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

major preoccupations of our generation of scholars. Studies on Guicciardini, Machiavelli, and Giannotti abound, and sometimes add little to what is well known. The present volume is a case in point, but I will return to that momentarily. The Machiavelli industry is a most dispiriting enterprise principally because many students of Machiavelli have failed to formulate any serious view of the problems and possibilities confronting his society. Indeed, the key issue with each of these thinkers was the atomization of community (real or imagined). The desire to retain some of the social benefits of individualism, while at the same time perpetuating necessary forms of collective life, was at the center of political debate. Each of these writers took up the question first raised by the Florentine humanist and chancellor Leonardo Bruni Aretino: How can human nature — fragile and selfish — be creatively involved in a world of deeper and more extensive social concerns? The problem of civil education and the elevation of the public world over private interests was at the heart of humanistic discourse. However, by the mid-15th century, intellectual perplexities multiplied as doubts mounted concerning the prospects for community. Luminaries such as the humanist chancellor Poggio Bracciolini made a most pessimistic assessment of the nature and durability of civic ties. In the following generation, of course, one observes two radical diagnoses: Machiavelli's judgments concerning political atomization, and Savonarola's plan for a religiously based republican politics. No longer was it possible to regard the shortcomings of society as mere manifestations of the failure of rhetoric or even corruption of the law. The difficulties stemmed from the decline of communal institutions and guild system of representation. The Medici, by pouring a substantial part of their personal fortune into the *camera*, had been able to stanch the hemorrhaging of the treasury. Their foreign policy and reputation had sustained the credit of the Republic. The events of the 1490s proved that these were indeed ephemeral remedies.

One must not, however, fix these crises on the peg of foreign policy or even taxation. Evidence of a very general nature exists for all of Italy suggesting that the problems of society were rooted in transformations of upper-class attitudes. In Florence we observe a decline in partable inheritance and a general shift toward limiting risk and liability. Put more succinctly, there was something of an aristocratic reaction: citizens were much less confident about the future and demonstrated this in family and business decisions. In the generation after 1470 we observe that the individual was under much greater familial constraint. Perhaps some of this can be explained through an appreciation of demographic changes: increased family size and aggregate population were results of the end of plague in the 1470s.

The present monograph takes for its subject Donato Giannotti's *Repubblica fiorentina*. Born in that fateful year 1492, of a "good" Florentine family, rather like that of Machiavelli's, Donato received an excellent education and traveled in the best intellectual circles. His political ideas resulted from that explosive combination of humanistic education and political revolutions. He was to suffer exile and have much time to reflect upon his republican sympathies. The harsh realities of the present were set against his ruminations about the experience of the ancients. His travels caused him to understand the Venetian experience; he was to try, like many of his fellow exiles, to appropriate from the history of Venice

that which might prove valuable in serving the ideals of a moderate republicanism. The author of the present volume sees his task as one of paraphrasing Donato's leading ideas and offering a glossary of terms. Given the progress made in literary studies in recent years, such a pedestrian approach seems but a regression. Having done the work of paraphrase it would have been worthwhile to then commence the task of analysis. No single text is richer in social vocabulary than the *Repubblica* of Giannotti. Few writers displayed greater feeling for the legitimate claims of those in quest of honor, while at the same time recognizing the value of justice. Out of this appreciation emerged an historical vision of a mixed constitution informed by Giannotti's moderate republicanism. His was not a speculative intelligence capable of exploring fundamental problems of politics; his talents lay in proposing republican solutions based on historical reflection. Always he would be preoccupied with the question of the relationship between *il popolo* and *i grandi*, and how a moderate regime could be securely anchored.

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AA.VV. *La fantascienza e la critica*. A cura di Luigi Russo. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979. Pp.262.

In questo volume, introdotto e curato da Luigi Russo, che ha già al suo attivo un libro sullo stesso argomento *Vent'anni di fantascienza in Italia*, sono raccolte 26 testimonianze di altrettanti studiosi d'ogni parte del mondo, testi che sono emersi dal convegno di Palermo, tenutosi nell'ottobre 1978, e al quale hanno aderito studiosi di varie discipline, ma che tutti hanno tentato di guardare al fenomeno della fantascienza nell'epoca moderna. Ne è nato così questo volume, di indiscussa validità, che mette a confronto i vari giudizi e le varie tendenze atte a dare un quadro esatto del fenomeno ormai uscito da una ristretta cerchia di appassionati e imposto anche in forma massiccia da spettacoli popolari, da riviste e da pubblicazioni d'ogni ordine e grado.

Vi si trovano qui raccolti giudizi storici, appunti teorici, approcci interdisciplinari, insieme a un diagramma di storia e critica che mette a fuoco la problematicità di un genere, come quello fantascientifico, di interesse internazionale. In ultima analisi si dibatte il problema di fondo se la fantascienza sia una scienza unita a fantasia, il che pone problemi di ordine letterario ma anche di procedura scientifica, o se la *fiction* sia solo un modo piegato alla narrativa che ha catturato nella propria area di scandaglio le suggestioni scientifiche: a questi e ad altri ben più complessi problemi il volume curato da Russo risponde con diverse visioni. C'è Dorflès che prospetta "l'impossibile nel verosimile," vale a dire mette l'accento sulla problematicità del dire, del linguaggio nel rapporto diretto con l'immaginazione; c'è Zgorzelsky che vede la SF come una propaggine di un "fantastico" moderno e dunque una variazione del tema che non inficia il corpo vero del "genere"; c'è Bernardini che mette in relazione e