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Literature and Mysticism in the Wake of Silvano Panunzio: From *The Divine Comedy* to the European Literature of the Twentieth Century

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Abstract: This article introduces one of the forgotten figures of religious and literary studies: the Italian scholar, philosopher, metaphysician, poet and writer Silvano Panunzio (1918–2010). His contribution has so far been relegated to the margins of academic debate, and, currently, there are no academic studies on his work, in which mysticism plays a pivotal role. Panunzio believed that the transcendental and mystical dimension is fundamental for fully understanding the social, cultural, historical and political events of humanity. Another relevant aspect of his work is the importance he gave to literature and its relationship with mysticism, as in the case of Dante's *Divine Comedy* or other European and Eastern writers and poets, such as Goethe, Shakespeare, Ibn Arabi and Dostoevsky. Significantly, Panunzio saved from oblivion the work of a forgotten man of letters of the nineteenth century, Gabriele Rossetti (1783–1854), who proposed the first symbolic and esoteric interpretation of Dante's literary production and of European medieval love literature. Raising awareness of the intellectual amnesia around the figure of Silvano Panunzio may be a useful contribution to future research, both in the field of religious and literary studies.



Citation: Latino, Piero. 2024. Literature and Mysticism in the Wake of Silvano Panunzio: From *The Divine Comedy* to the European Literature of the Twentieth Century. *Religions* 15: 1278. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101278>

Academic Editor: Ali Qadir

Received: 29 July 2024

Revised: 4 October 2024

Accepted: 8 October 2024

Published: 18 October 2024



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Keywords: Silvano Panunzio; mysticism; comparative literature; Dante; European literature; Eastern tradition; medieval love literature; amnesia in the history of ideas; Gabriele Rossetti

1. Introduction

Michel de Certeau's *Mystic Fable* and other such works have introduced the idea of mysticism as a genre of literature. Bracketing out religious experiences, such scholarship focuses on the philological and logical elements of literary texts, as well as ideal and material contextual factors behind such texts. At the same time, religious studies tend to zoom in on the confessional elements of such works or their critical–historical context. Such approaches are very revealing, but they tend to leave a dilemma when it comes to influential intellectuals who insisted that mystical literature was more than either, being both transformative and transcendent. Such methodological innovations try to balance the competing reductions of literature to mystical traditions or of mystical experiences to a genre of literature and of both to socio–historical contexts. Could a more complex methodology be found that holds both literature and mysticism in tension? What would such a methodological approach mean when it comes to famous mystical texts, such as those by Dante? This paper explores these questions through the life and work of one such public European intellectual who brought this balanced sensibility between literary and mystical studies but whose contributions have been largely sidelined. This is a forgotten figure in the field of religious and literary studies, the Italian scholar, philosopher, poet and writer Silvano Panunzio (1918–2010). He was an intellectual and metaphysician who

was also involved in the Italian political context of the 1970s, the so-called ‘anni di piombo’ (the Years of Lead), during which Italy faced one of the darkest periods of its recent history because of both the far-left and far-right terrorist attacks that plagued the country.

Silvano Panunzio’s family was associated with Fascism due to the friendship of his father, Sergio Panunzio, with Benito Mussolini, as well as the youth political militancy in the ranks of socialism, which they shared. The shadow of his father prevented Silvano from pursuing an academic career, as the academic milieu was hostile towards him for his family’s political sympathies. Moreover, after the shocking event of the death of his beloved son Pietro, he decided not to fight and to defend himself against the obstructionism of university baronies (see [La Fata 2021](#), p. 38). Thus, after spending twelve years as a Lecturer of the History of Political Doctrines and Philosophy of Law at La Sapienza University in Rome, he left his academic post and worked in various Italian high schools until 1975, the year in which he was appointed by the Prime Minister of Italy Aldo Moro¹ as Foreign Press Officer at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

In studying the figure of Silvano Panunzio, what is particularly interesting to point out is that an intellectual of his stature, who was also respected at the political level, spoke openly about the invisible world. He explained the sociological, cultural, historical and political reality through mysticism. He believed that the transcendental and mystical dimension is key to fully understanding the events of the history of mankind. Referencing the mystical dimension means dealing with the dimension of the invisible reality, and, in this respect, Panunzio stresses the centrality of literature to affirm, explore, record and pass on mystical truths and experiences. Thus, literature becomes a means of both transcendence and transformation. Moreover, in bringing together literature and mysticism, one of Panunzio’s great merits was to rediscover and spread the forgotten work of Gabriele Rossetti—the nineteenth-century poet and scholar who produced the first systematic study on the esotericism of Dante and medieval love literature, and more generally on the relations between literature and esotericism.²

The work in which Panunzio studies the mystical dimension of Dante and his *Divine Comedy* is *Cielo e Terra. “Poesia, Simbolismo, Sapienza nel Poema Sacro”* (tr. *Heaven and Earth. “Poetry, Symbolism, Wisdom in the Sacred Poem”*). In this book, Panunzio broadens the exegetical perspective of Dante’s work by linking it to European literature, as well as to Eastern mystical literature and tradition. Panunzio specifies that the truths concerning the spiritual world cannot be grasped and understood by “the unbelieving and undeserving materialists”³ ([Panunzio \[2009\] 2019](#), p. 106) but only by “those who have mystical experience”⁴ (*ibid.*). Silvano Panunzio was undoubtedly one of the most original and little-known intellectuals to openly speak of mysticism in terms of fact as the essence of the history of humanity; however, he was not only an intellectual whose contribution focused on mysticism: he himself had mystical experiences during his life. This aspect is particularly interesting because the study of the mystical dimension of literature and the history of ideas is written by someone who has a profound knowledge of the mystical reality—the “ineffable experience”,⁵ as he called it in *Cielo e terra* (*ibid.*, p. 103).

With regard to current research, the most comprehensive and detailed work on the figure of Silvano Panunzio is *Silvano Panunzio. Vita e pensiero* (tr. *Silvano Panunzio. Life and Thought*) by Aldo La Fata, who was his disciple. La Fata is, to my knowledge, the only scholar who has contributed to making Panunzio’s work known to the scientific community and enabling Silvano Panunzio’s major works to be published. He was also responsible for editing reprints of these works, in addition to directing and editing the collective work *Dalla Metafisica alla Metapolitica. Omaggio a Silvano Panunzio nel centenario della nascita* (tr. *From Metaphysics to Metapolitics. A Tribute to Silvano Panunzio on the Centenary of his Birth*).⁶ The figure and the work of Silvano Panunzio deserve in-depth research, which is still lacking and which would be useful both for literary criticism and religious studies. Literary studies would benefit from the fact that the literary text should be approached and analysed using criteria that are not philological but rather specifically related to the mystical symbolism, language and dimension. In terms of religious studies, the main benefit is

the opportunity to explore a topic which is unexplored as regards scholarship and which can focus both on the figure and the work of Panunzio. In particular, Panunzio attempted to blend together various religious traditions around singular mystical “experiences”, which makes his efforts all the more relevant today. Thus, this article is one of the first attempts and steps in acknowledging this case of intellectual amnesia in the history of ideas and opening up unexplored horizons of research, whose pivotal role is played by the pre-eminent importance of mysticism in our society.⁷

Rather than answering any specific question empirically, this article explores one work by Panunzio to understand what his method of holding literary and mystical aspects of texts together could look like. Given Panunzio’s own approach, it is important to connect his own life experiences to his outlook. The first part of this article introduces the figure and life of Silvano Panunzio, which is fundamental for understanding his mysticism and his work. The second section examines his contribution, in particular, to the different themes that feature in his work. Each *topos* can be studied separately and be the focus of a single piece of research. This explains the descriptive and introductory nature of this pioneering article on Silvano Panunzio, which can and should be followed up with further research on these multiple aspects.

2. Panunzio’s Life Explains His Work

Before analysing the book *Cielo e Terra*, devoted to the relations between literature and mysticism, it is worth introducing some aspects concerning Panunzio’s life and personality, which shed light on his work. Aldo La Fata perfectly sums up Panunzio’s approach to life as follows: “Despite the hard and painful blows received from life, he will always act as if nothing unpleasant has happened to him”⁸ (La Fata 2021, p. 38). One of the most painful events of his life was the death of his father, Sergio, in 1944, when Silvano was 26 years old. He had a nervous breakdown that caused him to lose his way, but it was his future wife, Matilde Vittoria Ricci, who saved him from this state of existential crisis. Thanks to Matilde, Panunzio regained his *joie de vivre* and a new spiritual strength. Another event that affected his life was the death of his third son, Pietro, who died at the tender age of two in his father’s arms due to a sudden illness. Little Pietro died on St. Peter and St. Paul’s Day, 29 June, and, from that day on, Silvano Panunzio would continually dream of his son who was to become a sort of ‘soul-guide’ for his father. It was Panunzio himself who confided to Aldo La Fata that he always did what little Pietro, after his death, asked his father to do, appearing to him in dreams (see *ibid.*, pp. 36–37). These dreams reveal an atmosphere of mysticism that pervaded the life and the personality of Silvano Panunzio, who, in fact, had a first mystical experience when he was seven years old. This event was an encounter with a supernatural reality at Mount Gargano, in the southern Italian region of Apulia, where the Shrine of St. Michael is located, which also explains Panunzio’s particular devotion to the Archangel Michael (see *ibid.*, p. 24).⁹

Silvano Panunzio believed he was a chosen one who had charismatically received from Heaven a spiritual mission to fulfil on Earth through his works. His aim was to counter the widespread materialism of contemporary society and promote a transcendental conception of existence. In particular, he intended to evangelise political and cultural circles (especially those of the more radical right), to fight the dominant progressive and Enlightenment culture of the modern era through the recovery of Christian faith and spirituality (in an initiatory perspective of the Christian religion) by assimilating the metaphysical doctrines of the East, in the wake of a fruitful dialogue between Christian, Islamic and Hindu traditions. This openness of Christianity towards Islam and Buddhism was an idea shared by Panunzio with a Pope whom he knew and met with personally, namely, Pope John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli). There was, in fact, an intense and fruitful dialogue between the two. “We Christians also have a duty to honour Moses, Buddha and Mohammed”¹⁰ (in *ibid.*, p. 122), these are the words of Angelo Roncalli spoken at a Eucharistic celebration in St. Mark’s Basilica in Venice, which Panunzio had attended and particularly appreciated because of the recognition by a Pope of the importance of the dialogue between Christianity and the

Islamic and Hindu religions. Pope John XXIII was not the only Pontiff that Panunzio knew. During his adolescence, he met Pope Pius XI at a meeting between the Pontiff and Silvano's father, Sergio Panunzio, concerning the construction of the Vatican railway station. On that occasion, Pius XI wanted to lay his hand on Silvano Panunzio, who, for the rest of his life, would remember that gesture, which he said unleashed a spiritual energy that mystically transmitted from the Pontiff's blessing hand to Panunzio's body and soul (see [La Fata 2021](#), pp. 26–27). Moreover, Pius XII had a connection, albeit indirectly, with Silvano Panunzio. In fact, an undated letter (in the possession of Aldo La Fata) written by Francesco Carnelutti, a regular visitor to the Vatican rooms, to Panunzio reveals that "the Pontiff (Pius XII) follows with curiosity and interest the things you write"¹¹ (in *ibid.*, p. 121). The things he wrote about were strictly linked to mysticism.

3. Panunzio's Thought, Its Influences and the Concept of 'Hindu Catholicism'

In his works, Panunzio speaks openly of the visible and the invisible world, of the difference between Good and Evil, between life and the mystery of death; he deals with sensitive topics such as metempsychosis and the pre-existence of the soul (which he believes is eternal); he focuses on the mystery of God and exposes a mystical, prophetic, cosmological and metaphysical gnosis. Another important topic that profoundly interested Silvano Panunzio was Marian apparitions, especially those of Garabandal, La Salette, Lourdes and Fatima. Panunzio was particularly attached to the Virgin Mary of Fatima, who is an important figure in both the Christian and Islamic traditions, being Fâtima al-Zahrâ, daughter of the prophet Mohammed.¹²

Moreover, one of the most significant contributions of Silvano Panunzio is undoubtedly the theorisation of the concept of "Metapolitics", which is expounded in his book *Metapolitica. La Roma eterna e la nuova Gerusalemme* (tr. *Metapolitics. The Eternal Rome and the New Jerusalem*).¹³ The term 'metapolitics' was used for the first time in 1650 by the Cistercian monk Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz (1606–1682) in his work *Metapolitica hoc est Tractatus de Republica, Philosophice*, which introduced the notion of mystical *civitas* and which has a striking analogy with Panunzio's conception of metapolitics. In fact, Panunzio holds that metapolitics is metaphysics applied to political governance, a dialogue between contemplation and action, between Divine design and human commitment (of a social and political nature), and a prophetic wisdom closely linked to the ultimate destinies of humanity and the world. With regard to the destiny of mankind, Panunzio proposes a positive approach. In fact, though humanity is experiencing what is called the Kali Yuga in the Indian mystical tradition, namely, the age of darkness, he sees a rebirth in this epoch of sorrow and crisis. In fact, all the negative and dramatic events that characterise this age of darkness he considers as palingenetic transmutations. We could thus speak of the mystical prophetism of Silvano Panunzio, implying that future terrible events are interpreted in eschatological and redemptive terms: humanity has to suffer in order to be reborn, it has to die before rebirth since each rebirth takes place after death. "In such a perspective", as Aldo La Fata remarks, "distrust, renunciation, pessimism are banned"¹⁴ (*ibid.*, p. 148) since, based on Panunzio's thought and prophetism, the traumatic events and the social transformation processes of our era "must be understood and transcended in a vertical and ascending sense"¹⁵ (*ibid.*) as "the lowest point of fall is precisely where the ascent begins"¹⁶ (*ibid.*). Panunzio's pessimism about the historical situation of contemporary times was therefore always accompanied by a future of hope and trust, of complete reliance on God, which is why he used to repeat the maxim of St Ignatius of Loyola "pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you" (see *ibid.*).

The concept of Kali Yuga evoked in relation to modern times leads us to explore another fundamental topic cherished by Panunzio, namely, the thread linking Christianity to Hinduism. The title of a paragraph of Aldo La Fata's book *Silvano Panunzio. Vita e pensiero* clearly illustrates Panunzio's concept of the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism, "Induizzare il cristianesimo, cristianizzare l'induismo" ("Induising Christianity, Christianising Hinduism", *ibid.*, p. 137). This expression brilliantly sums up Panunzio's

view of the dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism. In particular, among the most important figures of this “‘Hinduised’ Christianity”¹⁷ (ibid., p. 139), the author of *Cielo e Terra* appreciates, studies and praises those of Bahavani Charan (1861–1907) and Keshab Chandra Sen (1848–1884). The latter had spoken of a theme dear to Panunzio, namely, a cosmic Christ that is hidden in the Vedas (see ibid.), while the former was a Bengali who converted to Christianity and firmly opposed theosophy, describing it as a plague that fascinates and confuses the spirituality of the masses. The danger of theosophist doctrines was highlighted both by Panunzio and René Guénon (specifically in his book of 1921, *Le théosophisme, histoire d’une pseudo-religion*), and other figures from the early twentieth century such as the literary critic (and expert on Dante) Giovanni Busnelli (1866–1944). Bhavani Charan publicly defied the theosophist Annie Besant, who never accepted the confrontation, but, beyond the former’s aversion to theosophy, what is important to emphasise is the interesting association between Christianity and Hinduism that he makes. In this regard, an extremely interesting document by Panunzio quotes a statement by Charan in which the expression “Hindu Catholic” is coined:

By birth we are Hindus and we will remain Hindus until death [...]. We are Hindus as far as our physical and mental constitution is concerned, but as far as our immortal soul is concerned we are Catholics. We are Hindu Catholics”.¹⁸
(Quoted in ibid., p. 138)

Thus, one of Panunzio’s great merits was to combine the Christian tradition with Eastern metaphysics. In this respect, a fundamental source of inspiration for him was René Guénon, whose ideas allowed him to bring Christianity closer to the philosophical and mystical speculations of the East and Asia. Panunzio was a follower of René Guénon’s traditionalism (despite criticising some of his ideas), but his singularity is the way he combines traditionalist thought with Catholicism.

Beyond René Guénon, other figures who had an important influence on Panunzio’s philosophy and played an intellectual and spiritual guiding role include Rabbi Eugenio Zolli (1881–1956), Monsignor Nicola Turchi (1882–1958), Agostino Zanon (1886–1967), Giuseppe Capograssi (1889–1956), Ubaldo Mondio (1904–1990) and Carmelo Ottaviani (1906–1980).¹⁹ In particular, the Benedictine monk and atomic scientist Agostino Zanon played a cardinal role in transmitting love for the Virgin Mary to Panunzio, whilst Giuseppe Capograssi imparted significant teachings to the author of *Cielo e Terra*, such as, for instance, the recommendation to never compromise with the forces of evil and to endure like a good Christian the martyrdom of those who, like Panunzio, opposed the forces of darkness and spread Christ’s teaching. In a letter quoted by Aldo La Fata in his book *Silvano Panunzio. Vita e pensiero*, Capograssi warns Panunzio that he must be prepared to endure ostracism in the future because of his work: “Dear Silvano, I remind you that the martyrial privilege of being in the evangelical Truth has as its fatal consequence theological hatred, meaning ‘satanic’, of all the self-excluded”²⁰ (in ibid., p. 83).

As for other influences, Eugenio Zolli introduced Panunzio to biblical exegesis, to the understanding of the *Zohar*, the most important book of the Kabbalistic tradition, to the discovery of the Christian Kabbalah of Pico della Mirandola, and to learning the basics of Hebrew and Semitic languages (see ibid., p. 87). Like Panunzio, Zolli also had mystical experiences, as he describes in his biography, where he reports a vision of Jesus Christ towards the end of 1917 (see Zolli 2004, p. 109; La Fata 2021, p. 88). However, the person who had the greatest influence on Silvano Panunzio was the Italian mystic and friar who received the stigmata, Padre Pio (1887–1968),²¹ defined by Umberto Marchesini as “the greatest saint of modern times”²² (in Allegri 2002, p. 3). Panunzio met Padre Pio twice in person, in 1966 and 1967, and was among those who supported the friar’s beatification. He described Padre Pio as an *alter Christus*, a ‘divine personality’ entirely imbued with the *imitatio Christi*, namely, a mystic and charismatic who deserved to be amongst the highest ranks of Christian saints, on par with St. Francis due to his great spirituality that enabled him to act in the community, helping so many suffering people through his powerful and radiating spiritual projections (see La Fata 2021, pp. 101–2). Panunzio focuses in particular

on mysticism and the figure of Padre Pio in his work *Terra e Cielo: dal nostro Mondo ai Piani Superiori* (tr. *Earth and Heaven: from our World to the Higher Planes*, Panunzio 2002), which has aptly been defined by Aldo La Fata as the “Christian ‘book of the dead’”²³ (La Fata 2021, p. 163), since it treats the theme of the death and the afterlife paths of the soul. This book is composed of two chapters, one devoted to Saint Camillus de Lellis (patron saint of the sick, nurses and hospitals), whilst the other is the report of a paper given by Panunzio at the study conference “L’ultimo problema della vita: la morte” (tr. “The Ultimate Problem of Life: Death”), which took place between 9 and 12 September 1993 in San Giovanni Rotondo (Padre Pio’s home from 1916 until the year of his death in 1968). The title of Panunzio’s paper was “Le frontiere dell’Al di là nel poema di Dante e negli aneliti di Padre Pio” (tr. “The Frontiers of the Hereafter in Dante’s poem and in Padre Pio’s Longings”), and what is extremely interesting and significant is the association with Dante and Padre Pio, linked by the theme of death and suffering.

4. *Cielo e Terra*: The Forgotten Work by Silvano Panunzio

Cielo e Terra by Silvano Panunzio is a forgotten work of literary criticism which has been completely marginalised in the academic debate.²⁴ Though this book has not received the attention it deserves, some authoritative scholars have recognised and praised its intellectual value. For instance, Raimon Panikkar was one of the first intellectuals to make Panunzio’s book known on an international scale.²⁵ In fact, when he held the Chair of Comparative Philosophy of Religions and History of Religions at the University of California, Panikkar introduced the texts of *Cielo e Terra* in his lectures, and the students were fascinated by the contents. It was Raimon Panikkar himself who informed Panunzio of the interest aroused by the book, as evidenced by an autograph note kept by Aldo La Fata (see *ibid.*, p. 166).

In *Cielo e Terra*, Silvano Panunzio shows that *The Divine Comedy* is a mystical work, describing a pilgrimage that symbolises the ascent of the soul and the ever-increasing conquest of the angelic states (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, pp. 119–23). Dante is defined as “the choral Catholic Initiate and the solitary Initiate of the New Dimension of the Spirit”²⁶ (*ibid.* p. 22). He is considered a “mystical Poet”²⁷ (*ibid.*, p. 27), and *The Divine Comedy* is a “journey into the invisible”²⁸ (*ibid.*, p. 50) which narrates “known and unknown, historical and occult events, all of world and even cosmic importance”²⁹ (*ibid.*, pp. 125–26). The mystical reading of Dante’s work, and, more generally, of literature, is not the only focus of Panunzio’s contribution as another of his merits was to rediscover the forgotten work of Gabriele Rossetti, opening up unexplored horizons of research. In fact, the esoteric interpretation of medieval love literature proposed by Rossetti also broadened its scope by embracing European and Eastern literature and mystical traditions.³⁰

According to Gabriele Rossetti, Dante and the Italian medieval love poets belonged to an esoteric Order of an initiatory nature: the Order of the *Fedeli d’Amore* (The Faithful of Love). The love poets of this initiatory group used a secret and coded language in their literary production in which the theme of love, the image of the girl or the symbol of the rose, concealed an esoteric knowledge of a mystical and initiatory nature, as well as political and religious ideas. Thus, the obscurity of medieval love literature also provided a way to avoid political and religious persecution using the literary device of love. Rossetti highlights that the initiatory doctrine of love was transmitted from the East to the West and then spread to Spain and France before reaching Italy. A major role in this regard was played by the French Troubadours and Trouvères poets, but, beyond French and Italian love poets of the Middle Ages, “we find”, as Rossetti writes, “[. . .] Minne-Sänger (namely Singers of love) in Germany, and Love-singers [. . .] in England; and right across Europe” (Rossetti [1840] 2013, p. 162).³¹

Rossetti’s ideas and theories gave rise to the so-called “heterodox” school of Dantean studies, which was composed of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectuals and scholars, such as Giovanni Pascoli, Luigi Valli, Alfonso Ricolfi, Eugène Aroux and René Guénon, who sought to demonstrate the esoteric nature of Dante’s work and of medieval

love literature. In particular, in the twentieth century, Denis de Rougemont wrote a book, *Love in the Western World*, in which he proposed an esoteric interpretation of medieval love literature that confirms various ideas and themes developed by Gabriele Rossetti. The following passage of De Rougemont's book is significant in this respect:

There occurred during the twelfth century in Languedoc and in the Limousin one of the most extraordinary spiritual confluences of history. On the one hand, a strong Manichean religious current, which had originated in Persia, flowed through Asia Minor and the Balkans as far as Italy and France, bearing the esoteric doctrines of Maria Sophia and of love for the Form of Light. On the other hand, a highly refined rhetoric, with its set forms, themes, and characters, its ambiguities invariably recurring in the same places, and indeed its symbolism, pushes out from Iraq and the Sufi, who were inclined alike to Platonism and Manichaeism, and reaches Arabic Spain, then, leaping over the Pyrenees, it comes to the south of France upon a society that seems to have but awaited its arrival in order to *state* what it had not dared and had not been able to avow either in the clerical tongue or in the common vernacular. Courtly lyrical poetry was the offspring of that encounter. (De Rougemont [1940] 1983, p. 107)

De Rougemont draws on Eugène Aroux and Luigi Valli, but he does not mention Gabriele Rossetti, who was the source of both Aroux and Valli.³² Rossetti was the pioneer of this forgotten and neglected aspect of the history of ideas, which was marginalised in the academic debate, whilst the two most important works in which he set out his theories are *Il Mistero dell'Amor Platonico del Medio Evo* (tr. *The Mystery of Platonic Love of the Middle Ages*, 1840) and *La Beatrice di Dante* (tr. *The Beatrice of Dante*, 1842).³³ Silvano Panunzio found the latter particularly interesting, as he makes clear in *Cielo e Terra: "La Beatrice di Dante by Gabriele Rossetti is a classic work of Italian thought and literature and is, jointly, a European masterpiece"³⁴ (Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 42). He edited the 1982 edition of the book (published by the Atanòr Publishing House), writing an introduction to it which praises the figure and contribution of Gabriele Rossetti.³⁵ Panunzio acknowledges the connection between Dante and the *Fedeli d'Amore* as well as with the Templars, but he goes far beyond the common esoteric interpretation that sees the author of *The Divine Comedy* as merely belonging to the initiatory Order of the Faithful of Love. Dante appears to have metaphysically transcended the *Fedeli d'Amore*, even surpassing them, thereby diminishing the importance of and influence on Dante's work of this initiatory brotherhood composed of Italian love poets.*

While Dante is considered a "mystical poet", Gabriele Rossetti is defined by Silvano Panunzio as the "mystical interpreter"³⁶ (ibid.) of *The Divine Comedy*, the "mediator of the textual Knowledge of the word of Pythagoras, Plato and Dante"³⁷ (ibid., p. 83). In *Cielo e Terra*, he not only evidences the mystical dimension of Dante's work (and Rossetti's symbolic interpretation) but also links it to the mysticism found in European literature and in the Hindu and Arabic traditions (in particular, Persian poetry).³⁸ One of the most important connections suggested by Panunzio is between Dante and Goethe. In this regard, he coined the expression "comparative symmetries"³⁹ (ibid., p. 22), indicating the analogies between Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust*, between the Dantean Beatrice and the Goethean Marguerite, who both represent "the Eternal Woman, *Evau*, combined with the *Jod* in the Divine Name and Tetragrammaton (IHVH)"⁴⁰ (ibid., p. 32). Dante's Beatrice corresponds to the "Eternal Feminine of Goethe's *Faust*"⁴¹ (ibid.) symbolised by Marguerite. Beatrice "is the Saint Gnosis"⁴² (ibid.), who leads towards divine wisdom. In *The Divine Comedy*, as Panunzio points out, there are four saintly women: Maria, Beatrice, Lucia and Matelda. The latter symbolises the second birth, or rebirth of the soul, through the detachment from all that is earthly. Lucia and Beatrice represent what Panunzio calls the third Birth, linked, respectively, to Light (Lucia) and Truth (Beatrice). Finally, Maria is the eternal birth, as theorised by Eckhart (see ibid.). Thus, Panunzio considers the image of the woman in Dante, as well as in other authors, such as Goethe, to be initiatory in nature, where the quest of the woman is the spiritual path towards a mystical fusion with God.

The parallel between Dante and Goethe is undoubtedly one of Panunzio's major insights in the wake of a mystical reading of literature. These two writers and poets are linked in *Cielo e Terra* to an esoteric tradition embracing figures from different epochs, such as Plato [defined by Panunzio as "the universal Initiator"⁴³ (ibid., p. 25)], Shakespeare ["the prophet of the Occult in the secret Northern Islands"⁴⁴ (ibid.)], Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Pascal, Cervantes, Manzoni, Beethoven, Wagner, Dostoevsky and Vladimir Sergeevič Solov'ëv (see ibid.). In particular, the connection between Dostoevsky, Solov'ëv and Dante is another of Panunzio's interesting insights, linking the Russian with the medieval Italian literary doctrine of love. Dostoevsky is defined as "the evangelical prophet, in the mystical Russia"⁴⁵ (ibid.), whilst Solov'ëv is described as "the formulator of that 'sophianic' doctrine that brings together the Hellenic Venus, the Egyptian Isis and the Christian Mary in the superior, Platonic and Dantean synthesis of a perfect Faithful of Love"⁴⁶ (ibid.). Both Dostoevsky and Solov'ëv are linked by Panunzio to Dante and, more specifically, to the complex history of the esotericism of medieval Italian love poetry of the *Fedeli d'Amore*. Thus, the symbolic and heterodox interpretation of medieval love literature established by Gabriele Rossetti is developed by Panunzio in a new and original manner, opening up unexpected and unexplored exegetical perspectives that no representative amongst Rossetti's followers had identified, for example, the links between Dante, Goethe, Dostoevsky and Solov'ëv.

Thanks to Panunzio, Gabriele Rossetti's theories embrace European literature as well as the Eastern mystical tradition. In fact, in *Cielo e Terra*, he draws a parallel between Dante and the Arab poet and mystic Ibn Arabi (see ibid., pp. 45–80) and between medieval Italian love poetry and Sufism. In fact, according to Panunzio, the mystical doctrine of the Italian *Fedeli d'Amore* derived from the mysticism of Persian Sufism,⁴⁷ which originated in the Indian Vedanta mystical tradition. On the latter, Panunzio suggests an interesting relationship between the Eastern conception of Tantric Yoga and the biblical-troubadour mystique (see ibid., p. 64). Moreover, he highlights that the period when Dante wrote his work featured at least seven spiritual currents, which had a direct or indirect influence on his literary production: Joachimism, the Franciscanism of St. Bonaventure, Templarism [defined by Panunzio as the "chivalrous mission of the occult France"⁴⁸ (ibid., p. 56)], alchemical hermeticism (which spread from Egypt to Morocco and Spain), Persian Sufism,⁴⁹ the prophetic Kabbalism of Abulafia and, finally, Vedantism (see ibid., pp. 55–56).

In *Cielo e Terra*, Panunzio addresses and develops many significant topics concerning the esotericism attributed to Dante and the medieval love poets, clarifying some obscure points of this complex phenomenon in the history of ideas. Compared to the previous esoteric interpretation of Dante's work and medieval love literature, Panunzio's contribution differs in that it rehabilitates the role of Catholicism. Unlike Rossetti or Valli, in *Cielo e Terra*, there is no opposition between the Catholic Institution and an alleged heretical love doctrine, and it is necessary that the Church monitors the heretical associations. According to Panunzio, the religious authority's vigilance is legitimate because "the first and most repeated error of the 'heretics' lies in wanting to perform in the public domain (with words, gestures, writings, even with omissions)"⁵⁰ (ibid., p. 107), whilst "the inner fire that feeds the secret life ('the heart') of a Mystic or an initiate can in no way, with undue ardour, alter the face of a ruling Religion"⁵¹ (ibid.). In this respect, Panunzio takes the Sufi poet Al-Hallâj (858–922) as a role model. In fact, he mentions that Al-Hallâj was executed by the Islamic religious authority for having publicly pronounced the maxim "Aná Al Haqq" ("Ego sum Veritas"), "I am the Truth", namely, God (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 108). However, Panunzio affirms, "a truly 'pneumatic' Being does not seek to obtain the favourable judgement of men" but "he accomplishes everything while awaiting the ineffable and most severe judgment of the Angels"⁵² (ibid., p. 107). Here, the author of *Cielo e Terra* overtly speaks of the Angels and states the following:

there are not only "the Angels of persons", there exist also—see the Old Testament and the Apocalypse—"the Angels of the nations" and "Angels of the churches";

finally, there are the supreme Angels who scrutinise us and mark us on the forehead as in the progressive ascent of the Dantean journey.⁵³ (ibid.)

In this passage of *Cielo e Terra*, Silvano Panunzio clearly refers to the mystical and invisible reality in which angels are not abstract ideas but spiritual beings that really exist.

Interestingly, these references to angels and the invisible world are mentioned by an intellectual like Silvano Panunzio, who was not simply an expert on the occult but a respected figure at the political level under the Italian Government of Prime Minister Aldo Moro, as we have seen at the beginning of this article. Panunzio specifies that the subject of his writing cannot be scientifically proven and, therefore, referencing the question of the *Fedeli d'Amore*, he affirms that “we are in a transcendental realm where human documents do not exist”⁵⁴ (ibid., p. 75). In particular, he links Dante and the *Fedeli d'Amore* to invisible entities: “there are words escaped here and there from the author’s [Dante’s] pen which, read subtly, confirm that he has had an encounter at the highest level with the residues not of the abused *Fedeli d'Amore*, but rather with the invisible masters of them”⁵⁵ (ibid.). In another passage relating to Dante, he writes about the mystical and invisible reality, stating the following:

There exists an invisible prophetic community, *kadmic*, that is to say “original”, which goes back to the beginnings of pre-adamic humanity: it silently emits its rays on the Church, on the religious Orders, on the chivalric Orders. The Pontiff Clemente Romano, in one of his epistles, says that it is “older than the sun and the moon”. This explains why Father Dante, disappointed and inconsolable, entrusted him at the end of his life with the *supra-sense* of his creations for 500 years. And this explains the revelation that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, not in the decadent and already equivocal Knights Templar and their so-called heirs, but in the Johannine Order and in the orthodox and older Order of Malta. This explains how Dante entrusted his ideal testament *with hope* to the “Spirits of the Prophets” (Ap 22:6) who are also the Guardian Angels of the true Poets exposed to martyrdom. (Incidentally, the much-repeated *Fedeli d'Amore* today is a pale parody of the above-mentioned Community of Light, which is in no way transcendental. They contain the most mature Poet [Dante] who, not by chance, placed them in Hell)! In reality, there was no personal “discovery by Rossetti” on the island,⁵⁶ but an *ingenious reconstruction* of the authentic data that were mysteriously offered to him by the Sacred Singer himself.⁵⁷ (Ibid., pp. 76–77)

This passage from *Cielo e Terra* shows the complexity of the literary theme of love in the Middle Ages, as interpreted by the so-called “heterodox” school of Dantean studies inaugurated by Gabriele Rossetti. Compared to other esoteric and symbolic interpretations of medieval love literature, Panunzio’s is one of the most original and little-known, being completely forgotten and marginalised in the academic debate. The originality lies in the fact that it offers a new exegetical perspective in which the main parameter of interpretation is mysticism. Love literature is conveyed by Panunzio through the lens of mysticism. Thus, for example, the theme of “secrecy” and cryptic language of the *Fedeli d'Amore* is not explained by Panunzio in political and sectarian terms or in a coded jargon used by the medieval love poets, which was used to avoid political and religious persecution, as one can read in *Cielo e Terra*:

The allegorist school’s version of the arcane motifs observed by Dante and his friends is not the authentic one. That Luigi Valli and other scholars argue this rule is to be attributed to “sectarian” secrecy and the need for defence against the inquisitorial gaze of the Church and Power in general, is acceptable, as these are scholars who have considered all this from the outside. But it cannot fail to amaze that a spiritual man of Gabriele Rossetti’s calibre, deeply immersed in the inexpressible mysteries,⁵⁸ inviolable in themselves, of the Initiatory Way and the Mystical Way, would, without delving deeper, have considered the same thing. To interpret the “secrecy” of the *Fedeli d'Amore* as concealment by sectarians and heretics is to confuse superficial elements of friction with inner experiences

that are intangible. The Initiate is not heterodox in doctrine, nor rebellious in his behaviour. If by a sudden “fall” he became such, it would mean that his initiation was very imperfect. And it is no coincidence that such drifts happen to “neophytes” or those who are walking at lower levels. In the Initiate from above (that has nothing at all to do with the exhibitionist degrees bestowed by horizontal associations, none excepted) there can be neither substantial nor formal opposition to publicly constituted religious institutions. He knows better than anyone else, and at least to the same extent as the members of the Priesthood in office, that such entities are of unimpeachable divine origin. Nor is their decadence sufficient reason to move on to revolt and contestation of a, precisely, heretical nature. This unduly mixes empirical facts and individual cases with transcendent principles and perennial entities: in a word, the subjective with the objective, the particular with the universal. It will not go without saying here that *airèmoni*—whence “heresy” and “heretic”—literally means in Greek “I choose a side” [...].⁵⁹ (Ibid., pp. 102–3)

In this passage, the explanation of the secret and cryptic language of love poetry differs from all previous interpretations proposed by the so-called “heterodox” school of Dantean studies and finds its *raison d’être* in mysticism. So, Panunzio argues that “the ‘jargon’ [...] is used both to train and refine spiritual intelligence—which would be contaminated by ordinary language, weakened by the necessary tension—and to protect the essential sanctity of the Mystery from the profanes”⁶⁰ (ibid., p. 106). Moreover, he adds an aspect that neither Rossetti nor Valli had mentioned, namely, the meaning of the word “jargon”, which should not be considered in sectarian terms but in esoteric ones. Panunzio confirms Rossetti’s theory of Italian and European medieval love poets, which are, in reality, an initiatory group. He calls them “an initiatory Christian community whose members communicated with each other with poems expressed in jargon”⁶¹ (ibid., p. 89), and remarks that the word “jargon” derives from the medieval French word “jergon” that derives, in turn, from the word “argot”, which is not the Parisian dialect of the suburbs, but originates from the sacred language of the Argonauts, as revealed by the mysterious twentieth-century alchemist Fulcanelli in his book *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* (tr. *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, Fulcanelli [1926] 1971).⁶² Panunzio refers to Fulcanelli in order to explain the esoteric meaning of the words “jargon” and “argot”. In fact, argot means “gothic language”, or magic language, since gothic means magic (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, pp. 89–90). In this respect, Fulcanelli writes that “gothic art (*art gothique*) is simply a corruption of the word *argothique* (cant), which sounds exactly the same” and that “this is in conformity with the *phonetic law*, which governs the traditional cabala in every language and does not pay attention to spelling” (Fulcanelli [1926] 1971, p. 42). The esoteric meaning of the word “gothic” is also closely linked with medieval gothic cathedrals because “the cathedral is a work of *art goth* (gothic art) or of *argot*, i.e., cant or slang” and, as Fulcanelli affirms, slang is a “*spoken cabala*”: “all the Initiates expressed themselves in cant; the vagrants of the *Court of Miracles*—headed by the poet Villon—as well as the Freemasons of the Middle Ages, ‘members of the lodge of God’, who built the *argothique* masterpieces, which we still admire today” (ibid.). In this passage, Fulcanelli points out that “slang” (thus also “jargon” and “argot”) is the language of the initiates and refers to the Freemasons of the Middle Ages, as well as to two French men of letters: the medieval poet François Villon and the Renaissance writer François Rabelais.⁶³ Therefore, “*The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais is an esoteric work, a novel in cant”, and “the good curé of Meudon reveals himself in it a great initiate, as well as first-class cabalist” (ibid., p. 44). Thus, the esotericism of Dante and medieval love literature propounded by Rossetti, and, subsequently, by Panunzio, is now associated with the esotericism of French writers and poets, such as Villon and Rabelais, embracing European literature. This openness towards European literature, as well as Eastern literature and mystical tradition, is one of Silvano Panunzio’s main themes and merits, as I have already pointed out.

Panunzio held that the mystical symbolism and doctrine are not only present in Dante but also in other authors and intellectuals in the history of ideas, such as Apuleius, Shakespeare (for example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Bacon (in his book *De sapientia veterum*) or Ibn Arabi: all of them speak of a “virtù magica”, a “magical virtue”, namely, “a mental-spiritual force capable of operating the internal transformation of the states of Being”⁶⁴ (Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 80). Other significant literary works that the author of *Cielo e Terra* mentions are *The Romance of the Rose* by Jean de Meung and Guillaume de Lorris, *Séraphita* by Balzac, the literary compositions of Guido Cavalcanti, Petrarch, Tasso, Giacomo Leopardi, Gabriele D’Annunzio, and the initiatory novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton *Zanoni* (1842), in which, as Panunzio stresses, the Ancient Mysteries of Egyptian Tradition are connected with the Christian Mystery (see *ibid.*, p. 119). However, the difference between these literary works and *The Divine Comedy*, in Panunzio’s view, is that Dante’s masterpiece is not only a literary work but a sacred text. In fact, Dante, Homer and Virgil would have been “poet-priests, mystagogues and hierophants of the Divine Mysteries”⁶⁵ (*ibid.*, p. 46) of the invisible divine realities. The knowledge contained in *The Divine Comedy* is mystical gnosis which, Panunzio believes, is shared with other religious and literary figures and traditions throughout the centuries, such as Moses and the Sacred Science of the Egyptians, John the Baptist and the Essenes, Al-Ghazali and the Islamic Batiniyya school or Goethe and the Illuminati of his time (see *ibid.*, pp. 58–60).⁶⁶ Panunzio specifies that Dante’s sapiential doctrine requires knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, Metaphysics or Gnosis, finding its synthesis in Platonism, the speculative and mystical Theology of the Christian tradition, of the Cosmological Sciences, such as Arithmology, Astrology and Hermetic Symbology, and, finally, of the mythological, poetic and literary tradition of the classical world. He considered Gabriele Rossetti to be an interpreter who excelled in these five orders of knowledge (see *ibid.*, p. 47). Like the Prophets, Dante would have been endowed with the supernatural powers and knowledge transposed in his literary masterpiece, whose real nature is sacred essence, a journey into the realm of the invisible (see *ibid.*, pp. 48, 52–53), whilst the highest order of the mysteries contained in Dante’s *Comedy* is the “initiatory-mystical course”⁶⁷ (*ibid.*, p. 66), which corresponds to “the reunion of the Cross and the Rose”⁶⁸ (*ibid.*, p. 67). More precisely, as we read in *Cielo e Terra*, “the Cross is the active and penetrating Force of the avataric Sacrifice, it is the male moulding Divinity; the Rose is the Wisdom of Love, cosmic Beauty, universal plasticity, or the female receptive Divinity”⁶⁹ (*ibid.*). In particular, the mystery of the “initiatory-mystical course” is closely linked to the white rose, connected, in turn, with the occult reality of the invisible:

This Rose is “candid”: and to understand its whiteness, one must have understood the mysteries of the prophet Hosea (the first to speak of it biblically), of the very ancient and “heavenly” Iran, and of the Origins of the “White Spirit”. This, in a word, is tantamount to crossing the boundary, hence infinite, between the “faithful of love” (*fedele d’amore*) written in lower case, in inverted commas, and the capitalised Faithful of Love (*Fedele d’Amore*) of the ultra-maximum Love that *moves the Sun*—the Eternal Christ—and the *other Stars*—the angelic or divine Beings.⁷⁰ (*Ibid.*, p. 128)

In this passage, we find the concept of Eternal Christ, which is a pivotal theme in Panunzio’s beliefs. He used to call himself a “lover of Jesus”, a “lover of Christ”, as Aldo La Fata remarks (see La Fata 2021, p. 80).⁷¹ The figure and the message of Jesus are of cardinal importance in Panunzio’s work and thought, and, for Rossetti too, the figure of Jesus Christ is of primary importance, as we can see, for example, in *La Beatrice di Dante*: “I venerate the religion of Jesus Christ; and everything that may be contrary to it [. . .], I reject it with all the strength of my mind and heart”⁷² (Rossetti [1842] 2019, p. 537). Silvano Panunzio explains that Gabriele Rossetti’s anti-papal and anti-ecclesiastical animosity is rooted in the corruption of the men who represented the institution of the Church and is in no way opposed to Christianity. Thus, one cannot consider Rossetti as a heterodox opponent of the Catholic Church. On the contrary, as the author of *Cielo e Terra* points out, Rossetti continually proclaims he is a Christian, a Catholic, and considers the Gospel as

the text in which the truths of the true religion are contained (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, pp. 73–74). William Michael Rossetti, Gabriele's son, confirms this particular aspect of his father's thought and ideas: "it should be understood that, though a fervent and outspoken anti-papalist, he [Gabriele Rossetti] never expressly renounced the Roman Catholic faith" (in Rossetti 1901, p. 71).

In addition to the importance given to the Catholic creed and the figure of Jesus Christ in the history of humanity, another figure that represents a pivotal focus both for Rossetti and Panunzio is Beatrice. In his mystical interpretation of literature, mainly in Dante's literary production, Panunzio devotes particular attention to the figure of Beatrice, who was the main focus of his exegetical contribution. Following Rossetti's interpretation in his work *La Beatrice di Dante*, Panunzio states that the mystery of Beatrice is purely of a metaphysical nature (as in the *Song of Songs*), "namely of the *unio* and *fusio mystica* of the human Soul with the Divine Intellect, of the personal Spirit with the Universal Spirit"⁷³ (Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 85). Beatrice is the mysterious Woman of Boethius, who is, at the same time, the Platonic Philosophy and the human Wise Faculty: the former instructs from the outside and the latter dwells in the soul of man. She allows the ascent into Heaven, which is not a vague expression but a mystical concept, namely, the passage from active to contemplative life. In this respect, Panunzio writes that "the Soul devoted to 'Contemplation' is symbolically transformed into Woman, precisely because she is more receptive and more quiescent to the Supreme Divine Omnipotence. [...] It will precede the other part remaining on Earth to fight, that is, Man with his duties of 'Action'"⁷⁴ (ibid., p. 88). The seraphic fusion between the Intellect of Love (Dante) and his Soul (Beatrice) is celebrated in the Eighth heaven⁷⁵ (the heaven of the Cherubs), perfected in the Ninth (the one of the Seraphs) and glorified in the Tenth heaven (see ibid.).⁷⁶ It is, therefore, an inner faculty dormant in the human being that must be (re)conquered to achieve perfection, the spiritual regime of new life, through a passage of death and rebirth (see ibid., p. 87).

Thus, in *Cielo e Terra*, Dante's work is studied from the perspective of the mystical-initiatory component in the wake of Rossetti's contribution. One of the great merits of the latter is, in Panunzio's view, to have demonstrated the dissemination of the occult Wisdom in literature (as well as in Greek and Latin classical texts), especially the fact that this esoteric knowledge occurs through Myth, which "is not the spontaneous, fantastic, popular creation, but the wise, 'sacerdotal' creation of hierophants, of initiated Poets, or Prophets"⁷⁷ (ibid., p. 77). Myth is strictly linked to mysticism, as Panunzio points out, affirming that "'Myth' derives from the identical root of 'Mystique' and 'Mystery'" and "the very origin of the word indicates a clear and unequivocal hieratic provenance"⁷⁸ (ibid.). The Myth is also present in the common language, which was not invented by the people but by the Sacred Grammarians (see ibid., p. 78). So, if we include the proverbs, for example, we need to bear in mind that they are not the product of popular expression but, as Panunzio writes, "they are an elemental adaptation of the Sentences of the Sages and the veritable religious and heroic Myths"⁷⁹ (ibid.). More precisely, *Cielo e Terra* contains an interesting passage in this regard:

People do not invent anything at all, least of all language in its complex physical-metaphysical structure, which is the work of the sacred Grammarians, from the first human being to speak, Adam, to the first man to write, Enoch: and from the descendants of every place and nation. This is the doctrine that Dante makes his own and through which he teaches us. But the moderns, in their insipid arrogance, consider as "outdated" a divine Alighieri instructed by the "Spirits of the Prophets"! (*Apocalypse* XXII-6).⁸⁰ (Ibid.)

This passage from *Cielo e Terra* signals that Dante's work is not simply literature but pure prophetic and mystical knowledge transposed in the form of literary composition. Literature is, thus, a means of preserving and transmitting this sacred knowledge, as Gabriele Rossetti demonstrated by studying Dante and European medieval love literature. Panunzio praises this great merit of Rossetti and emphasises the fact that he was marginalised in European academic debate due to his interpretation of literature in a symbolic and esoteric

key. In the “Introduction” of the 1982 edition of *La Beatrice di Dante*, Panunzio defined Rossetti as an intellectual “very little known and too much forgotten”⁸¹ (in Rossetti [1842] 1982, p. VII), while, in *Cielo e Terra*, he remarks that Rossetti was convinced that in the future his ideas would be taken up and endorsed by scholars more capable of demonstrating their veracity (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 79). Silvano Panunzio was undoubtedly one of the few scholars who fought to recognise the merits of Rossetti’s contribution, saving the author of *La Beatrice di Dante* from oblivion.

5. Conclusions

The figure and the work of Silvano Panunzio represent a vast and hitherto unexplored horizon of research, a field in which new and unexpected discoveries are waiting to be made and which are relevant to both religious and literary studies. Aldo La Fata rightly defines Panunzio as an “extraordinary but neglected Christian thinker and philosopher”⁸² (La Fata 2018, p. 5) who sought to prove the existence of a gnosis and of a Christian esotericism linked specifically to the Islamic and Hindu mystical traditions. Mysticism is at the heart of his contribution and of his interpretation of literature in authors such as Dante, Ibn Arabi, Pascal, Cervantes, Manzoni, Shakespeare, Goethe, Dostoevsky and Solov’ëv.

Panunzio’s treatment of religious traditions other than Christianity may, of course, be subjected to critiques of selective syncretism or even appropriation. Such critiques would be helpful in situating him in his times of growing Italian interest in the “East”. Still, Panunzio’s main concern remains in mystical experience as a human quality that can transform readers, not specifically in interreligious commonalities or differences.

As we have seen, in explaining the true meaning of the term ‘jargon’, referred to the *Fedeli d’Amore*, Panunzio emphasises the importance of language, whose cryptic and hermetic nature is necessary to refine spiritual intelligence and protect its sanctity from the profane. This explains that “the evangelical ‘do not give holy things to dogs’, namely strangers, and ‘do not throw pearls to swine’, meaning the unbelieving and undeserving materialists”⁸³ (Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 106). As Silvano Panunzio writes, “the most dangerous profane and profaner is oneself. Those who have mystical experience know and understand this very well”⁸⁴ (ibid.). This sentence is highly significant since the author shows he is aware of a dimension from which ordinary people are excluded, namely, the mystical reality of the invisible world.

In a letter of 24 June 1974, Silvano Panunzio wrote the following:

When we have parents, we sometimes quarrel and bicker with them; but when our mother and father pass away, we realise with sorrow what we have lost. We Catholics have lost the Father (the Sun of pure Knowledge); now the Mother (the Church, the Moon, the Symbol) is paralysed in a cot. A miracle can always happen and the paralytic can walk again. But, even immobile in bed, she is still the Mother. Better alive than being euthanised. And the spiritual energies of twentieth-century Traditionalism—the ungrateful children—instead of helping her from within, set about judging her and making her—poor old woman—inept and stammering. To love the Church is to love Jesus; and to love Jesus is to love and serve God”.⁸⁵ (In La Fata 2021, p. 133)

By using the metaphor of the loss of parents, Silvano Panunzio paints a picture of modern society, deprived of faith, imbued with materialism and forgetful of the existence of spiritual reality. Through his work, Panunzio sought to express the basic need for spirituality and religion “in a world confused and dark and disturbed by portents of fear” (Eliot 2001, p. 432), as Eliot wrote in his poetical composition *Choruses from “The Rock”*. In this world, characterised by the decadence of the spirit, Panunzio attempted to show that humanity needs transcendence, that the human heart needs a metaphysical dimension, without which individuals become cold, mechanical, unfeeling and apathetic, and, here again, a passage from Eliot brilliantly sums up the desolation of modern society:

Forgetful, you neglect your shrines and churches;

The men you are in these times deride
 What has been done of good, you find explanations
 To satisfy the rational and enlightened mind.
 Second, you neglect and belittle the desert.
 The desert is not remote in southern tropics,
 The desert is not only around the corner,
 The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,
 The desert is in the heart of your brother. (Ibid., p. 400)

Healing the wounds of humanity through the act of spreading metaphysical knowledge was one of Silvano Panunzio's greatest merits, though his efforts are still partly neglected, given that his contribution has been relegated to the fringes of academic debate. Not only was his work imbued with mysticism but his personality as well, which deserves particular attention as Panunzio represents a forgotten figure who had mystical experiences and whose teachings could be useful to point a suffering humanity towards the path of spiritual elevation. As Aldo La Fata comments, "in everything he [Panunzio] wrote, did or said, he always saw the sign of a destiny, the imprint of a higher will"⁸⁶ (La Fata 2021, p. 7). Panunzio was convinced that he had a prophetic mission to fulfil during his lifetime—a task set for him by divine Providence in which he firmly believed (see *ibid.*, p. 8). He was also convinced that nothing happens by chance, and in this respect, he recalls, in *Cielo e Terra*, a curious event related to his links with Gabriele Rossetti. Panunzio writes that he first heard Gabriele Rossetti's name when he was about ten years old and attended secondary school in Rome. It was a classmate of his who told him about the author of *La Beatrice di Dante* as he was a native of Vasto, Rossetti's hometown, and boasted of being a descendant of his. The mother of this schoolmate also often spoke to a very young Silvano Panunzio about Gabriele Rossetti (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, pp. 39–40). "It was thus", Panunzio writes in *Cielo e Terra*, "that from early adolescence these unusual names and themes were impressed on my ear and heart", and "I would never have imagined that one day I would have the privilege of contributing to the reprinting of Gabriele Rossetti's greatest work"⁸⁷ (*ibid.*, p. 40). Significantly, Panunzio continues by affirming that "there are, in the course of each existence, mysterious and invisible threads that, interwoven, unravel and unwind even over the longest periods"⁸⁸ (*ibid.*). Following this statement, a mystical and higher dimension would thus intervene in the events of our life, and what we call coincidences would be nothing more than these mysterious and invisible threads evoked by Silvano Panunzio that would shape the course of each human existence. *Cielo e Terra* teaches the reader that the invisible and eternal world of Heaven exists and is directly linked with the transitory reality of the Earth.

In response to the question motivating this article, Panunzio also demonstrates how a literary train, such as from Dante to Rossetti and beyond, can be considered to be more than either literature or religion. Rather, he shows how to analyse such texts as both and more, as sources of transformation that have, in fact, led to a transmission of mystical knowledge and esoteric learning in Europe.

Silvano Panunzio shows that literature is a path which leads to the awareness that mysticism is the unknown essence of human life, enabling us to perceive the invisible threads that weave the story of our own destiny, directly or indirectly linked with other destinies, both in this worldly life and in the world that we cannot see, as in the case of a father who leaves this world and from the Hereafter continues to be the angel who lovingly guides his son on earth, from Heaven to Earth: *Cielo e Terra*.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- 1 In 1978 Aldo Moro was brutally killed by the Red Brigades, an Italian far-left terrorist organisation.
- 2 On the esotericism of Dante and of medieval love literature (see Rossetti [1840] 2013, [1842] 1982; Valli [1929] 2013; Ricolfi [1933] 2013; De Rougemont [1940] 1983; *L'idea deforme. Interpretazioni esoteriche di Dante* 1989; Salzani 2014). On Dante scholarship (see *In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature* 1975; Singleton [1954] 2019; Barolini 1984; Harrison 1988; Kirkpatrick [1987] 2004).
- 3 “Materialisti increduli e immeritevoli”. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.
- 4 “Chi ha esperienza mistica”.
- 5 “Esperienza ineffabile”.
- 6 There is only one other collective research work on Panunzio, published in 1998 and edited by Rodolfo Gordini and Sergio Sotgiu: *Testimone dell'Assoluto. "L'itinerario umano e intellettuale di Silvano Panunzio"* (tr. *Witness of the Absolute. "The Human and Intellectual Itinerary of Silvano Panunzio"*). See also Giardini (2019). The most important works by Silvano Panunzio include: Panunzio (2014, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2022).
- 7 Concerning recent scholarship on mysticism, see *The Presence of Light. Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, edited by Kapstein (2004); McGinn (1991, 1994); Sells (2004).
- 8 “Nonostante i colpi duri e dolorosi ricevuti dalla vita, egli si comporterà sempre come se non gli fosse accaduto alcunché di spiacevole”.
- 9 Silvano Panunzio founded in 1959 a religious Order inspired by the Archangel Michael, the ATMA (Alleanza Tradizionale Michele Arcangelo, tr. Traditional Alliance Michael Archangel), whose aim was to oppose the materialism of modern society in favour of a transcendent and spiritual conception of life (see La Fata 2021, pp. 59–63).
- 10 “Noi cristiani abbiamo il dovere di onorare anche Mosé, Buddha e Maometto”.
- 11 “Il Pontefice (Pio XII) segue con curiosità e interesse le cose che scrivi”.
- 12 Panunzio dedicated a study to the figure of Fatima, published in the journal *Metapolitica* in 1978 and entitled “Il simbolismo di Fatima” (tr. “The Symbolism of Fatima”). See Panunzio (2019b, pp. 897–904).
- 13 In the work *Metapolitica. La Roma Eterna e la Nuova Gerusalemme*, Panunzio shows that the history of humanity is characterised by an occult war between two opposing forces, the principle of evil and the principle of good, the left hand and the right hand of God, and this contraposition of the invisible realm influences the historical, political and social reality of humanity. It is therefore a transcendental conception of politics.
- 14 “In questa prospettiva la sfiducia, la rinuncia, il pessimismo sono banditi”.
- 15 “[Questi processi] vanno compresi e trascesi in senso verticale e ascendente”.
- 16 “Il punto più basso di caduta è proprio quello in cui comincia la risalita”.
- 17 “Cristianesimo ‘induizzato’”.
- 18 “Per nascita siamo indù e resteremo indù fino alla morte [. . .]. Siamo indù per quanto riguarda la nostra costituzione fisica e mentale, ma riguardo alla nostra anima immortale siamo cattolici. Siamo cattolici hindù”.
- 19 Notable books in Panunzio’s library include those by Mircea Eliade, Julius Evola, Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Martin Lings, Marco Passil, Michel Vâlsan, Leo Schaya, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Henry Corbin. As Aldo La Fata points out, the works most appreciated by Panunzio were those by Schuon, Burckhardt, Coomaraswamy and Corbin (see La Fata 2021, p. 105).
- 20 “Caro Silvano, ti rammento che il privilegio martirizzante di essere nella Verità evangelica ha come conseguenza fatale l’odio teologico, alias ‘satanico’, di tutti gli auto-esclusi”.
- 21 To Padre Pio, Silvano Panunzio (1992) dedicated the book *Solo nel mistero di Dio: sinossi ascetico-mistica da tutti gli scritti di Padre Pio da Pietralcina*. On Padre Pio, see Preziuso (1990); Allegri (2002).
- 22 “[I] più grande santo dell’epoca moderna”. Padre Pio was canonised on 16 June 2002, during the pontificate of John Paul II, who knew Padre Pio personally. To Karol Wojtyła, before he became Pope, Padre Pio had said at a meeting between them: “You will be a Pope, but there will be blood and violence” (“Tu sarai Papa, ma vi sarà sangue e violenza”, in Succi [2007] 2013, p. 383).
- 23 “Libro dei morti’ cristiano”.
- 24 The texts composing *Cielo e Terra* were written in the 1980s but with a limited print run of only a few copies, then it was published in 2009 by Metapolitica editions and finally the first real and complete edition of the book *Cielo e Terra* was published in 2019 by Simmetria editions.
- 25 Beyond Panikkar, other intellectuals contributed to making Silvano Panunzio’s ideas known beyond Italy, such as the Polish political scientist Jacek Bartyzel, the Spanish philosopher Gustavo Bueno Martínez, the Argentine philosopher Alberto Buela and the Portuguese scholar João Dagoberto Forte Bigotte Chorão.
- 26 “Il corale Iniziato cattolico e il solitario Iniziato della Nuova dimensione dello Spirito”.

- 27 “Poeta mistico”.
- 28 “Viaggio nell’invisibile”.
- 29 “Eventi noti ed ignoti, storici e occulti, tutti d’importanza mondiale e addirittura cosmica”.
- 30 Another forgotten figure of the European 19th century literary field praised by Silvano Panunzio is the French poet and writer Fabre d’Olivet (1767–1825) who, as one can read in *Cielo e Terra*, showed (like Rossetti) the presence of the Sacred Science in literature (especially medieval literature), creating a bridge between the Western mystical tradition and the Eastern one (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 83). Rossetti is defined by Panunzio “the Italian Fabre d’Olivet” (“il Fabre d’Olivet italiano”, *ibid.*, p. 41).
- 31 “Troviamo [del pari Cantori d’amore in Italia], Minne-Sänger (cioè Cantori d’amore) in Germania, e Love-singers (cioè Cantori d’amore) in Inghilterra; e così in tutt’i paesi d’Europa”.
- 32 It is worth pointing out that Eugène Aroux plagiarized Rossetti’s work. On this, see Giannantonio (1983, pp. 356–96); Fabrizio-Costa (2010, pp. 89–108).
- 33 La *Beatrice di Dante* by Gabriele Rossetti was published, in an incomplete version, in 1842 and later in 1935, before the 1982 edition edited by Panunzio.
- 34 “La Beatrice di Dante di Gabriele Rossetti è un’opera classica del pensiero e della letteratura dell’Italia ed è, congiuntamente, un capolavoro europeo”.
- 35 It is worth pointing out that Panunzio criticises and correct some errors of Rossetti’s interpretation. For instance, one of the criticisms Panunzio made of Rossetti is that he did not take into account Dante’s spiritual development that led him to distance himself from the *Fedeli d’Amore*, and thus not share their ideals and knowledge in mystical and initiatory matters. In *Cielo e Terra*, we read that Dante experienced a strong spiritual crisis, especially in the last seven years of his life, and it was this change in his spiritual and existential regime that distanced him from the uncritical radicalism of the *Fedeli d’Amore*, who without him, effectively became a sect (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 138).
- 36 “Mistico interprete”.
- 37 “Mediatore della Conosceza testuale del verbo di Pitagora, di Platone e di Dante”.
- 38 On the relations between Dante’s work and the Islamic mystical tradition, see Palacios ([1919] 2020); Campanini (2019); Celli (2013); *Dante and Islam*, edited by Ziolkowski (2015).
- 39 “Simmetrie comparative”.
- 40 “La Donna Eterna, *Evau*, unita allo *Jod* nel Nome Divino e Tetragramma (IHVH)”.
- 41 “L’Eterno Femine del *Faust* di Goethe”.
- 42 “Beatrice [. . .] è la Santa Gnosi in sé: come pure è la Comunità spirituale e la Scuola iniziatica che vi conducono”.
- 43 “L’Iniziatore universale”.
- 44 “Il vate dell’Occulto nelle segrete Isole Settentrionali”.
- 45 “Il vate evangelico, nella Russia mistica”.
- 46 “Il formulatore di quella dottrina ‘sofianica’ che riunisce la Venere ellenica, l’Iside egizia e la Maria cristiana nella sintesi superiore, platonica e dantesca di un perfetto Fedele d’Amore”.
- 47 Panunzio highlights that the expression “Fedeli d’Amore” (Faithful of Love) is of Sufic derivation (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 110).
- 48 “Missione cavalleresca della Francia occulta”.
- 49 It was Luigi Valli in particular who focused on the relations between Sufism and the mystical tradition of the *Fedeli d’Amore*.
- 50 “Il primo è più ripetuto errore degli ‘eretici’ sta nel volersi esibire sulla pubblica piazza (con le parole, con i gesti, con gli scritti, persino con le omissioni)”. Aldo La Fata points out that even the esotericism to which Panunzio refers is grounded on religious authority because, when approaching such a sensitive subject as esotericism, “it is necessary to anchor oneself in the solid ground of traditional Religion, to avoid both the abstractions of a vague spiritualism and the dangers of stumbling into lower order psychisms” (“è necessario ancorarsi al terreno solido della Religione tradizionale, per evitare sia le astrattezze di un vago spiritualismo che i pericoli di inciampare in psichismi di ordine inferiore”, La Fata 2021, p. 134). In particular, the esotericism to which Panunzio refers is not the “institutional or formal esotericism such as the Masonic one”, but the “real traditional esotericism such as is found, for example, in the ‘Greek mysteries’, in Tibetan Buddhism and in Arabic Sufism” (“esoterismo istituzionale o formale come quello massonico”; “vero esoterismo tradizionale quale si trova, ad esempio, nei ‘misteri greci’, nel buddhismo tibetano e nel sufismo islamico”, *ibid.*, p. 133).
- 51 “Il fuoco interno che alimenta la vita segreta (‘il cuore’) di un Mistico o di un iniziato non può in alcun modo, con indebite vampate, alterare il volto di una Religione regnante”.
- 52 “Un Essere veramente ‘pneumatico’ non cerca di procurarsi il giudizio favorevole degli uomini [. . .]. Egli invece compie ogni cosa attendendo l’ineffabile e severissimo giudizio degli Angeli”.
- 53 “Non ci sono solo ‘gli Angeli delle persone’, esistono anche—vedi l’Antico Testamento e l’Apocalisse—‘gli Angeli delle nazioni’ e ‘gli Angeli delle chiese’: infine gli Angeli supremi che ci scrutano e ci segnano in fronte come nell’ascesa progressiva del viaggio dantesco”.

- 54 “Siamo in un campo trascendente in cui i documenti umani non esistono”.
- 55 “Vi sono parole sfuggite qua e là dalla penna dell’Autore le quali, lette in modo sottile, confermano che egli ebbe un incontro ai più alti livelli con i residui non già degli abusati Fedeli d’Amore, semmai con i maestri invisibili dei medesimi”.
- 56 Rossetti was exiled, first in Malta and then in the UK.
- 57 “Esiste una invisibile Comunità Profetica, *cadmica*, ossia ‘originaria’ che risale ai primordi umani pre-adamitici: la quale, in silenzio, emana i suoi raggi sulla Chiesa, sugli Ordini Religiosi, sugli Ordini Cavallereschi. Il Pontefice Clemente Romano, in una sua Epistola, la dice ‘più antica del Sole e della Luna’. Ciò spiega come mai il Padre Dante, deluso e sconcolato, abbia alla fine della vita affidato a questa, per 500 anni, il *soprasenso* delle sue creazioni. E spiega la rivelazione avvenuta nel Sette-Ottocento non presso i decaduti, già equivoci Templari e loro pretesi eredi, bensì nell’ortodosso e più antico Ordine Giovannita e di Malta. Spiega come Dante abbia affidato *con speranza* il suo testamento ideale agli ‘Spiriti dei Profeti’ (Ap 22, 6) che sono anche gli Angeli Custodi dei Poeti veri esposti al martirio. (Tra l’altro, i tanto ripetuti, oggi, ‘Fedeli d’Amore’, sono una pallida parodia della indicata *Comunità della Luce*, affatto trascendente. Essi contengono il più maturo Poeta che, non a caso, li ha collocati all’Inferno!). All’atto pratico, non ci fu nell’Isola una personale ‘scoperta di Rossetti’, ma una sua *ricostruzione geniale* sui dati autentici offertigli, misteriosamente, dallo stesso Cantore sacro”.
- 58 With regard to the sources on which Gabriele Rossetti would have drawn, Panunzio points out that they were “ancient and authoritative sources, yet living ones of a higher level” (“fonti antiche e autorevoli, e pur tuttavia viventi di superiore livello”, Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 163). The mathematician, philosopher and esotericist Arturo Reghini (*alias* Pietro Negri) also confirms that “Rossetti, first systematic discoverer of the sectarian jargon of the *Fedeli d’Amore*, was led to his interpretation by knowledge of ancient secret traditions” (“Rossetti, primo sistematico scopritore del gergo settario dei Fedeli d’Amore, fu condotto alla sua interpretazione dalla conoscenza di antiche tradizioni segrete”, Negri [1971] 2006, p. 99).
- 59 “La versione della scuola allegorista sui motivi della disciplina arcani, osservata da Dante e dai suoi amici, non è quella autentica. Che Luigi Valli ed altri letterati sostengano come tale regola sia da imputare al segreto ‘settario’ e alla necessità di difesa dagli sguardi inquisitoriali della Chiesa e del potere in genere, può anche passare, in quanto si tratta di studiosi i quali hanno opinato tutto ciò dall’esterno. Ma non può non meravigliare che un Uomo spirituale della tempra di Gabriele Rossetti, profondamente addentro ai misteri inesprimibili, inviolabili in sé, della Via iniziatica e della Via mistica, abbia, senza approfondire, ritenuto la stessa cosa. Interpretare la ‘segretezza’ dei Fedeli d’Amore, come il nascondimento dei settari e degli eretici, significa confondere i piani superficiali di attrito con le esperienze interiori che sono intangibili. L’Iniziato non è eterodosso quanto alla dottrina, né ribelle per il suo comportamento. Se per un’improvvisa ‘caduta’ divenisse tale, ciò vuol dire che la sua Iniziazione era molto imperfetta. E non è un caso che tali slittamenti capitino ai ‘neofiti’ o agli incamminati su balze inferiori. Nell’Iniziato dall’alto (cosa che non ha niente a che fare con i gradi esibizionistici elargiti da associazioni orizzontali, nessuna esclusa) non ci può essere opposizione né sostanziale né formale alle Istituzioni religiose pubblicamente costituite. Egli sa benissimo, meglio di ogni altro, e almeno nella stessa misura dei membri del Sacerdozio in carica, che tali entità sono di ineccepibile origine divina. Né la decadenza delle medesime è ragione sufficiente per passare alla rivolta e alla contestazione di tipo, appunto, ereticale. Questa mescola indebitamente fatti empirici e casi individuali con principi trascendenti e organismi perenni: in una parola, il soggetto con l’oggettivo, il particolare con l’universale. Non sarà qui inutile ricordare che *airèmoni*—dove ‘eresia’ ed ‘eretico’—significa letteralmente in greco ‘scelgo una parte’”.
- 60 “Il ‘gergo’ [...] viene adoperato sia per allenare e affinare l’intelligenza spirituale—che dal linguaggio ordinario verrebbe contaminata, affievolita dalla tensione necessaria—sia per proteggere dai profani la sacralità essenziale del Mistero”.
- 61 “Una Comunità cristiana iniziatica i cui membri comunicavano tra loro con poesie espresse in gergo”.
- 62 Panunzio states that the alchemist Fulcanelli is one of the rare representatives in the twentieth century of the mystical and hermetic tradition (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 118).
- 63 On the esoteric dimension of Rabelais’ work, see Claude-Sosthène Grasset d’Orcet, Joséphin Péladan, *Le double langage de Rabelais*, Paris, Éditions Edite-ODS, 2015. According to Panunzio, among the other writers evoked by Fulcanelli, particular attention should be paid to Cyrano de Bergerac (1619–1655) who wrote *Voyage dans L’autre Monde. Les États et empires de la Lune. Les États et empires du soleil*, which is an alchemical text containing knowledge of the astrological Tradition of the Invisible Worlds, and the same knowledge is also found in Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533), in the *Orlando innamorato* (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 167).
- 64 “Virtù magica”; “una forza mentale-spirituale capace di operare la trasformazione interna degli stati dell’Essere”.
- 65 “Poeti-sacerdoti, mistagoghi e ierofanti dei Divini Misteri”.
- 66 Panunzio draws an interesting parallel between Dante and Saint Benedict, between the *Rule* and *The Divine Comedy*. In fact, the *Rule* by Saint Benedict states that spiritual pilgrimage leads to the Way of the Desert, which is not the ascetic acceptance of solitude but, on the contrary, is the fight against the Adversary: the Devil. The Desert is the battle between the human being and the demons, against the diabolic adversary which destroys the life of individuals causing pain and suffering. This is the same principle that we find in Dante’s descent into Hell (see Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 60).
- 67 “‘Corso iniziatico-mistico’”.
- 68 “La riunione della Croce e della Rosa”.
- 69 “La Croce è la Forza attiva e penetrante del Sacrificio avatarico, è la Divinità plasmatrice maschile; la Rosa è la Sapienza d’Amore, la Bellezza cosmica, la plasticità universale, o la Divinità ricettiva femminile”.

- 70 “Questa Rosa è ‘candida’: e per intendere tale suo candore bisogna aver inteso i misteri del profeta Osea (il primo a biblicamente parlarne), dell’Iràn antichissimo e ‘paradisiaco’, e delle Origini dello ‘Spirito Bianco’. Il che, in una parola, equivale al passaggio al limite, dunque infinito, tra il minuscolo ‘fedele d’amore’ tra virgolette e il Fedele tutto maiuscolo dell’Amore ultramaiuscolo che *move il Sole*—il Cristo Eterno—*e l’altre Stelle*—gli Esseri angelici o divinizzati”.
- 71 On the importance given by Panunzio to the figure of Jesus Christ, see Maddalena 2018, pp. 108–15.
- 72 “Io venero la religion di Gesù Cristo; e tutto quello che può risultare ad essa contrario [...], io lo rigetto con tutta la forza della mia mente e del mio cuore”.
- 73 “[I]l mistero di Beatrice [...] ossia dell’*unio e fusio mystica* dell’Anima umana con l’Intelletto Divino, dello Spirito personale con la Spirito Universale”.
- 74 “L’Anima dedita alla ‘Contemplazione’ è simbolicamente trasformata in Donna, appunto perché più ricettiva e più quiescente alla Suprema Onnipotenza Divina. [...] Essa precederà l’altra parte rimasta in Terra a combattere, ossia l’Uomo con i suoi doveri di ‘Azione’”.
- 75 The first seven Heavens are the inferior ones, as Panunzio remarks, and we should remember that the Heavens represent “the hierarchy of the Sciences of the Spirit” (“la gerarchia delle Scienze dello Spirito”, Panunzio [2009] 2019, p. 120). Heavens are the various grades of the ascent of the Soul, which lead to the angelical states (see *ibid.*, pp. 120–22).
- 76 It is worth recalling the importance of numerical symbolism in *The Divine Comedy*, especially numbers nine and ten.
- 77 “Il Mito non è creazione spontanea, fantastica, popolare, ma creazione sapiente, ‘sacerdotale’ di ierofanti, di Poeti iniziati, o di Profeti”.
- 78 “‘Mito’ deriva dall’identica radice di ‘Mistica’ e di ‘Mistero’: e l’origine stessa del vocabolo indica una chiara e inequivocabile provenienza ieratica”.
- 79 “Sono un adattamento elementare delle Sentenze dei Saggi e dei Miti religiosi ed eroici veri e propri”.
- 80 “Il popolo non inventa proprio nulla, meno che mai la lingua nella sua complessa struttura fisico-metafisica che è opera dei Grammatici sacri, dal primo uomo parlante, Adamo, al primo uomo scrivente, Enoch: e dai discendenti d’ogni luogo e nazione. È la dottrina che Dante fa propria e con cui ci ammaestra. Ma i moderni, nella loro boria insipiente, considerano ‘superato’ un divino Alighieri istruito dagli ‘Spiriti dei Profeti!’ (*Ap.* XXII-6)”.
- 81 “Molto poco conosciuto e troppo dimenticato”.
- 82 “Straordinario ma trascurato pensatore e filosofo cristiano”.
- 83 “L’evangelico ‘non dare le cose sante ai cani’ ossia agli estranei, e ‘non gettare le perle ai porci’, cioè ai materialisti increduli e immeritevoli”.
- 84 “Il più pericoloso profano e profanatore è rappresentato da se stessi. Chi ha esperienza mistica lo sa e lo capisce benissimo”.
- 85 “Quando si hanno i genitori, a volte si polemizza e si bisticcia con loro; ma quando il padre e la madre vengono meno ci si accorge con dolore di quello che si è perduto. Noi cattolici abbiamo perduto il Padre (il Sole della Conoscenza pura); ora la Madre (la Chiesa, La Luna, il Simbolo) è paralizzata in un lettuccio. Può sempre avvenire un miracolo e la paralitica può rialzarsi. Ma, anche immobile nel letto è sempre la Madre. Meglio viva che praticarle l’eutanasia. E le energie spirituali del Tradizionalismo del ‘900—i figli ingrati—invece di aiutarla dall’interno, si sono messi a giudicarla e a renderla—povera vecchia—inetta e balbettante. Amare la Chiesa è amare Gesù; e amare Gesù è amare e servire Dio.”
- 86 “In tutto ciò che ha scritto, fatto o detto, egli ha sempre visto il segno di un destino, la traccia di una volontà superiore”.
- 87 “Fu così che fin dalla prima adolescenza mi vennero inoculati, nell’orecchio e nel cuore, questi nomi e questi temi insoliti”; “non avrei mai immaginato di avere un giorno il privilegio di contribuire alla ristampa dell’opera principale di Gabriele Rossetti”.
- 88 “Vi sono nel corso di ciascuna esistenza, dei fili misteriosi e invisibili che, intrecciati, si sciolgono e si distendono anche alle più lunghe scadenze”.

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