

The Leopard: A Novel

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Set in the 1860s, *The Leopard* tells the spellbinding story of a decadent, dying Sicilian aristocracy threatened by the approaching forces of democracy and revolution. The dramatic sweep and richness of observation, the seamless intertwining of public and private worlds, and the grasp of human frailty imbue *The Leopard* with its particular melancholy beauty and power, and place it among the greatest historical novels of our time.

Although Giuseppe di Lampedusa had long had the book in mind, he began writing it only in his late fifties; he died at age sixty, soon after the manuscript was rejected as unpublishable. In his introduction, Gioacchino Lanza Tomasi, Lampedusa's nephew, gives us a detailed history of the initial publication and the various editions that followed. And he includes passages Lampedusa wrote for the book that were omitted by the original Italian editors.

Here, finally, is the definitive edition of this brilliant and timeless novel.

(Translated from the Italian by Archibald Colquhoun.)

The Leopard is set in Sicily in 1860, as Italian unification is coming violently into being, but it transcends the historical-novel classification. E.M. Forster called it, instead, "a novel which happens to take place in history." Lampedusa's Sicily is a land where each social gesture is freighted with nuance, threat, and nostalgia, and his skeptical protagonist, Don Fabrizio, is uniquely placed to witness all and alter absolutely nothing. Like his creator, the prince is an aristocrat and an astronomer, a man "watching the ruin of his own class and his own inheritance without ever making, still less wanting to make, any move toward saving it." Far better to take refuge in the night skies.

What renders *The Leopard* so beautiful, and so despairing, is Lampedusa's grasp of human frailty and his vision of Sicily's arid terrain--"comfortless and irrational, with no lines that the mind could grasp, conceived apparently in a delirious moment of creation; a sea suddenly petrified at the instant when a change of wind had flung waves into frenzy." Though the author had long had the book in mind, he didn't begin writing it until he was in his late 50s. He died at 60, soon after it was rejected as unpublishable.

Archibald Colquhoun's lyrical translation also contains 70 more precious pages of Lampedusa--a memoir, a short story, and the first chapter of a novel. In "Places of My Infancy" the author warns that "the reader (who won't exist) must expect to be led meandering through a lost Earthly Paradise. If it bores him, I don't mind." Luckily, the reader does exist; even more luckily, boredom is not an option.

Introduction by David Gilmour; Translation by Archibald Colquhoun

Other Books

The White Giraffe Series: *The Last Leopard*, The third book in the heart-warming White Giraffe series by Lauren St John, featuring the African adventures of Martine and her magical white giraffe. After a terrifying incident nearly ends their African road trip, Martine and Ben are determined to put it behind them. But in Zimbabwe's Matobo Hills, a blackmail plot unleashes a chain of dangerous events. Why do all clues point to Khan, the world's

rarest leopard? And what does a king's lost treasure have to do with it? As the line between myth and truth blurs, wildlife detectives Martine and Ben must race against time to save the leopard . . . and themselves.

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