

**Renaissance and Reformation**  
**Renaissance et Réforme**



**Machiavelli, Niccolò. Machiavelli: Political, Historical, and Literary Writings. Ed. Mark Jurdjevic and Meredith K. Ray, trans. Meredith K. Ray**

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*del cortegiano* (1516) and Raphael's portrait of Castiglione (1514–16) (30, 50). In chapter 4, Mac Carthy explores how Vittoria Colonna and Tullia d'Aragona break the connection between grace and beauty as expressed in male discourse (76). Chapter 5 examines Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1532) in terms of literary grace, and of Lodovico Dolce calling Ariosto the poet of grace (114). In Chapter 6, Mac Carthy discusses how Michelangelo and Colonna cultivate an image of intense working artists who reveal rather than conceal their labour, a Christian vision of the artist receiving the gift of God's grace (142). The Conclusion examines both prudence in Tasso's *Il malpiglio* (1585) and grace as a way to survive and thrive, and for women to cultivate pleasure for themselves through the inner grace of eloquence and intellect, in Moderata Fonte's *Merito delle donne* (1592). Mac Carthy closes her exploration of a plural grace with Tasso's nostalgia and Fonte's regeneration (181). The book begins and ends with the three Graces, seen here in their perennial dance in del Cossa's spring, and with April as the month of grace (187). Mac Carthy gives us a rich and perceptive study of grace in word, image, and beyond in sixteenth-century Italy.

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### **Machiavelli, Niccolò.**

***Machiavelli: Political, Historical, and Literary Writings.* Ed. Mark Jurdjevic and Meredith K. Ray, trans. Meredith K. Ray.**

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. Pp. viii, 334. ISBN 978-0-8122-2433-7 (paperback) US\$34.95.

The edition by Mark Jurdjevic and Meredith K. Ray, with translations by Ray, is an excellent volume of political, historical, and literary works by one of the great thinkers and writers of the Renaissance. Although Ray is the translator, "Note on Translation and Selection of Texts" provides an unattributed statement of method:

The selection of texts presented in this translation is intended to guide the reader through the arc of Machiavelli's political and literary life: from

his early years as a civil servant for the Republic of Florence to his fall from favor upon the return of the Medici to Florence in 1512, and his subsequent efforts to return to participation in the political life of his beloved city. (vii)

The edition is structured according to these phases in Machiavelli's career, including selections from his personal correspondence at three moments—early (1498–1513), midcareer (1517–1524), and late (1525–27)—“to orient the reader to important events and relationships in Machiavelli's life, setting the stage for the translations of his political and literary works” (vii). The volume arranges Machiavelli's texts chronologically according to their composition, except for the three literary works included, grouped together for convenience.

By 1513, Machiavelli was working on *The Prince* and on *Discourses on Livy*; by 1520, he found success with literary compositions such as *The Mandrake*, and began work on *Florentine Histories*, his “final major undertaking and is a centerpiece here” (vii). Ray includes a selection of chapters to allow readers

to observe not only how Machiavelli's political thought and theory of history come together as he attempts to make sense of Florence's past and future, but also how he continues to navigate the delicate and frustrating nuances of his uncertain position with respect to the Medici, whose own history is integral to that of the city. (vii)

The choice of excerpts represents some of Machiavelli's key ideas: *virtù*, *Fortuna*, a prince apparently good but capable of evil, the cyclical nature of history. Ray chooses an array of texts, including “letters, political treatises, literary comedy, and history—some well-known, others familiar primarily to specialists,” to highlight Machiavelli's range (viii). The Note calls attention to Machiavelli's style: “analytical, complex, and precise” in *The Prince* and *Florentine Histories*; “adept at manipulating literary tropes” in *The Mandrake*; “incisive, witty, reflective, and warm” in the correspondence (viii).

The translator's ideas are useful for anyone not reading the original: “The translation strives in its style to convey the meaning and spirit of Machiavelli's works to the modern reader while remaining as close as possible to Machiavelli's own vocabulary and prose” (viii). Sometimes English cannot convey Machiavelli's use of *virtù* or terms for ranks or political offices, so the Italian

has been retained, but generally the translator has tried to find equivalents in English, to provide key terms in Machiavelli's political philosophy, and to take care: "Overall, then, this translation retains as much as possible of the original grammatical structures, sentence breaks, and rhythm of Machiavelli's style. My intention has been to provide a fluid, accurate, and accessible translation without sacrificing Machiavelli's distinctive idiom" (viii). The translator shows the reader the choices made.

Jurdjevic contributes a well-considered Introduction, which opens thus: "Machiavelli stands out in the Western political and philosophical canon for the degree to which he rooted his arguments, hopes, and quarrels in the vocabulary of place. Like all great thinkers, of course, he also explored universal dimensions of the human condition" (1). This quality that Jurdjevic describes is what I have called, in regard to Shakespeare, the local global or global local, the universal particular or particular universal, an oxymoron that also applies to Machiavelli. Jurdjevic, who sees this Florentine as an urbane and urban writer in an urbanized Italy, aptly says:

For Machiavelli, however, Florence's traditions, history, and culture—its perversities and failures most of all—were the idiom in which he wrote, spoke, and thought. Machiavelli's search for the universal truths of political life was inextricable from his search for particular answers to the interrelated crises afflicting his life, Florence, and Italy. (1)

Machiavelli understood that, for Florence to become a great banking centre, the merchants in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, to control the city, successfully fought a civil war against its lawless and violent nobles who disrupted Florentine commercial life. Yet that very success made Florence and Italy vulnerable to outside military forces, as part of the dynastic rivalry between Valois and Habsburg, something explored in his *Florentine Histories* (3).

The Introduction is rich, including a strong analysis of Machiavelli and his times (4–24), so I will stress only a few aspects. Jurdjevic says that this collection highlights Machiavelli's "Florentine preoccupations," beyond *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy*, which the editors see "as analytical and historical tools with which he addressed contemporary crises and through which he understood the significance of Florentine history and his own role in it" (3). The editors prioritize Machiavelli's letters, literary works, and *Florentine Histories*, texts

that show, as he wrote to Francesco Vettori, that he loved Florence more than his soul and that he was a person of action whose writings were “the result of action” (4; see 3). The editors interpret Machiavelli as “foremost a political actor and pragmatic analyst and student of Florentine politics and society” (4) and hope to introduce English-speaking readers to an interpretation of Machiavelli explored by Gennaro Sasso, Mario Martelli, and Andrea Guidi. This collection helps to shed light on the Florentine Renaissance and the life of Machiavelli, a humanist who challenged humanism, who loved Florence but criticized it, who was ambivalent about the contradictions of the city (4).

Chapter 1, “Early Letters, Poems, and Military Writings (1498–1513),” includes the Prison Sonnets to Giuliano, Son of Lorenzo de’ Medici, whose sonnet 3 opens, “Giuliano, I send you some thrushes, / not because this gift be good or pretty, / but so that Your Magnificence, just a little, / may remember poor Machiavello” (39–40). The edition includes excerpts from *The Prince* (1513–15), which Machiavelli offered as a gift to Lorenzo de’ Medici the Younger: “if you consider it and read it carefully you will recognize in it my deepest desire that you should rise to the greatness which Fortuna and your own qualities promise you” (58). From Fortune, Machiavelli moves to envy and blame in the proem to book 1 of *Discourses on Livy* (1515–19): “Because of the envious nature of men it has always been no less dangerous to find new methods and institutions than to seek out seas and lands unknown, because men are more ready to blame than to praise the actions of others” (83). The prologue to Machiavelli’s comic play, *The Mandrake* (1515–17) states, “We mustn’t pay attention to words, or respect some idiot who doesn’t know, perhaps, whether he’s still alive” (108). Words and human nature are concerns for Machiavelli.

*Articles for a Pleasure Company* (post-1504) and *Belfagor* (1524) are satires on Florentine society (143–53). *The Art of War* (1519–20) discusses the philosophy and tactics of warfare and observes, “this land seems born to revive dead things, as has been seen in poetry, painting, and sculpture” (165). *Allocution to a Magistrate* (1519–20) explores impartial justice (166–68). *Discourse on Florentine Affairs* (1520–21) argues for republican government (169–80). “Midcareer Letters (1517–24)” represents many things, including friendship and politics (181–87). *Duties of an Ambassador* (1522) includes advice (188–91). The largest excerpt comes from *Florentine Histories* (1525), which concentrates on political culture and constitutional history, and ends thus: “as soon as Lorenzo was dead, those wicked seeds began to grow that, not

long after—because the only man who knew how to get rid of them was not alive—ruined and are still ruining Italy” (280). The “Late Letters (1525–27)” includes letters to Guicciardini and about the capture and imprisonment of François Ier in Madrid (281–95). This is a strong collection for students, scholars, and general readers.

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**Mampieri, Martina.**

***Living under the Evil Pope: The Hebrew Chronicle of Pope Paul IV by Benjamin Nehemiah ben Elnathan from Civitanova Marche (16th cent.).***

Studies in Jewish History and Culture 58. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. xx, 400. ISBN 978-90-04-41514-0 (hardcover) €168.

The tide appears to have turned definitively with regard to the study of Jews in early modern European history. It is increasingly difficult and also unnecessary for scholars of religious history in Europe to keep their denominations in boxes. For the early modern period, a wave of scholarship that examines points of conversion, collaboration, coercion, or mutual influence has thrown new light on the pressure points of the Reformation, and particularly on the roles of early modern Jewry. Comparative works such as Magda Teter’s *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth* (2020) or Kenneth Austin’s *The Jews and the Reformation* (2020), and narrower ones such as Peter Mazur’s *Conversion to Catholicism in Early Modern Italy* (2016) and Piet Van Boxel’s *Jewish Books in Christian Hands: Theology, Exegesis and Conversion under Gregory XIII* (2016), all suggest that no early modern Christian confession can be fully understood without reference to Judaism. Yet entrenched narratives are slow to change, however good the new scholarship, until there are new stories: primary sources that provide us with novel perspectives and that are accessible to introductory classes and to scholars venturing into new fields. For this reason, Martina Mampieri’s edition of Benjamin Nehemiah ben Elnathan’s *Chronicle of Pope Paul IV* is a very