

EDITORIAL

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If we try to qualify with a single adjective the multifaceted reflection of Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi (1773-1842) we might be tempted to qualify it as heterodox. Having lived between two centuries, Sismondi had to come to terms with the profound changes brought in by the two revolutions – the political one and the industrial one – without ever adhering completely to the rallying cry of his day and age. A liberal, he believed that the introduction of a fully democratic regime would be premature, fearing the risks of a tyranny of the majority and hoping for greater safeguards for the minorities. A historian, he left us two great masterpieces: the first one – *l'Histoire des Républiques italiennes du Moyen-âge* (1806-1818) – written against the administrative uniformity imposed by the Napoleonic domination; the second – *l'Histoire des Français* (1821-1842) – addressed to going back over the events of France starting from the outskirts, at the same time when the undisputed predominance of the capital was being affirmed over the provinces. Considered to be a romantic, above all in Italy, Sismondi never waived the classical values, criticizing the passionate excesses of the Romantics *tout court*. Faithful to his Geneva origins, Sismondi became the promoter of a Unitarian Protestantism, taking on fiercely critical attitudes *vis-à-vis* the *Réveil* movement, which many pastors of his birth town adhered to. A very active and impassioned mentor of all the national liberation movement present in his days (from Latin America, to Poland, to Greece, to Italy), he remained ever-sceptical on the mechanical equivalence between State and nation, preferring more complex and plural solutions.

Lastly, an economist, he was one of the first and solitary opponents of the latest technological innovations – machine-system – wondering what price was paid for the claimed liberation of man through machines and going so far as to justify, in the name of the wellbeing of each and everyone, a limitation of the pivotal principles of the political economy of his day and age, free competition and property rights.

Heterodox, then, but for a good stretch of the way certainly not unheeded. It would only be in the years prior to the great watershed of 1848 that his voice seemed to lose that extraordinary audience when his writings were read and translated into most of the European languages (except, then, to be rediscovered spasmodically and according to specific disciplinary specializations by the posthumous generations).

«Annali Sismondi / Annales Sismondi / Sismondi Annals» seeks to recoup all these aspects of his thinking, trying, if possible, to recompose them wholly. The strands that shape our new adventure are three: the first one looks backwards, with the intention of understanding the legacy that enlightenment, on the one hand, and the precocious frequentation of the Coppet circle, on the other, had upon his reflection. There has never been enough reflection on the fact that Sismondi was the most enduring member of Mme de Staël's parlour, allowing for the dissemination and the re-articulation of the ideas that

had originated and been formed there, well beyond the precocious loss of that extraordinary intellectual experience. The second one looks to the time that was his and aims to reposition Sismondi in the vast transnational and often transcontinental networks in which he lived and operated as a protagonist. Lastly, the third is addressed to the overall legacy of his thinking, which from a global perspective – both from the disciplinary point of view and the strictly territorial one – ended up disintegrating in numerous doctrinal rivulets, with specific national declinations.

In inaugurating this Journal, nothing has seemed to us to be more fitting than proposing anew to a multilingual public the dialogue that two great Italian historians had concerning the actuality of his thinking on the occasion of the international congress of the Association of Sismondi Studies in 2010. This is followed by the contributions presented to the Young Researchers' Atelier on the Sismondi day of Pescia in 2012, together with the unabridged new edition of a fragment of his rich correspondence.