

AFTER THE DIVORCE

BY GRAZIA DELEDDA · RELEASE DATE: NOV. 20, 1985

Deledda, a Sardinian novelist who won the Nobel Prize in 1926, somewhat resembles the Sicilian master Verga (though she's not as artful) in treating her native place in a pitiless glare of hardship and imprisoning plight. This novel, originally published in 1902 and now available in its first English translation, deals with the relative lack of influence civil powers have over fate. A law has been newly enacted that will allow the wives of convicted prisoners to divorce--a situation that would seem to benefit Giovanna, a poor woman from the town of Orleo, whose husband has (unjustly) been sent to jail for life for the murder of his skinflint uncle. Giovanna, with a child to support, is the object of the attention of a former suitor, Brontu--whom she'll go to eventually, torn within herself and subjected to the disquiet of the Church and of the town. Bleak it is, and almost chorally primitive: large, hopeless forces shift slowly around, crushing: the tragic ending comes as no surprise. D.H. Lawrence, as he did Verga, found Deledda's pessimistic mill fascinating--and so reintroduction of this work seems justified if mostly on grounds of historical curiosity, 60 years after its acclaim.

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