

unni in Messina and elsewhere, so this phonetic rule is not very strict. On page 112, in the third line of the first poem by Veneziano, *difensari cu lu stoccu* must mean “defend yourself with a staff” (or sword, an older meaning appropriate for Renaissance poetry), not “to protect your stock.” The entire translation of this poem, attempting rhymed couplets, becomes too free to be helpful to the student. On page 116, in the section on direct and indirect pronouns, line 5 should have *ndirettu* not *direttu*. On page 69, sentence 6, the word “straighten” should be “smoke.” In sentence 12, “bottom, depth” should be replaced by “crowd” (*fudda* is confused with *funnu*). In sentence 18, “dawn” is misprinted as “sawn.” On page 341, n.22, *corvi*, “crows,” is mistranslated as “blackbirds.” On page 77 in the dialect map of Sicily, three of the four little squares representing distinct linguistic zones are equally dark so we cannot make easy use of the map. On page 340, the last paragraph begins with *Lu* which should be changed to *La*.

The book contains a CD keyed to the exercises and readings, offering answers to questions asked in the text, translations, and further readings presented bilingually. Unfortunately, the disc was unplayable on both my CD players; I hope other users have better luck.

For decades, Gaetano Cipolla has made important contributions to our knowledge of Sicily, its literature, language, culture, history, and sociology. He has published numerous editions with translation of Sicilian poetry in the series “Sicilian Studies” that he edits for the publisher Legas, and Sicilian prose and verse in his journal *Arba Sicula* (Sicilian Dawn). This volume, rich in linguistic and cultural material, is a major continuation of that work.

**Review Essay: *A Tale of Two Women: Botteghe Oscure
and U.S. Literature in Italy***

“*Botteghe Oscure*” e la letteratura statunitense by Cristina Giorcelli. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021. pp. 396.

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Via delle Botteghe Oscure is a short, broad street in the historical center of Rome, connecting Largo di Torre Argentina with the Capitol. Its name bears witness to the ancient presence of several *dark workshops*, whose foundations can still be seen in the deeper layers of the street’s thick palimpsest. The learned tourists know that the street is culturally significant for at least three reasons: the Crypta Balbi, a branch

of the National Museum, showing the structures of a Roman theater, some medieval houses, a Renaissance nunnery, and an eighteenth-century church; the reddish façade of the palace that, for over 40 years, was the head office of the Italian Communist Party; and the imposing Palazzo Caetani, built between 1554 and 1570 for the noble family Mattei and later purchased by the Caetani as their major Roman residence.

The Caetani were one of the most distinguished families in Rome, especially from the time in the late thirteenth century when Benedetto Caetani became Pope Boniface VIII—the fierce adversary of Philip the Fair, king of France, and Dante (*Inferno* XIX:52–57). Members of his family held prestigious positions through the centuries, contributing to the political and cultural history of Rome. In 1911, Roffredo Caetani, Prince of Bassiano and last Duke of Sermoneta, a notable musician, met Marguerite Chapin, a rich young lady from Connecticut, who was in Paris to study singing. The two married and, in the truest Jamesian style, established themselves first in Versailles and, finally, in Rome. An energetic and strong-willed personality, Marguerite decided to invest her energies and money in promoting young writers, discovering still unpublished poets, and collecting paintings of lesser-known artists. In Paris she founded and directed the literary magazine *Commerce* (1924–32), which, among other merits, introduced to the public the first excerpts of Joyce's *Ulysses*. She eventually settled in Rome where, early in World War II, she had to face the tragedy of the loss of her son Camillo. In part as a reaction to such grief, though already in her late sixties, the Princess founded a second magazine. It was named after the street along which the family palace was located and the site of its editorial office: *Botteghe Oscure* (1948–60). Caetani paid generously to all her authors, regardless of their limited fame.

The extraordinary figure of Marguerite Caetani stands at the center of this recent volume by Cristina Giorcelli, longtime chair of American Studies at the University of Roma III. Giorcelli focuses on the relationships among Caetani, the literature of her native country, and the Italian cultural milieu in a period that, with reference to the history of cinema but also in a broader sense, has been defined as “Hollywood on the Tiber.” The contribution of *Botteghe Oscure* and of her patroness, a real cosmopolitan cultural mediator, to other European literatures (Italian, French, German) has been duly investigated by distinguished authors, but there is no doubt that the research carried on by Giorcelli had the task of analyzing the most important side of the subject. The amount of materials taken into account is impressive: letters from the correspondence of the Princess and her friends/authors/protégés, public and private documents from the Caetani archives, interviews, newspapers articles, reviews, notebooks, and the like. Giorcelli, however, never falls victim to the *quantity*, clearly distinguishing and stressing the *quality*

of the various voices in the polyphonic choir. Her exceptional expertise in the field of Anglo-American poetry enables her to offer the reader, through the lenses of Marguerite and her magazine, a complete picture of the various personalities, major and minor writers, literary critics, translators, and men and women of letters involved in the debates that made that period so fascinating. Though, as Giorcelli points out, Italy was, in those years, by and large still unprepared to understand the full range of such a meaningful cultural "invasion."

Caetani published, above all, poets but also novelists and playwrights. The volume is therefore divided into chapters pertaining to the different genres, including the category of translators and interdisciplinary artists. The chapter devoted to poets proves, for obvious reasons, unique in its richness and perceptiveness. Most opportunely, Giorcelli chose to shed light on the Princess's merits and successes, more than on her shortcomings or failures. At the same time, she avoided the danger of writing an extended eulogy, so there are also chapters that list the names of poets who were *not* included in the 25 issues of *Botteghe Oscure*, often providing convincing proposals of interpretation for their absence. But the number and level of those who were published suffice to justify the stature and impact of Caetani's operations. W. C. Williams, M. Moore, E. E. Cummings, W. Stevens, W. H. Auden, R. Lowell, K. Shapiro, R. Wilbur, W.S. Merwin, J. Merrill, R. Bly, R. Duncan, R. Jarrell, A. MacLeish, H. Nemerov, A. Rich, J. Wright, L. Zukovsky, P. Viereck, and R. P. Warren (to name just a few) appear as actors on a stage that had moments of friction but also had long periods and rich episodes of intellectual industry and genuine cultural promotion, resulting in a fruitful interaction between Italy and the United States. Moreover, she followed suggestions from friends and poets (Theodore Roethke, Paul Engle, T. S. Eliot, Archibald MacLeish) with unequal consistency; she was fully aware of what was happening in the history of contemporary U.S. literature, regularly having in mind what was published by *Poetry*, *The Hudson Review*, *The New Yorker*, and similar literary enterprises.

One of the more important issues that Giorcelli raises is the extent of Caetani's open mindedness. To begin with, this was, so to speak, more international than intranational; she was interested more in establishing a new canon of young writers than in a revision of the canon as such. Her journal mostly published authors belonging to mainstream literature, limiting the range of exploration of voices from literatures of minorities. The consequence was that, no matter how thick and rich the various issues were (some resembled a sizable book more than the fascicle of a literary journal), we do not find many Jewish American authors (Saul Bellow, Anthony Hecht, and Cynthia Ozick are notable exceptions), and even fewer African American writers. As far as Italian American literature is concerned, *Botteghe Oscure* did not host, for instance, John

Ciardi, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Diane di Prima, nor the novelists John Fante, Jerre Mangione, or Mario Puzo. But it included texts by such multi-ethnic poets as Harold James Enrico (1953, XII and 1957, XX), Richard F. Hugo (1956, XVII), and the Italian-Swiss novelist Niccolò Tucci (issues 1951, VIII and 1959, XXIV). And this happened when Enrico and Hugo were young and very little known, and Tucci still far from receiving the attention he would obtain later, above all in Italy. At the same time, Caetani proves perceptive in estimating the future role of such names as James Purdy, Donna Bowen, James Merrill ("accepted" by *Botteghe Oscure* after only the publication of *First Poems*; 1952, IX), and Robert Duncan. The poetry of Duncan appeared (1957, XIX and XX) as a promising novelty, not *because*—but *in spite of*—his association with Black Mountain and the San Francisco Renaissance. Princess Caetani, as Giorcelli repeatedly stresses, was as a rule indifferent to "schools" of poetry and suspicious of theoretical literary manifestos.

The impressive apparatus of endnotes gives Giorcelli the freedom to pursue intriguing byways and stimulating hypotheses concerning the intricate web of affiliations, correspondences, and interactions among editor, mentors, sponsors, and pupils. There are endnotes that read as miniature essays and deserve a special mention, such as the one in which Giorcelli documents her exchange of letters with Cynthia Ozick and the long note that prints and then discusses a previously unpublished text by William Carlos Williams on René Char (possibly an essay conceived as an introduction of the French poet to the American public). The genuinely comparatist point of view of the book points to a number of prospective developments of debates taken into account. The great, sometimes obsessive, interest of the Princess in Char—a characteristic of her temperament that in some cases risked putting an end to her friendship with distinguished poets and critics—surfaces here and there and often seems on the verge of promising another lengthy essay, dealing with the difficulties of Char's fortunes in the United States.

Giorcelli's volume pays a fair, uncompromising tribute to a figure who played a major role in developing a substantial international, cosmopolitan network and to a literary journal whose fame and prestige remain strong on both sides of the Atlantic. The brilliant, and at the same time nostalgic, letter sent by Cynthia Ozick to Giorcelli confirms: "I have always felt it to be an honor and a joy to have been a part of the history of this legendary journal." The volume also results in a fascinating dialogue, through time and distance, between two extraordinary women who devoted their entire lives to the promotion of literature, poetry in particular: on the one side, a generous and passionate dilettante; on the other, an impeccable critic who knows how to find her way through, and distinguish among, the heterogeneous but sure merits of a "monumental" figure.