Volpone, is portrayed in a negative way and only through his lavish (but sincere?) repentance in the last act is redeemed.

The play certainly condemns Sir Petronel's uses of disguise and deception[59] (such as his promise of a castle to Gertrude), but why? By this condemnation, is the play and (by extension) its authors condemning the kind of masking and trickery used in "Mandragola?" Is it condemning deception and conspiracies that employ less-than-moral means in general, and as such is a statement of a more traditional theological scale for gauging actions? Or is Sir Petronel's and Volpone's deceptions in some way different from Callimaco and Ligurio's and it is simply something about this specific conspiracy that the play finds ethically or morally wrong?

But, to shift our focus back the two English dramas again, I believe it has been established that the cases of disguise and deceit in *Volpone* and in *Eastward Ho!* are different in certain way. However, in their endings, the two come out looking rather similar. The "true" identities behind the disguises are revealed to the other characters in

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[59] I expect to find some secondary literature that contradicts the conclusion that in the end, everyone's activities are truly condemned, because of the extreme nature of the gap between the good characters in the play and the bad, and the overly generous response of Golding when allowed to have his revenge. Even if the characters are so over-the-top that they are farces, I stand by my conclusion that their actions are meant to be judged as faulty.

the play,[60] and the use of disguise is, as we mentioned above, is portrayed negatively, unlike in "Mandragola," where the is disguise is part of happy ending. There is no need to lift up and discover the truth behind the mask in order to restore balance to the situation—the mask, the split between appearance and reality, itself makes the happy ending possible. This positive light put on disguise and the on the view that it is the external that matters more over "realities" or "conscience" or "truth, " makes deception seem, on the whole, less insidious than the English plays make it out to be. One need not be a vice-ridden or an insatiable schemer, or even in a position of authority, to use deception as an effective means to a end. In fact, even those of the lowest rungs of power use it regularly. The *Mandragola* shows us that the same methods that princes use in their political dealings are the same methods that individuals necessarily use in our personal, social dealings. Because all relationships can be viewed as power relationships, we can and do negotiate and assume different masks of authority in all of our interpersonal connections.

The authors of *Volpone* and *Easward Ho!* do not seem ready to accept accredit disguise as an acceptable means of getting something. And yet they may flirt with the idea. One of the more interesting facts about the production history of *Volpone* is the audience's reaction to the final scene in which all of the conspirators and greedy competitors-to-inherit are sentenced. They are all given fairly serious punishments for their transgressions against the conventional morality that were ironically fitted to the crime (see the example of Volpone's punishment above). They were made examples of to the audience, just as the penitent sinners of *Eastward Ho!* are. But the audiences

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[60] Citations of the specific scenes in which this unmasking happens will be placed here.

watching *Volpone* widely rejected the punishments given to the characters, claiming that they were too harsh for a comedy (VO 217). Why might this be?

The portrayal of Volpone and his schemes is negative, but the audience seems to want to overlook the sins that Volpone committed and instead of a real punishment, want to just give him a small slap on the wrist, and leave the theatre giggling with him in his plots. The audience liked the trickster, liked the tricks and did not appreciate seeing him suffer so excruciatingly at the end of it all. Perhaps it is out of fascination for the ultimate trickster or arch-villain character that the audiences condemned Jonson's punishment of the Volpone and Mosca. Or perhaps it is a deeper recognition on the part of the English audience of a truth that we have discussed, but was not yet officially accepted in public discourse—that everyone must play the trickster, and that manipulation of human behavior by veiling or misrepresenting our motives and goals is something that we all do. The plays, because of their historical situation, could not endorse and vindicate the schemer in the way in Machiavelli did, to do so would risk far more punishment than the authors of *Eastward Ho!* received for controversial elements in their play. They had to demonize him, but even when demonized, the audience recognized the humanity and authenticity of the disguised because they implicitly understood what it was to be disguised.

The definitive example, however, of sympathy for the Machiavellian trickster in plays we have been examining, however, is *All Fooles*. At the conclusion of the play, the Gonstanzo and Marc Antonio, the father of the two sons who have secretly married discover are led by a vengeful Rynaldo to the tavern that the frequent where they discover that their sons are not the wholesome boys which they assumed them to be (AF

5.2). Instead, their fathers find that they are masters at drinking and wenching. Instead of leaving ashamed or attempting to disinherit their sons, their fathers, especially Gonstanzo, who had seemed to be the harsher father, forgave them and accepted their marriages. Gonstanzo, who is described in the play as "the wretched Machevilian" and "A miserable Politician" tells a story which extolled the virtues of being a cuckold as long as the semblance of virtue is maintained (AF 1.1.147 , 2.1.202). In the scene, as we have discussed, the supposedly bumbling character of Cornelio who was assumed to be extremely jealous of his wife throughout the course of the play, reveals that he himself has engineered her love affair with Dariotto and condoned it, all the while pretending to be the hawkish guardian of his wife.

The final scene of this play is a triumphant celebration of that kind of "pollicie in graine" (AF 5.2.218), which allows for a split between appearances and actuality. In fact, the characters of the play all seem to agree that the acknowledged split between the private and the public life is the best way of living life: "Live merily together and agree, / *Hornes cannot be kept off with jealousie.*" (AF 5.2.317). This is a whimsical, sexualized sort of acknowledgement of the same truth which Machiavelli realized: that the ideal standards by which traditional morality measures human life are discordant with the facts of life, which are much more pessimistic. In this case, the fact is that partners will often be unfaithful to one another, however, the characters of *All Fooles* do no lament this, this take the morally transgressive stance not that denies the whole structure or immorality of the act, for the unfaithful lovers still try to keep up appearances with each other, but that the immorality doesn't matter. The actual infidelity does not matter; it is part of life. What matters more is not to let your spouse see you being unfaithful. This is the same

sort of division between morality and the appearance of morality that Machiavelli condones as healthy and virtùous. Virtue is simply a cloak for virtù here and these characters embrace this doctrine whole-heartedly.

While it is true that the final scene of this play is an unmasking scene, we in the audience are happy and delighted to live with a situation, like *Mandragola*, which is very traditionally immoral. The happy ending of *All Fooles* is a resounding conclusion to allow and actually be proud of infidelities in marriage: "...I will make a speech in praise of this reconcilement, including therein the praise and honor of the most fashionable and autentical HORNE: stand close Gentles" (AF 5.2.221-223). There is nothing in the text that would suggest that these characters, like those in *Mandragola*, will suffer in any way: emotionally, physically, or mentally because of their Machiavellian behavior.

By examining the moral judgments of the uses of disguise in these Early Modern dramas, we clearly see that two out of the three judged the characters who implemented disguise harshly while reinforcing the traditional Christian moral code. However, as we discussed, there are subtleties to these critiques that suggest that the playwrights aren't sure about themselves about how to deal with this Machiavellian pragmatism, which seems indeed to reflect the necessities of life, but at the same time,

## Conclusion

The representations, caricatures, and critiques of Machiavelli's philosophy show that at the time these plays were written, there was much ambivalence about the secular, pragmatic approach to politics and individual morality that Machiavelli took. *Eastward Ho!* and *Volpone* both present strong opposition to Machiavelli's philosophy simply by their demonizing caricatures of any characters who followed Machiavelli's advice and

fitted their conscience to their time. *Eastward Ho!* and *Volpone* also launch a number of critiques on Machiavelli's philosophy and probe points at which his philosophy is faulted, such as in the figure of the advisor.

Yet, *All Fooles* embraces disguise in a way similar to *Mandragola* and embraces Machiavelli's doctrine of appearances and defies traditional morality in a similar way, treating marriage lightly, and not as a sacred concept or institution.

So, while it may be possible to say that these Elizabethan playwrights seem to have rejected Machaivelli's doctrine of means and ends, it is clear that there is some ambivalence about it, and this probably reflects the shifting nature of the English government, which, arguably used religion as a tool itself and was, in just a few decades about to be overturned by Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans. Therefore, opinions on whether government should be moral or should be pragmatic, as Machiavelli suggests wavered. Machiavelli's position however, seems to be heavily criticized, while the Christian moral system is not (except for in *All Fooles*), implying that the Elizabethans were not yet quite ready for a secular government based on such "policy."

My one parting observation about this interplay between texts and time periods and moral systems is that the drama is an ideally suited place to discourse Machiavelli's philosophy because Machiavelli's political theory is, in essence, a theatrical theory. Machiavelli writes and following authors play upon the political stage.

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