

**Enrica Simonetti**

**PUGLIA**  
journey through colour

*photography*

**Nicola Amato**

Mario Adda Editore

ISBN

© Copyright 2019

Mario Adda Editore  
via Tanzi, 59 - Bari  
Telephone/Fax +39 080 5539502  
[www.addaeditore.it](http://www.addaeditore.it)  
[addaeditore@addaeditore.it](mailto:addaeditore@addaeditore.it)  
All rights reserved.

*Graphic design:*  
Vincenzo Valerio

*Text editing:*  
Sabina Coratelli

*Translation:*  
Christina Jenkner

*Printing:*  
Grafica 080 - Modugno (Ba)

## Index



**7**  
Sky blue



**65**  
Murgia green



**121**  
Chalk white



**145**  
Basilicata  
Matera: the colour  
of culture



**191**  
Fire red



# Sky blue

From the north of Puglia to the Heel:  
beaches, coastlines, skies.  
From the *trabucchi* to the coastal towers,  
from the Tremiti Islands to Vieste,  
arriving in Monopoli,  
Polignano, Santa Maria di Leuca,  
among sea caves and natural parks,  
salt ponds, wetlands  
and breathtaking landscapes

It lasts a moment and then disappears. It is the blue-violet colour of the evening sky across the Adriatic horizon: it skilfully mixes the light of day with the darkness of the coming night and can only leave you breathless, since it is a unique colour, an almost “cyanotic” blue that in Puglia is never melancholic. Let’s start from this colour on our chromatic journey across a land that is never the same and that at every step reveals a beauty so varied as to be disorientating, a charm as fluctuating as the colour blue, which dresses itself in shades of turquoise, then of purple, and then of the pale lightness of the calm sea. Beyond Puglia there are *the Puglias*, as the “pilgrim” Cesare Brandi wrote when he recounted the liquid mornings he spent wandering in a region “that is not a single journey, but many journeys in one”.

From Gargano to the farthest stretches of Salento, the Heel seems enveloped by the sea as if it wanted to enter it and merge with its waters: the landscapes changes continuously and each itinerary awaits us with the emotions of diversity and the poetry of confusion. The essentiality of a menhir, the roundness of a *trullo*, an austere medieval castle, an ochre-coloured altar with its Baroque

curves. Nothing resembles what we saw but a moment earlier, and nothing can be repeated. Here we are faced with an imposing wall, and just a few steps later, we find ourselves in a narrow and winding alley, or in a cave dug by the sea or among the humidity of a cavern under the ground. The *stupor mundi* of Frederick II is also the amazement of our journey in search for colours, weaving the ochre of the historic buildings with the white of the walls of certain *masserie*, and opening our souls to the red of a sunset across the green of the Murgia in spring.

A “polychromatic” journey that promises a bewitching path, quite like a fairy tale. For this reason, we could not but start from the blue, the colour which the peoples of the east believe to have magical powers, and which among us becomes prodigious with its presence and its absence, being everywhere and then suddenly disappearing. From the blue of the sea that pervades the rocks of Gargano to that of the frescoes of the basilica of Santa Caterina d’Alessandria in Galatina: this colour appears and then suddenly disappears as the sea turns into sand and a painted sky ends on the ridge of a 14<sup>th</sup> century arch. A Latin blue that is co-

---

Cisternino encloses the colours of the Murgia dei Trulli: the whiteness of the pinnacles makes a unique landscape all across the Itria Valley



*eruleus* and which, at the farthest end of Itay's peninsula, never becomes a *blues*, remaining a vital colour, an active colour that dominates the eight hundred kilometres of Puglia's coastline, with its countryside, its palaces, its wetlands, its ports and its cliffs.

Our journey into the blue starts from the deep waters that surround the Tremiti Islands, between the sky and a flutter of albatrosses. We disembark at San Domino, where even the waters of the harbour are cobalt blue, and where during the summer one has the impression that the island cannot hold all the people who land here from boats, ferries and rafts. It seems as if the earth ends there, where we disembark, in that square that is not a square, which during the summer is filled by chaotic noise while it shows its cute, languid soul in winter. You have to raise your eyes to glance the road that climbs on the other side, beyond the pine trees, beyond the Mediterranean scrub, beyond

the horizon. Only by walking this somewhat anonymous road can we turn around and look down at the blue that dominates the scene: behind the top of a pine tree, between two tree trunks, beyond the window of a house or the broken glass of the lighthouse. An island that from afar, as all islands

---

In Galatina, the blue of the frescoes of the basilica of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria pops out all across the three naves of the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century church. The early pictorial decoration was completely replaced in the first decades of the 15<sup>th</sup> century by painters of the schools of Giotto and of Siena: the entire cycle is beautiful and makes this place look like a "little Assisi" in the heart of Salento



do, resembles an austere and mysterious place, while a closer look shows a small village, a cluster of lives suspended between the sea and the sky.

On the other side there is the island of San Nicola (one of the five islands that make up the archipelago of the Tremiti, alongside San Domino, Capraia, Cretaccio and the furthest one, Pianosa), where one has the same feeling: from afar, one can see the imposing yard of the church of San Nicola, while from close up one is faced with an uphill road, with houses that can either be deserted or full of vociferous humanity. One can walk these islands, or sail and swim around them. But at every step and at every stroke there is the blue of the boats, of the shutters and of the sky, that same sky which, legend has it, was the last sight of Diomedes, who was apparently buried here and gave his name to the "stones" thrown and to the birds "shaped" by Venus, upon the transformation of his fellow fugitives. On the Tremiti, one does not know whether to get lost within the myth or in the landscape, in the geology of the ancient rocks or in the poetry of the caves, cliffs and ravines. The Cape of the Diamond, the Cave of the Monk Seal, the Bay of the Turks, the Cave of the Crocodile, the Cape of the Rag: a wealth of names and views that will leave you breathless. There are many visual impressions: from the flight of the black and white Mediterranean shearwaters, which often fly in flocks as the evening falls; to the wide wingspans of the Scopoli's shearwaters that also nest on these rocks; and then the seagulls, the blackcaps, while geckos and lizards break the silence of one's walks, especially in spring, when the island and its vegetation are in that delicate moment of awakening, with the helichrysum turning the cliffs yellow and the cornflowers making their appearance.

One of these walks on the island is the "trip to the lighthouse". We are on San Domino and we follow the road beneath the pine trees towards Punta del Diavolo, the Cape of the Devil: not even such a name can make the place any less peaceful and, as we approach the gate of the lighthouse, it almost seems as if the air itself becomes rarefied, heavenly. Forget about the Devil. The octagonal

tower built in 1905 rises across the road, resting on a two-storey house, and its iron dome holds no light, and has been standing empty since 1987, when the lighthouse was blown up in a mysterious terrorist attack that still resembles a crime movie. It was the 5<sup>th</sup> of November and, all of a sudden, as the first winds of autumn began blowing and the tourists left the island, this small stretch of land found itself at the centre of a international mystery. The attacker – a Frenchman – died and the investigation focused on the threats at the time directed at Italy by Libyan leader Gaddafi. Since then, the lighthouse has remained untouched, ghostly and fascinating at the same time, a bombed out tower in time of peace, most likely a unique case that for a while captured the attention of the world's TVs, and then slipped back into oblivion. The recent sale of the solitary tower by the State has marked the beginning of its new life.

Under the cliffs of the lighthouse, it is nice to observe the clear water of the sea, with its algae, its soft corals and its sponges moving with the waves, and the passage of breams, dreamfish and dentexes. It seems unbelievable that someone would want to bring oil platforms to the waters off these islands. At the Tremiti islands, a marine reserve since 1989, nature stands against pollution, against the use of drills to look for oil and the passage of boats and ferries during the summer. According to the legend, this heavenly archipelago was born from a sudden outburst of anger of Diomedes, the hero sung by Homer who threw these cyclopean rocks into the sea, turning them into islands, to mark his detachment from the world, which had honoured him at first, and then disgusted him. Walking among the most beautiful places in the Tremiti, it is hard to believe that here, on a coastline that is both rugged and romantic, the legends tell us of such harsh stories, such as that of Diomedes' rage at the betrayal and deception he suffered from Aegiale, his unfaithful wife. For every view there is a name, and behind every name there is a legend. For example, there are those who believe that an exceptionally large jewel was buried somewhere on Punta del Diamante





---

Myth and legend meet at the Tremiti Islands, a natural paradise that should be enjoyed above all from the sea, where caves large and small enclose the true beauties of an archipelago filled with enchanting birds such as the shearwaters and rare Mediterranean plants shaken by the same wind that has designed unthinkable architectures, rock arches that open onto the sea, or unexpected depths, such as the Cave of the Monk Seal, the Cave of the Violets or the Cliff of the Elephant