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further investigation on Ficino's views on vernacular philosophy and its deep connection with the *Sommo Poeta*, also thinking of the well-known Dantean subtext in *El libro de amore*.

Bartolucci's analysis, in sum, has the merit to restore *De Christiana religione* to its actual role within the corpus of Ficinian work: not a mere apologetic tool, but a mirror of his ongoing philosophical, social and religious concerns. And his edition will certainly represent a precious reference for future scholarship.

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Aleksandr Nikolaevi? Veselovskij.

*Studi su Dante*.

Renzo Rabboni and Roberta De Giorgi eds.

*La Parola del Testo* 21.1-2 (2017). Pisa-Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2017. 128 pp. €125

Aleksandr Nikolaevi? Veselovskij (often transliterated as Alexander Veselovsky in English) was a Russian literary theorist and historian in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whose broad work as a comparatist has largely remained untranslated. In the present volume, Renzo Rabboni and Roberta De Giorgi aim to make some of Veselovsky's work accessible to a broader audience by editing and translating his writings on Dante into Italian. Their edition was published as the 2017 volume of the journal *La Parola del Testo*, and includes two introductory essays by the editors, various writings on Dante penned by Veselovsky, and a review of the Russian translations of the *Commedia* by Natalia Rogova Popova.

Renzo Rabboni's 'Dalla scuola storica al Formalismo' provides an essential introduction to Veselovsky's intellectual formation—how his travels and contact with other Dante scholars across Europe shaped his approach to the poet. Roberta De Giorgi's 'Il Dante di Veselovskij tra apocrifi e letteratura popolare,' focuses on Veselovsky's pervasive interest in folklore, and how many of his writings on Dante are a pretext to write about popular literature.

The main body of the volume consists of seven short works on Dante, written by Veselovsky between 1859 and 1893, and organized chronologically. These range from book reviews to encyclopedia entries, and showcase the critic's interest in Dante's folklore influences as well as the political use of Dante in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 'Dante Alighieri: la vita e le opere' [1859] is a review of Hartwig Floto's *Dante Alighieri, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Stuttgart, 1958) that commends the German scholar for writing a biography that is refreshingly unlike those "innumerabili lavori tendenziosi, dai quali viene fuori un Dante socialista, rivoluzionario [...] mentre di Dante stesso non vi è traccia" (55). Veselovsky also reviews Filippo Zamboni's *Gli Ezzelini, Dante e gli schiavi. Pensieri storici e letterarii con documenti inediti* (Firenze, 1864). While he concedes that Zamboni's readings of Dante are mostly successful, he takes issue with a reading of a particular passage (*Inferno* 23.61) and

dedicates about half of the review to that issue. “Noi siamo stanchi delle allegorie, e sopra tutto delle allegorie doppie,” (74) writes Veselovsky, shedding light on the critic’s hopes for historical work in the field of Dante studies.

The most polemical—and perhaps most interesting—section of Veselovsky’s *Studi su Dante* is the 1865 ‘Dante e le pene dell’Unità d’Italia.’ Veselovsky was in Florence in May of 1865, and witnessed the “Jubilee” celebration of the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of celebration of Dante’s birth. He sharply critiques the political instrumentalization of Dante’s memory by the city. He compares Pius IX to Boniface VIII, and accuses the “funzionari piemontesi” of liaising with foreign dignitaries rather than their own newly-minted compatriots. The short essay gives valuable insight into a Russian’s perceptions of the pageantry that followed in the wake of the Risorgimento.

Veselovsky’s longest essay on Dante, ‘Dante e la poesia simbolica del cattolicesimo’ [1866] is also a product of his 1865 sojourn in Florence. Here again, Veselovsky shows his contempt for those scholars and politicians who make Dante “un eretico, un rivoluzionario, uno strenuo difensore dell’Italia unita, ogni volta in risposta alle esigenze dell’epoca” (77). He gives some historical background on Dante and the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but then turns towards relating the *Commedia* to popular visionary works such as the *Viaggio di San Brandano*, the *Vita di San Macario*, and the *Visione* of Alberico. His goal is not to provide sources for Dante’s poem, rather to show how medieval thought and Christian doctrine create literary models, of which Dante is an expression.

In ‘Sospesi, irresoluti e ignavi nell’inferno dantesco’ [1888] Veselovsky again goes to great lengths to showcase his deep knowledge of the folklore tradition. While the essay is ostensibly about the residents of Limbo and the Vestibule of Hell, the author turns towards the folklore tradition again, to the extent of discussing the Buddhist *preta* tradition. Likewise ‘L’usura nella scala dei peccati in Dante’ [1889] compares the *Inferno* to the Byzantine *Vita di Basileo il Giovane* for reasons that are not immediately relevant to the topic stated in the essay’s title. He then suggests that Dante’s idea of usury transforms from being a sin of violence against art (as outlined in *Inferno* 11) to becoming a sort of fraud, citing the usurers’ location in Hell and in the structure of *Inferno* 17 as evidence.

The last work by Veselovsky in the volume is an encyclopedia entry: ‘Dante Alighieri’ [1893] that starts as a biographical sketch and opens out into a summary of each of his literary works. Finally, in an Appendix, Natalia Rogova Popova provides a concise overview of the Russian translations of the *Commedia* since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which should serve as a valuable reference.

One gets the impression that De Giorgi was correct in her assessment of Veselovsky: in all of his literary essays on the *Commedia*, he finds a way to incorporate folklore and popular literature. Scholars of nineteenth-century comparative literature, especially those who work on the folklore and folklorists will find his approach to the *Commedia* interesting. Likewise, scholars interested in the transnational reception of Dante during the Risorgimento will benefit from reading the incisive ‘Dante e le pene dell’Unità d’Italia.’ This volume’s greatest strength is that it makes accessible the works of a significant scholar who had remained untranslated, and therefore unknown to literary critics who do not read Russian. Renzo Rabboni and Roberta De Giorgi have certainly accomplished this goal with their translations

and introductions. The greatest limitation of Veselovsky's *Studi su Dante*, however, is that his contributions do not significantly advance the current field of inquiry. This translation paints a picture of a Russian Dante scholar at work—less compelling for his reading of the poem than for his relationship with other scholars, his deep knowledge of popular literature, and his commentary on the figure of Dante's in a newly-unified Italy.

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