

[Books In Sync Fiction Author A. Colin Wright's Book In Review](#)

[Sardinian Silver Book Review](#)



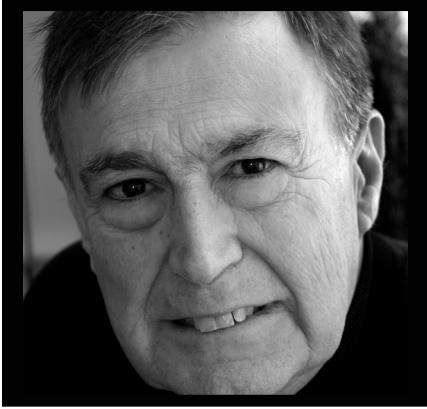
After an absence of forty-two years, languages professor [A. Colin Wright](#) returned for a visit to Sardinia. His nostalgic novel, [Sardinian Silver](#), he says in its afterword, “evokes a Sardinia that no longer exists but which had a quality of its own that is worth remembering.” It was a quality he also found in the no longer extant brand of Sardinian Silver wine that was “like a fleeting memory of something beautiful.” His efforts to recapture the quality and memories of Sardinia, the wine, and his friends from the 1960s have resulted in a novel of superior literary merit.

Wright’s novel is a pastoral romance about a summer in the life of twenty-four-year-old Englishman Arthur Fraser, a tourist guide in Sardinia. It is skilfully and evocatively written, relying on the interactions between its characters as they travel, fall in and out of love, and indulge in occasional bacchanalian festivals. While there are no action-packed adventures, there is a well-developed sojourn to Orgosolo, an enclave of outlaws where Arthur and his friends feel, “as though we’re entering a forgotten civilization, peopled by ghosts of ancient warriors.” And when Arthur and his friend Gavino vie for the same girl, a kind of genteel jealousy arises, which suits the type of novel Wright has written. Otherwise, the novel relies upon Arthur and his several female acquaintances to add spice in some episodes and humour in others. Of particular note is Wright’s ability to elicit the morals and mores of 1960’s Sardinia, both through what happens on the island and in Rome, and by the attitudinal interplay between traditionalist Sards and visiting foreigners like Arthur and his transplanted English friends.

Wright’s characters spring to life, full blown. Angst-ridden Arthur unceasingly searches for love with all the wrong women until the right one arrives at the book’s conclusion. His girlfriends contrast the morality of the day and the place with their boldness and outspokenness. The men, on the other hand, either appear grateful to follow in the wake of the women or to participate in surreptitious affairs, like the “nauseating man with the moustache and the nasty smile” inquiring of Arthur about the availability of a servant girl for “other things.”

In the end, as Arthur reminisces years later with his wife about Sardinia and “all the people we knew there,” he concludes, “An odd bunch, weren’t they?” But odd or not, they are well worth knowing.

Reviewed by M. Wayne Cunningham



[A. Colin Wright](#) was born and raised in Chelmsford, Essex, England. After serving as a linguist in the British Royal Air Force, Wright attended Cambridge University, where he earned undergraduate and graduate degrees. In 1961 he lived for six months in Sassari, Sardinia, followed the next year by a longer period in Reggio Calabria. He speaks six languages reasonably fluently (including Italian), and can stumble along in two more. In 1964, he was appointed professor of Russian at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. He remained at Queen's until his retirement in 1999 and still resides there today. Dr. Wright is married and has two grown sons.

“Based on his own time on Sardinia, Wright’s recent captivating and oftentimes hilarious novel *Sardinian Silver* follows the exploits of a young man trying to find love while assimilating to an archaically orthodox society. Sardinia in the 1960s was still very culturally undeveloped: the residents viewed mainland Italians and continentals (the British counted among them) as immoral and contaminated by modern society.

[Sardinian Silver by A. Colin Wright](#)

To Arthur Fraser, a young Englishman, Sardinia in 1960 is perfect. It's an island filled with Roman ruins, exotic scenery, local customs, and morally traditional values-he loves everything. To assimilate into the strange and belong to a society different from his own has always been his desire. Arthur arrives in the resort town of Alghero to work as a representative for a tourist company. His ambition is to find a Sard girl for himself. He is quickly thwarted, though, by the orthodox beliefs of the inhabitants. Unmarried couples cannot meet without chaperones, and anyone with "continental" attitudes is immoral. Arthur quickly learns that dating is fraught with real dangers. When Arthur finally falls in love with Anna, a Sard girl, he discovers that she lives in Rome and is no longer accepted at home. But she then falls in love with one of his best friends, and Arthur becomes irrationally obsessed. He incessantly schemes about winning back her affections, despite her efforts to dissuade him. In *Sardinian Silver*, author Wright masterfully evokes a mysterious society, its flamboyant people, and the Island's beauty. Like Arthur, you'll never want to leave Sardinia, with its wide sands, low hills, sun, and blue sea and its superficial pleasantness of life.

Book Details:

Publisher: IUniverse (October 28, 2008)

ISBN-10: 0595481000

ISBN-13: 978-0595481002

Paperback: 196 Pages

Language: English

[Genre: Fiction](#)

Paperback Price: \$14.95

E-Book Price: \$6.00

Amazon Purchase Link

http://www.amazon.com/Sardinian-Silver-Anthony-Colin-Wright/dp/0595481000/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1243434809&sr=1-1

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