ABSTRACT

The current best-selling bilingual edition of Machiavelli’s plays, *The Comedies of Machiavelli*, edited by David Sices and James B. Atkinson, contains several errors, mistranslations, and historical inaccuracies. Though Sices claims fidelity to Machiavelli’s texts in his introduction, my experience with his work—as both a theatre director and a student of Italian Renaissance literature—has proven otherwise. In particular, Sices’s translation of *La Mandragola* (titled *The Mandrake* in his edition) plays upon a misguided image of Machiavelli the villain, a stereotype that has plagued Italian Renaissance studies for centuries.

My translation of *La Mandragola* offers an alternative to Sices’s work. In this edition, I remain loyal to the 1513 performance text, preserving Machiavelli’s exact words whenever possible and footnoting discrepancies. I have also preserved Machiavelli’s use of formal and familiar language, a feat no other modern translation has attempted. In my opinion, Machiavelli’s use of *tu* and *voi* forms are critical to understanding his overall comment on contemporary religious, civil, and sexual power structures.

Though there is still work to be done (to date, I have yet to work with Machiavelli’s early handwritten manuscripts), I am confident my translation is both more entertaining and more accurate than the current bilingual edition. In sum, I hope this translation, intended for academic audiences, facilitates a more accurate conversation on Machiavelli’s contribution to Early Modern drama.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to four people: Dr. Barbara Godorecci (my mentor), Bonnie and Mike Crawford (my parents), and Angelique Crawford (my wife).

Barbara—without you, this project would have remained a pipe dream forever.

Mom, Dad—without you, I never would have started.

Angelique—without you, I never would have finished.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to all my colleagues who have either helped me directly with this project or offered encouragement or advice. I am particularly thankful to my chair, Dr. Emily Wittman, who took me under her wing and exposed me to the wide world of translation studies. Without you, Professor, this thesis would have never reached completion. Thanks for keeping me on track. I would also like to thank my committee members, who each brought a very specific toolkit to the job. Thanks, Dr. Burch, for your theatrical and playwriting knowledge. Thanks, Dr. Davies, for your linguistic guidance. And thanks, Dr. Goethals, for your wealth of Italian and Renaissance experience. With all our powers combined, I think we created something unique and special together.

Special thanks to Dr. Sharon O’Dair and Dr. Michelle Dowd, the two departmental heads who oversaw this project. Dr. O’Dair approved it, and Dr. Dowd saw it to fruition. I am grateful to you both. Thanks to The Hudson Strode Program of Renaissance Studies for housing me and supporting me these last two years, and thanks to the University of Alabama English Department for constantly and consistently pushing me to achieve more.

Thanks to my personal mentors, Dr. John J. Burke, Jr. and Dr. James McNaughton. Doc, I hope you enjoy a long, well-deserved retirement; Dr. McNaughton, you’re my hero.

And thanks again, Angelique, for putting up with me.
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INTRODUCTION

This edition of La Mandragola has been over a year in the making. It is a response, primarily, to David Sices’s translation which appears in the 1985 Dartmouth edition of The Comedies of Machiavelli. Sices’s bilingual compilation is the premiere bilingual edition of Machiavelli’s plays, and I feel his version of The Mandrake deserves an update. This project hopes to curate a better image of Machiavelli though a better representation of his language and rhetoric.

In Spring 2016, I cut and directed Sices’s translation of The Mandrake for the University of Alabama’s staged reading troupe, Improbable Fictions. We performed on March 10th to a packed black box theatre at the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center. The reading used little costuming and less set: characters wore business casual attire with cloaks, “Groucho Marx” glasses, and prop knives during the disguise scenes; our scenery consisted of two all-purpose benches. At fifty-eight pages, Sices’s translation is among the shortest texts I have ever directed; aside from song omissions, my adaptation remained faithful to his script. Our performance text was riddled with anachronisms, problematic language, and critical bias, however. As we rehearsed, these issues became clear, and I grew increasingly frustrated with it. It angered me how easily Sices had misrepresented The Mandrake to play into an incorrect historical narrative— one that has been curated by literature studies for over four hundred years. Furthermore, Sices’s translation is flowery and corny, where fiendish characters commit heinous acts with little reason or underlying comment. This is not Machiavelli’s text. La Mandragola is direct and clever, a
critique of contemporary socio-political morés. It challenges language and cultural heritage as it attempts to forge a new Italian identity. In sum, David Sices’s *The Mandrake* has managed to neuter and mislabel Machiavelli while maintaining an air of critical non-bias. Though University of Alabama audiences seemed to enjoy Improbable Fictions’ reading of *The Mandrake*, I felt that the production as a whole had failed. By final bows, I felt that I, too, had contributed to that incorrect history of “machiavellianism.”

But Machiavelli was not a *machiavel*. Contrary to cable television—which portrays so-called ‘machiavellians’ as dastardly, conniving, mustache-twirling psychopaths—he was a playwright, a linguist, a historian, a rhetorician, and a philosopher. Further, he was one of the greatest political minds of his age. *The Prince* is one of the most influential texts from the Early Modern era and easily the most influential political text from the Italian Renaissance.

So where does this false image come from, and how do we remedy it? Shortly after Machiavelli’s death in 1527, the word “machiavellian” began to crop up throughout Europe as a synonym for “villain.” In fact, the OED suggests that the 16th century English spelling of villain, “villian,” is a shortening of “machiavellian.” Thomas Fowler is credited with the first written “machiavellian” in 1566 (“He ys..a mortall enemy to all the protestants in this house,..a right mache villion” [OED]), and Shakespeare uses the word three times in his plays: twice in the *Henry VI* sequence and once in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Though his exile may have contributed to his reputation, I believe that the general misunderstanding surrounding Machiavelli stems from a misrepresentation of his and his contemporaries’ works, either due to poor understanding, poor adaptation, poor translation, or stereotype. Further, evidence shows that posthumous misunderstandings via translations of *La Mandragola* may have hurt Machiavelli’s reputation as well. After all, it is Friar Timoteo who utters the infamous line, “el fine si ha
La Mandragola was a breakout success during Machiavelli’s lifetime; in fact, it was the primary work Machiavelli was known for during his lifetime. Shortly after its first performance in 1520, it was performed in Rome at the request of the Pope; it returned as a revival in 1524. Machiavelli oversaw two productions in Venice in 1522, with the second performance having to be suspended due to audience riots in support of the play. It came to Venice again in 1526, where it saw two more performances, and it was performed in Romagna in 1526 to celebrate the installation of Machiavelli’s close friend Francesco Guicciardini as papal governor. (Haywood 18). Furthermore, each performance seems to have been accompanied with a new printed edition, as over ten editions existed before the turn of the 17th century. (18) It is safe to assume, then, that many had seen and/or read La Mandragola by the end of the 16th century and that many more were aware of it. It is also safe to assume, given references in Shakespeare’s texts (among others’), that the comedy had crossed into England as well. In The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597), Shakespeare pokes fun at the cuckold genre by conjuring Machiavelli. In 3.1, the Host nods briefly to La Mandragola’s characters and themes:


The above line evokes La Mandragola through words like “Machiavel,” “doctor” and “potions,” thus summoning parallels between Callimaco and Dr. Caius: both are Frenchmen (Caius a native-born French citizen, Callimaco a transplant during the Italian Wars), both are pseudo-doctors (Callimaco pretends to practice medicine to trick Messer Nicia; Caius never
demonstrates his practice), and both are Petrarchan lovers. Both “give potions” in hopes of achieving “motions.” The difference: Caius is a fool whereas Callimaco is a comic hero. Ultimately, Caius misses his mark and Callimaco succeeds: Caius marries a boy; Callimaco has sex with Lucrezia. Regardless, Shakespeare’s comparison seems uneven, as his revision of Callimaco through Caius bears little of the original character’s charm: despite his faults, Callimaco is well-spoken, educated, and thoughtful. Caius, on the other hand, is outspoken, hot-tempered, and brutish--more a tool for cultural parody than a believable human being. As a result, Shakespeare furthers an obtuse image of Machiavellianism through a brief recollection of La Mandragola. At least, the line suggests that Shakespeare’s audience--specifically the court at Westminster Palace, where the comedy was originally performed (Melchiori 2)--was mildly aware of Machiavelli’s work. At most, it confirms that La Mandragola played a part in Machiavelli’s growing misrepresentation in popular culture. As is often the case, the truth likely lies between these extremes.

That said--if misrepresentation is the root of Machiavelli’s bad name, then how can we correct it? Is it even possible to redeem Machiavelli? Shortly after the Improbable Fictions reading, I voiced my frustration with Sices’s text to Dr. Barbara Godorecci. A translator herself, Godorecci’s work focuses on the hermeneutics of ‘re-writing’ in both Machiavelli’s texts and Machiavelli-inspired texts. Her book, After Machiavelli, uses the word palimpsest to explain the revision process present in translative and adaptive literature: just as a palimpsest undergoes a process of erasure through scraping or chemicals, the translated text erases and supplants the original work through revision. Simply put, translation is “a new identity born of other identities, yet comprehensive of them” (Godorecci 1, 9). For me, Sices’s “new identity” is not “comprehensive” enough. Though his translation successfully pieces together a body from
amalgamated English parts, that body lacks a soul. Or, rather, it lacks the correct soul. When I mentioned this to Godorecci, she smiled. “You know the language,” she said. “Translate it yourself. Revive Machiavelli.”

Revival and redemption form the bifurcated heart of this project. Now, as the five-hundredth anniversary of *La Mandragola* looms overhead, is the prime moment to set the record straight—to uncover and rediscover the palimpsest beneath the revisions. In other words, there is no better time than now to return to Machiavelli, and we must grasp this good Fortune before it passes us by.

This translation is also a response to Tim Parks’s recent article in *The New York Review of Books*, entitled “A No-Nonsense Machiavelli.” In it, he calls for clearer, more concise translations of Machiavelli’s texts. He argues that *The Prince* should receive re-translative priority over other contemporary texts, including Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. For Parks, logic is the heart of Machiavelli’s prose, and English translations tend to overcomplicate or misrepresent it through incorrect words. “Sense comes first,” he writes, “the language must not get in the way of the argument” (Parks). I agree. As Godorecci notes, every translation is an exercise in erasure and “re-writing”: when a translator sets out to adapt a text, they must first choose which features can be kept and which ones must be omitted. Which linguistic features must be preserved? Which can be discarded? Which may be represented through alternate means or compensation? Which phrases, allusions, idioms, and metaphors simply do not work in the translated language? Which do? No two texts may be approached the same way. What works for Dante does not work for Boccaccio, and what works for Boccaccio does not work for Machiavelli. Regardless, sense must come first. Comprehension trumps meter every time, and, in my opinion, the best
translations are those which most successfully cut through the nuances of language to present a clear and exhaustive recreation of the author’s message.

Further, Parks writes that Machiavelli should be re-written without superfluous decor, citing that Machiavelli himself chose to write and translate without it. He points to a passage from Machiavelli’s letter to Lorenzo de’ Medici:

I haven’t aimed for a fancy style or padded the book out with long sentences or pompous, pretentious words, or any of the irrelevant flourishes and attractions so many writers use; I didn’t want it to please for anything but the range and seriousness of its subject matter.

(Parks)

“This doesn’t mean, of course, that there aren’t all kinds of rhetorical strategies in The Prince, or that the text shouldn’t be entertaining,” Parks writes. Rather, he notes that Machiavelli should be addressed on his own terms. He then observes how Machiavelli’s work has lost its own sense due to antiquity and how English translations of The Prince, from Edward Dacre’s 1640 translation to George Bull’s 1961 translation, tend to muddle and censor their message. In the end, he uses these reasons to justify his forthcoming edition of The Prince—a text that revives and preserves with meticulous curation.

Similarly, my translation of La Mandragola does not use flowery or corny language, and it does not attempt to paint Machiavelli’s characters as anything other than themselves. In sum, my work is La Mandragola al fresco, a play served cold with little dressing.¹ In the following sections, I will attempt to explain some of my translative choices, as well as offer a glimpse at my methods. Among my decisions, I have adapted Machiavelli’s high and low diction through

¹While I write plainly for sense, I have dressed my translation with footnotes that situate my translation within a critical conversation, explain references, and point out manuscript errors.
formal and familiar contraction use, I have preserved most of his idioms and swears, and I have corrected manuscript errors that may have contributed to incorrect past translations.
REGARDING SECOND PERSON PRONOUNS

Communicating formal and familiar pronouns is among a translator's biggest challenges when adapting a romance language. Most handle this problem in one of four ways: (1) they match romantic pronouns with formal English equivalents, (2) they footnote noteworthy passages affected by pronoun form, (3) they ignore formal and familiar pronouns altogether, or (4) they find a compensative equivalent. Each of these methods contain unique problems; however, “where there is certain good and uncertain evil, one should not leave the good for fear of the evil” (Crawford 71). Despite its problems, I believe that my translation, which uses contractions to compensate for high and low speech, is the best curation of Machiavelli’s discourse.

English familiars began to decline in popularity over seven hundred years ago and have since fallen into disuse. Due to this, translations that use English T-form pronouns (thee and thou) sound antiquated to modern ears. In their 2015 article in The Journal of Pragmatics, Suzanne Aalberse and Wessel Stoop attempt to explain the divide between Germanic and Romantic familiar pronouns. They reason that the drop in English T-forms stems from “a focus on negative politeness, the possibility of deflection via the loss of the T-pronoun and pressure on the inflectional system due to language contract involving adult second language learners” (Aalberse et al. 190). To illustrate, they map T-form decline via a selection of Middle Dutch texts: from a survey of over 2,000 13th century and 16th century prose and rhyming texts, they indicate a drastic decline in familiars. Where the 13th century prose results show an even two-to-
one ratio among formal and familiar subjects, respectively, the 16th century report indicates a stark decrease: of 3,048 second-person subjects, only nineteen are familiar (197). Given this data, Aalberse hypothesizes that the decline in Germanic T-forms stems from a confusion over verb endings. She writes:

If a verb ending is under pressure because it is not completely acquired by the speaker, there are two things speakers can do. The first option is to keep using the pronoun and thus risk producing utterances that might be perceived by others to have agreement errors. Alternatively, the speaker can resort to the use of a pronoun with similar meaning that combines with more economical inflection (like the V) and at the same time avoid agreement errors. (193)

In sum, Aalberse contends that the English and the Dutch adopted V-forms as an all-inclusive pronoun due, in part, to conjugation issues. As the languages evolved, speakers began to gravitate away from familiar pronouns, preferring the more economical formal form instead.

Though I am dubious of Aalberse and Stoops' research—their study focuses on Middle Dutch, not English—Shakespeare’s use of formal and familiar pronouns appears to confirm their findings. In his recent study in *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, Kyle Mahowald tracks Shakespeare’s use of *th*- and *y*-form pronouns throughout all thirty-seven major works. Though his conclusion is problematic, his data is telling: using the Naïve Bayes classifier to track occurrences, he determines that 88% of Shakespeare’s T-form and V-form pronouns can be classified by context (Mahowald 17). He writes that *you* and *your* typically accompany words like *lordship*, *madame*, *lords*, and *sir* while *thee*, *thou*, and *thy* most often accompany words like *torment*, *nuncle*, *lesser*, and *villain* (17). He then concludes that Shakespeare employs pronouns to differentiate high and low diction. However, Mahowald's study fails to convincingly
acknowledge the remainder. 22% of Shakespeare’s pronouns lack high and low context cues, meaning that over one-fifth of the Bard’s pronouns are potential rule-breakers. Given the context, that’s a large percentage. And Mahowald acknowledges this when he writes that “it is unusual that Hamlet uses you rather than thou to call Polonius a fishmonger” (23). Despite Polonius’s lesser status and the nature of Hamlet’s insult, Hamlet uses the formal to address him. Though the inconsistency may be justified due to Hamlet’s madness, the passage nevertheless conveys Shakespeare’s playfulness with Early Modern pronoun rhetoric. In sum, Shakespeare’s texts illustrate the malleability of contemporary English structures, and given Shakespeare’s medium--drama, an imitative art--it is reasonable to assume that familiar pronouns had begun to disappear from daily speech by the late 16th century.

To reiterate--English formal and familiar pronouns, despite their accuracy, are simply too antiquated for modern audiences. If anything, their inclusion might inhibit their understanding of the text. Starting in the late 19th century, English speakers began using T-form pronouns for emphasis and elevated speech due to a misunderstanding of classic pronoun usage. Including them in this text may actually inverse my intended effect. Since my translation of Mandragola prioritizes sense over form, I have chosen not to include familiar English pronouns in my text.

I have also decided not to indicate pronouns with footnotes. Footnoted designations add weighty critical focus of the text, and their problems often outweigh their benefits. In general, footnotes assign importance to passages, thus shifting the audience’s attention and manipulating their critical bias. Marking “noteworthy” pronouns prioritizes passages, and as a result, so-called “unnoteworthy” pronouns are often lost to non-speakers. In my opinion, readers should not be told which passages are important; they must be allowed to explore for themselves. In other words, it is not the translator’s job to play critic. A translated text is a Möbius strip, a cyclical
collaboration between language and intellect. The writer writes; the translator curates: it is the latter’s job, roughly speaking, to preserve the former’s work with as little interference as possible. Like an upscale bathroom attendant, a translator must remain invisibly present, ready to assist the reader whenever they need guidance. Diction shifts are simply too loaded and too invasive for footnotes, and marking specific moments does more harm than good.

On the other hand, a translator cannot simply footnote each and every tu and voi, as well as their respective conjugations. If done, the footnotes would bloat the text unnecessarily. If I were to mark every second-person pronoun in my translation of La Mandragola, then my text would double in length. Marking such words would also devalue my footnotes in general, detracting from necessary historical information, references, manuscript/typescript divergences, explanations, and further translations (i.e. Latin exchanges). As such, I have decided not to rely on marginalia as my primary means of indicating formal and familiar language.

Given these issues, most translators choose to ignore pronoun forms altogether. In fact, all of my primary sources (Sices, Shawn, Gianetti and Ruggiero, and the Paoluccis) sidestep the problem and use you for all second-person pronouns. Instead, they focus their translatative energies elsewhere--on sense and/or meter. La Mandragola is a dense text after all, and translators must pick their battles prudently: idioms, figures of speech, shifts between languages, class delineations, political commentary, stage directions, themes, characters, and motifs are all worthy focuses. However, understanding the nature of these pronouns is key to understanding Machiavelli’s discourse, specifically his exploration of communal structures. Throughout his works, Machiavelli tinkers with and tests power mechanisms, and Italian language is at the heart of that experiment. In Canto XXVI of Il Principe, he uses voi to elevate and legitimize Italy. He writes:
Pigli, adunque, al illustre Casa Vostra questo assunto, con quello animo e con quella speranza che si pigliano le imprese iuste; acciò che, sotto la sua insegna, e questa patria ne sia nobilitata e, sotto li sua auspizii, si verifichi quel detto del Petrarca: (Machiavelli 223-224, my italics)

Then, may Your illustrious House take up this mission; with this mind and this hope, take up these just businesses so that, under your sign, this patriarchy may be ennobled, and under your auspices, verify those words of Petrarch: (223-224, my translation)

Here, Machiavelli frames his final call-to-arms with formal second-person pronouns: he uses Vostra to establish a new communal self. At the time of writing (roughly 1513), Italy was suffering a major identity crisis. After having fallen victim to multiple invasions by the French and the Holy Romans, the heart of the former Roman Empire had finally begun to break. Canto XXVI attempts to mend Italy by calling its audience to unite under a new national identity. And Machiavelli builds his “House” with Italian bricks: aside from ending with a Petrarch quote (as opposed to Virgil, Cicero, or any other Roman scholar), Machiavelli frames his closing words in Italian. As such, “Casa Vostra” (“Your House”) is more than a successor to Rome, it is the new Rome--a culture as rich and nuanced as the world’s greatest empire. This short phrase implies respect, fidelity, and royalty. Machiavelli’s “House” is one that towers above its captors. It is a fortress built with Italian language and mortared with great Italian writing.

Due to his precise language in other works, I warrant a better translation of Machiavelli’s speech in La Mandragola--an edition which, for example, accentuates Friar Timoteo’s exclusive use of formals, illustrates Callimaco and Ligurio’s manipulative tones and forms, and notes Lucrezia’s linguistic rebellion against her husband. I warrant an edition that overcomes the problems of archaic English pronouns and shies away from superfluous footnotes. In sum, I have
decided to match Machiavelli’s words with compensative equivalents. In my translation, I use contractions to indicate formal and familiar speech. Whenever a character speaks in the *tu* form, I mark the surrounding language with contractions; whenever a character speaks in the *voi* form, I abstain from contractions.

As anticipated, this method for marking speech has several drawbacks. First, a character who uses the *voi* form does not always do so formally. *Voi* is also a collective pronoun, a close cousin to *you all* in English (*y’all* in various American dialects). In these cases, I adapt the character’s speech according to context and pre-established diction patterns. For example, if a character has a history of using the *tu* form, then they will continue to use contractions during collective speech; if the speaker tends to refer to others in the singular *voi* or if one of the recipients belongs to a higher social status, then they will refrain from contractions. To illustrate, Messer Nicia almost exclusively speaks in the familiar. Due to this, moments when he speaks in the formal/collective are fertile grounds for close reading. He uses *voi* in 5.5 without a clear reference, and as a result, his final line is vague: it may refer to Sostrata, Lucrezia, or both, collectively. The text remains unclear, and its meaning shifts depending on its recipient:

LUCREZIA: Egli e la grazia vostra!

SOSTRATA: Andate a trovare el frate. Ma e’ non bisogna, egli e fuora di chiesa.

NICIA: *Voi* dite el vero. (Sices 270, my italics)

To my knowledge, critics have overlooked this passage, assuming perhaps that Nicia’s line only refers to Sostrata. This reading is not incorrect: his line immediately follows hers, and he refers to her in the singular *voi* throughout the play. But without a referencing noun, Nicia’s pronoun remains may refer to a multiplicity of recipients. It makes sense, then, to also read “*Voi dite el vero*” (“You tell the truth”) as a formal acknowledgement to his wife and a subconscious
slippage in contemporary conjugal structures. Simply put, husband and wife are now equals in their marriage—and Nicia marks their equality by addressing his wife formally. He can no longer manipulate his wife, as the previous night’s undressing has stripped him of his machismo.

This reading directly contradicts David Sices’s argument in his foreword to *The Mandrake*. In it, he writes that comedy is a striptease and that “*The Mandrake* is not a good representative of the comic mode,” as “[n]othing is unveiled in the end” (Sices 22). I disagree. Sices’s so-called “striptease” is absent in the characters he explores: Callimaco, Ligurio, Timoteo, Sostrata, Siro, and Lucrezia do not change. All of these characters remain constant throughout: Callimaco remains a lover, Ligurio remains a parasite, Timoteo remains an opportunist, Sostrata remains a pleasure-seeker, Siro remains a servant, and Lucrezia remains a prudent matron. Each retains their role. The only character who truly changes is Nicia—and his “stripping” manifests in his language. By speaking in *voi*, Nicia undresses himself of his former titles. He is no longer Lucrezia’s lord, patron, guide, or moral compass; these garments now belong to Callimaco.² In sum, his slippage indicates his transformation as he slips into a new marital role.

The pronoun may also refer to Sostrata and Lucrezia collectively. In this case, both above readings compound atop one another: Nicia’s cuckoldry has demasculinized him before all the women in his life, and the borders between sex and social power have become blurred. Like Aristophanes’ *Assemblywomen*, the wife and mother end up on top, and the husband becomes a reliant fool: Sostrata has become his advisor, and Lucrezia has become his cynical partner.

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²In 5.4, Callimaco recalls Lucrezia’s nighttime vows; he ventriloquizes: “Therefore, I take you for my lord, my patron, and my guide; you my father, you my protector, and you my every good; and what my husband has wanted for a night, I want forever” (Crawford 100).
To illustrate this multiplicity of meanings, I have adapted Nicia’s line without contractions:

LUCREZIA: Thanks to you!

SOSTRATA: Go find the friar. But it is not necessary, he is outside the church.

NICIA: You tell the truth. (Crawford 102)

The speech remains formal, and I mark Nicia’s sudden shift with a short footnote that highlights the original text. It is the reader’s job, then, to decide whether this passage deserves the above critical attention. In my opinion, this is the most noninvasive and current way to convert the line, as it conveys a subtle diction shift without slowing the rhythm of the scene or calling attention to itself.

But collective pronouns are not the only hurdles one must overcome when translating with contractions. Monologues, soliloquies, and asides are also problematic, as they typically lack *tu* and *voi* indicators. On these occasions, I use context to assign contractions as appropriate: I determine formality based on the character’s relationship with the audience. For Ligurio, the audience is a co-conspirator; for Callimaco and Siro, they are a confidant; for Friar Timoteo, they are a congregation. By treating the characters thusly, I further flesh-out their personalities and force them to create unique relationships with the audience. Friar Timoteo, for example, speaks without contractions to further develop himself as the audience’s guide or patron. Callimaco, Ligurio, and Siro, on the other hand, speak in contractions whenever they are alone to draw-in or win over the audience. By approaching the soliloquies this way, the audience becomes an active member in Machiavelli’s community. They are not mere voyeurs; they are citizens. And this translation seems to match Machaivelli’s intent, as the original manuscript often breaks the fourth wall and acknowledges the unities. To paraphrase Nicia in 3.3, by
participating—by observing and learning—the audience becomes the “shit” (or fertilizer) from which great culture may rise.

Furthermore, contractions allow me to better recreate minor features from Machiavelli’s original text. Where most translators mark asides with stage directions, I mark them with diction shifts. In 3.2, Ligurio breaks from Messer Nicia to address the audience:

LIGURIO: Questi frati sono trincati, astuti; ed è ragionevole, perchè sanno e peccati nostri, e loro, e chi non è pratico con essi potrebbe ingannarsi e non li sapere condurre a suo proposito. Pertanto io non vorrei che voi nel parlare guastassi ogni cosa, perchè un vostro pari, che sta tuttodì nello studio, s’intende di que’ libri, e delle cose del mondo non sa ragionare. Costui è sì sciocco, che io ho paura non guasti ogni cosa. (Sices 204)

In this passage, Ligurio asks Nicia to remain silent while he speaks with Friar Timoteo. Then he breaks from the conversation and addresses the audience, admitting that he thinks Nicia will ruin everything. Sices marks this aside by enclosing it in parentheses, and Giannetti and Rugierro telegraph the break with a bracketed stage direction. But none of the play’s manuscripts, to my knowledge, contain parentheses or stage directions. In fact, Machiavelli even abstains from writing character entrances and exits, preferring instead to mark them with dialogue and scene changes. It makes little sense, then, to load Machiavelli’s text with features he does not use. Instead, I have chosen to mark the aside with contractions:

Ligurio: These friars are cunning and astute, and it is understandable, as they know both our sins and theirs, and he who is not practical with one could be fooled and not know how to steer him to your proposition. The point is, I do not want you to speak and spoil everything, because a man like you who stays in his study all day knows only of books

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3 (This fellow is such an imbecile, I’m afraid he’ll ruin everything.) (Sices 205)
4 [Aside] (Giannetti, et al. 90)
and does not know of worldly things. This guy’s so foolish, I’m afraid he’ll spoil
everything. (Crawford 59-60)
The shift is obvious, yet noninvasive. The stark break in language offsets Ligurio’s speech and
indicates a change in direction. There is no need to mark it otherwise; stage directions are
unnecessary. And, more importantly, the passage mirrors Machiavelli’s. Sense is achieved, and I
am able to preserve form as well.
REGARDING IDIOMS AND SWEARS

Translating idioms and swears is a separate challenge altogether. I have tried to keep Machiavelli’s language intact wherever possible, and I often translate idioms, lexicon terms, and figures of speech word-for-word whenever possible—sometimes choosing to keep them in their original Italian. Words like *prudenza*, *Fortuna*, and *virtù*, for example, are far too weighty for English equivalents like *prudence*, *fortune*, and *virtue* (or *worth*, as Sices, Gianetti, and Ruggiero often translate it). These words, among others, are the tentpoles of Machiavelli’s critical lexicon; he spent his entire life crafting, molding, and polishing their definitions. A good translation, then, does not attempt to reduce them into one-word equivalents. And since a paragraph-long summarizations tend to break the action and musicality of the scene, I have no other option than to leave them in their original language. Instead, I mark the word the first time I use it and briefly summarize it in the footnotes.

This is also the case with certain puns and language jokes. In 1.2, Messer Nicia and Ligurio discuss the possibility of leaving town and taking Lucrezia to the baths. Nicia rejects the idea, insisting that he lacks the energy to pack his things and force his wife to leave. When Ligurio suggests that Nicia may be scared of leaving, Nicia insists that he was a traveler in his youth. The remaining passage is an extended joke, poking fun at Nicia’s worldly knowledge (or lack thereof):

LIGURIO: Voi dovete avere veduta la carrucola di Pisa.

NICIA: Tu vuò’ dire la Verucola.

LIGURIO: Ah! Si, la Verucola…. (Sices 172)
Here, Ligurio confuses the Verucola of Florence with the so-called carrucola of Pisa. But there is no building called the “Carrucola” in Pisa; instead, Carrucola draws from the verb carrucolare, which means to trick, fool or bamboozle. Therefore, Ligurio’s “mistake” slices through Nicia’s “reminiscence” by calling him a fool and proving that he has never actually left Florence. Nicia has never seen Pisa; if he had, he would have seen the fool there: himself. Anne and Henry Paolucci attempt to maintain sense and form by translating “carrucola di Pisa” as “imbecile of Pisa”; they pun it with “Famous Hill.” (Paolucci 11, 12). While this translation preserves the sense of the line, I am not convinced it fully encapsulates the nature of Ligurio’s joke. “Famous Hill” could be anywhere, but “la Verucola” is specifically in Florence. David Sices chooses to rewrite the exchange altogether, shifting the focus from Florence to Pisa and playing upon a popular tourist destination:

LIGURIO: Then you must have seen the Leaking Tower of Pisa.

NICIA: You mean the Leaning Tower?

LIGURIO: Oh yes! The Leaning Tower…. (Sices 173)

Though this version of the line maintains Machiavelli’s form, it lacks sense. The purpose of this exchange is to prove that Nicia has never left Florence. Sices’s translation completely misses this point; thus, it skews Nicia’s nature. Akin to the Han-Greedo shootout in the Mos Eisley cantina, this short exchange provides copious character information in a short period of time: Nicia is a naive liar who, despite great speech, has never traveled beyond his village and Ligurio is a master schemer who manipulates others solely for jest. Since I can think of no equivalent alternative, I have left the pun in Italian and footnoted it. My version reads as follows:

LIGURIO: You have to have seen the carrucola of Pisa.

NICIA: You’re thinking of the Verucola of Florence.
LIGURIO: Ah! Yes, the *Verucola*. (Crawford 38)

This translation preserves both sense and form while keeping characters intact and providing just enough context for audience comprehension.

Swears and insults have also been translated for specificity. And when I cannot translate the word directly, I find a linguistic equivalent. In 2.6, I left Nicia’s language colorful and uncensored. Upon hearing Callimaco speak Latin, Nicia strings together a series of interjections:

NICIA: Oh! Uh! potta di san Puccio! Costui mi raffinisce in tralle mani; guarda come ragiona bene di queste cose! (Sices 192)

Laura Gianetti and Guido Ruggiero translate this line as “Oh my! By Saint Puccio’s pussy…,” reasoning that “Saint Puccio’s pussy (a popular expression in Renaissance Florence) appears to be a reference to the story of Friar Puccio and Isabella in Boccaccio’s Decameron, III.4” (Gianetti, et al. 86). The *Lessicografia della Crusca in Rette* confirms this reading, where it defines the word “potta” as a blasphemous synonym for women’s genitalia, often used as an interjection. In my version, I translate the word as “cunt” to play upon the linguistic severity of Machiavelli’s original word. “Potta” is a harsh word, an exhalation. It pushes air out and away from the mouth and punctuates it with a hard dental T-sound. Though “pussy” maintains a similar exhalation, the S-sound causes it to fizzle out at the end. Due to this, it lacks that viciousness of the original word. “Cunt,” on the other hand, maintains the exhalation—this time with the same mouth sound Machiavelli uses. Thus, my translation of the line reads like this:

NICIA: Oh! Uh! San Puccio’s cunt! This guy perfects me in his hands; listen how well he speaks of these things! (Crawford 52)

Again, Sices’s text varies substantially from Machiavelli’s script, this time removing the Boccaccio-inspired cunt-swear and inserting male genitalia. He writes:
NICIA: (Wow! By Saint Christopher’s cock! This fellow gets more subtle by the minute! Listen to how well he speaks of these things!) (Sices 193)

Aside from bracketing the aside in parentheses, needlessly revising Nicia’s onomatopoeias, and avoiding the potential genital-hand masturbation joke, Sices switches the gender of Nicia’s swear. And his text contains no gloss or explanation. The line simply exists. Perhaps Sices’s audience was ill-prepared for women’s genitalia in 1976 when he translated it for the Dartmouth Players (Sices 39); perhaps Sices himself was uncomfortable pairing private parts so closely with hands. Regardless, his adaptation lacks the so-called “fidelity to the spirit of the original” (39) he boasts in his foreword. Regardless, I see no reason why Machiavelli’s “cunt” should remain cloistered. I have preserved it with the best possible sense translation.

Sices’s text makes another critical error in 2.2, where he converts Nicia’s final line into a borderline-racist remark. In his version of Machiavelli’s text, the line looks like this:

NICIA: Come, se mi pare? Io tornerò qui in uno stante, che ho più fede in voi che gli Ungheri nelle spade. (Sices 188)

Sices’s line:

NICIA: What do you mean, if I will? I’ll be back in a second. I have more faith in you than an Arab in his stallion. (189)

He glosses his translation, and his endnote attempts to explain his reasoning: that “the exact text and sense of this comparison is controversial; its intention seems clearly phallic” (406) But “An Arab in his stallion” is not phallic at all. In fact, no version of Machiavelli’s manuscript, whether handwritten or typescript, contains phalluses, Arabs, or stallions in this scene. And the commonly accepted version of the line, which reads “ho più fede in voi che gli Ungheri nelle spade,” is incorrect. In his edition of *La Mandragola*, Eric Haywood addresses a potential
typesetting error which may have caused such an extreme mistranslation: “It is thought that the original version [of this line] may have read che gli Ungheri nello Spagno, which was once possibly a popular saying in Florence. Spano is Filippo (Pippo) Scolari (1369-1426), Count of Temesvàr in Hungary, a Florentine who had enjoyed great power and prestige at the court of Sigismond of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, where he earned his reputation as a valiant military leader. It is presumed that nello Spagno was changed to nelle spade by a copyist or typesetter who could not make sense of the reference, and that the variant stuck because it was thought more likely to be understood by the audience, on account of the Hungarians’ famed fighting skills….” (91). My translation fixes Sices’s mistranslation and attempts to restore the line’s original context:

NICIA: What do you mean, ‘if I will’? I will return here in an instant, for I have more faith in you than the Hungarians in their general. (Crawford 47)

Though it is not word-perfect, this version preserves the Haywood version, thus preserving Machiavelli’s manuscript, restoring the original joke in a way that both makes sense and represents the time period.

There are times, however, when an equivalent sense translation is not possible. On those occasions, I preserve sense with the best possible approximation: one that preserves Machiavelli’s meaning without sacrificing musicality. In 3.5, Nicia curses Ligurio in front of Friar Timoteo:

NICIA: Mal che Dio gli dia!

FRATE: Perché?

NICIA: Perché se lo abbia!
Here, I revise the exchange altogether. In my opinion, “Mal che Dio gli dia!” (“May God give him malady!”) is too vague, and a word-for-word translation may miss Machiavelli’s intention. To play upon the irony of Nicia’s location and situation, I have revised the first line as “Goddamn him!” The entire passage reads as follows:

   NICIA: Goddamn him!
   FRIAR : Why?
   NICIA: So he’ll go to hell!

Since I have chosen to revise Nicia’s instigating line, I have also revised Nicia’s reaction. Instead of “Perché se lo abbia!” (“So he will have it!”), I have chosen “So he’ll go to hell!” This version of the line preserves Machiavelli’s linguistic colorfulness while maintaining an acute sense of place: Nicia and Timoteo are standing outside the church, and Nicia is swearing God’s wrath upon Ligurio. The change is minor but noteworthy.
REGARDING PARENT MANUSCRIPTS

As stated above, this project’s primary goal is to replace David Sices’s translation of *The Mandrake* in the 1985 Dartmouth edition of *The Comedies of Machaivelli*; in my opinion, the right-hand pages deserve a modern update. The left-hand pages however make up one of the best representations of *La Mandragola* in print. In other words, Sices’s Italian text is nearly spotless—to the extent that I translated primarily from it. That said, the left-hand pages are not Sices’s work: as he notes in his introduction, the Italian manuscript is an amalgamation of “the recent edition of the comedies edited by Guido Davico Bonino, taking account of the important modern textual revisions suggested by Roberto Ridolfi and Mario Martelli” (Sices 39). Bonino’s 1977 manuscript draws from the 1526 printed edition of *La Mandragola*, which reproduces the five canzone (songs) Machiavelli adapted for the Guicciardini performance. As a cross-reference, I have used Eric Haywood’s edition of the Martelli text (1971), as well as scripts by Pietro Gibellini, Giorgio Inglese, and others.
A NOTE ON FOOTNOTES

Footnotes in this edition of La Mandragola serve two purposes: (1) to provide necessary background information for readers (i.e. historical information, references, manuscript/typescript divergences, explanations, and further translations) and (2) to provide a critical framework for my thesis. As I push onward towards publication, I will omit these more critical notes. For now, I find them necessary.
SONG

(To be said at the beginning of the comedy, sung by nymphs and shepherds together.)

Because life is brief
and many are the pains
that everyone enduring and struggling bears,

On the backs of our desires
We go passing and consuming the years,
He who shrugs away his own pleasure,
who lives with anguish and with sorrow,
Knows not the deceptions
of the world; or the evils
Or those strange cases by which
Almost all are oppressed--we are all mortal.

To escape this boredom⁵,
We choose solitary lives,
always in celebration and in joy
We are young men and happy Nymphs.

⁵ The boredom of "passing and consuming the years."
Now we have come
with our harmonies,
to honor this
your happy festival--and your sweet company.

Again, the name of he who governs us
Has conducted us here,
In whom will be seen all
the welcome goods in eternal semblance.
Thanks to him for this celestial grace,
For such a happy state,
You can be happy to stay,
To enjoy and to thank--those who gave it to you.
PROLOGUE

God save you, kind audience,
When our livelihoods seem to depend
on your kindness and graciousness.
If you follow along and keep quiet,
We will show you a new case born in this world.
See the apparatus,
What or where will be demonstrated:
This is your Florence,
Another time it will be Rome or Pisa,
Which unhinges your jaw with laughter.

This door, on my right-hand side,
Is the house of a lawyer,
Who has learned much of Boethuis’s law;
And this way, as it is in song,
Is the way of Love, Lover’s Lane,\(^6\)
Where he who falls never rises again.
Next you will see by his habit
What kind of Prior or Abbot

\(^6\) "Lover’s Lane is slightly anachronistic, but it better illustrates Machaivelli’s sense."
Dwell and meets in the temple here--
Given you do not leave too early.

A young Callimaco Guadagno,\(^7\)
Who has recently arrived from Paris,
Lives here, behind this left-hand door.
He, among any other good companion,
Brings kindness and esteem
With his signs and vestiges
Brings the honor of kindness and prestige.
A young, shrewd woman
Is much loved by him
And for this, was deceived,
As you shall hear, and I would like
That you will be as deceived as her.

The fable is called *La Mandragola*:
The cause you will see
In its acting, I hope.
The author is not a competitor of much fame;\(^8\)
So if you do not laugh,
He is happy to pay the wine.

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\(^7\) Sices writes Guadagni. This is either a typo or a mistranslation: Callimaco’s surname is Guadagno.
\(^8\) A reference, perhaps, to City Dionysia and other Athenian festivals where comedies were performed.
A knavish lover,
A dumb doctor,
An ill-lived friar,
And a parasite, with the malice of a fool:
All for your delight this day.

And, if this matter is not worthy,
Despite being the mere triflings
Of a man who wants to seem wise and serious,
Excuse it, for he constructs himself
With vain thoughts
Attempting to make his dismal time more sweet.
And since he has nowhere else
To turn his face,
And nowhere else to divide his attention
with other enterprises or other virtues,\(^9\)
I cannot deny him a reward for his toils.

The reward that he hopes for is that each one
of you are singing and grinning,
Saying poorly of what you see or hear.
From there it depends, without any doubt,

\(^9\) An allusion to Machiavelli’s exile in 1513.
That for all deteriorates
From ancient virtù\textsuperscript{10} to the present century,
Since the people,
Seeing that everyone blames,
Do not weary themselves or come unglued,
For doing so makes a thousand hardships of a work
That the wind soon breaks down or the mist soon covers.

For if anyone were to believe, saying evil,
To hold him by the hair,
and dismay him or force him to withdraw,
I admonish them, and I say to them
That the writer knows how to speak evil too
And that this evil was his first art,
And that in all parts
Of the world, wherever ‘yes’ is heard,
He does not esteem anyone,
Even if the writer does serve such men
Who wear a finer cloak than him.

\textsuperscript{10} Too many translators forget Machiavelli’s lexicon when they adapt Mandragola, thereby missing the heart of the play’s social commentary. Laura Giannetti and Guido Ruggiero address the issue of virtù and translation in their edition of Bibbiena’s The Comedy of Calandro. They write: “[Virtù] is often not ‘virtue,’ as is frequently translated, but that set of qualities that made one person better than another in the Renaissance. These qualities varied with the social status, occupation, and gender of the individual and could often be quite contrary to virtue as a moral attribute (5-6). The word represents a combination of cleverness, skill, reason, and cunning, and it sits, understated but ever-present, at the center of Mandragola’s conflict. Due to this, I have left it--and other key phrases--untranslated.
But let’s wash ourselves of anyone who wishes to speak ill.

Let’s return to the case at hand,

In order to not take up too much time.

One mustn’t pay attention to the words,

Nor fear some monster,

Who doesn’t know if he’s even still alive.

Callimaco is coming out,

With Siro, his familiar, who will tell

The order of everything. Pay attention,

For you won’t get any more argument\textsuperscript{11} from me.

\textsuperscript{11} By “argumento,” Machiavelli means ‘explanation of the plot.’ Contemporary plays and poems often began with an argument, a summation of the major themes of the work. Here, Machiavelli ends his introduction by asking the audience to seek the argument in the play itself, not in the prologue.
Callimaco: Siro, don’t leave. I need you for a moment.

Siro: Here I am.

Callimaco: I imagine you must have wondered about my sudden departure from Paris; and I imagine that you must be wondering why I have been here, idle, for a month.

Siro: You tell the truth, sir.

Callimaco: If I haven’t told you up to now what I’m going to tell you now, it hasn’t been because I don’t trust you; rather, it has been because that, when appraising things that man doesn’t want known, it is good to say nothing, if not forced to. Therefore, thinking that I have need for your services, I want to tell you everything.

Siro: I am your servant, sir: and servants should not ask anything of their masters, nor research anything they do; however, when their masters decide to divulge information, the servants must serve them with faith; this I have done and will continue to do.

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12 Since English no longer contains formal or familiar conjugations, a translator must find some other way to indicate formal and familiar speech. One way I choose to show this is through contractions: in this scene, Callimaco speaks familiarly to Siro; Siro speaks formally to Callimaco. To differentiate speech patterns, Callimaco uses contractions; Siro does not.

13 I have chosen to add “sir,” as needed, to Siro’s dialogue in this scene. This serves two purposes: one, it establishes a master/servant relationship between Callimaco and Siro; two, it reinforces Siro’s formal speech.
Callimaco: I know. I think you have heard me say a thousand times (and it doesn’t matter if you hear it a thousand and one) I was ten when my father and mother died and my tutors sent me to Paris, where I lived for twenty years. And, thanks to the passage of Carlo and the wars in Italy—which ruined my home province—I decided that I should live in Paris and never return, judging that living there was more secure than living here.

Siro: It is so.

Callimaco: And having ordered that of my goods be sold—except for my house—I settled on living there, where I’ve been those ten other years with great happiness...

Siro: I know.

Callimaco: …having divided my time between my studies, my pleasures, and my labors; and so I labored in each of these things, making sure that one did not prevent the way of the other. And for this, as you know, I lived very quietly, playing at each and making sure that I did not offend people: as such, I seemed to be accepted by the townsmen and the gentlemen, the strangers and the residents, the poor and the rich.

Siro: This is the truth.

Callimaco: But Fortuna, deeming that I had seen too-good weather, saw to it that one Cammillo Calfucci came to Paris.\textsuperscript{15}

Siro: Calfucci! I am beginning to guess your trouble.

Callimaco: This man, like other Florentines, was often feasting with me; and one day, as it happens, we came to a dispute over which country had more beautiful women, Italy or France.

\textsuperscript{14} “Terrazzano” translates, roughly, to “residents of the castle.” Sices translates the word as “countrymen,” which I find both hits and misses. Each of the six points stand at opposite ends: the bourgeois and the self-made gentlemen, the strangers and the familiars, the rich and the poor. “Foreigner and countryman” doesn’t quite work for this translation.

\textsuperscript{15} Fortuna is a major recurring character in Machiavelli’s works, especially \textit{Il Principe}; capitalizing her name and personifying her as a force of nature is necessary.
And because I couldn’t speak for the Italians--since I was little when I left--some other present Florentine praised the French, and Cammillo the Italians; after all parts had stated their reasonings, Cammillo said, somewhat irritated, that, if all the women in Italy were monsters, one of his relatives was able to win back their honor.

Siro: I have a clear idea of what you are about to say.

Callimaco: He named Madonna Lucrezia, wife of Messer Nicia Calfucci: to whom he gave so many honors of beauty and manners that he dumbfounded us--and in me aroused such a desire to see her, that I left all other deliberations, without thinking any more about war or peace in Italy, and set out to come here. When I arrived, I found the fame of Madonna Lucrezia was minor compared to the truth--which occurs very rarely--and seeing her aroused in me such desire to be with her, that I could not bear it.16

Siro: If you had told me this in Paris, sir, I would have known how to advise you; but now I do not know what to say.

Callimaco: I did not tell you this because I want your advice, but because I need to vent--and to prepare you to help me where you might be of assistance to me.

Siro: Unto this I am ready, but what hope have you, sir?

Callimaco: Alas! None.

Siro: Oh. Why?

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16 Unlike Sices and Shawn, I have decided to repeat phrases to emphasize their differences (‘to see’ versus ‘to be,’ in this line). Machiavelli employs similar tactics (frequent chiasmus, repetitions, and mirrorings) throughout *Mandragola.*
Callimaco: Listen. First, I’ll wage war on her nature, which is honest and alien to the themes of love; second, she has a very rich husband, who leaves her to govern everything, and even if he isn’t young, he isn’t completely old either; third, she doesn’t have relatives or neighbors with whom she convenes at any vigil, party, or other pleasure which delight the young. No workmen happen by her house ever; and she has no servants or family who aren’t afraid of her: in short, there’s no point of weakness or corruption anywhere.

Siro: What do you believe you can do, then?

Callimaco: There’s never anything so desperate that there is no hope; even if it seems weak or vain, it is will and desire that man must use to conduct things, not beliefs.

Siro: All in all, what gives you hope?

Callimaco: Two things: first, the simplicity of Messer Nicia, who, though a doctor, is the simplest and the most foolish man in Florence; second, the couple’s desire to have sons: though they’ve been married six years, they still haven’t produced any children--and being rich, they’re dying to have an heir. A third thing is that her mother is a good companion, but she’s rich, too, such that I don’t know how to govern her.

Siro: Have you attempted something yet, sir?

Callimaco: I have, one small thing.

Siro: What?

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17 This phrase translates literally as “I redirect you.” Sices translates the phrase as “I’ll tell you” (167), Giannetti and Ruggiero translate it as “Listen” (76), and Shawn avoids translating it altogether. I have adopted Giannetti and Ruggiero’s version for clarity.

18 ‘La natura’ is the subject here, but I have made it the object for better sense--since it’s the subject of the upcoming phrase.

19 Machiavelli uses “cose” for this word. I have altered it slightly.

20 Shawn has Callimaco call her “something of a whore.” I am partial to Machiavelli’s original (more subtle) text. I have added italics to note the particular nature of her companionship.
Callimaco: You know Ligurio, who often eats with me. This man is already a matchmaker, and he has lately given to begging people for dinners; and because he’s a peaceful man, Messer Nicia has a close familiarity with him. Ligurio strings him along, and although he hasn’t asked him to eat with him yet, Nicia sometimes lends him money. I’ve made friends with Ligurio, and I’ve told him about my love: he’s promised to help me with both his hands and his feet.

Siro: Make sure that he does not deceive you, sir: these trenchesmen do not have much faith.

Callimaco: This is true. Nevertheless, when you conspire with someone, you have to believe that he serves you faithfully. I’ve promised to give him a good sum of money if he succeeds; if he doesn’t, all he gets is a dinner and a supper, which in any event, I won’t have to eat alone.

Siro: What has he promised to do so far?

Callimaco: He’s promised to persuade Messer Nicia to go with his wife to the baths this May.

Siro: In what context, sir?

Callimaco: Beats me! It could be that the place arouses some other nature in her, since such natures don’t typically unearth themselves unless one celebrates. I would go, and I’d conduct all the pleasures I could, and I wouldn’t miss any chance to show my magnificence; to make myself familiar with them. Regarding their marriage… What do I know? Things breed things, and time governs all.

Siro: I am not displeased.

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21 Several translations state that Ligurio was a matchmaker. Matchmakers (or marriage brokers) were commonplace in Renaissance Italy. Since most marriages were arranged, matchmakers were often employed to find prospective partners. As Giannetti and Ruggiero note, some successful matchmakers became notorious as go-betweens in love affairs (77). Ligurio, it seems, is one of those types; however, he doesn’t seem particularly successful. He begs for food and borrows money from rich clientele. Though he is poor, he is perhaps the most virtù-ous character in Mandragola, aside from Lucrezia. His cunning, foresight, and willingness to fortify himself with powerful allies aligns him with Machiavelli’s use of virtù in Il Principe.

22 Other translations vary in their treatment of this idiom. I have kept it intact: the meaning is evident in its context.
Callimaco: Ligurio departed from me this morning, and he said that he’d talk with Messer Nicia on the matter, and that he’d respond to me.

Siro: There they are together.

Callimaco: I’ll pull to the side here and wait for a time to talk with Ligurio, some time when he is rid of the doctor. You, in the meantime, go back to the house and tend to your business; if I need you for something else, I’ll call for you.

Siro: I go.
SCENE TWO

Messer Nicia, Ligurio

Nicia: I think your counsel is good, and I spoke of it to the lady last night: she said that she’d respond to me today; but to tell you the truth, I don’t think we’re ready to go.

Ligurio: Why?

Nicia: Because I lack the drive to leave, and to have to put together my wife, my servants, and my household goods--that doesn’t square with me. Aside from this, I talked to a couple of doctors yesterday evening: one said that I should visit San Filippo, the other Porretta, and another Villa, and they seem to me an ugly flock of birds; they dirty the truth. These doctors do not know medicine from fish.23

Ligurio: What really seems to be bothering you, sir, is what you said before, that you are not used to leaving Cupola’s view.

Nicia: You err. When I was younger, I was very stray: there was never a fair at Prato that I didn’t attend; there was no castle around that I didn’t visit; and to say more: I’ve been to Pisa and Livorno, so there!

Ligurio: You have to have seen the carrucola24 of Pisa.

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23 This particular idiom has received heavy revision from various translators. Sices writes “know their ass from their elbows;” Shawn writes “these doctors don’t know what’s nibbling on the end of their line, if you get my meaning.” I am hesitant to add unnecessary vulgarities to Nicia’s dialogue, since he is upper-middle class and, frankly, adds enough vulgarity as is. I have formally translated Machiavelli’s text, with minor edits for clarity.

24 *Carrucola* draws from the verb *carrucolare*, which means to trick, fool or bamboozle. Due to this, I have left the italicized words in Italian to preserve Machiavelli’s pun. Few adaptations of this exchange have successfully rewritten it. Anne and Henry Paolucci come close when they pun “imbecile of Pisa” with “the Famous Hill,” but Sices seems to miss the mark altogether when he puns “leaking Tower of Pisa” with “Leaning tower of Pisa.”
Nicia: You’re thinking of the Verucola of Florence.

Ligurio: Ah! Yes, the Verucola. In Livorno, sir, did you see the sea?

Nicia: You know that I saw it!

Ligurio: How much bigger was it than The Arno?

Nicia: Than The Arno? It is four times--no, more than six, more than seven times bigger, I’ll say: and nothing to see but water, water, water.

Ligurio: I am amazed, then, given that you have peed in so many snows, that you have made so much fuss about going to a bath.

Nicia: You have a mouth full of milk.25 Do you think it’s a tale that I have to vanquish an entire house? Also, I have so much desire to have sons, that I’m willing to do anything. But go talk about it a little with your masters, see where they advise me to go; I’ll be with the lady in the meantime. Come and see me later.

Ligurio: As you say, sir.

25 The idiom refers to simplicity and naivety: to be like a child, whose mouth is full of mother’s milk. Wallace Shawn’s script, surprisingly, is one of the few translations that leave this idiom in-tact. Sices writes “You’re talking drivel, man!” (173); the Paolucci’s write “You’ve got the brains of a child!” (12). Though there are moments that warrant appropriated speech, this is not one of them. Machiavelli’s language is lively and vibrant, and context provides enough framework to determine sense.
Ligurio: I don’t think there is anyone in the world more stupid than that man; and how Fortuna has favored him! He’s rich, he has a beautiful woman who is wise, debonaire, and able to rule a kingdom. It seems to me that the old proverb about weddings is rarely true: “God makes man as they seem”; because often you see a well-qualified man courting a beast, and, adversely, a prudent woman with a madman. But from his madness there is this good, which Callimaco has to hope for--But here he is! What’re you doing standing there, Callimaco?
Callimaco: I’ve seen you with the doctor, and I was expecting you to get rid of him, so as to hear what you’ve done.
Ligurio: You know what kind of man he is, one with little prudence and less mind, and he departs begrudgingly from Florence, though I have warmed him to it. He has finally said that he’ll do everything; and I think that, if you like this plan, we will lead them; but I don’t know if we can make them need us.
Callimaco: Why?
Ligurio: What do I know? You know that this bath sees all kinds of people, and such a man could show up there who likes Madonna Lucrezia as much as you, someone who’s richer than you, who has more grace than you: so that you risk the danger of taking-on this trouble for others, where the intervention of competitors might toughen her to your advances, or, forgetting, might turn her to another and not you.
Callimaco: I know you say the truth, but what have I to do? What plans have I to make? Where have I to turn? I must try something, whether it’s grand, perilous, harmful, or infamous. It’s better to die than to live like this. If I could sleep at night, if I could eat, if I could converse, if I could enjoy anything, I’d be more patient and bide my time; but there’s no remedy; and if I’m not kept in hope of some plan, I’ll die anyway; and, seeing that I have to die, I don’t have anything to fear but to seize some beastly, cruel, or nefarious plan.

Ligurio: Don’t say that, refrain from this impetuousness.

Callimaco: You see, to restrain such thoughts, I feed them. It is, however, necessary that we continue to send them to the baths or to find some other way, so that I may nourish a hope—if not true, false at least—for which I may nourish a thought that might ease some part of my affliction.

Ligurio: You’re right, and I have to do it.

Callimaco: I believe you, though I know you’re a predator who makes his living preying on other men. Nonetheless, I don’t believe to be in that number, for if you make your move, I’ll notice, and I’ll try to get even, and you’d lose the use of my house and the hopes of having what I’ve promised you for the future.

Ligurio: Do not doubt my loyalty. I feel and hope for you when there is nothing to be gained; your blood suits with mine, and I want you to fulfill your desire and take what’s yours. But let’s leave this subject for now. The doctor’s commissioned me to find a physician, and he wants to know which bath he should go to. I want you to make my way: tell him you’ve studied medicine, and that you’ve gained some experience in Paris. He’ll be easily fooled, given his simplicity—and given your learning and your ability to say something in Latin.

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26 “Uccellare,” roughly, means “to prey on like a hawk.”
27 “Valermene” appears to be a form of “valere” or “to be worth.” My translation is an approximation.
28 “Ma lasciamo ir questo” translates literally as “But let’s leave this.”
Callimaco: How will that serve us?

Ligurio: It serves us by letting us send him to whatever bath we choose—and to seize another plan I’ve thought of, one that’ll be shorter, more certain, and more likely to succeed than the bath.

Callimaco: What say you?

Ligurio: I say that if you mind me and if you confide in me, I give you this thing to do, then everything will be done by eight tomorrow. And, when it comes to a man who isn’t, in order to find out whether you are or aren’t a doctor, the brevity of time and the thing itself will cloak you\textsuperscript{29}. Then, even if Nicia’s smart enough to research whether you are or are not a physician, he won’t have time to spoil the design.

Callimaco: You resuscitate me. This is too much to promise, and I graze on too much hope. How will you do it?

Ligurio: You will know when it is time; for now it isn’t necessary that I tell you, since time wills us to do and not to talk. You go home and wait for me, and I will go find the doctor, and if I bring him to you, you go on, continuing and accommodating my speech.

Callimaco: This I’ll do, yet you fill me with such hope that I fear it’ll go up in smoke.

\textsuperscript{29} Edited slightly for clarity.
SONG

He who does not prove himself
Over your great power, Love, vainly hopes
To ever experience true faith,
Which is heaven’s highest value;
Nor can he know how to live and die,
As he follows the damage, he flies well,
As he loves himself through others,
As fear and hope rack and destroy hearts;
Nor does he know how men and gods equally
Fear the arms you bear.
ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Ligurio, Messer Nicia, Siro

Ligurio: As I was saying, I think God has sent you this doctor, for the fulfillment of your desire. Since he has had so much experience in Paris; and do not marvel why he has not opened a practice here in Florence; he has his reasons: first, because he is rich, and, second, because he is, at any hour, likely to return to Paris.

Nicia: But look here, my brother, this is important: I wouldn’t want him to wade me out into some swamp and then leave me in the shallows.

Ligurio: Do not worry about that; only fear what might happen if he does not want to cure you; but, if he does take your case, he will not let go until he has seen it through to the end.

Nicia: As for that part, I want to trust you, but as far as his science goes, I’ll tell you when I have spoken to him whether he is a man of learning, because I won’t let him sell me blisters! 30

Ligurio: And because I know you, sir, (and you less me and him) I am taking you to speak with him. And if, once we have spoken with him, you do not think by his presentation, his learning, and his language, he is a man with whom you can trust your wife 31, then say I am not the man you think I am!

Nicia: Well then, in the name of Christ! Let’s go. But where is he?

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30 An idiom that refers to a salesman who is able to sell anything, similar to selling snake oil in American English.
31 This selection has been slightly altered from Machiavelli’s original text, which reads “mettere il capo in gambino.” My version plays up Lugurio’s manipulation of Nicia in a playful, dramatically ironic way.
Ligurio: He lives in this square, behind the door you see here, right in front of us.

Nicia: It’s a good hour. You knock.

Ligurio: It’s been done.

Siro: Who is it?

Ligurio: Is Callimaco there?

Siro: Yes, he is.

Nicia: Why don’t you say ‘Master Callimaco’?

Ligurio: He does not care about such trifles.

Nicia: Don’t say that! Pay your debt, and if he doesn’t like it, then that’s his business.
SCENE TWO

Callimaco, Messer Nicia, Ligurio

Callimaco: Who is it that wants me?

Nicia: Bona dies, domine magister.

Callimaco: Et vobis bona, domine doctor.

Ligurio: What do you think?

Nicia: Good, by the glory of God!

Ligurio: If you want me to stay with you, sir, you had better talk in a way that I can understand; otherwise, we will be burning two fires at once.

Callimaco: Have we any good business together?

Nicia: What do I know? I am searching for two things, things that another adventurer would flee: to bring trouble to myself and to others. I do not have any children, and I want them, and, for this trouble, I come to bring trouble to you, sir.

Callimaco: It would not displease me to please you or any virtuous and good man like you; and I have not been in Paris toiling all these years to learn for any other reason, if not to serve people like you.

Nicia: Great mercy; and, when you have need for any of my talents, sir, I will serve you willingly. But let us return ad nostram. Have you thought about which bath would be good for getting my wife pregnant? Because I know Ligurio has told me what he has told you.
Callimaco: This is true; but, to satisfy your desire, it is necessary to know the cause of your wife’s sterility, for there may be several causes: *nam causae sterilitatis sunt; aut in semine, aut in matrice, aut in instrumentis seminariis, aut in virga, aut in causa extrinseca*.32

Nicia: This is the most worthy man anywhere!

Callimaco: It is possible, aside from these, that this sterility is caused by you, due to impotence; if that were so, there wouldn’t be any remedy for you.

Nicia: Me impotent? Oh! You make me laugh! I don’t think there is a more vigorous or virile man in Florence.

Callimaco: If that is not it, then hold onto your hopes, for we will find you some remedy.

Nicia: Do you think there is some other remedy than the baths? Because I would not want that discomfort, and the lady would not leave Florence willingly.

Ligurio: Yes, there is! I will answer this myself since Callimaco is too modest. Did you not tell me, doctor, that you know how to make certain potions that absolutely guarantee pregnancy?

Callimaco: Yes. I did, sir; but I have to be careful with people I do not know because I do not want to be mistaken for a charlatan.

Nicia: Do not worry about me, for you have amazed me, that there is nothing I would not think or do in your hands.

Ligurio: I think you need to see a specimen.

Callimaco: Of course, we cannot do without that.

Ligurio: Call Siro, have him go with the doctor to his house to get it, and return here; and we will wait here at your house.

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32 “For reasons that are lost; or in its seed, and in the mother's, or in the instruments of the seminary training, or in the rod or in an extrinsic cause.”
Callimaco: Siro! Go with him. And, if you will, sir, return quickly, and we will think up some good remedy for you.

Nicia: What do you mean, ‘if I will’? I will return here in an instant, for I have more faith in you than the Hungarians in their general.33

33 Sices writes “I have more faith in you than an Arab in his stallion” (189), reasoning that “the exact text and sense of this comparison is controversial; its intention seems clearly phallic” (406) “An Arab in his stallion” is not phallic, however. In fact, no version of Machiavelli’s manuscript, whether handwritten or typescript, contains phallic references, Arabs, or stallions. And the commonly accepted version of the line, which reads “ho più fede in voi che gli Ungheri nelle spade,” is incorrect. In his edition of Mandragola, Eric Haywood addresses a potential typesetting error which may have caused such an extreme mistranslation: “It is thought that the original version [of this line] may have read che gli Ungheri nello Spagno, which was once possibly a popular saying in Florence. Spano is Filippo (Pippo) Scolari (1369-1426), Count of Temesvár in Hungary, a Florentine who had enjoyed great power and prestige at the court of Sigismond of Luxemburg, King of Hungary, where he earned his reputation as a valiant military leader. It is presumed that nello Spagno was changed to nelle spade by a copyist or typesetter who could not make sense of the reference, and that the variant stuck because it was thought more likely to be understood by the audience, on account of the Hungarians’ famed fighting skills....” (91). My translation fixes Sices’s mistranslation and attempts to restore the line’s original context.
SCENE THREE

Messer Nicia, Siro

Nicia: This patron of yours is a very capable man.

Siro: More than you can say, sir.

Nicia: The King of France must regard him highly.

Siro: Very.

Nicia: And for this, he must be happy to live in France.

Siro: This is true.

Nicia: He does very well for himself. In this land, there’s nothing but shit;\textsuperscript{34} the people don’t appreciate any kind of \textit{virtù}. If he were to stay here, no man would be able to look him in the face. I think I would know, for I’ve shit my guts out trying to learn my two cents’ worth\textsuperscript{35}, and if I had to make a living from them, I’d be out in the cold, let me tell you!

Siro: Do you earn one hundred ducats per year?

Nicia: Not one hundred lire, not a hundred pennies, even! And this is because people don’t have status in this land, not like their peers in other countries. They can’t find a barking dog; and they aren’t good for anything other than attending funerals or wedding parties or loitering all day on Proconsolo’s bench, people watching. But I don’t bother with them; I don’t have need for

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Cacastecchi} translates literally as “shit-sticks.” It refers to someone who is miserly or incompetent. I translated the word as simply “shit” to better highlight Machiavelli’s message: Italians are fertilizer, soil capable of growing a great nation. Without \textit{virtù}, they are waste. With \textit{virtù}, they may cultivate a rich, united Italy—a worthy successor to Rome.

\textsuperscript{35} I have removed the Latin for clarity.
anyone, as they are worse off than me! But I don’t, however, want my words to be known, as I would undoubtedly have a tax or some other boil on the rear thrown at me.

Siro: Do not worry, sir.

Nicia: We’re home. Wait for me here: I will return in a moment.

Siro: Go ahead, sir.
SCENE FOUR

Siro alone

Siro: If all other doctors were like this one, we’d have stones in our ovens. Oh, that this evil Ligurio and this crazy master of mine lead him to some place that will bring him shame! And, truly, I would desire shame upon him, if I believed that it wouldn’t find out, for, if it did, I would be harboring certain peril upon my life, his life, and his stuff. He has already become a doctor: I don’t know what their scheme is and where their deception is heading… --But here is the doctor with a chamber pot in his hands: who wouldn’t laugh at this old buzzard?

36 This idiom refers to the stupidity of those who mind bad advice.
SCENE FIVE
Messer Nicia, Siro

Nicia: I’ve done everything your way: this I want you to do my way. If I’d known that I wasn’t going to have children, I’d rather have taken a more pleasant wife than you. Here, take this, Siro. Come on, after me. What trouble I had getting that foolish wife of mine to give me this specimen! It’s not as if she doesn’t care about having children, she’s more concerned than me; but if I ask her to do something, there’s always some story.

Siro: Be patient: women are wont to be led by the sweet words of others.

Nicia: Sweet words! She makes me sick! Go, rat\textsuperscript{37}, tell your master and Ligurio that I’m here.

Siro: Here they are, coming out.

\textsuperscript{37} Ratto means both “rat” or “quickly.” The latter meaning is more commonly used in comedies; hence my usage in this passage.
SCENE SIX
Ligurio, Callimaco, Messer Nicia

Ligurio: The doctor will be easy to persuade; the difficulty will be the lady, and we will find a way around that.

Callimaco: Do you have the specimen, sir?

Nicia: Siro has it, under there.

Callimaco: Give it here. Oh! This specimen shows weakness in the kidneys.

Nicia: It does look a little murky; and yet she just did it.

Callimaco: Do not let that surprise you, sir. Nam mulieris urinae sunt semper maioris grossitiei et albedinis et minoris pulchritudii quam virorum. Huius autem, inter caetera, causa est amplitudo canalium, mixtio eorum quae ex matrice exeunt cum urinis.\(^{38}\)

Nicia: Oh! Uh! San Puccio’s cunt!\(^{39}\) This guy perfects me in his hands; listen how well he speaks of these things!

Callimaco: I am afraid that this woman is not well-covered at night, and that this is the reason for the crude urine.

\(^{38}\)”For the urine of women always has greater density and paleness and is less fine than that of men. Moreover, among other things, this is caused by a largeness of the canals, a mixture of other things that exit with the urine.”

\(^{39}\)”Potta,” according to the Lessicografia della Crusca, means “pussy” or “cunt.” Potta di san Puccio was a common idiom in Renaissance Florence; it appears to reference the story of Friar Puccio and Isabella from Boccaccio’s Decameron, III, 4. Giannetti and Ruggiero connect the idiom with “perfects me in his hands” to underline a masturbation joke (Giannetti 86).
Nicia: She has a thick quilt to cover her; but she stays on her knees for hours stringing off Our Fathers before coming to bed, and she is a beast to the cold.

Callimaco: In the end, doctor, either you have faith in me, or you do not. Either I have a remedy for you, or I do not. For my part, I will give you the remedy. If you have faith in me, sir, you will take it; and if, in a year from today, your lady does not have a child in her arms, I will donate two thousand ducats to you.

Nicia: Go on, for I’m honored to do everything, and I trust you more than my confessor.

Callimaco: You have to understand this: that there is nothing more certain to impregnate a woman than to give her a potion made from the mandrake. This is something I have tested a half-dozen times and have always found true. If it weren’t for this remedy, the queen of France would be sterile, along with countless other princesses from that state.40

Nicia: Is this possible?

Callimaco: It is exactly as I have told you, sir. And Fortuna has been kind to you in the meantime, for I have brought with me all of the things that go into this potion, and you can have them in the mail whenever you need them.

Nicia: When would she have to take it?

Callimaco: This evening after dinner, because the moon is willing, and the time couldn’t be more appropriate.

Nicia: That won’t be a big deal. Go ahead and prepare it, and I will make her take it.

Callimaco: And now we need to think of this: the man who has her first after she has taken the potion will die within eight days, and nothing in the world can save him.

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40 A few Italian editions capitalize stato, thus potentially forming a pun that links the principality of France with the physical (sterile) state of French courtiers. Machiavelli’s capitalization of stato is actually fairly common, often used to distinguish from ‘status.’
Nicia: Holy shit! I don’t want your snake oil!\textsuperscript{41} You won’t stick me with it! You, sir, have dressed me well!

Callimaco: Pull yourself together, there is a remedy.

Nicia: What?

Callimaco: To make her sleep with someone else right away. Being there all night, he will draw all of the infection of the mandrake. After that, you can lie with her without danger.

Nicia: I don’t want to do that.

Callimaco: Because?

Nicia: Because I don’t want to make my wife a bitch and myself a cuckold.

Callimaco: What are you saying, doctor? Oh! I see that you are not as wise as I thought you were. Are you so worried to do something that the king of France and all the noblemen over there have done?

Nicia: Who do you want me to get to do such a crazy thing? If I tell him, he won’t want to do it; if I don’t tell him, I’m betraying him, and that’s a case for the Eight:\textsuperscript{42} I don’t want to stick my head into trouble.

Callimaco: If there is nothing else bothering you, then leave the cure to me.

Nicia: What will you do?

Callimaco: I will tell you: I will give you the potion tonight after supper; you make her drink it, and after, put her to bed. That will be around 10:00PM. Then we will disguise ourselves: you, Ligurio, Siro, and I. We will go looking in the New Market, in the Old Market (as the songs go); we’ll gag the first young scamp we find strolling about, and to the song of blows lead him into

\textsuperscript{41}“Snake oil” is an appropriation of “suzzacchera.” \textit{Suzzacchera} is a medicinal syrup. In this sentence, Nicia is alluding to the mandrake remedy as a potion that is ‘too sweet to be good.’

\textsuperscript{42}The Eight Prime Justices (also the Court of Eight) was a criminal tribunal in Florence; they prosecuted capital crimes like murder.
your house and into your room in the dark. Then we will put him to bed and tell him what he has
to do. There will not be any difficulty. Afterwards, before daybreak, you will send him off and
make your wife take a bath. From there, you can be with her as you please, without peril.

Nicia: I’m content, so long as you say that kings and princes and noblemen have done it this
way. But above all, it better not become known, for the love of the Eight!

Callimaco: Who would tell?

Nicia: There still remains one task, and it’s important.

Callimaco: What?

Nicia: Contenting my wife; I don’t think she’ll ever go along with it.

Callimaco: You tell the truth. But I would not want to be married if I could not get her to do
things my way.

Ligurio: I have thought of a remedy.

Nicia: What?

Ligurio: Through her confessor.

Callimaco: Who will get the confessor to go along with it, you?

Ligurio: Me, money, our wickedness, theirs.

Nicia: I’m afraid that if I tell her, she won’t want to speak with the confessor.

Ligurio: There is a remedy for that, too.

Nicia: Tell me.

Ligurio: Make her mother take her.

Nicia: She does lend faith to her.

Ligurio: And I know that her mother is of our opinion--Come! Let us hurry, it is getting late. Go
for a walk, Callimaco, and make sure that in two hours, we can find you at home with a potion
made up. We will go to the mother’s house, the doctor and I, and persuade her, as I know her well. Then we will go to the friar, and we will report back on the things we have done.

Callimaco: Hey! Don’t leave me alone!

Ligurio: You seem pretty cooked to me.

Callimaco: Where do you want me to go now?

Ligurio: Here, there, up this street, down that one: Florence is a big place!

Callimaco: I am dead.
SONG

How happy is everyone to see
He who is born foolish and believes everything!
Ambition doesn’t press him,
Nor causes him to fear,
That which is willing to be seeded.
From boredom and from sorrow.
This doctor of yours,
Yearning to have children,
Will believe an ass can fly;
And of all the good reasons to wind up in hell,
Only this has a place in his heart.
ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

Sostrata, Messer Nicia, Ligurio

Sostrata: I have always heard it said that it is the duty of the prudente to seize the better of the worst paths: if, to have children, we do not have another remedy than this, you should seize it, as long as it does not weigh down your conscience.

Nicia: That’s the way things are.

Ligurio: You go and find your daughter, ma’am; Messer Nicia and I will go to see Friar Timoteo, your confessor. We will describe your case to him so you do not have to tell him: then you will see what he has to say.

Sostrata: Let us do that. Your street is over there. I will go and find Lucrezia; I will make sure she talks to the friar, one way or another.
SCENE TWO

Messer Nicia, Ligurio

Nicia: You’re likely surprised, Ligurio, that we need to make such a long story of things to
persuade my wife; but if you knew everything, you wouldn’t be as surprised.

Ligurio: I think it is because all women are suspicious.

Nicia: That’s not it. She was the sweetest person in the world and the most easy-going; but a
neighbor told her that if she vowed to hear first mass for forty mornings, that she would get
pregnant. She vowed and went there for maybe twenty. And wouldn’t you know that one of the
friars started sniffing around her, in such a way that ensured she wouldn’t want to go back? It’s a
shame when those who should be good examples act like that, am I right?

Ligurio: Like the devil, that’s the truth!

Nicia: Since that time, she’s kept her ears perked like a rabbit; and no matter what I say to her,
she makes up a hundred fusses.

Ligurio: I am not surprised anymore. But this vow, what did you do about it?

Nicia: She bought a dispensation.

Ligurio: That’s good. Now give me twenty-five ducats, if you have it, that need to be spent to
make a friend of this friar right away and to make him hope for more.

Nicia: Take them then; that doesn’t bother me, I’ll make up for it elsewhere.

Ligurio: These friars are cunning and astute, and it is understandable, as they know both our sins
and theirs, and he who is not practical with one could be fooled and not know how to steer him
to your proposition. The point is, I do not want you to speak and spoil everything, because a man like you who stays in his study all day knows only of books and does not know of worldly things. This guy’s so foolish, I’m afraid he’ll spoil everything.43

Nicia: Tell me what you want me to do.

Ligurio: Leave the talking to me, and do not talk unless I give you the sign.

Nicia: I’m content with that. What sign will you make?

Ligurio: I will close one eye; I will bite my lip… Deh! No, let us do it another way. How long has it been since you last talked with the friar?

Nicia: More than ten years.

Ligurio: Good. I will tell him that you have gone deaf and will not respond and will not talk at all unless we speak loudly.

Nicia: I’ll do it.

Ligurio: On top of that, do not get upset if I say some things that seem antithetical to the thing we want, for everything will come back around as it should.

Nicia: In good time.

Ligurio: But I see the friar talking with a woman. Let us wait until he has gotten rid of her.

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43 Most translations mark this aside with annotations. Shawn and the Paolucci’s mark the shift with a stage direction; Sices encloses it in parentheses. Both methods are potentially problematic, as drawing such attention to Ligurio’s aside can color or impact performance. Instead, this translation notes the change with a shift in diction: Ligurio speaks informally to the audience.
SCENE THREE

Friar Timoteo, a Woman

Friar: If you want to confess, ma’am, I will do as you wish.

Woman: Not today; I have an appointment: it is enough for me to vent a little, so as to be
upright, standing here. Have you said those masses for Our Lady?

Friar: My Lady, yes.

Woman: Take this florin, then, and say mass every Monday for two months for the soul of my
dead husband. And although he was a robust, terrifying man, even with Turin flesh: I cannot take
action against\(^4\) someone I do not resent. But do you think that he is in Purgatory?

Friar: Without a doubt.

Woman: I do not know about that. You know what he used to do to me sometimes. Oh, how
many times I have complained to you about it! I would avoid him as much as I could; but he was
so persistent! Uh, Good Lord!

Friar: Do not worry, the clemency of God is great: if a man does not lack the will to want, he
never lacks the will to repent.

Woman: Do you think that the Turks will pass into Italy this year?

Friar: If you do not do your devotions, yes.

\(^4\) Machiavelli uses “fare” (to do/make) here. For sense, I have translated it as “take action against.”
Woman: Heavens! God help us with those devils! I am terrified by their impaling. --But I see a woman in the church who has a spool of yarn that belongs to me. I am off to visit her. Have a good day.

Friar: Go peacefully.
Friar: The most charitable people are women; they are also the most troublesome. If you chase them away, you rid yourself of trouble and utility; if you entertain them, you have utility and trouble, together. It is true: you cannot have honey without flies. What are you doing here, my good sirs? Is that not Messer Nicia I see?

Ligurio: Speak loudly, as he has become so deaf, he can no longer hear anything.

Friar: I bid you welcome, sir!

Ligurio: Louder!

Friar: Welcome!

Nicia: Glad to find you, Father!

Friar: What brings you here?

Nicia: All is well!

Ligurio: You had better talk to me, Father, because you, in wanting him to understand, will put this plaza into an uproar.

Friar: What do you want from me?

Ligurio: Messer Nicia here and another good man who you will hear about later have several hundred ducats to distribute to charity.

Nicia: Holy shit!
Ligurio: Shut up, damn you, it won’t be that much! Do not be surprised, Father, by anything he says. He does not hear, but he seems like he does sometimes, and he does not respond in a way that makes sense.

Friar: Continue please, and let him speak as he wants.

Ligurio: I have part of the money with me; and they have designated that you, sir, should be the one who distributes it.

Friar: Most willingly.

Ligurio: But it is necessary, before this charity is done, that you have helped us with a strange case involving the Messer that only you can help us with, in which all the honor of his house is at stake.

Friar: And that thing is?

Ligurio: I do not know if you know Cammillo Calfucci, the nephew of the Messer?

Friar: Yes, I know him.

Ligurio: He went on a business trip to France last year, and, not having a wife, as she was dead, he left a marriageable daughter in the care of a monastery, the name of which I will not tell you right now.

Friar: What happened?

Ligurio: What happened is that, either through the nuns’ carelessness or the girl’s foolhardiness, she finds herself four months pregnant; so that if the matter is not fixed with prudenzia, the doctor, the nuns, the girl, Cammillo, and the Calfucci house are disgraced; and the doctor is so concerned by this scandal that he has vowed, if handled with discretion, to give three hundred ducats for the love of God.

Nicia: Bullshit!
Ligurio: Shut up! And he will give them through your hands. You and the abbess alone can remedy this.

Friar: How?

Ligurio: By persuading the abbess to give the girl a potion which will make her miscarry.

Friar: This is something to consider.

Ligurio: What? Something to consider? Look, if you do this, much good will come from it: you maintain the honor of the monastery, the girl, and her parents; you restore a daughter to her father; you satisfy the Messer here and all his family; and look how many alms you can make with these three hundred ducats; on the other hand, you do not offend anyone other than a piece of unborn flesh, without sense, that in a thousand ways could have been lost; I believe that goodness is what produces the most good and makes the most people happy.

Friar: So be it, in the name of the Lord! Let it be done as you will, and let it be done for God and for charity. Tell me the monastery, give me the potion, and, if you see fit, this money, so that we can begin to do some good.

Ligurio: Now you seem to me the man of the church I thought you were. Take this part of the money. The monastery is… But wait, there’s a woman in the church beckoning to me. I will be right back; do not leave Messer Nicia; I want to say a few words to her.
SCENE FIVE

Friar Timoteo, Messer Nicia

Friar: That girl, how old is she?

Nicia: I’m stunned.

Friar: I said, how old is the girl?

Nicia: Goddamn him!

Friar: Why?

Nicia: So he’ll go to hell!\footnote{Machiavelli writes “Perche se lo abbia!” which translates formally as “So he will have it!”; however, that phrase might not carry with English-speaking audiences. Therefore, I have appropriated it. Also, “Mal che Dio gli dia!” often gets translated as “God send him the plague!” (Sices 215) or “May God put a curse on him!” (Paolucci 31). Literally, the phrase reads as “Bad that God may give”; I prefer “Goddamn him!”, as it is ironic and matches Nicia’s diction.}

Friar: It looks to me like I am in a pit. I am dealing with a madman and a deaf man: one runs away, the other cannot hear. But if these coins are not counterfeit, I will be making out better than them! --Here’s Ligurio, returning.
SCENE SIX

*Ligurio, Friar Timoteo, Messer Nicia*

Ligurio: Stay quiet, Messer. Oh! I have great news, Father.

Friar: What?

Ligurio: That woman with whom I just spoke told me that the girl has miscarried on her own.

Friar: Good! These alms will go to the Graces.\(^{46}\)

Ligurio: What did you say?

Friar: I said that you would be much more willing to give these alms to charity.

Ligurio: The alms will be given whenever you want: but it is necessary that you do something else in benefit of the doctor here.

Friar: What is it?

Ligurio: Something less weighty, less scandalous, much more agreeable to us, and more useful to you.

Friar: What is it? I am obligated to you, and I have reached such a level of familiarity, that there is nothing I would not do.

Ligurio: I will tell you about it in the church, between me and you, and the doctor will be content to wait here and let me borrow a couple words. Wait here, we will be right back.

Nicia: Said the toad to the harrow!

Friar: Let us go.

\(^{46}\) Tax office, but there are other meanings. See Gianetti and Ruffiero.
SCENE SEVEN

Messer Nicia alone

Nicia: Is it day or night? Am I awake or dreaming? I must be drunk, though I haven’t drunk anything today, to go along with this chatter? We agree to talk to the Friar about one thing, and he tells him another; he wants me to play deaf, and I’d have had to have plugged my ears like a Dane\textsuperscript{47} so that I wouldn’t have to listen to the crazy things he’s said, and God only knows his purpose! I am out twenty-five ducats, and nobody has talked about my real business yet; and now they’ve left me here, like a donut on a stick.\textsuperscript{48} --But here they come: damn them both if they haven’t discussed my business!

\textsuperscript{47} A formal translation. It refers, perhaps, to contemporary Denmark’s unwillingness to participate in continental politics.

\textsuperscript{48} A zugo is a fritter-like dessert, cooked in oil in a hot pan. According to Accademia della Crusca, the treats often resemble erect penises, hence their usage in crude slang. Roughly, Nicia’s phrase resembles the American slang “caught with my dick out.”
SCENE EIGHT

Friar Timoteo, Ligurio, Messer Nicia

Friar: Let the woman come. I know what I must do; and, if my authority means anything, we will conclude this engagement tonight.

Ligurio: Messer Nicia, Friar Timoteo is to do everything. We need to see that the women come.

Nicia: You make me tingle all over. Will it be a boy?

Ligurio: A boy.

Nicia: I’m crying from tenderness.

Friar: Go into the church, I will wait here for the women. Stay on the side so that they won’t see you; and as soon as they leave, I will tell you what they have said.
SCENE NINE

Friar Timoteo alone

Friar: I do not know who has tricked whom. This sad Ligurio came to me with this first story, to
test me, so that, having consented to that, he would persuade me more easily for this; if I had not
consented, he would not have told me about this, so as not to reveal their plans without benefit. It
is true that I have been tricked; nevertheless, this trick is to my benefit as well. Messer Nicia and
Callimaco are rich, and I am to draw from them, each for different reasons; the thing is must be a
secret, for it is as important for them as it is for me. Whatever happens, I have nothing to repent.
I doubt I will not have any difficulty, as Madonna Lucrezia is savvy and good-natured: but I will
get to her in her kindness. And all women are short on brains: when one of them thinks to say
two words, it is something to preach about, for in the land of the blind, he who has an eye is
king. And here she is with her mother, who is a real beast, and will be a great help in conducting
the daughter to do what I want.
Sostrata: I believe that you believe, my child, that I prize your honor and your welfare as any other person in the world, and that I’d never advise you to do something that wasn’t right. I have told you and I’m telling you again, that if Friar Timoteo tells you that nothing should bear down your conscience, then you should do it and not think about it.

Lucrezia: I have always worried that Messer Nicia’s urge to have children would make us commit some error; and for this, I am always jealous and suspicious of anything he talks to me about, especially after what you know happened to me, having gone to the Servi. But of all things that have been tried, this is the strangest, to have to submit my body to this offense, and to cause a man to die for offending me: because I would have thought, if I were the last woman in the world and that I would have to replenish humanity, that I would be likely to do such a thing.

Sostrata: I don’t know how to tell you a lot of things, my dear child. Speak with the friar, see what he has to say, and do what you’re advised to do by him, by us, and by those who love you.

Lucrezia: I sweat from passion.
Friar: Welcome. I know what you want to hear from me, because Messer Nicia has spoken with me already. Truly, I have been poring over my books for over two hours, studying this case; and after much examination, I have found that things have, in particular and in general, gone in your favor.

Lucrezia: Are you telling us the truth, or are you joking?

Friar: Ah, Madonna Lucrezia! Is this something to joke about? Do you not know me?

Lucrezia: Father, no; but this seems to me the strangest thing I have ever heard.

Friar: Madonna, I know how you feel about it, but I do not want you to say that any more. There are many things which at a distance seem terrible, unbearable, and strange, that, when you approach them, turn out to be humane, bearable, and familiar; it is said that our fears are greater than our evils: and this is one of those things.

Lucrezia: God willing!

Friar: I want to return to what I was saying earlier. As conscience goes, you have to mind this general rule: that where there is certain good and uncertain evil, one should not leave the good for fear of the evil. Here there is certain good, that you will become pregnant and acquire a soul for our Good Lord; the uncertain evil is that he who sleeps with you after the potion will die; but there are also those who do not die. But because survival is doubtful, it is better that Messer Nicia does not run the risk. As for the act itself, it is a fable that it will be a sin, because the will
is what sins, not the body; and the cause of the sin is the displeasure of your husband, and you can please him by taking pleasure, and in this you only find displeasure. Besides, the ends must be regarded in all things: the ends for you is to fill a throne in paradise and to content your husband. The Bible says that the daughters of Lot, believing to be the final souls in the world, consorted with their father, and because their intentions were good, they did not sin.

Lucrezia: What are you persuading me to do?

Sostrata: Let him persuade you, my child. Don’t you see that a woman who doesn’t have children, doesn’t have a home? When her husband dies, she’s left like a beast, abandoned by everyone.

Friar: I swear to you, Madonna, by this consecrated breast, that no more conscience will bear down upon you in this case of your husband, than eating meat on a Wednesday, and that is a sin which can be washed away with holy water.

Lucrezia: What are you leading me into, Father?

Friar: I’m leading you to something, so that you can always have reason to pray to God on my behalf; and you will be more satisfied in a year than at present.

Sostrata: She will do what you want. I will put her to bed tonight myself. What’re you afraid of, you foolish girl? There are fifty women, in this land, who’d raise their hands to the sky.

Lucrezia: I am content: but I do not think I will be alive tomorrow morning.

Friar: Do not worry, my child: I will pray to the Lord for you, I will say the prayer to Archangel Raphael so that he accompanies you. Go quickly, and prepare yourself for this mystery, for it is getting late.

Sostrata: Peace be with you, Father.

Lucrezia: God and Our Lady help me, that they may keep me from harm.
Friar: Oh Ligurio, come out here!

Ligurio: How are you?

Friar: Well. They have gone home, ready to do everything, and there will not be any difficulty, as the mother is going to stay with her and will put her to bed herself.

Nicia: You’re telling the truth?

Friar: Well, well, you are cured of deafness?

Ligurio: St. Clemente has performed a miracle.

Friar: I should set up a plaque for you to get a little publicity, so that I may share this gain with you.

Nicia: We’re getting off track. Will the lady make difficulty in doing what I want?

Friar: No, I tell you.

Nicia: I’m the happiest man in the world.

Friar: I would think so. You will beget a baby boy; and he who has not, does without.

Ligurio: Go, Friar, to your prayers, and, if you need anything else, we will return and find you.

You, Messer, go to her to ensure she does not change her mind, and I will return to Master Callimaco to ensure that he sends you the potion. Be sure I can find you at seven o’clock to plan what must be done at ten.

Nicia: You said it well, goodbye!
Friar: Good health to you.
SONG

How suave is deception
That steers our imaginations and desires,
That undresses us from fatigue
And sweetens all bitterness.
O remedy high and rare,
You show the way to wandering souls,
You, with your great valor,
To make others happy, make Love rich;
You win gems, poisons, and spells
With your saintly counsels.
ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

Callimaco alone

Callimaco: I’d like to understand what they’ve done. Where can Ligurio be that I cannot find him? It’s not the twenty-third but the twenty-fourth hour! What mental anguish this has been and still is! And it’s true that Fortuna and Natura hold their accounts in balance: one doesn’t do any good for you without some evil surging up on the other side. The more my hope crescendos, the more my fear crescendos as well. Miserable me! How is it possible that I live in such anguish, perturbed by these torments and this hope? I am a ship tossed about by two disparate winds that becomes more shaky the closer it comes to port. Messer Nicia’s simplicity brings me hope, Lucrezia’s prudenzia and hard-headedness brings me fear. Woe is me, that I don’t find peace anywhere! Sometimes I try to win control over myself, I try to reprehend myself for this fury of mine, and I say to myself: --What are you doing? Are you insane? When you get her, what will you do then? You’ll know your error, and you’ll regret the anxieties you’ve put yourself through. Don’t you know how little good is found in the things men desire, with respect to the things that men expect to find? On the other hand, the worst that can happen is to die and go to hell: and look how many others have died! And look how many good men are in hell! Are you ashamed to go there, too? Face your fate; flee evil, or, if you can’t flee, bear it like a man; don’t prostrate
yourself, don’t be invirile\textsuperscript{49} like a woman. --And so I sum up my heart; but I don’t last long, for I am assaulted on all fronts by such great desire to be with her that I feel as if, from my feet to my head, all unlike myself: my legs tremble, my stomach turns, my heart shakes my chest, my arms fall limp, my tongue goes mute, my eyes grow dim, and my brain whirls. If only I could find Ligurio, I’d have someone to vent to. --But here comes quickly now: the report he brings will either cause me to live cheerfully a little longer or kill me outright.

\textsuperscript{49} Machiavelli uses \textit{invilire}, which is similar to invirile in English, which means “unmanly, effeminate.”
SCENE TWO

*Ligurio, Callimaco*

Ligurio: I’ve never desired so much to find Callimaco, and I’ve never had such a hard time finding him. If I were to possess bad news, I’d run into him at once. I’ve been to his house, to the square, the market, the *Pancone delli Spini*, the *Logga de’ Tornaquinci*, and I can’t find him anywhere. These lovers have quicksilver under their feet; they can’t stand still.

Callimaco: Who am I that I don’t call out to him? He seems cheerful enough to me! Oh, Ligurio!

Ligurio!

Ligurio: Oh, Callimaco! Where have you been?

Callimaco: What news?

Ligurio: Good.

Callimaco: Good, really?

Ligurio: The best.

Callimaco: Is Lucrezia content?

Ligurio: Yes.

Callimaco: The friar did what was needed?

Ligurio: He did.

Callimaco: Oh, blessed friar! I’ll always pray to God for him.

Ligurio: Oh, good one! As if God gives his grace for bad, as well as good! The friar will want more than prayers!
Callimaco: What will he want?

Ligurio: Money.

Callimaco: We’ll give it to him. How much have you promised him?

Ligurio: Three hundred ducats.

Callimaco: You’ve done well.

Ligurio: The doctor shelled out twenty-five.

Callimaco: What?

Ligurio: It suffices that he’s shelled them out.

Callimaco: The mother of Lucrezia, what did she do?

Ligurio: Almost everything. When she heard that her daughter could have a good night without sin, she never rested her pleading, ordering, and comforting Lucrezia until she had conducted her to the friar, and there she worked in such a way that she consented.

Callimaco: Oh, God! What have I done to deserve such blessings? I’m about to die of joy!

Ligurio: What kind of gentleman is this? Now for joy, now from sorrow, this guy wants to die anyway. Have you got the potion ready?

Callimaco: Yes, I have.

Ligurio: What will you send them?

Callimaco: A glass of Hypocras, which is well-suited for settling the stomach and stirring the brain…--Alas, alas, alas, I’m a goner!

Ligurio: What is it? What’s the matter?

Callimaco: There is no remedy.

Ligurio: What the hell is wrong?

Callimaco: It was all done for nothing, I’ve walled myself into an oven.
Ligurio: Why? Why don’t you tell me? Take your hands away from your face.

Callimaco: Oh, don’t you realize that I’ve told Messer Nicia that you, he, Siro, and I would grab someone to put in bed with his wife?

Ligurio: So what?

Callimaco: What do you mean, so what? If I am with you all, then I can’t be the one who is caught; and if I’m not with you, he’ll realize it’s a trick.

Ligurio: You tell the truth. But isn’t there a remedy?

Callimaco: No, I don’t think so.

Ligurio: Yes, there must be.

Callimaco: What?

Ligurio: Let me think on it a little.

Callimaco: You’ve cleared me right up: I’m finished, if you have to think now!

Ligurio: I’ve got it.

Callimaco: What?

Ligurio: I’ll get the friar, who has helped so much this far, to do the rest.

Callimaco: In what way?

Ligurio: We all have to disguise ourselves. I’ll disguise the friar; he’ll alter his voice, his face, and his habit; and I’ll tell the doctor that you are him; he’ll believe it.

Callimaco: I like that, but what will I do?

Ligurio: I picture you in a small cloak, and with a lute in hand coming around the corner of his house, singing a little song.

Callimaco: With my face showing?

Ligurio: Yes, for if you were to wear a mask, he would become suspicious.
Callimaco: He’ll recognize me.

Ligurio: No we won’t, because I want you to twist your face up, to open, sharpen or screw up your mouth, to close one eye. Give it a try.

Callimaco: Should I do it like this?

Ligurio: No.

Callimaco: Like this?

Ligurio: Not enough.

Callimaco: How about this way?

Ligurio: Yes, yes, keep that in mind. I have a nose at home; I want you to stick it on.

Callimaco: Fine; what will happen next?

Ligurio: When you come around the corner, we will be there, we’ll snatch the lute, grab you, spin you around, lead you into the house, and put you to bed. The rest you will have to do yourself!

Callimaco: Lead me to it.

Ligurio: Here you must lead yourself. But to make it so that you can return, that’s up to you, not us.

Callimaco: How?

Ligurio: Win her tonight, and before you depart, let her know who you are: reveal the trick; show your love for her; tell her how much you want her and how without infamy, you can be her friend and how with great infamy she can be your enemy. It is possible that she won’t go along with it, and that she would want this night to be the only one.

Callimaco: You think so?
Ligurio: I’m certain. But we mustn’t waste any more time: it’s already eight o’clock. Call Siro, send the potion to Messer Nicia, and wait for me at home. I’ll go to the friar: I’ll have him put on a disguise and bring him here, and then we’ll get the doctor and do whatever’s left to be done.

Callimaco. That sounds good. Go ahead.
Callimaco: O Siro!

Siro: Sir!

Callimaco: Come here.

Siro: Here I am.

Callimaco: Get that silver goblet that’s in my bedroom closet, cover it with a small drape, and bring it to me. And watch that you don’t spill it along the way.

Siro: It will be done.

Callimaco: He’s been with me for ten years now, and he’s always served me faithfully. I believe I’ll find faith in him in this case as well; and, though I haven’t told him about this trick, it seems as though he’s guessed it. He’s a good rascal, and I can see that the plot pleases him.

Siro: Here it is, sir.

Callimaco: Good. Quickly, go to Messer Nicia’s house and tell him that this is the medicine, that he must give it to his wife right after dinner and that the sooner she eats dinner, the better; and tell him how we’ll be around the corner to order, at the right time, that which remains to be done. Go quickly.

Siro: I go.

Callimaco: Listen here. If he wants you to wait for him, wait, and come back here with him; if he doesn’t, return here to me as soon as you’ve given him the message. Understand?
Siro: Yes, sir.
SCENE FOUR

Callimaco alone

Callimaco: I wait for Ligurio to return with the friar; and whoever said that it is hard to wait for something, said the truth. I seem to lose ten pounds every hour, thinking where I am now, where I’ll be in two hours, fearing the birth of some case that interrupts my plan. If that happens, it’ll be the ultimate and final night of my life, because I’ll throw myself into the Arno, or I’ll hang myself, or I’ll throw myself from from these windows, or I’ll give myself to the knife on her doorstep. I’ll do something because I don’t want to live anymore. But is that Ligurio I see? It is him. He has with him someone who seems hunchbacked, lame: it’s surely the friar in disguise. Oh, friars! Know one, and know them all! Who is the other who has approached with them? It seems to be Siro, who must have brought embassy to the doctor as I asked. That is him. I’ll wait here to convene with them.
SCENE FIVE

Siro, Ligurio, Callimaco, Friar Timoteo in disguise

Siro: Who is that with you, Ligurio?

Ligurio: A good man.

Siro: Is he crippled, or does he merely seem crippled?

Ligurio: Mind your own business.

Siro: Oh! He has the look of a great lecher.

Ligurio: Deh! Keep calm, or you’ll spoil everything! Where is Callimaco?

Callimaco: Here I am. Welcome, everyone!

Ligurio: O Callimaco! Say something to this madman Siro: he’s already said a thousand mad things.

Callimaco: Siro, listen here: you are to do everything Ligurio tells you tonight; and take note: whatever he commands you, it’s as if it were me; and whatever you see, feel, or hear, it is to remain strictly secret, however highly you may regard my stuff, my honor, my life, and your well-being.

Siro: This I will do.

Callimaco: Did you give the goblet to the doctor?

Siro: Yes, sir.

Callimaco: What did he say?

Siro: That he will do everything as ordered.
Friar: Is this Callimaco?

Callimaco: I am at your command. The advances between us have been settled: you now have me and all of my fortune at your disposal.

Friar: So I understand and believe; and I have taken it upon myself to do for you something I would not have done for any other man in the world.

Callimaco: Do not fatigue yourself too much.

Friar: It is enough that you wish me well.

Ligurio: Let us leave the ceremonies. Siro and I are going to disguise ourselves. You, Callimaco, come with us, so that you can do your business. The friar will wait here: we will return immediately, and then we will go to find Messer Nicia.

Callimaco: Well said. Let’s go.

Friar: I will wait.
SCENE SIX

Friar Timoteo alone

Friar: And they tell the truth when they say that bad company leads men to the gallows. And many times one happens upon bad things due to his easy or good nature, as well as his sad nature. God knows that I did not think of injuring anyone. I kept to my cell, recited my offices, tended to my devotees: then this devil Ligurio appears before me, who got me to dip a finger in a mess, into which I have sunk my arm and my body, and I do not know how far I’ll end up in it. Still, it comforts me that when one thing matters to many, many must find a cure for it. --But here come Ligurio and that servant, returning.
SCENE SEVEN

Friar Timoteo, Ligurio, Siro in disguise

Friar: Welcome back.

Ligurio: Do we look good?

Friar: Very good.

Ligurio: The doctor is about. Let us go to his house: it is after 9 o’clock, come on!

Siro: Who is that coming from his door? Is that the servant?

Ligurio: No. It’s him. Ah, ah, ah, uh!

Siro: You laugh?

Ligurio: Who wouldn’t laugh? He’s wearing a tiny cloak that doesn’t even cover his ass. And what devil is that on his head? He looks like one of those horned, canonical owls--and he’s got a little sword underneath. Ah, ah! He’s muttering I don’t know what. Let’s draw to the side and hear hear some of his wife’s misfortunes.
SCENE EIGHT

Messer Nicia in disguise

Nicia: What fuss my crazy wife has made! She sent the maids to her mother’s house and the servant to the farm. I praise her for this; but I don’t praise her for everything else: before she would be willing to go to bed, she was making such a racket: --I don’t want to! ...What will I do? ...What are you making me do? ...Woe is me, mamma mia!...--And if her mother hadn’t given her the what-for, she wouldn’t have gotten into bed at all. Damn her! I appreciate choosy women, but not so much that she loses her head, that cat brain! If someone were to say --That hanged will be the wisest woman in Florence --she would say: --What have I done to you? --I know that the Pasquina will enter in Arezzo;\(^{50}\) before I take my leave from this play, I’ll be able to say, with Mona Ghinga:\(^{51}\) --I saw it, with these hands! --I still look good! Who would recognize me? I seem taller, younger, slimmer: no woman would charge me money for bed. --But where can I find the others?

\(^{50}\)This idiom means, roughly “everything will end well.” Further research is needed to figure out the exact etymology of the phrase.

\(^{51}\)Though little is known about Mona Ghinga, she was, apparently, a well-known pimp in Florence.
SCENE NINE

*Ligurio, Messer Nicia, Friar Timoteo, Siro*

Ligurio: Good evening, sir.

Nicia: Oh! Uh! Eh!

Ligurio: Do not be afraid, it is only us.

Nicia: Oh! You’re all here? If I hadn’t known you right off, I’d have let you have it with my sword here; it’s righter than you might think. Is that you, Ligurio? And you, Siro? And this other? The Master, eh?

Ligurio: Yes, sir.

Nicia: Move aside! Oh, how well he’s counterfeited! Not even Va-qua-tu\(^{52}\) would know him.

Ligurio: I had him put a couple nuts in his mouth, so people would not recognize him by his voice.

Nicia: You’re stupid.

Ligurio: Why?

Nicia: Why didn’t you tell me before? I would have put a couple in my mouth, too: it’s important to not be recognized by the voice!

Ligurio: Here, put this in your mouth.

Nicia: What is it?

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\(^{52}\)Va-qua-tu was an Italian police constable, a subject of folklore, renowned for his ability to see through tricks and disguises.
Ligurio: A ball of wax.

Nicia: Give it here… Ca, pu, ca, co, che, cu, cu, spu… You nuisance, you rascal!

Ligurio: Pardon me, I gave you something by mistake that I did not mean for you to have.

Nicia: Ca, ca, pu, pu… What, what, what, what was that?

Ligurio: Aloe.

Nicia: To hell with you! Spu, pu… Master, why don’t you say anything?

Friar: Ligurio has made me angry.

Nicia: Oh! You counterfeit your voice well.

Ligurio: Let’s not waste any more time. I will be the captain, and I’ll order the army for the day. Callimaco will charge the right horn, the left me, the doctor will stand between the two horns; Siro will be the rear-guard, to support whatever band that falters. The password will be Saint Cuckoo.

Nicia: Who’s Saint Cuckoo?

Ligurio: He is the most honored saint in France. Let us go, we will set the ambush at this corner. Listen: I hear a lute.

Nicia: It is. What do we want to do?

Ligurio: We should send a scout ahead to find out who it is, and when he reports to us, we will act.

Nicia: Who will go?

Ligurio: Siro will go. You know what you have to do. Consider, examine, return quickly, and report.

Siro: I go.

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53 In Machiavelli’s text, Nicia begins to make cuckoo noises as he spits out the “wax.” Due to this, I have kept the line in-tact.
Nicia: I don’t want us to catch a crab\textsuperscript{54} who’s some weak, sick old man, so that we have to play this game all over again tomorrow night.

Ligurio: Do not worry. Siro is an able man. Here he is; he has returned. What did you find, Siro?

Siro: It is the most handsome young rascal you have ever seen! He is not twenty years old, walking alone in a ragged cloak, playing a lute.

Nicia: That’s our guy, if you’re telling the truth. But watch out, for this broth will be all over you if you’re lying!

Siro: He is just as I have told you.

Ligurio: Let us wait for him to turn the corner, and after, we will pounce on him.

Nicia: Pull yourself over here, Master: you’re stiff like a wooden doll. Here he is.

Callimaco: “I hope you take the devil to your bed, Since I cannot take you to bed instead!”

Ligurio: Hold still. Give me that lute!

Callimaco: Woe is me! What have I done?

Nicia: You’ll see! Cover his head, gag him!

Ligurio: Spin him!

Nicia: Give him another turn! Give him another! Take him to the house!

Friar: Messer Nicia, I am going to go rest, for my head hurts so bad, it is killing me. And if you do not need me, I will not be back tomorrow morning.

Nicia: Yes, Master, don’t come back: we can do the rest ourselves.

\textsuperscript{54}“Pigliare un granchio” is an idiom with means, roughly, to catch a crab.
SCENE TEN

_{Friar Timoteo in disguise, alone_}

Friar: They have holed themselves up in the house, and I am going back to the convent. And you, spectators, do not pin yourselves up, because tonight no one sleeps. So that the Acts do not disturb time\(^55\): I will go say Mass; Ligurio and Siro will eat dinner, since they have not eaten today; the doctor will go from room to room, so as to keep things cooking; Callimaco and Madame Lucrezia will not sleep, because, I think, if I were him and you were her, then we would not sleep, either.

\(^55\) Here, Timoteo addresses contemporary theatrical conventions. Machiavelli, through him, acknowledges the Greek tradition of time (keeping the action of the play within the space of a single day) and sidesteps it.
SONG

Oh sweet night, oh saintly
And quiet nocturnal hours,
Who accompany yearning lovers;
You bring such
Joy, wherever you are,
That alone you make souls blessed.
You give worthy prizes
To loving hosts
For their long labors;
You make, oh happy hours
All icy chests burn with love!
Friar: I couldn’t close my eyes last night; I have been eager to know how Callimaco and the others have made out. And I waited, consuming the time with various things: I said mass, I read *A Life of the Holy Fathers*, I went to church and lit a spent candle, I changed a veil on Our Lady, who does miracles. How many times I have told these friars to keep her cleaned! And then they wonder why the devotions miss their marks! I remember when there were five hundred images, and there aren’t even twenty today: this is born from us, for not having done enough to maintain her reputation. Every night after the Compline, we would hold a procession, and we would make ourselves sing hymns every Saturday. We would always take vows there, so that people would see fresh images; we would encourage men and women to make vows in confession. Now nobody does these things, and then we wonder why things turn cold! Oh, how little brains my fellow friars have! But I hear a great racket at Messer Nicia’s house. Here they come, by my faith! And they are outing the prisoner. I have come just in time. They certainly lingered over the last drops: it is already becoming dawn. I want to be where I can hear what they say without being seen.

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56 This appropriation likens Timoteo’s monologue to the prudent archers passage in *Il Principe, VI.*
SCENE TWO

Messer Nicia, Callimaco, Ligurio, Siro in disguise

Nicia: Grab him on that side, and I’ll take this side, and you, Siro, hold him by the cloak, from behind.

Callimaco: Don’t hurt me!

Ligurio: Don’t fear--get going.

Nicia: Let’s not go any further.

Ligurio: Well said, we will let him go here. We will turn him around two times, so that he does not know where he has come from. Spin him, Siro!

Siro: There.

Nicia: Spin him another time.

Siro: There you are.

Callimaco: My lute!

Ligurio: Go, ribald, get going! If I hear a word from you, I’ll cut your throat!

Nicia: He’s fled. Let’s go and change: and we should go out at dawn all at a good hour, so that it doesn’t look like we stayed out late last night.

Ligurio: You tell the truth.

Nicia: Go, Ligurio and Siro, and find Master Callimaco, and tell him that the thing has proceeded well.
Ligurio: What can we tell him? We don’t know anything. You know that, after we arrived in the house, we went to the cellar to drink: you and your mother-in-law remained with him, and we didn’t see you again until now, when you called us to put him out.

Nicia: You tell the truth. Oh! I have beautiful things to tell you! My wife was in bed in the dark. Sostrata was waiting by the fireplace. I came up with this young scamp, and, so no hood could go uncovered, I led him to the pantry I have in the hall, where a weak light cast off so little dawn, he couldn’t see my face.

Ligurio: Wisely done!

Nicia: I made him undress: he hesitated, so I turned on him like a dog--in such a way that a moment of stripping seemed like a thousand years--and he remained naked. He had an ugly face: he had a big nose, a crooked mouth ...But you’ve never seen a more beautiful body: pale, soft, smooth! And as for the other thing, don’t ask.

Ligurio: That is not well-reasoned. You needed to see everything?

Nicia: Are you kidding? Since I had stuck my hands into the dough, I wanted to touch the bottom. Then I wanted to see whether he was healthy: if he had had boils, where would that have left me? You tell me!

Ligurio: You have reason.

Nicia: When I was sure that he was healthy, I pulled him after me, and in the dark led him into the room, put him in bed; and before I departed, I wanted to feel with my own hands how things were going, for I’m not used to being given fireflies for lanterns.

Ligurio: How much prudenzia you have governing these things!
Nicia: After I had possessed a certain touch and feel for everything, I left the room, and shut the door, and went to the mother-in-law, who was by the fire, and all night we went on waiting and talking.

Ligurio: What did you talk about?

Nicia: About Lucrezia’s foolishness, and how, without so much coming and going, she would have believed from the beginning. Then we talked about the baby; I can already feel him in my arms, that little rascal! Until I heard the song of seven o’clock; and, fearing that the sun would overtake us, I went into the room. I tell you, I couldn’t get that ribald up!

Ligurio: I believe it!

Nicia: He liked the ointment! Well, I got him up, called you, and we went to lead him out.

Ligurio: The thing has gone well.

Nicia: What would you say if I told you that something still irks me?

Ligurio: And what is that?

Nicia: That this poor fellow, that he is going to die soon, and that this night will cost him so dearly.

Ligurio: Oh! You have little to worry about! Leave the cure to him.

Nicia: You tell the truth. --But it seems like it’ll be a good thousand years before we can find Master Callimaco and rejoice with him.

Ligurio: He will be out in an hour. But it is getting to be clear day: we should go change; you, what will you do?

Nicia: I’ll go back into my house, and put on my good clothes. I’ll raise and wash my wife, and have her come to church, to enter into holiness. I want you and Callimaco to be there, so that we can graciously thank the friar and repay him for the good that he’s done.
Ligurio: Well said: we will do that. So long.
SCENE THREE

Friar Timoteo alone

Friar: I have heard this conversation, and I have enjoyed every bit of it, considering how stupid this doctor is; but I have enjoyed the ultimate conclusion beyond measure. And since they will be coming to find me at home, I do not want to be here any longer. I will wait at the church, where my merchandise will be worth more. --But who is that coming out of the house? It looks like Ligurio, and with him must be Callimaco. I do not want them to see me, for the reasons I have said: anyway, if they do not come to find me, I will always have time to go and find them.
SCENE FOUR

Callimaco, Ligurio

Callimaco: As I was saying, my Ligurio, I felt ill at ease until three o’clock; and even though I had great pleasure, it didn’t seem right to me. But, then I made her know who I was, and then I made her understand the love I had for her and how easily, for the simplicity of her husband, we could live happily and without any infamy, promising that whenever God makes other of him, I would make her my wife; and having her, on top of these reasons, having tasted the difference between lying with me and with Nicia, and between the kisses of a young lover and an old husband, after some sighing, she said: --Since your astuteness, my husband’s stupidity and my confessor’s wickedness have led me to do what I’d have never done myself, I want to judge that it was a celestial providence that wanted this, and I am not sufficient to refuse this as Heaven wants me to accept it. Therefore, I take you for my lord, my patron, and my guide: you my father, you my protector, and you my every good; and what my husband has wanted for a night, I want forever. You must become his companion, and come to church in the morning, and from there you’ll come and dine with us; and you’ll be able to go and stay as you will, and we can convene at any hour without any suspect. --I was, hearing these words, about to die of sweetness. I couldn’t respond in the slightest to what I desired to say. So I find myself the happiest and most

57 A potential pun in both English and Italian.
content man that ever was in the world; and if this happiness isn’t taken from me by death or
time I will be more blessed than the blessed, more sainted than the saints.
Ligurio: I take great pleasure in all of your good fortune, and everything has turned out as I told
you it would. But what do we do now?
Callimaco: We go toward the church, for I promised her I would be there, where she, her mother,
and the doctor will come.
Ligurio: I sense the opening of the door: it’s the women, they’re coming out, and the doctor is
following.
Callimaco: Let’s go to the church and wait for them there.
SCENE FIVE

Messer Nicia, Lucrezia, Sostrata

Nicia: Lucrezia, I think it best to do things with the fear of God, and not mindlessly.

Lucrezia: What has to be done, now?

Nicia: Listen to how she responds! She’s like a cock!

Sostrata: Don’t be surprised: she’s a little changed.

Lucrezia: What do you want to say?

Nicia: I say that it is good that I go ahead and speak with the friar, and tell him to meet you at the church door, to lead you to the blessing, because it is proper, this morning, as if you are being reborn.

Lucrezia: Why don’t you go?

Nicia: You’re so bold this morning! She seemed half-dead last night.

Lucrezia: Thanks to you!

Sostrata: Go find the friar. But it is not necessary, he is outside the church.

Nicia: You tell the truth.58

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58 Nicia’s use of voi here can be read three different ways: (1) as a direct response to Sostrata, (2) as a formal confirmation to Lucrezia, or (3) as a collective acknowledgement to both. Due to this, I have chosen words that do not require contractions--to preserve the formal and play upon a multiplicity of potential interpretations.
Friar: I come outside because Callimaco and Ligurio told me that the doctor and his wife were coming to church. Here they are.

Nicia: *Bona dies*\(^{59}\), father!

Friar: Welcome to you, and congratulations, my lady, that God blesses you to make a beautiful baby boy!

Lucrezia: God willing!

Friar: There is will by all means.

Nicia: Is that Ligurio and Master Callimaco in the church?

Friar: Yes, sir.

Nicia: Call them.

Friar: Come!

Callimaco: God save you!

Nicia: Master, please put your hands here on my wife.

Callimaco: Willingly.

Nicia: Lucrezia, this is he who will cause us to have a cane to prop us in our old age.

Lucrezia: I hold him very dear, and want him to be our godfather.

\(^{59}\)“Good day.”
Nicia: Goodness be upon you! And I want you and Ligurio to come this evening and dine with us.

Lucrezia: In all the world.

Nicia: And I want to make them a key to the downstairs room, so they can return whenever they feel like, since they don’t have women at home and live like beasts.

Callimaco: I accept it, to use it when I have occasion.

Friar: I have to have money for the alms.

Nicia: You know you will, dominae. It will be sent today.

Ligurio: Of Siro, is there not a man who remembers him?

Nicia: Let him ask: whatever I have is his. You, Lucrezia, how much do you have to give the friar for his blessing?

Lucrezia: I don’t remember.

Nicia: Well, how much?

Lucrezia: Give him ten.

Nicia: I’m drowning!⁶⁰

Friar: And you, Madonna Sostrata, it seems to me you have put a cork in your old age.

Sostrata: Who wouldn’t feel anew?

Friar: Let us all go into the church, and there we will say our prayers. After the service, you may go and dine at your leisure. --You, spectators, do not expect us to come out anymore: the service is long. I will remain in church; they will leave through the side door and go home. So long!

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⁶⁰ According to Accademia della Crusca, affogaggine is akin to suffocating, gagging or drowning; it is often said in jest or as a curse.
REFERENCES


