Finally, political reason to destruction and the Baroque. Thus, it is hard to agree with Navarrete when he writes that the “entire poem is based on rather trivial, time-worn comparisons, hyperbolically expanded and compounded by mythological allusions” (p. 217), for such a reading makes light of Quevedo’s explosive language and marginalizes ter Horst’s excellent interpretation.

In Quevedo’s case, the innovation within his poetry lies partly (a) in the attempted destruction of Petrarchism (Quevedo “is come not to fulfill the Petrarchan tradition but to destroy it,” p. 239); (b) in the whole process of defamiliarization / desautomatización (Pozuelo Yvancos, footnote 32, p. 265, and hence marginalized); and (c) more importantly, in what Blecua has called “el angustioso problema de la vida como muerte y de la inexorabilidad del tiempo” (p. 265, once again marginalized in a footnote). Finally, although Navarrete assures the reader that Petrarchism in Spain ends with Quevedo (pp. 233-240), it would not do to forget either the later works of Calderón or the clearly simplified Petrarchan imitations of Gónorrhia that continue well into the eighteenth century.

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Victoria Kahn’s *Machiavellian Rhetoric* would be an intriguing study if for no other reason than its arguing that Renaissance political writers were more astute readers of their contemporaries’ works than is generally recognized by modern commentators. It is also a daring study in that it offers a corrective reading to an influential body of modern historical scholarship on the import of Machiavellianism as a language of political discourse in the early modern period, scholarship exemplified in J. G. A. Pocock’s magisterial work, *The Machiavellian Moment*. Kahn’s study attempts to reorient our understanding of just what that “moment” entailed, especially for late-Renaissance English writers. In this endeavour she challenges Pocock (and others) both at the level of content (the specific claims he makes concerning the “substance” of Machiavellian political discourse) and at the level of methodology (how he goes about the work of reconstructing the language of Machiavellianism as it informed the writings of both Machiavelli and those who subsequently adapted that language to new ends).

There is certainly much to recommend in Kahn’s revisionary work. Central to her argument is that the modern focus on Machiavellianism as a language of “secular republicanism” fails to understand how Machiavelli’s work was actually read and
(re)conceptualized by late-Renaissance political writers. Although Kahn takes up many of the same topics addressed by Pocock — most notably Machiavelli’s concern with the relationship between virtù and fortuna — her emphasis on what she calls Machiavelli’s “rhetorical politics” is meant to redirect attention to how, in response to humanist notions of civic life, late-Renaissance political writers viewed political thinking less as a specific body of ideas than as a process of deliberation and persuasion carried out variously by, and affecting relations between, ruling figures, the “public” at large, and the writers themselves. As Kahn documents, this process — which revolved around a complex set of issues concerning, for example, the nature of prudence, the limits of exemplarity, and the “legitimacy” of force and fraud as forms of authority — could be applied in many different contexts; in that sense, she argues, Machiavellianism functioned as a language applicable to a range of political perspectives much broader than the “republican tradition” examined by Pocock.

Despite its laudable effort to alter the critical landscape, however, the study as a whole fails to convince, largely because it does not persuasively establish its central thesis: that the new attentiveness to the rhetorical dimensions of political life among late-Renaissance writers was distinctly and decisively “Machiavellian.” Kahn does succeed in establishing the two main components of this thesis: first, that Machiavelli was so widely read and so carefully studied by subsequent political writers (in England and elsewhere) that his works achieved authoritative status on a range of highly charged sociopolitical issues; and second, that late-Renaissance writers were increasingly interested in (both intellectually stimulated and troubled by) the rhetorical dimensions of political life. But what she does not do is establish the link between these tenets; that is, Kahn does not succeed in substantiating that later writers actively and self-consciously recontextualized Machiavelli’s writings, or ideas exclusively associated with those writings, to help articulate and resolve the new conceptual dilemmas posed by late-Renaissance political life. In short, if the rhetorical dimension of politics became a particularly significant theoretical issue within late-Renaissance political debates, it is not at all clear that Machiavelli should be considered the chief source of this understanding.

Indeed, time and again Kahn asks us to identify as distinctly “Machiavellian” themes, topics, maxims, historical examples, or modes of analysis that would have been available from a variety of sources. To see the limits of this perspective, we might consider two of her more weakly formulated claims. Kahn argues in chapter 4 that Bacon’s writings evince a Machiavellian approach to political issues because he addressed the possibility (both the promise and limits) of deploying fraudulent public display to promote one’s interests (a type of Machiavellian corruption as Pocock describes it). But surely this was an idea that Bacon could have learned from Roman historians (whose writings he also studied), or from his own research into English history (we have only to recall his history of Henry VII’s reign), or even (if not especially) from his own first-hand experience in the service of the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts. Moreover, to define Bacon’s indebtedness to Machiavelli in this
limited way is to do a disservice to our understanding of the complex line of influence between the two writers as evidenced in Bacon’s careful (typically Renaissance) rewriting of the Machiavellian texts (especially the Discourses and the Art of War) in essays such as “Of Empire” and “Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates.”

The shaky foundations of Kahn’s argument are even more pronounced in the book’s final section, which devotes three chapters to Milton’s indebtedness to Machiavelli’s understanding of rhetorical politics. The first two of these chapters, on Areopagitica (1644) and Comus (1634) respectively, are particularly ill-conceived in that there is little evidence that Milton gave serious attention to Machiavelli’s writings before the late 1640s or early 1650s. Like so many of his contemporaries (including his friend, Marchamont Nedham), Milton “rediscovered” Machiavelli in the context of the quest for “settlement” that attended the abolition of the monarchy in 1649. Moreover, even to the extent that Milton had carefully read Machiavelli by the early 1630s (and Kahn never suggests that he had), it is almost impossible to believe that, given his reading habits prior to his going public in the early 1640s, Milton needed Machiavelli to teach him that rhetorical concerns influenced public life: his entire educational background would have taught him that truism. Kahn constantly tries to sneak in traces of Machiavelli into Milton’s thought, but the connections she makes between Milton’s obsessive concern with the relations between ethics, politics, and faith (or between liberty and contingent modes of knowledge) and related concerns in Machiavelli’s writings simply fail to convince us that Machiavelli was a particularly significant source for Milton, at least in these earlier texts. (Kahn’s unsubstantiated assertion that the Lady’s oft-referred to “virtue” in Comus should be read in terms of Machiavellian virtù is, to say the least, a stretch). In short, nothing in Areopagitica or Comus seems especially dependent on Machiavellian topics or modes of analysis, and one senses a real strain in these chapters to make them conform to the book’s central line of argument. And even when she turns to Paradise Lost in her final chapter — which includes a truly brilliant analysis of how Milton linked concerns over the semiotics of knowledge to broader ethical and political concerns, and all within the context of his particular revisions of Protestant theology — she still does not persuade us that Milton was working in dialogue with Machiavelli, and this despite much more compelling evidence that by the time he came to compose his great epic Milton had given sustained attention to Machiavelli’s political thought: the fact that Satan is at once a dissimulating rhetorician and an espousal of republican ideas does not in itself mean that Milton conceived him in self-consciously Machiavellian terms.

In the end, despite moments of real insight, Kahn’s study falters because it is not sufficiently attentive to the need to theorize its own interpretive methodology. She does not distinguish, that is, between “Machiavellianism” as an available language of political thought (a “paradigm” in Pocock’s sense) and Machiavelli’s writings as texts that were read and subsequently rewritten (creatively misread, as Harold Bloom might say) to help resolve conceptual problems within later political debates. To take just one example of this conceptual blurring, when toward the end of the study Kahn refers to
Milton’s “pervasive Machiavellianism” (p. 194), the term “Machiavellianism” is really nothing more than short-hand for a very broad-based cultural discourse in which Machiavelli himself simply had a share. Considered from this perspective, the study would have been more effectively organized as a series of essays on how late-Renaissance (English) writers variously conceptualized the mutually sustaining yet problematic links between politics and rhetoric.

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For scholarly research concerning salaried musicians at the Florentine grand ducal court, the lasting significance of this handsome and spaciously designed book lies in the transcription of numerous and often substantial excerpts from documents found in the Archivio di Stato, Florence, and in a host of other archives and libraries around the world. Beginning in 1543 with the earliest records from the court of Cosimo I, who was made duke in 1537 and then grand duke of Tuscany in 1569, and ending in 1737 with the death of Gian Gastone, the last of a continuous line of Medici grand dukes, Kirkendale assembles archival references in separate studies for 173 court musicians and places them in chapters devoted to each of the grand dukes. Individual biographical studies are held together by a narrative thread wherein Kirkendale not only supplies a historical context but also gives informed commentary and notes, drawing attention to modern resources and critical studies. Although the narrative will inevitably be subject to modification with further research, it is in itself an impressive achievement in its clarity of presentation and erudition.

The limits and methodology of the project are candidly explained in the preface and bear reporting here in order to prevent misunderstanding. Kirkendale’s purpose is to create a resource book which contains reference to, if not quotations from, all known documents pertaining to court musicians of the Medici grand dukes: by stipulating grand dukes, Kirkendale excludes examination of other active patrons in the family, such as Grandprincipe Ferdinando (1663-1713), who died before the title was passed on from his father, Cosimo III. Thus, the book is heavily laden with Italian and to a far lesser degree Latin texts which Kirkendale transcribes, expanding abbreviations and standardizing such matters as accents and punctuation (but not orthographic irregularities) without comment — an editorial service which most readers will find useful.