

BOOK REVIEWS

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FRANCA DI NINNI, ed. *Niccolò da Verona, Opere: Pharsale, Continuazione dell'Entrée d'Espagne, Passion*. Medioevo veneto. Collana diretta da Furio Brugnolo e Lorenzo Renzi. Venezia: Marsilio, 1992. Pp. 510.

This edition of all of Niccolò da Verona's works, the logical completion of Di Ninni's work over the past twenty years, is a welcome addition to the growing body of recently edited Franco-Italian texts. Di Ninni has assembled the two texts signed by Niccolò, the *Pharsale* and *Passion*, with a third work, the *Continuazione dell'Entrée d'Espagne*, anonymous but now generally attributed to Niccolò. Readers should be aware that what Di Ninni calls *Continuazione dell'Entrée d'Espagne* is Mussafia's *Prise de Pampelune*; as not uncommonly in the case of medieval texts, untitled works can bear several names.

The volume is divided traditionally: introduction, the three texts (each followed by its notes), glossary with indices (proper names and vocabulary), and bibliography.

The Introduction consists of a brief background on Niccolò, the author; a survey of the criticism on his works and their attribution; a description of the manuscripts in which the works are found and their history; Di Ninni's criteria of edition with her standards for punctuation and accentuation; an extensive outline of the rhyme schemes; a discussion of rhetorical devices across the three texts; a list of linguistic traits of the texts; and notes. While the format is standard for an edition, Di Ninni's

commentary is distinguished by its gently ironic tone toward earlier critics. For example, "La scelta [of which of the four evangelists one should follow on a specific event] non è casuale, ma sembra determinata dall'orientamento di seguire l'evangelista che offra il maggior numero di particolari o la lezione più lunga" (26); or, in commenting on her own criticism, "Il *prologo* e la *conclusione* della *Passion* ci offron[o] alcune indicazioni che, se accolte come veritiere e non come topoi letterari,..." (13), Note 16. "In realtà chiunque si sia occupato delle opere di Niccolò da Verona le ha accolte come veritiere" (90).

In a non-standard portion of her introduction, Di Ninni comments at length on two rhetorical figures that are clearly of particular interest to her: comparison and enjambement. The treatment of comparisons is quite detailed, listing their various types, e.g., with the natural world and with historical or mythological episodes. Di Ninni's commentary on enjambement is brief, with samples from each of the three poems.

The reader, however, might wish for a more extensive orientation in other areas more common to introductions; for example, in the case of metrics. Since under the title of "metrica," only rhyme is discussed (43-55), though quite extensively and well with a comparison of the three poems, a later section on syllabic count would seem logical. But under "enjambement," the editor mentions only that its use is accompanied by a strong caesura. The metrics themselves—the mechanics of the caesura, syllable count, etc.—are not discussed. The metrics have been demonstrated to be problematic in the case of other Franco-Italian texts (e.g., Holtus's *Bataille d'Aliscans* (1985), which Di Ninni follows at many points (38)). Considering the irregularity of Franco-Italian forms, it would be helpful to know the accuracy of her syllable count: how it was accomplished and any problems encountered.

Underlying the entire Introduction is a polemic on the authenticity of authorship. In discussing the language of the texts, Di Ninni specifically limits herself to traits which the three texts have in common and which help justify her attribution of the

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Continuazione to Niccolò: "Mi limiterò ad analizzare i tratti comuni alle tre opere che abbiano una certa consistenza e individuino, quindi, un'abitudine linguistica" (60). Her remarks about differences in the three texts and speculations about the origins of those differences are therefore quite relevant. Di Ninni documents variations between texts (e.g., "...nella *Pharsale* prevalgono le forme in -e-, nella *Continuazione dell'Entrée d'Espagne* e nella *Passion* quelle in -ie-" (61); "La forma -our è prevalente nella *Continuazione dell'Entrée* e nella *Passion*, quella -or nella *Pharsale*" (64)) but never assembles them entirely. Thus, although Di Ninni is clearly convinced that the three are by the same author, readers are not presented with quite enough information to make up their own minds. This does not hinder the comparisons and analysis from being useful to those working with Franco-Italian or coming from either Old French or Old Italian to read similar texts. On the contrary, the range of variations between three texts probably by the same author helps the reader know what to expect in variation between other Franco-Italian texts by the same— or different— authors.

Di Ninni's criteria of edition are based on the "rispetto assoluto delle grafie proposte dai manoscritti, senza alcun intervento sulle stesse" (59). However, as is accepted practice and required for readability, Di Ninni has added accents, punctuation and certain word divisions. Where she has made alterations, the original manuscript reading is in a footnote at the bottom of the page, as she makes clear in her introduction.

The editions of the texts follow in their proposed chronological order: *Pharsale*, *Continuazione dell'Entrée d'Espagne*, and *Passion*. Each has notes at the bottom of the page, and notes at the end of each section to report any interesting or important issues, be they based on other editions, the manuscript, or sources. The endnotes for each poem are slightly different, according to the needs of each text as determined by previous editions and commentaries. Thus, just before the endnotes for a given poem, Di Ninni states her rationale for the notes to the poem in question.

Di Ninni's editions are clear and readable. While the original manuscripts were unavailable to me, I did examine Di Ninni's editions in comparison with the work of Wahle (1888), Mussafia (1864) and Bertolini (1989). Wahle edited the *Pharsale*. In his edition, difficult to obtain, he does not accept later corrections to the manuscript itself, believing these hands to be later, while Di Ninni believes some to be contemporary. Di Ninni says, in the paragraph preceding her notes to the *Pharsale*, that she includes "una discussione sulle più importanti correzioni apportate al testo edito di Wahle," and that she does not mention typographical errors or changes (frequently errors of transcription) which do not alter the meaning (193). There are few differences between Wahle's text and hers, and these are due in large part to her accepting the corrections in the manuscript. However, there are a few consistent differences— especially the 'y' which she uses for Wahle's 'i' in *roy*, *o,par qoy*, *doye*, etc.; these seem to be mostly final, but are not in every case. A single explanation at the beginning of her endnotes would suffice, since the reader cannot help but wonder what is going on here. Her attempt to be brief in the notes on each page occasionally makes interpretation of them difficult; thus, for line 249, her text reads *vaincra*; a note at the foot reads *vainzra*. There is no endnote. Wahle's text reads *vaincra* with *vainzra* in a footnote. Is Di Ninni repeating Wahle's note? Has this been erroneously recorded as Wahle's reading, since most unlabelled notes are Wahle's readings?

Di Ninni's endnotes to the *Pharsale* are carefully researched, including those to appropriate classical references (e.g., Caesar), and to other medieval texts (e.g., *Li Fet des Romains*, the *Romans d'Alexandre*). In short, Di Ninni projects a strong interest in historical references and parallel texts, while leaving some textual issues unclear.

The second text, first published in 1864 by Mussafia as the *Prise de Pampelune*, but which Di Ninni calls the *Continuazione dell'Entrée d'Espagne*", has long been a classic of Franco-Italian editions. Di Ninni begins her edition with seven lines from Ms.

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Fr. XXI (the *Entrée d'Espagne*), giving the author's name as "Nicolais." Overall, Di Ninni's text closely follows Mussafia's. She herself says that his edition is "sostanzialmente corretta" (42). Differences lie in occasional punctuation (e.g., line 42, dashes for quotes to set off an aside) and in typical manuscript reading difficulties (e.g., u/n, line 94). She also reads all words beginning with *q* without a *u*, which she does throughout the edition ("Ho mantenuto...la distinzione di grafia... qu-, q-;..." (41)), unlike earlier editors (cf. Mussafia, X). She includes all extra manuscript marks (e.g., 48: *ahé(t)* for Mussafia's *ahé* without any note). At the end of the edition she corrects a number of manuscript readings altered by Mussafia (e.g., 3101 Mussafia, *mostran*; manuscript *motrant*; 3208 Mussafia, *en lui*; manuscript *en lu*, etc.).

Di Ninni's notes to the *Continuazione* include references to characters or episodes in the *Entrée d'Espagne* which Niccolò reuses; a comparison with later Italian tradition, *Li fatti de Spagna* and *Spagna in versi*; and the "più significative correzioni" to Mussafia's edition (383). The notes about various characters are helpful to anyone with interest in the epic tradition in Italy (e.g., line 3150, about Aquin de Portugal (387)). In short, Di Ninni has brought Mussafia's edition up to date with modern editing conventions and notes that will interest many scholars of Italian epic.

Bertolini's edition of the *Passion* is much more recent, and, as Di Ninni says, therefore more acceptable in its standards. However, again, there are differences between Di Ninni's version and Bertolini's. Beyond punctuation and capitalization, these include occasional different readings (e.g., line 3: Bertolini *remenbrance*; Di Ninni *remembrance*— and this is not a resolution of a nasal) and the use of dieresis (e.g., line 5, Bertolini, *passion*, Di Ninni, *passion*; line 24, Bertolini *beneoit*, Di Ninni *beneöit*). This last is particularly striking since Bertolini examines the metrics of the *Passion*, including scansion, quite carefully (33-38), and Di Ninni does not discuss metrics extensively. Her notes to this portion of the text are, as she herself says, "quasi esclusivamente i rimandi ai passi evangelici o biblici cui Niccolò si è servito" (423).

Di Ninni follows the three editions with an Index of Proper Names (which lists each appearance of each name), a selective Glossary (preceded by a careful explanation of word categories included), and a short bibliography. The Table of Contents is at the front, as in more and more Italian works today.

This volume has been very carefully assembled. There are few typographical errors (some extra commas in the notes (89; 91); "offrone" for "offrono," (13); "bilioteca" (92); "uni ves" (95); "Whale" for "Wahle" (95), a missing page number (96, note 74) etc.), and the commentary and glosses are considered and reasonable. While one might wish for more clarity or consistency in the notes, especially in explaining differences between her edition and earlier ones, Di Ninni has produced a much-needed compendium.

With Franco-Italian texts, there is always a question of "How much is enough?" in supplementary material and analysis. Since each text is so different, and each editor has his or her own interests, an editor necessarily covers much more ground in preparing a text than it is possible to include in a single volume. Though one reader might wish for more in a given area because of personal interests, discussion of every aspect of a Franco-Italian text within a single edition is impossible. Thus Di Ninni has made some judicious choices: she includes items of particular interest to herself (e.g., the comparisons) and selected items to explain her hypotheses (similarities between texts to justify the attributions to Niccolò). Her contributions to the authorship debate are particularly valuable. Her edition of Niccolò da Verona's three poems is readable and approachable, an edition which imparts an appreciation of a poorly-known fourteenth century author both to those in the field and outside it.

Editions cited:

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