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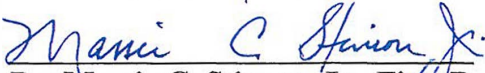
Austin, James Craig, "The Fox and the Lion: Machiavellian Characters and Tactics in Renaissance Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe and Jacobean Tragedies by John Webster" (1999). *Theses, Dissertations & Honors Papers*. 215.
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The Fox and the Lion:
Machiavellian Characters and Tactics in Renaissance Tragedies by Christopher
Marlowe
and Jacobean Tragedies by John Webster

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Introduction

Niccolo Machiavelli's book *The Prince* is a masterpiece of political thought. He wrote this book to provide instruction for Lorenzo de' Medici in the administration and unification of the city-states of Italy. Machiavelli's aim was to provide a lesson in the *realpolitik* of the world, rather than in the ideal politics of thought. His book is revolutionary and was highly controversial, for Machiavelli addressed what he felt was the true nature of people. Machiavelli was suspicious of humans, feeling that they are basically dishonest and interested only in their personal welfare. He felt that it "is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire, and always, when men do it who can, they will be praised or not blamed; but when they cannot, and want to do it anyway, here lie the error and the blame" (Machiavelli 14-15). From this desire to acquire comes human ambition, and from this ambition comes a selfish nature. The irony of Machiavelli's belief is that he does not distinguish between good and evil in his description of human political aspirations; he only states that those who acquire successfully are not held responsible for their actions, while those who attempt and fail are punished. The suggestions of a new moral code in the political world, absent of traditional religious and moral beliefs, stunned and entranced the people of the time. His code is rooted in results rather than means. Machiavelli felt that people focused more on the outcome of events rather than the process with which they unfold.

Harvey Mansfield Jr. in his Introduction to *The Prince* notes the irony involved in people's perception of events:

As people assume that the outcome of events in the world is determined by God's providence, so they conclude that the means chosen by God cannot have been unworthy. Machiavelli's thought here is both a subtle attack on the notion of divine providence and a subtle appreciation of it, insofar as the prince can appropriate it to his own use. (xviii)

Machiavelli has painted a disturbing yet strangely familiar portrait of politics. He posits that each person in reality is only concerned with self and that the outward appearance of a politician is actually contradicted by a secret agenda lurking beneath the surface.

Religion, morality, and goodness are all tools used by politicians to maintain an appearance of virtue which allows one to thrive and not be punished, all the while attaining personal goals. In a world where so many people are evil, great people cannot afford to be good, for the more clever evil people will devour the honest, yet great. One does not necessarily have to completely believe Machiavelli's assessment of the nature of human beings; yet one cannot deny that there are people who operate under such a code.

Perhaps it is the fact that Machiavelli's book rang so true of some people that it stirred such fascination in the playwrights of the Elizabethan and Jacobean era. Many plays offer studies of individuals or groups of individuals who made use of the tactics and doctrines of Machiavelli, and it is my purpose to provide insight into a few of these plays. Curiously, the Elizabethan and Jacobean era expanded, and possibly distorted, the idea of the Machiavellian character to include any person that made use of Machiavellian tactics. Machiavelli's doctrines were no longer restricted to the world of politics. Many characters that could not directly pursue the things they desired used Machiavelli's tactics. Christopher Marlowe and John Webster captured the essence of the

Machiavellian individual, especially as Machiavellian individuals came to be seen in the Elizabethan and Jacobean era. Both playwrights provide provocative studies of the many types and tactics of Machiavellian characters, and inspire in their audiences self-examination and examination of the general human condition.

Machiavellian Intrigue on the Isle of Malta

Christopher Marlowe's play, *The Famous Tragedy Of The Rich Jew Of Malta*, deals with political and economic intrigue on the small Mediterranean island of Malta. Almost every character in the play (except Abigail) follows the code of the Machiavellian character and is guilty of some form of dissembling or execution of Machiavellian policy. The original use of the Machiavellian system was meant to guide a prince or ruler in his execution of the affairs of state. However, the political tenets of Machiavelli also found their way into the literature of the Renaissance, and his influence can be seen in the character development of some of the contemporary dramas. For example, the main character in the play, Barabas, is not a pure Machiavellian in the political sense of the word. Instead, he is more of an economic Machiavellian as N. W. Bawcutt states in his introduction to the play:

The unscrupulous adventurer in economics parallels the Machiavellian in politics; both reject traditional ethical systems that call for submission to divine laws and a respect for one's fellow human beings. A key term in the play is 'policy', . . . which had a wide range of meanings in sixteenth-century English, sometimes favorable ('a praiseworthy skill in public affairs'), sometimes highly unfavorable ('deliberate cunning and deception'), though by the end of the century the unfavorable meaning came to predominate. (25)

Save Abigail, no one in the play is innocent. Barabas is the ultimate schemer; he will stop at nothing to secure his wealth and exact revenge upon those who have wronged

him. The Governor of Malta is perhaps the greatest Machiavellian in the play. He acts strictly according to policy and represents the closest example of a political Machiavellian. Almost every political move that Governor Ferneze makes has some basis in Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Even the holy friars in the play are not above employing trickery and deceit as they attempt to procure the Jew's money for themselves. Indeed, almost every character in the play hides behind the mask of religious piety in an attempt to disguise his evil intentions. As Douglas Cole claims in his book *Christopher Marlowe and the Renaissance of Tragedy*, almost everyone wears the "hypocritical mask":

The hypocritical mask, of course, is the Machiavellian trademark. In this play, it is worn not only by Barabas, who uses deception—even the deception of a religious conversion—to attain his vindictive ends, but also by the friars, whose religious habits barely cover their competitive greed and secret lechery, and by the opportunistic Ferneze, governor of Malta whose invocation of divine providence at the close of the play cloaks in a pious formula the actual efficacy of his own capacity for double-dealing.

(93)

In the Prologue to the play, the character Machevil informs the audience that he "count[s] religion but a childish toy, / And hold[s] there is no sin but ignorance" (Prol. 14-15).

Barabas lives in a self-created world of avarice and greed. He lives to count his money, constantly tallying his worth. All of his energies are directed at financial gain, and he becomes a "super-merchant" whose abilities at gathering money surpass those of

all other people in Malta, while he ranks in a league with the other greatest Jewish merchants and usurers in the world, as he declares:

They say we are a scattered nation;
I cannot tell, but we have scrambled up
More wealth by far than those that brag of faith.
There's Kirriah Jarim, the great Jew of Greece,
Obed in Bairseth, Nones in Portugal,
Myself in Malta, some in Italy,
Many in France, and wealthy every one:
Ay, far wealthier than any Christian.
I must confess we come not to be kings.
That's not our fault: alas, our number's few,
And crowns come either by succession,
Or urged by force; and nothing violent,
Oft have I heard tell, can be permanent.
Give us a peaceful rule, make Christians kings. . . . (1. 1. 123-136)

Amid this catalog of wealthy Jews, Barabas makes an interesting distinction between the Christians and the Jews. Besides the obvious religious difference, he points out that the Jews as a race have a natural ability to make money; it is a God-given ability. Though they are a small social group, they have far exceeded any Christian in wealth. This speech conveys a dominant theme in the play, the confusion and intermingling of the secular and religious. The only character in the play who ever has any sincerity in her religious claims is Abigail. Indeed, religion is used as a badge in the play, a way of

identifying opposing camps, and Barabas, because of his religion and wealth, will suffer at the hand of the Christians, the people who hold the political power.

Soon after the audience meets Barabas, the Governor of Malta is introduced. Malta owes annual tribute money to the Turkish crown. However, the Turks have let the collection of the money slide for ten years. Now they have returned to Malta to collect the past due money in full, and the sum has become too great for the treasury to cover. During this scene Governor Ferneze engages in some of his best political action in the entire play. First he deals with the Turks by slyly buying a little time so that he may collect the tribute from the people of Malta. The Turks, satisfied that the Maltese will pay the tribute, return to their galleys at sea. With the Turks gone, Ferneze now turns his attention to the collection of the tribute. In chapter three of his book *The Prince*, Machiavelli asserts that, if the prince must harm some of the population, he should act swiftly and harm as small a faction of the population as possible (10). The Jews are the obvious choice for Ferneze to levy the balance of the tribute against. They are greatly outnumbered by the Christians in Malta. The Christians generally despise the Jews, for they believe them to be the murderers of Christ. Finally, the Jews' wealth as a small group outweighs the wealth of the larger Christian population; Ferneze will gain much while angering only a few people. So Ferneze calls all the Jews of Malta in for a conference and tells them that they must carry the burden of the tribute. Barabas protests, claiming that the Jews are strangers in Malta, and, since they are not citizens, they should not be forced to pay. Ferneze quickly counters Barabas' argument and uses religion as an excuse to levy the tribute tax:

No, Jew, like infidels.

For through our sufferance of your hateful lives,
Who stand accursed in the sight of heaven,
These taxes and afflictions are befallen,
And therefore thus we are determined:

Read there the articles of our decrees. (1. 2. 65-70)

Ferneze makes the Jews responsible for the entire tribute by demanding half of all Jewish estates. Furthermore, those who refuse will immediately be forced to convert to Christianity and will lose their entire estate. Barabas at first tries to refuse, and he meets with the full wrath of the Governor's unjust justice. He is stripped of his entire estate. This situation reflects chapter twenty-five of *The Prince*, Machiavelli tells his readers that a prince must sometimes act impetuously with swift and decisive action and with little regard for an individual (61-62). Ferneze certainly does this, for he has to set an example with Barabas; and then none of the other Jews will dare resist after Ferneze's harsh punishment of the most powerful Jew in Malta.

At this point Ferneze seems to have dealt thoroughly with Barabas and reduced him to nothing. However Ferneze does make one mistake. Machiavelli advises in chapter three of *The Prince* that a ruler should deal with his enemies thoroughly so that there can be no hope of revenge, for one slightly injured will return one day to be avenged. However, one thoroughly vanquished will never be able to recover and return for vengeance (10). The Governor has seemingly harmed Barabas beyond recovery, yet he should not have allowed the Jew to remain in Malta. He has greatly underestimated the Jew's resourcefulness and his penchant for revenge. After the confiscation of his goods, Barabas swears an evil oath of revenge:

Ay, policy, that's their profession,
And not simplicity as they suggest.
The plagues of Egypt, and the curse of heaven,
Earth's barrenness, and all men's hatred,
Inflict upon them, thou great Primus Motor!
And here upon my knees, striking the earth,
I ban their souls to everlasting pains. . . . (1. 2. 164-170)

Barabas is not fooled by the Christian's act; he knows that he has become a victim of the Governor's political agenda. His oath of revenge reveals the great anger that he harbors in his soul. Barabas displays his pride by asking God to assist him in his revenge. Finally, by stating that he "bans their souls to everlasting pains," Barabas becomes a devil committed to revenge.

The first thing Barabas must accomplish in order to effect his revenge is to try to regain some of his power. Since his power in the play is related to his material wealth, he must attempt to regain his wealth. Knowing the nature of men, and especially Christians, Barabas has hidden a huge portion of his original treasure under some of the floorboards in his house. He needs only to retrieve this wealth to reestablish his position. However, his house has been confiscated and turned into a nunnery, where no man, other than the lecherous priests, may enter. Out of necessity, Barabas concocts a plan involving Abigail:

Wherein these Christians have oppressed me:
Be ruled by me, for in extremity
We ought to make bar of no policy. . . .

Then, Abigail, there must my girl
Entreat the abbess to be entertained. . . .
Ay, daughter; for religion
Hides many mischiefs from suspicion. . . .
As good dissemble that thou never mean'st
As first mean truth, and then dissemble it; . . . (1. 2. 277-279, 287-288,
290-291, 300-301)

In these instructions to Abigail, Barabas reveals his Machiavellian plan. He entreats her to embrace “policy” and use religious conversion to Christianity to gain access to the nunnery. Her feigned conversion will provide the perfect disguise. He uses religion as a tool, just as the Prologue suggests, when Machiavelli states that “I count religion but a childish toy / And hold there is no sin but ignorance” (14-15). Religion is not the only tool Barabas uses here: he uses his daughter as well. Furthermore, he holds little concern for her safety, yet he professes to be plotting the return of his riches for her own benefit. The prayer Barabas says while Abigail is in the nunnery reveals his true concern:

O thou, that with a fiery pillar led'st
The sons of Israel through the dismal shades,
Light Abraham's offspring, and direct the hand
Of Abigail this night. . . . (2. 1. 12-15)

Abigail is inside the nunnery at great risk to herself, searching for Barabas' gold, and he seems to care only for the safety of his gold and jewels. His prayer is not that she return safely, but that God direct her hand to the treasure. Again, Barabas confuses religion and policy, for he compares his attempt at regaining his treasure to Moses in the wilderness

leading his people to safety through the power of God. Abigail does find the gold, and she successfully returns it to Barabas. At this point he goes into a frenzied state of avaricious delight:

O my girl,
My gold, my fortune, my felicity,
Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy:
Welcome, the first beginner of my bliss!
O Abigail that I had thee here too,
Then my desires were fully satisfied;
But I will practise thy enlargement thence.
O girl, O gold, O beauty, O my bliss! (2. 1. 50-57)

This scene is comic as Barabas hugs his bags of gold and revels in their return. The gold is everything to him: it is his strength and protection, and the thing which gives him the most joy. Charles G. Masinton, in his book, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision: A Study in Damnation*, offers a commentary on this passage:

Unable to distinguish between the affection he feels for Abigail and the enormous love he has for his gold, Barabas accepts his bags of money from her with a profane yet ridiculous parody of divine worship and religious ecstasy . . . this speech proceeds from the Jew's inverted religious sense: instead of loving God, he worships gold; and instead of seeking to cultivate Abigail's admirable traits, he exhibits an insane materialism. (75)

Masington makes an excellent point, for Barabas does not try to cultivate any sort of goodness in Abigail. Instead, he would turn her into the same evil schemer that he is himself. Perhaps, in Barabas' mind, this is a matter of pragmatism. If Abigail were to grow up believing that men were inherently good, then she would have no defenses in the cruel world that is Malta. In chapter twenty-eight of *The Prince*, Machiavelli advises that men, "because they are wicked and do not observe faith with you, you also do not have to observe it with them." (69). Perhaps it is just this realization which makes Barabas want to expose his daughter to his evil schemes. However, it may also be that Barabas simply sees her as a commodity to be used to his advantage where possible.

With his money returned and his daughter out of the convent, Barabas purchases a new house and exclaims: "In spite of these swine-eating Christians. . . / Am I become as wealthy as I was" (2. 3. 8,12.). However, Barabas is not satisfied, for revenge is clearly on his mind, and he will not stop until he achieves it. Barabas's thorough and ruthless pursuit of revenge echoes chapter three of *The Prince*, where Machiavelli states that revenge should be so devastating that one cannot recover from it (10). His first target is Lodowick, the Governor's son. His plan for Lodowick's death is diabolical, involving Abigail and Mathias, one of Lodowick's peers and the true love of Abigail. He will play the two young men against each other by using Abigail to embroil the men in a jealous competition. With Abigail as the bait, Barabas sets out to catch the fancy of Lodowick. He enters into a coded discussion with him, referring to Abigail as a diamond, tempting him to court her at his house:

As for the diamond, it shall be yours:

I pray, sir, be no stranger at my house;

All that I have shall be at your command. (2. 3. 141-143)

It is no surprise that Barabas would use the language of trade and mercantilism falsely to promise his daughter to Lodowick. Barabas offers his “best jewel” as bait for Lodowick. He speaks kindly and respectfully to the young Christian, almost acting subordinate as he offers to stand downwind from Lodowick so he will not have to smell the stench of a Jew. However, all Barabas’ kindness is merely a ruse to take the young man off his guard so that Barabas may set his trap. Chapter eighteen of *The Prince* states that one must be an excellent dissembler and appear virtuous, so one’s enemies will always be off guard (Machiavelli 69-71).

Integral to Barabas’ trap is his daughter Abigail. She is the bait that will draw the two young men into Barabas’ snare. Later, as Lodowick calls upon Abigail, Barabas directs her to dissemble love to the young man:

Bar. Daughter, a word more; kiss him, speak him fair, (Aside)

And like a cunning Jew so cast about

That ye both made sure ere you come out.

Abigail. O father, Don Mathias is my love!

Bar. I know it: yet I say make love to him;

Do, it is requisite it should be so. . . . (2. 3. 239-244)

Barabas forces Abigail to be part of his scheme. She is but a young girl and does not clearly see until too late why Barabas is forcing her to dissemble. Yet Abigail does sense that something is wrong with the whole falsehood, for she knows that she loves only Mathias. However, Barabas craftily reassures her that “It’s no sin to deceive a Christian” (2. 3. 311). Again, he falls back on religion to justify his evil. In a speech given earlier,

Barabas reveals he cares more for revenge than he does for his daughter or religion:

Yonder comes Don Mathias; let us stay.

He loves my daughter, and she holds him dear: (Aside)

But I have sworn to frustrate both their hopes,

And be revenged upon the Governor. (2. 3. 146-149)

Intent on revenge, Barabas uses his new henchman, the evil Ithamore, to send a false challenge to Mathias from Lodowick. The two young men meet and kill each other in a duel.

Barabas has his revenge, but it does not come without a price. Abigail finds out the truth about Lodowick and Mathias. Because of her guilt for the sin she has committed, she joins a convent. This infuriates Barabas because he hates the Christians, especially their clergy. He makes many references to the-less-than celibate lifestyle of the clergy, where nuns become pregnant each year, and no one seems to notice. Now his lust for revenge becomes focused on Abigail and the nunnery as he exclaims:

False, credulous, inconstant Abigail! . . .

Ne'er shall she live to inherit aught of mine,

Be blessed of me, nor come within my gates,

But perish underneath my bitter curse,

Like Cain by Adam, for his brother's death. (3. 4. 27, 30-34)

Barabas again uses biblical references to justify his actions. His use of religion as a justifier of his actions is reminiscent of Machevill from the Prologue to the play who "count[s] religion but a childish toy" (14). Actually, he is so sure that Abigail will betray his secrets that he curses her to die. Since she is no longer his pawn, Barabas disinherits

her and pretends she is no longer his daughter. Comically, in her place he selects Ithamore, the Turk, as his new heir. This choice further displays what it is that Barabas truly values. His religious loyalties go no deeper than the surface; in classic Machiavellian style, Barabas uses religion as nothing more than a tool. As soon as Abigail is no longer useful to him, he casts her off. Since Ithamore is now his number one pawn, Barabas rewards him with the promise of all his fortune. Relationships, like everything else, are only valuable to Barabas if he can use them for some selfish need.

Barabas releases his vengeance upon the nunnery, once again through the guise of religion. On "Saint Jaques Even," the abbey's patronal feast day, the nuns receive gifts of foodstuffs and alms from the people of Malta (3. 4. 76). Barabas uses Ithamore to deliver the nuns a pot of poisoned rice, and the whole nunnery is poisoned, including Abigail. In the throes of death and wracked with fear because of her sin, Abigail confesses her part in the dual murder of Lodowick and Mathias. Consequently, Abigail is the only character in the play that achieves any sort of serious spiritual awakening. However, the friar quickly maligns her spiritual epiphany, for he is nothing more than a base villain. His words the moment after she dies illustrate his hypocrisy:

Ay, and a virgin, too, that grieves me most.

But I must to the Jew and exclaim on him,

And make him stand in fear of me. (3. 6. 41-3)

This scene contains serious undertones. Although the friar maligns her realization on earth, her confession was sincere and therefore not devalued in the eyes of God. This speech ironically reveals that the worldly friars have some carnal knowledge of the nuns. Friar Bernardine does not lament Abigail's death for any other reason than he never slept

with Abigail. Furthermore, he does not care for the sanctity of confession, for he cannot wait to go and confront Barabas with the information to see if he can bribe the Jew.

Barabas's bag of Machiavellian tricks and devices seems never-ending. When friars Bernardine and Giacomo try to bribe Barabas, he and his henchman Ithamore strangle Bernardine and frame Giacomo for the crime. Making Giacomo believe that he has accidentally killed Bernardine by striking him with his staff, Barabas revels in the mischief of using the law to condemn Giacomo, exclaiming, "The law shall touch you, we'll but lead you, we." (4. 2. 201). When his servant Ithamore betrays him and takes up with a band of blackmailers, Barabas visits the band dressed as an Italian musician. In a very comical scene, despite the deaths, Barabas presents the gang with a bouquet of poisoned flowers, inviting the gang to sniff themselves to death! However, Barabas's frugality again brings him grief, for he did not use enough poison to quickly kill the gang, and they have enough time to tell Governor Ferneze about Barabas's crimes. It seems that Barabas has met his end, but he has yet another trick up his sleeve. He imbibes a special potion which makes him appear dead, and the Governor throws Barabas's body over the wall of Malta. Making use of a bad situation, Barabas aligns himself with the Turkish army besieging Malta and shows them a secret entrance to the city. The Turks and Barabas surprise the Christians and take the city. As a reward the Turkish General makes Barabas Governor.

At this point it seems that Barabas has won. He controls the city and is in command of his own destiny. However, it is now that Governor Ferneze displays his best Machiavellian tactics. Barabas does not care to be Governor; he sees no reason to work in public service when he is already rich; furthermore, he does not care to rule Christians,

for they hate him. Consequently, in exchange for gold, Barabas makes a deal with Femeze to return him to position of Governor and conquer the Turks. Femeze naturally agrees to help the Jew, causing Barabas to revel in his good fortune:

Thus, loving neither, will I live with both,
Making a profit of my policy;
And he from whom my most advantage comes,
Shall be my friend. (5. 2. 113-117)

This statement sums up Barabas's entire credo. Only those who are profitable to him are his friends. Those who can offer him nothing are worth nothing. However, friends made under these circumstances seldom prove to be true, as Barabas painfully realizes in the action to come.

Femeze helps Barabas in his scheme to destroy the Turks. However, at just the right moment, Femeze seizes his opportunity and makes full use of fortune. Allowing the Turkish army to be destroyed, he captures their leaders and catches Barabas in his own deadly trap. Femeze completely betrays the alliance between him and the Jew. In chapter eighteen of the *Prince*, Machiavelli states that a prince must sometimes betray his promises (69-70). Femeze realizes that having the Turks prisoner and Barabas dead is a very advantageous situation:

Content thee, Calymath, here thou must stay,
And live in Malta prisoner; for come all the world
To rescue thee, so will we guard us now,
As sooner shall they drink the ocean dry,
Than conquer Malta, or endanger us.

So march away; and let due praise be given,

Neither to Fate nor Fortune, but to Heaven. (5. 5. 125-131)

This last speech exemplifies Ferneze's abilities as the ultimate politician. By catching Barabas in the trap meant for Calymath, he has rid himself of the pesky Jew, while gaining a shield against another Turkish invasion. He also exemplifies another of Machiavelli's laws of government. Although he has gained his position through policy and double-dealing, Ferneze still gives credit to God for his accomplishments. Machiavelli states in *The Prince* that rulers should appear goodly and honorable as much as possible (69-70). Despite his ruthless nature, Ferneze appears to his subjects as a virtuous man.

Ferneze is not a sympathetic character in the play; he is very easy to dislike. However, he is allowed to win in the end. Technically, an Elizabethan audience should want Ferneze to be the victor; after all, he represents Christian interests in the play. Perhaps Marlowe wanted to display one immutable law of the Machiavellian code. With the examples of Ferneze and Barabas, he shows that political power is more valuable than money. Early in the play, Marlowe shows that power can procure money, yet money alone does not necessarily protect one from those in power. With the public sanction of his political power, Ferneze was able to strip Barabas of his wealth. Barabas, despite his great wealth, was unable to resist Ferneze. In chapter twelve of *The Prince* Machiavelli states that a prince must have an army to enforce his decrees (48). Ferneze possessed an office and an army to back his decision to chastise the Jews. Money alone may provide some power: Barabas had the resources to secure his henchman, Ithamore, and he used his resources to exert his will, but it was more his Machiavellian abilities that allowed

Barabas to exact his revenge upon his enemies. Had Barabas not been so “talented,” he would have been powerless to exact any sort of revenge. Barabas’s talents did help him rise to the position of Governor. At this point, it seemed as if Barabas had won. However, he rejects the political power and in the absence of his newfound power, Barabas is again powerless to resist the desires of Ferneze.

Machiavellian Characters in Marlowe's *Edward II*

Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* is a play about the deposition and murder of King Edward II of England. Marlowe presents the King as a frivolous individual, quite incapable of running the Kingdom. He is a man who would never have wanted to be king if he had not inherited the position. In his book, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, Douglas Cole outlines the deficiencies of Edward II in a time of political uncertainty:

From the whirl of human pettiness and pretensions, of internecine civil strife, of coarsening personalities and political degradations, the figure of a suffering king emerges, a king with neither the private nor the public virtues of a kingship, a king governed by his minions and attacked by his barons, a king with nothing of the hero about him but with much of the petulant child, a king and no king. (161)

Cole thus sums up the central problem in the play. Edward is not a character, especially in the beginning of the play, worthy of anyone's respect. Because of this fact his barons revolt against him, he alienates his queen and she abandons him, and those who remain on the side of Edward look to control him for their own purposes. In this setting, Marlowe has an opportunity to develop several characters that employ Machiavellian tactics to achieve their goals. Within the context of his history, Marlowe conducts a psychological study of the motives and actions of his dramatis personae, and the play reveals the ruthless selfishness with which each one will pursue his desires. Each of the main characters acts under one conviction while his or her motives are often hidden.

Edward is not concerned with the affairs of state or the business of running the kingdom. Instead, he is only concerned with existing in a state of blissful companionship with his favorite Piers Gaveston. This fact enrages the barons and dilutes his power as a monarch. The stage is set for each character to attempt the pursuit of his Machiavellian scheme. Characters of lesser station such as Gaveston and Spencer plot to use the King as a means of social and political advancement. Mortimer eventually seeks the Crown. The Queen, after being shunned by Edward, eventually enters into an alliance with Mortimer, helping him murder the King. Almost every character in the play makes use of Machiavellian policy and political double-dealing to achieve some secret goal.

In the realm of politics, Edward II serves as an anti-Machiavellian; he does not possess the virtues necessary in a ruler for successful management of a kingdom. Machiavelli wrote his book *The Prince* as a guide for princes, explaining the governing of a kingdom. In his book, Machiavelli uses many real life examples to explicate his points; some of the examples are of rulers that did things correctly, while others deal with rulers who were unsuccessful. Two examples of unsuccessful rulers are Alexander Severus and Antonius Caracalla. In chapter nineteen Machiavelli explains how both rulers were, for one reason or another, killed by their own troops. Alexander Severus was killed for being too effeminate and being overly influenced by his mother; Antonius Caracalla was well liked by his troops at first, but eventually was assassinated by one of his own soldiers because his cruelty to the people of Rome became too great (Machiavelli 74-79). Machiavelli used examples of bad rulers to show that knowing what not to do is as important as knowing what to do. Edward II allows his vices to lead to his making incoherent and unclear decisions, and he cannot separate his personal from his political

life. This fact is evident in the scenes where Gaveston has returned and the King foolishly grants Gaveston titles and riches far beyond his worth:

And sooner shall the sea o'erwhelm my land
Than bear the ship that shall transport thee hence.
I here create thee Lord High Chamberlain,
Chief Secretary to the state and me,
Earl of Cornwall, King and Lord of Man. (1. 1. 152-6)

Here the King makes several grave mistakes. He promotes a person of much lesser station to a position far beyond the most powerful barons in his own country. Granted, in most cases the King should be able to do what he pleases. However, Machiavelli points out that there are two types of Principalities. One type is comprised of the Prince and his servants, with the servants dependent upon the Prince for power and money. The other type is composed of the Prince and a group of already-established barons. These barons possess their power due to a long tradition of established position, and they are more the Prince's peers than his servants. Edward's kingdom is the latter type, and Edward cannot afford simply to ignore the barons' wishes, for surely then there will be some sort of retribution involved.

Edward's relationship with Gaveston is an example of a vice that interferes with Edward's ability to rule the Kingdom. His relationship with Gaveston is clearly homosexual, and this relationship offends the barons and his queen. Creating a rift in his and the Queen's relationship, Edward shuns Isabel for the company of Gaveston. The King will eventually drive her into the arms of Mortimer. Early in the play, Isabel

noticed the unnatural relationship between the King and Gaveston. Mortimer asked the Queen where she was going in such a somber mood, to which she replied:

Unto the forest, gentle Mortimer,
To live in grief and baleful discontent;
For now my lord the king regards me not,
But dotes upon the love of Gaveston.
He claps his cheeks, and hangs about his neck,
Smiles in his face, and whispers in his ears;
And, when I come, he frowns, as who should say,
'Go whither thou wilt, seeing I have Gaveston (1. 2. 47-54)

In this speech, the Queen foreshadowed much of what is to come in the play. The bond begins to form between the Queen and her "gentle Mortimer." Also, the King begins to ignore all other responsibility in order to frolic with Gaveston. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli directly warns against committing acts that will incur hatred or contempt among the barons or the people:

What makes him contemptible is to be held variable, light, effeminate, pusillanimous, irresolute, from which a prince should guard himself as from a shoal. He should contrive that greatness, spiritedness, gravity, and strength are recognized in his actions, and he should insist that his judgements in the private concerns of his subjects be irrevocable. (72)

Edward is guilty of nearly all these infractions of Machiavelli's code. His relationship with Gaveston has made Edward seem like a fool. Worse, the relationship with Gaveston has made Edward seem especially effeminate to the warlike Barons. He has further

offended their sensibilities by trying to raise Gaveston to an inflated position in the realm. Due to the position of his barons, Edward is not at leisure to offend them as he pleases. They are not his servants to be bullied around at his whims; they are sword-wielding warriors with armies and resources of their own. They make it known through several threats to the King that they will ply these forces against him if necessary.

The King's relationship with Gaveston is the central cause of discontent among the nobles. They know that Gaveston is nothing more than a base flatterer. The King would have been wise to listen to their counsel in this matter, for, from the beginning, it is obvious to the audience that Gaveston has secret motives for his relationship with the King:

Farewell base stooping to the lordly peers!

My knee shall bow to none but the king.

As for the multitude, that are but sparks,

Rak'd up in embers of their poverty. . . .

I must have wanton poets, pleasant wits,

Musicians, that with touching of a string

May draw the pliant king which way I please. . . .

Sometime a lovely boy in Dian's shape,

With hair that gilds the water as it glides,

Crownets of pearl about his naked arms,

And in his sportful hands an olive-tree

To hide those parts which men delight to see. . . . (1. 1. 18-20, 52-54,

61-65)

These lines reveal Gaveston's character almost completely. He sees the King as nothing more than a tool that he will use to propel himself above the barons. He plans to use the king's power to raise himself to a political level second only to the king's. Intrinsic in his plan is his desire to become the secret power behind the throne; Gaveston will draw the "pliant king" which way he pleases. He knows that Edward II will come to him exclusively for counseling and that he will be able to trick Edward II into doing whatever he wishes. He plans to distract the King with fanciful shows and perverted imagery of young boys so that he may use the King for his selfish desires.

The King truly cares for Gaveston and holds him in high regard as his best friend. However, Gaveston's affections for the King do not run as sincere. Gaveston is much more Machiavellian than Edward, and Gaveston clearly uses their relationship for his own advantage. The opening lines to the play display the difference between the two individuals:

My father is deceas'd. Come, Gaveston,

And share the kingdom with thy dearest friend.

Ah, words that make me surfeit with delight!

What greater bliss can hap to Gaveston

Than live and be the favorite of a king! (1. 1. 1-5)

The words in italics are the lines Gaveston is reading in a letter from Edward. His response to Edward's heartfelt offer to share the Kingdom with him is cold and calculating. Gaveston is not happy to be going to see his friend; instead, he is only happy at his great fortune. He does not even use Edward's name; he is only happy to be going to "live and be the favorite of a king!" Gaveston's happiness in the passage is linked to

his personal political and financial gain. This episode displays another fault in Edward's judgment. Machiavelli warns that a Prince should choose his companions carefully and wisely. They should be few and the Prince should be able to trust them. A Prince should always avoid flatterers since the subjects' impressions are partially formed using the advisors who surround the King. Furthermore, the mark of a good counselor is that he will concern himself with the welfare of the kingdom and the Prince, not with his own status (92-95). Gaveston meets none of these criteria. He only cares for his own welfare, and all his "counseling" to the King is merely self-interested Machiavellian politics.

In an effort finally to rid the Kingdom of Gaveston, the barons band together with the Archbishop of Canterbury. They also possess much greater ability in the realm of Machiavellian politics than does Edward. Earlier in the play, Gaveston and the King took revenge upon the Bishop of Coventry for leading the cause to banish Gaveston while Edward I was still alive. The King and Gaveston abused the Bishop and seized his property. Using their outrageous behavior as leverage, the Archbishop of Canterbury allies with the nobles and forces Edward to sign Gaveston's banishment. Machiavelli would have applauded the baron's and the Archbishop's tactic because, instead of outright revolt, they used their political clout to achieve their goal (Machiavelli 69). In true Machiavellian style, they assumed the role of the fox and set a political trap for Gaveston.

In desperation, Edward II offers to divide up the Kingdom among his nobles so that he may have "Some nook or corner left / To frolic with my dearest Gaveston." (1. 4. 72-3). In her book, *Hammer and Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher*

Marlowe's Plays, Constance Brown Kuriyama asserts that the King's love for Gaveston far exceeds Gaveston's for the King:

Although Gaveston's character is not so fully elaborated as Edward's, he appears to care far less for Edward (or any one else) than for himself.

Gaveston is as devoted to Edward as his nature permits; unfortunately, his nature is frivolous, shallow, and opportunistic. Objectively speaking, he is not worth a kingdom Marlowe makes it clear, however, that

Gaveston is not in the least interested in sacrificing his life for the King

(184)

From the beginning Gaveston's love for the King has been rooted in the status and power he can gain from the King; in the first scene, Gaveston states that his "Musicians . . . with touching of a string / May draw the pliant king which way I please"(1. 1. 53-4).

Gaveston has used the King to execute his personal Machiavellian agenda. Edward's inability to recognize Gaveston as a dangerous ally will help precipitate Edward's downfall.

Edward is distraught at Gaveston's banishment and blames the Queen, for Gaveston has brainwashed Edward into believing that the Queen has defamed Gaveston. Edward then shouts in anger, "There weep, for till my Gaveston be repealed / Assure thyself thou com'st not in my sight" (1. 4. 169-70). Curiously, the only time Edward proves any skill at Machiavellian tactics is in his ability to use the Queen's affections for him to gain the repeal of Gaveston's banishment. Isabella gets an idea, and she hatches a Machiavellian scheme of her own. Her motives are not clear because she reveals her reasons to Mortimer in private. However, after their discussion, Mortimer's position on

Gaveston's banishment is drastically changed, and he changes the other barons' positions with a slick political speech:

Know you not Gaveston hath store of gold,
Which may in Ireland purchase him such friends
As he will front the mightiest of us all?
And whereas he shall live and be beloved,
'Tis hard for us to work his overthrow. . . .
But were he here, detested as he is ,
How easily might some base slave be suborned
To greet his lordship with a poinard, . . .
To banish him, and then to call him home,
'Twill make him vail the top flag of his pride,
And fear to offend the meanest nobleman. (1. 4. 260-264, 266-268, 277-279)

Mortimer's plan sounds similar to the old Mafioso code: keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer. Mortimer does not want Gaveston to go to Ireland, raise an army, and return and conquer the barons. By keeping Gaveston close, the barons can keep him weak and watch for a chance to assassinate him. However, does Mortimer really think keeping Gaveston in England is a good idea for the country? He states later that if Gaveston does not bow to their will, the barons may then justly "with some color rise in arms" (1. 4. 281). Prevention of a civil war is one reason they banished Gaveston. By keeping Gaveston in England, the catalyst for war is still very prevalent. Perhaps civil war is what Mortimer wants all along. Perhaps the Queen and Mortimer see

this inevitability and want Gaveston around to bring war into reality. Mortimer's motives for civil war are rooted in his desire to gain power, while Isabel's are rooted in her desire to be united with Mortimer.

The Queen's motives for defending Gaveston seem to have been to make Edward happy and win her favor in his eyes. At first, she and Edward seem reconciled, but, as soon as Gaveston returns, everything goes back to the way it was. The King still dotes upon Gaveston and tries to force the barons to pay tribute to Gaveston. At this point, the action picks up pace. The barons and Mortimer align in one camp against Edward and Gaveston in another. Thanks to Gaveston, Edward gains some new allies in Spencer and Baldock, two ambitious lesser nobles who hope to gain advancement through an alliance to the King. I do not believe that the King dotes upon Spencer or Baldock as he did with Gaveston. Their conversations are not peppered with amorous language. However, their Machiavellian motives are clear, for both Spencer and Baldock wish to use Edward for promotion. The two lesser nobles choose to ally with Edward because he is the legitimate King and their greatest chance of promotion.

The outbreak of civil war exemplifies the division in the Kingdom. The barons are at first victorious. They overrun Tynemouth castle and capture Gaveston with the aid of the Queen. At this point, it becomes apparent that the Queen is in love with Mortimer, and, in an aside, she says:

So well hast thou deserved, sweet Mortimer

As Isabel could live with thee forever!

In vain I look for love at Edward's hand (2. 4. 60-62)

With Gaveston in their command, the nobles sentence him to death. The King accepts this fact but requests to see Gaveston once more. Most of the Barons are willing to honor the King's request. However Warwick exceeds his authority and executes Gaveston saying "it is my country's cause I follow" (3. 1. 11). This statement may or may not be believable for, as Kuriyama posits:

The Earls are less egocentric than Edward, but the good of the country, to which they pay considerable lip service, cannot compete with their individual desires. Some personal interest is almost always involved in the other characters' objections of Edward's conduct, as Isabella sharply reminds us when she is unjustly accused of pleading for Gaveston: "Tis for my selfe I speake, and not for him" (197)

Everyone acts with his or her personal interests at stake. However, Warwick's hasty actions will cost the barons dearly. Edward, with the aid of Spencer, retaliates with a successful attack. They capture the barons and behead them all, except Mortimer. This is Edward's final and most crucial mistake. Instead of beheading Mortimer, he sends him to the Tower of London. Machiavelli states that one should punish his enemies so badly that there is no chance of retribution (34-35). Edward leaves Mortimer alive; consequently, Mortimer flees to France, joins forces with the Queen, Sir John of Hainault, and Kent. They all agree to gather an army, but it is Mortimer who is fond of the idea of armed conflict: "But by the sword, my lord, it must be deserved; / The King will never forsake his flatterers" (4. 3. 61-62). Here begins Mortimer's Machiavellian rise to power, for he knows that only by conquest can he put himself in a position to gain

power. Once he has gathered his armies, he makes everyone swear allegiance to the Prince of Wales and Isabella to legitimize the invasion:

Arrived and armed in this prince's right,
Here for our country's cause swear we to him
And, for the open wrongs and injuries
Edward hath done to us, his queen, and land,
We come in arms to wreak it with the swords,
That England's queen in peace may reposess
Her dignities and honors, and withal
We may remove these flaterers from the king (4. 4. 18-19, 21-26)

Mortimer disguises his true goals in a veil of patriotism. Roger Sales, in his book *Christopher Marlowe*, asserts that "Mortimer may claim the right to speak for England and yet his patriotism is ultimately shown to be a convenient mask for his self-interest" (119). He pretends to be fighting for the honor of the Queen and to assure the Prince his rightful Crown, but, most importantly, Mortimer states that he only wishes to remove the flatterers from Edward's side. However, during the battle Edmund, the Duke of Kent, realizes that Mortimer has very different plans for the King:

Proud traitor, Mortimer, why dost thou chase
Thy lawful king, thy sovereign, with thy sword?
Vild wretch, and why hast thou, of all unkind,
Borne arms against thy brother and thy king? (4. 5. 12-15)

Kent now realizes the folly of following the ambitious Mortimer against the King.

Machiavelli warns against helping anyone else come to power, for it will surely be the

undoing of the one who helped (15). Kent realizes the harsh truth of this statement as Mortimer begins to extinguish the blood-line of Edward. Mortimer must kill Kent and the King so that he will be left as the sole protector of the young Edward III. Mortimer's murder of the King and Kent helps solidify his power and leaves him in control of the Kingdom.

Mortimer and the Queen grow closer together as both sink deeper into their Machiavellian worlds. The clever Machiavellian devices at Isabella's disposal become evident in a conversation she has with Mortimer. She knows that she cannot directly become involved with the murder of Edward II, yet she will never be safe with him still alive. So, she cleverly endorses her desire for Edward's death while avoiding a direct statement of her desires.

Queen: But, Mortimer, as long as he survives,

What safety rests for us or for my son?

Mor. Jun: Speak, shall he presently be dispatched and die?

Queen: I would it were, so 'twere not by my means (5. 2. 43-5)

These lines solidify the Queen's involvement in the murder of the King. She is completely stripped of any innocence. She and Mortimer can now pursue their Machiavellian takeover of the kingdom. With a cleverly-worded note, Mortimer instructs his henchmen in the murder Edward. The note is an example of Machiavellian dissembling in writing; read one way it instructs the reader to eliminate Edward, while read another it instructs the reader to save the King:

Gurney, it [the note] was left unpointed for the nonce;

Edwardum occidere nolite timere,

That's his meaning. (5. 5. 18-20)

The note has two possible meanings, depending on how it is punctuated. The villains Matrevis and Gurney know how to interpret the note, and they now realize that the King must die. Roger Sales notes the irony in which Mortimer becomes exactly what he hated earlier in the play:

Mortimer despises Gaveston and yet boasts about his own rise to power. He forces Edward to abdicate and then advances his own favorites. His claim to speak for the people and to protect their constitutional rights is undermined by the way he becomes just like his enemies. (122)

Mortimer's plan would have gone off without any problems except that Gurney confesses and gives the clever note to Edward III for evidence. When faced with the prospect of capture, Mortimer boasts "Let's see who dare impeach me for his death!" (5. 6. 14)

Mortimer believes that no one can bring him to justice; however, he does not count upon the wit of King Edward III. The new King proves to be the greatest Machiavellian in the play, as is displayed in his ability to deal with the two conspirators. Furthermore, the new King proves to be a positive example of a Machiavellian, instead of a negative one. Machiavelli never intended his book to be taken in a negative fashion, although much English dramatic tradition does so. *The Prince* is not a handbook for villains. Instead, his book is a handbook for rulers who must deal with the reality of the political world. Interestingly, the virtues he extols in a ruler do not apply to a normal man. The ruler who can deal ruthlessly with his enemies and protect a kingdom from its enemies by whatever means necessary possesses the greatest virtue (Machiavelli 30-33). Mortimer believed Edward III to be just a child and no threat to his position. However,

Edward III brings justice to Mortimer and the Queen efficiently and effectively.

Machiavelli states that a good ruler must have the qualities of both the lion and the fox (69). The lion represents swift and decisive action against one's enemies, while the fox has the wit to outsmart their traps. Edward III gathers the full force of the law and positions the remaining nobles behind him. He then moves on the conspirators, confronting them with the evidence of the note. With the cunning of a politician, he catches Mortimer with the evidence and swiftly has him put to death. He effectively deals with his enemy and leaves no room for retribution. He also suspects his mother in the murder, but, without sufficient evidence does not condemn her to death. Instead he imprisons her in the Tower of London. With this action, Edward III avoids matricide and the possibility of alienating his subjects. His sensitivity to the issues shows that while decisive, Edward III is not rash. He is a strong yet intelligent monarch who returns order to the world of the play. The rightful King is back on his throne with the support of his nobles, and the conspirators have been effectively punished.

Machiavellianism and Appearance versus Reality in Webster's *White Devil*

Within the milieu of his first great tragedy, *The White Devil*, John Webster has created a world of darkness and ambiguity. The setting for most of the play revolves around several different courts of the Italian nobility. The characterization for the play is typical; there are greater and lesser nobility and their servants, churchmen and henchmen. However, Webster has created a world atypical of most other tragedies in that no one character fully assumes the role of protagonist or antagonist. Instead, Webster presents several characters of equal importance that all interact to bring about the tragic conclusion of the play. All characters interact to present a world typified by chaos where reality is often different from appearance. Furthermore, none of the main characters can be classified as a "good guy." Webster presents the Italian court as a place of corruption and evil where all the nobles compete against one another, using their best Machiavellian tactics to achieve their goals.

The play does possess minor characters that would be considered good, but their parts are small and their effect upon the action is almost insignificant. They are presented as being petty and impotent in the face of the evil of the court, and their efforts to uphold the virtues of righteousness and honor bring about their own downfall. By not playing the Machiavellian game of the court, they fall prey to the more evil predatory characters. Webster's language reinforces his portrayal of a dark and evil world with his extensive use of imagery that reinforces these motifs; his images revolve around disease, decay, and animals, portraying humans as wolves and dogs. Within this play, Webster has given the audience a glimpse into the dark side of human nature. He has created a world that presents dissembling and deception as the only means of survival. The characters cannot

and will not embrace honor, truth, or virtue, for the naivete of goodness can provide no defense against the reality of evil.

The one event that precipitates the action of the entire play is the liaison between Vittoria Corombona and Duke Brachiano. They are both stuck in unfulfilling marriages, and they have passionately fallen in love. This fact creates many problems in the arena of the Italian court because they are both members of the upper class, and their actions could cause an international scandal. Critics have likened the union of the two lovers to the union of Antony and Cleopatra. However, as Charles R. Forker affirms this similarity in his book, *Skull Beneath the Skin: A Study of the Plays of John Webster*, he also highlights the underlying danger and unsettling feeling that the affair evokes:

The deliberate mixing of forms imparts to *The White Devil* a disorienting sense of fragmentation and uncertainty, a feeling that experience is puzzlingly discontinuous, its perspectives wrenched and shifting, its values unstable and self-canceling. Webster can therefore present the love between Bracciano and Vittoria as both a heroic passion and a sordid coupling of an ambitious “strumpet” with her lustful victim. One of the many unsettling patterns in the play allows us to regard the lovers as criminal descendants of Antony and Cleopatra. . . . (254)

For a moment, the audience gains a glimpse of the intense romantic feeling that Brachiano has for Vittoria. It is easy to envision Antony as he carelessly risks his kingdom and position for the love of Cleopatra. Brachiano makes similar promises to risk all for Vittoria, saying “you shall to me at once / Be dukedom, health, wife, children,

friends and all”(1. 2. 265-256). However, the circumstances surrounding their love tells a twisted story of death, deceit, corruption, and panderism.

The encounter between Vittoria and Brachiano has the initial appearance and feeling of high romanticism. Financial gain and murder are the underlying themes lurking beneath the surface. Vittoria is a noblewoman, and society would expect from her the highest mode of conduct. Yet, it becomes apparent that Brachiano is paying her for sexual favors:

Brachiano: What value is this jewel?

Vittoria: ‘Tis the ornament of a weak fortune.

Brachiano: In sooth I’ll have it; nay I will but change

My jewel for your jewel. (1. 2. 219-221)

Vittoria’s family, though noble, is poor. In this scene she reveals her most valuable commodity. She is a young and handsome woman, and surely she would benefit from a liaison with Brachiano. The irony of the scene is that the lovers speak in code to each other as if they know that what they are doing is somehow wrong. Brachiano’s exchange of his “jewel” for Vittoria’s is rife with sexual undertones. On the surface, the exchange seems to be nothing more than one jewel for another; underneath, the exchange is actually for sexual favors from Vittoria. She has reduced herself to nothing more than a whore in an effort to bid for financial gain.

Financial gain is not the only theme hidden under the surface of this scene. Vittoria would be foolish to simply remain Brachiano’s courtesan. Instead, she will make a bid for Brachiano’s complete devotion as her husband. If she can gain his hand in marriage, then she may gain the financial security that she desires. Unfortunately, the

Duke is married and so is Vittoria. She knows that with their spouses alive they can never be together, so in a Machiavellian scheme, she relates a dream to Brachiano that results in the death of her husband and Brachiano's Duchess. Lurking just out of sight is Flamenio who exclaims:

Excellent devil.

She hath taught him in a dream

To make away his Duchess and her husband. (1. 2. 254-256)

Flamineo is Vittoria's brother; strangely he is also her pander. Working together with Vittoria and Brachiano, Flamenio devises a plan to get rid of Vittoria's husband Camillo for the evening and bring the lovers together. One must wonder why Vittoria's own brother would risk the honor of their family by prostituting his sister to the Duke. In chapter three of *The Prince*, Machiavelli warns that men, in general, are restless with their positions in society; therefore, they will often use any means and all their assets to increase their position and fortify their wealth (8-16). Consequently, Flamenio's desire to use his sister as a commodity is explained though not excused, despite his sister's willingness. By connecting Vittoria and Brachiano, Flamenio can possibly gain power and wealth. It becomes obvious that Flamenio views his sister as nothing more than a commodity, an instrument for his financial and social gain.

As the two lovers close upon one another, Cornelia (Vittoria, Marcello, and Flamenio's mother) suddenly bursts onto the scene. She reprimands the lovers exclaiming, "Woe to light hearts, they still forerun our fall" (1. 2. 268). For a moment, the two lovers are separated; however, as a representative of good in the play, Cornelia

proves to be an impotent character. She has stopped the lovers only for the moment, and she receives the blame for the ensuing disaster that Brachiano foresees:

Uncharitable woman, thy rash tongue
Hath rais'd a fearful and prodigious storm,
Be thou the cause of all ensuing harm. (1. 2. 304-306)

Brachiano's placement of the blame on Cornelia is not necessarily correct; however, the contradiction between the audience's sense of fairness and the play's sense of reality becomes clear with these lines. Neither Brachiano nor Flamenio can understand why Cornelia has interfered. Flamenio further heaps the blame upon his mother when he says:

Now, you that stand so much upon your honor,
Is this a fitting time o' night think you,
To send a duke home without e'er a man?
I would fain know where lies the mass of wealth
Which you have hoarded up for my maintenance,
That I may bear my beard out of the level
Of my lord's stirrup. (1. 2. 306-312)

His implications are that honor is worth nothing if one does not have money to support his position. His mother's concern for her daughter's honor is less important than the lecherous desires of a duke, especially a duke who is very rich and very powerful. He is flabbergasted that she does not understand the value of a union between Vittoria and Brachiano. His lust for money surfaces as he watches Vittoria exchange her worthless jewel for the Duke's precious jewel. Observing the exchange, Flamenio raves, "Excellent, / His jewel for her jewel; well put in Duke" (1. 2. 222-223). Of course, the

underlying implications of this statement go even farther. Flamenio is ecstatic with the Duke's symbolic exchange of his money for the "jewel" of Vittoria's sexuality. He sees his sister as the commodity that will bring true Flamenio's desire, "that I may bear my beard out of the level / Of my lord's stirrup (1. 2. 311-312). Flamenio reveals himself to be a creature of greed, not unlike Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi*. As Lee Bliss points out the function of the "tool villain" in his book, *The World's Perspective: John Webster and the Jacobean Drama*:

. . . they willingly define themselves in terms of the corrupt political and personal relationships they see about them. They choose to be irresponsible, cogs in the political machine whose power they hope to share; if pressed, they use their practical knowledge of the world's ways to justify the means by which they pursue its prizes. (98)

Both characters are driven by a desire to attain money and position by any means possible, and both adhere to the belief that the court is inherently corrupt; therefore the only way to attain wealth is through corrupt means. In Webster's later play, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola states:

Let good men, for good deeds, covet good fame,
Since place and riches oft are bribes of shame;
Sometimes the devil doth preach. (1. 2. 213-215)

Like Bosola, Flamenio cares nothing for goodness or honor. He has seen, through his mother's noble efforts to embrace virtue, how much these goodly commodities are worth. Their family is still poor. Conversely, he also sees the initial reward for the sin of his panderism in the Duke's jewel. His sister has gained a jewel of monetary value for the

“jewel” of her sexuality. It is the hope of more monetary reward that embroils Flamenio in the plot to unite Vittoria and the Duke through marriage at any cost.

During the second act, several new Machiavellian characters appear. The two most important new characters are Cardinal Monticelso and Duke Francisco de Medici. These two noblemen have come to Rome with Brachiano’s wife Isabella (who is also Francisco’s sister). Their supposed purpose is to try to reunite Brachiano and his wife and get him to stop his adulterous affair. The Cardinal and Duke try reason with Brachiano in an attempt to curb his lecherous habits. Monticelso appeals to Brachiano’s sense of nobility, telling him he is foolish to throw his position away for a woman. Monticelso tries to appeal to Brachiano’s sense of fatherhood, telling him to be a good role model for his son. Finally Francisco poses the argument:

See a good habit makes a child a man

Whereas a bad one makes a man a beast:

Come you and I are friends. (2. 1. 38-40)

On the surface, Monticelso and Francisco appear to be concerned about Brachiano and his Duchess. However, this proves not to be the truth. The Cardinal and Francisco are actually in the formative stages of a Machiavellian plot to destroy Brachiano. Despite his lechery, Brachiano is a powerful Duke; consequently, Francisco and Monticelso would benefit from his destruction. In the following lines the audience finally gains a glimpse of the hidden political agenda of the Duke and the Cardinal:

Francisco: So, ‘twas well fitted: now shall we discern

How his wish’d absence will give violent way

To Duke Brachiano’s lust. . . .

I fain would have the Duke Brachiano run
Into notorious scandal. . .

Monticelso: It may be objected I am dishonorable
To play thus with my kinsman, but I answer,
For my revenge I'd stake a brother's life,
That being wrong'd durst not avenge himself.

Francisco: Come to observe the strumpet

Monticelso: Curse of greatness sure he'll not leave her.

Francisco: There's small pity in't.

Like mistletoe on sere elms spent by weather,
Let him cleave to her and both rot together. (2. 1. 373-375, 389-
396)

Despite her heartfelt sadness at Brachiano's rejection, Francisco does not care for his sister. He only cares about his political agenda. Dena Goldberg in her book, *Between Worlds: A Study of the Plays of John Webster*, neatly explains the significance of this scene:

. . . the rags of self justification finally fall away, revealing their naked selves. And the audience suddenly realizes that these two pillars of church and state are not really interested in correcting the situation after all, but on the contrary, are luridly delighted at the prospect of Brachiano's downfall. . . . (29)

Machiavelli states in chapter eighteen of *The Prince* that a ruler should be a great liar and dissembler, yet he must also maintain an image of piety and honor (69-70). This advice

explains why Francisco and Monticelso maintain their outward disguise of “marriage counselors” while secretly they plot the destruction of the very person whom they counsel.

Brachiano is not necessarily an honorable person and not especially worthy of the audience’s sympathy. He too possesses a cold, calculating Machiavellian side. He knows that both his Duchess and Camillo (Vittoria’s husband) are the main obstacles in his and Vittoria’s path. However, if he were rid of these two, Vittoria and he could be married. Brachiano, with the help of Flamenio, concocts two exotic Machiavellian plans to kill Isabella and Camillo. Using his henchmen Julio and Christophero, Brachiano has them poison a picture of himself, which the Duchess kisses each night before bed. The plan works: when the Duchess observes her nightly ritual, she is killed by the poisoned portrait. Then, Flamenio gets Camillo drunk and entices him to engage in the sport of horse vaulting. While they are alone, Flamenio pounces on Camillo, breaks his neck and makes it look like an accident. Both of these murders recall similar methods used by the scheming Barabas. His Machiavellian plot to frame one friar with the death of the other while looking like an innocent bystander is brilliant. Equally impressive is his technique of poisoning a bouquet of flowers and appearing to his victims in the disguise of an Italian musician. He then charms his victims with his music and entices them to enjoy the scent of the bouquet. The scene is quite comical as his victims unknowingly sniff themselves to death with the poisoned flowers! Moreover, the deaths of the Duchess and Camillo reinforce the theme of appearance versus reality in the play. The murders are staunch reminders that Machiavellian tactics are rooted in deception. In the arena of

realpolitik, one cannot afford to take anything or anyone at face value, for the world is full of dissemblers (Machiavelli 61).

Vittoria immediately falls under suspicion with the death of Camillo. She is taken into custody and immediately the Cardinal and Francisco try to fix the outcome of the trial. In a secret conference, they reveal their hidden agenda:

Francisco: You have dealt discreetly to obtain the presence

Of all the grave lieger ambassadors

To hear Vittoria's trial.

Monticelso: 'Twas not ill,

For sir you know we have nought but circumstances

To charge her with, about her husband's death;

Their approbation therefore to the proofs

Of her black lust, shall make her infamous

To all our neighboring kingdoms. (3. 1. 1-9)

They know they do not have the evidence to convict Vittoria, so they develop a subtle plan. Since their primary intent is to defame and perhaps destroy Brachiano, they will defame Vittoria's name and convict her of being a whore. They will figuratively switch her crime from the criminal court to an indictment of morality and try her on the basis of her conduct. The irony is that Vittoria turns the tables upon the Cardinal and effectively puts him on trial in front of his peers. M. C. Bradbook, in his book, *John Webster:*

Citizen and Dramatist, enunciates the underlying implications of Vittoria's trial:

The Cardinal's formula of possession ... is dissolved by Vittoria's power to transform the Cardinal's trial of her into her trial of the Cardinal. This

is not the reward of innocence but of courage. Prisoners may gain ascendancy over their jailors, and Vittoria demonstrates the disgraceful political role of a corrupt Church, leaving a skeptical gap that is to be unresolved even in the final scene. The Cardinal exemplifies precisely the worst kind of White Devil, as listed by Thomas Adams – the hypocritical churchman, the Judas of the faith. (132)

Despite her staunch defense, Vittoria is found guilty of moral misconduct. The Cardinal sentences her to be sent to “a house of convertites.” They cannot find her guilty of the murder, but they still find a reason to chastise Vittoria, showing that the people who have the power make the rules. Vittoria is convicted of being a whore, but she highlights the irony that the Cardinal has “ravished justice.” His goal was to defame Brachiano through Vittoria, and, using the power or the law, he has accomplished his goal. In chapter eighteen of *The Prince*, Machiavelli cites the use of the law as a preferable means to achieve one’s goals. Under the guise of piety or justice, one can use the law to harm one’s enemies (69-70).

Until now, neither Francisco nor the Cardinal has known of Isabella’s death. After the trial, the fact of Isabella’s death becomes clear. Francisco’s reaction is devoid of emotion. He knows that Brachiano is responsible, but to act on this fact could cause a war, yet he must have revenge. At this point, Francisco begins to show his ultimate Machiavellian capacities, as Forker states:

Webster presents the Florentine duke as the ultimate horror – the spirit of carefully nurtured hatred, inhumanly Machiavellian and bloodlessly disengaged, a sort of death’s head who presides quietly, aloofly,

efficiently, and invulnerably over the lives of virtually everyone in the play. The metaphor by which he commits himself to his sister's memory, "Believe me I am nothing but her grave" (3. 2. 341), encapsulates an irony that defines the essence of Francisco. (264)

With the murder of his sister, the engine for Francisco's full vengeance upon Brachiano is revealed, although the reason is more politics than grief. He formulates a Machiavellian scheme of deception and adopts a policy of revenge that will be effective yet pose minimal risk to himself. In a significant speech, Francisco enunciates his political approach to revenge:

He that deals all by strength, his wit is shallow:
When a man's head goes through, each limb will follow.
The engine for my business, bold Count Lodowick;
'Tis gold must suck an instrument procure,
With empty fist no man doth falcons lure.
Brachiano, I am now fit for thy encounter.
Like the wild Irish I'll ne'er think thee dead,
Till I can play at football with thy head. (4. 1. 131-138)

Here Francisco reveals much that Machiavelli recommended for an effective ruler. In chapter seven of *The Prince*, Machiavelli contends that a ruler must at times be severe in his actions, yet he must retain the intelligence to protect himself from his enemies (26). Francisco certainly adheres to this tenet through his resolve to hire Lodowick (a pirate) as his instrument of revenge. With this tactic, Francisco distances himself from the crime, while gaining an effective ally against his enemies. Francisco also demonstrates his

willingness thoroughly to destroy Brachiano so that he cannot possibly attain revenge upon Francisco. Chapter three of *The Prince* highlights the importance of thorough destruction of one's foes, and Francisco's resolve to pursue Brachiano until he "can play at football" with his head leaves no room for Brachiano to be avenged upon Francisco (10).

Furthering the theme of appearance versus reality in the play, Francisco and his band of henchmen don disguises as Knights of Malta and trick their way into the Paduan palace of Brachiano. Once inside, the wily Francisco steps into the background and allows his henchmen to attend to their business of murder and revenge. Their clever method of poisoning Brachiano's visor is effective, and, as the poison seeps into Brachiano's body, he is wracked in pain. Since Brachiano is not dying quickly enough, the two henchmen Lodowick and Gasparo assume the guise of Capuchin monks and, under the pretense of administering last rites, they appear to him in the form of holy men and complete the murder. After destroying Brachiano, the henchmen lose their disguises and murder Vittoria, her servant, and Flamenio. Francisco's revenge is complete and he has not directly bloodied his hands. Gasparo notes the irony of the nature of a prince's position when he exclaims: "Princes give rewards with their own hands / But death or punishment by the hands of others" (5. 6. 186-187). This statement is consistent with the necessity of maintaining appearances while one's real nature remains hidden. Chapter 21 of *The Prince* exemplifies this necessity; Machiavelli advises that a prince must be a patron of his people and appear to support their efforts, rewarding that which is excellent. However, he must also deal with the business of treachery and deceit and he is best advised to remain as distant from these dealings as is possible (87-91).

The ending of *The White Devil* is seasoned with uncertainty and ambiguity. Giovanni, the son of Brachiano, captures Lodowick. With Lodowick's capture and confession, Giovanni swears to exact justice upon the conspirators; however, the play does not provide the audience with the vision of the justice being served. Giovanni's promise to see justice served is open-ended and unfulfilled. Apparently, Francisco has achieved his revenge with no consequences: his Machiavellian scheme was successful. Indeed, for Giovanni to bring justice to Francisco, Giovanni will have to retrieve Francisco from his own duchy. Nothing short of a war will wrest Francisco from his city-state. Webster has provided the audience with a perplexing situation where Francisco's Machiavellian plan has worked almost perfectly. By distancing himself from the murders, he has left Giovanni with little real evidence to convict him. He has only the word of a known criminal and ex-pirate. There is actually no hard proof that Francisco was ever in the castle of Brachiano at all, for he was in disguise all the time. In a play where appearance is often not reality, disguise and dissembling have emerged as successful Machiavellian tactics, effective in dealing with one's enemies and achieving one's political agenda.

The Role of Machiavellian Tactics in the Execution of Evil in the *The Duchess of Malfi*

Within the microcosm of his play, *The Duchess of Malfi*, John Webster has created a world ruled by the forces of evil. Furthermore, each of the characters representative of the forces of evil makes extensive use of Machiavellian tactics and tools to satisfy his or her personal agenda. The social structure of the play is hierarchical, with the evil Cardinal resting at the top of the pyramid. He is a man who uses his position in the Church to fulfill his Machiavellian agenda. All other characters are subordinate to him and influenced by his will. Ferdinand and the Duchess are twins and the Cardinal's siblings, making them the next most powerful characters in social rank. Ironically, the proximity of the twins to the Cardinal denies them freedom, and they fall under his influence whether or not they are aware of this fact. Ferdinand is the Cardinal's first line of defense in the play. As a sly Machiavellian tactic, the Cardinal uses Ferdinand as a buffer between the Machiavellian henchman Bosola and himself. Consequently, Bosola falls under the direct influence of Ferdinand, who uses Bosola as a tool to spy on the Duchess. Although the Duchess is of the same social rank and heritage as her brothers, she does not possess the same evil soul as her brothers. The relationship between her and Antonio (her lover and steward) represents the only light of goodness in the play. Although forbidden by her brothers, it is the only relationship in the play which, even for a moment, proves to be fruitful. It represents love, goodness, and God's true purpose in marriage. Nonetheless, both brothers abhor the idea of the Duchess's remarriage. As Robert Ornstein declares in his book, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy*:

Only Ferdinand and the Cardinal speak of the sin of marrying twice and they do not convince us that the Duchess should be condemned as

unfaithful to a nameless, dead husband, who is mentioned casually in passing. Nor do they convince us that she earns her torments by breaking the laws of social decorum. (141)

Ferdinand and the Cardinal cite several vague reasons such as religion, honor and decency to condemn the Duchess' remarriage. Machiavelli states in chapter eighteen of *The Prince* that it is necessary for powerful individuals to appear to support virtue and goodness so they will not incur the condemnation of common opinion; "he should appear all mercy, all faith, all honesty, all humanity, all religion" (70). However, upon closer examination of the text, their hidden evil reasons become apparent and we see how both brothers conspire to destroy the Duchess and her happiness. Ferdinand is incestuously jealous, while the Cardinal wishes to secure the family money from others. Through their Machiavellian henchman, Bosola, the brothers exert their influence upon the Duchess and the world of the play, first destroying all that is good and then bringing about their own demise.

The remarriage of the Duchess is the event that sets the action in motion for the rest of the play. Despite her brothers' wishes that the Duchess remains single, she falls in love with and marries the steward of her house. A secret marriage with no official church sanction would have been a scandal in her time, for her steward Antonio is much below the Duchess' station. However, Rowland Wymer states in his book, *Webster and Ford*, that social ideals "are not wholly determinant of social practice (it was normal for young widows to remarry and not unknown for great ladies to marry beneath themselves)" (59). In Wymer's assessment of the social climate of the time, the Duchess has committed no great crime. Clearly, her brothers are using the issue of social honor to disguise their

motives. The Duchess has already married once and her first husband is dead. In addition, she has already had a firstborn son with her now-deceased husband. This son is currently the Governor of Malta, and the hereditary rights should rest with the first son. The text from the play shows that the Duchess is very beautiful; she, most of all, rues the fact that her youth and beauty should be wasted. The Cardinal and Ferdinand use many tools to prevent the Duchess from remarrying. They cite the need for the Duchess to remain virtuous and claim that to marry again would be too luxurious, a blatant satisfaction of her physical desires. They even come close to telling her that she would be nothing more than a whore if she should remarry.

Despite her brothers' urgings, the audience, and her brothers, cannot ignore the feeling that she is interested in remarriage. This prompts her brothers to hire a spy. The man they choose is Bosola. He is a strange mixture of educated Renaissance man and cold, calculating Machiavellian villain. The play has already revealed that he has been convicted of murder and sentenced to several years of punishment in the prison galleys, yet these still seemingly-virtuous men hire a convicted criminal. Antonio gives the audience immediate insight into Bosola's character:

The only court-gall: yet I observe his railing
Is not for simple love of piety:
Indeed he rails at those things which he wants,
Would be as lecherous, covetous, or proud,
Bloody, or envious, as any man,
If he had the means to be so. . . . (1. 1. 23-28)

In his notes on the text, Gunby reveals that Antonio calls him a "court-gall," singling him out as an obvious "court sore-spot or source of bitterness" (175 n). He notes the irony that the things Bosola seems to hate are the very things he desires. His presence at court is only to make a living for himself. The Cardinal has had him in his service before; the time that Bosola served on the galley was for a murder he had committed for the Cardinal. It is ironic that a churchman would hire a Machiavellian henchman to commit murder, but this detail provides interesting insight into the character of the Cardinal. When Bosola asks him for the reward for his service in the galleys, the Cardinal snubs him; however, this rebuke is all part of a larger plot of the Cardinal's. He has tricked his brother into hiring Bosola for the new job he needs accomplished:

Cardinal: Be sure you entertain that Bosola

For your intelligence: I would not be seen in't.

And therefore times have slighted him,

When he did court our furtherance: and this morning.

Ferdinand: Antonio, the great master of her household

Had been far fitter.

Cardinal: You are decieve'd in him,

His nature is too honest for such business.

He [Bosola] comes: I'll leave you. (1. 2. 148-154)

This conversation reveals the subtle methods the Cardinal uses to control his brother. The Cardinal knows that he is obsessed with the sexual abstinence of the Duchess, and in saying "For your intelligence" he makes Ferdinand believe that it is solely Ferdinand's idea to spy on the Duchess; however, Bosola's spying will provide essential information

on the Duchess to the Cardinal as well. Furthermore, the Cardinal is shown to be an excellent judge of character. He can clearly spot the people who will do his evil bidding and those who will not. His brother is too blind with a "perverse and turbulent nature" to be a proper judge of character (1. 2. 94). It is clear to all who know him that Antonio is virtuous; consequently, the Cardinal has no use for him.

Bosola came to court to make a living; he returns specifically to see the Cardinal. He clearly hopes that the Cardinal will give him some sort of reward for going to prison and not revealing the Cardinal's part in the original murder. The Cardinal snubs him, however, acting as though he wants nothing to do with Bosola. Desperate for money, Bosola is alone and disillusioned as he muses: "Miserable age, where only the reward of doing well, / is the doing of it!" (1. 1. 32-3). He is flabbergasted that his Machiavellian skill at treachery and murder will not be rewarded. He is a prime target for Ferdinand, who needs someone to gain intelligence about the Duchess. The conversation in which Ferdinand retains Bosola's services reveals much about the nature of the villain Bosola:

Ferdinand: There's gold.

Bosola: So:

What follows? (Never rain'd such showers as these

Without thunderbolts i'th' tail of them;)

Whose throat must I cut?

Ferdinand: Your inclination to shed blood rides post

Before my occasion to use you. . . . (1. 2. 169-175)

Ferdinand gives Bosola gold. Immediately the strange mixture that comprises Bosola's character is apparent. He is a wicked, cold-blooded killer, yet he is also a scholar. He

makes a striking classical reference to the legend of Jupiter who seduced Danae by appearing to her in a shower of gold, yet underneath the guise of the golden shower lurks the powerful lightning of the god of thunder (Hopper and Lahey 94 n). This image is juxtaposed against the stark question "Whose throat must I cut?". Bosola is educated, but he is also obsessed with the idea that men can only rise through treachery:

Let good men, for good deeds, covet good fame,
Since place and riches oft are bribes of shame;
Sometimes the devil doth preach. (1. 2. 213-215)

He states here that good deeds are for the good, and his wording makes clear that he does not include himself in the category of good men. He believes that the only way that he will rise is through treachery. Harvey J. Mansfield, Jr., in his introduction to *The Prince* highlights the essence of Machiavellian politics, the politic code that Bosola follows:

It [*The Prince*] is famous for its infamy, for recommending the kind of politics that ever since has been called Machiavellian. The essence of this politics is that "you can get away with murder": that no divine sanction, or degradation of soul, or twinge of conscience will come to punish you. If you succeed, you will not even have to face the infamy of murder, because when "men acquire who can acquire, they will be praised or not blamed" (Chapter 3). Those criminals who are infamous have merely been on the losing side. (Intro. vii-viii)

This is the reason that Bosola follows through with his service to the Duke by murdering the Duchess. At first, he sees the whole affair as nothing more than business that will end in some form of great payment for his services.

Bosola is, however, a complicated character who begins to develop sympathy for the Duchess, yet he will not leave the service of the Duke. After all of the horrible psychological torture Bosola helped Ferdinand execute upon the Duchess, Bosola finally asks the Duke:

Bosola: Why do you do this?

Ferdinand: To bring her despair.

Bosola: 'Faith, end here;

And go no farther in your cruelty,

Send her a penitential garment, to put on

Next to her skin, and furnish her

With beads and prayerbooks. (4. 1. 113-119)

Ornstein gives further insight into Bosola's character:

. . . Bosola will dare any criminal act before he dares to assume control over his own destiny. So long as he believes that he will save himself by loyal service, he remains true to his politic code. But when Ferdinand rewards him with a curse for murdering the Duchess, his cynicism disintegrates into plaintive questioning. . . . (68)

In a world which seems to be governed by evil and politics, Bosola cannot understand why his faithful service goes unrewarded while he helped discover the Duchess's husband and subsequently gave aid in punishing and murdering her and her two sons and nursemaid. He turns to Ferdinand and asks:

Let me know

Wherefore I should be thus neglected? Sir

I served your tyranny: and rather strove
To satisfy yourself, than all the world;
And though I loath'd the evil, yet I lov'd
You that did counsel it: and rather sought
To appear a true servant to an honest man. (4. 2. 325-331)

This passage is fraught with irony, which exposes an interesting juxtaposition of concepts and words that help define the nature of the evil in this play. It is not an evil that makes any sense. Bosola somehow loathed the crimes he committed, yet he claims to have loved the man who had him commit the crimes. He has tried to distance himself from his crimes by assuming a detached Machiavellian attitude to his political agenda, so that the necessity of addressing his agenda has come to outweigh the reality of the horrible crimes he must commit in order to rise in rank and wealth. This is in reality an impossible situation. As Bosola becomes more involved with the Duchess, he begins to realize the impossibility of distancing himself from the crimes he commits. Machiavelli meant for his tactics to be used by princes for governing their nations; however, when the same tactics are used for personal ends in familiar situations one cannot escape the ravages of conscience. He also calls himself a "true servant to an honest man"; this is impossible, for there is nothing honest about the Duke. He is a criminally insane animal who has just murdered his twin sister. How can Bosola expect fair treatment from such a man?

It is at this point in the play that Ferdinand begins to realize the folly of his treatment of the Duchess. The illogic of his passionate hatred for the Duchess's remarriage comes into direct conflict with Bosola's logical Machiavellian agenda. Once the Duke's passion for revenge has been satiated, he is thrown back into his incestuously

lustful passion which no longer has the potentiality for gratification. Consequently he turns to Bosola, and, unable to accept responsibility for his own actions, he blames his henchman:

Let me see her face again;
Why didst not thou pity her? What an excellent
Honest man might thou have been
If thou hadst borne her to some sanctuary! . . .
I bade thee, when I was distracted of my wits,
Go kill my dearest friend, and thou hast done't. . . .
Only I must confess, I had a hope,
Had she continu'd a widow, to have gain'd
An infinite mass of treasure by her death:
And that was the main cause; her marriage,
That drew a stream of gall quite through my heart; . . . (4. 2. 271-285)

This passage is rife with irony, as he turns to the very man that he employed to carry out his evil plan and blames him for the murder. Ferdinand is still blind to the fact that it is truly the Machiavellian Cardinal who has been manipulating Ferdinand's madness for his evil ends. Ferdinand says that he was out of his wits, but this should be no surprise: he has been insane since the beginning of the play. As early as the first act, the audience sees elements of his instability, even in everyday life not connected with the Duchess. Earlier in the play Ferdinand is joking with his courtiers, and for a moment the jokes roll beyond his mirth, and Ferdinand reacts by maniacally exclaiming:

Why do you laugh? Methinks you that are

courtiers should be my touchwood, take fire when I give
fire; that is laugh when I laugh, were the subject never so witty. (1. 2.
43-45)

This scene hints at Ferdinand's attitude about everything. He is a perfect example of one who uses his power ultimately to control people. The simple fact that he would have his courtiers modify their emotions to mirror his shows his deep-rooted insecurity. He is unable to allow individuality to operate in his presence. All those beneath him must take a subordinate role, or he goes into a temper tantrum. A similar trait was evident in Ferdinand as he tried to rationalize his hatred for his twin. He stated that he hoped the Duchess would amass a large store of treasure from not remarrying; however, the language he used to express his disdain for the Duchess's new husband, or lover, belied his outward reason:

Methinks I see her laughing,
Excellent hyena! Talk to me somewhat, quickly,
Or my imagination will carry me
To see her in the shameful act of sin. . . .
Happily with some strong-thigh'd bargeman;
Or one o' th' wood-yard, that can quoit the sledge
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire
That carries coals up to her privy lodgings. . . .
Go to, mistress!
'Tis not your whore's milk, that shall quench my wild-fire
But your whore's blood. (2. 5. 38-41, 43-46, 48-50)

This clearly is not the language of someone who is afraid the Duchess may spend her fortune frivolously on her new husband or leave it entirely to a new heir. In his fit of rage, he made absolutely no mention of finances. Instead, his mind was infected with perverse sexual thoughts. He actually had to fight back the urge to imagine his sister in the act of intercourse. The audience must have cringed to hear the Duke transform his sister into an evil laughing hyena and then to hear him run through an inventory of possible lovers. The scenes he depicts are almost pornographic. He does not see her in love, but in wild lust, moving from lover to lover in a reeling fit of ecstasy. This passage reveals Ferdinand's hidden agenda. Ferdinand's ability to maintain a Machiavellian façade of seeming virtue progressively breaks down throughout the play, and his selfish desire to keep his sister from the arms of another man proves to be the reason for his jealousy and subsequent madness.

After the murder of his sister, Ferdinand's insanity spirals out of control. His guilt drives him far beyond the realm of sanity as he loses all ability to interact in the world of the sane. He develops the dreaded psychological disease of lycanthropy and begins to frequent graveyards at night to dig up the bones of the dead. Since Ferdinand is no longer able to appear sane, he can no longer be Machiavellian and his brother has lost a valuable tool. Without his brother, the Cardinal is forced to attend to his own Machiavellian agenda, and he is forced to directly employ Bosola, as this speech of the Cardinal's reveals:

[Aside] Are you come? So: this fellow must not know

By any means I had intelligence

In our Duchess' death. For though I counsel'd it,

The full of all th' engagement seem'd to grow
From Ferdinand. Now sir, how fares our sister? . . .
If you'll do one thing for me I'll entreat,
Though he had a cold tombstone o'er his bones,
I'd make you what you would be. . . .
'Tis thus: Antonio lurks here in Milan;
Inquire him out, and kill him: while he lives
Our sister cannot marry, . . . (5. 2. 104-108, 114-116, 122-124)

These lines spoken by the Cardinal display his nimble Machiavellian mind at work. In the lines spoken as an aside, the audience sees that he will play the innocent. His sister is already dead, and he knows that Bosola had a part in her murder. However, he is content to let Bosola think that he knows nothing about the murder, allowing all the guilt to fall upon his insane brother. He will use Ferdinand as much as he possibly can; even in madness his brother cannot escape the evil will of the Cardinal. The Cardinal also displays his uncanny ability to evaluate others in their capacity to do what he wants. He knows that Bosola caused the death of the Duchess. However, he believes that Bosola will do anything for money or advancement. The Cardinal wants Antonio dead, and Bosola seemingly accepts the task of killing him. However, Bosola has lost his ability coldly to commit atrocities in the name of advancement. His murder of the Duchess has affected his soul and caused a conversion of his character. The Duchess's calm dignity and concern for others, despite her psychological torture, affects Bosola so much that he must turn away to murder her. Her image haunts Bosola, and though she is physically dead, her spirit lives on in the minds of the remaining characters for the rest of the play.

Bosola has decided to make amends for his crime and to attempt to rescue Antonio.

Consequently, he asks the Cardinal where he may find Antonio. The Cardinal's reply reveals his skill at Machiavellian intrigue:

There is a gentleman, call'd Delio
Here in the camp, that hath been long approv'd
His loyal friend. Set eye upon that fellow,
Follow him to mass; may be Antonio,
Although he do account religion
But a school-name, for fashion of the world,
May accompany him: or else go inquire out
Delio's confessor, and see if you can bribe
Him to reveal it: there are a thousand ways
A man might find to trace him: . . . (5. 2. 127-136)

This passage reveals the ironic character of the corrupt churchman. He condemns Antonio for holding religion as a "school-name, for fashion of the world"; however, in the same breath, he tells Bosola to find Delio's confessor and bribe him for information that would be sacred. In his attitude towards religion, the Cardinal is reminiscent of the character Machevill from the Prologue to the *Jew of Malta*.

Though some speak openly against my books,
Yet will they read me, and thereby attain
To Peter's chair; and, when they cast me off,
Are poison'd by my climbing followers.
I count religion but a childish toy,

And hold there is no sin but ignorance. (Marlowe Prol. 10-15)

The Cardinal is a walking contradiction. From a distance, he seems virtuous and holy, but deep inside his soul is black. He cares nothing for the religion that he seems to hold in such high esteem. It is merely a tool that the Cardinal uses to maintain appearance, hold position, and wield power over others.

As the play draws to a conclusion, the death of the Duchess begins to have an effect on her murderers. Ferdinand is driven completely insane with the knowledge that his sister is gone. He will never be able to fulfill his incestuous desires. Bosola's mind is haunted with her image causing him to declare, "O penitence, let me truly taste thy cup / That throws men down, only to raise them up" (5. 3. 344-345). Even the Cardinal exclaims, "How tedious is a guilty conscience!" (5. 4. 4). Each man descends into his own form of madness, inspired by guilt. The Cardinal sinks deeper into his plot to hide the murder, and the whole play evolves into a gothic carnival of bloodshed and murder. In the final act, fate seems to bring all remaining parties together, and, in a whirlwind of madness, mistaken identity, and insanity, Antonio, the Cardinal, Ferdinand, and Bosola kill each other. Even Antonio is not guilt-free, for he willingly courted the vengeance of the Duchess's brothers by deceiving them with a secret marriage. It is not necessarily the brother's right to forbid the marriage, but Antonio knew they were powerful, cruel men. Antonio's main crime is his inability to assume a strong role in his relationship with the Duchess. He can never assume the role of protector, as is evidenced by his fleeing danger with their son while leaving the Duchess to deal with her brothers. The schemes that the other men have created bring about their own demise. The weight of guilt coupled with the drive to conceal or avenge the murder of the Duchess drives each man

to desperation, bringing explosive destruction to those who were close to the Duchess's situation. Antonio, although not involved in the murder, was her husband and part of the secret marriage: this involvement brings his downfall. The others were her murderers and fortune has levied justice on all involved.

Webster offers no strong character to conclude the play and return the world to normal. He leaves the play somewhat open-ended and leaves the audience unsure that the world will be returned to order. Delio, in the final speech of the play, states that the Duchess's first son by Antonio should be established:

Let us make noble use
Of this great ruin; and join all our force
To establish this young hopeful gentleman
In's mother's right. (5. 5. 110-113)

Webster has left the conclusion of his play in the hands of a character that the audience has barely met. This fact offers little comfort, for nothing is known of his true character. As Webster makes clear in his play, reality often disagrees with appearance. The audience is left to wonder if the son will be a carbon copy of his uncles, or if he will possess some of the virtue of his mother. Perhaps Webster felt that these facts were unimportant, as Webster presents the audience with a portrait of social and individual decay.

The evil characters in the play make use of Machiavellian tactics in the administration of their personal agendas. However, Machiavelli wrote his book solely for rulers who wish effectively to run their states. Machiavelli advises that rulers suspend themselves from the normal code of human conduct because a ruler cannot be completely

honest in a politic world of dishonest people; those who outwit or double-cross the ruler will surely destroy him. Machiavelli makes clear in his book that his tactics are only excusable when used for the administration of the state; these tactics are not acceptable for normal human conduct (Machiavelli 34-35). Certainly, the evil characters in *The Duchess of Malfi* used Machiavellian tactics for personal reasons; this fact precipitates the downfall of virtually every character in the play. From this portrait of destruction, perhaps Webster meant to display the folly of evil, personal politics and to show that there can be no happy ending when one sets out to deceive or control other people.

Conclusion

Both Marlowe and Webster present provocative worlds rife with Machiavellian characters that cheat, deceive, dissemble, and murder their way through life. Both playwrights create worlds of darkness, where the strong exploit or destroy the weak and one's appearance is often only a façade used to hide an evil inner reality. Both Marlowe and Webster present characters that are close to the political ideal that Machiavelli had in mind when he wrote *The Prince*. In *Edward II*, Mortimer is the ultimate political over-reacher. His bid for the kingdom is almost successful, his only downfall being his inability to stop Fortune from destroying his efforts. Governor Ferneze is the ultimate political machine. While maintaining an outward appearance of concern and piety, he uses religion as a mask and a weapon. He has the ability to accept the unexpected events that Fortune sends him, and he uses Fortune to his advantage when he can.

Consequently, Ferneze is the politician in command of Malta in the end of the play. In *The White Devil*, Webster gives an excellent view of a ruthless politician with the character of Francisco. Everyone and everything in his world is just a tool for his political agenda. Francisco's feigned concern for Brachiano's infidelity to his sister is only a means for Francisco to achieve Brachiano's downfall. He has the ability to assume a disguise to achieve Brachiano's death, and his motive of revenge is nothing more than a political agenda. Webster's play *The Duchess of Malfi* presents a highly complex Machiavellian picture. Politics are not at the center of the play, yet Machiavellian tactics exist in the characters. The Cardinal and his brother are powerful characters who chastise and eventually destroy their sister simply because they do not

approve of her conduct. Their motives are personal rather than political; however, their methods are Machiavellian.

Webster presents a more complex world in both of his plays than does Marlowe. Marlowe's characters, though highly developed, are somewhat more predictable than Webster's. Furthermore, Marlowe allows a few characters to rise to the forefront of the play and assume roles as main characters. Webster's tragedies are elaborate collages of many characters all of equal importance. The audience feels safer with Marlowe's conclusions. The endings of his plays present nicely developed characters in command, and the audience has an idea of the world that will exist after the play. However, in both of his plays, Webster leaves the conclusion in the hands of completely undeveloped characters; the members of the audience are left to wonder what will become of the world after the play, and Webster gives them almost no idea. Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to generalize about entire eras of literature from just a few works, perhaps the reader can still derive some feeling for the subtle differences in the eras. Marlowe was an Elizabethan playwright, and at this time England was strong and self-assured. Consequently, his plays end with a definite and developed character that is in control. Webster wrote in the Jacobean era, and England faced uncertainty. Perhaps this uncertainty was the feeling Webster hoped to convey in the endings of his plays. By concluding his dramas with the ascendancy of undeveloped and relatively unfamiliar characters, he conveys in his plays a feeling of uncertainty to the audience. It is left to wonder what will happen to the world of the play, just as the English people were left to wonder what would happen to their great nation with the Stuarts on the throne.

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Biography

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