



Sea and Sardinia

D.H. Lawrence

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Written after the First World War when he was living in Sicily, Sea and Sardinia records Lawrence's journey to Sardinia and back in January 1921. It reveals his response to a new landscape and people and his ability to transmute the spirit of place into literary art. Like his other travel writings the book is also a shrewd inquiry into the political and social values of an era which saw the rise of communism and fascism. On one level an indictment of contemporary materialism, Sea and Sardinia is nevertheless an optimistic book, celebrating the creativity of the human spirit and seeking in the fundamental laws which governed human nature in the past fresh inspiration for the present. This 1997 edition restores censored passages and corrects corrupt textual readings to reveal for the first time the book Lawrence himself called 'a marvel of veracity'.

Sea and Sardinia Details

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Author : D.H. Lawrence

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From Reader Review Sea and Sardinia for online ebook

Lissa says

A beautifully written love letter to Italy.

Hal Brodsky says

After reading this well written, quotable, but uneventful travelogue by D.H. Lawrence, I find myself wondering why British people travel. Here is Lawrence, 60 years before Paul Theroux (who I thought held the title of "Crankiest Travel Writer"), setting out on a whirlwind tour of Sardinia, and complaining about it every step of the way.

With no explanation or preamble, D.H. Lawrence and his wife (The "Queen Bee", who he criticizes relentlessly) set off for this remote island IN WINTER apparently so he can bitch about the weather along with the poor food and service in the hotels they can afford to stay in. This is post WWI/pre-Mussolini Italy and the economy is not too hot. The Lawrences spend no more than 1 night in any city, so they never get to know any town. (One night they arrive in a rural town to find that all the men are dressed as women. It is cold, so they scurry back to their hotel, make tea, and look out from their window a while before eating a bad meal. Lawrence never explores why the people are cross dressing, but he does describe the meal in detail).

The writing at times is amazing and the book provides a peek at an area of the world at a moment in time that is long gone. For this reason it is worth reading. On the other hand, it is unclear why Lawrence ever left home.

Albert GB says

Me compré este libro con motivo de un improvisado viaje a Cerdeña. Buscando guías para hacer excursiones lo encontré. Me pareció interesante la idea de leer el libro de Lawrence sobre su viaje relámpago a la isla -6 días- que coincidía exactamente con la duración del mío.

Comparto en parte las críticas que se le hacen sobre su cierta mirada malhumorada en diferentes momentos y que parece que sobre determinadas gentes y sitios todo le disgusta. Yo diría que quizá quiere mantener una mirada ingeniosa a toda costa en cada descripción, hacer siempre la mejor frase posible; y esta voluntad de agudeza, de crítica fina quizás le lleve al autor a perder una mirada tranquila, serena. Como cuando a veces uno intentando ser demasiado gracioso se va inconscientemente a lo cínico. Yo diría que algo de eso hay, pero que duda cabe que escribe con trazo agil y fijándose en detalles que son una delicia de leer.

El libro fue escrito de manera muy rápida según he leído y esto puede haber influenciado a esta tendencia a lo negativo. Me gustaría leer su libro sobre Italia intuyo que no pasa lo mismo. Aquí tenía ya una fama de escritor y no sé si en algún momento puede que tuviera desgana para explicar un viaje en el que anduvo quizás agobiado. En cambio cuando el autor escribe desde las entrañas cuando se apasiona por lo que explica es muy bueno.

Siempre quise escribir un libro de viajes que en el fondo fuera una historia de amor. Un libro que describiera un viaje real y que a su vez relatara el enamoramiento de almenos uno de sus protagonistas. A medio camino entre la realidad y la ficción. Es una vieja idea que me ronda la cabeza, un sueño abstracto que no tiene porque llegar a cumplirse nunca. Leyendo este libro en muchos momentos sentía que en relación a lo que sería la descripción de los paisajes, las gentes, las costumbres, las reflexiones sobre el momento histórico, este es exactamente el libro que quería escribir. Algo así como “era esto!” resonaba dentro de mi mientras pasaba las páginas.

A su vez mientras leía me daba cuenta que nunca lo escribiré porque ando muy lejos de la capacidad de descripción que demuestra el escritor en este Cerdeña y el mar. Me queda imaginar una historia que se escribiera a 4 manos donde la acompañante real y a su vez objeto de ficción realizará la difícil tarea descriptiva que se me antoja a mi inalcanzable y yo pudiera pasar por encima sobre la misma realidad ya anticipada y a su vez ir introduciendo el foco en la relación personal entre los protagonistas.

Qué decir que Cerdeña y el mar no pretende en ningún momento la segunda de mis fijaciones a pesar de que el escritor viaja con su pareja sentimental. Y de aquí yace otro handicap del libro que no va más allá del viaje, quizá sea el propio género literario pero no explica las motivaciones del viaje ni la relación entre escritor y su acompañante. Una de las cosas que más me cargó es que siempre; y digo siempre; se refiera a ella como “la abeja reina”.

Algunas de las partes del libro que especialmente he disfrutado han sido aquellas en las que el autor reflexiona sobre la naturaleza humana; sobre el carácter de los sardos o sobre el socialismo y el nacionalismo. El libro fue escrito en 1921 y está muy presente en él la idea de la Alemania derrotada por la guerra por ejemplo. Observarlo desde nuestro tiempo mirando hacia atrás y ver un mundo que por ejemplo no había conocido el nazismo con las dudas que va planteando el autor sobre un futuro que plantea incierto pero que el lector conoce resulta interesante y da que pensar.

Anecdóticamente el hecho de passar casi 100 años más tarde, en mi viaje, por pueblos que describe el escritor también tuvo su gracia.

La tendencia a la negatividad es quizá lo que le resta más puntos a esta obra; aunque yo quizá me quedaré con el recuerdo de un libro que me ha revelado como tendría que ser mi pseudo “libro de viajes” imaginado; añadirle a Lawrence un poco de amor.

Vanessa Couchman says

I am a great fan of Corsica, but I have never visited its close neighbour Sardinia, so it was with great interest that I lighted on D.H. Lawrence's account of his visit a few years after World War I. I was a bit disappointed. I wasn't expecting a conventional travelogue, but in fact Lawrence and Frieda visited for only about three or four nights during January and saw very little of any interest while they were there. They found it very cold, the journeys between places interminable and the food inedible.

Some of Lawrence's descriptions of the landscape are lyrical and his observations on the Sardinian character are pertinent and often amusing. He also makes an impassioned plea for separatism and against globalisation when it was just beginning. However, I generally find him petulant and self-obsessed when he isn't being sardonic. And the soubriquet "queen bee" (or its abbreviation q-b) that he applies to Frieda grates after a while.

So, while I learned something about Sardinia, I learned rather more about D.H. Lawrence.

Jenni says

Not the most compelling narrative as far as travel writing goes. Lawrence's writing is fantastic, and he makes some very interesting observations about the people and politics of Sardinia. But he has a tendency to ramble and repeat himself quite a bit, which made it a very slow read.

Susan says

It had been 20 years since I read DH Lawrence, having read all of his major novels and some of his poetry as an undergrad. I had forgotten what a misogynist he was, but also what a brilliant writer. This book was thus alternately infuriating and exhilarating. His descriptions of the people were mostly just ridiculously offensive, a relic of Victorian British colonialist thinking, already somewhat passé at the time this was written; but his descriptions of the landscapes — oh, boy. Vivid, painterly, indescribable. Grudgingly awarding it four stars. I would like to read a contemporary travelogue about Sardinia written by a woman; it seems that not much has been written about the island in English. So I do have to recommend this!

Renata Weissinger says

Interesting historical insight into Sicily and Sardinia but Lawrence annoyed me with his attitude.

T.P. Williams says

I liked this book very much. Lawrence paints an extremely vivid picture of rural Italy on the eve of industrialization. You can almost see him with his backpack at the train stations, in a pensione, etc. A very natural manner of expression; conversational almost.

Maria Paris says

Thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful narrative style, although it took much longer than usual for me to finish this book. To be fair I mostly read Golden Age Mysteries, so this book was not my preferred genre. I saw a used soft cover version of it with a poetic cover illustration at a local tent-used-book-fair and really bought it judging it by its cover ?, although by browsing through it quickly I became intrigued by its evocative place descriptions. It stayed at my night table for months while I would pick it up when I was 'between' books or felt like dreaming of a distant beautiful place. Finally bought it in kindle form to make it a more portable read since the paper book was pretty frayed and fragile. Although I was at times unnerved by dated and overly opinionated views, which actually I also find in the British 1930s -1940s mysteries I more frequently

read but for some reason I noticed them more here, overall I recommend this book. It will at the very least be a much less expensive but still wonderful trip to Sardinia! I found that by looking up particular places on Google maps, and changing to 'street view' I could submerge even more into the journey. Hope this helps you also! And if you find out what a 'kitchenino' is, do let me know! ???

paola says

4-

Mentre leggevo, immaginavo Lawrence raccontare il suo viaggio in Sardegna - con le iperboli delle sue annotazioni - ad un gruppo di amici, mentre passeggiava amabilmente. I suoi aneddoti, le sue impressioni - anche viste attraverso la lente di chi si aspetta di ritrovare la purezza e la naturalità dell'umanità incontaminata dal progresso - vanno dall'estatico e incantato all'oltraggiato; l'ammirazione per certi luoghi o per gli abiti tipici ha come contrappunto quello della delusione nel ritrovare anche in quello che dovrebbe essere un popolo e luogo idealizzato la stessa umanità con gli stessi difetti. Insomma ho capito perché gli piaceva Grazia, con la sua Sardegna "magica", arcaica (e deformata dal ricordo di chi se ne è andato) e lontana dallo scorrere del tempo e dal progresso: D. H. ha idealizzato un luogo che in realtà già allora aveva molte più complessità; ma questo diario di viaggio mi ha divertito, con tutte le sue iperboli, con quell'apparenza da aneddoti da ascoltare divertiti durante una cena con gli amici.

Felice Picano says

It's in his travel books that the real D.H. Lawrence reveals himself, and while his three books about traveling in Italy are almost a century old now, they hold up very well.

Naturally the writing is lovely, the descriptions wonderful. Has anyone ever wielded a more sensitive or poetic pen or one more far ranging in its coloristic effects than Lawrence at the top of his game? And, at the same time, he is quite good about exactly where he went and how he went and how much time it took and exactly how much it cost: which is purely historical at this point. But then travel in Europe forty years ago, when I was young and on the road, was also dirt cheap compared to today with the inflated Euro.

But while Tuscany and Sicily-- subjects of his two other travel in Italy books -- are well traversed by now and wealthier and much changed from when Lawrence visited, Sardinia remains off the beaten path and so mysterious and not often visited even in 2012. And so this book is one of the more interesting of all travel books of the period (1922) in that I suspect a lot of what Lawrence writes of could be easily duplicated today.

Then, it was only a few years after the First World War, and people there were still living peasant lives and wearing peasant costumes and following peasant customs going back centuries -- his description of a holiday in one town, almost entirely occupied by younger men in outrageous drag, is very good. Of course the disruption of the war had changed much, and he shows how that made a great difference in some, if not all, of those lives. For the most part, the younger people he writes about are young people in all times and places. So the pocket-sized pictures we get of various locals--bus drivers and conductors, wounded soldiers, waitresses --are eternal.

Lawrence never holds back in his criticism nor his annoyance, and he can be very irritated and very irritated indeed. He refers to his Hilda, his soul-mate, the woman of his life, as "the q-b" short for "queen bitch," even when he's being kind to her. But he can admire too, and he has no qualms about calling men handsome or beautiful or even seductive, when they are. That's refreshing!

At just under two hundred pages, and available also in a collection of all three of his Italian travel books, *Sea and Sardinia* is a worthwhile read.

Gary Bryan says

I read this after having visited Italy several times, studied the language for years, and spent two months travelling around Sardinia this summer. The book was interesting for seeing how much some things have changed since a century ago and, even more, how little others have. The public transport is still underdeveloped; the people in general are still hospitable and genuine, even if often reserved and closed towards outsiders, which is refreshing after the typical Sicilian and South Italian false friendliness; finding decent accommodation for a reasonable price is still tough; as a tourist in Italy one still feels a little unwelcome, judged by nationality rather than personality, and like a chicken to be plucked for money; the food on the ferry is still awful; yet despite everything it's still a wonderful place to visit.

Lawrence does come across as grumpy, but it's something I could relate to since travelling isn't always glamorous. His final whisky-induced outburst about all the negative aspects of Italy and the Italians was just too similar to some of my own rants after a bit too much time spent being unfairly judged just for being an outsider, having my fluent Italian replied to in broken English, and narrowly avoiding being ripped off. Similar too were the disbelieving replies: "ma siamo buoni", there's no way that us Italians can be anything less than perfect, we'll happily criticise ourselves but a foreigner need not dare to.

Sure, he and his wife only spent a few days there and only a night in each place, some of the places they chose were not exactly tourist destinations, and it was winter so they didn't experience the beaches and nature that the island is most famous for. But it was enough to get a realistic impression of the culture and the way of living in the more rural parts, and I found myself nodding along as I read about their experiences of the landscapes, the towns, the transport, and above all the people.

Annette says

Timeless. Loved this book! I also had the pleasure of reading a very old copy from the library - worn leather, cut pages, deep musty smell of old books that transported me. What an amazing journey.

Bob says

Lawrence is a complaining little English snot in much of it, which makes for the work's brilliance. Time and time again he faces up to his own reasons for being a jerk but does not disown his emotions, he holds on to his responses. And then he is also able to see the bigger picture with the tiny petty details. For example he is living in a nation collapsing to Fascism, the US and USSR are going isolationist, and Lawrence is aware, though naive about these things, but he also lets you know what the price of eggs or hotels are in Italy at that time.

Jillian King says

DHL sure likes to complain.
