«Botteghe Oscure» e la letteratura statunitense by Cristina Giorcelli.

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It is tempting to see Marguerite Caetani (Marguerite Gibert Caetani, Princess of Bassiano, Duchess of Sermoneta, 1880–1963) as a character in a Henry James novel, but the similitudes (New England upper class, residence in France and Italy, marriage to an Italian aristocrat, etc.) are largely overshadowed by her achievement (unusual for a woman of her status and her time) as sponsor of two important international literary journals: *Commerce* (1924–32), directed in Paris by Paul Valéry, Léon-Paul Fargue and Valery Larbaud, and *Botteghe Oscure*, which the Princess founded, edited, published, and financed from her Roman palace between 1948 and 1960. Unlike *Commerce*, whose non-French contributions were translated, *Botteghe Oscure* adopted the innovative approach of publishing poetry and prose in the main Western languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish) without a translation (with some exceptions), alongside French or English translations of texts in other languages (e.g., ancient and modern Greek, Dutch, Korean, Polish, and Portuguese). Another peculiarity was the format, which imitated that of a hardcover book in size as well as in the number of pages (typically between 200 and 400, with some issues reaching 600).

Linguistically, the largest group was represented by American English authors who were either born in the United States or became naturalized in their lifetime (a total of 210, compared to 133 Italians, 98 French, 39 German, and 28 Spanish). This is not a surprise, considering the Princess' background, her lifelong attachment to her country (which she visited only once, briefly, after 1909), and the journal's aim to contribute to the reopening of the intercultural dialogue across the Atlantic, which fascism first and the war later had largely interrupted.

«Botteghe Oscure» e la letteratura statunitense is the third volume sponsored by the Fondazione Camillo Caetani and based on the journal's extensive epistolary archive. Unlike its two predecessors (edited by Stefania Valli in 1999 and Jacqueline Risset in 2007 and featuring Marguerite Caetani's letters to and from Italian and French authors, respectively), Cristina Giorcelli's contribution is not an "edited correspondence" but a comprehensive and detailed study of the journal's intricate relationship with American literature (and its editor-publisher's even more complicated relationship with individual authors) in the 1950s. As such, it represents a valuable contribution to the study of transatlantic cultural relations in the postwar period, when American literature represented—in Cesare Pavese's words—the "gigantic theatre where everybody's drama was being staged, more genuinely than anywhere else" (45).

The book begins and ends with a few, contextual chapters on the origins and the philosophy of the journal; its main features (including a page-long footnote on its complicated editorial and typographical history—a veritable tour de force of descriptive bibliography); the role it played in the Italian literary context of the time; the changing fortunes of *Botteghe Oscure*'s managing co-redactor, the multitalented writer Eugene Walter, who served in this role from 1956 until his abrupt dismissal in 1959; and the reception of the journal in the United States as evidenced by reviews in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New Republic*, and other major periodicals. These provide the background for a set of core chapters on American presences and absences, featuring poets (the largest contingent), prose writers, translators, playwrights, and "multidisciplinary" authors (i.e., those whose work interacted with the visual arts, music, cinema, theatre, or the sciences).

The picture that emerges is indicative of the Princess' personal tastes (she was not interested in writers, movements, or forms of poetry that are experimental, intimately and intensely subjective, ideologically motivated, or controversial), but also of her dependence on a small group of advisors and friends (such as the poet and filmmaker James Broughton, Archibald MacLeish, Theodore Roethke, Allen Tate and a few others), or relatives (her sister Katherine, her cousin T.S. Eliot) whose connections were prestigious, but whose recommendations not always conformed to high literary standards, and occasionally relaxed, or even contradicted,

the Princess's own selection criteria. Consequently, *Botteghe Oscure* did not publish any Beat or Black Mountain poets, nor any members of the New York School, and only two of the San Francisco Renaissance (Robert Duncan and Madeline Gleason), and that only because they were recommended by Broughton, who was part of the Bay Area scene. The only other major exceptions were Robert Lowell and W.D. Snodgrass, both representatives of the so-called confessional poetry, who were published repeatedly in *Botteghe Oscure*. Of the "approved" authors, some were published when still little known, or unknown, in their own country (e.g., Eleanor Ross Taylor); others provided a more substantial contribution by supporting or promoting the journal in the United States than by contributing their own work to it (e.g., Robert Wooster Stallman); and a few never published their poems in a book (Calvin Thomas).

Regardless of their literary output or reputation, all authors featured in the book are presented in one or the other chapter based on their medium, and whether they were published in the journal or not. These capsule profiles, ranging in length from a single paragraph to a couple of pages, focus on the author's relationship with the Princess, the journal and some of its other contributors, and consistently end with a concise list of main awards and publications. In the United States the latter may be considered superfluous for major authors such as Lowell, Stevens, or Williams (although the main text, in Italian, primarily addresses an Italian audience), but it proves to be valuable in the case of minor poets or writers who have not stood the test of time. In fact, one of the achievements of the book consists in making a convincing case for some of these authors (most of them women, such as Jean Garrigue, Madeline Gleason, Barbara Howes, and others), whose work, Giorcelli claims (and the sample poems she prints mostly confirm), needs to be revisited and properly assessed.

Many contributors to *Botteghe Oscure* doubled as advisers, recommending authors or acting as liaisons between the Princess and specific groups, academic institutions, funding agencies, publishers, periodicals, and awards in the United States. Typically, the closer the relationship between the adviser and the Princess, and the more likely for the recommended author to be published (and republished) in her journal. However, even the closest relationship could end, sometimes abruptly (as in the case of Robert Fitzgerald), or be temporarily suspended (as it happened to Williams), if the adviser failed the "René Char Test," either by declining

to contribute to the promotion of the Princess's literary idol in the States (as various advisers did, some more diplomatically than others), or by expressing a less than enthusiastic opinion on his work, or—worse—by criticizing it. On the contrary, a positive comment or an actual contribution such as a translation, a preface or a review (but only if approved by the Princess) could open the doors of the journal, if not also the gates of Palazzo Caetani or the legendary gardens of Ninfa, the Caetani's summer residence in the Roman Campagna, where only a select few were invited.

One of these few was Robert Lowell, whom the Princess coveted as both contributor and adviser, thanks to his talent and to his valuable literary connections. Strongly recommended by Eliot and Peter Viereck, and probably invited to contribute by Allen Tate (who was a friend of Marguerite's sister Katherine Garrison Chapin and had married Isabella Gardner, great-niece of Isabella Stewart Gardner and Lowell's cousin), Lowell would in turn recommend such authors as Delmore Schwartz and John Hollander (who were not published), as well as William Alfred, William Belvin, James Burns Singer, Marguerite Young, and others (who were). It appears that the Princess approached Lowell through his friend and confidant Elizabeth Bishop, whom she contacted asking for a possible contribution (which did not materialize) while stressing "how she'd like to know your address & how eager she is to have a poem of yours, etc., etc.," as Bishop reported to Lowell in a letter dated July 18, 1950, adding that "Probably she'd be nice to call on when you get to Rome" (178). And, sure enough, when the Lowells (Robert and his second wife, Elizabeth Hardwick) arrived in Rome, in December of the same year, they called on the Princess and were promptly invited to Palazzo Caetani and then to Ninfa. Writing to Bishop in April of 1951, Lowell described the experience in mixed yet insightful terms:

> We've been to Pisa, Siena [. . .] and visited the Princess (*Botteghe Oscure*) Caetani – a mad, sympathetic aristocratic Mrs. Ames [the eponymous character of a 1912 novel by the English writer E.F. Benson], not deaf and really nice and kind, at least to us—but mad, so that though a grand and tireless manager, she thinks of nothing except her magazine – like an only child, a simile I understand so well (178).

If the December meeting marked the beginning of a close friendship, the Princess never lost sight of her "only child," as the letters she sent the couple during the following months clearly show: "I wish I were near you to help me with the flow of material I am receiving!!!" (July 25, 1951) (179); "How often I have longed to be able to discharge my decisions onto you and Elizabeth!" (November 12, 1951) (179); "How often I wish you were here for consultation, as well as for all the other reasons" (December 31, 1951) (179). This eventually led to the ultimate test:

> How I wish you would feel a wish to try some translations. I have a feeling you are one of the very few people who would be able to give an equivalent in English. I have seen such miserable, pedestrian attempts so far (February 20, 1951) (179).

Two years later Lowell obliged, sending a translation of a poem by Char with the warning that it was not "near enough to the original to even be called a free translation [. . .]. Yet somehow I think the structure and the feel of it will give the reader a flash of what Char is like. It better be called 'To A**, a variation on a poem by Rene [sic] Char" (January 9, 1953) (179). Since the translation was never published (nor mentioned again in the correspondence between poet and publisher), Giorcelli suggests that the Princess may have seen a "variation" as a less than respectful tribute to her beloved poet; but it is also possible that she simply did not like the result, despite the "feeling" she had expressed to entice the poet Char-ward.

However, issue XI (1953) of *Botteghe Oscure* features "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" in an Italian translation by Rolando Anzilotti, a scholar and friend of Lowell's. (The poem was from the 1946 collection *Lord Weary's Castle*, but evidently the Princess viewed translation as a strategy to get around her own editorial rule of printing only unpublished works.) In the same year, Lowell sent the Princess another poem, "Ford Madox Ford (1873–1939)," explaining that "This little elegy on Ford may be somewhat obscure to anyone unfamiliar with his writing, but it ought to come through. I've been tinkering with it and putting it aside since last spring. Now it's done, and yours, and no one else's if you want it." At first the Princess was enthusiastic, expressing her appreciation in characteristically warm terms: "You were sweet to arrange to give me that poem I like

so very much" (August 12, 1953). Yet, two months later, she followed up with an aristocratically evasive rejection: "Dear Robert, I am terribly disappointed but I have suppressed your poem but please don't send my check back. I much prefer you keep it for the poem you will eventually give me and hope I will owe you still more. [. . .] I would rather wait and have something you really want to give me" (October 13, 1953) (180). As it happened in other cases, no reason was provided but patronage used instead as a palliative. Although the poem was eventually published in Stephen Spender's *Encounter* (and then included in *Life Studies*, 1959), Lowell was disappointed enough to complain to Ezra Pound: "My devoted Principessa Caetani turned it down – after begging me for five years for anything, anything . . ." (March 25, 1954) (180). He must have used much stronger terms with the Princess (in a letter that has not been traced), because six months later, after being hospitalized in a mental institution, he wrote again to apologize: "I know I was utterly lofty and outrageous about your refusal. Please accept my deep regrets" (November 8, 1954) (181).

Lowell's second and last contribution to *Botteghe Oscure*, "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow," appeared in issue XXIII (1959). Another poem from *Life Studies*, "A Mad Negro Soldier Confined at Munich," is in the Marguerite Caetani Papers, in a typewritten copy with pencil annotations. However, if the text was prepared for publication, it never appeared in the journal and no traces of it being submitted, accepted, or rejected, are to be found in the correspondence. Perhaps the Princess deemed it too personal; or perhaps what prevented its publication was the journal closing after issue XXV in 1960.

In his last letter to his friend and Roman patron, Lowell manifested his regret for the end of the journal in warmer terms that one might expect from a poet who, despite his fame, had been turned down as many times as he had been published in it: "I am awefully [*sic*] sorry Bottegha [*sic*] is ending. I think you can be proud of your years of service, of bringing the many nations together, and of pepping up so many young poets. Your magazine is part of the story of Europe's rising out of the flatness and desolation of the war. I know you will miss your work, and many will miss their sympathetic correspondence with you" (April 28, 1960) (372).

Lowell's epistolary exchange with Marguerite Caetani exemplifies the nature and the extent of the relationship that this unique patron and publisher entertained with many other authors featured in the book.

It is a relationship marked by a patrician and rather ambiguous mixture of warm, motherly feelings and shrewd and manipulative opportunism—a typical example of American pragmatism tempered by Old-World sense and sensibility. This is the portrait that emerges from the Princess' extensive transcontinental correspondence and the journal archives, both meticulously investigated and ably presented by Giorcelli, whose perceptive comments combine the scholarly authority of a consummate literary historian, the meticulous attention to detail of an expert bibliographer, and the peculiar style of a brilliant writer. Given the impressive number of references and cross-references, both in the main text and in the over twelve hundred notes, a more comprehensive and granular index (and, perhaps, a bibliography of secondary sources) would have been useful, indeed valuable to anyone with a serious interest in the subject. Therefore, it is hoped that if an English-language edition of the book will be undertaken, these features will be properly included.

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Modern American Poetry and the Architectural Imagination by Jo Gill.

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We are living in a time of short attention spans and limited memories with publishers often releasing little books that, while stimulating, often display cultural and critical amnesia by neglecting to adequately acknowledge previous groundbreaking work. Gill reminds readers of what scholarship is in her thorough examination of modern poetry's architectural affinities. The book houses a vast community of creative and academic work while focusing on close readings of poems that sparkle with new insights.

Chapters on Hart Crane, Carl Sandburg, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Frank O'Hara provide a thorough synthesis of this revealing part of modern American poetry. In doing so, she demonstrates sound