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Machiavellian Mischief: Gender Distinctions Between Machiavels in Heywood's *The Second Part of King Edward IV*

In Thomas Heywood's drama, *The Second Part of King Edward IV*, the pages include a wide range of characters who exude Machiavellian characteristics. Most notably, someone who is Machiavellian is defined as "a follower of Machiavelli; a person who adopts the principles recommended, or supposed to have been recommended, by Machiavelli in his treatise on statecraft; a person who practices expediency in preference to morality; an intriguer or schemer" ("Machiavellian"). Many of the male characters in Heywood's drama, such as Richard III and Dr. Shaw fit this definition of "Machiavellian" almost perfectly. Each of these men are distinctly Machiavellian in that they are schemers who typically prefer convenience over morality. Throughout the drama, these men commit evil, wrong, or sinful deeds. They commit such acts as deceit and murder, and they never apologize or repent for their wrongdoings. Moreover, these lawless actions are what propel them to or keep them in power which is what helps make them Machiavellian. On the other hand, women such as Jane Shore, Queen Elizabeth, and Mistress Blage may also be viewed as Machiavellian as their sins are also for their own gain, but so are their acts of kindness. While the men typically execute feigned acts of kindness to further their own gain or access to power, the women perform genuinely good deeds for the same purpose. Thus, the women aid in displaying that not all Machiavellian characters are completely without morality. While Machiavelli makes clear in *The Prince* that characters must be evil or feign kindness in order to gain or keep power, I believe that does not necessarily reign completely true. I analyze the parallels between male and female characters in *The Second Part of King Edward IV* to argue that the women, while somewhat Machiavellian in their traits and tendencies, are not

complete Machiavels like their male counterparts but still further their personal goals of power through their Machiavellian characteristics.

The main Machiavellian man to be focused on here stands in the characterization of Richard III. Apparent in *The Prince*, Machiavelli comes across as a “teacher of evil,” and to appreciate Machiavelli, one must acknowledge “the intrepidity that enabled him to shock and oppose the power of morality. Machiavelli shows that necessity is stronger than morality...” (Mansfield 643). Mansfield’s assertion of Machiavelli’s royal guide rings true when delineated in the actions of, specifically, the men in Heywood’s drama. In many works, Heywood’s *The Second Part of Edward IV* being no exception, Richard III often remains portrayed as “a raving, animalistic tyrant and as a smoothly dissembling Machiavel, as a hell-spawned scourge and as a merely mediocre monarch who made the error of alienating the regional aristocracy” (Schwyzer 173). Like a “Machiavellian” character, a “Machiavel” is defined as:

A type of stage villain found in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and named after the Florentine political theorist Niccolò Machiavelli, whose notorious book *Il Principe (The Prince)*, 1513) justified the use of dishonest means to retain state power. Exaggerated accounts of Machiavelli’s views led to the use of his name... for a broad category of ruthless schemers, atheists, and poisoners. Shakespeare’s Iago and Richard III are the most famous examples of the type. (Baldick 209)

Richard III remains personified as a “Machiavel” in a multitude of ways throughout Heywood’s drama. Specifically, one of the first instances of Richard’s Machiavellian villainy, depicted in the play, takes place when Richard III is manipulating Clarence in relation to the prophecy. The conversation unfolds, and Richard’s true colors, concealed in his asides, are made evident when he claims:

RICHARD. Who you? Ay, I dar'st answer for you –

*Aside.* – That I shall cut you off ere it be long –

[*To them*] But, reverend Doctor, you can only tell,

Being his highness' confessor, how he takes it.

*Aside to Shaw.* Shaw, you know my mind; a villain like myself. (Heywood 11.44-48)

Leaning on Machiavelli's ideals of villainy over morality for power, in this scene Richard III admits to himself and Doctor Shaw that he is undoubtedly a villain who will rid of Clarence in an attempt to climb the noble ladder to the throne. In this sense, Richard absolutely lives up to the definition of "Machiavellian" through his scheming speech. Moreover, he *feigns* innocence, kindness, and concern for his brother's well-being through the rest of the scene in order to retain the power he already holds. This feigned innocence appears in the form of an oath to Clarence when Richard proclaims:

RICHARD. 'Tis gone, 'tis gone. Brother, I am your friend,

I am your loving brother, your own self,

And love you as my soul. Use me in what you please,

And you shall see I'll do a brother's part:

Send you to heaven, I hope, ere it be long. (Heywood 11.74-78)

As Machiavelli suggests, "One conclusion only can be drawn: the prince must have the people well disposed toward him; otherwise in times of adversity there is no hope" (29). Although Richard does an exemplary job of having Clarence and others in his corner by playing the concerned and kind brother and friend, he still proves to be entirely and chaotically evil for immediately after these declarative words of love, he secretly states, "I am a true-stamped

villain as ever lived” (Heywood 11.79). Furthermore, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli asserts, “there are two other ways to rise from private citizen to prince which cannot be assigned altogether to luck or ability... These are: ascent to princely power by some criminal or evil conduct; and the rise of a private citizen to supreme authority in his land through the choice of his fellow citizens” (24). Richard III’s “criminal or evil conduct” is what propels him to power which is his ultimate desire. He murders Clarence and the young princes in the tower, and he harms countless others to satiate his never-ending thirst for power and control.

Another male character who stands as an evident, pure Machiavel is Dr. Shaw. Like Richard III, Dr. Shaw is exhibited through Heywood’s drama as a vile and scheming man hell bent on gaining power of his own through the manipulation and destruction of others. As Philip Schwyzer suggests of Dr. Shaw, he is “the unctuous climber” who “crumbles with guilt after preaching on Richard’s behalf and, haunted by a ghostly friar, resolves to starve himself to death in his study” in Heywood’s play (206). While, unlike Richard, Dr. Shaw does experience feelings of remorse, that does not make him any less of a power grubbing, slimy Machiavel as he crumbles under his guilt rather than attempting to right his wrongs. Even in Thomas More’s history, Dr. Shaw is portrayed as someone who will go to great lengths for power and chose evil over honesty and morality as More suggests, “Doctor Shaa by his sermon lost his honesty...” and “he should by the authority of his preaching incline the people to the protector’s ghostly purpose” (60). Dr. Shaw’s unabashed backing of Richard’s villainy in More’s history mirrors his same actions in Heywood’s drama, and in the play, Richard’s villainous influence contributes to Shaw’s own evil doings. Like Richard, Dr. Shaw’s Machiavellian qualities are what ultimately cause his downfall. One of the first instances of Dr. Shaw’s slimy villainy appears in the same scene mentioned previously. After Clarence exits, Richard III enlists the help of Dr. Shaw in his

path to take the thrown by the destruction of others and persuades Shaw to aid him in this quest by promising him power in stating:

GLOUCESTER. But I will draw thee with me unto greatness;

Thou shalt sit in by bosom, as my soul.

Incense the King, now being, as thou art,

So near about him – and his confessor –

That this ‘G’ only is George, Duke of Clarence.

Doctor, thou needst not my instruction;

Thou hast a searching brain, a nimble spirit

Able to master any man’s affections.

Effect it, Shaw, and bring it to pass once:

I’ll make thee the greatest Shaw that ever was. (Heywood 11.91-100)

Of course, to a power-hungry Machiavel like Dr. Shaw, this offer is rather enticing to him, and he agrees by explaining:

DOCTOR SHAW. My lord, I am going my commandment

Unto the Marshalsea, to Captain Stranguidge,

For piracy of late condemned to die,

There to conferee him and his company.

That done, I’ll come with speed back to the King,

And make no doubt, but I’ll effect the thing. (Heywood 11.101-06)

In this dialogue, it is worthy of notice that Dr. Shaw does not seem to exhibit any hesitation in taking Richard’s offer. He immediately agrees to do as Richard wants in order to further his own

personal gain and power. Thus, Heywood's portrayal of Dr. Shaw's character proves him to be just as much of a sadistic and pure Machiavel as Richard.

Conversely, Jane Shore may also be considered somewhat of a "Machiavel" in Heywood's drama as she "has erred in violating conventions of marriage and rank and sexuality, her familiarity now, nevertheless, extends quite pragmatically to the lives of the commons for whom she can do many kindnesses" (Palmer 308). However, unlike Richard III and Dr. Shaw, Jane comes across as someone who possesses Machiavellian traits and tendencies, but she does not *intentionally* harm others in order to further her own desires and gain. Quite the contrary, Jane utilizes her power not only to help herself but also to help others, a trait that Richard and Shaw do not exhibit. While pure Machiavels, such as Richard and Shaw, hold criminality and desire high above morality, Jane's actions and speech show it is possible for a character to exhibit Machiavellian traits while still holding onto their morality. Moreover, Mansfield proposes the idea:

Machiavelli shows that necessity is stronger than morality to be sure, but he would not have to argue this point if morality were not stronger than it appears to be. Its strength lies in what people "profess" to others and to themselves. Almost everyone is aware of the contrast between what people profess and what they do or how they behave, but almost no one thinks that this sad divergence justifies abandoning morality for evil. Machiavelli thinks, or "teaches," that it does. (643).

Throughout the play, Jane "professes" goodness as well as displaying *real* acts of kindness towards others even though this goodness is founded through unintentional treachery for her own gain. To elaborate, Jane commits the act of infidelity not only for her own gain but also for the gain of others. Her affair with King Edward IV awards her the ability to take care of herself and

bless others with kindness. This stands apparent in scene ten when Queen Elizabeth confronts Jane about her affair with the King and Jane claims:

JANE. All I can do is too little, too,  
 But to requite the least part of this grace.  
 The dearest thoughts that harbour in this breast,  
 Shall in your service only be expressed. (Heywood 10.126-129)

These lines portray that Jane's mercy and morality make her a Machiavel as well. Although she commits the evil act of adultery with the King for her own gain and others, she also does it to keep herself in good favor with the Queen by utilizing her sway over King Edward IV to help Queen Elizabeth. As David Hawkes suggests, "Once installed at court as Edward's concubine, she takes every opportunity to assert natural value over financial, bestowing conspicuously disinterested mercy on all petitioners..." (40). Not only does Jane use her power as the king's "concubine" to help herself and the Queen, she also utilizes it to help others. For instance, when conversing with Jane and Jockie on Jane's good deeds Brackenbury states:

BRACKENBURY. A comforting, minist'ring, kind physician,  
 That once a week, in her own person, visits  
 The prisoners and the poor in hospitals,  
 In London, or near London every way;  
 Whose purse is open to the hungry soul,  
 Whose piteous heart saves many a tall man's life. (Heywood 9.24-30)

Based on the context in which the conversation is situated, it may be assumed that Jane could not help these prisoners without the power gained from her unlawful sins. She even hints at her Machiavellian sin later in the conversation when she claims, "That all the coals of my poor

charity / Cannot consume the scandal of my name” (Heywood 9.34-35). Additionally, she remains completely aware of the power she consumes through her affair as she speaks on the matter of saving Stranguidge and his crew when she asserts, “I’ll rack my credit, and will launch my crows / To save their lives, if they have done no murder” (Heywood 9.74-75). Thus, Jane’s words and actions, unlike Richard III’s, seem completely sincere. Jane genuinely desires to utilize her standing as the King’s mistress to help the Queen remain in favor with the King as well as aid in preserving the lives of others. Although she seems to have no plans of stopping the affair, she “demonstrates an unwavering adherence to essentialist values,” (Hawkes 40). Jane shows that she is not a complete Machiavel because she still retains her morals and is entirely genuine in her desire to help others.

Like Jane, Queen Elizabeth also seems to be genuinely merciful and moral while exuding Machiavellian traits at the same time. In the same scene between Jane and the Queen as mentioned above, Elizabeth acts as though she is about to kill Jane. Instead, in a surprising turn of events, the Queen kisses Jane and forgives her for her indiscretions. However, the Queen’s forgiveness of Jane exhibits an air of personal benefit when she states:

QUEEN. Rise my sweet Jane, I say thou shall not kneel.

O, God forbid that Edward’s queen should hate

Her, whom she knows he doth so dearly love.

My love to her may purchase me his love;

Jane, speak well unto the King of me and mine.

Remember not my son’s o’er-hasty speech;

Thou art my sister, and I love thee so.

I know thou mayst do much with my dear lord;

Speak well of us to him in any case,

And I and mine will love and cherish thee. (Heywood 10.116-125)

Similar to Jane, in this scene, Queen Elizabeth's Machiavellian traits remain apparent. However, the tendencies which transform her into a Machiavel stand evident in her manipulation of Jane for personal power. The Queen commits an act of kindness in the form of forgiveness for the purpose of achieving her personal goals. She clearly states that if she loves Jane, the King will love her more, and she suggests that she will only show Jane love and kindness if Jane agrees to speak well of the Queen and her family to the King. Thus, the forgiveness and mercy she bestows upon Jane is specifically intended to get Jane to speak highly of the Queen and her kindred to the King so the Queen may remain in his favor. Additionally, the Queen's forgiveness of Jane seems to be completely genuine. Even though she is doing something to give herself more power, she still shows mercy and morality in her actions. Moreover, Queen Elizabeth's love of Jane stands to help Jane gain even more favor with the King. Furthermore, in the same scene, the Queen utilizes her newfound friendship born from manipulation to do good by others like Jane does. When Brackenbury enters to entreat the King to spare Stranguidge and his men, Elizabeth states, "Edward, needs must you pardon them" (Heywood 10.156). Then, even though Edward claims the men will die, Elizabeth tries to help further as she nudges Jane and suggests, "Good Jane, entreat for them" (Heywood 10.164). Thus, she is not a complete Machiavel like Richard and Shaw, but she is mostly moral while exuding some Machiavellian traits similar to her female counterpart.

Similar to Jane and the Queen, Mistress Blage also exhibits some Machiavellian traits while remaining out of the realm of complete Machiavellianism. In scenes fifteen through eighteen, after Jane has been persecuted by Richard, Heywood makes clear all the good Jane has

done for Mistress Blage by utilizing her power as King Edward IV's mistress. In return, Mistress Blage gives Jane a safe space away from Richard, one may assume because she hopes to gain more from Jane's own power. However, when she hears that Jane is not to be helped, fed, or given shelter, she turns on Jane for the purpose of her own well-being and possible power gain. David Palmer elaborates on this scene when he claims that the two women "may come together and live 'like two warme widdowes'; but little time passes on Heywood's stage, however, before Richard proclaims Jane Shore a criminal and Mistress Blage turns on her 'true friend'" (309).

When Mistress Blage turns on Jane she exclaims:

M. BLAGE. What? And so I should be a traitor, should I?

Is that the care you have of me and mine?

I thank you, truly. No, there's no such matter.

I love you well, but love myself better.

As long as you were held a true subject,

I made account of you accordingly;

But being otherwise, I do reject you,

And will not cherish my King's enemy.

You know the danger of the proclamation:

I would to God you would depart my house. (Heywood 18.134-43)

It appears in Mistress Blage's exclamation against Jane that she feels she will benefit from honoring the King's wishes. Additionally, it seems her previous good deeds, while they were genuine, were only for the purpose of gaining power or wealth through Jane when she believed there was still something to gain. Later, Mistress Blage's Machiavellian qualities further appear when she gives Jane up to the apparitors and states:

M. BLAGE. So, now her jewels and her gold is mine,  
 And I am made at least four thousand pound  
 Wealthier by this match than I was before.  
 And what can be objected for the same?  
 That once I loved her? Well, perhaps I did.  
 But now I am of another humour;  
 And women all are governed by the moon,  
 Which is, you know, a planet that will change. (Heywood 18. 208-15)

Mistress Blage's Machiavellian tendencies are displayed through her greed. She once loved Jane for her own gain, and now she turns Jane in for the purpose of gaining wealth and good favor as well. While Blage's love of Jane seems to be genuine as she shows Jane mercy earlier in the story, she also leans more towards the same type of Machiavellianism exhibited through the male characters as she throws Jane out without a thought to obtain Jane's wealth. What remains unique about Mistress Blage is that her morality and Machiavellian qualities seem to alternate equally. She is, however, nowhere near a pure Machiavel like Richard and Dr. Shaw, and remains closer on the scale to Jane and Queen Elizabeth.

The fundamental resolution here determined is that the females in Heywood's drama ultimately exist as *slightly* Machiavellian foils to the *purely* Machiavellian male characters. While male characters such as Richard III and Dr. Shaw only exist to wreak havoc on others for the sake of gaining power, the female characters are quite the opposite. Although Jane, Queen Elizabeth, and Mistress Blage commit some wrongdoings for the sake of their own gain, they also utilize mercy and morals to help others. Machiavelli claims that "any man who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good. Hence a

prince who wants to keep his authority must learn how to not be good, and use that knowledge, or refrain from using it, as necessity requires” (42). This may ring true for Richard III and Dr. Shaw, but, in the case of the women, a fair mix of morality and immorality stands to aid in the struggle for power. Thus, the female characters are not fully Machiavellian, but they utilize a combination their Machiavellian traits and their morals to achieve power of their own.

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