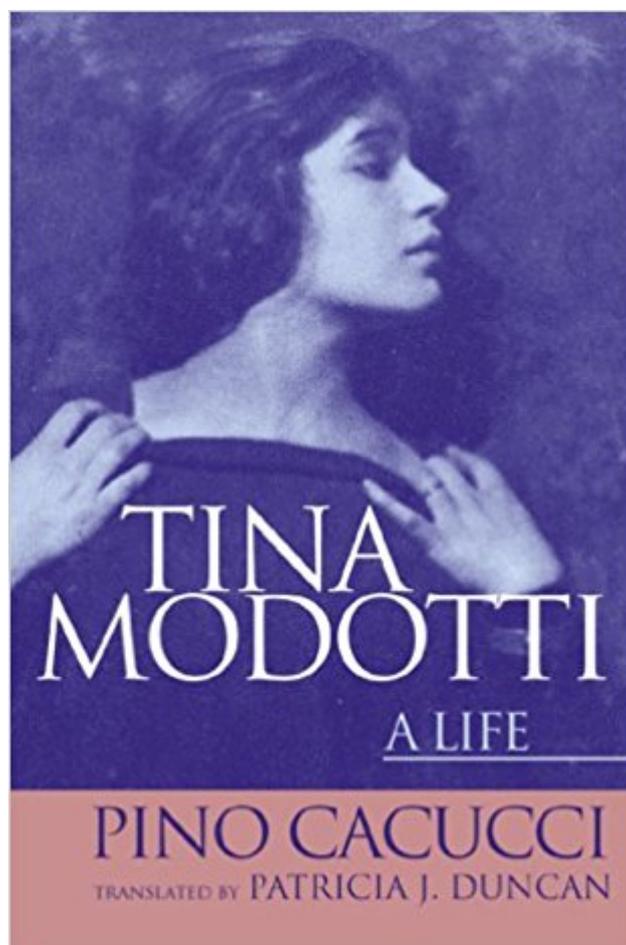


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Tina Modotti: A Life



Synopsis

The life of Tina Modotti is the stuff of enduring legend. Her sensual, melancholic beauty inspired the work of the most brilliant artists, photographers, and writers of her time, including Diego Rivera, Edward Weston, and Pablo Neruda. Her fierce commitment to the social and political causes of the working class and her affiliation with the Mexican Communist Party landed her at the center of national controversy in Mexico. A gifted photographer in her own right, Modotti is now widely recognized as one of the great artists of the early twentieth century. Born in Udine, Italy, in 1896, Tina Modotti immigrated to the United States at the age of seventeen, settling with her family in San Francisco in order to escape the misery and poverty of the world from which they came. Modotti initially sought work in the local silk factory and as a dressmaker, but her beauty and poise soon launched her into a career as a silent film actress and artist's model. It was through her work as a model that she met photographer Edward Weston. Though already married to California poet Roubaix de l'Abrie Richey (known as Robo), Modotti fell in love with Weston and with photography and left with him for Mexico in 1922. It was in Mexico that Modotti blossomed, both as a talented artist and as a fiery and dedicated worker for the cause of the revolutionary left, and where she befriended artists Rivera and Frieda Kahlo. However, in 1929 Modotti, long under suspicion by the Mexican police, was arrested in connection with the murder of Julio Antonio Mella, a Cuban revolutionary and also her lover. Though the real killers were never identified, the Mexican press raised a scandal by publishing nude photographs of Modotti taken by Weston and depicting her as a woman of easy virtue. She was eventually exiled from Mexico. Denied re-entry to the United States, Modotti fled first to Germany and then to Moscow, where she abandoned her photography and worked as a bureaucrat for the Communist Party and traveled on clandestine missions for the "Red Rescue." In 1936 Modotti moved to Spain, where she met Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, Andre Malraux, and Robert Capa. Although Capa tried to encourage her to take up her photography again, Modotti was by now dedicating herself exclusively to political militancy. At the fall of the Spanish Republic in 1939, Modotti returned to Mexico, where she died on January 5, 1942. In this internationally acclaimed biography, Pino Cacucci brings the adventurous, riveting, and tragic story of Tina Modotti to life. He shows great compassion for his subject even as he explores the darker side of the passion that drove her--a side filled with doubts and fears regarding her actions and her commitment to the political cause in which she found herself entrenched. Set in Mexico, Germany, and Spain, with a large and fascinating cast of notable characters, Tina Modotti penetrates the inner sanctum of communism and the artistic circles of the late 1920s and '30s, and it paints a brilliant portrait of a woman and an era.

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Customer Reviews

Tina Modotti -- photographer, model, lover of famous men, revolutionary Communist. What a fascinating life. I finished this biography -- which flows like a novel -- inspired to follow my own convictions and amazed by this bewitching, powerful woman.

excellent book. It takes dawn many novels

Although I agree that San Francisco was home to many artistic and cultural activities that make it distinct from any other American city, to assert that it was "Not founded by Anglo-Saxon Protestants, San Francisco developed as a city without Puritan influences, much like the great European cities that favored radical innovations and a healthy indifference toward conventional morality." (can you taste the superiority of the European writer in that quote?) Anyone who believes that does not know who founded San Francisco. Guess what. It was Mormons. Yep. They pulled into the bay and off loaded from the Good Ship The Brooklyn, before the gold rush and mass influx of others. Before that, it had been all but abandoned as a Presidio by the Spanish. And since I know my history, I can tell you the Mormons of that time had more in common with the Puritanism of the original colonies than other Anglos. But that is just one of the stretches... Of course the Mormons were overrun with the advent of the Gold Rush. San Francisco has been a pendulum that swings back and forth from anarchy to corruption in its city government in the last 150 years. As for the rest of the book, take out

some of the added quasi-history spices and it would have been much more valuable, or at least worth recommending. But maybe I shouldn't look at it for historical value, but as a great romance?

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