ITALIAN LITERATURE TO THE RENAISSANCE

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The number of important publications concerning the Pre-Renaissance period in Italy, which have appeared in the last year, is not very great. It may be that what Prof. Foligno suggested regretfully two years ago, as the possible explanation for a similar lack of studies at that time, is still the cause: 'The historical method of approach has for some years been losing favour...restricting the output of works of pure scholarship as against articles of aesthetic criticism....' Or it may be that the field of interest in literary history has shifted, in the mind both of the public and of the scholars themselves—for various reasons which are too numerous and too complicated for discussion here—towards the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is also possible that the historical method, properly so called, has been weakened by the various attacks upon it made by the proponents of the aesthetic approach and by the pseudo-historical method of the German 'Gehalt und Gestalt' type. Finally, it is possible again quite apart from these reasons, that the centenary of Leopardi has absorbed so large a part of the interest of scholars in the field of Italian literature that relatively little has remained for the earlier periods.

Such significant works as have appeared may be summarized chronologically as follows:

In a condensed and well-documented, palaeographic and philological analysis Giulio Bertoni\(^1\) has established the authenticity of the vernacular inscription on the cathedral at Ferrara; he believes, however, that its date should be set at some decades later than 1135. Another document of interest, from both the philological and literary point of view, has been published by D. M. Inguanez.\(^2\) In a few MS. pages he has discovered the

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\(^1\) G. Bertoni, 'L' iscrizione volgare del Duomo di Ferrara (1135)' in Rendiconti della R. Acc. dei Lincei, S. vi, vol. xii, fasc. 5–6, 1937.

\(^2\) D. M. Inguanez, Un dramma della Passione del secolo XII, Badia di Montecassino, 1936 (Misc. cassinese, 12).
text of a liturgical Passion play of which 60 verses correspond to the Sulmona fragment, discussed at length by De Bartholomaeis in 1924 and by Young in 1933. The new text not only supplies us with the action of the play, but carries its date to a considerably earlier period. Inguanez’s Montecassino MS. goes back a hundred years earlier than that of Sulmona, to the twelfth century. Since the two Munich texts which came from the abbey of Benediktbeuern are preserved in thirteenth-century MSS., the new text provides not only the earliest Passion play which has come down to us from Italy, but perhaps even the earliest for the whole Western Church. The importance of the new text lies in the fact that it proves that the drama already existed in Italy in the twelfth century, thus radically modifying the opinion of De Bartholomaeis and Young as to the introduction of the drama into Abruzzi: it must have passed to Sulmona from Montecassino. The Latin text is followed by a few verses in the vernacular; these, however, are very probably of some decades later and certainly written by another hand; none the less they are of considerable philological interest.

The Duecento, this year, has been almost entirely neglected. Except G. Saviotti’s useful book no study worthy of note has appeared on the early poets, nor on those of the ‘Stil nuovo’; but this is not unnatural after the many important publications of the last few years. Mention should be made, however, of the little book by Teresio Grossi, a series of selections from the burlesque poets of the Duecento and Trecento provided with a rather good, but not always very secure, running commentary.

Inevitably, there is no lack, this year as always, of significant studies on the ‘Sommo Poeta’. In the first place we note with the greatest satisfaction the appearance of the second and last volume of the Convivio. As was stated in YWML for 1935, this edition, not yet definitive, but marking a decisive step in that

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3 G. Saviotti, Poeti del Dugento, Milan, Vallardi, 1937.