valore fattuale fungono da pietre miliari poste a scandire le fasi diverse della vita che è oggetto della narrazione e come tali vanno valutati" (p. 273).

Se insistito è l'interessamento di Della Terza per il grande Vico, la posizione del solitario pensatore napoletano riceve una ulteriore messa a punto nel capitolo conclusivo del libro, dedicato ad Auerbach studioso di Vico. La lodevole confidenza dello studioso harvardiano con la lingua e la tradizione di studi tedesche ci permette di capire il metodo di lavoro di Della Terza, legato in questo ad una vecchia, buona tradizione risalente a Luigi Russo, ed altri valenti studiosi della passata generazione, che consisteva nel creare il saggio dall'analisi del testo. Della Terza ha studiato a lungo sia Vico che Auerbach, e utilizzando il filosofo napoletano come punto fermo della sua indagine, segnala almeno due possibili errori dell'interpretazione di Auerbach (p. 312 e p. 318), dei quali si serve per delle utili precisazioni sull'ubicazione del pensiero vichiano tra Barocco ed Illuminismo.

Caratteristica unica, a mio avviso, di questo libro, è la sua perfetta disponibilità ai più disparati livelli; mentre da un lato le ordinate, ricche note testuali ne fanno un utile manuale di aggiornamento, le sue indagini sulle varie metodologie critiche, che non scadono mai al livello di un *Forschungsbericht*, si collocano tra le più chiare distinzioni che siano state tracciate intorno ai fondamentali problemi della letteratura italiana sull'arco dei suoi sette secoli. Testo tanto utile allo studente quanto allo studioso che intraprenda ulteriori indagini, esso rivela la sua voluta astensione da facili disegni storici, tanto allettanti quanto avulsi dalla pagina letteraria, per cui il pregio principale del libro risiede proprio nel suo costante contatto con le opere e con le teorie critiche che da esse emanano, entrambe viste attraverso la probante, ma non facile accezione della memoria, attraverso la rivelante prospettiva dell'autore nell'autore, del critico attraverso il critico.

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B. TOSCANI, ed. *Le laude dei Bianchi contenute nel Codice Vaticano Chigiano L.VII.266*. Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1979. Pp. 214.

Until a very few years ago, even a discerning Italianist might have been forgiven for believing that Don Giuseppe De Luca was destined for fame, if at all, only for his role as intermediary between Palmiro Togliatti and John XXIII. His impassioned and often abrasive pleas for a wider understanding of literature, whose principal obstacle he detected in an excessive adhesion to a nationalistic canon which did not allow for the possibility of too close a connection between the best in Italian literature

and the Church, seemed destined to fall on deaf ears (see, e.g., his, *Introduzione alla storia della pietà*, Roma, 1962, p. 116).

Don De Luca lead a fascinating life, intellectually and otherwise, a life which found its unity and purpose in the service and love of history and literature [a loving but fair biography of this 'Roman' priest from Lucania is Romana Guarnieri's, *Don Giuseppe De Luca tra cronaca e storia (1898-1962)*, Bologna, 1974]. This love, together with De Luca's abrasive originality, found its most telling expression and its program in the 'uncommon' name which he chose for the most important series he edited, a name he then gave to the publishing house he founded: 'Storia e Letteratura' (an interesting appreciation of all these elements was offered in an obituary by the noted Marxist historian, Delio Cantimori, in *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3, 5, 1964, 402-8). De Luca, in the course of the numerous reflections he devoted to Italian literature and its history, always found most mystifying the fact that Italians were almost the last to refuse to recognize the radical importance of the phenomenon of piety in literature; Italy was virtually the only country in which it was possible to debate whether religious poetry were poetry or not and yet remain a respectable scholar.

The opinion which sees religious literature only as material for linguistic history is still strong in Italy; medieval sermon collections and works of poetry are still apt to be published without much consideration for the context in which they were born and the type of life they meant to praise or condemn. Timid new departures, however, are being made; even historians of literature and editors of literary texts begin to realize that such an artificial and dogmatic approach is less than useful and possibly mistaken. With some embarrassment, the connection between literature and piety begins to be examined even in otherwise respectable circles. Not surprisingly, the study of the *lauda* has been one of the principal areas in which these new advances have begun to be made.

The *lauda*, even until very recent times, had found but few students. It is notable that the most comprehensive treatments of this genre were to be found in histories of dramatic forms, first in D'Ancona's history of the theatre (*Origini del teatro italiano*, 2d ed., Torino, 1891, vol. 1, pp. 106-83) and then in De Bartholomeis's analysis of the beginnings of dramatic poetry (*Origini della poesia drammatica in Italia*, 2d ed., Torino, 1952, pp. 193-308, and *passim*). Without wishing to diminish the value of both these pioneering works, it must be conceded that, although they present much information about the material beginnings of the *lauda*, they show little sensitivity to the spiritual context in which it was composed and sung. D'Ancona was happy to see in it an emanation of the popular spirit in the face of the insufficiencies of the clergy. While De Bartholomeis did not show the same polemical spirit, his principal interest remained the dramatic elements of the *lauda* and its role in the development of theatre; no attention was paid to the wider and more vital questions of the piety, spirituality or theology of these poems. Confraternities, when they were discussed, caught the interest of these authors only as mildly interesting expressions of popular social life and never as emanations of the people's piety. Such being the state of scholarship, it is not surprising that De Luca, while professing prophetic views on the aspects of such literature which ought to attract attention, had some ironic comments to make about past efforts (see, *Introduzione* . . ., p. 12).

Evidence of the changes which have taken place in this area in more

recent times is offered by an exemplary anthology of *laude* from the Duecento published some years ago by G. Varanini (*Laude Dugentesche*, Padova, 1972). While that work was still wary of treading the 'improper' ground of piety itself, an admirable effort was made to place the compositions in question in a more thoroughly detailed historical context. A description, however concise, not just of the role of confraternities in the composition of the *laude* but also of their organization, ideals and purposes was included. A similarly sensitive work is now offered us by B. Toscani in his edition of some of the *laude* of the Bianchi.

The movement of the Bianchi, as Toscani mercifully informs us (pp. 9-27), was one of those mass devotional outpourings which periodically manifested themselves in medieval Europe and which left behind them devotional practices which have remained the staple of popular religion even until the present day. This penitential movement of flagellants appeared suddenly in Liguria in 1399, proclaiming dramatically and anew the necessity for conversion. In July 1399, 5,000 Bianchi arrived in Genova, dressed in white (hence the name) and ready to process through the city; they were joined in their exercises of piety by the archbishop and many notables. Thenceforth, they spread like wildfire throughout Italy. At Florence, 50,000 joined the movement; chroniclers report that more than 150,000 Bianchi met in Prato on September 8, 1399, to celebrate the feast of Our Lady and 250,000 were in Rome, among whom 20,000 had come from Germany.

The movement was clearly impressive in its dimensions and must have created quite a stir in much of Italy. One of their principal forms of devotion was the singing of the *Stabat Mater*, their 'official' hymn, and of *laude*, some of which are edited by Toscani. Although the title of this book may give the impression that all the *laude* contained in it have been edited only on the basis of the MS. Chigi L.VV.266, such is not the case.

The *codex* in question was written by Filippo di Lorenzo Benci, a Florentine, between 1448 and 1464. Filippo, a composer of *laude* himself, was also an avid collector of them and this *codex* includes not only the sixteen *laude* edited here by Toscani but also 662 others of them, of which twenty-two more may also be connected with the Bianchi (a promise to edit these also is made at p. 37), and some Latin hymns and orations. Filippo's collection is the only known witness for nine of the *laude* edited by Toscani; for the rest, the other witnesses have been collated against the *codex* by the editor and stemmata are provided to describe their supposed relationship. The philological part of this work should satisfy the most exacting palates. A glossary is included (pp. 183-90) and an index of first-lines of all the compositions collected in the *codex* (pp. 191-213).

As has been indicated, Toscani manages the achievement of satisfying not only the usual run of historians of literature but also those with wider interests. He does this by indicating, in the first place, that his edition is intended as a response to the invitation of G.M. Monti, one of the pioneer historians of Italian confraternities, to study the movement of the Bianchi and their sources (cf. p. 7, where Toscani acknowledges that the invitation, while producing fruits in historical works, had not found a similar reception in literary fields). Aside from the essay at a short history of the Bianchi already alluded to, Toscani also attempts a short review of the historiography on the subject (pp. 25-7). What is even more unusual in a work of this sort, and the more appreciated for it, is the editor's attempt to

examine the devotional-theological themes which form the substance of the *laude* (pp. 40-1), nor does he neglect mention of those of the Bianchi's devotional practices which survived them and have remained popular in places until the modern day (p. 47).

It would be too easy to be hypercritical and find fault with these attempts at crossing inter-disciplinary boundaries, to point out the clearly amateurish character of the historiographical part of Toscani's undertaking, the schematic nature of the summaries of previous historiography, the failure to place satisfactorily the movement of the Bianchi within the context of the history of medieval spirituality and of the popular religion of the times generally. To do so, however, would be only to point out the obvious fact that the formation of Italianists is still sorely lacking, that the necessity for inter-disciplinary studies and approaches has not only not yet lead to changes in the curriculum of Italian Departments but that such changes are not even seen as desirable in many quarters. Thus, it seems best here to praise Toscani's perception of this necessity and his attempt to take the larger view. The fact that he is clearly self-taught in all that which concerns the wider context of the *laude*, despite all the limitations which it implies, redounds to his merit. It is to be hoped that an even worthier attempt will be made in the edition of the rest of the *laude* of the Bianchi to meet the exacting ideals expressed so well by Don Giuseppe De Luca.

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GIUSEPPE BISACCIA. *La "Repubblica Fiorentina" di Donato Giannotti*. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1978. Pp. 217

I recall, vividly, an event of many years ago when, as a young scholar, I became much interested in late 15th-century Florentine history. Before beginning research, I decided it would be well to consult the two experts in the field. The question I asked was: Do you believe that the Medici created an aristocracy and courtly society? One replied, yes; the other, no. At that moment my decision to go back to the age of Dante became firm. It struck me that the key problem in late 15th- and early 16th-century Florentine history had to do with the character of the aristocracy. Did the Medici, with good will of forethought, seek to elevate the status of the so-called Florentine "grandi" in order to secure their position? In 1955 Rudolf von Albertini published his remarkable study *Das florentinische Staatsbewusstsein im Obergang von der Republik zum Prinzipat* in which prospects for deeper social insights into the changing character of the *grandi* were much enhanced. Unfortunately, neither his insights nor his valuable documents, published as an appendix, have attracted sufficient attention. Politics, constitutional history and political thought have been