

**ANNALI D'ITALIANISTICA**

**VOLUME 41**

**(2023)**

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shed a great light on such a controversial and complex theme adding one essential piece toward the solution of the riddle.

Enrico Minardi, *Arizona State University*

**Fulvio Delle Donne, and Guido Cappelli. *Nel Regno delle lettere. Umanesimo e politica nel Mezzogiorno aragonese*. Roma: Carocci, 2021. Pp. 239.**

This volume, written by two experts in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, provides us with a better insight into political thought and historical-political literature in Italian Humanism. The focus is placed on Southern Italy and specifically on the “Umanesimo aragonese,” or “Umanesimo monarchico,” a meaningful definition that emphasizes the “spazio politico che fiori” (190) in the kingdom of Naples under the Aragonese monarchs. This book presents the outcomes of the yearslong research by the two authors, thanks to a fruitful collaboration evidenced by the consistency of the volume, which represents a fundamental landmark in the field, especially for the innovativeness of its critical perspectives.

The ground-breaking elements of this publication make it a must-have resource for the study of fifteenth-century Italy and, more broadly, the history of political ideologies. The exploration of the *Mezzogiorno aragonese*, an area partially neglected in international scholarship so far, proves it to play a crucial role in the evolution of Renaissance (and modern) culture. This thematic scope is closely connected with another innovative approach in the book: the acknowledgment of the centrality, in this age, of theories of monarchical power and literature devoted to it. Such output, only recently examined through unbiased critical lenses, has been given the deserved place in the history of Humanism and has been “cleared” from the scholarly marginalization it has undergone until the previous century. Indeed, this publication largely contributes to the progression of a recent strand of studies (fostered by the previous pioneering works by both authors) that goes beyond the partial stance predominant in twentieth-century scholarship, which mainly concentrated on “republicanism,” unconvincingly (and anachronistically) regarded as the chief current of thought in political Humanism. Conversely, the expansion of new interdisciplinary analyses of different sources (historical, literary, philosophical, artistic) liberated humanist theories from the traditional labels of “naive” and too idealistic, leading to a reconsideration of interpretative categories which appear too narrow and inadequate to explain complex phenomena: in particular, a radical review of the category of “civic humanism,” which this book contributes to reconsider, has brought a reassessment of the too clear-cut (and often groundless) distinction between republican and princely ideals. Another key point made by the book is that the theory framed by the “Umanesimo monarchico” had a crucial influence on the gradual process that would lead to the emergence of the modern concept of the state. Moreover, the authors provide a comprehensive image of the close interplay between

historiographical narratives and political treatises that gave life to Aragonese Humanism, with a look also at other genres, showing the eclectic and intercommunicating nature of the various forms of humanist literature.

The synergy between historiography and political-theoretical works is at the core of the structure of the volume, which is divided into two sections. “*La maiestas e la sua legittimazione*” (by Delle Donne, 23-96) focuses on Alfonso the Magnanimous’s reign and on the legitimization of his newly-established power which was carried out through the construction of a shared historical memory by means of historiographical texts. The second section (by Cappelli, 97-187), “*La maiestas e la sua affermazione*,” looks mainly at the reign of Ferdinando of Aragon and at the production of a “trattatistica nelle sue forme più varie e flessibili” (192), which provides ideological support for—and represents—a specific model of the state: a centralized and organic system, based on the principle of body politics and on the mutual bond between a virtuous ruler and his people. The book opens with a *Prologo*, significantly entitled “La letteratura politica, la politica della letteratura.” Chapter 1 illustrates the instauration of Alfonso’s domain, concentrating on the legitimizing narratives produced by various authors and on the language through which this historical memory was disseminated. Chapter 2 reconstructs how Aragonese rule built a sophisticated system of cultural politics, in which the leading figure was Antonio Panormita, the “artefice della svolta umanistica” (50), who was committed to a cultural operation intended to “legittimare eroicamente” (55) the new power. This chapter is also devoted to other prominent authors, in particular Lorenzo Valla and Bartolomeo Facio, and to their contrasting ideas on historiography and its political function. Chapter 3 focuses on Alfonso’s triumph, a milestone in the definition and representation of the king’s ideology, an event that is significantly presented as “il trionfo dell’Umanesimo monarchico” (76): indeed, the whole complex ceremony, based on an “active” recovery of the classical tradition and aimed at conveying specific political messages, was narrated and illustrated by numerous humanists and artists. Chapter 4 moves on to the actual political theorization produced under Ferdinando’s reign, whose most influential expressions can be found in the treatises by Giovanni Pontano, “capofila indiscusso [...] dei teorici di Ferrante” (109): the analysis concentrates on the *De principe* and *De obedientia*, which provide a full-length theory of the state, defining the conducts of both the leader and the subjects; but the investigation includes other authors too, paying attention also to poetry, and showing how this output as a whole gave life to “una dottrina dello stato *in nuce*” (114). Chapter 5 examines the conception of the state framed in Pontano’s *De obedientia* and in works by other humanists (e.g., Diomede Carafa, Giuniano Maio), highlighting the centrality in this theory of the principle of “organicismo politico” (which was at the basis of most humanist political models, regardless of institutional forms) and of the interconnected topics of obedience, reprisal of dissent, and the building of

consensus. Chapter 6 comes to the rule of Alfonso II and the end of the reign, with a look also at the period “oltre il regno” and authors active in the Cinquecento, pointing out how humanist doctrines have been appropriated by aristocracy. Finally, the *Epilogo* presents the conclusions, underscoring that the idea of *maiestas*, pivotal in the “Umanesimo monarchico”, was “fondativa dello stato moderno” (193).

In summary, this volume represents a substantial contribution to the study of Italian Humanism and an invaluable resource for scholars in different fields of Medieval and Renaissance studies, from history and literature to the history of political thought.

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**Lorenzo Geri, Marco Grimaldi, and Nicolò Maldina, eds. *La lirica italiana. Un lessico fondamentale (secoli XIII-XIV)*. Roma: Carocci, 2021. Pp. 344.**

Published in the Carocci series Studi Superiori, the volume *La lirica italiana. Un lessico fondamentale (secoli XIII-XIV)*, edited by Lorenzo Geri, Marco Grimaldi, and Nicolò Maldina, offers a thematic map of important questions regarding medieval Italian poetry. The volume includes a “Premessa” (13-14), written by the editors, and twenty chapters, whose aim is to navigate the rich constellation of literary, historical, and philological issues of medieval lyric through its critical lexicon.

As noted in the introduction (13), the most immediate frame of reference is that of companions and of similar *lessici critici*. The keywords selected as entryways to medieval Italian poetry are discussed by a host of scholars, all coming from Italian institutions, and at different points of their academic careers. The contributors are all engaged in Italian and Romance philology to a certain extent, a shared background that nurtures the whole book. The entries are presented in alphabetical order, and yet they might be read against the grain along three directions: main themes; places of production and reception; genres, models, and styles. The *lessico fondamentale* deals with love (Roberto Rea), city (Nicolò Maldina), comic mode (Marco Berisso), court (Lorenzo Geri), dialogue (Claudio Giunta), philosophy (Luca Lombardo), poetic genres and forms (Marco Grimaldi), geography (Federico Ruggiero), the lyric self (Lorenzo Geri), language (Irene Iocca), Biblical models (Nicolò Maldina), Classical models (Natascia Tonelli), Romance models (Simone Marcenaro), ethical issues (Marialaura Aghelu), music (Maria Sofia Lannutti), politics (Enrico Fenzi), reality and realism (Marco Grimaldi), rhetoric (Veronica Albi), sacred (Matteo Leonardi), and textual transmission (Giuseppe Marrani).

The volume is presented as an up-to-date introduction (“un’introduzione agile e aggiornata,” 13) for students of Italian literature and philology at the beginning of their undergraduate career, while still welcoming further research