

**Renaissance and Reformation**  
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**Poliziano, Angelo. Coniurationis commentarium. Ed., intro.,  
and trans. Marta Celati**

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The volume edited by Pierno offers a thorough sample of the Italian religious writings and their various genres from the Middle Ages to the late Renaissance, and encourages scholars to continue along this research trajectory. Above all, it shows the non-canonical but always literary works of that period, and the role of Catholic Church in shaping Italian vernacular before the Council of Trent imposed its severe cultural politics and before the linguistic model of Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) got the better of the others.

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**Poliziano, Angelo.**

***Coniurationis commentarium*. Ed., intro., and trans. Marta Celati.**

Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2015. Pp. vii, 109. ISBN 978-88-6274-636-6 (paperback) €15.

Written and distributed immediately after the Pazzi Conspiracy—an anti-Medicean plot culminating in the gruesome assassination of Lorenzo de Medici's brother and the subsequent reprisal against the conspirators in April 1478—Poliziano's *Coniurationis commentarium* is a book that defies any easy classification. An act of political propaganda responding to specific events and confined to the narrow borders of Florence, the text—as some sort of dark counterpoint to Poliziano's *Stanze*—is also a refined work of literature, engaged in a dialogue with the immortal models of Roman historiography. By means of a new critical edition, commentary, and Italian translation of this often neglected text, Celati skillfully situates Poliziano's work in its cultural context, thus contributing to our knowledge not only of the author but of humanistic historiography at large.

The book comprises an introduction, the text in Latin with facing Italian translation, a selection of epigrams against the conspirator Francesco Salviati, and a detailed commentary. The introduction discusses the *Commentarium's* genesis and context of publication, the definition of conspiracy-history as a sub-genre of humanistic historiography, the political implications of Poliziano's angle on the Pazzi conspiracy, the text's classical models and sources, the differences between the *princeps* of 1478 and the second edition of 1480, the

circulation of the text in manuscript and print, and its influence on Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine*. Of all the important information found in the introduction, of particular interest is Celati's identification of a specific tradition of Latin texts on conspiracies, which grew—together with princely advice books—in the second half of the Quattrocento in conjunction with the erosion of republican forms of government in the Italian city-states. Celati, moreover, illustrates the history of this genre by looking at the diffusion of the *Commentarium* in Aragonese Naples, where it was brought and soon imitated by none other than the king's secretary Giovanni Pontano, who first understood the political potential of Poliziano's invention.

As for the text itself, Celati replaces A. Perosa's critical edition—which was based solely on the *Commentarium*'s printed versions—with a new Latin text revised against a number of previously ignored manuscripts preserved in England and Italy. Together with a more reliable text, the investigation of the *Commentarium*'s manuscript tradition also revealed a number of authorial variants, which can be read in the commentary. Celati, moreover, supplants previous Italian translations with one of her own, which not only faithfully conveys the literal meaning of the Latin text but also expresses its often fragmented and elliptical syntax modelled upon Sallustius's *De Catilinae coniuratione*. What makes Celati's work really outstanding, however, is the informative and well-conceived commentary appended to Poliziano's text, which perfectly illustrates its *realia* while indicating in detail its classical sources. As the viewers of a fresco by Botticelli, readers are thus called to detect the gestures of Caesar as described by Suetonius in Poliziano's description of Lorenzo de Medici resisting the assailants, while also appreciating the numerous snippets from Ovid and Virgil wrapped around the victims of the gruesome attack.

Because of its balanced combination of textual criticism and historical contextualization, Celati's edition of Poliziano's *Commentarium* is a must-read for scholars of Florentine humanism, neo-Latin literature, and, more generally, for anybody interested in the relationship between political institutions, cultural production, and the social function of literary forms.

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