



The Church of Solitude (Sunny Series, Women Writers in Translation)

Grazia Deledda

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A translation of Grazia Deledda's final novel, an autobiographically based portrayal of an Italian woman coming to terms with breast cancer at the cusp of the twentieth century.

The Church of Solitude tells the story of Maria Concezione, a young Sardinian seamstress living with breast cancer at the cusp of the twentieth century. Overwhelmed by the shame of her diagnosis, she decides that no one can know what has happened to her, but the heavy burden of this secrecy changes her life in dramatic ways and almost causes the destruction of several people in her life. This surprising novel paints the portrait of a woman facing the unknown with courage, faith, and self-reliance, and is the last and most autobiographical work of Grazia Deledda, who died of breast cancer in 1936, shortly after its publication. An afterword by the translator offers additional information on the author and examines the social and historical environment of that time.

“This tale of faith and strength in the face of illness is beautiful. Though written more than sixty-five years ago, it is still timely, with its portrayal of a woman who lays blame for her disease on her past and her wavering devotion.” — *Library Journal*

“Benighted, hot-blooded, moving, Grazia Deledda's unjustly forgotten novel—about a fiercely proud, fiercely resigned woman struggling with dark truths—is a benchmark in the evolution of attitudes toward cancer and sexual passion.” — Susan Sontag

“Concezione's secret nearly destroys the man who loves her in this powerful novel by Grazia Deledda, gracefully translated by E. Ann Matter.” — Martha King, translator of *Cosima by Grazia Deledda*

“A moving story, simply (even austere) told, and the translation captures the narrator's strengths. Deledda's short novel is packed with emotions and mystery, with many kinds of love, a fatal illness that can't be named, humor and kindness, greed and lust. The heroine is a compelling figure, at once simple and complex, remote and 'simpatica.' Her world is exotic but her problems are not.” — Joan Ferrante, Columbia University

“The poetic detail of Deledda's prose, and Matter's ability to translate with ease her descriptions of landscape, weather, and seasons, make this a wonderful contribution to the literature of women of Italian background.” — Mary Jo Bona, author of *Claiming a Tradition: Italian American Women Writers*

“Set in the early part of the last century, before breast cancer was openly discussed, this novel sheds much-needed insight into the mental state and experience of that time period.” — Rosemarie LaValva, Binghamton University

“This translation allows non-Italian speaker access to a most important novel by one of Italy's best novelists.” — Anthony Julian Tamburri, coeditor of *From the Margin: Writings in Italian Americana*

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