

# The Malcontent

INTERROGATING MACHIAVELLIANISM

## Malevole/Altofronto: the Education of the Prince

What's the relationship between Malevole and his alter-ego Altofronto?

Consider: "O truly noble!" (1.4.8) and "fearless virtue" (1.4.13) vs "Dissemblance and suspect" (1.4.9).

What are the relative values of these concepts in the education of a Prince?

What is the relationship between the "parts" Altofronto plays and the qualities of the ideal ruler?

## Machiavellians: Malevole vs. Mendoza

### MALEVOLE

#### OPPORTUNITY

"I could not time it, Celso" (1.4.10).

"I find the wind begins to come about;  
/.../ I'll lie in ambush for conveniency"  
(3.3.17,23).

#### CONNECTION/VALUE

"Thou, one of full ten millions of men,  
that lovest virtue only for itself" (1.4.4-5).

#### DISSEMBLING

"hope, hope, that never forsakst the  
wretched st man,/ Yet biddst me live,  
and lurk in this disguise" (1.4.29-30).

### MENDOZA

#### OPPORTUNITY

"My brain is in labour till it produce  
mischief, and I feel sudden throes" (1.3.84-5).

#### CONNECTION/VALUE

"Merit! By heaven, I horn him!... Tut, we  
are politic, he must not live now" (3.3.91-3).

"as wise men do love great women, to  
enoble their blood and augment their  
revenue" (3.3.103-5).

#### DISSEMBLING

"He who cannot feign friendship can ne'er  
produce the effects of hatred" (1.8.82-3).

## Mendoza/Altofronto/Pietro: The Atomized Prince

Malevole/Altofronto: the “dissemblance” and the “virtue” refracted into two “roles”

- The use of verse vs. prose: How is Altofronto the same or different from Vindici?
- The significance of the “honourable friend”: What is the difference between Celso and Hippolito (Vindici's brother) in terms of function?
- Decorum: Altofronto could not “time” it, but Malevole can: reintegration as the birth of a new kind of ruler.

Pietro: hasty, trusting, too open to manipulation: a “good” man but not a “good leader” because too easily led:

“I ha’not the patience. Wil thou deserve me? Tell, give it!” (1.8.52).

Mendoza: “dissemblance” without ground

- Two speeches about women: one praising, one condemning;
- Use of agents who must all be destroyed: the “successful” Mendoza is ALONE.

## Bilioso and Favour: the Evacuated Centre of the Machiavellian Court

What is the function/symbolic value of Bilioso in this scene? How does he compare to Celso, Malevole, Mendoza?

“His grace presents you by me a chain, as his grateful remembrance for—I am ignorant for what” (1.463-5).

“Did your signiorship ne’er see a pigeon-house that was smooth, round, and white without, and full of holes and stink within?” (1.4.91-3)

Obsession with ambassador’s clothing, the “costume” of status:

REPRESENTATIVE of the STATE: pretty surfaces with vile or empty interiors.

## Femininity: Groundlessness of the material economy

**Bilioso’s “wife”:** economy of equivalence between his “young wife,” the chain of favour, and the “little bitch” or pet:

“I’ll make thee acquainted with my young wife too. What! I keep her not at court for nothing” (1.4.71-72).

**Aurelia:** “I will love thee, be it but in despite / Of that Mendoza” (1.6.46-7).

**Maquerelle** (“painting”):

“youth and beauty once gone, we are like ... out-o-fashion apparel that no man will wear” (2.5.42-3)

“Visit her chamber, but conditionally you shall not offend her bed; by this diamond” (1.6.54-5).

## The “English” Machiavelli

English suspicion of Machiavellianism:

GROUNDLESSNESS: the “appearance” of good virtue would replace the grounding in good virtue;

VALUE: upon what ground do we determine value?

Is it possible to conceive of a Machiavellian rule grounded in Natural Law and ETERNAL or UNIVERSAL values?

How does the notion of DIVINE RIGHT function relative to the concept of Machiavellian rule?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

