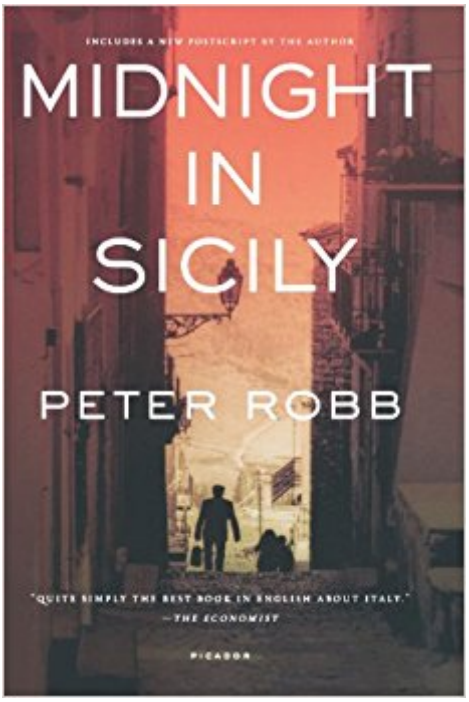
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Midnight In Sicily: On Art, Food, History, Travel And La Cosa Nostra



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Synopsis

A New York Times Book Review Notable Book of the YearA New York Public Library Best Book of the YearFrom the author of M and A Death in Brazil comes Midnight in Sicily.South of mainland Italy lies the island of Sicily, home to an ancient culture that--with its stark landscapes, glorious coastlines, and extraordinary treasure troves of art and archeology--has seduced travelers for centuries. But at the heart of the island’s rare beauty is a network of violence and corruption that reaches into every corner of Sicilian life: Cosa Nostra, the Mafia. Peter Robb lived in southern Italy for over fourteen years and recounts its sensuous pleasures, its literature, politics, art, and crimes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is not a travel book, but rather a sophisticated attempt to make sense of the on-going prosecution of the 78-year-old seven-time prime minister, Giulio Andreotti, and of the intimate ties between the mafia and postwar Italian politics. An Australian by birth, Robb is not just parachuting in to gawk at the corruption that traded in votes, money, government contracts and even assassinations. A longtime resident of Naples, Robb adeptly puts the elusive world of organized crime (both Neapolitan and Sicilian) in a historical context that stretches back to the 19th century. In Sicily, however, organized crime is not an isolated institution and its pervasiveness is suggested by Robb’s brilliant interweaving of writers such as Leonardo Sciascia, Giuseppe di Lampedusa, Pier Paolo Pasolini and the artist Renato Guttuso. Many artists saw a connection between the rich food of Sicily and the mob, which Robb expertly exploits, even repeating an ironic quote from Andreotti himself: "I found myself with my stomach full of marvelous but terrible food, the pasta con le sarde,

the cassata and not only did I not understand a thing there but I was ill too. I wonder whether there's a connection between food like this and the growth of the mafia." Those who treasured Excellent Cadavers, Alexander Stille's magnificent study of magistrates Giovanni Falcone, Paolo Borsellino and the mafia "maxitrial," will appreciate Robb's epic story of evil and nobility. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Mezzogiorno, or southern half of Italy below Rome, has always been considered exotic, untamed, and vaguely dangerous. Its people are a mix of Mediterranean and North African, with food, culture, and traditions that are mysterious and exotic to even its close northern compatriots. Robb (The Concept of Race in South Asia, Oxford Univ., 1997), a native Australian, lived in Italy for more than 14 years and writes an entertaining and richly textured expose of the place during those times. Having resided mostly in Palermo, he offers firsthand accounts of life there that include goings-on with the Mafia. He also gives insight into events of the mid-1990s, when seven-time Italian prime minister Giulio Andreotti came to trial for corruption and murder; his association with organized crime has led to a continuing social and political tumult that has affected even the Vatican. In this richly detailed work, one feels the heat and tastes the canoli that the author describes. Robb currently lives again in Melbourne, where he has written for the London Review of Books and the Times Literary Supplement. Recommended for Italian study collections.?David Nudo, "Library Journal"Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Midnight in Sicily is a beautifully written exploration of the horrifying history and politics of Southern Italy from the post War years through to the mid nineties. It ties in some of Sicily's more ancient history too, to provide the needed background for the development of the society as it is today. Peter Robb lived in Naples for 14 years and spent a lot of time in Sicily researching this book. His inclusion of the works of local authors Scascia and Lampedusa and the art of Guttuso to help make sense of this story is inspired, as nowhere else but in fiction could we possibly come close to understanding the reality. The black and white photographs of Letizia Battaglia are the evidence backing up his tales (if you have not seen them, look them up as they are not shown physically in the book). Sometimes I had to put the book down for a day to digest the truth and the unbelievability of the truth. His reliance on court records and the writings of the magistrates makes the whole thing undeniable. This is a seriously disturbing book and makes one wonder how far the disease of Mafia style corruption has spread across the world.

A sympathetic, personal, outside but informed view on life in Naples and Palermo, centered on a looping history of the Mafia trials and the collapse of the major Italian political parties. Unsurprisingly, a bit dark, not a travelogue. You might also consider "The Sack of Rome", that provides a sequel of sorts, as it documents the rise of Berlusconi, from a well-informed insider. The challenge with both is to put them into the broader context of Italian history and culture. The latter also raises intelligent and thoughtful parallels with developments elsewhere in Europe and, presciently, in the United States.

This is a detailed story of the post war Mafia in Sicily by a foreigner who lives the place and manages to bring an informed outsider’s perspective to a forbidden subject. A very worthwhile read.A word of warning: I grew up in Italy in the1970s so I understood a lot of the Italian political references from that era. If Italy’s Cold War political scheming is a mystery you might be confounded by parts of the narrative.I enjoyed it and am glad to have it in my library for a second read in the future.

Dense with detail. Peter Robb somehow keeps himself out of the story for the most part whilst all the time you know he has been very close to the source. As gripping as fiction and a wonderful primer for the stories and characters of an Italy that is frustrating, mysterious, stylish, violent and profound.

Excelent book. Peter Robb has a good eye for details and go in many matters to the core of the story. He also inform about daily life in Sicily, perhaps most in the western part of the Island. Very good to read about the late Elisabeth Davis and her very imortant Work for getteing Italian food out to very many people. Can highly recomend this book.Jens Borresen, Svendborg, Denmark.

Love it

PETER ROBB HAS WRITTEN ONE OF THE MOST FASCINATING BOOKS TO EVER COMEFORTH FROM ITALY.MR ROBB IS A SKILLED STORYTELLER IN THIS ALL TOO TRUE ’GIALLO’[CRIME STORY] OF POLITICS, MURDER, MAFIA, CULINARY, TRAVEL,ART AND HISTORY OF ’LA SICILIA’ FEW HAVE EVER UNDERSTOOD.MR ROBB TAKES US ON A JOURNEY OF THE ’MEZZOGIORNO’ AS NO AUTHOR BEFOREOR SINCE HAS DEIGNED TO

UNDERTAKE.HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE,PLACES,POLITICS [AND CUSTOMS] THAT DEVELOPED INTO WHAT WE UNDERSTAND AS MODERN DAY SICILY IS RENDERED AND FLESHED OUT WITH THE ASTUTE EYE OF THE ARTFUL ARTESIAN AND HISTORIAN.FOR AN APPRECIATION OF MODERN DAY ITALY, HOW IT'S DESTINY BECAME ENTWINEDWITH THE INCUBUS OF CRIME THIS TOME IS A SCHOLARLY MUST READ AND NECESSARY PREREQUISITE.LUIGI B

Interesting book. The writer has a gift for describing the markets and foods of Palermo. I read it while traveling through Sicily and it made a nice companion and gave me ideas for foods to try. His storytelling, however, is less polished. The story was disjointed and at times difficult to follow. All in all, it was an interesting, although tortured, read.

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