



# Malacqua

*Nicola Pugliese*

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## Malacqua Details

Date : Published May 2013 by Tullio Pironti Editore (first published 1977)

ISBN : 9788879376

Author : Nicola Pugliese

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## From Reader Review Malacqua for online ebook

### Tina says

Un libro che ho scoperto per caso e che mi ha lasciata senza parole per la meraviglia. E' l'unico romanzo di Nicola Pugliese e non mi stupisce: alla fine a che sarebbe servito scriverne altri, se questo già dice tutto? Uscì per la prima volta nel 1977 con Einaudi, poi fu inspiegabilmente dimenticato e ora è stato ripubblicato da Tullio Pironti nel 2013, un anno dopo la morte dell'autore. Non è facile parlarne, come non è facile parlare di tutti i libri ricchi di senso e di bellezza. Verrebbe da dire: insomma, sono solo 150 pagine, fate uno sforzo e leggetevelo. Ma farò uno sforzo anch'io e cercherò di darvi una vaghissima idea di quello che ci potete trovare. Innanzitutto Napoli, per quattro giorni colpita da una pioggia maligna e incessante, che sembra preludere a un qualche evento straordinario, che cambierà il corso delle cose; sotto la pioggia, intanto, appaiono e scompaiono voci misteriose di bambole e monete, l'attesa sempre elusa del miracolo, crolli, voragini, vittime innocenti, assessori e autorità impegnate a recitare la loro parte e a coprire la loro inettitudine. E poi, sotto la pioggia, vengono a galla i pensieri, le perplesse riflessioni sulla vita e sulla morte di Andreoli Carlo, giornalista, Mirasciotto Vincenzo, vigile urbano, Di Gennaro Carmela, che vende le sigarette di contrabbando, Sorrentino Luisa, segretaria del Prefetto, e di molti altri. E poi, sotto la malacqua, si liberano le parole di un grande scrittore: uno stile che ricompone in una malinconia commovente il "burocratese" dei verbali e il flusso di coscienza. Infine, dopo quattro giorni di pioggia, di sogni e di incubi, di attesa, troverete un finale doloroso e kafkiano, in un certo senso, ma di un Kafka napoletano. Non perdetevelo per nessun motivo. Altre recensioni in 10 righe su [dentroilcerchio.blogspot.it](http://dentroilcerchio.blogspot.it)

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### Anni says

The title of this fabulist novel ('when things get bad' in colloquial Italian) refers to a four day downpour of biblical magnitude, which acts as an extended metaphor for the maladministration and corruption of Naples in the seventies. The city is viewed as alive with its citizens' collective consciousness - described in cinematic detail, with a torrent of words equal to the deluge, and creating an immediacy to what is a very absorbing reading experience.

Reviewed for [Whichbook.net](http://Whichbook.net)

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### Cecilia says

I recently took a writing class that informed me that a reader needs "white space" -- the kind of space created by dialogue, page breaks and chapters. This book has virtually no "white space"; it is a deluge of words, thoughts and feelings. I was as exhausted reading as I imagine the book's characters felt subjected to four days of non-stop rain. This is the kind of book that appeals to hyper intellectuals who will marvel at the novel's construction, prose, meaning, etc. etc. I found it interesting but at some point found myself thinking - geez will this ever end? Perhaps that was the point. I am dying to know why Pugliese withdrew it from publication shortly after it was released in 1977.

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## **Andy Weston says**

### **Malacqua - Nicole Pugliese**

The book is set during a four day period of steady rain in Naples, during which it emerges that an emergency situation is taking place. But Pugliese concentrates on a series of characters and how their lives stop and take stock as this potentially life changing event takes place. It is a series of vignettes linked by the character of a journalist, Carlo Andreoli, whose reflections are interwoven into the stories of the others.

It isn't a plot driven novel therefore, and reading the standard advance media review, you could easily think so. Though short it isn't an easy read, frequently slow and a meditation in long descriptive sentences. Apparently endless rain with strange visions and supernatural visitations for the ten or so characters, the floods mean they contemplate catastrophe as a type of imagined apocalypse, a possibility of utopia.

Pugliese's solitary novel was written in the seventies and banned from reprint by the author until his death in 2012 is a strange in many ways, not least as a harbinger of things to come for sceptics of global warming.

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## **Michael Podlasek Kent says**

An allegory whose buried messages I will be wrestling with for some time. The rain has been with the people of Naples forever, as are resurgences of hatefulness, corruption, and greed in our own. How and when these undercurrents resurrect themselves, how they manifest in our day-to-day lives, is for us to observe. Passages both frustrating and brilliant intersperse. 198 is just the right length. Any longer and this would veer toward the realm of Krasznahorkai, whose work is even more inaccessible and opaque. Some questionable sexual commentary. Difficult to separate the chauvinist views of the narrator from the writer, unless Pugliese is taken as the narrator.

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## **Helen McClory says**

Beautiful language mired in the fact that nothing happens - and normally I quite like nothing happening in novels. The problem is a kind of lack of insight. But it is beautiful and full of the rhythm of the rain. A good novel to read on a rainy day while on holiday in a decaying seaside town.

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## **Teresa says**

### **4.5 stars**

Upon finishing this book, I didn't know what Malacqua meant, but it didn't matter—the subtitle says it all. In style, especially near the end with the shaving episode, I was reminded of a more accessible/much shorter Ulysses. As far as the depiction of Naples goes, I was reminded of Elena Ferrante's works (this book was first published in 1977), though my reading of works set in Naples is not extensive. But in theme, I was reminded, from the very first page, of the city I was born and live in. And the below quote about New Orleans could be about the city the narrator probably loves too in spite of knowing it's 'stupid' to do so. And

as I wrote the previous sentence I realized what Malacqua must mean: “**bad water**”—of course! How ‘stupid’ of *me* for not realizing it sooner.

Times are not good here. The city is crumbling into ashes. It has been buried under a lava flood of taxes and frauds and maladministrations so that it has become a study for archaeologists. Its condition is so bad that when I write about it, as I intend to do soon, nobody will believe I am telling the truth. But it is better to live here in sackcloth and ashes than to own the whole state of Ohio.

(Lafcadio Hearn in a letter to a friend in Ohio)

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#### **Addendum (12/5/17)**

My thanks to Elizabeth for inquiring about the title. Here is what she discovered:

*I asked on a language forum if malacqua has a more colloquial meaning. One person responded that 'In Naples "mal'acqua" means "when things get bad".' And another noted that in a book title, it could have various figurative meanings...*

(See Comment # 4.)

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#### **Shatterlings says**

Not entirely sure what I have just read, it was odd, disjointed but also filled with some interesting imagery. But I have no grasp on the message that the author was trying to tell me, or even if there was one.

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#### **Robert says**

An intriguing little novel. I reviewed Malacqua for the Cleaver here:

<https://www.cleavermagazine.com/malac...>

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#### **Bill Hsu says**

This is actually quite enjoyable over a gray, rainy weekend in San Francisco. It's unusual for me not to lose patience with a novel in which we have to sit through Carlo Andreoli's shaving ritual for multiple pages. I suspect I may not be as forgiving on a sunny weekend.

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#### **Sonia Crites says**

This book had a almost dream like quality. It was engaging and I enjoyed it but I'd be hard pressed to say I really could explain it. 4 days of rain in Naples and wailing dolls.

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## Dave says

One of the finest pieces of magical realism ever written. Without a doubt owes a debt to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and without a doubt deserves a place alongside it. A masterpiece.

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## Heather says

*Malacqua* is about what its subtitle says it's about—"Four Days of Rain in the City of Naples, Waiting for the Occurrence of an Extraordinary Event"—but that only partly captures the mood and feel of this atmospheric novel. *Malacqua* is about four days of rain, yes, but it's also about how things work or don't work, about how the government works or doesn't work, about how people are stuck or indecisive or unsure or resolved about things in their lives, and about how life goes on, and about how people move through their days, with their everyday frustrations and rebellions (or dreams thereof) and hopes and worries. There's an introduction/prologue, and then a section of the book for each of the four days; the narration of each day is made of long sentences, long paragraphs, wonderful unspooling phrases about city-life, city-moments, with the focus shifting from place to place, character to character. The book starts and ends with a journalist, Carlo Andreoli (who's 35, though I read him as ten or twenty years older and was surprised when his age was mentioned), and focuses partly on the direct consequences of the rain that starts and then continues for four days: a sinkhole opens in a road; buildings collapse; people die. But we also get little snippets of other inhabitants of Naples and their lives: a stenographer thinking about sex and her boyfriend, a girl in her late teens meeting up with a lover, a poet giving a reading, a café owner and his English wife, a mother whose son has just gotten married, a ten-year-old girl whose mother is difficult, a secretary waiting for a bus and thinking about her romantic relationships. We also get some magical realism, which is sort of loosely integrated into the story: a few weird/inexplicable things happen, but mostly we're in a more or less realistic, if soggy, landscape.

I loved the descriptive passages about Naples and its water and its weather, from the first sentence of the book on: here's how the book starts:

And through the windowpane steaming grey thoughts following the sea, with Santa Lucia huddled behind him, hands in his pockets, listening to the silence of his silence, the gusts of the coming wind, and those leaves twisting in the street, down into the asphalt (9)

A few pages later, we read about "the brackish air, the smell of diesel" (11). Later, night arrives "with inky streaks and sudden gusts" (13); later still, there's this, which I think is great:

The harbour was peaceful and silent, with very few lights still burning, and only from time to time a train's rattle in the silence, a rattling train and a few silent cars inside that silence. There was night, only night, floating over the telegraph poles, the neon signs. (61)

I also like the way that the narrative shifts from character to character, and the way that different characters' thoughts and memories are explored: I like how a passage about a police officer looking at the sea turns into him thinking about swimming off a boat with his friends when he was a kid, which turns into him thinking about his marriage and his wife, who's ill/anxious, so that you can't help but reflect on the contrast between

his childhood (all possibility and freedom) and his adult life, but in a way that doesn't feel heavy-handed, in a way that just flows.

*Malacqua* was originally published in Italian in 1977, and this is the first time it's been published in English translation: as the back cover explains, it was withdrawn from publication until after Pugliese's death, at his request. This was Pugliese's only novel, but I wish he'd written others: I found myself thoroughly immersed in this book and its style, transported from a wintry New York existence to a rainy autumnal Neapolitan one.

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### **Nancy Oakes says**

Kudos to And Other Stories for publishing this lost novel (and for having a subscription service so I would find a copy at my doorstep!) and cheers to the reader who said that this book has a dreamlike quality to it, because that is the absolute best way to describe it. I don't have time at the moment to really get into it but I will say that this book should be read only by the most patient of readers. When it takes like 5 days for me to finish a novel less than 200 pages, it's a serious, serious book that requires thought. The author's writing style is not the easiest either.

more soon (I know I keep saying that, but it will happen).

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### **enricocioni says**

I am Italian, and I've spent most of my life avoiding English translations of Italian literature, thinking I'd get more out of the original. Last month was the first time I read the English translation of an Italian novel cover to cover, specifically Jhumpa Lahiri's translation of Domenico Starnone's *Trick*—and it was a strange, stressful, confounding experience. I couldn't un-see the ghost of Starnone's Italian hovering behind Lahiri's English, and it kept taking me out of the story, making me wonder how I would have done things differently, and making it very difficult for me to figure out whether the novel's actually any good or not, and in the end it was all too much for me to really enjoy it. Perhaps, I thought, I should continue avoiding Italian books in translation. But on a recent visit to my local library I saw a copy of Shaun Whiteside's translation of Nicola Pugliese's 1977 novel *Malacqua*, and I couldn't resist. And—it was a completely different experience. THIS is how you translate!

Someone asked me, the other day, what makes a good translation good. I struggled to find a good reply, and I am sufficiently unsatisfied with the one I did come up with in the end that I'm not going to reproduce it here. But right from the very start of *Malacqua* I knew Whiteside's was a good translation, and this is how I knew: from the very start, I wanted to read it out loud, the words wanted to leap off the page and into mouth and then into my ears. They were alive. So that's what I did, or that's what I did for about half the book, since I found it all so compelling that I wanted to read as much as possible in as few sittings as possible, and I don't have the stamina required to read more than thirty or so pages aloud in one go. There are a few clunky word choices here and there, and a few expressions that are slightly too British in my opinion, but overall Whiteside's prose flows like an unstoppable torrent. Indeed, I wonder whether Whiteside meant the rhythm of his words to mimic the novel's never-ending rain. If he did, they do.

For the rest of my review, head over to my blog, Strange Bookfellows:  
<https://strangebookfellowsblog.wordpress.com>

