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Angelo Fiore. *L'erede del Beato*. Milan. Rusconi. 1981. 391 pages. 10,000 l.

Sicily has been written about before, but probably never has the account been so authentic and true to life as in this case. Even if Verga's Mastro Don Gesualdo and Tomasi di Lampedusa's Principe di Salina are figures whose characterization can hardly be surpassed, the hero of this novel can certainly be compared to them. Indeed the evolution of the character of Pietro, *L'erede*, is a masterpiece. He is portrayed with finesse and surrealistic touches. He claims to attain the highest degree of perfection when he is "in bilico fra la salute e la malattia." He is always very neat, likes to dress well, always hesitates, is full of contradictions and pouts over the unreality of his existence. Likewise the many other characters of this lengthy novel that the reader avidly gulps down, trying to arrive at the conclusion which is not there. Has Pietro all the faith necessary to make him a candidate for the legacy? The Blessed Filippo had stated in his will that all his fortune should go to a blood relative who had donned the cloth. But the Blessed Filippo himself, was he not a conglomerate of sanctity and heresy? Existentialism?

L'erede del Beato is a day-by-day chronicle of events that the author may have observed with his own eyes during his long life in Sicily. It is the Sicily of the big towns as well as the Sicily of the provinces, of the little villages up on the top of a mountain, which can be reached only on foot or by mounting a little donkey. It is the Sicilian middle class nursing all its frustrations and hatreds and psychological aberrations which occasionally verge on folly. All this is evinced in interminable dialogues, interrupted now and then by lyrical passages bringing out the extraordinary beauty of the island.

The title is most appropriate. The novel is the saga of Andrea, who believes his son Pietro is legally entitled to the legacy left by their ancestor, the Blessed Filippo, and who spends most of his fortune in trying to secure it. Document after document is produced in court by a gaggle of "pretenders" to the legacy, with false documentation in the majority of cases. Andrea is a small bureaucrat. He is kind to his brother and everyone else; but he hates his mother because she remarried after the death of his father, and he accuses her of stealing the products of his little farm. Andrea does not confide in anyone and fails to communicate with his son, but he writes his thoughts in a diary, his confidant. Among the women only Adele, the mother of the heir, stands out. Otherwise, the reader faces a world completely dominated by men who take advantage of, curse, beat and even kill their women.

Fiore uses strong language, vivid dialogues, very descriptive adjectives and poignant figures of speech as *occhi brodo-si*. His first book came out in 1963. In 1967 he won the Premio Selezione Marzotto and in 1970 the Premio Savarese.

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