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COUNSELLORS AND COUNSELLED

The Advice to Princes Tradition between the Hundred Years' War and the British Interregnum

Padova, 12-13 September 2024

In 1327, fourteen-year-old Edward III was faced with the difficult task of restoring peace after Edward II's much-contested leadership, characterised by the presence of self-interested advisors. It comes as no surprise that a copy of the *Secreta Secretorum*, meant to provide instruction for the newly crowned king by offering both theoretical and practical advice, was commissioned for him shortly before his coronation. Throughout the Middle Ages, the genre had flourished giving birth to monumental treatises, as well as to a broader conversation on the nature of good and bad kingship. Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum* enjoyed an extraordinary fortune well beyond the Middle Ages; during the Renaissance, advice to princes literature continued to flourish in manuscript and print, also thanks to the development of new theories on government. From John Skelton's *Speculum principis* (1501), written for a young Henry VIII, to George Buchanan's *De Iure Regni apud Scotos* (1579), directed to James VI of Scotland during his minority, Renaissance treatises bridge direct royal advice with both political pragmatism and legal theory. Continental works play a part in this process, contributing to the incorporation of European models into the national political discourse, with the translations of Machiavelli's *Prince* (1532) and Baldassar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528). Ideal kingship could also be contrastively defined by negative examples of tyrannical or unsuccessful monarchs. The tradition of tragic *exempla* of fallen princes begun by Boccaccio's *De Casibus* (1370s), focusing on the tragic consequences of bad leadership, was expanded by Lydgate and later reworked in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1555-1610). The genre of the *speculum principis* evolved from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance by continuously readapting itself to the changing times. This tradition informed many

literary works where the idea of good and bad kingship, as well as of loyal and treacherous advisors, is explored. The organising committee welcomes contributions analysing advice literature directed to kings and princes, as well works dealing with the delicate balance between king and counsellors, in Medieval and Renaissance Britain. Topic suggestions include – but are not limited to:

- Literature of advice to princes in Latin and English
- (Dis)continuities between the Medieval and the Early Modern advice tradition
- Relationship between counsellors and counselled
- Relationship with politics and history
- Relationship between literature and political theory
- Advice to political actors and its literary echoes in the British Isles

Keynote speakers:

Raluca Radulescu, Bangor University
Andrew Hadfield, University of Sussex

Proposals for 20-minute individual papers can be sent to: alessandra.petrina@unipd.it and should include a 350-word abstract and a 100-word biographical note. The deadline for submitting proposals is 29 February 2024. Notification of acceptance will be sent by 31 March 2024.

Scientific and Organising Committee: Alice Equestri, Alessandra Petrina, Sibilla Siano, Allison Steenson.