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Bazzoni, Alberica, Emma Bond and Katrin Wehling-Giorgi, eds. *Goliarda Sapienza in Context: Intertextual Relationships with Italian and European Culture*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP with Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. Pp 253. ISBN 978-1-61147-916-4. \$85 (hardback). \$80 (e-book).

This book of collected essays originated from a 2013 conference on contemporary Italian author Goliarda Sapienza (1924-1996). The collection contributes to the recent renewed interest in Sapienza by introducing her to an international audience and contextualizing her work both within a European and Italian context through multiple critical approaches, such as queer, feminist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, and affect theories. As such, the text sheds light on an intriguing and little-known literary figure of the twentieth century who will be of interest to scholars and students of Italian, European, comparative literature, queer, and women's studies. Readers will be immediately captured by the editors' introduction, which not only describes the structure of the collection and the fourteen contributions, but also skillfully explains Sapienza's literary oblivion through the difficulties she had in publishing her work, her "ex-centric" life, and the originality of her writing. The editors highlight two fascinating periods in Sapienza's life and literary development: namely, her depression and resulting electro-shock therapy, which damaged her memory and resulted in a loss of knowledge of her English; and her brief imprisonment in Rebibbia in 1980 for theft. Both are addressed by various essays in the collection.

Very much aware of the collection's important position within the modest but growing bibliography on Sapienza, the editors navigate Sapienza's complicated literary history by tracing some of the vicissitudes of her published, posthumous, or still inedited work, especially the "tortuous path" (4) of her major novel, *L'arte della gioia*. Indeed, readers will appreciate the scholarly diligence with which the editors and authors in this collection are careful to define the parameters of their inquiry, meticulously document the production and publication of Sapienza's work, and record uncertainties. Readers should also be prepared for some distracting ungrammatical phrases, as well as frustrating editorial inconsistencies, both between and within the essays, in the use of multiple citation styles and placement of translations.

Divided into four sections, the collection's first section, "Life, Writing, and the Ethics of Subjectivity," focuses on the intersections between Sapienza's life and writing. In the initial essay, Mariagiovanna Andriago considers Sapienza's writing through Leiris's concept of "permanent autobiography" (17). Andriago carefully highlights the dialogic and plurilinguistic (Sicilian, Italian, Roman) dimensions of two phases of Sapienza's writing, the periods that follow her electroshock therapy and her brief imprisonment.

L'arte della gioia is the main focus of the next three essays. Aureliana Di Rollo analyzes mother-daughter relationships beyond biological ties through *affidamento* and a triple matricide. Andrée Bella reads the protagonist, Modesta, through Foucault's exploration of the ancient Greek *parrhesiastic* practice, which concerns "the ethical choice of putting our own life, our own *bios*, constantly under scrutiny" (49). Monica Farnetti builds on her earlier study of "murder as an act of self-defense" in *L'arte della gioia* (64). She observes that Sapienza "deliberately avoided any involvement in feminist thinking and practices" (65), then invokes the "zoé" of Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory to suggest that Sapienza's novel is a "zoe-graphy" (69).

In the final essay in this first section, Emma Gobbato offers a preview of her ongoing research on Sapienza's little-studied role as a scriptwriter. From 1947, for about 20 years, Sapienza worked very closely with her partner, film director Francesco (Citto) Maselli. Gobbato convincingly demonstrates Sapienza's pivotal place in Maselli's life and film production through a careful analysis of their epistolary exchanges, made available by Sapienza's widower, Angelo Pellegrino, "curator and careful guardian of all of Goliarda Sapienza's works" (82).

The second section, "Goliarda Sapienza: International Intertextuality," focuses primarily on French and English influences on Sapienza's work and imagination. In the first essay, Charlotte Ross offers a thought-provoking reading of several of Sapienza's autobiographical

novels through Sara Ahmed's ideas of "misalignment" in *Queer Phenomenology*. Ross analyzes Sapienza as a writer who is "queerly 'misaligned'" with her "'home' cultural context" (88), but also fruitfully so. Ross reads Sapienza's rejection of Italian feminism through this notion of "misalignment," and offers interesting analyses of same-sex desire and cross-gendered behavior in the autobiographical novels. In the following essay, Emma Bond uses work on affect theory by Ahmed, Sedgwick and others to analyze the dimensions of shame in Sapienza's prison narrative, *L'università di Rebibbia*, and Joan Henry's *Who Lie in Goal*. Bond focuses on specific episodes that underline the narrators' feelings of marginalization, the connection between shame and identity, and the restorative power of shame. In the final essay, Maria Belén Hernández González underlines the centrality of Virginia Woolf's thought and writing to Sapienza's development and draws parallels between *Orlando* and *L'arte della gioia* and their protagonists.

Section III of the collection considers Sapienza's work within "The Italian Context," and starts with a wide-ranging essay by Laura Fortini, who charts the eccentric position of Sapienza's life, like that of many contemporary women writers, as "beyond the canon." Fortini frames Sapienza's writing in relation to major international figures, such as Natalia Ginzburg, Alba de Céspedes, Primo Levi, Doris Lessing and Radclyffe Hall.

The last five essays compare Sapienza and her work to other Italian authors. Bazzoni's rich and cogent essay compares Morante's *La Storia* and *L'arte della gioia*. Given that the novels were published within a few years of each other and Morante and Sapienza moved in the same intellectual and social circles at the time, Bazzoni suggests that *L'arte della gioia* can be read as a response to *La Storia*. Exploring the texts' narrative and thematic similarities, Bazzoni contrasts Ida's passivity and sexual disinterest to Modesta's erotic drive, which fuels her quest for knowledge and agency. Next, Goffredo Polizzi interprets *L'arte della gioia* as "talking back" to De Roberto's *I Viceré* (175). Polizzi considers gender and race in Southern Italy through theories of intersectionality, de Lauretis' concept of eccentricity, Homi Bhabha's discourse on "unchangeability" (166) and Lombroso and Niceforo's late nineteenth century elaboration of anti-Southern Italian prejudice based on degeneration.

In the fourth section, "Spaces of Recollection," Laura Ferro explores of the recollection of childhood memories in Ramondino and Sapienza. Ferro's essay is followed by Maria Morelli's analyses of Sapienza's prison narratives, *L'università di Rebibbia* and *Le certezze del dubbio*, and Dacia Maraini's *Memorie di una ladra*. Through the rich lens of Foucault's notion of prison as a heterotopia and Kristeva's concept of *chora*, Morelli considers the narrators' struggles with gender, voice and heteronormative, semi-incestuous and "homosexual" desire. In the final essay, Katrin Wehling-Giorgi also takes up Kristeva's notion of *chora* and analyzes childhood memories in Sapienza's *Lettera aperta* and *Il filo di mezzogiorno*, as well as in Elena Ferrante's *L'amore molesto*. Wehling-Giorgi explores the protagonists' struggle with the construction of selfhood through the mother's body, and the violence of maternal and paternal language.

In conclusion, this volume's strengths lie in its theoretically rich, carefully wrought, and meticulously documented essays which offer readers a mosaic of intriguing perspectives on the recently rediscovered figure of Goliarda Sapienza. In addition, several free online resources supplement the collection: a [website](#) and a podcast of the original 2013 [conference](#).

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