

AMICI DI LEONARDO SCIASCIA

TODOMODO

Rivista internazionale di studi sciasciani
A Journal of Sciascia Studies

Fondata da / Founded by
FRANCESCO IZZO

Anno XIII - 2023 - Tomo I



LEO S. OLSCHKI EDITORE

AMICI DI LEONARDO SCIASCIA / FRIENDS OF LEONARDO SCIASCIA

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Si sa che in Francia è frequente l'aggregazione di lettori particolarmente fedeli intorno al nome di certi scrittori: associazioni che si dicono di amici: *Amici di France, Amici di Giraudoux, Amici di Buzzati* (e credo che Buzzati sia uno dei pochi scrittori stranieri a godere in Francia di una cerchia di amici); associazioni che, con quelle degli *Amici del Libro*, cui si debbono felicissimi incontri tra opere letterarie e artisti che le illustrano, sono segni di una civiltà intellettuale a noi quasi ignota.

LEONARDO SCIASCIA, *Appunto per un discorso sul mistero di Stendhal*, 3 novembre 1983

It is a well-known fact that in France groups of particularly loyal readers tend to cluster around individual writers in associations that are called "friends": Friends of France, Friends of Giraudoux, Friends of Buzzati (and I believe that Buzzati is one of the few foreign writers to boast a circle of friends in France).

These associations – as well as the Society of Friends of Books, to which we owe fortunate encounters between literary works and the artists who illustrate them – are signs of an intellectual civility almost unknown to us.

LEONARDO SCIASCIA, *Notes for a speech on the mystery of Stendhal*, 3 November 1983

L'Associazione Amici di Leonardo Sciascia, priva di scopi di lucro, è stata fondata nel 1993 a Milano, nella sua sede storica, presso la Biblioteca Comunale di Palazzo Sormani, tanto amata dallo scrittore di Racalmuto (1921-1989). Ispirato all'amore di Sciascia per le associazioni di amici di scrittori e artisti, «segni di una civiltà intellettuale a noi quasi ignota», il sodalizio mira per statuto a diffondere e mantenere viva la lettura, la conoscenza e la ricerca sulla figura e l'opera di Leonardo Sciascia, riassumendo nel logo – realizzato da Agostino Arrivabene – tre segni distintivi della felice contaminazione dei generi e delle passioni dell'uomo Sciascia: la penna della scrittura, il bulino dell'incisione e la spada dell'impegno civile.

The Association of the Friends of Leonardo Sciascia is a non-profit organization founded in 1993 in Milan in its historic home of the Palazzo Sormani public library, a space much loved by the writer from Racalmuto (1921-1989). Inspired by Sciascia's love for associations of friends, writers and artists, 'signs of an intellectual civility almost unknown to us', the society aims to disseminate readings of Sciascia and to promote knowledge of and research into his life and works. The society's logo (designed by Agostino Arrivabene) combines three distinctive symbols that show the way Sciascia's passions and range of works cross-fertilize each other: the writer's pen, the engraver's burin, and the sword of civil engagement.

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Gli Amici di Leonardo Sciascia perseguono sin dagli esordi una politica di partenariato e finanziamento dei propri obiettivi statutari volta a garantire indipendenza, autonomia e sostenibilità alle iniziative e ai progetti del sodalizio. Siamo grati alle imprese che uniscono l'eccellenza nei diversi settori in cui operano alla sensibilità per la promozione della cultura.

The Association of the Friends of Leonardo Sciascia has, since its foundation, pursued a policy of partnership and financing of its statutory objectives, aimed at guaranteeing the independence, autonomy and sustainability of its non profit initiatives and projects. We would like to express our gratitude to those companies which continue to combine excellence in the various sectors in which they operate with an appreciation of the promotion of culture.

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All articles submitted for publication shall be assessed through double-blind peer review (i.e. both the reviewer and author identities will be concealed from the reviewers, and vice versa). ANVUR Rating: A. Please refer for details to the «Instructions for Contributors» at the end of this volume.

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RIVISTA INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI SCIASCIANI
A JOURNAL OF SCIASCIA STUDIES

FONDATA NEL 2011 DA FRANCESCO IZZO

cm 17 × 24

ANNUALE ❖ ANNUAL

ISSN 2240-3191

Curata dagli Amici di Leonardo Sciascia, «Todomodo» nasce per dare conto degli studi e delle ricerche sull'opera e la figura di Leonardo Sciascia, spaziando dalla letteratura alle arti figurative, dalla politica alla riflessione filosofica e scientifica, dalla fotografia al cinema e al teatro. Aliena da intenti agiografici, la rivista ospita ogni anno nelle maggiori lingue europee contributi su invito al pari di testi sottoposti per pubblicazione e approvati da un comitato di lettura. Articoli di rassegna con saggi monografici, associati anche ad atti di convegni, letture-interpretazioni di opere sciasciane, studi critici e ricerche, documenti inediti, conversazioni, saggi su traduzioni, forum di discussione, aggiornamenti bibliografici, recensioni e altro formano le rubriche della rivista.

Edited by the Amici di Leonardo Sciascia, «Todomodo» was founded with the aim of providing a forum for original studies and research on the works and the figure of Leonardo Sciascia, ranging from literature to figurative arts, from politics to reflection on philosophical and scientific issues, from photography to cinema and theatre. The journal eschews any hagiographic intention and each year hosts both invited contributions and peer-reviewed articles in the major European languages, divided into sections containing review articles and essays on single themes (linked also to the proceedings of conferences), interpretative readings of Sciascia's works, critical studies, unpublished documents, interviews, essays on the translation of the author's work, forums for discussion, reviews and other elements.

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In copertina: AGOSTINO ARRIVABENE, *Effluvi d'üreriani*, acquaforte, 2011.

RECENSIONI / BOOK REVIEWS

GAETANA MARRONE*

JOSEPH FARRELL, *Leonardo Sciascia. The Man and the Writer*. Introduction by Giuseppe Tornatore. Firenze, Leo S. Olschki 2022 («Sciascia Scrittore Europeo», 5), xx-298 pp. with 20 color plates. ISBN 978 88 222 6821 1.

This volume represents the most complete and thought-provoking study of the personal and artistic journey of one of Italy's most imaginative and prolific storytellers. As the author states at the forefront, Leonardo Sciascia's relationship with Sicily is one of the central topics of his book: «Sicily was a passion, but it was also a corner of the cosmos, a stage on which [...] great debates over political, social and ethical values could be dramatized if not resolved» (p. XIII). Sicily captures the complexity of Sciascia's controversial political vision, a vision of power as a criminal act, but also the evocative representation of his formative literary experience, with the profound influence of Luigi Pirandello.

And it is a Sicilian artist, Giuseppe Tornatore, who introduces the reader to Farrell's monograph, underlying how Sciascia's narratives have recounted the long agony of History; how they come to life in a «tormented and surprisingly oblique perspective, one paradoxically more in line with the vision of a film director than of a novelist» (p. IX). This is the definite book on Sciascia, which reveals the originality of his style and the richness of his themes. Its subtitle (*The Man and the Writer*) underscores a personal and literary venture supported by Farrell's close relationship with the Sicilian writer; a study which blends biographical details and a rigorous critical analysis.

Farrell's long-term interest in Sciascia's world as a critic, translator and editor is well known. What is expanded here from the study published by Edinburgh University Press in 1995 is a new interest in anthropology as a frame of comparison and in the revaluation of peripheral or apprentice works. Sciascia's protagonists (typically male) are visualized in the field of experience, in the classical definition of *animal rationalis*. In ten chapters, Farrell offers a multifaceted conceptual and aesthetic assessment of the writer's styles to reinforce the innovative features of the treatments involving history, memory, violence; the richness of

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Keywords: Manzoni, Alessandro; Pirandello, Luigi; Simenon, Georges; Tomasi di Lampedusa, Giuseppe; Tornatore, Giuseppe; *Il gattopardo*; *I promessi sposi*. Sicily; civic humanism; detective story; essay-inquiry; political vision.

themes (labyrinthine), his ethical and political values. He divides the principal literary texts into two genres: in fiction, the detective story «for its own ends» and, in non-fiction, the «essay-enquiries», virtually a new genre (p. xv). The chapters address a rethinking of realism in the portrayal of southern Italian culture and make us reflect on the precariousness of human existence framed within Sciascia's proclaimed belief in the freedom and the justice which spring from reason. Farrell's cultural insights weave a mosaic of profound influences on the writer, ranging from Voltaire, Montaigne, Pascal, to Cervantes, Tolstoy, and Borges.

The first three chapters focus on the enigma of Sicily as a geographical space that embraces the history and culture of the Mediterranean and beyond. Beginning with *Favole della dittatura* (1950), Farrell establishes the moral and political framework of Sciascia's future work, as well as his cosmopolitan literary and artistic references. For example, he points to «an Orwellian sense» (p. 6) that pervades the individual fables, primarily inspired by Aesop and Jean de la Fontaine, but also suggestive of that pessimism which expresses Sciascia's view of Fascism. Sicily as a crucible, whose past traditions imply a continuity over time and whose obsessive present projects a grim future, finds its dialogic complement in the essay *Pirandello e il pirandellismo* (1953). For Sciascia, Pirandello is the quintessential Sicily for his cultural, historical, and psychological sense of identity. However, he disapproved of Pirandello's allegiance to Fascism unequivocally. Sciascia warned against the loss endured by Sicilian writers who attempted to remove Sicily from their consciousness («the industrial Vittorini is finished», p. 56). He dissented against the vision of Sicilian history as eternal stasis espoused by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa in *Il Gattopardo*. His model for the historical novel remained Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*.

The focus is still his native island when Sciascia chronicles the life style of his home town and of its people left behind by history: poverty, injustice, powerlessness are the terms of the dire sociological indictment of *Le parrocchie di Regalpetra* (1956). Tradition and what does it mean to be Sicilian led Sciascia to examine the contexts of three key terms: *sicilianità*, *sicilitudine* and *sicilianismo*. The first defines «a kind of surrogate mafia ideology»; the second, the noble feeling of being a Sicilian; the third, the most despicable way of «feeling Sicilian» (pp. 45-46). On one side, Sicily is the bitter land of non-reason imbued with a kind of Gramscian pessimism and, on the other, a more dreamlike, enticing island. Sciascia's civic humanism implies that story-telling has not an end in itself but it is an assertion of an intellectual commitment towards society. As Farrell states, «the freedom of independent thought, and the advocacy of ethical standards of public life represented the quintessence of his political commitment» (p. 71). The only political ideal which commanded his admiration was the French revolution, because it asserted civil rights and provided a platform for justice.

For Sciascia, the quest for justice as a personal responsibility is typically Sicilian and the attempt to ensure justice is the objective of the detective novels (chapter iv). From the primitive forms of social revolt to the collusion with Rome's political power players, mafia culture is a threat that leads civilization on the brink

of chaos. Above all his private eye, much indebted to Simenon's Maigret, is a character not a type. The fundamental conflict in the detective stories is not «between crime and detection, but between chaos and order» (p. 107). Captain Bellodi, the ex-partisan lawyer of *Il giorno della civetta* (1961), represents an idealized metaphysical view of the Law. The attempt to understand why a person becomes a mafioso captures 'the' reality of Sicily in particular when local *capomafia* Don Mariano, after expounding his view of humanity in five categories ranging from «real men» to the «quack quacks» during interrogation, confers Bellodi, a northerner, the honor of being «a man».

Sciascia returns to the threatening process of social desertification that the Captain believes will engulf not just Sicily but the entire country in *A ciascuno il suo* (1966), in which mafia families function as alternative structures wherever civil society has failed. In this mystery novel, Sciascia's skepticism foreshadows *Il contesto* (1971) and *Todo modo* (1974). In the early 1970s Sciascia shies away from Sicily to depict the abysmal picture of an imaginary geopolitical landscape culminating in the Christian Democrats' opening to the Left, urban terrorism and the emergence of obscure forces conspiring against the State. Sciascia called *Il contesto* a parody, and in an afternote «un apologo sul potere nel mondo» (*Il contesto* [1971], Adelphi 2006, p. 132). In *Todo modo* (its title taken from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius), he comes to grips with the relations between the Catholic Church and the State. Judges, detectives, lawyers are all products of a system of power; corruption is a permanent feature of society.

The reader, as Sciascia perceives it, has to abandon the traditional role with its inherent passivity to actively engage in an intellectual exchange of ideas. We can see the writer's passion for justice at work whether we follow a fictional detective committed to the pursuit of truth which can only be relative or the protagonist of the essay-inquiries. Take, for instance, the scientist of *La scomparsa di Majorana* (1975) (chapter VIII). Ettore Majorana, the theoretical physicist born in Catania who worked with Fermi, went missing in March 1938 after purchasing a ticket by ship from Palermo to Naples. For Sciascia, Majorana had glimpsed at the future of the atomic bomb. Once again, in chapter VII, we encounter victims of injustice: the Augustinian friar of *Morte dell'inquisitore* (1964) and Aldo Moro in *L'affaire Moro* (1978). Fra' Diego La Matina from Racalmuto was condemned to be burned at the stake by the Inquisition in 1658 for murdering the Spanish Inquisitor. The monk's fate conveys an ominous image of the Inquisition as a form of ideological intolerance which is not merely grounded in the past but challenges our uncertain present. *L'affaire Moro* records the chilling truths of a country on the verge of collapse after the former DC Premier's execution on 9 May 1978. As a member of the parliamentary commission of inquiry, Sciascia rejected the idea that the Red Brigades were a product of external forces and was critical of the failure of the police to find Moro, who becomes an isolated man, abandoned by his Party and left to the mercy of the *brigatisti*. Like Majorana and Fra' Diego, Moro is a tragic symbol on whom a political drama was played out, an example of the new Inquisition.

The final chapters (9-10) address Sciascia's loss of faith in Communism with *Candido ovvero un sogno fatto in Sicilia* (1977), his most autobiographical novel which echoes Voltaire's *conte philosophique*. A number of works written in the years 1981-1988 share a common factor: history and narrative merge as Sciascia revisits old ideas and subjects. Of these, *Il teatro della memoria* (1981), a case of disputed identity involving a man who had lost his memory and was claimed by two women as their husband, is indebted to Pirandello's *Come tu mi vuoi* but also to the mystifying problem of identity as presented by the Moro case; *Il cavaliere e la morte* (1988), a transcendental crime story inspired by Dürer's engraving *Knight, Death and the Devil* (1513), meditates on the Sicilian obsession with death. The posthumous novella *Una storia semplice* (1989), an enigmatic case of suicide or murder, examines one last time the limited possibilities afforded to justice.

Sciascia unmasked the conformism of the old PCI, the uncertainties of Italian democracy, the oppressive atmosphere of totalitarian regimes; he opened a critical window into our cultural tradition imperiled by historical violent ruptures. Readers unfamiliar with his work would do particularly well to consult this book, which from the early fables to the late texts, celebrates one of the great masters of world literature.