

*Poetry and Identity in Quattrocento Naples.* Matteo Soranzo.

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This 170-page book consists of six chapters, corresponding to material already published but expanded for this book. After a few acknowledgments thanking the small world of Neo-Latin scholars, an introduction sets out to define the author's choice of Naples in the Aragonese. Chapter 1 focuses on the use of the Latin language at the court of Naples as founding Neapolitan identity, especially in contrast with the authors writing in vernacular Catalan present at the court of the Aragon princes. This is already a token of the author's bias, as most recent studies tend to show how indebted Neapolitan humanism was to Catalan and vernacular roots, while Latin as a spoken language was a further mark of distinction. Chapter 2 develops the particular attitude Giovanni Pontano, the prime minister and the greatest figure of Neapolitan humanism, adopted toward his respective homelands: we follow him from Umbria to Parthenope, which he identifies with the power of poetry. This is the most convincing part of the book, as it aptly introduces the two foundations at work in Giovanni Pontano's poetry in terms of culture and identity: Umbria is identified with Plautus, the iconic author who was also his linguistic model, but also with Propertius, one of his models for the writing of elegies; Naples is his eminently Virgilian adoptive country. It was only late in his life, in 1471, that Pontano chose to become a Neapolitan citizen, if such an anachronism may be here formulated. Naples did not prove ungrateful, since the city called its academy Pontanian.

This quest for identity continues in chapter 3, in which the author focuses on Giovanni Pontano's love poetry as representative of a particular conception of marriage in Neapolitan society during the Quattrocento. This is really a new way to consider the

most studied Pontanian poetry, with a perspective clearly borrowed from social sciences; it enables Soranzo to suggest that Pontano's love poetry was a major cornerstone in the poet's assimilation and in the construction of a new identity. Chapter 4 emphasizes Sannazaro by recontextualizing the pastoral affiliations between *Arcadia* and Pontano's *Urania*. In spite of this chapter being oriented toward intertextuality, Sannazaro's choice of language might have been more deeply analyzed. Chapter 5 makes a connection between Pontano's astrological poems and Florentine movements (including Giovanni Pico della Mirandola) that were gaining ground in the court of Naples through Giles of Viterbo, the disciple of Ficino who helped the circulation of Florentine Neoplatonism. This is why chapter 6 examines the poetic conversion of Aragon atmosphere just after the death of Pontano and especially in Sannazaro, and what it means in terms of religious identity. Interestingly enough, it is with Pontano's demise that Florentine influence could develop, whether in philosophical theories or in poetic matters. Sannazaro choosing to write his *Arcadia* in the earliest form of Tuscan language was no chance event either, founding as it did Italian pastoral poetry. A brief conclusion summarizes the subject of this book and shows how the problematics addressed by the Neapolitan humanists of the time were identity issues that had their full part in cultural and social studies. An extensive bibliography is followed by an index, but, if the great classics are there, the bibliography is not exactly up-to-date, as it does not include the most recent editions of some of Pontano's texts.

The book is structured according to chronological order and stresses the very gradual construction of a genuine Neapolitan identity through its two main figures, namely Pontano and Sannazaro, but without fully avoiding the mishaps and pitfalls of teleology. The great merit of this book is to bring together scholarly writing that will reach a wider audience of enlightened amateurs, by contextualizing Neapolitan humanism within cultural studies of early modern Europe.

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