

*Machiavelli's Prince. Traditions, Text and Translations*, ed. by Nicola Gardini and Martin McLaughlin, Rome 2017, Viella, 270 pp.

In the years since 2013, a deluge of publications about Machiavelli's *Prince* has flooded the academic publishing market. Many of these derived from conferences, which is scarcely surprising in view of the impressive celebrations that marked 2013 as the 500th anniversary of the composition of possibly the most famous work of the Italian Renaissance. The publications dealing with Machiavelli's treatise include *Machiavelli's Prince. Traditions, Text and Translations*, edited by Nicola Gardini and Martin McLaughlin, and printed in 2017. The book gathers the contributions presented at an international conference held at the University of Oxford on 22 and 23 November four years earlier, on the occasion of the celebrations.

As the editors explain in the introduction, the volume is divided into the three sections mentioned in the title. The first section, "Traditions", focuses on analysis of the classical sources that Machiavelli used for his work, including ancient traditions of thought with which he polemicized. This is the largest section of the book, containing almost half of the essays, seven out of a total of fifteen. The first chapter is by Robert Black and investigates the impact of the Florentine environment on Machiavelli's text. The focus is on the occurrence of specific terms of political vocabulary such as 'virtue' and 'state', illustrating how their semantic fields shifted in Machiavelli's works to adapt to changing historical-political circumstances. The next three chapters concentrate on the ancient and humanistic sources that appear in the *Prince*. It is a little surprising that the editors chose to reverse the chronological order, putting the study of humanistic sources before those of ancient tradition. The chapters written by Riccardo Fubini and Mario Domenichelli make connections between Machiavelli's text and other works: the former with Valla's *Repastinatio dialecticae*; the latter with the *Spiritual exercises* of Ignatius de Loyola and with the Jesuit and Platonic tradition more generally. In the following chapter William Landon addresses the relationship between Lucretius and Machiavelli, arguing that Machiavelli was influenced and guided by the Latin poet's materialism, leaving evident traces in the *Prince* and even more so in the *Asino*.

Following the tradition of political philology studies opened by Jean-Louis Furnel and Jean-Claude Zancarini, the following two chapters address the topic of Machiavelli's style, comparing texts related to his political and administrative activity with the language of the *Prince*. In the first of these, Claudia Bonsi explores the daily transcriptions of the Chancellery made by Machiavelli, linking them to those of Biagio Buonaccorsi, who was engaged in the same task in the same period. She uses the linguistic and lexical indicators to make hypotheses about the use of expressions and words in the *Prince*. In the second, instead, Corinne Manchio examines the *Legazioni*

*e commissarie* and the *Prince* together. The linguistic differences between the politician in action and in exile translate into an effort by the author to provide, in the treatise composed in Sant'Andrea in Percussina, a synthesis of previous experiences on the ground and a global political vision. Hilary Gatti's contribution, which concludes the first section of the volume, also examines the recurrence of key terms in the *Prince* and the *Discorsi*, such as the opening chapter. In this case, the word 'freedom' is at the centre of the analysis and Gatti, concentrating in particular on chapters V and XXVI, points out that the concept of freedom is connected in the work to that of the will in relation to the vicissitudes of fate.

The second part of the collection is entitled "Texts". It explores the textual characteristics of the *Prince* starting from the fundamental work of Giorgio Inglese for the critical editions of 1994 and the most recent one of 2013. The two editions, produced at a distance of almost twenty years from each other, allowed the author to illustrate the changes in the exegesis of the text, especially thanks to the refinement of philological instruments.

The uncertain identity of a figure in chapter XVIII of the treatise is under the magnifying glass of Giorgio Scichilone. Leading scholars such as Federico Chabod, Luigi Firpo, and Inglese himself (in the critical edition of 1994) believed that behind the nameless prince was Ferdinand of Spain. Scichilone, instead, favours the hypothesis already put forward by Mario Martelli that he preferred to the Spanish king, explicitly mentioned in chapter XXI, Giovanni de' Medici, suitably hidden as pontiff in office when Machiavelli composed his text. The second section of the book closes with a chapter focused on the famous chapter XXII, which deals with the importance of choosing good advisors. In this essay, Eugenio Refini probes in depth the sources of the work, shedding light on a double influence, Aristotelian and biblical, in the semantic value attributed by Machiavelli to the terms *discernere* and *sufficiente*.

The third section of the book, "Translations" considers the circulation and reception of the work. The theme is addressed through an overview of the various translations of the text over a period of time that covers almost three centuries, starting from the middle of the sixteenth. The five chapters of this final section outline a journey from France to the United Kingdom, back to the Continent in the Netherlands, touching Slovenia and finally ending the tour in Germany. Germano Pallini's essay examines the French translations from an unprecedented point of view: namely, the poems that accompanied the first French prints of the text. These allow us to observe the reception of the work in the political and cultural environment that preceded the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, which marked a watershed for Machiavelli's European popularity. Alessandra Petrina, on the other hand, as an expert on the circulation of Machiavellian works in Great Britain, describes the characteristics of a manuscript English translation of the *Prince*

preserved in the archives of Queen's College. This translation preceded the first printed version of 1640 by a few decades and was produced using both the Italian original and the Latin version by Sylvester Telius. Based instead on the French translations are the first Dutch versions, the subject of analysis by Francesca Terrenato. She examines two different printed editions, underlining the appreciation that the work encountered in the new Republic as compared to the demonization it had undergone in the previous century, particularly in Dutch academic circles.

Martina Ožbot opens a window on the reception of the *Prince* in Slovenia where the first partial translation dates back to 1878, and the first full version actually to the 20th century. However, the subject of Ožbot's examination is not the reasons for the delay in Slovenian translations compared to other European regions, but rather the formal and censorship differences between two translations: the 1920 translation – the first complete one – and that of 1966. Richie Robertson's study of the circulation of Machiavelli in Germany closes the section and the entire volume. His focus is very broad both in chronological terms (from the second half of the seventeenth century to the dawn of Romanticism) and in terms of the examined sources. In fact, Robertson considers the influence of Machiavelli's work in its entirety, not only the *Prince*, taking into account different kinds of text ranging from translations and political treatises to literary and oratorical works.

Together with the bibliography of studies dedicated to the *Prince* in recent years, this book confirms that attention to Machiavelli's brief treatise has never declined. In addition to the celebratory anniversaries, the richness of the Florentine archives providing new cues for investigation contributes to the interest, as does the history of the text beyond Italian borders, where new documentary sources add precious pages to the research.

The conference from which the book originated was – as we read in the programme – centred on the sources and circulation of the work. A section focused on the analysis of the text was subsequently added to the volume, but this raises some doubts, as does the allocation of the contributions to the various sections. Perhaps the decision to include a new section stems in part from the editors' desire to include in the collection the keynote lectures that probably had more general content. Alternatively, the editors may have wished to emphasize, from a structural point of view, their commitment to keeping the focus on the *Prince*, whereas some essays tend to leave this focus in the background, as in the case of the final chapter. The selection of chapters for the various parts of the book can also sometimes be puzzling to the reader. The chapters written by Black and Gatti, for example, appear to focus not on the possible sources of the work but on textual analysis, so that one would expect to find them in the second section. Similarly, Refini's essay would be more appropriately placed in the first section, since it takes into account ancient influences on Machiavelli's treatise.

The final part dedicated to translations appears to be particularly successful, since it deals effectively with the popularity of the *Prince*, working both on the political-cultural accounts in which it circulated and on the various forms of translation undertaken.

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