
Literature, Politics and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance

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Instrument

Joint seminar / conference involving early-stage researchers

Description

The project is focused on the intersection between politics, historiography and literature during the long Renaissance (from the late fifteenth to the late seventeenth century). Several Renaissance writers had indeed political and diplomatic functions as primary activity, but because of long-lasting aesthetical prejudices about the Renaissance literary experience, this field remains a quite unexplored one. We therefore aim to bring attention to this component through the organization of two joint conferences, which will provide the opportunity for the official constitution of an international research group on this subject.

The aim of the project as a whole is to raise critical attention to the need to assume a historical perspective in literary studies and to acknowledge that Renaissance literature is an artistic experience deeply-rooted in the political context, in particular in the years of the Italian Wars and of the Thirty Years War, when Italian writers lost at the same time their social and cultural function, and had to find new ways to affirm the values of art. In this time of deep crisis and uncertainty they found a solution in the classicism; yet this classicism was not conceived as a form of disengagement, but rather as a medium through which they examined thoroughly their contemporary political world. The two workshops deal with the hidden meaning of this classicist poetics, shedding new light on the intersection, neglected, but central in order to broadly understand the phenomenon of early modern classicism, between historiography, politics and literature in the long Italian Renaissance.

Activities

Two international conferences are planned that gather experienced and young early-career scholars: "Tacitus ad litteram: quotational strategies from the political works of Tacitus in the seventeenth-century Italian literature" (Padova, February 3rd-4th), and "Poetry, politics, history during the Italian Renaissance (1492-1555)" (Lausanne, November 10th-11th).

The first conference aims to investigate a particular form of the revival of Tacitus's work in seventeenth-century Italy, that is the quotation, exploring the appropriations and distortions of Tacitus' thought in the different genres of baroque political literature, from pamphlets to historiographical works. The workshop deals with the manipulation of Tacitus' text in Renaissance political literature.

The November conference, conceived as a seminar, aims to survey, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the ways in which poets alluded to some important contemporary political events such as the Italian Wars. The papers will pay particular attention to lyric, in which the political discourse is less traditional, especially in the context of Renaissance Petrarchism, in order to map the elaboration and the circulation of political and historiographical texts written between 1492 and 1555, and to better

**Potential for
follow-up
activities**

understand the meaning of such political allusions in these lyrical works and the role of intellectuals in the Renaissance society.

The two conferences will be the first step of a broader collaboration that will bring us to establish a joint international research group working on the intersections between literature, politics, historiography and diplomacy in the early modern period, with the objective to become a point of reference in the field of Renaissance studies, by organizing periodical workshops and establishing a book series, possibly open access.

One of the first goal of the research group is to collect data about the encomiastic literature in the long Renaissance and create a public database of literary texts which will not only make available philological information about this production but also help to understand how the writers dealt with the contemporary political ideas.

A second objective is to develop the research on the use of quotations from ancient authors in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works, investigating how the work of other Greek and Latin writers, such as Plutarch or Livy, were manipulated in the long Italian Renaissance.

Finally, we plan to establish a joint Winter School on Renaissance political literature that will be held alternatively in Lausanne and Padova, involving both internal and external scholars, addressed to PhD students and post-docs – not only of these two universities – whose research work belongs to this area.