

## Prato Consortium Postgraduate Roundtable, 2016

12-13 December, Prato

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During my current research stay in Florence on a fellowship at the Dutch University Institute (Istituto olandese di storia dell'arte, NIKI), I was able to participate in this year's Prato Consortium for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Postgraduate Roundtable, organised by the University of Monash on 13 December. The roundtable and



workshop were preceded on 12 December by the inspiring lecture '*To appease the rightful resentment of God': Rome's response to calamity during the 1703 earthquake*, delivered by prof. Monica Azzolini, in which she investigated the response of Italian culture and society to past and present earthquakes through the prism of the earthquakes of 1703 in central Italy and Rome. Particularly interesting from a methodological point of view was her use of a wide range of sources, including paintings, literary works in both print and manuscript, historical documentation, and material culture to trace the histories of earthquakes, the physical and emotional damage they left behind, and their influence on future responses to such disasters. Prof. Azzolini's lecture was, in turn, followed by the launch of the new book *Studies on Florence and the Italian Renaissance in Honour of F.W. Kent*, edited by Peter Howard and Cecilia Hewlett (Brepols, 2016) by prof. John Henderson.

The two roundtable sessions on Tuesday 13 December offered Warwick colleagues Maria Kolpakova, Ovanes Akopyan, and myself a splendid occasion to present our research in a friendly, yet highly specialized, and academically stimulating environment. In the morning's first three presentations religious and worldly artefacts, testifying to cultural exchange in Italian and European contexts, were approached from art-historical perspectives. During the second session thought provoking papers, characterised by perspectives related to history of medicine, intellectual history and philosophy, were presented on Avicennan anatomy, Zerbi's *De cautelis medicorum*, and on Cardinal Isidore of Kiev ('Maximus the Greek'). In my own paper, *Publishers at the Intersection of Cultures: Italian Contacts and the Creation of Joan Blaeu's Theatrum Italiae (1663)* I looked at the significance of Italo-Dutch contacts for the collecting of source material for, and compilation of, Blaeu's town atlases of Italy. Presenting several case studies on which I am currently working, combining source material from Florence and Rome, proved both challenging and extremely rewarding; Monash's Roundtable in Prato provided a good context to discuss work-in-progress among students and highly esteemed scholars sharing a keen interest in early modern Italy. After my paper, I received excellent, constructive feedback that will be useful both for my current research in Italy and my dissertation more generally.

Following the roundtable, inspiring conversations continued over lunch, and during prof. Nicholas Terpstra's workshop on *The Future of Renaissance Studies*. All in all, I look back at a fruitful two days in Prato, during which I got the chance to (re)connect with fellow postgraduate students and senior scholars in a truly global context, to which, as remarked by Nicholas Terpstra, the roundtable's topics and approaches testified.