

will really benefit from increased critical and theoretical attention, the application of traditional literary theory, and proposals for structuring the field.

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Riccardo Corcione (ed.): *Franco Fortini-Giovanni Giudici. Carteggio 1959–1993*. Florence: Olschki, 2018. 219 pp., pb., € 25.–

The Fortini-Giudici correspondence, edited by Riccardo Corcione for the prestigious Florentine publisher Olschki, is not simply an edition of the sixty-six letters preserved at the Giovanni Giudici Series of the A.P.I.C.E. Center of the University of Milan and at the Franco Fortini Series of the Humanistic Library of the University of Siena: Corcione also adds the precious notes taken from Giudici's diaries (also preserved at the APICE Center), in which Giudici refers directly to Fortini. Moreover, Corcione arranges and examines these materials to reconstruct both their intense friendship and intellectual bond—though not devoid of passionate disagreements and conflicts—as well as the Italian cultural history of the second half of the twentieth century by means of this essential and, needless to say, necessary *specimen*. To this date, in fact, only excerpts and paraphrases of these letters were available to scholars of Fortini and Giudici; as a result, every critical investigation of this relationship up to this point has been, in a sense, incomplete, and devoid of that spirit of totality which, instead, emerges clearly from each letter of their correspondence.

Corcione's edition includes a lengthy and rich introduction (pp. 1–71) and is accompanied by a scholarly apparatus that not only facilitates the reading of the volume, thanks to the quantity and the quality of information and explanation provided, but also and especially because it makes the reading activity itself quite pleasant, which one does not encounter often in such texts. From a strictly philological point of view, Corcione's edition is precise and thorough, reflecting in all its parts the criteria followed in its transcription (and of the edition itself), included at the start of the correspondence (pp. 75–76). The objective, writes Corcione, is to “rendere maggiormente fruibili i testi e prestare la massima fedeltà allo stato originale in cui questi si presentano” (p. 76). As is clear from the introduction, the dialectic between Fortini and Giudici represented a real partnership between two poets and intellectuals that went through various phases that were characterized, as stated above, by agreements and mutual deep respect as well as strong disagreements and negative feelings. From these letters there emerges constantly the idea of the necessity of affirming the truth and of a kind of literature whose function is eminently referential, political, proactive, and active. In other words, there emerges an idea of literature of literary and political engagement that cannot be reduced to a merely casual or formal gesture.

Overall, beyond the correspondence itself, the long introduction by Corcione is of particular interest. Entitled “Un ‘moncherino di religione’, Fortini interlocutore di Giudici.” Even in its title alone, this introduction summarizes effectively the cultural horizons of the book and the dialogue between Fortini and Giudici. It produces, through a constant dialectic between ideology and literature, cornerstones of their correspondence—a veritable, heretical “religione per la storia” around which the relationship of the two writers developed for more than thirty years. The extensive essay explores the themes of the correspondence, foremost at the political-ideological level (born from the ruins of the old form of literary engagement and aimed at articulating the authentic writer's prophetic powers), and then goes on to illustrate the most intense and dominant issues, which range from philosophical and poetic readings to heated disagreements and quarrels about politics, religion, and ideology. If taken into account, these elements emerge, both explicitly and implicitly, in the verse and prose of both writers, especially after the 1970s (i. e., Fortini's *Paesaggio con serpente* and Giudici's *Il male dei creditori*).

Although they are united by the daily work at the Italian manufacturer Olivetti and by joint participations in the journals of *critica militante* such as *Il Menabò*, *Comunità*, *Situazione*, *Rinascita*, *Questo e altro*, *Quaderni piacentini*, and obviously by the writing of poetry, it would be hard to find in the history of Italian literature two intellectuals and writers more different than Fortini and Giudici. For example, let us take on two collections of poems of fundamental importance, *La vita in versi* and *Verifica dei poeti*, published in the *annus mirabilis* of 1965: as Corcione rightly claims, to the “profilo di uno scrittore [Giudici] disillusio e incerto, preda costante di un mondo alienato e alienante” (p. 33), there is opposed the prophetic voice and political-ideological mandate of Fortini. From this potential negative dialectic, a dense dialogue emerges between two friends that not only sheds light on the historical, social, economic, political, and literary changes of postwar Italy, but also offers keys to understanding some of the most (un)expected influences and readings of both writers: chapter 1.2, “La verifica dei poteri tra Lukács e Benjamin” (pp. 12–25), is particularly instructive illustrating how Fortini and Giudici reread and reinterpreted Marxist and neo-Marxist philosophers, as well as of how these thinkers (Lukács and Benjamin) may have profoundly influenced their respective visions of the world and literary works. Whereas for Fortini certain readings have been digested by current scholarship, for Giudici, conversely, scholars nowadays move through fragile territory; in this sense, without succumbing to the imperative of genetic criticism and the obstinate search for sources, Corcione’s study thus allows us to traverse stabler ground; fundamentally, it provides its readers with firm points to rethink, dialectically, Giudici’s thought (and also Fortini’s thought, as it developed in dialogue with Giudici himself).

I will conclude with a few more remarks. Often, introductions to volumes of correspondence may take the form of a summary of the letters themselves, or else they tend merely to draw a map of the correspondence itself, which, however useful, risks reducing the role of the editor to that of a mere compiler/collector of various types of information. On the contrary, Corcione’s introduction to the Fortini-Giudici correspondence becomes an invitation to rethink the work and thought of both poets through the historical and philological data that the collected letters offer. The central point of this analysis is clearly the breaking point (ideologically speaking) that occurred between the two poets from 1967 to 1970: “a partire dal 1967, i rapporti tra i due scrittori appaiono inevitabilmente compromessi”; we will have to wait until May 1976 to rediscover something close to an opening attempt at reconciliation by Fortini toward Giudici, though their respective political and religious positions continue to represent a point of divergence between the two intellectuals. On the other hand, this divergence does not constitute a total distancing between the two, an aspect that Corcione outlines admirably in his introduction by remarking how this negative dialectic actually presents an opportunity for both figures to reflect even more deeply on their own ideologies (political, religious, aesthetic, and literary). The correspondence, or at least the correspondence that is preserved in these letters, does not completely reveal the reasons for the conflict: rather, they show the gradual fizzling out of the correspondence and the painful awareness of a distancing (one that Giudici seems to perceive more acutely and suffer from more than Fortini). In truth, there is never a complete detachment between the two, nor even a genuine separation. Despite it all, Fortini remains Giudici’s privileged interlocutor: of course, the lengthy discussions on literary institutions, on the role and function of the intellectual, on the militant protest of an active criticism that dominated the world of letters in the 1960s, gave way to later exchanges on merely poetic content. In this sense (and this is the core of the introductory essay), Corcione demonstrates convincingly what the role of the intellectual represented for an intransigent political activist like Fortini, on the one hand, and, on the other, how poetry had for Giudici a cathartic function in the eternal inner conflict between the sacred and the profane, among the ideals of a collective revolution and the private interests that drive Man towards “il basso”.

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