Clarion Review

General

Sardinian Silver
A. Colin Wright
iUniverse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

After an absence of forty-two years languages professor A. Colin Wright returned for a visit to Sardinia. His nostalgic novel *Sardinian Silver* he says in its afterword "evokes a Sardinia that no longer exists but which had a quality of its own that is worth remembering." It was a quality he also found in the no longer extant brand of Sardinian Silver wine that was "like a fleeting memory of something beautiful." His efforts to recapture the quality and memories of Sardinia the wine and his friends from the 1960s have resulted in a novel of superior literary merit.

Wright's novel is a pastoral romance about a summer in the life of twenty-four-year-old Englishman Arthur Fraser a tourist guide in Sardinia. It is skilfully and evocatively written relying on the interactions between its characters as they travel fall in and out of love and indulge in occasional bacchanalian festivals. While there are no action-packed adventures there is a well-developed sojourn to Orgozolo an enclave of outlaws where Arthur and his friends feel "as though we're entering a forgotten civilization peopled by ghosts of ancient warriors." And when Arthur and his friend Gavino vie for the same girl a kind of genteel jealousy arises which suits the type of novel Wright has written. Otherwise the novel relies upon Arthur and his several female acquaintances to add spice in some episodes and humour in others. Of particular note is Wright's ability to elicit the morals and mores of 1960's Sardinia both through what happens on the island and in Rome and by the attitudinal interplay between traditionalist Sards and visiting foreigners like Arthur and his transplanted English friends.

Wright's characters spring to life full blown. Angst-ridden Arthur unceasingly searches for love with all the wrong women until the right one arrives at the book's conclusion. His girlfriends contrast the morality of the day and the place with their boldness and outspokenness. The men on the other hand either appear grateful to follow in the wake of the women or to participate in surreptitious affairs like the "nauseating man with the moustache and the nasty

smile” inquiring of Arthur about the availability of a servant girl for “other things.”

In the end as Arthur reminisces years later with his wife about Sardinia and “all the people we knew there” he concludes “An odd bunch weren’t they?” But odd or not they are well worth knowing.

M. Wayne Cunningham