



IL CENACOLO

ITALIAN CULTURAL CLUB

Founded in 1928

Regular Thursday Meetings, Noon to 2:00 P.M.
San Francisco Italian Athletic Club
1630 Stockton Street (3rd floor), San Francisco, CA 94133

www.ilcenacolosf.org

"Il Cenacolo is an organization that preserves, enhances and encourages all aspects of Italian arts, language and culture and recognizes the unique contribution of Italian heritage that is intertwined in the history and life of the San Francisco Bay Area."

APRIL 2018

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2018

PROGRAM CHANGE TO:

Anna Magnani: First Italian to Win an Academy Award
Jim Boitano, PhD, Cenacolista

TO BE RESCHEDULED:

Matteo Ricci, SJ in China
Antoni Ucerler, SJ

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018

Born in Internment
Anna Fiorina Hess, Author

THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2018

How Italy Shaped the Views of a Young American
Admiral John Bitoff, USN, Retired

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018

Lucca, a Repository of Architectural Treasures
David Giannini and Anna Maria Pierini, Cenacolisti

This month's programs arranged by Alex Kugushev.

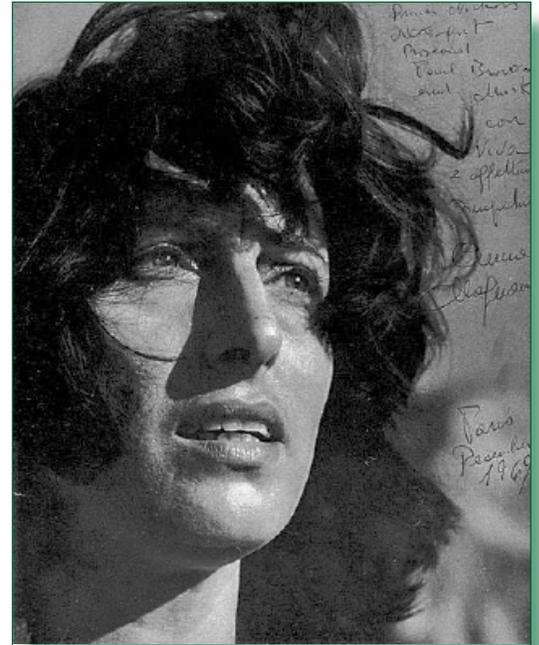
PROGRAM PROFILES

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 2018

Anna Magnani: First Italian to Win an Academy Award

Jim Boitano, PhD, Cenacolista

Anna Magnani was an Italian stage and film actress. She won the Academy Award for Best Actress, along with four other international awards, for her portrayal of a Sicilian widow in *The Rose Tattoo*. She was referred to as “La Lupa,” the “perennial toast of Rome” and a “living she-wolf symbol” of the cinema. Time magazine described her personality as “fiery,” and drama critic Harold Clurman said her acting was “volcanic.” In the realm of Italian cinema she was “passionate, fearless, and exciting,” an actress that film historian Barry Moshé calls “the volcanic earth mother of all Italian cinema.” Director Roberto Rossellini called her “the greatest acting genius since Eleonora Duse.” Playwright Tennessee Williams became an admirer of her acting and wrote *The Rose Tattoo* specifically for her to star in, a role for which she received an Oscar in 1955.



Jim is of course our former president, author of the *Correnti della Storia* essays in our monthly bulletin, and Il Cenacolo’s 2016 Man of the Year. He has been a popular speaker at our luncheons on many occasions. He holds a BA from Seattle University, an MA from the University of Denver and a PhD from Catholic University. He taught for many years in various positions at Dominican College/University, where he was also academic dean.

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018

Born in Internment

Anna Fiorina Hess

Anna will take us on a WWII journey from Scotland to Italia. She was born in internment in Scotland, when her parents Andy and Kathy Bertellotti had been torn from their warm fish and chip shop in England to be interned in Scotland for five years for nothing more than being Italian. Mussolini sealed their fate when he aligned with Hitler and Nazi Germany.

During WWII we Anna rambles through the rubble of war. About those experiences she wrote a book, *Born in Internment*, originally published in 2015.



She will speak of her family, as they traveled from Scotland to war-torn Italy and she will show us photos. Among their numerous adventures, Anna will tell us about her father's brother, who joined the *Resistenza* and eventually became an interpreter for the American Army. Also about Bruna, his teenage sister, who fled with her parents to the Tuscan hills where she and her friend Lena had a narrow escape from the terrible Massacre at Sant'Anna di Stazzema in 1944.

Anna immigrated to California in 1962 with the grand design of "getting a man and a tan," achieving both in very short order—she met Ron Hess on her first afternoon in California. They are still married, celebrating 53 years of fun in Napa. Their adult children have children of their own. Anna has been passionate about writing throughout most of her life. She took creative writing courses, culminating many years later with *Born in Internment*, (available on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle formats). She will bring her book and we will have a chance to examine and buy it. Of course she would be happy to sign it, too.

THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2018

How Italy Shaped the Views of a Young American
Admiral John Bitoff, USN, Retired

This is about the magnetism of Italian culture. John Bitoff grew up in Brooklyn, New York and had the usual Italian-American association with school mates, neighbors and restaurants, but his first real experience with Italian culture began as a junior officer visiting Italy while serving aboard U.S. Navy ships beginning in the late 1950s. These visits included the ports of Augusta, Brindisi, Catania, Civitavecchia, Gaeta, La Spezia, Livorno, Messina, Naples, Syracuse and Venice. Of course, these visits often included excursions to the hinterlands of Rome, Pompei, Capri, Nettuno, Pisa, Florence, Lago Como, Garda and Iseo, Porto Fino, Taormina, Cinque Terre, Siena, Perugia, Verona and Vicenza, just to mention a few. His Italian experience culminated with living in the local economy in Naples for three years while serving as Executive Assistant to the NATO Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces Southern Europe.



This was not a tourist's experience of Italy. Living in the country and amongst some of the most colorful of Italian society transformed him—and his family as well—forever. His perspective

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on food, art, community, government and culture (both Italian and European) was totally altered to the point that when he returned to the United States he experienced an unexpected difficulty readjusting to the culture and values of his home country.

John Bitoff graduated from the Maine Maritime Academy and had a long and diversified career in the US Navy, from commanding destroyers, to executive assignments in the Pentagon and with fleets in the Mediterranean and in Hawaii, rising to Rear Admiral in 1985. He is a graduate of the National War College and holds graduate degrees in business and international security. In 1989 Golden Gate University conferred on him a Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa for “his contributions to the nation as a soldier statesman.” Upon retiring from the Navy he served as Director of Emergency Services for San Francisco and as a Senior Executive with the San Francisco Unified School District. He continues to engage in various service activities.

THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2018

Lucca, a Repository of Architectural Treasures

David Giannini and Anna Maria Pierini, Cenacolisti

Lucca is one of Tuscany’s and Italy’s most interesting cities because it has preserved much of its historic, predominantly medieval, past. Among its architectural treasures are several churches, most notably the Duomo, San Frediano and San Michele in Foro. David and Anna Maria, both of Lucchese descent, will speak about Lucca’s remarkable urban landscape with a fully illustrative presentation.

David is a longtime Director and Past President of Il Cenacolo, and was Il Cenacolo’s Man of the Year in 2014. He has been nominated to become our next President, beginning in July 2018. He is a member of

the California Bar Association and a graduate of Santa Clara University with a BA in History. He has spent significant time studying and visiting Palladian architecture in Northern Italy and throughout the United States.



Anna Maria Pierini, Executive Director of San Francisco’s Italian Community Service Agency, is a lifelong international traveler, having visited all but one continent. Although she has been inspired by natural beauty, history, art and architecture, and cultural traditions of all the locations she has visited, Lucca touches her heart most deeply. She was Il Cenacolo’s 2017 Woman of the Year.

Dear Cenacolisti,

Welcome to Spring! Enjoy this wonderful season of re-growth, longer days and feelings of joy and fun! As usual, this bulletin contains useful information about our Club's activities, upcoming events and our members.

PEOPLE—

We are 75% through our fiscal year which begins July 1. We continue to seek new members and I encourage all to recruit new members by telling your friends and acquaintances about us. If you need more information or assistance, our Membership Chairman (Ron Derenzi) is anxious to help.

At this time, I am pleased to welcome these new members who have joined us so far this fiscal year:

New Member

Romana Bracco
Marie Derenzi
Leanna C. Giannini
Mark Lachtman
Robert Laggini
Bill Mastrangelo
Lisa Michelis
Richard Peterson
Susan Peterson
Anna Maria Pierini
Terri Ryan
David Stewart

Sponsor

Ron Derenzi
Ron Derenzi
David T. Giannini
Dennis Pasquini
Ron Fenolio
Ron Derenzi
David T. Giannini
Richard DeBono
Chuck Stagliano
David T. Giannini
Bob Ryan
Marv Pheffer

Please join me in introducing yourselves to these new Cenacolisti when your paths cross at our Thursday meetings and our special events. We are glad they have chosen to join Il Cenacolo and look forward to their participation.

Many thanks to the sponsors noted above. It is through their involvement that the new members joined us. We appreciate the efforts made by these sponsors to recruit.

Our new members include the first women members ever at Il Cenacolo. Welcome! This is indeed a fitting and significant event as we celebrate our 90th year. Hopefully, it portends continued evolution of our organization as we seek to remain relevant while still reflecting the values and culture of our founders and our history.

Just a couple of reminders—

—As before, I encourage you to join one of our committees. These committees are key to our operations and you can make a difference by joining one. Please take the time now to contact one of the team chairmen (they are listed after this message) and get involved!

—The Board's nominating committee (David Giannini, Ken Sproul and Chuck Stagliano) have reviewed all Director candidates and made recommendations to the Board of Directors. The Director nominations, in accordance with our by-laws, will be published prior to our upcoming Annual Meeting held on June 28 at our regular Thursday luncheon.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS—

Thanks to Richard DeBono for organizing the March programs. These were excellent and varied programs that provided enjoyment as well as camaraderie with fellow members.

This bulletin highlights our April programs. Please support your Club by attending as many of the Thursday luncheons as possible. Your attendance is much appreciated.

Regarding programs—

Each one of our Directors steps up to be responsible for organizing the slate of speakers for a given month. Alex Kugushev, our overall Program Chairman, provides significant support by actively adding to a long list of potential speakers and assisting the monthly Program Chairman. I hope you agree that the speakers have been excellent, that the topics have been varied and interesting, and that, in general, having speakers at our weekly luncheons has been very positive. ***BUT WE STILL WANT TO MAKE IT BETTER.*** And that can best be done by you. Each of us has ideas, people, and subjects that we believe will add to the speaker program. I'd like you to please send those ideas to Alex (alexkugushev@att.net) And if you can, please provide Alex with the name and contact information of speakers that you believe our members would enjoy. We will follow up and make arrangements—but your involvement would be wonderful. ***Do it now!*** Thanks!

Just a reminder that you are invited to attend and observe a Board meeting. If you would like to come, please email me (ilpresidente@ilcenacolosf.org) and let me know your preferred date (we usually meet at 9:30am on the second Thursday of each month, immediately before the weekly luncheon meeting).

We continue to plan for meaningful events during the upcoming year. Please note the dates on the **CALENDAR OF EVENTS** following. Although the details are not yet finalized for every event, it is certain that they will be fun! So save the dates on your calendar, and look for further announcements as the events draw near.

Especially, please be sure to mark June 28 on your calendar *in ink!* Our annual meeting will be held on that date. We will (1) update everyone on the workings of our Club—including our financial position, (2) provide a slate of proposed directors for your vote, (3) vote on revisions to our by-laws and (4) conduct any other business that is applicable to Il Cenacolo. If you have specific matters that you would like to have covered, please contact me.

As you probably know, most of the Bay Area Italian-affiliated organizations have started to collaborate under the acronym of CIAO, Coalition of Italian-American Organizations. ([Click here to read about CIAO.](#)) The leaders of these organizations have already had two meetings—thanks to organization by Nick Figone at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Association. Chuck Stagliano and Ken Sproul have represented us. The first “project” is to determine CIAO’s response to the City of San Francisco’s unfortunate resolution to change the name of “Columbus Day” to “Indigenous People’s Day.”

FINALLY—

This year we celebrate our 90th anniversary! The Board has some ideas cooking about how to celebrate this special event in our history—*so stay tuned!*

BUONA PASQUA!

Franz Cristiani
President



“Il Cenacolo” by Leonardo da Vinci, represents the Last Supper on the Holy Thursday before Easter.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 12, 2018

IL CENACOLO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
(Write ilpresidente@ilcenacolosf.org to attend)

APRIL 28, 2018

FIVE FILMS OF MICHELANGELO ANTONINI
CINEMA ITALIA SF*
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

JUNE 28, 2018

IL CENACOLO ANNUAL MEETING
(*AT THE REGULAR THURSDAY LUNCHEON*)
SF ITALIAN ATHLETIC CLUB
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

AUGUST 24, 2018

ITALIAN HERITAGE NIGHT
SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS BASEBALL GAME
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

SEPTEMBER 23, 2018

SAL REINA OPERA OUTING
ROSS, CA

NOVEMBER 3, 2018

ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL & DINNER
SAN RAFAEL, CA

DECEMBER 7, 2018

HOLIDAY GALA
ST. FRANCIS YACHT CLUB
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

** In collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute and the Italian Consul General*

IL CENACOLO TEAMS

FINANCE/INVESTMENTS

CHAIRMAN: Marv Pheffer (m.pheffer@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: John Benson, Ron Derenzi and David Giannini

HOLIDAY GALA

CHAIRMAN: Ron Derenzi (r.derenzi@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Eugene Lanzone and West Whittaker

ITALIAN FILM FESTIVAL

CHAIRMAN: Ken Sproul (k.sproul@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBER: Lido Cantarutti

LUNCHEONS/SFIAC LIAISON

CHAIRMAN: Eugene Lanzone (e.lanzone@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Ken Sproul and Lou Sarto

OPERA OUTING

CHAIRMAN: Chuck Stagliano (c.stagliano@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Ron Derenzi, Don Lewis and Richard Ruff

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND MEMBERSHIP

CHAIRMAN: Alex Kugushev (a.kugushev@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: David Cobb, Bill Dito and Mauro Zanetti

STRATEGIC PLANNING/MARKETING

CHAIRMAN: Richard DeBono (r.debono@ilcenacolosf.org)

TEAM MEMBERS: Jim Boitano, Pietro Bonanno and Mike Prior

RIDE SHARE

FROM:

CONTACT:

SF—Pacific Heights and the Marina . . . [Richard DeBono](#) 415-730-2584 cell

SF—Marina [David T. Giannini](#) 415-921-4407 home
415-713-9219 cell

SF—Jordan Park, Inner Richmond . . . [Chuck Stagliano](#) 415 531-6900 cell

Marin County [David Cobb](#) 707-888-2311 cell

SFIAC PARKING

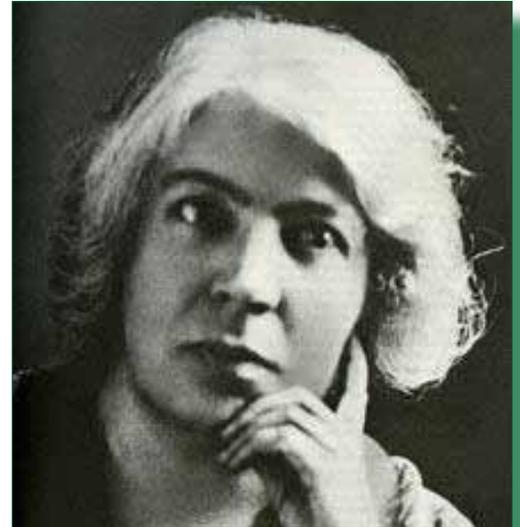
(all within 1-4 blocks away)

- Valet parking at [Original Joe's](#) restaurant at the corner of Stockton and Union. You do not have to dine there to use the valet. The current charge is \$20.
- [APM Parking at 721 Filbert](#). \$10 with SFIAC validation.
- [North Beach Garage at 735 Vallejo](#) (between Stockton and Powell). \$4 per hour.
- [Vallejo Street Garage at 766 Vallejo](#). \$4 per hour.
- [Green Street Parking at 626 Green](#) (between Columbus and Powell). \$10.
- [Powell Street Garage at 1636 Powell](#) (between Union and Green). \$12-\$25.

(Click on links for directions to SFIAC)

GRAZIA DELEDDA
(1871-1936)

This month's essay looks at a famous Italian author who focused her writing on her homeland...Sardinia...and sought to depict a realistic picture of the life of the poor peasants of the remote towns in this southern island of Italy. She maintained a strict writing schedule throughout her life: she started her day with a late breakfast, several hours of reading, followed by a rest period after lunch. Then, she proceeded to write later in the day for 2-3 hours, making sure that she produced at least 4 handwritten pages each day. This pattern took place seven days a week, year after year. She was a quiet and reserved woman, who did not speak much. She enjoyed friendly, intimate talk and traditional feasts and celebrations, but not political debates, serious discussions, parties, or haute society. Yet, in her quiet way, she was gathering the material for her books, listening and observing intently. The prodigious output of this "research" and her writing regimen was over 30 novels and about 400 short stories, most of which were collected into nineteen books. She also wrote poetry, essays, theatrical works, stories for children, articles on folklore, and a translation of Balzac's Eugénie Grandet. Ultimately these works and their overall themes resulted in her winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1926. (The first Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded in 1901). She is the second Italian author to win that prestigious award (Giosuè Carducci, who was the subject of one of my earlier essays, was the first, in 1906). Deledda was the second woman to win the award (the first was Selma Lagerlöf from Sweden in 1909), and the only Italian woman to have ever received it. The citation accompanying her award serves to indicate the themes the world saw in her writings: "For her idealistically inspired writings, which with plastic clarity picture the life on her native island and with depth and sympathy deal with human problems in general."



GRAZIA MARIA COSIMA DAMIANA DELEDDA was born in Nuoro, Sardinia, on September 28, 1871. Sardinian villages were isolated from one another, and this was particularly true of the town of Nuoro, which stood on high ground at the foot of Monte Ortobene and the surrounding Barbagia area in the mountainous and once thickly wooded center of the island. Her father, Giovanni Antonio Deledda, was a middle class, fairly well-to-do landowner who farmed his own land.

Her childhood circumstances were fortunate and favorable for the development of her writing genius. Her family home in Nuoro, facing the majestic mountain and overlooking a vast

valley, was located along the pathway of many travelers, who often stayed for a time at the house. Her home, dominated by a large kitchen with a smoking fireplace in the middle, was a center of storytelling, including tales of various encounters with fate, crime, tragedy, and romance. A well-behaved and quiet girl among more troublesome brothers and sisters (she had six siblings), Grazia was often ignored by her busy mother, Francesca Cambosu Deledda, and was left to her own devices. The young girl kept close to her father and took pleasure in listening to and observing his many guests. These encounters allowed her to meet and understand the people who would become types of characters in her future writings. (Her father was himself a book lover and a poet, who once founded a printing office to publish a small newspaper and his own poems).

Sardinia has a language of its own, Sardo, with many dialects. Thus, Grazia's native language was not standard Italian but the Italian dialect *Logudorese Sardo*. She grew up with Sardinian legends, folklore, and native customs that preserved cultural traits and themes from antiquity. It was for these cultural ties even more than its ancient history that led her to call her dear Nuoro "a Bronze-Age village." Its geographic location also explains another peculiar fact: this girl living on the island of Sardinia never saw the sea during her childhood years.

Grazia was born about the time of the first anniversary of the unification of Italy, when learning the Italian language became required in all schools. Her only formal education was four years at an elementary school in Nuoro. Thus, going to school and learning to read and write in Italian meant learning a "foreign" language, the language of a distant Italy, which was a language much different from the spoken idiom of her native Sardinia. (Yet, despite her limited formal schooling in Italian, it was to be the language in which she produced all of her written works. She became, as it were, a master writer in a foreign language).

Like the lives of most peasants, Grazia's life had its hardships. In her childhood, bandits (homeless outlaws and vagabonds) flourished in the Barbagia region. The stories of their



adventures, crimes, and misfortunes filled the minds of the children both with excitement and courage, but also with terror. She was nine years old when she received a mouflon for Christmas, the shorthaired grayish-brown or russet wild sheep native to Sardinia and



Corsica. It was brought to her by her *compare* (godfather), Francesco Satta, from Olzai. She related later how she thought that this was the best Christmas gift she had ever received.

That winter was the hardest in living memory. Satta appeared with the mouflon in his arms. He had been robbed by bandits, who had taken his horse and his winter clothes, including his sheepskin coat. He was frostbitten, but he was alive; and he was elated because he had retrieved the wild mouflon, which had run away when he was attacked.

That winter, the snow was unusually deep. Many people in the neighborhood starved or froze to death in the terrible spell of cold, and Grazia internalized the human suffering of that winter, and said it never left her as she later wrote about the peasants' struggle against harsh weather conditions. Families flocked together by the fireplaces in their kitchen; death took its toll in the Deledda home, too. Grazia's little sister Giovanna, three years younger than herself, was found dead one day in her bed. Grazia always remembered her as the most beautiful of her sisters. There is no reason to doubt that Grazia's dear Christmas gift was consumed out of necessity.



Following her four-year formal education, she was tutored privately by an elementary school teacher at home. He gave her a number of themes to write about and she improved her writing ability using these exercises. Some of these pieces were very good, and her tutor encouraged her to publish them in a newspaper. However, she did not know where to send her essays, so she procrastinated in publishing them. Finally, when she was 13 years old, she came across a fashion magazine, *L'Ultima Moda (The Latest Fashion)* that looked like a possible publisher for one of her essays. She sent the editor one of her short stories, and to her delight, "*Sangue Sardo*" (*Sardinian Blood*) was immediately published. The story was about a girl like Grazia,

involved in a love triangle and its jealousies. Set by the sea, the story ends in murder when the protagonist Ela pushes her sister's lover off the cliffs.

This short story was followed by several others that were published in local magazines and newspapers. Being a published writer of love stories as a teenager, Grazia found more infamy than fame in her village. Suspicion and rumors followed her. Her mother was verbally attacked for being an irresponsible parent; village women burned a magazine and shouted their reproaches. To deflect the shock and anger engendered by her fiction, she began publishing under various pseudonyms, such as G. Razia and Grazia Madesani, when she was published in local publications.

In 1892, she sent one of her novels, *Fior di Sardegna* (*Flower of Sardinia*) to an editor in Rome. He published it and with the widespread popularity of this first published novel, her life as a successful Italian writer was born.

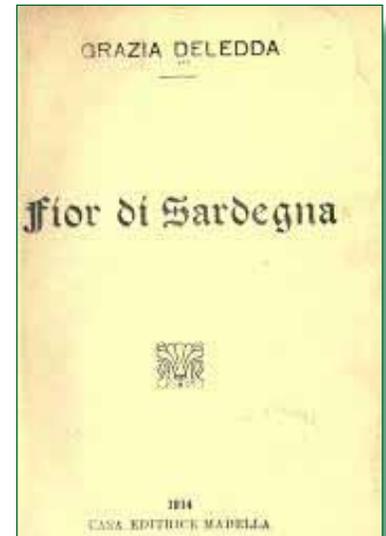
In 1899, she took her first trip outside of Nuoro, visiting the Sardinian capital of Cagliari. While she was there, she fell in love with Palmiro Madesani, a bureaucrat in the Ministry of War. She married him in 1900, and moved permanently to Rome. After her marriage and moving to Rome, Deledda led something of a dual life. A shy and retiring woman by nature—the opposite of her tempestuous siblings—in Rome she was both a homemaker dedicated

to raising a family and a successful writer. She and Madesani had two sons: Sardus (ca. 1901- ca. 1938) and Franz (ca. 1905- ca. 1981). [Deledda with her two sons, left.]



In 1903, she published her novel, *Elias Portolú*. Its publication brought her, for the first time, international fame and critical acclaim. It was first translated by the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (*Review of Two Worlds*) into French,

followed by translations into most European languages. The novel is about Elias Portolú who returns home to Nuoro after serving prison time in mainland Italy for a minor theft. Lonely and vulnerable after his prison exile, he falls in love with his brother's fiancée. But he finds himself trapped by social and religious strictures, his passion and guilt winding into a spiral of anguish and paralyzing indecision. For guidance he turns first to the village priest, who advises him to resist temptation. Not satisfied with this advice, he turns to the pagan “father of the woods,” who recognizes the weakness of human will and urges him to declare his love before it is too late. The novel is typical of her preoccupation with the notion of transgression, and with fatally flawed characters that are torn between hope and despair, right and wrong, sin and redemption in their lives in Sardinia.



NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE

Although the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Deledda for her complete body of work up to 1926, her international notoriety was based on several important novels. In addition to *Elias Portolú* (1903), her other most notable novels written prior to 1926 were:

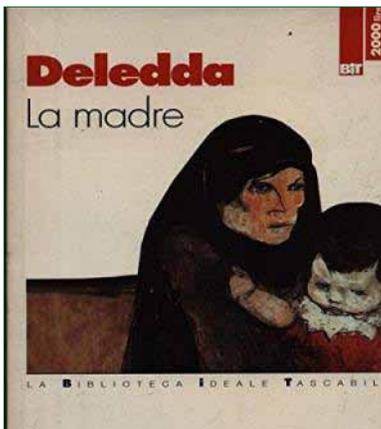
Dopo il Divorzio (*After the Divorce*, 1902), is set in Sardinia, where Constantino Ledda is convicted on charges of murdering his evil uncle. He is innocent, but he accepts the verdict because of his wife Giovanna. After Constantino is convicted, Giovanna has no economic means to support her family, so she divorces her husband and marries again with a wealthy but cruel landowner. Constantino is released after the real killer confesses, and he and Giovanna start a forbidden romance.



Cenere (*Ashes*, novel 1904; [1916 silent film](#) starring Eleonora Duse *[left]*, the famous Italian stage star in her only film appearance) is the story of Oli, a Sardinian unwed mother who is forced by poverty to abandon her only child. Raised by his natural father, Ananias eventually attains social acceptability in the legal profession yet cannot give up his obsessive search for his mother. When Oli realizes that public knowledge of her life in prostitution will jeopardize her son's impending marriage and professional success, she makes the ultimate maternal sacrifice to ensure his future. Deledda's novel explores the themes of filial duty, hypocritical societal expectations, the ravages of poverty, and maternal devotion. She interweaves into the novel leitmotifs of Sardinian

folklore, health issues, banditry, illegitimacy, prostitution, and the social mores of the late 19th century with all the attendant public opprobrium.

Canneal Vento (*Reeds in the Wind*, 1913), which tells the story of the three Pintor sisters, impoverished noblewomen who are looked after and whose small farm is tended by their devoted servant, Efix. For his own part, Efix has a sin to atone for: the murder of the Pintor sisters' father. Into this climate of stasis comes the sisters' ne'er-do-well nephew Giacinto, the son of a fourth sister who fled from her stifling family culture years before. Giacinto brings chaos, destruction, and change from the outer world, penetrating the calm of the insulated family and their acquaintances while Efix, as protector, watches, powerless to help. The novel shows clearly how Deledda combined strands of realism and naturalism, in doing so portraying not only the people of her time but their religious beliefs and practices as well as their mythic—if not pagan—superstitions.



La Madre (*The Mother*, 1920; published in English as *The Woman and the Priest*, 1922; also published in English as *The Mother* with an introduction by D. H. Lawrence, 1923) is considered by many critics her best novel. The mother, Maddalena, discovers—after following him cautiously—that her son Paulo, a young and venerated parish priest of the village of Aar, has entered the house of Agnese, a girl without relatives. The mother has always protected her son, even pushing him into the priesthood. Now, seeing him fall, she exclaims: “Why Lord, why?” She did not dare to finish the question,

but the question keeps gnawing away at her, “Why is he not allowed to love a woman? Everyone can love...only he could not love?” The mother suffers, fights against the sin of her son and, nevertheless, tends to justify it, perhaps blinded by the spirit of the previous parish priest, who was said to have gone mad possessed by vice and the devil. Helped by his mother, Paulo manages to overcome the temptation by renouncing Agnese’s pretensions. The young woman does not resign herself to letting him go so easily, but threatens to announce the scandal in the church. The next morning, when Paulo sees Agnese from the altar, he feels that his guilt is transformed into humble resignation: if the scandal must punish him, it will be the just atonement for his fault. But Agnese, arriving at the altar, kneels and is silent. Meanwhile, the mother, who cannot stand the tension and anguish of seeing her son defamed, dies in the back of the church.

In these and others of her more than 40 novels, Deledda often used Sardinia’s landscape as a metaphor for the difficulties in her characters’ lives. The ancient ways of Sardinia often conflict with modern mores and her characters are forced to work out solutions to their moral issues.

When she was informed that she had won the Nobel Prize, the unassuming woman said simply, “Già!” (“Already!”), and went directly to her office to continue her regular writing schedule. Arriving in Stockholm to receive the award, the scene was not as tranquil as it had been in her house in Rome. She was fascinated by Stockholm, as her letters home to her family indicated, but she was also amazed at being surrounded by dignitaries, royalty, ambassadors, and ministers of state. However, she did not let all the pomp and celebration go to her head; she remained unassuming as always. At the actual ceremony, she was introduced by the Swedish literary historian, Henrik Schück (who had nominated her for the award), who solemnly praised her in a long and incomprehensible speech (in Swedish, a language she did not understand). When she heard her name announced, she knew she was supposed to rise and approach the king to receive the prize. She then delivered one of the shortest acceptance speeches in the history of the Nobel ceremonies. Even in this great moment in her life, she remained reserved and unpretentious.

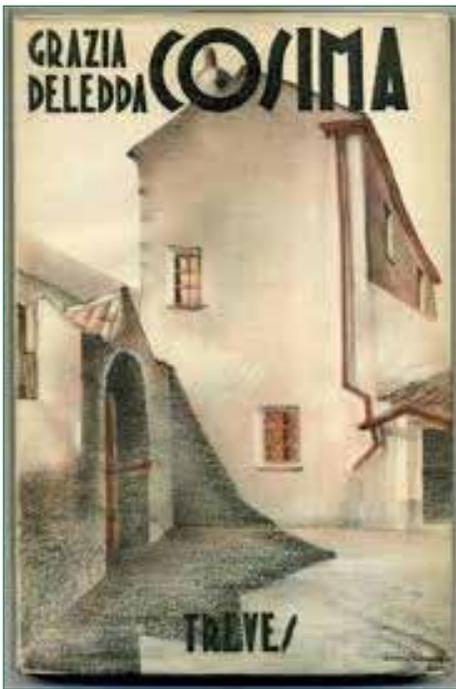
Returning to Italy after the ceremony, publicity and public attention were harder to face as the turmoil of Italy and Italian politics took over from the festivities of the ceremony and sightseeing. Mussolini, who had recently come to power, wanted to profit from Deledda's fame. She felt compelled to participate in an embarrassing ceremony where the mark of honor awarded to her was a portrait of Mussolini with a dedication that Il Duce proudly read aloud to the audience: "For Grazia Deledda with profound admiration from Benito Mussolini." Privately, she referred to these Fascist festivities as a farce, alien to her nature; but they appeared to her to be inescapable, the price of fame. She certainly held no affection or loyalty for Mussolini and his Fascist movement.

Grazia Deledda lived another ten years after receiving the Nobel Prize, years marked by a painful and slowly spreading breast cancer. But she continued to follow the same daily writing schedule that she had followed her entire life, and published a number of works. Some of these later works are: *La Casa del Poeta (The Poet's House, 1930)* and *Sole d'Estate (Summer Sun, 1933)*, both collections of short stories that reflect her optimistic vision of life even during the most painful years of her incurable illness. Life remains beautiful and serene, unaltered by personal suffering; mankind and nature are reconciled in order to overcome physical and spiritual hardship.

In many of her later works, she combined the imaginary and the autobiographical; this blend is readily apparent in her novel, *Il Paese del Vento (Land of the Wind, 1931)*. In another novel, *L'Argine (The Embankment, 1934)*, the renunciation of worldly things, including love, mirrors her own life with its acceptance of self-sacrifice as a higher manner of living, and through this is reconciled with God. Her final published novel, *La Chiesa della Solitudine (The Church of Solitude, 1936)*, is a semi-autobiographical depiction of a young Italian woman, Maria Concezion, coming to terms with her breast cancer. The common trait of all her later writings is a constant faith in mankind and in God.



Grazia Deledda died on August 15, 1936. For her burial, she was shrouded in the maroon velvet dress she had worn during the Nobel festivities in Stockholm ten years earlier. In a quiet spot at the foot of Monte Ortobene, close to her home in Nuoro, a memorial church was built, named after her book *La Chiesa della Solitudine (The Church of Solitude, 1936)*. There, under the shadow of the trees she passed on her many excursions uphill, is the lonely Tomba Deleddiana.



Even after her death, she seemed to continue to produce books. In a drawer there was found the carefully stored manuscript of the novel *Cosima*, written in ink on light-blue paper. The book was published posthumously in 1937. Its heroine was named after the author herself, whose middle name was Cosima, and the semi-autobiographical tale tells of Deledda's early life until her first trip by train, to the capital Cagliari in southern Sardinia on October 21, 1899.

ANALYSIS

The life, customs, and traditions of the Sardinian people were prominent in the writing of Grazia Deledda. She relied heavily on geographical description and details, and her work was most often concerned with transgressions. Many of her characters were social outcasts who struggle in silence and isolation. Deledda's whole work was based on strong facts of love, pain and death upon which rested the feeling of sin and of an inevitable fatality.

In her novels there was always a strong connection between places and people, feelings and environment. The environment depicted was mostly the harsh one of her native Sardinia, but it was relived not through realistic analysis but often through the imagination of Sardinian myths.

Deledda has not gained much recognition as a feminist writer due to her themes of women's pain and suffering rather than themes of women's autonomy. ❖

Adapted by James J. Boitano, PhD from: Encyclopedia Britannica website; Encyclopedia of World Biography website; Frenz, Horst, ed. "Grazia Deledda" in Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901-1967. Amsterdam: Elsevier Publishing Company, 1969; Hallengren, Anders. "Grazia Deledda: Voice of Sardinia." Nobel Prize website, 2002; Kern, Margaret. "Deledda, Grazia (1871-1936)." Italian Women Writers. Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 2002; Wikipedia.

BONUS: [Grazia Deledda in Stockholm \(45 sec\).](#)

<https://www.nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=1028>

MEMBERSHIP



Please welcome our newest members:

ROMANA BRACCO, SAN FRANCISCO, CA; SPONSORED BY RON DERENZI

**Romana was Il Cenacolo's Woman of the Year in 2011.
Her undergraduate studies were at St. Peter's College in New Jersey.
She held a managerial position with Alitalia Airlines for 25 years,
and married Cenacolista John Bracco in 1992.
She is known to continuously give back to the Italian American community,
and generously supports several charitable organizations in the City.**

MARIE DERENZI, S. SAN FRANCISCO, CA; SPONSORED RON DERENZI

Marie has a BA from San Jose State University with a Secondary Teaching Credential.

"My husband Ron has been a member of Il Cenacolo for 40 years. I have helped him on many functions, and feel I have been a member for years myself!!"

LEANNA C. GIANNINI, HILLSBOROUGH, CA; SPONSORED BY DAVID T. GIANNINI

**Leanna holds a JD from the University of Santa Clara; an AB in History, Italian & Humanities, and an MA in Education from Stanford University.
She is a teacher of Italian at St. Catherine of Siena School in Burlingame,
and an attorney at law.**

"I have a lifetime of devotion to Italian language and culture, a 40-year attendance and participation in San Francisco Opera and San Jose Opera, and I also have been attending Il Cenacolo events for over 40 years."

BILL R. MASTRANGELO, SAN FRANCISCO; SPONSORED BY RON DERENZI

**Bill holds a Degree of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University,
and is currently the Senior Director of Sales for Salesforce.**

*"I am interested in keeping the connection to the Italian culture. My family immigrated here and we lost some of that in the process of becoming citizens.
I am looking forward to joining Il Cenacolo."*

LISA MARIE MICHELIS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA; SPONSORED BY DAVID T. GIANNINI

Lisa is a San Franciscan native, and holds a BS in Business Administration. She currently is the Event Planner for the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club.

“I want to support organizations that represent my Italian heritage and support Italian causes.”

SUSAN D. PETERSON, SAN FRANCISCO, CA; SPONSORED BY CHUCK STAGLIANO

Susan holds a BA from UC Berkeley, and a graduate degree, CA Lifetime Teaching Credential, also from UC Berkeley.

“Since my first of many trips to Italy in 1966, I have been completely enamored of the country, its people, history, arts and culture. In the 80’s I began studying Italian at San Francisco Community College and regularly began attending the San Francisco Opera. I am a longtime member of Museo Italo Americano, as well as a longtime season-ticket holder and patron of the San Francisco Opera.”

ANNA MARIA PIERINI, SAN FRANCISCO, CA; SPONSORED BY DAVID T. GIANNINI

Anna Maria is the Executive Director of the Italian Community Services, and Il Cenacolo’s Woman of the Year 2017.

She holds a BA from Dominican College in San Rafael, and a Master of Human Resources and Organization Development from University of San Francisco.

“I respect the Il Cenacolo mission and was cordially invited to join by David T. Giannini.”

TERRI RYAN, SAN FRANCISCO, CA; SPONSORED BY BOB RYAN

Terri is a retired Project Manager for Wells Fargo Bank.

“I love Italy and Italian culture. I have come to Thursday lunches frequently as my husband’s guest and I find the group to be very congenial.”
