

Al-Cantàra: a different idea of Mount Etna and its wines



We are on the north side of the Mount Etna, Passopisciaro, contrada Feudo, in the heart of the “Alcantàra Valley”. Unique view, which can be enjoyed even more if taken with a subjective eye.

Here, indeed, the beauty of the landscape stays in the eyes and mind of the viewer.

If you look at it with an objective eye instead, you can enjoy the value of the landscape in its natural components: the valley, completely covered by dispersing vineyards, and the river that arises and divides the valley from the Etna that overlooks behind it. The same river creates a boundary beyond which you can make out the outskirts of Messina and the hill towards the Nebrodi, a mountain range that hides the Tyrrhenian Sea and that is characterized by a prosperous and charming vegetation. In this fascinating ecosystem, the winemaker has been playing a decisive role for at least two decades. Thanks to his daily activity, he becomes also the first and unaware landscape architect. The scenery itself becomes the mouthpiece of culture and tradition, where the wine is first and foremost altruist, donating an added value, and, in return, it receives two outstanding titles: “wine of identity” and “wine of landscape”.

The richness of this introduction, full of landscape and cultural references, reveals the backstage where, among others, emerges an exceptionally unique figure.



His name is Pucci Giuffrida, during the day he is an accountant and trustee in bankruptcy, at night he thinks about his company. Its name is “Al-Cantàra”, which means “bridge”, but it is also a valley and a river, and it is where its land is located. Upon fourteen

hectares, almost all planted with local vine varieties, we can find: Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Cappuccio, Carricante, Minnella, and an intriguing Pinot, which surprises you in the bottle, and other gems that create a catalogue offering a dozen of labels.

There is everything in the personality of this vigneron, but what stands out is a colourful, picturesque and poetic world with which he has “wrapped” his production.

He captured interest using an efficient and unique means of communication: the use of the dialect of his city, Catania, to give an identity to his wines.

Therefore he names “O’ scuru o’ scuru” the red DOC, “Luci Luci” the white DOC, “Amuri di Fimmina e Amuri di Matri” the rosé DOC, awardwinning at the international wine fair Vinitaly in 2014, and so on. They are all titles of sonnets extracted from the anthology called “O’ scuru o’ scuru”, meaning “written in the darkness of the night”, by the poet Nino Martoglio, from Catania, who lived between the nineteenth and the twentieth century and who used to write in his dialect. He is the equivalent of Salvatore Di Giacomo for the Neapolitans, Trilussa for the Romans, Renato Fucini for the Florentines, Carlo Porta for the Milanese and Barbarani for the Venetians.



Luci Luci - Etna bianco DOC

Pucci is a creative vigneron, ahead of his times. Because nowadays it seems that the “fashionable” wines are those that own an “identity”, namely recognisable for an undisputed personality that places them in an identifiable territory. And his wines, made on Mount Etna, have this indisputable feature.

We asked him: “Why is the identity a qualifying and successful element? And what do we mean exactly with the word ‘identity’?”. «Identity is a complex concept, and not always clearly understood» he answered. «Not, at least, in its very nature. Frequently, when you talk about identity you think of a general and “common” heritage that appears in different models of folklore, detached from the real cultural identity of a community. Usually, the identity is regarded as rationality, knowledge, language and dialect. Concepts that remind me of an aphorism of Pasolini, who said: “The dialect is like a mother’s breast, from which everyone has sipped, and on which now everyone spits...”».

Good answer. And if a spit represents the disgust and the breast represents a value of linguistic pureness, the one who promotes the identity, expressed both by the dialect and the wine, deserves a praise... «Thank you! But only if this identity – said Pucci with a Proustian abundance – is meant as a “common” heritage, as the label with which everyone marks its “inner self”, a real “being”, modelled by its past, its culture, but also by the agonies experienced through its own land. To this, one needs to add the value of the symbolic and cohesive instrument that every group has: its own language and specifically its own dialect».



O' scuru o' scuru - Etna Rosso DOC

This visionary intuition, originated from a pulsating mind and a cerebral heart, succeeded in marrying the wine of Mount Etna with the dialectal poetry in all its artistic forms: theatre (“O’ scuru o’ scuru” is also a successful musical), poetry, painting (the wonderful labels of the wines, highly awarded, are realised by the artist Alfredo Guglielmino, and one of these received the gold medal at the wine fair Vinitaly), and literature.

The jewel of the catalogue is “O’ scuru o’ scuru” Etna Red DOC, 14,5%, a degree of alcohol that you don’t feel thanks to the structure of the wine and, above all, to its stabilizing acidity.

In other words, a balanced wine, much appreciated by foreign markets. However, the AlCantàra “wine of identity” seems to be the white DOC “Luci Luci”, translated: fireflies.

We tasted the 2012 wine and we can already place it, for its quality, among the best white wines of the Etna region. A gem “signed” by the young oenologist Salvatore Rizzuto, trained in Burgundy and then in Piedmont.



Occhi di Ciumi - Bianco IGT Sicilia

Who knows which top will reach the label “U’ toccu” (a card game similar to the Morra), a black Pinot of the Etna region, which has always been the persistent idea of Giacomino Tachis.

The link to dialect worked so well that the range of authors was expanded almost immediately.

Along these lines, the IGT red Nerello Mascalese in

purity, “Muddiche di sulì”, refers to a sonnet by the contemporary poet Salvatore di Pietro. “La fata

galanti” refers to the work of an eighteenthcentury poet from Palermo, Giovanni Meli. The white

IGT is called “Occhi di ciumi” (its labels received a gold medal for its beauty) after a poem by

Alfio Antico, from Lentini, a versatile artist, who navigates between poetry and percussion instruments and who has performed next to Giorgio Albertazzi, Lucio Dalla, and Vinicio Capossela.

After helping us redacting this list, Pucci Giuffrida stopped, staring at us with his eyes always smiling. He seemed like he was demanding time to undress the clothes of a romantic and visionary

poet and to wear again the clothes of the accountant. Instead, he was going back in time in quest of

a maxim: «It’s true, we are both romantic and cold calculators. I remember that motto of a famous

character, whose name I cannot recall, who said “Culture without economy is lame, but the

economy without culture is blind”». Right! It was Einstein who donated us the evocative beauty of

the last line of a beautiful fairy tale. Highly modern.