

## ABSTRACT

### MACHIAVELLI AND MANHOOD: A STUDY OF EFFEMINACY IN THE *DISCOURSES ON LIVY* AND *MANDRAGOLA*

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This thesis explores the linkages between effeminacy and women in Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* and *Mandragola*. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli creates a masculine ideal without sufficiently articulating the prerequisites necessary to fulfill that ideal. However, he does not hesitate to deem things that do not meet those standards as effeminate. Effeminacy is a trait that can be ascribed to things as well as people, and appears to be the antithesis of the behavior Machiavelli wants to encourage. While effeminacy typically connotes a disparagement of men as well as women, it is difficult to tell if that is indeed what Machiavelli means in his use of the term. By carefully reviewing his discussions of effeminacy as well as his treatment of women, a more nuanced interpretation of his thought emerges. It appears that although women and effeminate men are typically left out of traditional power structures, there may be a way for both to overcome their defects. Machiavelli's play *Mandragola* offers insight into how this may occur.

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MACHIAVELLI AND MANHOOD: A STUDY OF EFFEMINACY  
IN THE *DISCOURSES ON LIVY* AND *MANDRAGOLA*

BY

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION .....	1
EFFEMINACY IN THE <i>DISCOURSES</i> .....	4
WOMEN IN THE <i>DISCOURSES</i> .....	10
EFFEMINATE MEN AND VIRTUOUS WOMEN IN <i>MANDRAGOLA</i> .....	23
CONCLUSION.....	32
REFERENCES .....	33

## INTRODUCTION

Machiavelli is responsible for two enduring political images. The first, and possibly more famous, is that of the goddess Fortuna. In chapter 25 of the *Prince*, Machiavelli describes Fortuna as a fickle, dangerous, woman, who is seductive and violent. Fortuna only yields to a formidable power and a man must rise to the challenge by beating, striking, and restraining her. Fortuna is destructive and exists contra political life. The metaphor of Fortuna looms large in Machiavelli's work, making it difficult to separate Machiavelli's view of the goddess from his thoughts on flesh and blood women.

The second image occurs in chapter 18 of the *Prince*, where Machiavelli explains that necessity compels a prince to embrace a beastly nature. The successful prince must employ the force of a lion and the trickery of a fox. Both are necessary; the fox because a lion does not recognize snares, and lion, because a fox cannot fight wolves (*P, XVIII*). To be all one or all another is too imbalanced and ineffective, but to have both is to be in possession of Machiavellian *virtù*<sup>1</sup> capable of subduing Fortuna.

These two images demonstrate some of the prevailing questions present in Machiavelli's thought. If Fortuna is not meant to symbolize women generally, what can be made of the women Machiavelli occasionally references in his thought? The fox and lion are similarly problematic. If the fraud is useful, why is force seemingly so much more important in subduing Fortuna? If one

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<sup>1</sup> Machiavellian *virtù* is not to be confused with traditional moral virtue. *Virtù* is typically interpreted to mean political efficacy and strength. Most interpretations of Machiavelli link *virtù* to the use of masculine force. This paper will use *virtù* where appropriate to indicate Machiavelli's understanding of the term.

has no recourse to force, how is one to survive? These questions are of particular importance to anything or anyone Machiavelli deems effeminate. While manliness is clearly admired, a difficulty arises in attempting to determine what a precise definition of Machiavellian masculinity entails. While forceful action is certainly considered right and appropriate in many cases, it is not the only means to power.

Manhood does emerge as an important theme in throughout Machiavelli's body of work. Pitkin interprets the vast majority of Machiavelli's thought and the tensions therein to be the product of his ambivalence toward masculinity: both what it means and how to sufficiently embody it (1999, 5). Many interpreters find *virtù* itself to be representative of manhood. Wendy Brown finds it to be "the paradigmatic symbol of manhood; exercised to its fullest, it rids man of all softness in himself and all dangers of being enveloped, overcome, or seduced by the goddess who would undo or enslave him" (1988, 90). A cursory glance through his work finds that Machiavelli privileges active, heroic, and ostensibly masculine behaviors. His concern with domination and by extension manhood is Machiavelli's way of addressing his true concern: how to achieve autonomy from nature. The language he adopts to do this is specifically gendered, with the feminine Fortuna overcome by masculine *virtù*. Machiavelli's elevation of masculine *virtù* is indicative of his lack of respect towards femininity and his condemnation of effeminacy. "[I]f *virtù* is Machiavelli's favorite quality, *effeminato* is one of his most frequent and scathing epithets. Nothing is more contemptible or more dangerous for a man than to be like a woman or for that matter, a baby or an animal- that is passive and dependent" (Pitkin 1999, 25).

Women are often presented as foils to demonstrate the failings of men rather than the success of women. Jaquette (2007) suggests there is a sharp division between sex and gender in Machiavelli's thought, meaning that an attack on effeminate men does not necessarily entail an

attack on women (349). While it is theoretically possible for Machiavelli to be condemning effeminacy without actively disparaging women, it is hard to separate the two, given that Machiavelli assigns them similar traits (Pitkin 1999, 110). Pitkin does allow that femininity and effeminacy are fundamentally different but still argues that “[w]hat he condemns in effeminacy is precisely what he considers typical of women. Women are dumb, fearful, weak, indecisive, and dependent. They are childishly naive and easily manipulated” (1999, 110).

Some interpreters find a softer side to Machiavelli. Arlene Saxonhouse argues that Machiavelli actually subverts gender norms in pursuit of his greater mission, which is “turning good into bad, bad into good, virtue into vice, men into women, and women into men-or, more precisely, he makes the difference between what had been opposites so ambiguous that we can no longer tell good from bad or women from men” (1985, 151). Gender becomes as ambiguous as all the other absolutes that Machiavelli renders relative. Marcina (2004) further argues that while the barrier between male and female exists, it is unpoliced; men and women are free to transgress it needed.

Milligan (2007) argues that Machiavelli’s use of gender norms is a rhetorical device meant to shame the reader into proper behavior. To suggest something is effeminate, Milligan contends, assumes there is a proper masculine counterpart that can be shown in rebuttal. Noting that Machiavelli does not appear to clearly anoint any man as a model of masculinity, Milligan suggests that Machiavelli terms things as effeminate to shame his readers to action. Machiavelli can do this by comparing them unfavorably to the “imposing yet illusive” standard of masculinity. As often occurs in Machiavelli’s work, the reader is left to interpret what a thing is by determining what it is not.

While the interpreters mentioned above vary greatly in their perspectives, all seem to agree that men deemed effeminate and women will have difficulty acquiring power by conventional means. The effeminate man or republic is clearly problematic for Machiavelli, but perhaps his figure of the trickster fox and its propensity for fraud suggests a solution to this problem. Similarly, Machiavelli's treatment of women is more complex, and perhaps more related to effeminacy, than is often granted. It seems further exploration of the two is warranted. The *Discourses on Livy* provide an excellent beginning for this exploration. Machiavelli's near-constant revision of his source material, Livy's *History of Rome*, provides ample opportunity to compare both versions and interpret Machiavelli's intended lessons based on what is included and what is not. Machiavelli's play, *Mandragola* also offers fertile ground for this study, as it offers a fresh perspective on a long-told story, with clues as to how women and effeminate men may be redeemed.

#### EFFEMINACY IN THE *DISCOURSES*

The term effeminate first occurs in I 6. Here, Machiavelli confronts the problem of a small, isolationist republic. Such a republic is built only to maintain itself, and the consequence of expanding by force is the collapse of the state. But while growth is deadly, stasis is also a threat. If the republic remains peaceful “from that would arise the idleness to make it effeminate or divided; these two things together, or each by itself, would be the cause of its ruin” (*D I 6.4*). Idleness caused by peace will either cause men to become soft and effeminate or to dissolve into factional violence.

While the problems of the small republic eventually become more complicated, Machiavelli does provide an answer to the problem of idleness. The first chapter of the first book

argues that a founder should construct a kind of artificial necessity to prevent the citizens from becoming idle. This necessity can be created through the imposition of laws and orders, as seen in the example of the Romans. The laws set by Romulus, Numa “and the others imposed so that the fertility of the site, the advantages of the sea, the frequent victories, and the greatness of this empire could not corrupt it for many centuries, and that they maintained it full of as much virtue as has ever adorned any other city or republic” (*D I 1.5*).

The threat effeminacy presents to the state is further explicated in a chapter discussing the order of rulers. Here, he praises the way Rome “chanced upon very great fortune” in the succession of its rulers. If the rulers following Romulus had not appropriated virtue similar to his, Rome would have “become effeminate and the prey of its neighbors” (*D I 19*). Due to the apparently excessive virtue of Romulus, Numa was able to rule Rome in peace. As Machiavelli indicates in I 6, a peaceful climate is not necessarily beneficial. Peace begets idleness which then breeds effeminate men. Ancus, Rome’s fourth king, who succeeded the warlike Tullus Hostilius, wished his rule to be marked by peace; however, he determined that peace was unhelpful for the reputation of Rome, as his neighbors judged him to be effeminate. To maintain his position and the reputation of Rome, he was compelled to return to the example of Romulus, rather than that of Numa. Ancus demonstrates two of the most elemental parts of *virtù*: the ability to understand the particulars of a given situation and adapt himself to fit. Numa’s religion served to tame the people, to “reduce it to civil obedience with the arts of peace” (*D I 11.1*). Livy notes that Ancus, understanding that war was necessary but feeling that religion need not be neglected created a public priestly ritual for the declaration of war (Livy, I 32). Ancus is able to marry the piety of the Romans with their ferocity; this seems to be a praiseworthy way to combat effeminacy.

Religion in service of peace, then, is ineffectual, while religion in service of war can be useful in the service of combatting effeminacy.

In his first two explicit uses of the term, Machiavelli demonstrates that effeminacy in a people can be managed. It is a danger, but one that is surmountable given a ruler that understands how to properly manipulate external conditions through laws to create *virtù*. The next, and likely most famous, use of the term *effeminato*, makes clear that without proper instruction, effeminacy is a real and present threat. In II 2, Machiavelli examines why the ancients seemed to be greater lovers of freedom than modern peoples. It appears that the love of freedom has decreased due to modern miseducation, encouraged by the current religion. In the preface to book I of the *Discourses* Machiavelli observed that the weakness of present times is due at least in part to the “ambitious idleness” of Christian religion (*D I pr.2*), but it is in II 2 that his critique becomes the most direct. Machiavelli explicitly separates the perceived truth of Christian religion from earthly pursuits of pagan religion and essentially flips the perceived cause of modern weakness on its head. Christianity identifies the earthly pursuits of pagans as the cause of most modern ills; however, in Machiavelli's formulation, the focus on the otherworldly allows for the creation of the ills Christianity bemoans.

The truth and true way revealed by Christianity glorifies humble rather than active men and asks that adherents think more of enduring their weakness than “doing something strong” (*D II 2.2*). The mode of life elevated by Christianity makes men endure the pain of servitude in hopes of Paradise rather than encourage them to fight against their worldly oppression. This has left the world in the hands of criminal men, who can control it easily, as the people are more focused on “enduring their beatings than avenging them” (*D II.2*). Through Christianity, the world "appears to be made effeminate." This stands in stark contrast to the bloody sacrifice of

pagan religion, which is meant to cure men of their ambitious idleness and transform them into lovers of freedom. The current religion understands pomp, but not gravity. There is no ferocity in their ritual, only the glorification of the humble and contemplative men (*D* II 2.2).

Machiavelli's critique of religion seems to converge around its ability to shift the focus of believers from their earthly circumstances to their eternal reward. While this may be true for the majority of common believers, the powerful priests were often focused on more temporal matters. The same religion that encourages the majority of its believers to endure their beatings is the same that was once led by "the fearsome pope" Julius II, who presided over an active military policy and makes several appearances in the *Discourses*. While humility may have been appropriate for others, the church leaders often had their focus elsewhere. Certainly, the assertion that Christianity led pacifism was often untrue, and Machiavelli seems to recognize this by saying that the world merely "seems effeminate." Wars in the name of Christ were fought throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Christianity "baptized the sword, canonized military saints, founded military religious orders, used them to fight the Reconquest and the Crusades, labeled any war against enemies of the faith, and even enemies of the papacy, as Crusade and elaborated indulgence theory to promote participate in and support of such wars"(Colish 1999, 601). Machiavelli had certainly witnessed, in his public roles, a great deal of political and military action taken by those meant to be emissaries of the peace of Christ (see *D* 1 27). The Christian religion as practiced seems to represent a paradox. It is strong enough to subdue and transform, yet it leaves men effeminate.

Machiavelli suggests that the problem of religion can be solved through a reinterpretation of Christianity. He follows his rebuke of Christianity as practiced with a discussion of the Samnites, and the strength they had in keeping the Romans from conquering them until Papirius

Cursor became consul. Papirius is well known to Machiavelli for being adept at manipulating Roman religion in a way that led to the success of his endeavors, and the defense and expansion of his homeland, which Machiavelli indicates could be the true worth of Christianity properly interpreted. By Machiavelli's own admission, this reinterpretation of Christianity would have to be quite radical. Later in the *Discourses*, Machiavelli praises Saints Francis and Dominic for bringing Christianity back to its foundations. It becomes obvious that Machiavelli does not believe these reforms to be effective, and in fact, have made the laity more susceptible to the wicked men he warns of in II 2. It is highly unlikely (and indeed untrue) that the type of martial *virtù* Machiavelli seems to advocate would have been the aim of either Francis or Dominic.

Being aware as he was of the ways in which Christianity can be used in service of military action, it seems unlikely that Machiavelli is attempting to say that Christianity is incapable of inspiring typical masculine heroism. In fact, the coupling of earthly glory in service of the church with an eternal reward for heroism in her name would seem to inspire more greatness rather than less. How, then, has Christianity resulted in the world becoming effeminate and heaven disarmed? Here, it may be helpful to remember Machiavelli's disdain for the ambitious idleness into which the Christian clergy led the world. Christianity seems to only anchor some of its adherents to their temporal reality.

The effeminacy that Christianity inspires seems, at least in this case, to be less about the action inspired and more about the deleterious effects Christian education has on common men. Men are meant to strive for heaven and taught to divorce themselves from worldly goods. Yet Christian education does not seem to be enough to defeat human nature, which seeks to acquire. What emerges is an effeminate amalgam that both denies religion sufficient power and keeps men from achieving their true nature.

Machiavelli's next use of the term occurs in III 10, during a discussion of those "idle princes and effeminate republics" that attempt to wage war while keeping their captains out of battle. Those kings and captains who do go into battle often do so more for ceremony and have no intention of actually fighting. Machiavelli attributes this to a misinterpretation of Fabius' practice of staying in strongholds and drawing the enemy to him. Fabius possessed an army of superior strength and virtue and was able to use this tactic to gain the greatest advantage for himself. He chose as he did from a position of strength, with no intention to avoid a battle. For those lacking his advantages, waiting for the enemy is a poor strategy. Machiavelli demonstrates this through the example of Philip of Macedon. Taking refuge in a stronghold did not save him, as the superior Roman forces were able to roust him from it. After being chased from the mountain, Philip began keeping his distance from the Roman army. This lengthened the conflict and weakened his forces. Philip brought more shame upon himself through these actions than he would have by losing in battle. This is because "one ought to wish to acquire glory even when losing, and one has more glory in being conquered by force than through another inconvenience that has had you lose." As Mansfield notes, this chapter seems to be a subtle strike at Machiavelli's fellow anti-Christian crusaders, who either remain above the fray of battle or employ inappropriate tactics (1979, 351).

Machiavelli's next reference to effeminacy comes in III 46. "It appears that not only does one city have certain modes and institutions diverse from another, and procreates men either harder or more effeminate, but in the same city one sees such a difference to exist from one family to another." Rome, Machiavelli proclaims, provides several examples that prove this to be true. The Manlii were "hard and obstinate, the Publicoli lovers of the people, the Appii ambitious and enemies of the plebs..." These familial similarities cannot be attributed simply to sharing a

bloodline, as marriages can complicate those inherited traits. The explanation, then, must be in how each family undertakes the education. It seems of utmost importance that a “boy of tender years” begins to hear good or bad of a thing while his attitudes are still capable of being molded. That education and the impressions it leaves on him will be responsible for determining his responses throughout the rest of his life. If this were not true, the Appii would not have had the same wish or the same passions. Once again, education emerges as central to combatting effeminacy.

From the explicit mentions of effeminacy in the *Discourses*, it is clear that Machiavelli considers it a scourge. From the first examples regarding war and peace, it can be inferred that effeminacy causes men to be insufficiently warlike. From his discussion of Christianity, it becomes clear that this warlike nature is meant to be used in service of the Fatherland. Although religion can suppress this nature or redirect it inappropriately, there are ancient templates for what Machiavelli considers a more appropriate use. Throughout these examples, the importance of a correct education is clear. It seems men can be saved if they are educated correctly and shepherded by the proper orders. But what of women?

### WOMEN IN THE *DISCOURSES*

Many of the women appear in the *Discourses* are mentioned in the chapter on conspiracies. These examples often seem not to praise women for their achievements but to shame men for their failures. III 6 contains several instances of women who can capitalize on the mistakes of men. Epicharis, Nero’s mistress, was involved in a plot to overthrow the emperor and was accused by a potential co-conspirator. She defended herself so boldly that Machiavelli

says that Commodus became “confused” and did not condemn her. In a similar plot, Marcia, the concubine of Commodus, was given a list of those to be executed that contained her name. In this case, "necessity forced her to be brave" and she led a conspiracy to kill him.

Machiavelli praises Epicharis for her prudence in refusing to name the other conspirators when soliciting others to join her. The boldness of her defense when she is revealed also demonstrates prudence. Her story is used to against the example Plautianus, who was accused with written evidence of conspiracy, in addition to “other signs.” Plautianus is similarly bold in his defense, but unable to escape implication. Epicharis, having issued no written instructions, was able to survive.

Machiavelli does not provide any indication of why Epicharis wishes to conspire against Nero, other than to say that she had been a previously his mistress. Tacitus says of her “a certain Epicharis (how she informed herself is uncertain, as she had never before had a thought of anything noble) began to stir and upbraid the conspirators” (*Annals* XV, 51). The portrait of Epicharis that emerges in Tacitus’ account does complicate Machiavelli’s account. It appears that Epicharis tired of waiting “between hope and fear” for the execution of the conspiracy, “either through old acquaintance of the woman or on the strength of a recent intimacy” engaged a captain of Nero’s fleet that had been involved in the murder of Nero’s mother. This captain felt his subsequent promotion did not adequately compensate him for the actions he had undertaken on Nero's behalf. Epicharis, as Machiavelli says, then tells him of the plot without divulging the individuals involved, expecting him to join the conspiracy. He does not and goes to Nero with this information. Unlike Machiavelli, Tacitus includes the details of Epicharis’ fate. Nero, while not able to find more than hearsay to support her guilt, still does not believe she is blameless and has her imprisoned. Later, she is subjected to torture on the rack, as Nero does not think a

woman will be able to withstand it. She survives an entire day without divulging anything regarding the conspiracy. On the second day, she kills herself in particularly gruesome fashion. Epicharis exhibits fidelity to the conspiracy while simultaneously providing the opportunity to destroy it. Although she admirably protected her fellow conspirators, she was also nearly the cause of its downfall.

Returning to Machiavelli and the example of Commodus, Commodus' carelessness in writing a list and then leaving it open demonstrates a significant lack of prudence, but without action on the part of Marcia, that lapse in judgment would not have mattered. The timely interception of that list by Marcia and her subsequent enlisting of two others named to counter the attack ultimately saved their lives. Machiavelli's account is not notably different than that of Herodian. In Herodian's account, when Marcia discovers the list, she makes the following proclamation: "So, Commodus, this is my reward for my love and devotion, after I have put up with your arrogance and your madness for so many years. But, you drunken sot, you shall not outwit a woman deadly sober!" Machiavelli does not belabor the point, but the excess of Commodus was well known. As the Herodian's account makes clear, it was his excessive drinking that made it possible for Marcia to poison him by wine. Further, Commodus, as noted outside of Machiavelli's account, decided to kill Marcia and the others because of their opposition to his plan to appear with gladiators. His pursuit of hyper-masculine behavior that was nonetheless considered disgraceful by his closest advisors ultimately led to his death at the hands of a woman.

Machiavelli pairs the example of Marcia with that of Macrinus, a man described as "more civil than warlike" who served as prefect to Emperor Caracalla. Macrinus was implicated by Caracalla's royal astrologer in a plot to overthrow the emperor while abroad. Macrinus was able

to intercept the letter meant to inform the emperor. Macrinus determines Caracalla must be killed, and enlists a soldier to carry out the execution. It should be said that this soldier had personal reasons to wish revenge on the emperor. As Mansfield notes, the example of Commodus and Marcia is the first of two cases where necessity demands swift action on the part of those designing the conspiracy (1979, 334). In addition to demonstrating the importance of necessity, these examples show action by a woman and an effeminate man, both who may not be expected to act in a conspiracy due to their weak nature. Mansfield again provides an interesting interpretation. Perhaps Machiavelli's warning against written messages is meant to kindle suspicion in the reader (Mansfield 1979, 334). After all, Marcia and Macrinus could have easily forged the notes that led to their counter conspiracies. Here, there is a lesson in underestimating those who are typically written off as unlikely actors. Machiavelli earlier warned of the dangers of conspiracies discussed imprudently so that a servant or third person overhears and reveals the plot, but in the examples above, those unlikely actors are then placed in a situation where necessity forces their action. Much as in the earlier chapters, necessity forces some *virtù* to emerge.

While these women certainly have much to teach, they are given relatively brief treatment. Machiavelli does discuss Caterina Sforza at greater length in III 6, in the context of the dangers that can befall a conspirator after the plan has been executed. Caterina and her small children were taken hostage after her husband Girolamo was killed by the Forli conspirators. Although the king was dead, the conspirators were unable to enter the fortress. Later, Caterina uses her position to secure her release by promising to allow them entry and leaving her children with the conspirators. Once in the relative safety of the fortress, Caterina cursed the conspirators for the death of her husband and swore to avenge him. The maternal care expected of her by her

captors did not appear; rather, she exhibited her still-fertile body to the conspirators by showing them “her genital parts,” saying that she still have the mode for making more of them [children].” With Caterina back inside the walls, the conspiracy failed.

According to Machiavelli, the example of the Forli conspirators demonstrates the need to be unmerciful in the execution of a conspiracy. If some are left behind to avenge the fallen prince, the conspiracy may no longer be considered successful. While he permits that in some cases loose ends may be unavoidable, the conspirators “merit no excuse” if heirs are left through lack of prudence or sheer negligence (*D* III 6.18). The conspirators, “short of counsel and late to perceive their error” exhibited a lack of prudence that makes their failure inexcusable. While Caterina managed to salvage the situation for her family, she is only able to demonstrate her prowess due to the inability of men to execute their plans properly. The conspirators were in such a position that their only recourse was to allow widow of the deceased to negotiate on their behalf. In a way, the conspirators themselves became like women, lacking agency and needing to rely on those outside themselves to secure their position.

In addition to the lack of prudence on the part of the conspirators, what is striking here is Machiavelli's relatively straightforward presentation of Caterina's actions. She is not condemned for her apparent lack of maternal feeling, or her fairly crass actions. Her taunts are uniquely feminine and presented without derision. There is debate as to whether Caterina was indicating that she was currently pregnant with an heir to Girolamo or merely her continued fertility. In either case, her actions suggest that the old regime does not die as long as she lives.

While Caterina is the most prominent example in the *Discourses* of men neglecting to secure themselves against women, it is not the only example. In III 4, Machiavelli again warns against leaving alive those who have lost a kingdom to a new ruler. No prince will be secure

while those deprived of the principality live, and old injuries cannot be cured with new benefits. To illustrate these points, Machiavelli recounts the mistakes of the Tarquin Priscus and Servius Tullius, both kings of Rome. Priscus was mistaken in believing that since the kingdom appeared to be given to him lawfully, the sons of his predecessor would not dare challenge his authority and overthrow him. Servius Tullius erred in assuming he could buy the affection and loyalty of the sons of Tarquin, who were passed over by their mother in the line of succession in favor of Servius. Both men failed to secure themselves against opposition, which is a common failure in the *Discourses*. In the case of Servius, it was his daughter that ultimately orchestrated her father's death. Tullia, who was married to young Tarquin, convinced her husband to take away from her father both "his life and the kingdom, so much more did she esteem it to be queen than the daughter of the king." Even a daughter's filial piety appears to be of no importance in the face of ambition.

The ostensible lesson becomes more complicated when the story of the two kings is supplemented with details from Livy's account. Livy notes that Servius' two daughters -the two Tullia's- were married to two of the sons of Tarquin Priscus. The daughters were part of the new benefits Machiavelli indicates Tullius gave to the sons of Priscus to obtain their goodwill. Servius' younger daughter, Tullia Minor, was married to Arruns. By Livy's account, Arruns had a sweet disposition, while Tullia was fierce and ambitious. Tullia was distressed to find herself married to a man with no ambition or boldness. Finding her husband lacking, "she turned completely from him to his brother; he was the one she admired, calling him a man and of true royal blood" (Livy, I 46). Tullia despised her sister, as she "had a real man for a husband." Tullia's ambitions are clear: "[i]f the gods had given her the husband she deserved, she would soon have seen in her own house the royal power that she now saw in her father's" (Livy I, 46).

The gods may have given Tullia an ineffective first husband, but she was willing to ensure her second would be better suited to her. Livy does not indicate how this came to pass, but both Tullia's sister and husband were killed, freeing Tullia and Lucius Tarquinius to marry. Livy says of this marriage that "Servius did not prevent the marriage but hardly gave his approval." Tullia then urged her new, in no uncertain terms, to move against her father.

If you are the man that I think I married, she said, I salute you both as husband and king. But if not, then the situation has changed for the worse, for crime is compounded by cowardice. Why don't you rouse yourself to action? You don't come from Corinth or Tarquini. Unlike your father, you don't have to take over a foreign kingdom. Your household gods, the gods of your ancestors, your father's image, the royal palace and the royal throne in your home, and the name of Tarquin declare and summon you to be king. Or, if you have so little nerve for this, why do you disappoint the citizens? Why do you allow yourself to be seen as a prince? Get out of here and go to Tarquini or Corinth; take yourself back to your roots! You are more like your brother than your father. (Livy I, 47)

Tullia's mention of her father-in-law's foreign birth also casts an interesting light on Machiavelli's use of Tarquin Priscus in III 4. Priscus was indeed a foreigner from Tarquini. Not only was he foreign to Rome, but he was considered a foreigner in his homeland, as his father was from Corinth. Although he was wealthy, his foreign ancestry meant he would be unable to hold office in his homeland. His wife, Tanaquil, was from a powerful family, and could not bear the thought of losing her status through her marriage to a wealthy yet powerless man. Tanaquil, "forgetting all ties of patriotism if only she could see her husband honoured" suggested they move to Rome, as she felt a wealthy, ambitious man would be able to secure a position of nobility (Livy, I 34). Her suspicion was correct, as Priscus was noticed by the king and became so close to Ancus that he was made the guardian of the king's minor children. As Machiavelli alludes to, when Ancus died, Priscus became king. Tanaquil was also instrumental in securing the throne for Servius, who she considered the appropriate successor after her husband's death.

The sons of Ancus eventually have their revenge, and Priscus is killed. Rather than announce his death, Tanaquil makes it known that her husband is merely wounded, and that he named Servius to rule in his place until he recovers. Just as Tullia cast aside filial piety, Tanaquil overlooked her natural born sons in appointing Servius. Tanaquil's selection would eventually help his son-in-law to unseat him. When the time comes to overthrow Servius, the Senate is reminded that he was only given the throne due to a woman's gift.

Livy finds Tullia to be motivated in part by the actions of Tanaquil. If a foreign woman who could so easily betray her homeland was able to create not one but two kings of Rome, why should it be beyond the abilities of the daughter of a king to do the same? Tullia is motivated by ambition, and her actions demonstrate the all-consuming desire for power. Despite being the daughter of a king and wife of a prince, she had no reason to expect the kingdom, and no material injury was caused to her through the rule of Servius. The only true injuries she suffers are to her pride, injuries which now appear no less dangerous.

Livy's account certainly challenges the assumption that Servius Tullius should not have expected his daughter to wish to rule. His daughter's nature was not unknown to him, and while not blessing her marriage to a man that match her nature, does nothing to stop it. Machiavelli's pronouncement that both Priscus and Servius only lost their kingdoms because they did not know how to secure themselves against usurpers can also be seen differently based on Livy's account. Tullia's wish to rule was so strong that she acted against her own father, viewing him as a usurper of something that was rightfully hers. But even then, it was only hers inasmuch as she saw it to be the rightful possession of her husband. In many ways, Tullia and Tanaquil do act similarly to Machiavelli's destructive *Fortuna*, demanding a man worthy of their power.

The active scheming of the women discussed above stands in stark contrast to the women of III 26, where Machiavelli purports to explain "How a State is Ruined Because Of Women." In this chapter, Machiavelli explicitly states that "women have been the cause of much ruin, and have done great harm to those who govern a city, and have caused many divisions in them" (III 26.1). There are three women referenced in this chapter. The first is a wealthy woman of Ardea, who was wanted in marriage by a both pleb and a patrician. The woman's father was deceased and as such was unable to mediate the dispute. The mother of the woman felt the noble provided the most advantageous match, while her tutors felt that the pleb was the better choice. The supporters of each side took up arms. The plebs entreated Volscians to come to their defense, causing the nobles to enlist the help of the Romans. The Romans defeated the Volsci, marched to Ardea, and killed those responsible for the unrest.

Lucretia and Virginia provide further evidence of the deleterious effects of women. The "excess" done against Lucretia removed the state from the Tarquins while the unrest in the wake of Virginia deprived the Ten of their authority. Machiavelli assigns these women so much blame here, while in earlier passages describing the same situations he hardly acknowledges their involvement. In III 5, Machiavelli states that the Tarquins were driven out of Rome, not because of the injustice perpetrated against Lucretia, but because of their inappropriate handling of the affairs of the state. The Senate was deprived of their authority; the laws were disregarded. Rome was under the control of a tyrant and no longer willing to abide this cruelty. The rape was truly "excess"; the final straw that allowed a pretext for the overthrow of the Tarquin kings. Another event, Machiavelli suggests, could have served the same purpose. Similarly in I 40, Machiavelli discusses the missteps of Appius Claudius as an official, with only a brief mention of the role Virginia.

Machiavelli states that no less an authority than Aristotle attributes the ruin of tyrants to "having injured someone on account of women, by raping them or by violating them or by breaking off marriages [...]. He argues that this cause of grievance should not be taken lightly, but remedied in time that it does not harm the state. Combined with the warning in III 6 to avoid injuring the property or women of enemies or subjects, it becomes clear that women themselves are unlikely to be the cause of the issues in government. Rather, the action of men towards women gives a pretext for various factions to execute their own plans. These women seem to be acquitted of orchestrating the downfall of their respective governments. Still, Machiavelli's invocation of Aristotle in support of his argument in this context indicates that the passage warrants more analysis, as this is his only explicit mention in the *Discourses*. That Aristotle considered women to be the biological inferiors of men is widely known. In addition to (or because of) this inferiority, women were not included in politics. Women were to be the exclusive to the private, meant to stay strictly separated from the public. Machiavelli does not offer here any support for the biological inferiority of women, but the examples he uses are both of private women taken as public goods by tyrants (*Politics*, 1314b27). As usual, Mansfield offers an interesting interpretation, suggesting that Machiavelli's true intentions are to warn those tutoring the young (1979, 392). As ancient philosophers perpetuate a standard that cannot be attained, tutoring the youth in that philosophy may be effectively promoting the plebeian cause, furthering the factions within a state. Machiavelli, then, will abstain from philosophy as much as possible in order to avoid becoming himself a woman causing divisions in a city (Mansfield 1979, 392). It is not surprising that Machiavelli would choose women as surrogates for philosophers. After all, his primary complaint against Greek philosophy is the way it divorces men from their physical circumstances. Much like Christianity, classical philosophy encourages

an otherworldly focus. It seems philosophy can be equally responsible for the effeminacy of the world.

Women emerge in one final, brief example in the final chapter of the *Discourses*. In this chapter, Machiavelli intends to examine the daily acts of foresight necessary for republics to maintain their freedom. When “strange and unhopd for” accidents occur, one finds a city “in need of a physician.” In one such accident, Roman women are caught in a plot to poison their husbands. The plot is uncovered before all the men are killed, but many women succeeded in killing their husbands. Machiavelli says that “so many were found that had poisoned them and so many who had prepared the poison to poison them.” Machiavelli pairs the incident of the Roman matrons with that conspiracy of the Bacchanals, in which he asserts many were involved. Machiavelli indicates that crimes of these magnitudes could have been dangerous for Rome, had Rome not already had a suitable means to punish such crimes. The Roman solution was the practice of decimation-punishing every tenth. This mode of punishment was enough to inspire fear but without causing excessive injury to Rome.

As Machiavelli’s account of the incident is fairly brief, it may be helpful to compare it to Livy’s source material. Livy notes that a large number of Roman men were killed, but attributes the cause of the deaths to disease. However, he does mention that some have argued that Roman women were poisoning men and goes on to recount the dubious tale in detail. Apparently, a servant woman had direct knowledge of the plot and agreed to testify to the true cause if she would remain unharmed for informing on her mistress. Her testimony was true and twenty women were discovered with poison, which they claimed was actually a healthy tonic. The women were then bidden to drink the salutary potion. After consideration, all twenty drank and perished. Further investigation found nearly two hundred women guilty of brewing poison (Livy,

VIII 18). Livy's account ascribes the motivations of the matrons to madness rather than "felonious intent." This was a prodigious event, something so far outside of women's nature it could not be believed. To rid the city of their madness, the ancient pestilence cure of appointing a dictator to drive a nail into a sacred object (which Livy indicates is a procedure also followed when the plebs seceded) is renewed in an attempt to cure the pestilence or madness. In either version, women are not particularly virtuous.

Mansfield notes that Machiavelli's account differs from the Livian in that the women were not actually decimated, nor were the members of the Bacchanal conspiracy (1979, 439). Many were killed and not in a particularly organized fashion. What, then, is the reader meant to make of this? Mansfield suggests these women can be placed in the same category as those of III 26 who are responsible for the destruction of states. Mansfield notes that while Livy does not distinguish between those who prepare the poisons and those who administer it, Machiavelli does (439). If the women in his chapter are construed as the philosophers of the III 26, Machiavelli again indicates that those who teach philosophy are as culpable for the effects as those who originate it. Saxonhouse interprets Machiavelli's inclusion of this event as a warning to the reader of his poisonous intent, as well as to provide instruction on how those disenfranchised are still able to create change (1985, 166). Much like the Roman women, Machiavelli had been cast from political power and made weak. Just as the Romans did not expect their wives to conspire against them and did not take precautions against them, Machiavelli seems an unlikely threat and has not been adequately guarded against. Both interpretations have merit and both imply that things that may seem innocuous may, in fact, be poisonous. In the Machiavellian worldview, no person can be considered benign.

The portrait of women that emerges from the *Discourses* is decidedly mixed, although not as negative as it may at first seem. Some women are tacitly praised for their ability to act when men cannot. Caterina Sforza boldly flaunts her femininity after being underestimated by her captors. She uses their imprudence to her advantage, eventually regaining the kingdom and ruling it while her son was a minor. Caterina's actions are certainly bold, and while they may not have been entirely logical, they were effective in securing her ends. Other women who act in ways Machiavelli seems to consider praiseworthy are not quite as effective. Epicharis is able to save herself from immediate death at the hand of Nero due to her bold defense and no written proof of the conspiracy against him. However, she was eventually tortured for her involvement. Perhaps more damningly, the historical account implicates her in her own downfall. Had she not misjudged her conspirators, she could have avoided the situation all together. Marcia fares better, as Machiavelli's account indicates that she could have been the author of the conspiracy against Commodus. However, this is a generous interpretation. These women are placed strategically, and their involvement cast in such a way as to demonstrate not only their failures but the failures of men. In all the above cases, men seemed to forget that women were capable of conspiring.

The ability and willingness of women to use men their own ends is overlooked by Servius Tullus. In Livy's account, while he lay dying in the streets, his daughter drove by in her carriage. Her driver tried to avoid him, but Tullia grabbed the reins and guided the carriage over the body of her father, splattering her carriage and clothes in his blood. While Machiavelli omits that gruesome detail, her lack of filial piety does not escape his notice. Tullia, a woman who may not have been fit or able to rule, but certainly wished to, was used by her father to secure the allegiance of another family. He overlooked her ambition at the cost of his own life. For all the

wisdom that Livy attributes to his rule, he was apparently not wise enough to eliminate the threat his own daughter posed.

The women spoken of above were all overlooked at the peril of men, but Machiavelli did not necessarily warn against that behavior explicitly. However, in the instances where Machiavelli specifically warns of the dangers of women, those women took no action on their own behalf. Virginia and Lucretia were both objects of lust that became political merely by catching the attention of powerful men. Appius Claudius was already in the midst of factional conflict when he attempted to overextend his powers in his pursuit of Virginia. The Tarquins were already hated when Sextus raped Lucretia. Her suicide was simply the event Brutus needed to foment a rebellion against them. In both cases, violations of women merely served as convenient representations for their enemies of tyrannical overreach.

Machiavelli's lesson seems to be that everything can be made political. Actions by those outside of the sphere of power, such as women (or the weak men they symbolize) are rarely without political repercussions, and rulers overlook them to their own detriment. Machiavelli's analysis here also gives hope to those outside of the conventional power structure. It seems there are ways to gain entry if one understands how to exploit them. While it is not immediately clear how best to do so, Machiavelli's *Mandragola* indicates where there may be a path.

#### EFFEMINATE MEN AND VIRTUOUS WOMEN IN *MANDRAGOLA*

Machiavelli's exploration of effeminacy does not end with the *Discourses*. While the politically-centered *Discourses* may contain everything he knows, it was not widely circulated and was unpublished until after his death. As his more serious volume would perhaps have little

hope of being seen and grasped by the broader public, he turned to the more accessible medium of the comedic play. While in exile, essentially unmanned himself, he wrote several literary works. In the play *Mandragola*, Machiavelli uses the unique medium to enrich and expand the themes of his ostensibly more serious work. Particularly, the plot of *Mandragola* is meant to demonstrate how a “masculine man can substitute the impotency of a failed man” (Milligan 2007, 164).

Before the action of the play, Machiavelli places a prologue that finds him striking a humble yet aggressive posture that mimics the prologues of the *Discourses*. Here, he indicates that if the audience feels the material is “too light,” they ought to bear in mind “that he is trying with these vain thoughts to make his wretched time more pleasant, because he has nowhere else to turn his face; for he has been cut off from showing with other undertakings other virtue, there being no reward for his labors.” He expects that his reward for undertaking this enterprise will be that everyone will “sneer, speaking ill of whatever he sees or hears.” This harsh reaction no doubt explains why the present age “falls off from ancient *virtù*.” After preparing himself for harsh criticism, he asserts that anyone under the impression that speaking ill will “discourage him or make him draw back a bit” should know that he is similarly skilled at verbal sparring. Further, “he doesn’t stand in awe of anyone, even though he might play the servant to one who can wear a better coat than he can.” Before the action of the play can even begin, Machiavelli reminds the audience that although he is potentially in a servile, emasculated position, he is not to be underestimated.

With Machiavelli’s admonition in mind, the action of the play proceeds. Callimaco, the apparent hero, is lured to Florence after hearing rumors of the unparalleled beauty of a Florentine girl named Lucrezia. He finds her to be as beautiful as gossip suggests, but she is married and

possessed of an honest nature, making it unlikely Callimaco will be able to become her lover. He fears the situation is hopeless until he makes the acquaintance of Ligurio, a former marriage broker confident he can manipulate Lucrezia into an affair with Callimaco.

Ligurio knows that Lucrezia and Nicia have been unable to conceive a child despite Nicia's desperate desires. Ligurio's scheme turns Nicia's desire into Callimaco's good fortune. The scheme is this: Callimaco, playing the part of a doctor, will tell Nicia of a certain mandrake potion that will cure Lucrezia's infertility. Unfortunately, the potion will cause the death of the first man to have intercourse with her after it is administered. Callimaco will then suggest that Nicia find another man to draw off the poison. Any stranger will do. A disguised Callimaco will be enlisted for the task.

Callimaco is able to successfully convince Nicia that he is both a smart and well-regarded doctor by using Latin phrases and referencing (false) connections to French nobility (*M II, 6*). While Nicia is convinced of the soundness of Callimaco's solution, he fears his wife may not be so open. To persuade her, Ligurio enlists the support of her confessor and her mother. With the help Friar Timothy and her mother Sostrata, Lucrezia agrees to take the mandrake potion. All that remains is to find a suitable dupe. A disguised Callimaco is found and brought to Lucrezia's bed. The next morning, Callimaco reveals to Ligurio that in the night he confessed the scheme to Lucrezia. She agrees to continue an affair with Callimaco until her husband dies, at which time they will marry. The play ends with all satisfied. Callimaco has Lucrezia, the Friar has a large donation from Nicia, Nicia will have a child, and Ligurio will be enriched through his connection with Callimaco. All's well that ends well.

The plot of the *Mandragola* is obviously inspired by that of the rape of the Roman Lucretia, which Machiavelli references in III 26 of the *Discourses*. Lucretia's husband, away

from home, bragged of his wife's virtue. Lucretia was indeed very virtuous, and this virtue caught the attention of the Tarquin Sextus. Lucretia refuses his advances, at which point he threatens to kill her and tell everyone he caught her with a male servant, and her reputation for virtue will be destroyed. Sextus rapes her. Lucretia does not stay silent, and tells her husband and father, who both hold her blameless. Nevertheless, she determines that she cannot live knowing that she is a symbol of degraded virtue and kills herself. Brutus, who has been waiting for an opportune moment to overthrow the Roman tyrants, seizes this opportunity to defeat the Tarquins. In death, Lucretia became a symbol for a Roman people. The Roman Lucretia was indeed virtuous in the classical sense and it was her virtue that led to her death (Connors 2010, 102.) Lucretia's symbolism belies her ultimate unimportance. As Machiavelli makes clear in the *Discourses*, her rape and death merely provided pretext for what Brutus had been plotting for years. Brutus, then, becomes the hero (Connors 2010, 103). As Connors notes, had Brutus and Lucretia's husband not made her violation public, her rape would have been a private tragedy with no repercussions for the broader regime (103). Lucretia's private virtue was only powerful when public masculine virtue was willing to avenge it. Machiavelli's retelling through the *Mandragola* provides a new perspective, one in which Lucrezia's participation is not secured through threats, but through her thorough manipulation, which leads to her eventual consent.

While Lucrezia is certainly given crucial to the play, it is important to remember that the plot still hinges on the ability of a man to perform masculinity. Nicia's inability to produce an heir requires that another be brought in to take his place. The characters in the play seem to care little about why Nicia and Lucretia have been married for six years with no child, although Nicia's admission that she is often up all night saying her prayers and avoiding bed may provide a hint. Nicia is older, and as Callimaco suggests, perhaps she would prefer a younger husband.

Whatever the true cause, care is taken to cast the mandrake potion as a remedy to Lucrezia's infertility. Before telling Nicia of the potion, Callimaco makes it clear that male sterility could be the cause of their troubles; in which case, there would be no remedy to cure it. Nicia then claims there is no "tougher or more robust" man in Florence than he, so obviously, the problem must be his wife (*M II*, 2).

Of course, there is a cure of sorts for Nicia's sterility, if only one of substitution. Nicia is made to believe and seems to accept that he is the true victor in this scheme. He is easily exploited by Ligurio and Callimaco to participate in the plot to find another man to bed his wife due to his desire for a child. He is actively emasculated. His wife is taken by another man, who is then able to live in his home, and when Nicia dies, this interloper will likely marry his wife and retain his property. To the viewer, he has been effectively rendered effeminate. Despite this emasculation, Nicia seems thrilled to be a (theoretically unknowing) cuckold.

Most interpretations do not challenge the portrait of Nicia as cuckolded husband, but Michael Palmer (2001) argues that the character deserves more careful consideration. Nicia is taken to be a fool, but Palmer maintains that this is in fact a carefully cultivated façade (111). Nicia does not wait for God or fortune to provide him an heir and instead seizes the opportunity provided by Callimaco to obtain his own ends. As he reasons that playing the fool is the safest position for those with revolutionary ideas, Palmer concludes that Nicia and Machiavelli "teach us to what lengths human beings must go to subdue a hostile nature" (111). Nicia emerges as the "prince" of the *Mandragola*. Mansfield offers a similar perspective, arguing that although Nicia appears stupid, his desire leads him to use Ligurio and Callimaco rather than being used by them. Mansfield too finds Nicia to be the "prince" in that he is the Machiavellian surrogate character.

Machiavelli and Nicia both need heirs, and neither can be sure of procuring them through normal means (Mansfield 2000, 29). Both must find alternatives to fulfil their legacy.

The perspectives offered by Palmer and Mansfield offer interesting insights into Machiavelli's view of emasculation and effeminacy. While the audience is perhaps meant to laugh at Nicia, he does provide an alternative model of manhood in which the emasculated fool is still able to emerge from the action of the play happy, with an heir and a happy wife. That Nicia is so thoroughly unmanned but manages to achieve everything he wants by acting at the correct time seems reminiscent of Brutus in the original story of Lucretia (Connors 2010, 111). Unlike Brutus, Nicia's stupidity seems to be permanent.

Callimaco appears to be Nicia's virile foil. However, Callimaco is far from the ideal man. He is so moved by the description he hears of Lucrezia's beauty that he is overcome with lust and leaves his home in France for the chance at seducing her. His rash action is indicative of the lust and unbridled acquisitive appetite that Machiavelli often ascribes to the young in the *Discourses*. Machiavelli does warn against letting these impulses rule unchecked and Callimaco seems to have been in danger of allowing just that, save for Ligurio's intervention. He tells Ligurio that he will "take any course-bestial, cruel, nefarious..." to have a chance with Lucrezia (*M I*, 3). Ligurio must urge Callimaco to control himself until the proper moment, and Ligurio is the one able to orchestrate circumstances so that moment will occur.

Callimaco spends a great deal of time reminding himself to behave in a masculine fashion. After the plot has been set in motion, Callimaco spends worries frequently over the outcome, which, if the plot goes awry, will end in his public humiliation. He suggests that even a satisfactory end for him could cause the eternal damnation of his soul. Having been so fortunate thus far, he worries that forces of nature will check him, as they "hold the account in balance; the

one never does you a good turn that on the other side something evil doesn't surge up" (*M IV*, 1). In spite of his fear, Callimaco urges himself on, to "[f]ace your lot; flee evil, but, not being able to flee it, bear it like a man; don't prostrate yourself, don't degrade yourself like a woman" (*M IV*, 1). Callimaco is not forced to suffer terrible consequences, but Callimaco must bear like a woman turns out to be a thorough investigation of his manhood by Nicia (*M VI*, 5). He is disguised, turning his youthful face ugly, forced to endure a fondling by Nicia. He is essentially made to look a fool and endure a test of masculinity (Milligan 2007). While he is not found lacking, he is found to be masculine by someone who fails the traditional tests of masculinity himself.

While Callimaco and Nicia are the most obvious male beneficiaries of the *Mandragola*, Ligurio and Friar Timothy both benefit, and both are instrumental to the plot. Ligurio serves as the author of the plot; although it is an imperfect comparison, in many ways, he is the fox to Callimaco's lion. It is Ligurio who determines that the Friar will be crucial in luring Lucrezia into this plot. Ligurio assures Friar Timothy's participation through blackmail, but not through knowledge of the personal sins of the Friar. Rather, Ligurio tests the moral flexibility by posing as the relative of a novice at a convent who has found herself pregnant. Ligurio argues that the priest should counsel the abbess to give the girl a tonic to induce a miscarriage with the following logic: "Think how much good would come from doing this: you would preserve the reputation of the convent and of the girl and her family ... and on the other hand you harm nothing but an unborn piece of flesh ... I believe what benefits and satisfies the majority is itself good" (*M III*, 4). The Friar agrees to do as Ligurio asks, but not after requiring a donation to the church. The Friar has passed Ligurio's test. The Friar's flexibility on matters of church doctrine is reminiscent of Machiavelli's treatment of religion in II 2 of the *Discourses*, where he suggests

the effeminacy caused by the present religion could be remedied through reinterpretation. The Friar, the one representative of traditional morality in the play, is willing to adapt, but is useless without someone else to deploy him.

Although much has been said of the men of *Mandragola*, the women of the play are also deserving of mention. Sostrata, Lucrezia's mother, is instrumental in convincing her daughter to take part in the cuckolding of Nicia. She is overbearing, and is referenced as a woman that was likely once of easy virtue and one of good company. Lucrezia is said to be more virtuous and of a docile temperament than her mother, but descriptions of her throughout the play suggest otherwise. Lucrezia seems to be pious, staying up late to say her prayers each night, but seemingly only to avoid going to bed with her husband. She is at first deemed inaccessible to Callimaco not because she is extremely virtuous, but because her isolation leaves him no way to access her (*M I*, 1). She is stubborn and is said to rule over her husband. Lucrezia is not a calm, submissive wife, and may not be the virtuous woman she is originally thought to be.

Connors interprets Lucrezia's feminine virtue to be a facade, much like the feigned madness of Brutus, which is cast off only when the opportune moment arrives (2010, 118). Lucrezia adopts conventional feminine virtue because it is the only way for her to advance her position. Just as Callimaco and Ligurio exploit Nicia's desire, Lucrezia uses her feminine *virtù* to exploit the desires of Callimaco and Ligurio to her own ends. Lucrezia performs *virtù* in the mode of the fox, as she is unable to deploy the lion (Connors 2010, 118). In revising the tale of the Roman Lucretia, Machiavelli constructs, intentionally or not, a world where women may be able to wield their private *virtù* in a way that will benefit them publicly. Shifting the story in this way effectively demonstrates that virtue is "a matter of political prudence to be judged according to the action" (Flaumenhaft 1994, 96). Lucrezia certainly exhibits this prudence. She does not act

until it is clear that she will not be penalized. She is assured by the Friar that her soul will not suffer eternal consequences; she does not take Callimaco into her household until she has devised a way for him to do so that does not arouse the suspicion of her husband and others. While she may have discarded virtue, she maintains the appearance of virtue. As Connors notes, the appearance of traditional virtue is crucial to her ability to eventually exercise Machiavellian *virtù*.

While perhaps not immediately evident, the *Mandragola* provides clarity on several of the themes Machiavelli pursues in the *Discourses*. First, and perhaps most obviously, *Mandragola* is a conspiracy (Sumberg 1961). Conspiracies, as the *Discourses* suggest, are not only a particular obsession of Machiavelli, but perhaps the only way for women to exercise their power. As Marcia, Epicharis, and the unnamed Roman women of III 46 demonstrate, women are often overlooked, and find their only recourse is to conspire. Lucrezia's reconfigured *virtù* offers a way forward, not only for women, but for effeminate men as well. Without recourse to leonine force, the effeminate man's only *virtù* can be that of the fox. However, for men in particular, the outlook is not bleak. After all, Rome was able to acquire through force and fraud. Knowledge of fraud is a prerequisite for proper Machiavellian politics. It is also the only recourse of the new prince until he is able to build up arms.

While Machiavelli's reconfiguration of traditional feminine virtue may not seem revolutionary, it is important to remember the Roman Lucretia was only allowed to exercise her traditional virtue through her death. Lucrezia is allowed to live, and live well. However, it seems difficult to see just how much women will gain, as they are effectively still cut off from the brute strength of the lion. While men could eventually utilize both halves of *virtù*, one wonders if the effeminate man will be able to notice they have access to either. If effeminacy is largely the

product of education, it can be corrected. However, as all teachers know the student must be receptive to the material, and for some, such as Nicia, it may be too late.

## CONCLUSION

Machiavelli is a thinker that is greatly concerned with control. The effeminate man and the woman are both, in many respects, buffeted by outside forces. While their supine positions may indicate that they are and will continue to be powerless, Machiavelli provides a way for both of them to gain some kind of power over their circumstances through the trickery of fraud. For those who understand, there is always recourse to the virtù of the fox. While women are not necessarily praised in the *Discourses*, his subtle deployment of female cunning indicates that there are women capable of performing up to Machiavellian standards in some respects. The character of Lucrezia in *Mandragola* further indicates the ways in which women can use the appearance of classical virtue to subvert it. In a similar way, men who are made effeminate are able to use fraud and trickery to obtain their ends, if they understand enough to use it.

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