



The Art of Joy: A Novel

Goliarda Sapienza

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The tumultuous twentieth century, told through the life of a single extraordinary woman

Rejected by a series of publishers, abandoned in a chest for twenty years, Goliarda Sapienza's masterpiece, *The Art of Joy*, survived a turbulent path to publication. It wasn't until 2005, when it was released in France, that this novel received the recognition it deserves. At last, Sapienza's remarkable book is available in English, in a brilliant translation by Anne Milano Appel and with an illuminating introduction by Angelo Pellegrino.

The Art of Joy centers on Modesta, a Sicilian woman born on January 1, 1900, whose strength and character are an affront to conventional morality. Impoverished as a child, Modesta believes she is destined for a better life. She is able, through grace and intelligence, to secure marriage to an aristocrat—without compromising her own deeply felt values. Friend, mother, lover—Modesta revels in upsetting the rules of her fascist, patriarchal society.

This is the history of the twentieth century, transfigured by the perspective of one extraordinary woman. Sapienza, an intriguing figure in her own right—her father homeschooled her so she wouldn't be exposed to fascist influences—was a respected actress and writer who drew on her own struggles to craft this powerful epic. A fictionalized memoir, a book of romance and adventure, a feminist text, a bildungsroman—this novel is ultimately undefinable but deeply necessary; its genius will leave readers breathless.

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