What surfaces from this rhetorical reading is the high regard Machiavelli has for the power of the word. Despite his ultimate advocacy of ragion di stato, for instance, Machiavelli nevertheless regards eloquence, not physical might, as the power with which to build and control communities. Or, in reference to Machiavelli's own writing, Viroli demonstrates that Machiavelli is not so concerned with the objective truth of the scientist, but rather with the effective truth of the rhetorician, as declared in his famous though often mistranslated phrase la verità effettuale della cosa. Therefore, by situating Machiavelli's thought in the attitudes of his private and public life, and his texts under the rubric of rhetoric, Viroli allows us to come to a full understanding of Machiavelli's discourse.

In this way we are able to understand rhetoric as a key to his ideas. If somewhat circular, this argument is nonetheless compelling. It effectively challenges weather-worn interpretations by grounding itself in the likely interplay of man's political, philosophical and rhetorical views in relation to the intended meaning of his works. Thus Viroli successfully dislodges the interpretations of the political scientist and the adherent of power politics, replacing the former with that of the classical orator and the latter with that of an advocate of persuasion. By his conscious steps to retrieve Machiavelli's thought by interpreting his work through his favoured rhetoric of the classical tradition, Viroli avoids the pitfalls of anachronistic attributions and makes a convincing restoration to the portrait of our much known figure.

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Founded in the thirteenth century, the University of Padua was one of the most important European centres of learning in the medieval and early modern period. Padua attracted students and intellectual figures from Italy and the rest of Europe. As scholars have long recognized, it established a special connection with England via its contribution to the development of political, intellectual and cultural Tudor life. Jonathan Woolfson's excellent work catalogues the astounding number of Englishmen who journeyed to the northern Italian town for education, cultural refinement and to escape from religious persecution. The result is a well-written and detailed account of the Tudor experience in Padua that is more complete than any previous scholarship on this topic.

The main aim of this book is to portray Padua as a microcosm of Italy in its cultivation of new strains of humanist thought and in its encouragement of scholarly subjects still nascent in England, such as studies in the Greek language, Aristotelianism,
and, later, Erasmian humanism. Woolfson’s placement of the humanist Niccolò Leonico Tomeo (1456-1531) at the centre of an important humanist circle in the 1520s reflects the importance of the personal transmission of humanism. Leonico’s interpretations of Aristotelian natural philosophy influenced the study of medicine at Padua and bore fruit in the work of William Harvey, discoverer of the circulation of the blood. Padua’s thriving intellectual atmosphere encouraged interdisciplinary thinking. Woolfson argues persuasively that the political thought of Thomas Starkey was heavily influenced by the Paduan medical tradition.

...The second section of this book is a comprehensive biographical register of all Englishmen documented as having been in Padua between 1485 and 1603 and reflects Woolfson’s meticulous research in English and continental archives and libraries. The 350 entries reflect the wide range of Englishmen—there are no women on the list—who gathered at Padua. There are statesmen (Francis Walsingham and Henry Wotton), humanists (Thomas Starkey and Richard Pace), men of the church (Reginald Pole and Cuthbert Tunstall), intelligencers (William Barker), physicians (William Harvey and John Caius), and travellers (William Barker, Thomas Hoby and Philip Sidney). This list also reinforces one of Woolfson’s main arguments, namely that Padua was one of the preferred foreign destinations of English students at that time.

Despite conventional wisdom, religious upheaval did not check the constant influx of Englishmen into Padua during the Tudor age. Those who were not students, such as William Thomas and William Barker, through their writings added to the English perception of Italy. Others made contributions in the political sphere by acting as intelligencers and sending information home to England to supplement their travelling expenses. It is in these travellers and intelligencers, Woolfson argues, that we can see the genesis of the English grand tour.

...Padua and the Tudors is essential reading. It makes a significant contribution to Anglo-Italian scholarship in its discussions of the transmission and reception of humanism and in its presentation of the extraordinary richness of English life at Padua in the sixteenth century.

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Il carteggio Parisetti-Buonafede rientra nel ricco filone degli epistolari privati settecenteschi, una vena apparentemente inesauribile nella storia del costume e della cultura letteraria italiana del secolo dei lumi.