

Review

Reviewed Work(s): La rivista 'Commerce' e Marguerite Caetani. Vol. ii: Giuseppe Ungaretti: lettere a Marguerite Caetani by Sophie Levie and Massimiliano Tortora

Review by: Mila Milani

Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 110, No. 3 (July 2015), pp. 884-885

Published by: Modern Humanities Research Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/modelangrevi.110.3.0884>

Accessed: 29-03-2018 15:57 UTC

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La rivista 'Commerce' e Marguerite Caetani. Vol. II: Giuseppe Ungaretti: lettere a Marguerite Caetani. Ed. by SOPHIE LEVIE and MASSIMILIANO TORTORA. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura. 2012. xlvii+83 pp. €24. ISBN 978-88-6372-421-9.

In the 1920s, Giuseppe Ungaretti acted as sole editor for the Italian section of the literary review *Commerce* (1924–32), founded in Paris by the American philanthropist Marguerite Caetani. This edited collection unveils the epistolary exchange that the Italian poet had with Caetani from 1926 to 1931. The twenty-four unpublished letters come from the Camillo Caetani Foundation in Rome, where the letters sent to Marguerite Caetani by international correspondents are now held (these include, among others, Giorgio Bassani, the editor of *Botteghe oscure* (1948–60), the other literary journal founded by Caetani, Dylan Thomas, and Maurice Blanchot) are now held. This publication aims specifically to bring to light the significant intellectual ties of the literary review and its cosmopolitan reach, and goes hand in hand with the publication of the letters of the German editors of *Commerce*, such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Rudolf Kassner: *La rivista 'Commerce' e Marguerite Caetani, I: Briefwechsel mit deutschsprachigen Autoren*, ed. by S. Levie and K. E. Bohnenkamp (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2012). More precisely, Ungaretti's letters represent tantalizing materials which strategically allow the book's editors to chart the profile of the Italian literature published in *Commerce*, and to disclose the literary model that Ungaretti himself wanted to push forward through the review, thus offering a valid critical contribution, both to the study of the French literary journal and to that of Ungaretti's poetics.

Ungaretti's letters are introduced by two insightful essays, written by the two editors. Sophie Levie's essay, translated from Dutch into Italian by Cecilia Tavanti, offers an informative profile of *Commerce*, its cultural milieu, and the international editorial board. By intertwining Caetani's biographical data with her contemporaries' diaries and correspondence, Levie attempts to reconstruct Caetani's social networks in Paris in order to clarify the genesis of *Commerce* and to assess the role of the American philanthropist in the creation of the review. The often scarce and contradictory sources, as well as the lack of a proper manifesto, leave the question intriguingly unanswered, but Levie rightly stresses that Caetani's hidden role in the review was influenced by both the social conditions that a female aristocrat must have had to adhere to and her non-literary status. Undeniable from the reading of Caetani's correspondence is, nonetheless, her effort to engage international literary figures with the review, most notably through the translation of Saint-John Perse's *Anabase* into English, Italian, and German. Although not fully explored by Levie, the private materials that the scholar investigates would also help to reassess the then contemporary cultural perception of Caetani, as Roger Fry's less diplomatic picture of the Princess suggests: 'a nice innocent little American with an all American's passion for poetry' (p. xv).

Massimiliano Tortora's essay brings into greater focus the role of Ungaretti in *Commerce*, by exploring the poet's peculiar literary choices and suggestions

with regard to fourteenth- (Fra' Michele Minorita and Petrarca), seventeenth- to nineteenth-century (non-literary prose of scientists and travellers, and Leopardi), and contemporary Italian literature (Barilli, Bacchelli, Cardarelli, Cecchi, but also Baldini, Pea, Raimondi, Savinio, and Soffici). Furthermore, scrutiny of the archival materials allows the unveiling of some literary suggestions which remained unpublished, thus illuminating a much more articulated scenario than that offered by the published face of the review. This has led Tortora to a convincing reversal of Eleonora Conti's hypothesis ('Ungaretti mediatore culturale di *Commerce*', *Intersezioni*, 1 (2002), 89–108) concerning the apparent *rondismo* and classical perspective of Ungaretti. Tortora's fine analysis of the published and unpublished literary works suggested by Ungaretti maps the personal canon of the Italian author, who favoured an idea of modernity developed through fragmented, avant-garde, yet essential prose writing. What is different, however, is the choice of poems, in which Ungaretti's self-promoting strategy subtly conceals his intention of being paired with Leopardi.

Ungaretti's letters are accompanied by thorough footnotes edited by Tortora. The intersecting reading of other correspondences, namely those with Ardengo Soffici, Giuseppe Raimondi, and Jean Paulhan, significantly enriches the wealth of information on the current state of the Italian cultural and periodical scene (e.g. the debate on Bontempelli's review *900: cahiers d'Italie et d'Europe*). Above all, despite some family details and hackneyed expressions of gratitude, the letters cast light on the international dialogue that Ungaretti was seeking to develop in order to stimulate contemporary Italian literature. The book ends with an appendix consisting of two letters sent by Ungaretti to Roffredo Caetani (concerning the latter's opera *Hypatia*) and to Andrea Caffi (mainly debating contemporary English and French poetry), a letter from Enrico Cecchi to Marguerite Caetani, and a very detailed index of *Commerce*, edited by Levie.

This collection of letters is a stimulating insight into the discourses around and behind the literary journals, demonstrating the potentialities of using archival correspondence to cast a sharper light on both the actual publishing strategy and the framing of the editors' poetics within the general aims of the review. This first step should allow further elaboration of in-depth and interconnected analyses of the several foreign correspondences, to offer a more exhaustive picture of the role of international editors in forging *Commerce*'s literary poetics vis-à-vis Caetani's perspective, and, most notably, of the transnational dialogue informing 1920s European cosmopolitan culture.

UNIVERSITY OF READING

MILA MILANI

The Tradition of the Actor-Author in Italian Theatre. Ed. by DONATELLA FISHER.
London: Legenda. 2013. x+220 pp. £45. ISBN 978-1-907975-80-6.

This is a broad-ranging collection of essays from expert contributors based on a conference organized by Joseph Farrell and Donatella Fisher in Glasgow in the autumn of 2008. Fisher also edited the volume and wrote the introduction. All sixteen