

## ANGELICA AND TANCREDI: AN ITALIAN UNIFICATION

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The Risorgimento was rife with romanticism that ranged from the operas of Giuseppe Verdi to the novels of Alessandro Manzoni to the heroics of Giuseppe Garibaldi. It culminated in the Unification of Italy, but it was not a smooth process. Verdi's *Nabucco* and Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* were Italian works known throughout Europe. Garibaldi had become legendary in Italy and Europe, to the point that some Italians revered him as a saint or Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> In *The Leopard* by Giuseppe di Lampedusa, Angelica and Tancredi represented Italian Unification, displaying the romanticism of Unification and showing the South adapting to Unification, as the old nobility joined the rising liberal class. The initial romanticism of Risorgimento paralleled the promise and passion of the marriage of Tancredi Falconeri and Angelica Sedàra during their engagement. While the Prince of Salina, Don Fabrizio, spoke of love in marriage, his words succinctly captured Italy's Unification: "Flames for a year, ashes for thirty."<sup>2</sup> In Tancredi's and Angelica's marriage, which represented the fusion of liberal elite to landowning South, the passion extinguished after the initial excitement, and in Italian Unification, the romanticism of the Risorgimento became an unfilled promise and only benefitted the elite liberal class, the North, and landowning Sicilians.

Angelica Sedàra's father was Don Calogero and he embodied the values and ascent of the liberal middle class. This class was acquiring almost as much wealth as the nobility, and thus Don Fabrizio was threatened by Don Calogero, the richest man in Donnafugata.<sup>3</sup> The new liberal class might have accrued wealth, but it lacked the style and mannerisms of the established nobility. The Prince was embarrassed when Calogero presented himself for dinner, wearing formal raiment with an appalling tailcoat.<sup>4</sup> Angelica was the representation of this new class, having been educated in Florence, where she learned to speak proper Italian and without her Girgenti accent. This class educated itself in northern Italy and espoused liberal values, confiscating and selling ecclesiastical lands, and supporting Garibaldi in the merging of southern Italy to Piedmont. Angelica was not only refined through education, but when she was introduced to the Prince's family and its' guests at Donnafugata, she exuded a radiating beauty that mesmerized the room.<sup>5</sup> Her arrival at dinner possessed the romantic image of Garibaldi landing at Marsala. Her charm was perhaps akin to the charismatic figures attempting to unite Italy, such as Garibaldi.

Tancredi Falconeri stood almost in direct contrast to the rising wealth and prominence of the liberal middle class since his parents frivolously spent themselves in bankruptcy and left Tancredi with nothing but a noble name.<sup>6</sup> In his marriage with Angelica, he represented the old Italy, which was dying out and giving way to the liberal middle class the Sedàras represented. While Tancredi's parents destroyed their nobility, Angelica's family acquired wealth and power, even though her grandfather, Peppe 'Mmerda was notorious for being the lowest of the Prince's peasants.<sup>7</sup>

The quick ascent to wealth for the Sedàra family and freefall from nobility to bankruptcy for the Falconeris captured the emergence of the new, liberal middle class that superseded the nobility as the

<sup>1</sup> Marc Monnier quoted in Dennis Smith *The Making of Italy, 1796-1870* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 321.

<sup>2</sup> Giuseppe di Lampedusa *The Leopard* (New York: Random House Inc., 1991), 88.

<sup>3</sup> Lampedusa, 81.

<sup>4</sup> Lampedusa, 93.

<sup>5</sup> Lampedusa, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Lampedusa, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Lampedusa, 140.

affluent group. The nobility had been established for generations, but the rising class, with people such as Don Calogero, had acquired wealth recently through selling land.<sup>8</sup> This mirrored the situation in Italy during Risorgimento. The Prince realized that the nobility had to adapt to survive and Tancredi had to marry into rising wealth.<sup>9</sup> The liberal middle class gained affluence, shown by Angelica's family becoming the wealthiest family in Donnafugata and Tancredi adapting by merging with the emerging class to survive.

The Risorgimento was brimming with romanticism and unbridled excitement among the middle class. Some peasantry fought with Garibaldi against The Bourbons, hoping for social change.<sup>10</sup> The popular feelings of Unification were amplified by Garibaldi's successes in Sicily. The Unification fever spread over most of Italy and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies held a plebiscite, approving annexation by Piedmont. By 1861, with the exception of Rome and Veneto, all of Italy was unified by Piedmont. This romanticism and unbridled excitement for Italian Unification ignited Tancredi to fight for Garibaldi and it spurred his impending marriage to Angelica. The engagement was fraught with the same affections for Unification. The couple explored the Donnafugata villa, showered each other with romantic kisses, increased their desire, and were engorged and filled with sensuality and lust for the other.<sup>11</sup> This compared closely with Italian Unification, as Garibaldi and the Redshirts and Risorgimento gripped middle class Italians, provoking them to fight and clamor for Unification.<sup>12</sup>

Italy would soon be united and Angelica and Tancredi would soon marry, but the pinnacle of Unification and marriage occurred before the conjoining events. Following Unification, Italy struggled to find an Italian identity and history linking the provinces into one country, and many revolutionaries who had forged Unification were thrown into disillusionment, such as Francesco Crispi.<sup>13</sup> Count Camillo Benso di Cavour succumbed to an illness in 1861 and Garibaldi's glory reached its apex.

The leaders of Italy were disheartened and the people were dispassionate, evinced by a small percentage of the electorate voting, even in the North.<sup>14</sup> The Sicilian peasantry, including those who had fought with Garibaldi in hopes of change, was direly disappointed. Don Ciccio, the Leopard's hunting companion, was enraged with Unification from the start, but his vote against Unification was annulled. He conveyed many Sicilian commoners' feelings, claiming Calogero Sedàra and those representing the liberal class that stood to benefit rigged the plebiscite in their favor.<sup>15</sup> Unification benefitted Piedmont and the elite, such as Tancredi and the Sedàra family, but damaged the peasants and relegated them into a worse state of being in Sicily.<sup>16</sup>

Brigands caused problems in the South, waging a civil war with the Piedmontese Army. It was a bloody and expensive civil war fought by Garibaldini, Bourbon loyalists, and men enraged by Piedmontization. The ramifications of civil war following Unification were an exacerbated disillusionment and a continued lack of change for the majority. Northern liberals, such as the Florentine educated Angelica Sedarà, and Southern landowners, such as Tancredi Falconeri, amalgamated with each other to benefit themselves. Only landowning men with money were enfranchised. The incipient

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<sup>8</sup> Lampedusa, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Lampedusa, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Duggan *A Concise History of Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130.

<sup>11</sup> Lampedusa, 183.

<sup>12</sup> Duggan, 130.

<sup>13</sup> Duggan, 144.

<sup>14</sup> Duggan, 144.

<sup>15</sup> Lampedusa, 133.

<sup>16</sup> Leopoldo Franchetti quoted in Smith, 374.

romanticism and anticipatory excitement for unifying Italy were abated and supplanted by disillusionment and unhappiness for the future.

The marriage of Angelica and Tancredi that reflected Italian Unification experienced the same fizzling of romanticism and youthful exuberance that had sparked Unification. Following the young couple's dalliances in the villa and building each other closely to climax, their marriage stagnated and mirrored the unhappy situation in Italy. Their highly anticipated marriage carried the same unfilled promise as Unification. "Those were the best days in the life of Tancredi and Angelica...But they did not know then; and they were pursuing a future which they deemed more concrete than it turned out to be, made of nothing but smoke and wind."<sup>17</sup> Chasing each other around the villa and teasing each other were the climax of their happiness, occurring before marriage. The idea of Unification and marriage was stimulating, but the actuality of it was an unhappy marriage laden with unfulfilled passion. Italy struggled following Unification, strangling with disillusionment, uncertainty, injustice, and a lack of the fervor that had guided Unification. Tancredi and Angelica settled into a mellow marriage that included Angelica engaging in an extramarital affair.<sup>18</sup>

Italy had changed during Unification and the tide of feeling was changing. At a ball the Sedàra family and the Prince's family attended, Colonel Pallavicino was heralded as a hero.<sup>19</sup> The Colonel had wounded Garibaldi, who had been adulated as a hero previously. Giuseppe Garibaldi was no longer the answer for the liberal middle class and the Unification had resulted in the North, South, and Sicily experiencing disunity.<sup>20</sup> The elite liberal middle class were the victors of Unification, gaining wealth and power, and the nobility of Sicily experienced its demise. The death of the Leopard while he was staring into the face of Angelica signified the transition of power from the noble elite to the liberal elite. Angelica was the liberal with a northern education and the Leopard represented the moribund breed of Sicilian nobility. Tancredi had merged with the new liberal class to survive and adapted to become the elite.

Fifty years after Unification, the liberal middle class benefitted greatly and Sicily did not improve. The Church confiscated the relics of Concetta, Caterina, and Carolina, the Leopard's daughters.<sup>21</sup> Angelica, two generations removed from Peppe 'Mmerda, boasted ecclesiastical connections, a friendship with the powerful Senator Tassoni, and wealth.<sup>22</sup> She convinced Concetta's nephew, a Salina and Sicilian, to tribute Garibaldi, thinking it a "fusion of the old and new Sicily."<sup>23</sup> Concetta represented Sicily fifty years after Unification, still showing no signs of amelioration or growth, having lived a bitter life, not marrying, and having the powerful invalidate her relics. The romantic feelings of the Risorgimento waned and a unified Italy benefitted the interests of the elite and liberal middle class, eschewing peasants and commoners. Fifty years earlier, the peasants of Sicily, especially of Fr. Pirrone's hamlet, were shown to abhor unification and the taxes it imposed. Two cousins married each other in an ugly economic situation, showing a stark contrast to the elite, namely Angelica and Tancredi.<sup>24</sup> The exuberance of Tancredi's marriage to Angelica subsided and became stale, seemingly benefitting both of their economic but not romantic interests. Likewise, the North benefitted by taking the South and Sicily, but only the elite landowners of Sicily like Tancredi gained from Unification.

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<sup>17</sup> Lampedusa, 188.

<sup>18</sup> Lampedusa, 314-315.

<sup>19</sup> Lampedusa, 250.

<sup>20</sup> Lampedusa, 270.

<sup>21</sup> Lampedusa, 319.

<sup>22</sup> Lampedusa, 310.

<sup>23</sup> Lampedusa, 308.

<sup>24</sup> Lampedusa, 234.

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