

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Gualdo Rosa, Lucia. La carriera di Giovanni Aurispa al servizio della curia. Da Eugenio IV a Callisto III, con un ricordo di Germano Gualdo di Concetta Bianca

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Volume 45, Number 2, Spring 2022

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1094839ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i2.39782>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Blanchard, W. (2022). Review of [Gualdo Rosa, Lucia. La carriera di Giovanni Aurispa al servizio della curia. Da Eugenio IV a Callisto III, con un ricordo di Germano Gualdo di Concetta Bianca]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 45(2), 318–319. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i2.39782>



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La carriera di Giovanni Aurispa al servizio della curia. Da Eugenio IV a Callisto III, con un ricordo di Germano Gualdo di Concetta Bianca.

Libri, Carte, Immagini 14. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2020. Pp. x, 146. ISBN 978-88-9359-488-2 (paperback) €18.05; ISBN 978-88-9359-489-9 (e-book) €15.20.

At his death in 2005, the Italian scholar Germano Gualdo left behind an extensive file of records related to the curial activities of the humanist Giovanni Aurispa (born Giovanni Pichuneri, 1376–1459). Gualdo's long association with the Scuola Vaticana, where he served as its director for a period of time, and his training as a specialist in diplomatic paleography gave him unparalleled access to archival materials. Those he collected that relate to Giovanni Aurispa fall into three categories: (1) papal bulls signed by him (but often written by a scribe); (2) papal bulls granting Aurispa favours of a financial nature or reimbursements for expenses incurred while travelling on behalf of the curia; and (3) papal documents that mention Aurispa in passing or that were connected to his travels in the train of others. These materials have been helpfully organized and published by his spouse, Lucia Gualdo Rosa, in the volume under review, which includes a brief personal reminiscence by Concetta Bianca and an appendix that publishes some twentieth-century correspondence between Germano Gualdo and Giuseppe Billanovich, all related to their efforts to bring to publication the scholarly discovery, in the 1970s, by the Ferrarese schoolmaster Adriano Franceschini, of a manuscript inventory of Aurispa's library prepared at the time of his death (*Giovanni Aurispa e la sua biblioteca. Notizie e documenti* [Padua: Antenore, 1976]). The materials edited and transcribed here substantially expand our knowledge of a humanist to whom Sabbadini—but few other scholars of Italian humanism since—devoted a great deal of his research. It would appear that the time is now ripe, then, for a full-scale biography of a humanist whose commercial enterprises related to the purchasing and selling of manuscripts have tended to detract attention from his unequivocal love of learning and commitment to the humanist movement. Indeed, as Franceschini was wise to point out, the more than 600 manuscripts that belonged to his personal library at his death were not in most cases especially valuable (in respect to age or provenance), indicating that he was a reader more concerned with the content and textual accuracy of

his library than its formal appearance, even though he did serve as a broker and dealer of more valuable works.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of this volume is to remind students and scholars of Italian humanism that the figures we study found the “available professional channels”—to use a phrase of Paul Oskar Kristeller—that they could in order to pursue their livelihoods, and that even in an age of patronage and sinecures, humanists associated with the curia on occasion had to serve on ambassadorial missions, work as translators and secretaries, and attend to such details of daily life in a clerical world as granting an exemption for a godfather to marry his goddaughter, or permitting the erection of personal altars in the houses of the wives of numerous Englishmen. And while it is likely that Aurispa, who enjoyed especially favourable patronage under Nicholas V, was not especially burdened with bureaucratic responsibilities, often working out of Ferrara later in his life, where his major benefice was situated, he served the papacy in its dealings with the Eastern church and in a number of ambassadorial missions to Spain, Venice, Florence, and Siena. We learn here also of a 1453 papal bull that legitimized the three children that Aurispa fathered with Maddalena, a woman described as a “former” slave/servant in the document (*olim sua serva*, 95).

Gualdo Rosa has produced a worthy tribute to her husband’s achievements, and it is hoped that his legacy (and that of Franceschini and Sabbadini before him) will bear further fruit in the form of a fully integrated biography of Aurispa that can explore the many facets of an important humanist whose close ties with Ferrara rather than Rome have tended to relegate him to the shadows of scholarship on Italian humanism.

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v45i2.39782>