

NORMAN

DOUGLAS



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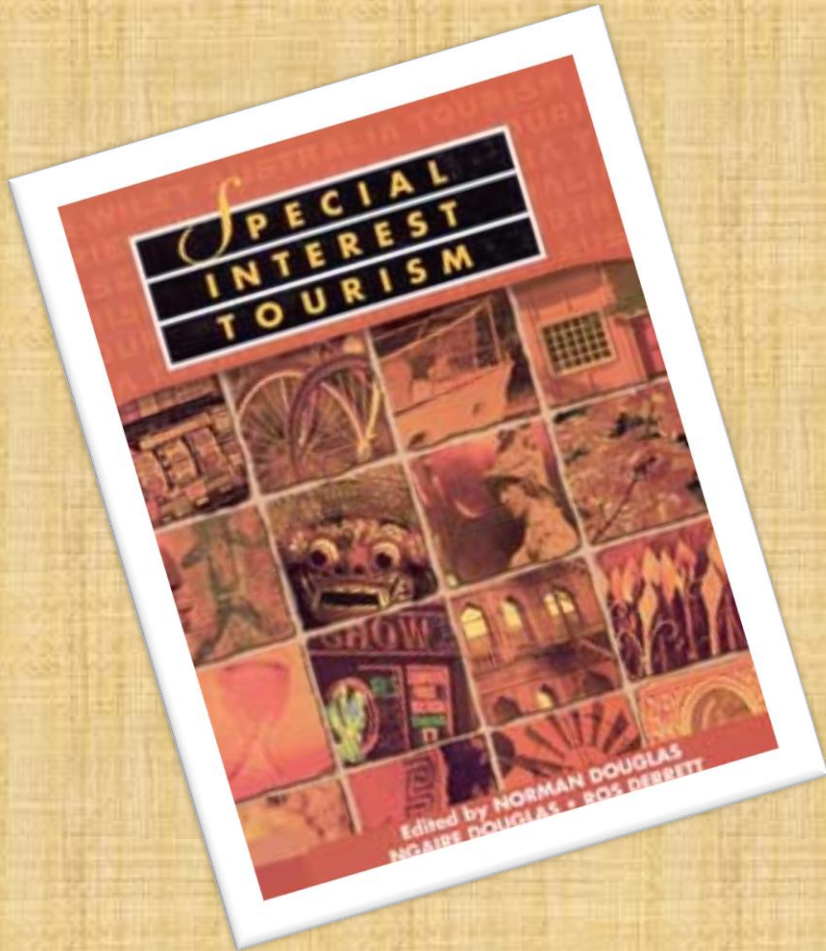
FROM THE "GRAND TOUR" TO NORMAN DOUGLAS

The list of english, french and german travellers, who visited calabria starting from the seventeenth century until the 1840's is very long. Many of them were unknown men of letters, archeologists, naturalists or eccentric eriters, official painters and writers of the napoleonic army, reporters, portrait painters or tutors of the offspring of noble or rich families. A new phenomenon originated in europe from the middle of the 17° century and it reached its peak in the first half of the 1800: "the grand tour". It was a journey made by young men from noble or rich middle class families at the end of their studies through the main cultural centres of the "old continent", in order to improve their education. The main destinations were france, the netherlands, germany and –in italy -- rome, florence, pisa, venice, naples, paestum and sicily. The journey lasted a few months or even years. During the journey, these young men learned about politics, culture, art and about life in general (from craftsmanship to enogastronomy, from fashion to folk songs.) The expression "grand tour" was developed by richard lassels, who employed it to describe his journey to italy in his book "the voyage of italy " (1670). One of the first and bravest intellectuals who travelled towards the south of italy during the second half of the 1700 was henry swinburne (1743-1803). However, it was norman douglas (1862-1952) –a scottish writer of austrian-british origin – who chose calabria as his favourite destination. In his work "old calabria", he provided one of the most detailed descriptions of his trip and was able to intercept the innermost aspects of the nature of this region. "old calabria" (1915) is considered, at present, the most beautiful and interesting example of "travel literature" in the south of italy.



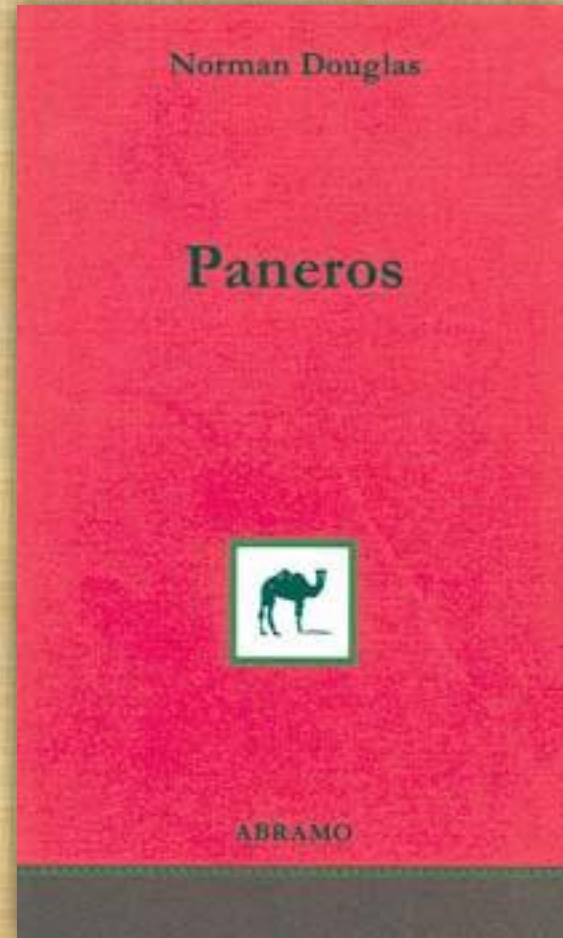
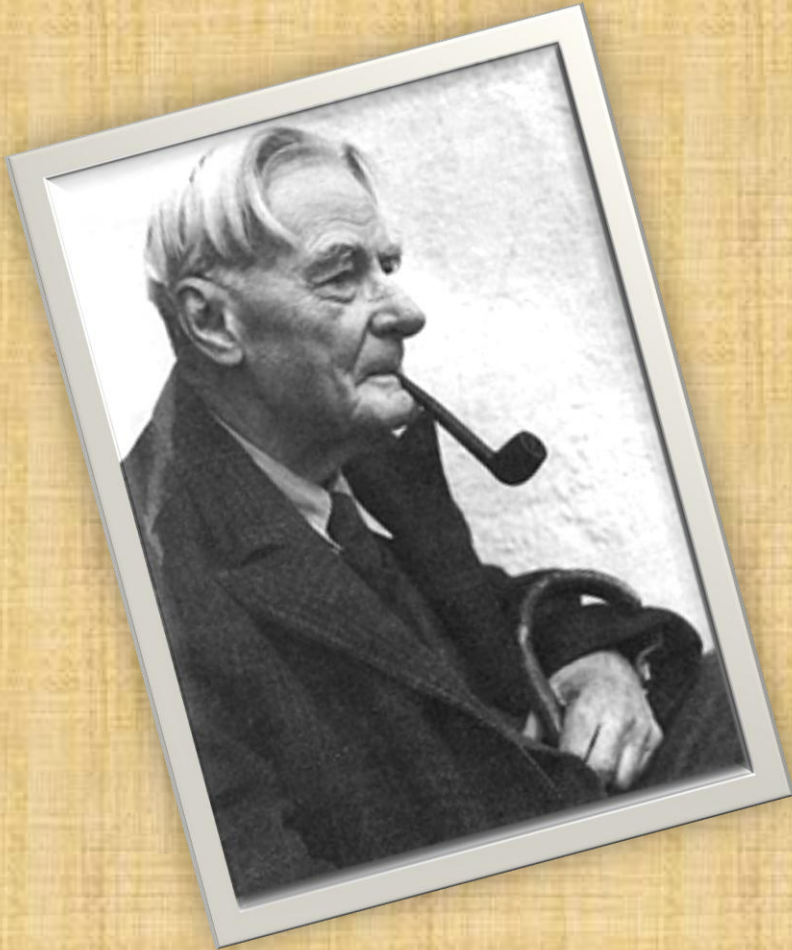
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This book is an outstanding account of Douglas's journeys in this region. He visited Calabria for the first time in 1907 and for a second longer stay in 1911. Norman Douglas was a very peculiar person: well educated, libertine and very fond of nature, good food and wine as well as of nice guys (he was homosexual). Norman Douglas was born in 1862 in Thuringen (Austria). (His surname was registered at birth as Douglass). His father, a manager in a cotton mill, died in a climbing accident when Norman was about six. Norman's family came back to England and soon he started his diplomatic career, which he was forced to give up, as a consequence of a sexual scandal at St. Petersburg, where he was based. In 1898 he married a cousin, Elisabeth Fitts Gibbon; they had two children but they divorced in 1903 on grounds of Elisabeth's infidelity. Norman's first book publication, "Unprofessional Tales" (1901), was collaboration with his wife, written under the pseudonym "Normyx" Elisabeths. Norman Douglas spent most of his life between London and Italy, and visited Calabria twice. (He fled England during the war to avoid persecution for kissing a boy and giving him some cakes and a shilling) he immediately fell in love with the historic background of the Calabria region, as well as its wild nature, its pure crystal sea and its proud people. Then Douglas spent several years in Capri (at the Villa Daphne); here he met D.H. Lawrence (the author of Chatterley's Love) and lived until he died, apparently deliberately overdosing himself on drugs after a long illness. His last known words to those near him were: "Get these fucking nuns away from me". He was buried in the "non-Roman-Catholic cemetery" in Capri. The Latin inscription on his tombstone is from an ode by Horace and reads: "omnes eodem cogimur" ("we are all driven to the same end"). Norman Douglas loved Capri: "Nepenthe", the fictitious island which he used as a setting for his book "South Wind", is probably the island of Capri which



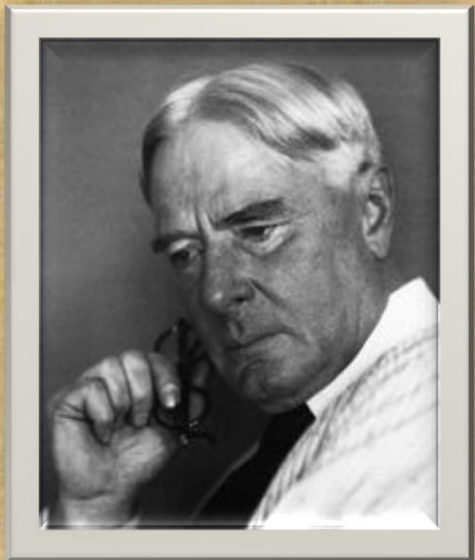
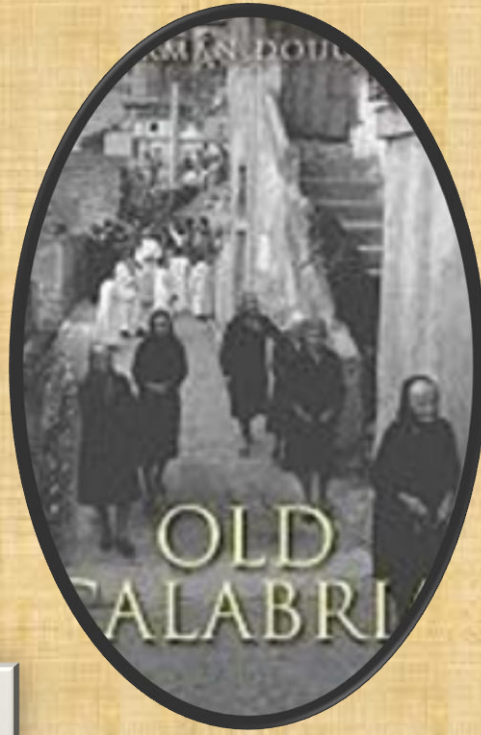
Douglas particularly loved because of its hospitality, lifestyle, food and good wine (initially defined as sour and unhealthy). During his life Norman Douglas collected aphrodisiac recipes of all times and places. (he thought that the best aphrodisiac food was fresh meal). The Scottish author gathered them for his personal use and for a selected group of friends, without meaning to publish them.

However, Norman Douglas's friend and bookseller Pino Orioli decided to publish these recipes. Only 250 signed copies ("privately printed for subscribers") were published with an introduction by the author himself titled: "Paneros. Some words on aphrodisiac and the like." (Paneros was an aphrodisiac stone, according to the myth). The dedication was emblematically (and also erotically) addressed to Lucretius: "to the memory of Lucretius who was murdered by a love philtre".



This recipe contained 163 aphrodisiac recipes, from “soups” to “sweet” and “drinks”, and was sold at a high price for the time. The first edition reported on its cover a photo of the author when he was a baby (in reality it was a joke: the baby in the photo was Norman's sister Mary).

After Douglas's death, a book on aphrodisiac recipes was then published in 1952 without Norman Douglas's introduction (which was substituted by an introduction of Douglas's friend Graham Greene) and titled “Venus in the Kitchen. Love's Cookery Book”. The author's name was substituted by the pen-name Piffaretti. This book contained a photo of Norman Douglas with Pino Orioli, 13 decorations by Bruce Roberts, a manuscript with two “epitaphs” and a frontispiece illustrated by Norman Douglas's “inimical friend” D.H. Lawrence. This cover had been thought for the original edition and, to quote Norman Douglas's words: D.H. Lawrence painted for it a frontispiece depicting an obese, middle-aged woman shovelling something into a kitchen oven with a small boy or devil (I forget which) at her side—a monstrously anti-aphrodisiac vision—but pure Lawrence”. Later Leo Longanesi published the Italian translation of this recipe book with the title “Paneros”.



NORMAN DOUGLAS AND THE WINE

Norman Douglas was a wine expert and during his travels he loved visiting "osterie" and "trattorie" (pubs). In his book "Old Calabria" he declared himself fond of Calabrian wines which he described as "remarkable". Since ancient times, Calabria has been the land of wine par excellence. It was not by chance that the Greeks called it "enotria" i.e. "the land of wine". Over 100 varieties of vines were already known in the Greek period and several temples were dedicated to the Greek god Bacchus, such as the famous temple of Cremissa, today Cirò. The legend says that the wine, the "greco di bianco") would thus be the most ancient Italian "nectar" which is considered to have aphrodisiac properties. Thanks to its geological features and its geographic location at the core of the Mediterranean sea, where the sun shines for 8 months a year, Calabria produces top class wines, with a robust and generous taste. Wine production in Calabria is still mostly non-industrial, in fact peasants produce their own wine with primitive and empirical criteria, and this leads to a variety of wines without a real continuity in the quality of the production of the same type of wine



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M. J. S. WOOD

(to quote norman douglas in "old calabria": "every vilage has its own type of wine and every family has its own winemaking method; every family has its own wine".) this is one of the main causes of the poor distribution of calabrian wines in the rest of italy. in fact, only few winemakers have received the "registerd designation of origion" label so far. cirò is one of the few wines produced through an industrialised process, and it is the first calabrian wine to have obtained the "registered designation of origin" label. Only recently other wines such as "bivongi", "savuto", "donnici" and "pollino" have been awarded such label.



NORMAN DOUGLAS' EXPERIENCE: OUR OPINION

WE THINK THAT NORMAN DOUGLAS EXPERIENCE TEACHES WHAT A TRAVELLER SHOULD DO: FIRST OF ALL A TRAVELLER SHOULD NEVER BE INDIFFERENT OR DISTRACTED; ON THE CONTRARY HE MUST BE ABLE TO CATCH EVERY DETAIL: THE FACES AND GESTURES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE AS WELL AS THE BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE . YOU ALSO MUST RESPECT LOCAL TRADITIONS AND RELIGION AND, JUST LIKE NORMAN DOUGLAS, YOU MUST TASTE LOCAL ENOGASTONOMIC SPECIALITIES (BETTER IF IN A TYPICAL "OSTERIA", FAR AWAY FROM COMMON TOURIST TOURS). IN A FEW WORDS: "BE CURIOUS AND OPEN YOUR MIND".

THE END

