

The politics of culture in Quattrocento Europe: René of Anjou in Italy

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Abstrak

This book explores how Rene of Anjou, French prince and exiled king of Naples (1409-80) engaged his Italian network in a programme of cultural politics conducted with an eye towards a return to power in Italy. Built on a series of original interpretations of humanistic and artistic material (chiefly neo-Latin literature and illuminated manuscripts of classical texts), the book is also a case study for a diplomatic approach to culture. It recasts this source base as a form of high-level communication for a hyper-literate elite of those who could read the works created by humanist and artistic agents for their constituent parts: the potent words or phrases and relevant classical allusions; the channels through which a given work was commissioned or transmitted; and then the nature of the network gathered around a political agenda. Works produced by Janus Pannonius, Giovanni Bellini, and others were crucial to the development and aggrandizement of the network, which was the foundation of a power bloc intended to return René to power in Naples. After René's ultimate military failure in the 1458-64 Neapolitan war of succession, his network evolved into a faction opposed to the Italian League and the state system it sustained. This book poses a challenge to conventional interpretations of the politics of humanism, and offers a new vision of the Quattrocento: a century in which the Italian Renaissance began its takeover of Europe, but in which Renaissance culture was itself shaped by its European political, social, and diplomatic context.