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Youth Raped, Violated, and Denied: The *Ventennio* in Andrea Camilleri's Narratives

1. Introduction

Born only three years after the 1922 March on Rome, Sicilian writer Andrea Camilleri spent his youth under the yoke of Fascism. The writer was the son of a low-level (but committed) Fascist functionary, and memories of that painful era in Italian history have appeared in many of his works. Camilleri's writings on that period are so extensive that, as Nino Borsellino comments in his essay "Lo specchio dell'isola" ("The Mirror of the Island"), "one could write a Baedeker [travelogue][1] entitled 'When the Allies Landed,' about the summer of 1943, made out of the pages of Camilleri's books and the declarations he has made in interviews" (80). As a matter of fact, the pages in which the author remembers his youth under Fascism and during the Allied landing in Sicily are some of the most moving in his biography (Lodato 101-06). Camilleri vividly remembers the trauma of nearly dying in an Allied bombing raid in Porto Empedocle in 1943, and he recalls the chaotic circumstances of his family's evacuation to the countryside while his father, a navy officer, was forced to stay behind in his hometown to man the port (Lodato 101). He still shudders at a fateful meeting with the infamous General George Smith Patton, during which the "Bandito" tore down a wooden cross, which had been erected by some townswomen for a German soldier who had died in a bombing attack, breaking it in disgust (Lodato 115). He recalls his dueling senses of liberation and occupation—the joy of being freed from tyranny on the one hand and the realization of an impending foreign occupation on the other—which made him cry actual tears at the arrival of the Allied troops. (Many decades later, Leonardo Sciascia, the famous Sicilian writer, would confess to his friend Camilleri the exact same emotions on this historic day [Lodato 115]).[2] For a complete panorama of the author's memories of the *Ventennio* and its immediate aftermath, however, one must turn to his narrative fiction.

"Literature is culture's memory, not as a simple recording device but as a body of commemorative actions (…). Writing is

both an act of memory and a new interpretation, by which every new text is etched into memory space," writes Renate Lachmann in "Mnemonic and Intertextual Aspects of Literature" (301). As will become clear throughout the analysis of three of Camilleri's most representative works, it is not the actual traumatic events—the days of the Allied landing and of Allied bombing raids—that have left Camilleri struggling to find an appropriate means of communicating his narrative "commemorative action." Rather, it is the post-factum recognition of the brainwashing that an entire nation, and especially its children, underwent at the hands of the Fascist propaganda machine. This reminds Camilleri of what he perceives to be going on in present-day Italy: a systematic brain-washing through the private television channels owned by Silvio Berlusconi (who in his capacity as Prime Minister also controlled the State's media outlets). Camilleri's commemorative goal in his writing is twofold: he endeavors to raise a monument to events of the past so that they not be forgotten and, more importantly, he warns his readers of the potential peril through his reinterpretation of that past, and through the clear parallels he draws between it and recent events.

Literature transmits knowledge through its mnemonic capacity and can thus serve a didactic function within a shared memory space (Lachmann 301). Camilleri's literature, in particular, demonstrates the validity of Lachmann's point. The Sicilian author fiercely criticizes any type of extremism, orthodoxy, or fanaticism—both historical and contemporary. Through a historical looking glass, his writing questions Italian and Western attitudes toward forms of "otherness," which made themselves felt in the West in political, religious, and social circles at the time of writing. At first, this consisted of a simple aversion toward all those not adhering to the values of mainstream society,[3] but after the September 11 attacks it turned into an open hostility toward other ethnicities and religions.[4] To an uncomfortable extent, Camilleri illuminates the parallels between events and attitudes during the *Ventennio* and in contemporary Western (Italian) society.

Decades after the events he witnessed as a youth, as with so many other eyewitnesses and survivors, Camilleri reappraised and processed the dramatic and—especially for a young boy—traumatic events of the Fascist era. This article will focus mainly

on three primary sources: the Montalbano detective novel *Il cane di terracotta* (*The Terracotta Dog*), published in 1996; the short story "Un diario del '43" ("A Diary from 1943"), from the 1998 collection *Un mese con Montalbano* (*A Month with Montalbano*); and the 2003 historical novel *La presa di Macallè* (*The Siege of Macallè*).[5] All these narratives center on the topic of childhood—that is, on the denial of childhood under Fascism. But while the detective novel provides a look only at the consequences of war actions at a local level, the latter two works provide a meticulous and honest confrontation with an uncomfortable topic: the submission to, or at least passive acceptance of, the systematic mental indoctrination of Italy's youth.

Camilleri approaches the subject of the *Ventennio* from different angles in his literary production. In her article "The Literary Representation of Memory," Birgit Neumann states that "an individual's memories are highly selective, and that the rendering of memories potentially tells us more about the rememberer's present, his or her desire and denial, than about the actual past events" (333). Such selectivity becomes especially evident when looking at different periods of Camilleri's career. This article will take into account recent theoretical discourse in the field of cultural memory studies (Assmann, Erll, Isnenghi, Lachmann, Neumann, Rigney) as well as earlier analyses of Camilleri's writings dealing with Fascism (Bonina, Demontis, Nigro), to give a comprehensive look at those works in which the author comes to terms with his personal memories of the *Ventennio*. Furthermore, the essay will trace the trajectory of Camilleri's treatment of his memory of childhood under Fascism through three specific works written between 1996 and 2003. In them, he chose to focus on the abuse of youth during the *Ventennio*: a factual account in *Il cane di terracotta* and a timid approach to the subject in the short story "Un Diario del '43," lead to *La presa di Macallè*, a novel where rape is treated in all its complex links to violence and power.

2. Youth Denied

In the second book of his series of detective novels, *Il cane di terracotta*, Inspector Montalbano stumbles upon a mystery dating

back more than five decades: while investigating a series of robberies in local supermarkets, he comes across the artfully arranged tomb of two lovers in a cave. After the detective is wounded in a shoot-out and is required to take a leave of absence from regular police duty, the entire second half of the novel is dedicated to his unofficial investigation of this crime. Certain clues, such as coins found close to the victims, soon provide evidence that the young lovers' deaths must have taken place in the summer of 1943. The detective asks his paternal friend, Headmaster Burgio, for help, and Burgio and his wife, Angelina, proceed to paint a vivid picture of life in Vigàta and the surrounding area during the Allied landing in 1943 for the benefit of the *commissario*, who was born in 1952, almost a decade after the fact.[6]

Camilleri draws heavily on his own experience and life story here. In one of the short stories in the collection *Un mese con Montalbano*, Burgio gives his exact age: "nel 1932, io avevo sette anni" (97). Not coincidentally, he and Andrea Camilleri were both born in 1925, and when the Headmaster instructs Montalbano, who is a generation younger, on the events taking place in 1943, it is easy to hear the voice of Camilleri speaking through his protagonist. Although Burgio remembers vividly the facts of the particularly horrendous July 7, 1943 bombing of Vigàta—a stand-in for Porto Empedocle, Camilleri's hometown—those are not the most salient memories found in the account. Rather, it is a nod to childhood: the feelings of loss and confusion young adults felt at the time, especially once the local *liceo* (high school) was closed down due to the heavy Allied bombings, and families began to disperse in the surrounding countryside. Burgio's wife, Angelina, remembers:

> Data la spaventosa situazione che c'era nell'isola a causa dei bombardamenti, le scuole chiusero l'ultimo giorno d'aprile e noi ci sparagnammo il terribile esame di maturità, venimmo promossi o bocciati a scrutinio. (194)

These are almost *verbatim* the author's words remembering his last school year, as reported in his biography. Indeed, Camilleri graduated from Porto Empedocle's *liceo* without having to take the *maturità*

exams, and almost lost his life in the July 7th bombing raid (Lodato 105-06).

Although Burgio remembers many facts of the era, it is through Angelina that the emotions of the time are conveyed. She describes how she and her best friend were separated by the bombings and had to resort to almost daily letters to stay in touch. Lisetta, her friend, went to nearby Serradifalco (which, not coincidentally, is where Andrea Camilleri's family went), while Angelina fled to stay with relatives on the mainland for the duration of the bombings. The separation was particularly difficult for the two best friends, as Lisetta not only was mentally and sexually abused by her father during those chaotic times, but was also in love with an American soldier and had only Angelina as her confidante. Given the frenzied circumstances, it is not surprising that the letters ceased at a certain point and the two friends lost touch with one another. But when Angelina finds out more than five decades later that it is in fact Lisetta who is buried inside the grotto alongside her beloved American soldier, it still causes her considerable pain.

In *Il cane di terracotta*, Camilleri manages to bring to life the personal memories and feelings of his youth, rather than the mere historical facts, using the narrative artifice of the detective story. By recounting, in a contemporary context, the story of a woman who could have been one of his classmates decades prior, the Sicilian author gives voice to a cultural period that deserves to be remembered: the post-1943 Southern Italian experience. Jan Assmann defines collective memory in his 1988 essay "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität" ("Collective Memory and Cultural Identity") as

> the characteristic store of repeatedly used texts, images and rituals in the cultivation of which each society and epoch stabilizes and imports its self-image; a collectively shared knowledge of preferably (yet not exclusively) the past, on which a group bases its awareness of unity and character. (129)

The problem in Italy's case, especially (but not only) when looking at the events following 1943, becomes immediately apparent: the country's North and South lived two completely different realities.

But even before that date, as Mario Isnenghi (27) correctly states in his essay "Italian *luoghi della memoria*," "writing on 'sites of memory' in a united Italy is set against a background of *disunited* factors and developments. Disunity is a constituent element of events, memory, and narrative."[7] In his writing, Camilleri creates his own set of individual memories.

He constructs a "commemorative action," as "writing is both an act of memory and a new interpretation, by which every new text is etched into memory space" (Lachmann 301). His individual remembrance, even when disguised as detective fiction, takes on collective significance. As Susan Suleiman, in her book Crises of Memory, observes: "the human faculty to create and invent, to give form and shape to memory and experience, endows the vicissitudes of individual lives with collective meaning" (Suleiman 10). By recalling specific Sicilian events for a large readership, Camilleri tries to counterbalance the disunity in narratives that prevailed in the period between 1922 and 1945, about which Italian literature disproportionately focuses on the Northern Italian experience.[8]

3. The Violation and Violence of Youth

Camilleri's body of work is exceptionally varied, but it can be argued that the main focus in all of his writing, even in his detective novels and essays, is history. Even though the writer himself claims not to have "testa e stomaco da storico" (*Strage* 44 69), in his narratives he consistently provides a distinct historical background that often plays a primary role in the plot. When it comes to the *Ventennio*, Camilleri's focus is both on the historical facts as on the emotions and effects these events had on the population. In "Un diario del '43," for example, Montalbano and Camilleri's readers get a quick history lesson about the structure of the Fascist youth organizations through the words of Headmaster Burgio, who illuminates the edifice of Fascist education:

> sin dalla nascita si veniva inquadrati nell'organizzazione giovanile fascista che prima si chiamò Opera Nazionale Balilla e appresso Gioventù Italiana del Littorio. Dai tre ai sei anni si era Figli della Lupa… dai sei ai dieci si passava Balilla, poi Avanguardista e dai sedici in su Giovane Fascista. (Camilleri, "Un diario" 73)

The effects of this indoctrination from birth are explained in the next sentence, when Headmaster Burgio's wife, Angelina, states that "tutti, in quell'età e in quel periodo eravamo, se non esaltati… almeno infatuati" with Fascism and its ideals (Camilleri, "Un diario" 73). As the author is relaying his own memories and speaking from his own experience, once again the elder Sicilian protagonist can be seen as his mouthpiece, when she recalls that only very few of her school comrades managed to save themselves from this brainwashing, even at the age of young adulthood, and those who managed did so only by means of having access to the right reading materials (Chiaberge).[9]

The short story "Un diario del '43," published two years after *Il cane di terracotta*, focuses on the tragic consequences of fanaticism produced by the methods of a Fascist upbringing, an issue Camilleri elaborates in more detail in his controversial novel *La presa di Macallè*. In the short story, Montalbano comes upon a diary, written in 1943, in which Carlo Zanchi, a young man who describes himself as an "*Avanguardist*," chronicles the days that followed the invasion of the Allied troops and the fall of Fascism in Sicily—the same historical backdrop as in *Il cane di terracotta*. Of particular note is the style of his diary, written in perfect Italian (dialect was prohibited at the time), with a vocabulary replete with the Fascist terminology the youth had been exposed to throughout his upbringing. Here, he talks about his disappointment that the "sacre sponde" of his "Patria," Sicily, have been violated by "negri invasori." He comments that the "topi" start crawling back out from their hiding places, trying to reestablish those political parties that Fascism had managed to wipe out. It soon becomes clear that the "topi" to which he is referring are not only communists, though, but also those previously in power; the "rifiuti umani" have elected a known Mafioso, who had been sent into exile by the Fascists, as their new mayor.[10] Zanchi's language is filled with disdain for those who betrayed Fascism and its ideals; in his eyes, this means basically everybody: the communists and socialists (who had always been contrary), the Allies (who officially fought against the Facist regime) as well as the traditional hierachy of his town, always willing to change and betray political ideals in favor of wealth and power. He is willing to sacrifice his own life for those ideals that have been inculcated in him and in which he alone apparently still believes.

In "Un Diario del '43" and in *La presa di Macallè*, the investigation concerns the culpability of an individual and the guilt of a system. As Simona Demontis suggests:

> Camilleri seems to ask himself what level of awareness an indoctrinated youth might have had in that period; if he was almost a clone of those who acted in order to dominate the minds and conscience of the weakest, to have at their back and call a number of real remissive and submissive weapons, so completely assimilated to their ideology and demagogy to have lost their personal identity and act like a war machine. (65)

The diary is suddenly interrupted by a cryptic confession of guilt at having caused a tremendous event. By pure chance, Montalbano manages to uncover what had happened: acting on behalf of his Fascist ideals, Zanchi had thrown a hand grenade onto a truck loaded with explosives in an act of sabotage, causing the death of thirteen people. Guilt-ridden and cured of any fanaticism, as attested by the deeply regretful and nearly incoherent words in his diary, Zanchi hanged himself in the countryside just a few days after his "heroic act." As with many of the other instances in which Montalbano investigates crimes from the *Ventennio*,[11] it is important to note that the parties involved still suffered the consequences of their acts, even decades after the traumatic events. In this particular case, Montalbano so regrets having brought up memories of Carlo Zanchi's actions that, after closing his personal "investigation," he sends the diary and five hundred thousand lira to Zanchi's brother, a priest in a community center, to appease his own sense of guilt. Montalbano's generous gesture can also be interpreted on a more philosophical level: he is revisiting, reliving, and reinterpreting history. By using events from his own biography, the author relives his own and his generation's coming of age during the *Ventennio*. Writing many decades later, with the luxury of hindsight, Camilleri chronicles a moment in his island's history in which he takes into account the motivations of those youths he judges "misguided" (through Zanchi) and the effects of their actions on others. In that way, the author reinterprets a chaotic moment in time, demonstrating cause and effect by squarely laying the blame at Fascist indoctrination

rather than searching for faults within the individuals. Montalbano's monetary apology and willingness to let go of history (sending back the diary) is Camilleri's own subtle way of coming to terms with his own generation's faults. The author, in that case, provides the perfect example of Lachmann's theory of the double meaning of literature, etching a "new text into memory space."

4. The Rape of Youth

In *La presa di Macallè,* Camilleri elaborates the issue of youth's ethical responsibility posed by Demontis and cited above. This novel, written between 2001 and 2002 and published in 2003, is arguably Andrea Camilleri's most discussed and misinterpreted narrative.[12] While it is no doubt one of his least approachable works, especially for readers used to his Montalbano detective fiction, it can be read as one of Camilleri's masterpieces. In analysing the narrative, the Wu-Ming collective of authors notes:

> It is a masterwork, but it is anything but an easy book or in any way consoling. It denounces with ferocity the hypocritical and monstrous characters Italian society has been dragging along for many decades now. (n.p. or link)

As the title suggests, the novel takes place in 1935, during the Second Italo-Abyssinian War. It centers on a 6-year-old boy, Michelino, a metaphor for infant Italy in Year XIII of the Fascist Era. Michelino is the son of the local Fascist secretary, Giugiù (a nickname for Giulio which also means *Down Down*), who is a stand-in for Mussolini himself.[13] The work, by Camilleri's own admission, is actually based upon Carlo Emilio Gadda's *Eros e Priapo (Da furore a cenere)* (*Eros and Priapus [from Frenzy to Ashes]*), a satiric and grotesque pamphlet published in 1945, in which Gadda tries to come to terms with his own experience of Fascism.[14] In his work, Gadda "condemned the Fascist degradation of Eros, a positive principle of love and life, into Priapus, a violent and destructive possession, a true rape of culture and civilization" (Baranski and West 163). Similarly, Camilleri has Michelino love "Gesù, Mussolini, il papà e la mamma" with all of his

young, innocent heart, yet his efforts to be the perfect little Fascist boy do not keep him from being both victim and perpetrator of terrible acts of violence.

At the beginning of the novel, Michelino is described as being innocent "ma sperto," since he witnessed the nightly "battles" between his parents for many years, and is affected by two physical conditions: he is extremely well endowed and suffers from priapism when hearing the voice of Mussolini. Michelino is only six years old in the novel and that is why some have levelled against Camilleri the accusation of writing pornography. However, the perversion described by the author is of a different nature (Bonina 385), as he is depicting, through the rape of a boy, that of a nation by a dictatorship built around phony virility and the cult of the Duce. As Salvatore Nigro explains in the book's introduction:

> The Duce's voice in this book occupies a pornographic space that exists between a door that closes and a pair of underwear that is dropped; between buttons that are ripped open and a genital excitement. (Nigro *Introduzione*, jacket notes)

Michelino's erection is the obscenely swollen Fascist rhetoric, a myriad of hands raised in Roman salute, and the rigid code of obedience toward the Duce and the Fatherland.

Extremely smart for his age—albeit in a very limited way, since he eschews any type of critical judgment—Michelino is entrusted to a private tutor, Olimpio Gorgerino, whose task is to make him the best young Fascist he can be. Gorgerino, the head of the National Balilla Organization, is convinced, or at least convinces Michelino, that the Spartans were the Fascists of Ancient Greece (55). And, to commemorate Fascist victories, he celebrates with Michelino the way he claims the Greek philosophers did, ignoring *logos* and the fact that the very Gorgias he so often invokes was not Spartan, nor were any of the participants of his beloved *Symposium.* In fact, they were all Athenians—Sparta's opponents. Further confusing *logos* or the quest for knowledge tow which he pays lipservice, the tutor renounces Eros (the "positive principle of love and life") by citing the poet Aulus Licinius Archias of Antioch, and embraces the "violent

and destructive possession" of Priapus.[15] The time has come for Young Italy to pay for its *hubris*, but it does so without admitting the pain and understanding the act of violence: "Stinnicchiato a panza sutta contro il bordo del tavolino, Michelino s'arricordò che uno spartano devi sapiri sopportare il duluri senza una lagrima, senza un lamentu" (70). Ironically, it is during the young nation's most glorious moments (the Sieges of Adua, Axum, and Macallè), that the pain is first felt, as Michelino is raped by his tutor. The emblematization of Michelino as "Young Italy" and his rape mirror Gadda's belief that Fascism represented "a true rape of culture and civilization."

After celebrating the victory at Macallé with his private tutor, Michelino is selected to take part in the town's reenactment of the Siege. Camilleri's description of the absurd event is based on the author's autobiography: young Andrea also took part, at age ten, to the Porto Empedocle's reenactment of the historic battle. During the event, the Italian played by Michelino—of note here is that young Camilleri acted out the same role—is overpowered by his nemesis, Alfio, the son of a local communist who plays an Abyssinian. The shame is almost too much to bear, and as his father corroborates, during dinner, that communists are nothing but animals, Michelino decides to kill his schoolmate (108). The highly stirring nature of an event such as a battle reenactment on a young person's mind is a direct reference to Camilleri's life. With his young heart inflamed by rhetoric, he, had in fact sent a letter to Mussolini, asking to enroll as a volunteer to fight in Africa. The text of his letter reads as follows: "Sono il balilla Andrea Camilleri. Gradirei arruolarmi volontario per combattere in Africa Orientale. Firmato Andrea Camilleri." The author received a gracious reply from the Duce, informing him that he was too young to join the army, but expressing appreciation for his fervor and Fascist spirit (Lodato 87).

The glory of the celebration of the Siege of Macallè is the beginning of the end for Michelino. From this point on, he is forced to discover the falsehoods of the people around him and subsequently takes refuge in his own confused set of orthodox beliefs, which have been influenced by both State and Church. When his father learns of the pederastic practices of the private tutor, he forces Olimpio to leave town. Soon after, Michelino's belief in the goodness of the Church

and its emissaries is shattered when he realizes that his mother has had an affair with the local priest. His next disillusionment occurs when the Church rejects his contrition over the killing of his classmate, and when the priest breaks his seal of confession by telling his parents. In addition, Michelino's father gets involved in an affair with the young boy's cousin, Marietta, whose fiancé has died at Macallè, and with whom Michelino had started a physical and emotional relationship. Betrayed by Church, Family, State, and Education, Michelino becomes a lethal weapon, armed with the rhetoric to justify his actions as well as the physical means to carry them out. Demontis considers the breadth and scope of Camilleri's indictments of violence and hypocrisy in this book:

> All aspects of the Fascist regime are evaluated and dealt with: internal and external politics; colonialism; management of the organization of the masses and propaganda; autarchic economy; repression of dissidents; relationship and connivance with the Catholic church. (72)

Likewise, Wu-Ming argues that the real power of the book lies in its denunciation of the political and social practices of Church and State: "The Sicily of the period is a nonredeemable place, as it must have appeared in the eyes of the child Camilleri, an inferno in which Fascism and Catholicism were absolutely overlapping, in which they were the same thing" (n.p.).The end result is illustrated in the subtitle of Gadda's volume: "from Frenzy to Ashes," which aptly describes Michelino's emotional and psychological fall as he realizes the chaos of his clouded mind. With his morality corrupted by false rhetoric and his body raped, he has been transformed into a fanatic murderer. Having already killed small and larger animals, deemed "undesirable," as well as his communist schoolmate, there is no surprise he can murder his own family (father and cousin) with the machete he had received from his father. Young Italy is killing Mussolini but this is not a catharsis, not even after Michelino throws himself into the fire. As in "Un diario del '43," years of inflammatory rhetoric bring about devastation in the form of the very real and unyielding violence, madness, and death that had characterized Fascism. There is no redemption in the novel, as all

protagonists fall prey to the violence and suffering caused by religious and political fervor.

In this book, Camilleri leaves the area of his personal memory and enters into the realm of poetic imagination in order to reconstruct the past, and to find in it the elements of the disorder and crisis that trouble Sicily and Italy today. There are, of course, "striking similarities between imagination (fantasy) and memory," as this novel shows especially well (Lachmann 303). Lachmann argues in fact that "the bond between mnemotechnics and literature is grounded in the double meaning of *imago* as an image of memory and as the product of imagination, the creative stimulus of literature" (303). That bond is insoluble, because it is only through the imagination that memory can be communicated; Hayden White noted the "value of narrativity in the representation of reality" (White 1) and Camilleri clearly demonstrates this concept in his story, when he uses moments that belong to the realm of the imaginary and the fantastic (such as Michelino's conversations with the Holy Cross) to illuminate actual historical events. In *Imperfect Histories,* Ann Rigney asserts the aesthetic power of narrativizing, claiming that "literature has a privileged role to play in giving voice to what has been overlooked in other forms of remembrance," and that it is especially useful "for recalling certain experiences that are difficult to bring into the realm of public remembrance or that are simply too difficult to articulate in any other way" ("Dynamics" 348). In *La presa di Macallè*, Camilleri shapes his own particular form of remembrance, evoking extremely painful experiences and using the plot to reveal the atrocities committed first against and later by his protagonist. The inflicted violence becomes the symbolic representation of a cultural and political state of affairs that still subsists in contemporary Italy. Thus, reconstructing the past has meant for Camilleri to convey a message regarding the present: his novel clearly warns against political and religious orthodoxy and indoctrination.

In *La presa di Macallè*, Camilleri chooses to follow Gadda's rhetorical strategies of excess, using not only metaphor but also "a language that can be described as a counter-joke, with a vocabulary rooted in the abysses of pornographic literature" (Nigro, "Croniche" LV) in order to provide his interpretation of the past with the most appropriate medium. This is part of the reason why Camilleri recounts

this particular story in a dry, crude language, without any trace of his usual irony, abandoning his usual writing style which is characterized by witty discourse and episodes of *gravitas* interspersed with lighter, often humoristic moments. While it is a stretch to call the novel "pornographic," there can be no doubt that it is "perverse": perversion is exactly what Camilleri aimed at dramatizing, and the subject matter that led Camilleri to write such a radical book, trying to make sense out of events of the past. Readers' and critics' negative reaction to it can be attributed to the time of publication: the book was written in the aftermath of the World Trade Center bombings in 2001 and published during the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. As shown in the preceeding analysis, Camilleri clearly hopes to productively influence (or at least raise awareness of) contemporary national rhetoric in the early years of the new century by pointing out obvious ties to past horrors—atrocities committed by those overly influenced by or dedicated to Fascist indoctrination. By drawing parallels between Fascist propaganda and recent attempts of what the author perceives as political and cultural indoctrination by the media, Camilleri warns his reader of the possible consequences of blind faith in (political and religious) leaders as well as unquestioning acceptance of public opinion.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Baedeker is a German publishing house famous for its travel guides.

[2] It should be noted here that Leonardo Sciascia was born in Racalmuto, Agrigento, 30 km (18.5 miles) away from Camilleri in 1921, and was only four years his senior.

[3] Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset TV channels introduced Italian viewers to "American" values by picking up many of the top US TV shows, beginning in the 80s: consumerism, frenzied capitalism, and fierce personal and professional competition. Over the next few decades, the idea of abiding by a moral or ethical code was put into question by the Prime Minister himself pushing and overstepping boundaries again and again. Alexander Stille writes, "Berlusconi over a twenty five year span turned traditional values upsides down, with making money at the top and acquiring a philosophy of life at the bottom" (48).

[4] In response to the September 11 attacks of al-Qaeda, Silvio Berlusconi stated in *La Repubblica*, on September 26, 2001 (translated and cited by BBC News one day later), "We must be aware of the superiority of our civilization, a system that has guaranteed well-being, respect for human rights and—in contrast with Islamic countries—respect for religious and political rights, a system that has as its value understanding of diversity and tolerance… The West will continue to conquer peoples, even if it means a confrontation with another civilization, Islam, firmly entrenched where it was 1,400 years ago."

[5] When possible, I refer to the translations by Stephen Sartarelli (Picador). However, neither the short story collection nor the historical novel have so far been translated into English. Unless otherwise indicated, therefore, all translations provided are my my own.

[6] In *Il ladro di merendine* his exact age is given: in 1996 the detective is 44 years and ten months old (176).

[7] It needs to be remembered here that "luoghi" (places) are not defined only as physical places but also include literature among the "monuments" to be considered.

[8] This comes out not only in Camilleri's narrations of childhood during Fascism, but also in his literary accounts of Sicily's "alternative partisanism."

[9] For Camilleri, it was a volume by André Malraux, *The Human Condition*, which "saved" him. Cf. Chiaberge.

[10] The parallels with real life events, such as the story of Lucky Luciano, who was contacted by the Americans prior to the invasion of Sicily, is deliberate and another feature of Camilleri's narrative.

[11] See "La sigla" ("The Acronym"), "La veggente" ("The Soothsayer"), and "Being Here…," all in *Un mese con Montalbano*, and "Meglio lo scuro" ("The Dark is Better"), in *La paura di Montalbano*.

[12] For those readers interested in examining those critiques in more detail, see the "Archivio Storico" of the Camilleri Fans Club website, beginning in October 2003.

[13] Camilleri's irony in naming his Mussolini stand-in "DownDown" should be noted.

[14] Neither Fascism nor Mussolini are mentioned by name in the pamphlet. Since its original publication, only a heavily censored version has been available due to the crude language used in the original version. An uncensored version is scheduled to be published soon.

[15] Cf. Barański and West.

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