

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Di Teodoro, Francesco Paolo. Lettera a Leone X di Raffaello e Baldassarre Castiglione

Matteo Soranzo

Volume 43, Number 3, Summer 2020

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1075311ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35329>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Soranzo, M. (2020). Review of [Di Teodoro, Francesco Paolo. Lettera a Leone X di Raffaello e Baldassarre Castiglione]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(3), 300–302. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35329>

and its sequel *Brotherhood*. Although the plotline perpetuates the Borgia Black Legend, the immersive nature of the game in which the world of Renaissance Italy is painstakingly rendered has a powerful effect on players. History comes to life and participants are actors within it, often leading them to further explore the history of the period.

The scholarly apparatus of the contributions might have been strengthened by deeper research and more rigorous editing in places; important references are sometimes missing. In sum, however, the collection makes a valuable contribution to Borgia knowledge and historical methodology.

ALLYSON BURGESS WILLIAMS

San Diego State University

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35328>

Di Teodoro, Francesco Paolo.

Lettera a Leone X di Raffaello e Baldassarre Castiglione.

Biblioteca dell'«Archivum Romanicum». Serie I: Storia, Letteratura, Paleografia 503. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2020. Pp. xii, 72 + 32 ill. ISBN 978-8-8222-6677-4 (paperback) €23.

The general public usually thinks of Raffaello Sanzio as first and foremost a painter, creator of some of the most iconic masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance. Specialized works in historic preservation and conservation, however, occasionally describe Raffaello as a public official appointed by Leo X to map out and preserve the remains of ancient Roman buildings from the injuries of time and ignorant mobs. One of the many merits of Di Teodoro's book is that it clarifies the origins of what is ultimately a myth, while at the same time assessing Raffaello's undeniable and still enduring contribution to the practice of historic preservation. By referring to Raphael as *magister* and *praefectus*, Di Teodoro explains, Leo X was not thinking of a modern-day "Ispettore Generale," as anachronistically thought by some eighteenth-century readers of papal documents. Nevertheless, the project of crafting an exact *forma Urbis* for Leo X based on methods one might call scientific is indeed a milestone in the birth of modern notions of historic preservation. At the heart

of these issues is the letter Raffaello and Baldassarre Castiglione addressed to the Medici pope, published and introduced in Di Teodoro's elegant book.

Di Teodoro's knowledge of this letter is the result of almost thirty years of painstaking philological work on its key witnesses: namely, 1) (Ma) Mantova, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Castiglioni 2016, busta 2, carta 12; 2) (Ma1) Mantova, Archivio Privato; 3) (M) Munchen, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS It. 37b; 4) B. Castiglione, *Opere volgari e latine*, edited by Giovanni Antonio e Gaetano Volgi (Padua: Serassi, 1769), 429–36. Disseminated in numerous articles and soon to be finalized in the introduction and critical apparatus of his forthcoming *Scritti di e per Raffaello*, Di Teodoro's ecdotic solutions, *stemma codicum*, description of manuscripts, and other contributions are only summarized in *Lettera a Leone X*, which was written for the average reader and as a first introduction to the letter and its exegetical problems (viii).

Instead of variants, *conspectus fontium*, *index locorum* and other specialized accessories, Di Teodoro's book comprises an introduction to the text and its context (1–42), normalized transcriptions of Ma and M (43–68), a photographic reproduction of Ma (plates 1–25) and five plates including Raffaello's drawings as well as a modern reconstruction of how the painter used a compass to measure ancient buildings (plates 25–32). Among the real treasures gracing the book's iconographic apparatus, of particular interest are Raffaello's drawings of the Arch of Constantine (plate 27: MS Barb. Lat. 4424, fol. 19v; plate 29: MS Escorialensis 28-II-12, fol. 45r). The letter describes this monument to illustrate the earlier decadence of Roman sculpture as opposed to the lasting excellence of architecture—a crucial point in the authors' thesis. Also noteworthy is Raffaello's drawing of the Basilica Emilia (plate 26: MS Coner vol. 115/77, fol. 61r of the John Soan's Museum of London). The numbers, parallel lines, and orthographic projection deployed in this drawing perfectly illustrate the measuring and drawing techniques explained in the letter. Overall, these components allow the reader to learn about the context and *Nachleben* of Raffaello's letter, while also acquiring some familiarity with Castiglione's handwriting and scribal habits. Of course, Raffaello's drawings reproduced in the edition are not part of the letter nor of the map of Rome. Nevertheless, they give a clear idea of what Raffaello's map of ancient Rome would have perhaps looked like, had it been finished.

Penned by an accomplished humanist and a painter at the peak of his career, the letter is a complex document, lending itself to several interpretations.

Di Teodoro's introduction perfectly succeeds in emphasizing this text's crucial role in the birth of historic conservation and preservation, not only as a scholarly discipline but first and foremost as a civic duty. The legacy of Raffaello and Castiglione, as Di Teodoro persuasively argues, still echoes in Article 6 of the Italian Constitution. Slightly less successful, because of its lack of *conspectus fontium*, is Di Teodoro's attempt at detecting the humanistic sources of the letter's approach to Roman antiquity, or the philosophical premises of some of its central arguments. Take, for instance, the letter's juxtaposition of architects and painters. Grounded on historical and technical observations, this comparison is also based on a clearly stated view concerning the reliability of instrumental measurements as opposed to sensory perceptions (51–52) whose origins might be of interest not only to literary scholars but also to historians of science. These lines of inquiries, however, might have strayed from the clearly stated scope of this publication.

Di Teodoro's book, to conclude, constitutes a useful and accessible point of entry into the letter of Raffaello and Castiglione, as well as a welcome complement to this scholar's numerous and more technical publications on this age-defining text.

MATTEO SORANZO

McGill University

<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i3.35329>

Erasmus, Desiderius.

***Annotations on Galatians and Ephesians.* Trans., ed., and annot. Riemer A. Faber.**

Collected Works of Erasmus 58. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pp. xx, 256 + 2 ill. ISBN 978-1-4426-4193-8 (hardcover) \$150.

The title alerts readers that the volume comprises Erasmus's annotations on two Pauline epistles, rather than his commentary. The key difference between the two genres was not Erasmus's decision not to treat every single verse; often commentaries do not cover texts exhaustively. Rather, Erasmus's interest lay with issues surrounding the transmission and preservation of the Greek New Testament text more than with points of interpretation.