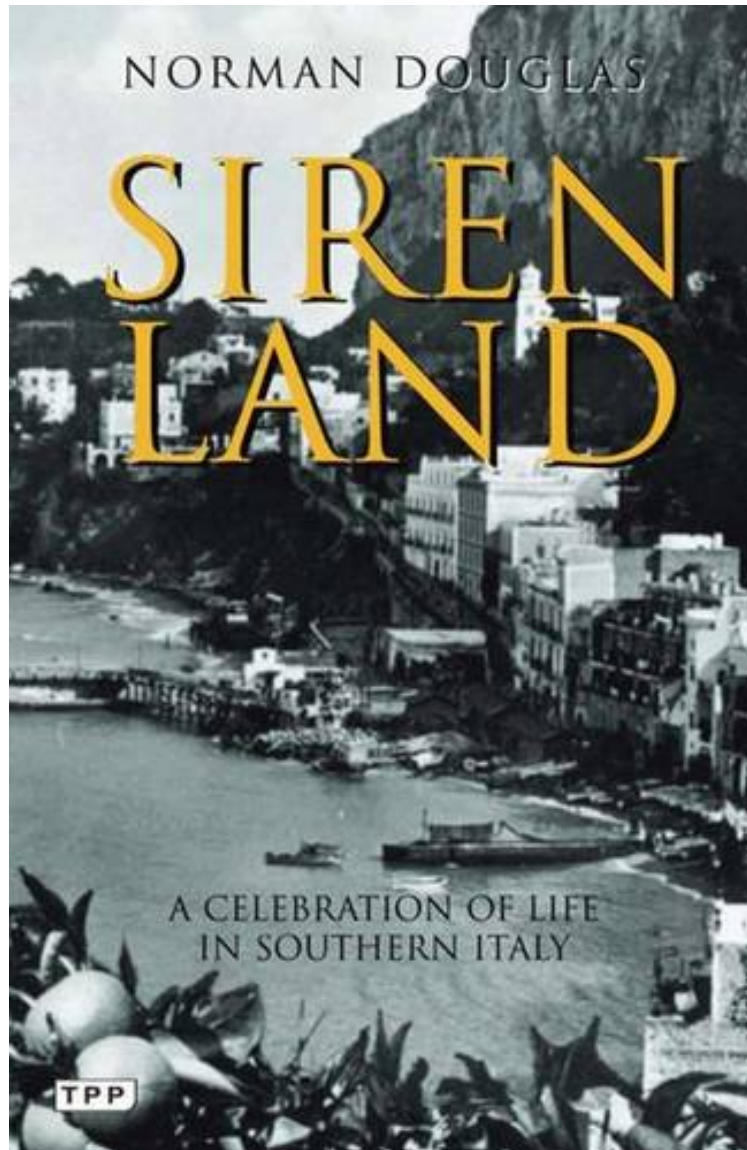


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Siren Land: A Celebration of Life in Southern Italy (Tauris Parke Paperbacks)

Norman Douglas

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#268045 in Books Tauris Parke Paperbacks 2010-08-03 2010-08-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.83 x .55 x 5.111, .45 #File Name: 1848850018216 pages | File size: 58.Mb

Norman Douglas : Siren Land: A Celebration of Life in Southern Italy (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Siren Land: A Celebration of Life in Southern Italy (Tauris Parke Paperbacks):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Peter A. Gardetto Excellent !! 13 of 13 people found the

following review helpful. Capri and Sorrento: an elegy to their past and present By Magalini Sabina Siren Land is a strange book according to modern standards, it is actually not a modern book at all. It belongs to those essayistic travelogues that characterised the period from the end of the Nineteenth to the beginning of the Twentieth Century. It was written in 1911, on a journey performed by the Author in 1908. Norman Douglas (1868-1952), was a very peculiar writer, reared between Germany and England, devoid of a formal college education, ex diplomat, expatriate due to various sexual scandals (pederasty). He has left us three novels, and five travel books, of which Siren Land is the first. The Siren Land encloses the Sorrentine Peninsula and Capri, which together form the Southern arm of the Bay of Naples. This country was a favorite resort of Englishmen traveling abroad and it represented for most Northerners the paradise of the Mediterranean South. This magnificent region was once identified as the home of the Sirens, mythological creatures half human and half birds (Homer), that the Middle Ages turned into women fish. Starting from this ancient Siren myth, Douglas narrates the topographical and archeological features of the Bay of Naples. First he climbs on the highest heights and "grasps" the geography and the spirit of the place, and then with his beautiful prose he starts heading back and forth between history and the present. However, as in other books of his (Old Calabria, for example) narrative and description are interrupted by the frequent insertion of moral essays, on ethics derivable from ruins, absence of sexual liberty in the European North and other such issues. Chapters deal with local winds (the famous Scirocco of Capri, a Southeastern wind that drives people crazy) and their folklore, the character of Tiberio (the Roman Emperor that decided to spend his last ten years of life in Capri and that here is called Timberio and has been unjustly treated by Roman historians), local ghosts (from dead maidens, to priests and hermits), and that of Sister Seraphina (Capri's patron saint that is plasmated on Saint Teresa d'Avila), caves (the Blue Grotto for first, but also many others) and their narrative, leisure, local wine (that at Douglas's time wasn't very good - differently to today, go there today and ask for Biancolella d'Ischia - note from Sabina). I am sure many readers will find this book difficult to read, because of the pre-modern sensibility of the Author. His humoristic Nietzschean naughtiness and the puritan determination of his atheism and hedonism, together with the eccentric attitude of the typical British abroad may seem fastidious to modern Europeans today, but if the approach to the read is orientated toward and antiquarian fascination with language and humanism intended as the satisfaction of curiosity of one's whereabouts and nothing else, there is no book more pleasant especially if you are resting on a balcony overlooking the Bay of Naples on a summer afternoon. I must add a personal note. I bought this book during my honeymoon in Capri and have always treasured it in this edition but I hope it will be republished possibly with notes. To Italians Norman Douglas was a precious friend, he was elected honorary citizen of Capri after WWII and here he successively committed suicide many years later after having become one of the Island's monuments. Naturally time has taken his toll on this eccentric Englishman, but I believe he still inhabits the Island. 1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By parker retractable pointold favorites good to have it back. Good print, legible and clear.

Norman Douglas's first travel book, Siren Land is an homage to a part of the world that captivated the author more than any other. Weaving the myths of the Sirens into the landscape and history of the region, Douglas writes with knowledge and an irrepressible exuberance of the past and the present, of legends and archaeology, folklore and daily life, patron saints, local ghosts, wine, and the wind.

A product of scholarship and leisure, of the love of books and the love of life -- New York Times*What makes Siren Land exceptional is the quality of the telling. Weaving scholarship, impressions, fact and fantasy into an intricate fabric as enchantingly entertaining and full of human interest as the best of fairy tales or ancient myths. One of the most memorable books of its genre.* -- Mark Holloway, in his introduction to Siren Land*...the tales of one of the 20th century's greatest travellers in Italy.* -- Wanderlust*Siren Land makes a welcome return to print... A classic of travel writing, it's a hymn to the delights, history and myth of southern Italy, written by a hedonist who happened also to be a great scholar.* -- Books Quarterly*An early 20th Century classic from the golden age of travel writing...his phrasing is effortless and his ideas easily meld the mythic with the modern.* --Nick Owchar, LATimes.com