

A Good Man or a Good Citizen? Aristotelian Politics and the Italian Renaissance Courts

Dr Grace Allen

The John Rylands Research Institute, University of Manchester

The author:

Grace Allen completed her PhD on at the Warburg Institute on the topic *Vernacular Encounters with Aristotle's Politics in Renaissance Italy*. The work was undertaken as part of the AHRC research project with the University of Warwick on Vernacular Aristotelianism in Renaissance Italy, c. 1400-c. 1650 which ran from October 2010 to January 2014. As far as is known, this was the first funded research project world-wide to study the Renaissance diffusion of Aristotelian works in the Italian vernacular. This initiative tried to redress the almost exclusive concentration on Latin Aristotelianism among historians of philosophy and ideas in recent decades and provided an electronic census and description of all relevant materials in both manuscript and print. From August 2016-July 2017 she was a Research Associate of The John Rylands Research Institute, University of Manchester, where she used the special collections of the John Rylands Library to explore the presence of classical Greek political thought, in particular that of Aristotle, Plato and Polybius, in the active politics of the late Italian Renaissance.

The paper:

This paper focuses on the presence of Aristotelian politics in literature produced in the sixteenth century Italian courts, particularly advice literature intended for the new political professionals of the sixteenth century. The starting point is Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano*, composed in the first decades of the sixteenth century and published in 1528, which offers the first and most influential portrait of the ideal courtier; its author was a court professional who undertook diplomatic missions which included representing the Duke of Urbino at a ceremony for the award of the Order of the Garter in England, a mission referenced in the work. Other texts include Bernardo Segni's commentary on the *Politics*, notable for its composition under the auspices of the Accademia Fiorentina, Torquato Tasso's dialogue *Il Messaggero* (which includes a discussion of the Renaissance ambassador) and various works on the courtly secretary. Key points of discussion are the forms of political government, the concept of tyranny, and finally the question posed in the title of the paper, which resonates in all these discussions: could a courtier be both a good man and a good servant of the state?