

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Alessi, Niccolò. *Columbeidos sive Vita b. Columbae virginis reatinae ordinis de Poenitentia S. Dominici*. Ed. Andrea Maiarelli

Mattia Zangari

Volume 40, Number 4, Fall 2017

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086074ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29276>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Zangari, M. (2017). Review of [Alessi, Niccolò. *Columbeidos sive Vita b. Columbae virginis reatinae ordinis de Poenitentia S. Dominici*. Ed. Andrea Maiarelli]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 40(4), 183–185. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v40i4.29276>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2017

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

une somme et un sommaire, que la communauté scientifique se doit de lire et continuer, comme si, en fin de ce troisième volume, l'on pouvait commencer à saisir les domaines et les interactions des termes du titre : Renaissance, Europe et diversité.

L'ancrage lorrain de ce point de départ permet enfin de considérer explicitement les repères historiographiques et géopolitiques des cartes et histoires de l'Europe. Ce faisant, le foisonnement des perspectives fournit les outils et matériaux pour penser — et construire — une identité culturelle européenne. Souhaitons que ce projet, éloigné des généralités pour mieux ouvrir perspectives et dialogues, trouve de nombreux lecteurs et échos ! Il démontre de manière exemplaire, dans sa rigueur comme dans son ampleur, que la diversité n'est pas un mot creux mais, bel et bien, la voie vers une épistémologie du pluralisme. C'est un magnifique projet que de peser, dessiner et définir « la Renaissance en Europe dans sa diversité ». Grands mercis aux acteurs, auteurs, éditeurs qui l'ont partagé avec les lecteurs.

HÉLÈNE CAZES

University of Victoria

**Alessi, Niccolò.**

***Columbeidos sive Vita b. Columbae virginis reatinae ordinis de Poenitentia S. Dominici*. Ed. Andrea Maiarelli.**

Quaderni del Centro per il collegamento degli studi medievali e umanistici in Umbria 57. Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2016. Pp. cxvi, 332. ISBN 978-88-68-0-141-5 (hardcover) €65.

The evocative *historia* of Angiolella Colomba Guadagnoli (1467–1501), Dominican tertiary and founder of the observant monastery of Colombe in Perugia, has come down to us not only in two legendary and hagiographical *legendae* (one in Latin and one in the vernacular) but also in a long Latin poem in hexameters (nine books for a total of 6,802 verses) written around 1580 by the Dominican Niccolò Alessi (1509?–85). This poem has recently been edited by Andrea Maiarelli. Even if Alessi did not enrich the narrative plot of the work, essentially limiting himself to putting the two prose legends into verse, he did nonetheless make precise and specific editorial choices and conveniently

omitted certain elements from the prose versions. Given the delicate historical moment in which Colomba's *fabula* was written, Alessi's editorial choices mean more than some "parole che poco possono dizere" (words that can say little), to quote an earlier mystic, Angela da Foligno (*Il libro della beata Angela da Foligno*, ed. L. Thier and A. Calufetti, Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Quas, 1985, p. 189).

Colomba, who was born in Rieti, arrived in Perugia in 1488, where she founded the so-called Colombe monastery in 1493. Alessi's biography of the saint is full of historical people with whom Colomba interacted regularly; it underlines her charisma, visions, ecstasies, and thaumaturgical powers. The arrival of a severe plague in Perugia, Colomba's ability to predict very brutal internal fights, and the capitulation of the powerful Baglioni family are present in the three texts: the two *legendae* by Sebastiano Angeli (completed in the first quarter of the sixteenth century) and the *Colombeide* (dating to the last quarter of the sixteenth century).

A native of Perugia, Alessi was a learned preacher and professor of theology in several Italian cities. In his poem, he displays a refined narrative technique indebted to classical authors from Virgil to Lucan, from Horace to Titus Livy, from Juvenal to Propertius (as Maiarelli clearly points out; see xv–lxvi, xc–xciii). Maiarelli's introduction to the edition is rich in content and very useful. With a strong ability to synthesize, Maiarelli offers modern readers the necessary information about the author, the structure of the poem, its narrative structures, and the interactive dimension of sources that conveniently communicate and intersect.

In an effort to identify an approximate date of composition, Maiarelli suggests 1577 as the *terminus post quem*. The poem was, in fact, written before the plague of 1576–77 arrived in Perugia (vv. 1190–96). The titles of the paragraphs in *Columbeidos* are the same as the respective paragraphs in the Latin version; yet the similarity between the two Latin texts disappears towards the end of the work, when Alessi seems to become more laconic about the narration.

As I indicated above, there are some significant omissions. Maiarelli suggests that they are caused by Alessi's effort to avoid suggesting that the Blessed Colomba may be tied to Savonarolan circles. Sebastiano Angeli, who was one of Colomba's many confessors and one of her biographers, had been condemned by the Roman curia for his involvement in the Savonarolian

movement. Maiarelli suggests that it made Angeli unsuitable to be Colomba's spiritual guide (lxxviii–iv). Just to be safe, Alessi avoided any possible reference to Savonarola and avoided some of the material from the Latin legend that could have compromised the Blessed Colomba by a possible connection.

Compiled between 1635 and 1639 at Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Guidi's request, the manuscript (BAV 11808) is dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Barberini. It is in a good state of conservation and presents a beautiful page in which the image of the Blessed Columba receiving the Eucharist from an angel stands out. Although the manuscript was not addressed to readers expert in sixteenth-century Latin, we can easily say that its intended readers were at least familiar with the *latinus sermo*. The exegesis and the introduction offer a double apparatus: lexical, morphological and syntactic information, and annotations of a literary, historical, and mythological nature. On the whole, this is a fine edition of a rare text that raises the hope of further scholarly attention to Niccolò Alessi's poem on the Blessed Colomba and other late fifteenth-century holy women.

MATTIA ZANGARI  
Università di Firenze

**Archer, Harriet, and Andrew Hadfield, eds.**

***A Mirror for Magistrates in Context: Literature, History and Politics in Early Modern England.***

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xiv, 258. ISBN 978-1-107-10435-8 (hardcover) US\$99.99.

Sources generally agree that *A Mirror for Magistrates* was a publishing phenomenon in early modern England. It first appeared in bookstalls in 1563, and new editions were issued continually throughout the reign of Elizabeth I and well into the reign of James I. It greatly influenced contemporary writers, including Shakespeare himself, and in its first manifestation was controversial enough to be banned by Mary I. Then called *A Memorial of Such Princes*, this lost first edition set up the *Mirror's* unique structure: a prose frame around narrative poems spoken by the ghosts of well-known historical figures. The primary author, William Baldwin, wrote the prose frame as if he was reporting