



Il mare colore del vino

Leonardo Sciascia

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Così Sciascia volle presentare questo bellissimo libro di racconti, scritti fra il 1959 e il 1972: «... mi pare di aver messo assieme una specie di sommario della mia attività fino ad ora – e da cui vien fuori (e non posso nascondere che ne sono in un certo modo soddisfatto, dentro la mia più generale e continua insoddisfazione) che in questi anni ho continuato per la mia strada, senza guardare né a destra né a sinistra (e cioè guardando a destra e a sinistra), senza incertezze, senza dubbi, senza crisi (e cioè con molte incertezze, con molti dubbi, con profonde crisi); e che tra il primo e l'ultimo di questi racconti si stabilisce come una circolarità: una circolarità che non è quella del cane che si morde la coda». Resta da dire che il tempo trascorso non ha per nulla intaccato, e anzi esalta, la felicità e l'efficacia delle storie qui riunite come in un breve compendio delle molte voci narrative di Sciascia: scoprirlle (o riscoprirlle) oggi significa anche lasciarsi sorprendere dalla loro sconcertante, amara lucidità. *Il mare colore del vino* apparve per la prima volta nel 1973.

Il mare colore del vino Details

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From Reader Review *Il mare colore del vino* for online ebook

Dewey says

As underrated as his country's entire 20th century literary tradition, Leonardo Sciascia is one of those excellent short story writers who should be known everywhere. He writes the kind of short stories that are simple but qualitative like those of Stanisław Lem, and are described in the introduction as a modern derivation of the folk tale style of Sciascia's native Sicily. As I went to pay for my copy of *The Wine-Dark Sea* in a bookshop in Turin, the guy at the register nodded most approvingly at my choice; after reading them, I too give my nod of approval.

What I found to be a particularly exceptional quality of Sciascia's stories was his ability to make each different story stand out, long after I'd read them, an impressive feat considering the simplicity of his style (or maybe not; complicated stories can befuddle where simple ones slip by). Sciascia has this knack of drawing the reader in, either by the astonishing nature of what is going on or by some subconscious probing of whatever organ furthers our curiosity. "The Long Crossing" is one favorite that I'd read in grad school, one that anybody knowledgeable about the mass migration of Sicilians to America can laugh at. Others, like "The Ransom" and "Philology" address the mafia, a subject that Sciascia, a Sicilian, is unusually unafraid to approach. Some, like "Giufa" and again "The Ransom," are only a step away from the Sicilian folk tale style Sciascia draws from. He lovingly uses the title story, "The Wine-Dark Sea," to showcase the kindness and warmth of Sicilians to the reader; frankly, there are few who are more seemingly proud and passionate about coming from Sicily as Sciascia, though his stories should not be mistaken for ramblings of pride. Anybody interested in post-war Italy will find Sciascia's stories recreating the political feud between Catholics and Marxists that dominated that period of Italian history for many years. My favorites were "The Long Crossing," "Demotion" and "The Test," though all of them were equally good.

A must! Not only for Italy fans and students of Italian, but for anybody. They are well translated, and English readers should have no reason to fear the foreign origins of Sciascia's stories.

William2.1 says

The first half of this book of stories I found flat and not up to Sciascia's usual rich level of storytelling. But then halfway through, starting with the tale "Demotion," I felt the stories begin to deepen. By the time I got to "End Game," p. 121, I was without question back in the master's hands. This seems to me an anomaly in Sciascia's otherwise unusually consistent oeuvre. I'd like to know if the translation is at fault. I don't have a word of Italian, but a couple examples of English phrasing I found laughably bad. I would ask that any GR reader who has Italian to render a verdict on this translation. I'd really like to know what you think. So this is an uneven collection, for whatever the reason, recommended with reservations. However, I do not hesitate to recommend Sciascia's other collections in English. There are two that are fabulous. They are *Open Doors* and *Three Novellas*, available in US as a Vintage print-on-demand book, and *Sicilian Uncles*, on Granta Books and not currently in print. Of the novels, my two favorites are *To Each His Own* and *Equal Danger*. Please see my reviews.

Stephen Durrant says

Reading the late Sicilian writer Antonio Sciascia while traveling in Sicily recently was a good decision. So much that he writes about seems to have real currency, at least to this fairly superficial traveler with far too little Italian. The striking landscape (and wine-dark sea, at least as seen from Taormina) has not changed, nor has the corrupting power of the mafia, which just extracts and doesn't develop, or the almost imploring look of residents there who want to know if you are impressed with their homeland, a place where there is so much to like . . . and so much to dislike as well. Several of Sciascia's stories will long stay with this reader. "The Long Crossing," about Sicilians who believe they are traveling by ship to America, is devastating, especially when read against the backdrop of what now goes on almost daily in Lampedusa. And the delightful "Giufa," which is really just an extended joke, says much about gullible Catholicism and a "stupid Moslem," who is really not so stupid at all!

JacquiWine says

The thirteen pieces in this excellent collection of Leonardo Sciascia's short stories, *The Wine-Dark Sea*, were written between 1959 and 1972. Collectively, the author considered these stories – which are arranged in chronological order – as a kind of summary of his work up until that point in time. As such, the pieces are somewhat diverse in nature, and yet there is something inherently Sicilian in each and every one, a reflection of a certain aspect of the island's soul and character. As with other collections I've covered here, I'm not going to review each individual story. Instead, I will focus on my favourites, the ones that made the greatest impression or spoke to me in some way.

The collection opens with *The Ransom*, Sciascia's retelling of an old folk tale he first heard during a visit to the capital as a young boy. When Don Nicola Cirino, the Procurator General of Palermo takes a fancy to a beautiful girl named Concettina, he sees an opportunity to strike a bargain with her father, Don Raimondo. If the father allows him to marry Concettina, Don Nicola will arrange for the release of the man's son-in-law, currently serving a prison sentence for killing a peasant with a single kick of his foot. Despite the young girl's concerns, the father agrees to the union, and so Concettina has to marry the old judge; in effect, the innocent must pay the price for the release of the guilty. However, the story doesn't end at this point; there are further developments to come, events that add a touch of irony to this old tale.

Many of the stories in this collection are underscored by a sense of rivalry between factions, whether it be clashes between husbands and wives, conflicts between separate branches of the Mafia or tensions between local neighbourhoods. This quote from *The Ransom* captures it nicely as Sciascia reflects on the differences between two neighbouring towns, Grotte and Racalmuto.

In truth, the two towns, although only separated by a couple of miles, were as different as could be. Grotte had a Protestant minority and a Socialist majority, three or four families of Jewish descent and a strong Mafia; it also had bad roads, mean houses and dreary festivals. Racalmuto staged a festival that lasted a whole week and was splendidly colourful and extravagant; the people of Grotte flocked to it in their hundreds; but for the rest of the year the town was tranquil and trouble-free, being electorally divided between two great families, having a handful of Socialists, and army of priests and a Mafia divided against itself. (pg. 5)

Perhaps somewhat inevitably, the Mafia feature in quite a few of Sciascia's stories. In *Philology*, two men discuss the origins and meaning of the word 'mafia', but their reasons for doing so only become clear as the

story unfolds. Another story, the aptly named Mafia Western, features two rival Mafia cells that have been in conflict with one another for many years. When a third cell is suspected of killing several members of both factions, not even the patriarchs of the Mafia hierarchy can solve the issue through the usual declaration of a truce; so they leave it up to the two cells to resolve things as swiftly as possible.

The mafiosi of the town began to make their own investigations, but fear, the sense of being the objects of an inscrutable vendetta or homicidal whim, and finding themselves suddenly in exactly the same position in which they themselves had placed honest people for so long, left them bewildered and robbed of much of their will to act. They were reduced to imploring their political members in their turn to implore the carabinieri to mount a real, thorough-going and efficient investigation—even though they suspected that the carabinieri themselves, having failed to smoke them out by legal methods, might have resorted to this shadier, more secure one. (pg. 169-170)

To read the rest of my review, please click here:

<https://jacquiwine.wordpress.com/2016...>

Valeria Campo Tranchida says

Lo stile di Sciascia è innegabilmente pregiato, i racconti, per quanto brevi, sono spesso sagaci e interessanti, ma non ho mai amato e non amo i racconti... proprio non ci riesco; non sedimentano sul fondo del mio animo, non mi lasciano poi molto. Come lettore, cerco qualcosa che semplicemente qui non ho trovato.

Ted says

Giufa has been living in Sicily since Arabian times. In the script of that period his name appeared as a small, crested bird, its tail stuck straight up in the air and a grape in its beak. A thousand years later, Giufa still shambles along the roads, ageless like all simpletons and up to all kinds of mischief.

4 1/2 rounded up because of my typical disinterest in short stories. I found these easy and pleasurable to get through.

the author

Leonardo Sciascia (1921-1989) was a writer of novels, essays, short stories and plays. Several Italian films have been based on his fiction, including *Il giorno della civetta* (1968; The Day of the Owl), *Cadaveri Eccellenti* (1976; Illustrious Corpses), and *Porte Aperte* (1990; Open Doors).

Starting in his mid-50s, for about a decade Sciascia also held various elected offices in Palermo, the Italian

Chamber of Deputies, and the European Parliament, as a member of the Communist Party and later the Radical party. (view spoiler)

the NYRB edition

has an Introduction by Albert Mobilio, and a brief afterward by the author, in which he explains how the collection came to be published in 1973. The stories are presented in the order in which they were written, in the period 1959-1972. Three in particular were, by that time, hard to find – these being “A Matter of Conscience”, recently made into a film, and two stories which had been adapted for television, “End Game” and “The Long Crossing”. Sciascia notes that the collection seems to form, “collectively, a kind of summary of my work up to now”.

The cover design of this edition is based on a painting by a noted Italian painter, Renato Gutsusso, also born in Sicily, who in fact shared many social and political views with the author. I particularly like it because it reminds me of flora I saw on a walk along the ocean cliffs between three cities of the Cinque Terra in 2007.

Cactus sul golfo di Palermo, Renato Gutsusso, 1978

the Sicilian connection

Sciascia was a Sicilian first and Italian second, from what I have gathered. The stories in this collection are all set primarily in Sicily - perhaps one or two do not have any particular setting that I was able to recognize. I'm certain that a reader who knows more about Sicily than I do would see many connections to Sicilian land and culture that I never caught.

A couple stories started with a long, arduous journey from Rome to Sicily. It was nearly 24 hours, a long train ride, ferrying of the train cars over the Strait of Messina, then resumption of the train ride to whatever final destination on the island. This seems likely to have been a journey that the author took many times, though certainly air connections have existed for decades.

The Mafia are mentioned in several stories, which indicates not only the prominent role that organization has played in Sicily, but also that the violence and corruption connected to them and their internecine warfare was one of the author's greatest political concerns.

As for the land of Sicily itself, the seas surrounding it, and the prominent beauty of these natural gifts, Sciascia is relatively non-committal. With the partial exception of the title story, he is much more concerned with people, and with the social environment resulting from human interactions.

the stories

Most of the thirteen stories in the collection employ a third person narrator. A couple exceptions use all dialogue, or quotations from letters. Some are small mysteries, which have the unusual feel that the narrator too is keen to see the outcome, even as the story is being related.

A word I thought of more than once was “curious”. There’s something different about Sciascia’s stories, hard to put into words – and even if I tried, they would be words dissimilar to another reader’s words, even as that other reader admitted this curious feel to the stories.

The title story, at about forty pages much the longest, tells of an engineer taking that previously mentioned long train ride from Rome into Sicily, sharing a compartment with three adults, two of whom are the parents of two young boys. The third adult, “attached to the others by ties of family, friendship or casual acquaintance, was a girl of about twenty-three, rather colorless at first sight and clad in a severely simple dress of black edged with white. The children never left her alone...” The engineer, a good-natured man in his late thirties, finds himself, somewhat against his wishes, drawn into conversation with the parents, the girl (whom he slowly becomes oddly attracted to once he observes her talking and interacting with the children), and even the young boys themselves, who are not very well behaved. The strange arc of the quickly progressing interrelations between the engineer and the others forms the story, a story which appears headed to an improbable conclusion, which turns into one most probable after all, as the travelers reach their destination.

This sort of ending-with-a -thud, a reassertion of reality onto the back end of a story which seemed almost a fairly-tale (or a folk tale), appears frequently in the collection. But these stories are each concluded in a different manner, so this reader at any rate, always one to give himself up to an author’s easy manipulation, was (at worst) at least somewhat surprised at the particular twist that Sciascia applied.

One of the TV adaptations mentioned above, “End Game”, is another story in which the reader shares one of the main character’s confusion over what is happening. This is so finely wrought that I find it impossible to even describe the story in a simple manner than would not ruin it for a reader. I found sudden thoughts of Jorge Borges sneaking into my consciousness.

These thoughts had already occurred when I read an earlier story, “Giufa”. The quote at the top of the review its first two sentences. It’s a tale is about the time that Giufa killed a cardinal “and got away with it either by sheer cunning or sheer stupidity: for the two are closely allied, and Giufa, stupid as he was, could also be extremely cunning.” The cardinal in question was one of the church-prelate species, also referred to in the story as “His Eminence”.

Other stories include “Philology”, a *very* curious (that word again!) story about the etymology of the word *mafia*, a dialogue between a lawyer coaching his client for an upcoming testimony; and “Apocryphal Correspondence re Crowley”, letters passing between a Chief of Police and His Excellency Benito Mussolini, and reports submitted by the Commissariat of Public Security at Cefalu. We thus read Sciascia’s fictive and amusing telling of the 1923 expulsion from Sicily of the English occultist, ceremonial magician, iconic outside-the-box moralist and cult leader Aleister Crowley.

Then there’s “A Matter of Conscience” (that film mentioned above) in which a lawyer, on his way home from Rome to Madda (see train ride above) reads in a woman’s magazine (don’t ask) a letter written by an unnamed woman to an advice-giving priest, about an infidelity she committed many years prior, with a relative “who had been a frequent guest at our house”. Tormented by guilt, she wants to know if she should confess to her husband, whom she loves dearly. And the woman is identified as being from Madda!

The jubilation that surged within the lawyer’s breast was so intense that it bordered on ecstasy. This letter would provide a topic of conversation for at least a month at the club, among colleagues at the courthouse and within domestic circles. Theories by the hundred would be formulated, numberless private lives – of wives, husbands, wives’ relatives – would be put

under the microscope and examined with the keenest curiosity; in some cases, like his own, this curiosity would be detached, almost academic; in others it would be malicious, dedicated to the winking out of every shred of scandal.

And so it transpires. Suspicions build, each new idea or piece of previously confidential information engenders a host of new ideas and suspicions amongst ever shifting collections of the town's males, together with profound interest, amusement, or dread among these leaders and followers of society. (Hm. Just now I'm reminded of *The Scandals of Clochemerle*.) This was no doubt made into a pretty amusing movie.

judgement

Stories by a keen writer, expressing irony, satire, and a wry sense of humor about the human condition. Recommended to lovers of short fiction.

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Previous review: *Organic Marxism public service*

Random review: *Buddenbrooks: Family Life as the Mirror of Social Change* *a book about the novel*

Next review: *Ready Player One* *preview*

Previous library review: *The Periodic Table*

Next library review: *La Bodega the Fruit of the Vine*

Procyon Lotor says

Mediamente buoni, qualcuno da fuoriscala. Solita classe, molto scialo: oggi con idee ben inferiori tirerebbero fuori da ognuna un romanzo, lui ne fa raccontini acuminati o balsamici. 1) Reversibilit?. 2) Il lungo viaggio. 3) Il mare colore del vino. 4) L'esame. 5) Giuf?. 6) La rimozione. 7) Filologia. 8) Gioco di societ?. 9) Un caso di coscienza. 10) Apocrifi sul caso Crowley. 11) Western di cose nostre. 12) Processo per violenza. 13) Eufrosina. Colonna sonora: vari rumori aeronautici.

Noelle says

The Wine Dark Sea is a collection of Leonardo Sciascia's best short stories. Sciascia, a Sicilian author who lived from 1921 to 1989, has a writing style that is much more accessible than that of many of his contemporaries such as Umberto Eco or Dino Buzzati. The bulk of these stories were written in the 1960s, and each eloquently speaks to an aspect of the Sicilian way of life and history, such as distrust for outsiders, the Mafia culture, Catholicism, Communism, and the desperation of poverty. Some read as ye olde folk tales, others as cutting political commentary. In "Demotion," a Communist leader gets a back a little of his own after berating his wife for clinging to a decanonized saint. "Guifa" tells the tale of a village idiot who outsmarts a military captain in a rustic way that puts the reader in mind of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories or a fable by Aesop. The greed and treachery involved in the depressing tale "The Long Crossing" leaves the reader feeling as betrayed as the victims in the story; it illustrates the desperation the people must have felt

and the risks they took to reach a better place with better opportunities. “Mafia Western” is about a blood feud between two Families taking such a death toll that an outsider’s influence on the body count goes unnoticed until after a truce is negotiated. This man’s vendetta struck fear in the hearts of the fearless Mafiosi, a tale that many Sicilians would likely appreciate. Sciascia’s collection is riveting and enlightening, a perfect introduction to his other works such as *The Day of the Owl*.

Sandra says

Il mare colore del vino” è lo splendido mare della Sicilia, che al tramonto si tinge di colori dorati grazie ai raggi del sole che vi si riflettono: è un mare che “non ubriaca: si impadronisce dei pensieri, suscita antica saggezza”, quella saggezza che la terra di Sicilia sembra aver assorbito dai tanti popoli che l’hanno calpestata e ne hanno solcato i mari, e che si trasmette quasi passasse nel DNA dei suoi abitanti, come il piccolo e sveglio Nenè del racconto che dà il titolo al libro. Alcuni racconti sono rievocazioni di vicende del passato, in cui la donna svolge un ruolo di silenziosa pedina nelle manovre familiari gestite esclusivamente dagli uomini, come accade in *Reversibilità* e nell’ultimo racconto, *Eufrosina*, che in un disegno circolare, richiama la tematica iniziale, definita da Sciascia “la straziante religione della famiglia”. I miei racconti preferiti sono *Gioco di società*, che potrebbe benissimo essere uno di quei brevi episodi della serie Alfred Hitchcock presenta, che vedeo in tv da bambina, e *Il lungo viaggio*, tragicomico racconto di emigrazione che mi ha ricordato invece qualche film di Alberto Sordi. Sono racconti che offrono uno spaccato della realtà siciliana di ieri e di sempre, come Western di cose nostre che descrive le sanguinarie faide di mafia, ma contemporaneamente parlano di aspetti che riguardano l’umanità, descrivendo personaggi quali Giufà, un personaggio da favola, uno stolto astuto che riesce a fregare, grazie alla sua stoltaggine, le guardie, la giustizia e anche la Chiesa. Una lettura molto piacevole, che offre diversi spunti di riflessione.

Ann says

The Sicilian language has no future tense. Nostalgia for *La Cosa Nostra* is not strictly an American phenomenon. Aleister Crowley lived in Sicily for a while before WWII, and Mussolini had him deported. Or that one Sciascia might have just made up. There was one story in there that reminded me a lot of Lucio Fulci's "Don't Torture a Duckling."

Martin Roberts says

¡Estupendo!

Estevo Raposo says

Trece relatos curtos ó redor de Sicilia, da sua vida cotiá e a xente dalí. Recomendable.

Gerard says

Leonardo Sciascia never disappoints. Strak geschreven verhalen, uitgepuurde taal. If Elsschot were Italian...

Lynette says

I haven't read many short story tellers. I found Sciascia writing fascinating. The stories were very simple, in terms of events that occur in every day life, but told with amazing insight or depth that I was not expecting.

Roberto says

Benvenuti al sud

A volte si viaggia per tutto il mondo cercando di capire le culture dei popoli più remoti e si trascura invece di cercare di comprendere quella dei luoghi più vicini a noi.

E' quello che succede al protagonista di questo breve racconto di Sciascia (parte di una raccolta di tredici racconti), che costretto a convivere con una famigliola di siciliani durante un lungo viaggio da Roma ad Agrigento, impara improvvisamente qualcosa di più sui siciliani e sulla *sicilianità*. Un incontro che dura relativamente poco ma che rimarrà a lungo nella memoria, nostra e del protagonista.

Scrive bene Sciascia. Conciso, mai una parola di troppo, preciso. Ma qui anche particolarmente efficace, perché a momenti di riflessione alterna dialoghi esilaranti, specie con i due terribili bambini Lulù e Nenè che ne combinano di tutti i colori.

Ho ascoltato il libro durante un viaggio letto da *Enrico Lo Verso*, che è molto bravo a interpretare i dialoghi con la giusta cadenza siciliana; consigliatissimo, un'oretta di divertimento assicurato!

Ferris says

This is such an interesting collection of short stories, and my first introduction to the Sicilian author, Leonardo Sciascia. The stories are distinctly different in plot, yet there were common threads throughout. They abound with passions, violence, revenge, betrayal, and family love and loyalty. I felt as though I was peeking into a culture which is at once a bit intimidating and deeply intriguing. Clearly, Sciascia is an erudite, articulate writer which brings a richness and depth to his stories that is icing on the cake!

Mark says

Much the same as my reviews of his other books. Compelling short stories that whilst "naif" on first read trigger some very conflicted reactions and conclusions.

Giulia Spritz says

Piacevole da leggere. Uno spaccato della Sicilia com'era, ma forse anche com'è ancora adesso.

T.E. Wilson says

These stories have a writing style that is more sparse than in Sciascia's novels. Many of the stories are structured as fables, and as such suggest a kind of moral message, though the lessons are far from clear. Despite the tight prose and proverbial structure, each tale is quite different, likely as they were written at different stages of Sciascia's long career. This is thoughtful, clear minded writing with heart, and well worth your time.

Donald says

"Il mare color del vino", published in 1973, is a collection of short stories by the Sicilian writer, journalist and communist author, Leonardo Sciascia. A short story by the same name is contained in this volume.

Sciascia's style translates very well into English, though there are numerous examples of wordplay which inevitably cannot be appreciated in another language.

Sciascia is famous for his sharp irony, his encyclopedic grasp of Sicilian aesthetics, geography, history and people. He often weaves Sicily's Arabic past into his characters (Sciascia is an Arab name itself), with strange, amusing, and even shocking plot twists.

If you want to understand Sicily at its base, you really need to read Sciascia. "The Wine-Dark Sea" is a very good place to get a taste for this enigmatic island.
