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# A MACHIAVELLIAN TREATISE

BY STEPHEN GARDINER

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
PETER SAMUEL DONALDSON



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## CONTENTS

PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	I
NOTE ON THE TEXT	40
Ragionamento dell'advenimento delli inglesi et normanni in Britannia	43
A Discourse on the Coming of the English and Normans to Britain	101
NOTES	152
INDEX	169

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## PREFACE

The text edited and translated here is the last work of Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, a leading statesman in the reign of Henry VIII and Lord Chancellor under Philip and Mary. It is entitled, in the Italian version of George Rainsford which is the only form in which it has survived, *Ragionamento dell'advenimento delli inglesi et normanni in Britannia*. There are two manuscripts, Escorial I. III. 17 and Besançon 1169, and these have been almost totally ignored by previous scholars. In fact, apart from the several catalogue references, there is only one previous notice of the existence of the work. In 1933, in an introduction to his edition of Gardiner's letters, James Arthur Muller cited a reference to the text in the *Catalogue général des manuscrits des Bibliothèques Publiques de France*. Muller, Gardiner's ablest biographer, had not been aware of the existence of the work previously. He asked Pierre Janelle, another leading Gardiner specialist who had not known of the treatise before, to examine it, but apparently this was not done, and the business of following up Muller's valuable lead has gone unattended until now. The present edition owes its existence to the suggestion of Professor Paul Oskar Kristeller: he examined the Besançon manuscript in 1966 and recognized the need for an edition. When work on that manuscript was nearly complete, Professor Kristeller found a reference to the second manuscript in a catalogue of Italian MSS at the library of El Escorial. This manuscript proved to be the one sent to Philip II to whom the Italian translation is dedicated, and it has served as the copy text for this edition.

According to the translator (fol. I<sup>r</sup>) Gardiner's original text was in English. No copy of an English version has been found, and this is not surprising, for Gardiner's posture in the work is far more pro-Spanish than he would have wished to appear to his countrymen. It is unlikely that Gardiner wanted an audience much larger than the two men to whom the surviving MSS were sent (Philip II and Antoine Perrenot, Bishop of Arras and later Cardinal Granvelle, Charles V's chief diplomatic minister), and when Elizabeth became queen the translator or anyone else who had a copy of the work would have had little reason to retain it, much less make it public, for Gardiner's work, though nominally historical, offers

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[More information](#)

#### PREFACE

political counsel to Philip of Spain designed to perpetuate Habsburg rule in England. The work does treat the Norman and Anglo-Saxon conquests, as the title says, but the purpose was not solely historical. The dynastic changes in England's past are presented as parallels to the coming of Philip, and the historical examples are explored for the sake of practical political counsel: how can a foreign prince rule England effectively and pass it on to his heirs?

In turning history into political advice, Gardiner drew upon the greatest political writer of the time: though the debt is never acknowledged, Gardiner borrows some 3,000 words directly from *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. Gardiner's relation to Machiavelli was, like his relation to the Habsburgs, more intimate than scholars have thus far been able to demonstrate, and the Elizabethan polemicists who pictured him as a Machiavellian schemer determined to betray poor England to the Spaniard were, despite their simplifications, not altogether mistaken. In fact, a fresh and thorough examination of Gardiner's whole career, rich in contradictions, is now in order; not only because Gardiner was, literally, a Machiavellian, but also because the present work clarifies his position on many important issues of the day, and, above all, affords an unequalled opportunity to study the way in which he looked to history and to political theory for the solution of practical political problems.

Gardiner's treatise is also an essential document in the wider history of European Machiavellism, and should be studied in that context: there were others, like Nifo, who quoted Machiavelli at length without attribution or otherwise covertly transmitted his works and ideas. There were others, too, like William Thomas, who tried to influence the policies of their sovereigns by offering analyses of current affairs drawn from Machiavelli. Gardiner's case is perhaps the most interesting and new work is called for in this field also. The present introduction cannot adequately explore either Gardiner's career or sixteenth-century Machiavellism in the light of the new evidence, and full treatment of these questions must be reserved for another occasion. This introduction is confined to the manuscript tradition, textual questions, the biography of the translator, a brief account of the sources, and the placing of the treatise in its immediate historical context in the reign of Mary.

Also, the present edition is of Gardiner's text and Rainsford's dedication only: the MSS include an appendix by Rainsford entitled *Ritratto d'Inghilterra*. This work was intended to supplement what Gardiner had done, to complete his analysis of English history

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and politics with the kind of formal description of the country that the Venetian ambassadors customarily sent home at the end of their service. It is usefully studied together with Gardiner's text, particularly as Rainsford's opinions on a number of issues are different from those of Gardiner. However, it has been decided to publish Rainsford's text separately in a forthcoming volume of the *Camden Miscellany* series. The limitation of space has made this necessary: his work, particularly his economic analysis of English society, raises issues of its own impossible to treat fully here.

I should like to thank Professor Kristeller for his generous help at every stage. Professor William Nelson, Professor G. R. Elton, Professor Richard Koffler and my wife Alice Donaldson also gave me the kind of assistance without which I could not have finished the job. I received valuable aid also from Professor Joseph Mazzeo, Professor Eugene Rice, Professor Daniel Javitch, Professor William Watson, Professor Paolo Valesio, Miss Judith Shenfield, Mrs Anne Rourke, Michael Moore, Craig Karpel, David Miller, John Muller IV, and my parents John J. and Constance Donaldson. I wish to thank the libraries of Besançon and El Escorial for permission to use their manuscripts, and the Old Dominion Fund of MIT for financial support.

This project, which began as a PhD dissertation at Columbia, has been long in preparation, and the present volume is not the end of it. The words of William Watts, Augustine's seventeenth century translator, seem relevant to my own experience, as they have seemed to other translators since his time: 'This translation I began for the exercise of my Lenten Devotions; but I quickly found it to exercise more than my Devotions: it exercised my skill (all I had); it exercised my Patience, it exercised my Friends too (for it is incomparably the hardest task that ever I yet undertook).'

Cambridge, Mass.  
 May 1974

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# RAGIONAMENTO

DELL' ADVENIMENTO DELL' INGRESI  
 ET NORMANNI IN BRITANNIA .

STEPHANO. ALPHONSO .



*D*icorrendo fra me scisso lun:  
 gamente, Honorato Cavaliero, ne s'io  
 alquanto come' tra Silla et Caribbe' sospe:  
 so, et dubbio qual recca seco mmore' peri:  
 colo, et manco biasmo, o' il concedere' o' il  
 negarui quello ch' e' come' esplic' me' ne' haude'