

MAFIA MOTIFS IN ANDREA CAMILLERI'S DETECTIVE MONTALBANO NOVELS:
FROM THE CULTURE AND BREAKDOWN OF OMERTÀ TO MAFIA AS A
SCAPEGOAT FOR THE FAILURE OF STATE

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ABSTRACT

Adriana Nicole Cerami:
Mafia Motifs in Andrea Camilleri's Detective Montalbano Novels:
From the Culture and Breakdown of Omertà to Mafia as a Scapegoat for the Failure of State
(Under the direction of Ennio I. Rao)

Twenty out of twenty-six of Andrea Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels feature three motifs related to the mafia. First, although the mafia is not necessarily the main subject of the narratives, *mafioso* behavior and communication are present in all novels through both mafia and non-mafia-affiliated characters and dialogue. Second, within the narratives there is a distinction between the old and the new generations of the mafia, and a preference for the old mafia ways. Last, the mafia is illustrated as the usual suspect in everyday crime, consequentially diverting attention and accountability away from government authorities. Few critics have focused on Camilleri's representations of the mafia and their literary significance in mafia and detective fiction. The purpose of the present study is to cast light on these three motifs through a close reading and analysis of the detective Montalbano novels, lending a new twist to the genre of detective fiction.

To my two treasures, Antonio and Massimiliano.

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INTRODUCTION

The representation of mafia within fiction is an under-explored topic, and even more so within Sicilian author Andrea Camilleri's works, which seem unrelated to mafia depictions. When interviewed the author confirms this notion. Yet after reading the author's non-fictional book *Voi non sapete: gli amici, i nemici, la mafia, il mondo nei pizzini di Bernardo Provenzano* (2007), on mafia boss Bernardo Provenzano and the communicative mechanism of *pizzini*, in addition to the author's narration of Provenzano's *pizzini* for the televised documentary on the capture of the same mafia boss (*Scacco al re: La cattura di Bernardo Provenzano*, 2007), I began to take note of persistent representations of mafia throughout Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels. The author has published close to one-hundred novels and the majority are historical fiction or detective fiction. Among the historical fiction works (at this time 53 and counting) only three of them contain a mafia narrative, while among the detective novels, 20 out of 26 feature the mafia.¹ Although the author excludes the idea that his detective novels deal with the subject of mafia, there is no denying the presence of mafia, which happens to take on the form of three main motifs: 1) the feeling *mafioso* type; 2) the dichotomy of old and new mafia; and 3) the mafia as a scapegoat to the failure of State. Thanks to these three motifs I propose that the author expands the *giallo* genre into a detective-and-mafia genre.

¹ The historical novels that discuss mafia are *Voi non sapete...*, *Il birraio di Preston* (1995), that contains scenes involving mafia characters, while *La banda Sacco* (2014) is more explicitly about a true mafia story. I would propose a future study on the distinction between detective fiction and historical and the connection of mafia with crime fiction.

My dissertation centers on twenty of Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels that exemplify the three above-mentioned motifs and that open up a new possibility of a detective-and-mafia genre.² My secondary sources will include Leonardo Sciascia's detective novels (*A ciascuno il suo*, *Il giorno della civetta*, and *Il contesto*) and several cinematic representations of the Sicilian mafia, including Francesco Rosi's *Salvatore Giuliano*, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*, and Fernando De Leo's *Milano calibro 9*. I will also incorporate *Voi non sapete...*, Camilleri's novel on Provenzano's culture of messages while in hiding, and *Il codice Provenzano*, the first official text to publish Bernardo Provenzano's communicative code. An analysis of the mafia within the context of Sicilian literature and film will prove fundamental to an understanding of the evolution of the mafia motif within genres such as the detective and historical novel, and whether Camilleri follows a well-trodden path or blazes a new trail. To this end, I will utilize and base my analysis of the mafia on *Cose di cosa nostra (Men of Honor)*, Judge Giovanni Falcone's testimony on the mafia as a social, economic and cultural phenomenon. In addition, I have consulted Salvatore Lupo's *History of the Mafia*, as well as Michele Pantaleone's *Stato di omertà*. To develop my narrative perspective, I will consult the anthologies on the mafia in literature, such as Elena Brancati and Carlo Muscetta's *Per leggere la letteratura sulla mafia*, Robin Pickering-Iazzi's *Mafia and Outlaw Stories from Italian Life and Literature*, Corinna del Greco Lobner's *The Mafia in Sicilian Literature*, and Vito Mercadante's *Letteratura sulla mafia: antologia di letteratura sulla mafia*. Such studies look at Camilleri's predecessors (Verga, Pirandello, Sciascia, De Roberto, etc.) who represented the Sicilian mafia in various shades and through diverse literary genres and narratives. This groundwork functions as a stepping stone for my argument on how Camilleri differs in his

² I also touch on a few of Andrea Camilleri's historical and non-fictional novels such as *Voi non sapete...*, *Il birraio di Preston*, and *La banda Sacco*.

literary and cultural rendition of the mafia, and how the mafia motifs function as a narrative device as well. My study aims to connect the phenomenon of the mafia with Andrea Camilleri's literary motifs and the detective genre.

In Chapter one, I will analyze the “feeling mafioso” type, or rather a collective consciousness rooted in Sicily's history of political and economical oppression and the pervasive culture of the mafia. While I examine instances of “feeling mafioso” within Camilleri's novels, I will also address Sicily's peasant culture and its history as a victim of exploitation and repression. It is important for me to examine the language and culture of peasants in relation to mafia language and culture.³ In an inclusive manner, I will address the influence of Christian culture and Cosa Nostra's appropriation and perversion of rules and rituals. To that end, I will discuss Bernardo Provenzano's *pizzini* and how his communicative code plays out within the context of *omertà*.⁴ I will also look at the use of religious references in Provenzano's code and the implications of his appropriation of Christian doctrine. More importantly, I will comment on Camilleri's own analysis of *pizzini* in *Voi non sapete: gli amici, i nemici, la mafia, il mondo nei pizzini di Bernardo Provenzano*. This analysis merits attention in order to define mafia mode of communication within *omertà*, as well as for my subsequent analysis of Camilleri's representation of mafia code through characters such as Don Balduccio Sinagra and Tanu u

³ In the historical/fantastical novels *Il gioco della mosca*, *Il corso delle cose*, *Maruzza Musumeci*, and others, Camilleri illustrates the Sicilian peasant culture through characters, dialogues, and proverbs influenced by his own childhood memories of growing up in Porto Empedocle.

⁴ In 2006, Cosa Nostra boss Bernardo Provenzano was apprehended after nearly forty years of hiding and being on the run from the police. While hiding in a shed in Corleone, he communicated with his family and men through tiny messages (“pizzini”) typewritten in a specific code. These messages were passed from person to person in order to carry out mafia business. Once investigators confiscated these messages, they deciphered Provenzano's code consisting of grammatically incorrect Sicilian and Biblical references.

greco.⁵ The conclusions on Provenzano's *pizzini* and his code prove relevant to my conception of mafia communicative code as a cultural and narrative motif within the context of fiction.

Provenzano uses code to disguise his true intentions to an outsider, just as Camilleri's detective novels present the mafia as a cover-up for the true culprits of injustices. More importantly, the mafioso type is illustrated within the detective Montalbano novels as a mode of communication utilized by mafia and non-mafia characters.

Chapter two will elucidate the dichotomy of old and new mafia, and the breakdown of *omertà*. Within the detective Montalbano novels, the old mafia is represented by elderly and "retired" bosses, such as Don Balduccio Sinagra and Tanu *u greco*, who render an "honorable and orderly" image of the mafia. According to Camilleri's rendition, the old generation complied with *omertà*, or Cosa Nostra's code of honor in which members of the organization respected their role within the hierarchy. What may be implied by Camilleri through the "quasi-heroic" mafia bosses Balduccio and Tanu—and the distinction between an old and dignified mafia versus a new and radical one—is a metaphor of the evolution of the mafia and possibly of civil society as well: within the context of organized crime, the "new" mafiosos and their conduct have decayed, contaminating the principles of *omertà*, and henceforth are creating a sense of anxiety for the future of humanity.

In Chapter three, I will examine and interpret the representation of mafia as a scapegoat for non-mafia crimes and how this blame is connected to the failure of the State as a civil institution. I will focus on the literary and socio-cultural implications of such a "scapegoat paradigm" within Camilleri's detective novels, and therefore will look at the evolution of this

⁵ In Camilleri's detective novels, the elderly *capo mafias* communicate to Montalbano through stories and allusions. Without using direct or explicit language, they succeed in expressing very specific information about mafia activity. On the one hand, they stay within *omertà* by not being transparent; on the other hand, the information they reveal is going against their code.

paradigm through religion, myth, and literature featuring the mafia, such as *Cavalleria rusticana* and *I malavoglia* by Giovanni Verga.⁶ In previous literature on the mafia, the scapegoat was a way to defend *omertà* and the “masculine prerogative” of vendetta. Within Camilleri’s detective Montalbano novels, the mafia as scapegoat serves as a way to deviate from the main story and the true culprit of the crime. Using Cosa Nostra as a go-to for blame is also a reflection of corruption in present-day society and its institutions that are let off the hook of civic responsibilities and accountability. Blaming the mafia for all social and political problems, when in reality the criminal organization is the State’s “partner in crime,” works as a façade to the truth of power relations. Just as Camilleri’s novels are multi-dimensional, power relations in society are always complex and never one-sided. So often in the Italian news, as well as in American media, we see the surface of events, of mafia bosses arrests, the discovery of a wanted mafioso in hiding, or of a mafia related shooting, etc. But is catching and arresting mafia members and bosses getting to the root of the problem? What I believe the scapegoat motif does is to question the issue: is mafia still the problem, or are the institutions and politics the true problem now? Is society hiding behind this excuse of mafia? Our society and its authorities are no longer held within one entity or one person, but are diffused among many exclusive and obscure individuals. What I believe Camilleri is expressing with this scapegoat motif is that using the mafia as culprit is all too easy and gives one a false sense of simplicity within today’s society. Once one can go beyond the usual suspect, then one can start to arrive at truths.

⁶ The nineteenth-century Sicilian author approached the scapegoat concept very differently from Camilleri. In Verga’s works women and honor became scapegoats for mob murders, as an “easy way out.” *Omertà* was a way to protect mafiosos and to justify their violence. In *Il giorno della civetta*, Leonardo Sciascia comments on the strong connection between crimes of passion and the mafia, and establishes Verga as the literary precedent of mafia strategy. Lobner writes: “Ever since the time when, in the sudden silence of the orchestra pit, during *Cavalleria rusticana*, the cry of “Hanno ammazzato comparì Turiddu!” first chilled the spines of opera enthusiasts, criminal statistics and number symbols of the lottery in Sicily have had closer links between cuckoldry and violent death. A crime of passion is solved at once so it is an asset to the police; it is also punished lightly so it is an asset to the mafia.” (36)

In Chapter four I will explore how the detective Montalbano novels and mafia motifs give a new dimension to the detective genre: the detective-and-mafia novel. Since nearly all of Camilleri's detective novels reference or explicitly incorporate the mafia in the characters, narratives or plot, the possibility of a new "genre" or "framework" becomes more evident. In this part of my dissertation I will investigate the precedents of mafia in the *giallo* and in detective novels; and then how the detective genre affects the mafia novel and vice versa.

In short, Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels are innovative both from a detective and mafia fiction perspective. The three mafia motifs that I will elucidate set the Montalbano novels apart from other detective novels and other literary and cinematic interpretations of mafia, in that Camilleri takes into consideration the social and cultural history of the mafia—of its prejudices, stereotypes and real life evolution—and the literary and cinematic representations of mafia within the works of, or derived from, Verga, Lampedusa, Sciascia, DiLeo, Coppola, Rosi, among others. Camilleri echoes the complexity of the mafia and at the same time creates cultural and narrative motifs. My dissertation contextualizes these motifs within Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels and within Sicilian Mafia fiction and film, furthermore determining their narrative function and social implications.

CHAPTER 1: “FEELING” *MAFIOSO* TYPE MOTIF

Per lungo tempo si sono confuse la mafia e la mentalità mafiosa, la mafia come organizzazione illegale e la mafia come semplice modo di essere. [...] Si può benissimo avere una mentalità mafiosa senza essere un criminale.

–Giovanni Falcone, *Cose di Cosa Nostra* (80)

Introduction

Andrea Camilleri is not known for mafia literature and yet so many of his novels mention or feature the mafia. As a matter of fact, out of twenty-six inspector Montalbano novels, twenty of them exhibit some form of mafia. In addition, many of his historical novels also feature mafia behavior and culture. Nevertheless, the author has even been quoted as saying that he does not write about mafia. One of the common features of his representations of mafia is mafia mentality, or “feeling” mafioso. Ultimately this feeling becomes what I consider a mafioso type that is illustrated through characters or instances that demonstrate one or a combination of the following: a) the culture of anonymity; b) cryptic language and allusive storytelling; c) the shame and display of *pentitismo*; d) crude peasant ways; and e) *sbirro*-like conduct. Before delving into Camilleri’s narrative representations of this motif, it is necessary to examine the origins and development of *Sicilianità* and feeling *mafioso*, and afterwards I will provide and analyze textual examples and references in order to establish the purpose and outcome of this motif.

1. Origins and Development of “Feeling” *Mafioso*

According to Giovanni Falcone, anthropologists such as Giuseppe Pitrè and Henner Hess, and Sicilian author Leonardo Sciascia, the mafia mentality can exist outside of the mafia. Many Sicilian contemporary authors have admitted to exhibiting in their writing a collective notion of *mafiosità*, “feeling” *mafioso*, or as I refer to it: the mafioso type. This concept has to do with the strong interrelation between Sicilian culture and mafia culture. The two realms are separate in that Sicily is not synonymous with the mafia; however, they do share characteristics in language, modes of communication, and traditions. There is a huge difference between the reality of the mafia (and *omertà*), and the more collective experience of feeling *mafioso*.⁷ The Sicilian mafia is not only a way of life based on *omertà*, but a business and economic model utilized to gain and maintain power. The culture of the *mentalità mafiosa* can be shared by mafia and non-mafia, and there is no ritual of initiation, except for growing up in Sicily or with a Sicilian family, just being exposed to the mafia mentality, and, most importantly, accepting and assimilating it to an extent. For Sicilianità and mafiosità often overlap in their cultural components, such as loyalty to the family and distrust of outsiders. As Falcone states in his memoir *Cose di Cosa Nostra*, one can

⁷ Although there is some controversy on the origin of *omertà*, popular belief is that it comes from *omo*, which means “uomo.” According to Hess, “The word *omertà* comes from the Sicilian *omu*, meaning man. Its main connotation is the idea of a true man: in the Sicilian view a real man knows how to make himself respected through his own efforts, defend his property through his own efforts, if necessary restore his honour and that of his family through his own efforts, and solve problems and controversies through his own efforts without having to seek the help of others or have recourse to any kind of state organ. The encouragement of a private use of violence is clearly implied. It is also reflected in local sayings; proverbs frequently offer the best definitions of subcultural norms. “A cu ti leva lu pani levacci la vita’ [...]; ‘Si moru mi drivocu, si campu t’allampu’; that is, if I die I’ll be buried; if I live I’ll kill you” (quoted in Alongi 1887, p. 76, and again in Boissevain 1964, p. 44, as still in current use). It follows for an *uomo d’onore* that he absolutely refuses any kind of cooperation with the judicial organs of the state – not only if he is directly concerned in a case, but also if he is only indirectly concerned. It is not therefore just a fear of terrorisation which keeps silent the witnesses of a deed punishable under state law, but also a conviction that it is the business of the victim, or his relations, to take the matter into their own hands. If the state organs were to be effectively involved, the person concerned would in a sense be robbed of the chance of proving himself an *uomo di sostanza*”(Hess 109).

possess a mafia mentality without being a criminal. What does this “*mafiosità*” entail then?

Thanks to the studies of anthropologists and criminologists such as Pitre and Hess, and to the fictional narratives of Verga, De Roberto, Pirandello, Lampedusa, Sciascia, and Camilleri, we can define the mafia mentality as a way of being intrinsically connected to the Sicilians’ condition attributable to centuries of invasions and repression. The Sicilian people were constantly occupied by foreigners, some more benevolent than others, and so one way in which they coped was by adapting or pretending to adapt to and accept the current laws and at the same time maintain private life and opinion. This practice encouraged the development of “silence” that became embedded in the Sicilian psyche. It left a heritage of a misoneistic temperament, made up of apparent submission and faith in traditions, united by a delirious pride. Falcone writes:

La riservatezza, per esempio, l’abitudine a nascondere i propri sentimenti e qualsiasi manifestazione emotiva. In Sicilia è del tutto fuori luogo mostrare in pubblico quello che proviamo dentro di noi. Siamo lontani mille miglia dalle tipiche effusioni meridionali. I sentimenti appartengono alla sfera del privato e non c’è ragione di esibirli. Io stesso in un certo qual senso condivido tale mentalità. Hanno perfino scritto che sono freddo come un serpente... La loro naturale riservatezza spinge i siciliani a non immischiarsi nei “fatti altrui”, il che è bene e un male allo stesso tempo. È un fatto che intromettersi, immischiarsi, impicciarsi in faccende altrui causa spesso fastidi. (86-87)

The traits of reserved-ness and minimalism in expressing emotions and opinions are a way of survival and thriving not only in the mafia world, but also in Sicilian society. Sicilians are customarily distrustful and cautious of outsiders, and at the same time are highly knowledgeable about what goes on amongst their own. Small towns especially feed on gossip and knowing everyone’s business, so it is only natural that people are on average reserved and secretive. This way of being could permit a parallel yet contradictory existence: through the practice of silence and the surveillance of their surroundings, Sicilians could simultaneously defy and endure their foreign occupiers. According to Falcone, this contradiction is what created the development of

the mafia mentality: “Il risultato è che i siciliani adottano e assimilano qualsiasi novità ma in funzione di criteri e di scelte utilitaristiche del tutto personali. Su tale antico retaggio il mafioso ha costruito la sua particolare forma di misoneismo” (81). The *mafioso* culture is also the ability to adapt to changes and to simulate courtesy and display hypocritical deference. It is a warrior tactic of surrendering to inevitable defeat and submitting to the dominant law. One could even compare it to the Machiavellian virtue of adaptability deemed essential for maintaining a successful principality, as Niccolò Machiavelli stated in his political text *Il principe*, but originally entitled and more appropriately known as *De principatibus* (from the year 1532).

Henner Hess gives a thorough outline of the collective mafia attitude and its manifestation within the criminal organization. He utilizes Barzini and Pitрэ as a foundation of the definition of mafia:

We must begin with an elucidation of the psychological attitude covered by the word *mafia*, an attitude to which the term is exclusively applied by some authors. This may be defined as a proud awareness of one’s own personality, of independence in every respect, the ability to look after oneself and to defend one’s own dignity at any price, and as an awareness of chivalrous ties with the members of one’s own group...

...*mafia* as a trait of character, a philosophy of life, a concept of society, a moral code, a particular sensibility predominant among all Sicilians. They are taught in their cradle, or perhaps know even when they are born, that they must help one another, stand by their friends and fight their common enemies, even when the friends are in the wrong and enemies are in the right. Every man must defend his dignity under all circumstances and must not let the slightest disrespect or affront go un-avenged. They must not divulge secrets and always keep clear of official authority and laws...In this sense any man conspicuously displaying his pride is a *mafioso*. (1963, 263-64)

Although Pitрэ’s conception of the mafia is outdated and limited, Hess interprets his perception of mafia as:

the awareness of man’s nature, an exaggerated idea of the power of the individual, the sole power of decision in each conflict and in each clash of interests; hence the inability to tolerate the superiority or, worse, the arrogance of others. The *mafioso* wants to be respected and almost invariably shows respect himself. When offended he does not turn to the judiciary and does not rely on the law. If he did so he would be displaying weakness and offending against *omertà*, which brands as distasteful and despicable any man who turns to an official in order to get his rights. (Hess 10-11)

Although much of these statements stereotype Sicilians as all exhibiting “mafia-like” behavior, the fact that such a mentality and lifestyle evolved out of Sicily’s past is undeniable. There is no need to conclude that all Sicilians feel *mafioso*, but we may establish that such ways are prevalent within society as a result of Sicily’s history. Just by looking at language and literature, there is evidence of such prevalence. In a conclusive note for the novel *Il contesto*, Leonardo Sciascia described the pervasiveness of mafia in Sicilian fiction. He considered “Sicilian-ness” (*Sicilianità*) as being inseparable from Sicily’s history of mafia. Renato Guttuso, a Sicilian painter and friend of Sciascia, also agreed on the inescapable influence of mafia culture. He stated that even if he painted an apple, Sicily and therefore the culture of the mafia were always present. Sciascia agrees with this notion and he elaborates on its relation to *Il contesto* in the following quote:

[...] ho scritto questa parodia partendo da un fatto di cronaca [...] ad un certo punto la storia cominciò a muoversi in un paese del tutto immaginario; [...] E si può anche pensare all’Italia, si può anche pensare alla Sicilia; ma nel senso del mio amico Guttuso quando dice: ‘anche se dipingo una mela, c’è la Sicilia.’ La luce. Il colore. E il verme che da dentro se la mangia? Ecco, il verme, in questa mia parodia, è tutto d’immaginazione. Possono essere siciliani e italiani la luce, il colore, gli accidenti, i dettagli; ma la sostanza vuole essere quella di un apologo sul potere nel mondo, sul potere che sempre più digrada nella impenetrabile forma di una concatenazione che approssimativamente possiamo dire mafiosa. (Sciascia 114-15)

According to this perception, a writer cannot escape his roots, and for a Sicilian the concept of “roots” implies the historical, cultural, social and economic influence of the mafia. Essentially, he affirms that the surface of his writing may be random, but the substance always evokes a grander issue; in this case mafia power and its influence on society and politics. Though the actual word “mafia” rarely appears within his novels, Sciascia often alludes to mafia activity within civil society through ambiguous language and referential and indirect narration. His stories were suggestive of the real-life power struggle between the mafia and Sicilian politics,

society and justice. For Sciascia, mafia culture has to do with the mafia's mode of communication: allusions, indirectness, and the lack of words, or silence. In fact, the writing style and narrations in novels such as *A ciascuno il suo* and *Il giorno della civetta* (as well as *Il contesto* and *Todo modo*, among others) display many allusions, indirect and cryptic narration, all very reminiscent of the mafia's communicative mode practiced in *omertà*, and therefore this "feeling" mafioso motif. In a symposium on Sciascia and the *giallo*, Margherita Marras explains the true vitality of *Sicilianità* that Sicilian literature can exhibit:

Sono ancora molti i critici e i letterati che percepiscono sicilianità, sicilianismo e sicilitudine come un'etichettatura il cui primario fine sarebbe l'isolare, o il ghettizzare, una cultura in nome di una sua specificità. Ma la sicilianità e il sicilianismo non si possono ridurre ad un'ossessione maniacale "geofolklorica"(11), né imprigionare in un'ideologia apologetica e autocelebrativa o in un'ottica decurtata di sfumature, manicheista ed estrema.

Perimetrando la Sicilia come spazio letterario appare evidente che, pur esistendo una corrispondenza tra forme, tematiche e generi, la sua principale caratterizzazione sia la varietà data da una pluralità di voci, dalle diverse tipologie di scritture, da elementi eterogenei e da complessi percorsi narrativi. Attraverso la sicilianità o il sicilianismo non si esclude quindi, anzi si contempla, l'individualità di ogni scrittore di cui si valuta la particolarità in rapporto alle influenze esercitate da fattori autoctoni (e non solo) di ordine socioantropologico e intellettuale. (Symposium: "Leonardo Sciascia e l'affermazione del giallo "nazionale-regionale," Marras)

This sort of *Sicilianità* is evident in Giovanni Alfredo Cesareo's theatrical work *La mafia*, which also happens to be one of the first dramas to feature the concept of the *mafioso* "feeling." Scholar Corinna del Greco-Lobner examines Cesareo's interpretation of the sense of *Sicilianità*:

In the play, the local *capomafia* ('head of mafia') Don Rasconà, a powerful *cacicco* ('mediator'), gives a point-by-point explanation of this historical-cultural paradigm. The arguments he presents are essential to the understanding of the resentment Sicilians feel for mainlanders, a sentiment largely responsible for the persistent identification of the mafia with *Sicilianità*, an insular patriotic response to the oppression of Italy's central government dating from Sicily's annexation to the mainland in 1861. (del Greco-Lobner 7-8)

Within this context, *Sicilianità* – otherwise known as “feeling *mafioso*” – is the socio-political history that Sicilians carry with them in their conscious and subconscious minds. In addition to this “feeling” there is also a socio-cultural-economic point of view on which Giovanni Falcone was an expert. In *Cose di Cosa Nostra* he discusses at length the culture of the mafia, and a major aspect shared by the mafia and Sicilians, which he refers to as the “culture of death.”

Judge Falcone writes:

La cultura della morte non appartiene solamente alla mafia: tutta la Sicilia ne è impregnata. Da noi il giorno dei morti è festa grande: offriamo dolci che si chiamano teste di morto, fatti di zucchero duro come pietra. Solitudine, pessimismo, morte sono i temi della nostra letteratura, da Pirandello a Sciascia. Quasi fossimo un popolo che ha vissuto troppo e di colpo si sente stanco, spossato, svuotato, come il Don Fabrizio di Tomasi di Lampedusa. Le affinità tra Sicilia e mafia sono innumerevoli e non sono io certamente il primo a farlo notare. Se lo faccio, non è certo per criminalizzare tutto un popolo. Al contrario, lo faccio per far capire quanto sia difficile la battaglia contro Cosa Nostra: essa richiede non solo una solida specializzazione in materia di criminalità organizzata, ma anche una certa preparazione interdisciplinare. (Falcone 86)

Falcone describes the relationship between the criminal organization and its culture as an interdisciplinary phenomenon. For him the mafia forms its own institutions and inserts them within civil society.⁸ From a cultural perspective, Cosa Nostra appropriates and perverts traditional Sicilian values of family and sacrifice, often blurring the lines between mafia culture and Sicilian culture. This applies not only to Sicilian rural culture (of peasant life) but also to the Catholic tradition and its rituals. These appropriations can be seen within the narratives of the detective Montalbano novels. In the sections that follow I will elaborate on these interpretations, their functions and effects on the narratives.

⁸ When describing the mechanism of Cosa Nostra, Giovanni Falcone refrained from using references such as the “octopus,” because he felt that such terms would give a false sense of *us* versus *them* and a disconnect between mafia and society. The mafia is more like a chameleon as it is always changing and adapting to society and economics. Falcone wrote: “Ma se vogliamo combattere efficacemente la mafia, non dobbiamo trasformarla in un mostro né pensare che sia una piovra o un cancro. Dobbiamo riconoscere che ci rassomiglia” (*Cose di Cosa Nostra* 89).

2. *Omertà* and the Code of Silence

Within the realm of literature, but also film, to an extent, a good point of departure when one discusses mafia and its means of thriving is *omertà*; in particular the code of silence that mafiosi must maintain. In the detective Montalbano novels *La forma dell'acqua* (1994) and *Una lama di luce* (2012), one of the ways in which Camilleri illustrates the *mafioso* type motif is through the integration of the code of silence. The code of silence is one of the major elements of “feeling” *mafioso* that Sicilians share with the mafia’s practice of *omertà*. The code manifests itself through silence, allusive language or storytelling, and proverbs. One classic example of *mafiosità* within the Sicilian literature canon is Lampedusa’s *Il gattopardo*. There are many instances in which the Prince (Don Fabrizio) and the priest (Father Pirrone) use an outside story as a façade to express their true feelings, while not divulging them directly. It is a protective device in order to stay unattached to a certain mode of thinking, or remaining unlinked to a certain politic. In the following dialogue, there is an example of cryptic communication between Don Ciccio and Don Fabrizio when they talk about who voted for whom in the elections:

Questo Don Fabrizio lo sapeva, infatti; e appunto per ciò la risposta non fece che trasformare un enigma piccolino in un enigma storico. [...] Era entrato in gioco il machiavellismo incolto dei Siciliani che tanto spesso induceva, in quei tempi, questa gente, generosa per definizione, ad erigere impalcature complesse fondate su fragilissime basi. [...] Alcuni [...] interpretavano i ragionamenti di lui come uscite ironiche volte a ottenere un risultato pratico opposto a quello suggerito a parole; questi pellegrini erano usciti dal suo studio ammiccando per quanto il rispetto lo permettesse loro, orgogliosi di aver penetrato il senso delle parole principesche e fregandosi le mani per congratularsi della propria perspicacia proprio all’istante in cui questa si era eclissata” (Lampedusa 104-5).

From an historical and socio-economic perspective, the idea of “enigma” and the practice of “Machiavellianism” is what characterized the Sicilian struggle to survive harsh circumstances by way of cunning, elusiveness, and adaptability. Part of this survival method also consisted of silence, taciturnity, and the minding one’s own business.

Camilleri, illustrates to an extent these practices in his first detective Montalbano novel, *La forma dell'acqua*, in which two characters refrain from providing information on the death of the important politician Luparello, as it would tarnish his reputation (27-28).⁹ In another instance in the novel, the TV newscaster chooses not to mention where and how Luparello died (28). In this case silence was beneficial to the reputation of a man in power. Within Sicilian culture, however, silence can be as damaging as the spoken word, for leaving out details can indicate deviations or controversy. The much later novel *Una lama di luce* also exhibits silence, but through the communication of code in order to avoid conflict. In this novel detective Montalbano reflects on a witness to a crime (Valeria) and how her silences and omissions reveal a lack of honesty and therefore a misunderstanding of the veracity of the case. Camilleri narrates through Montalbano's voice in the following reflection:

E com'è che Valeria, che con Mimi voliva pariri la granni accusatrici di di Marta, non commintava il fatto che il marito di Loredana era stato convocato 'n commissariato? Non avrebbono dovuto agurarsi che dal commissario lo spidivano direttamente 'n càrzero? Troppe omissioni, troppi silenzi. Po' c'era qualichi cosa d'assolutamenti 'ncomprensibili. (Camilleri 191)

For Montalbano and Camilleri, the silence and omission of information lead to disbelief and further scrutiny. In another scene of the novel, Montalbano reflects on the situation, the two women involved in the case, and their probable use of coded language to communicate with each other:

Ma la cosa 'mportanti era che il motivo per cui aviva ditto d'aviri bisogno di 'sta Nina era 'na farfantaria. Non c'era stata nisciuna cena epperchiò la prisenza di Nina doviva sirviri a qualichi altro scopo. E forsi avivano parlato 'n codici. (Camilleri 210-11)

⁹ The politician Luparello was having an affair with his own nephew.

Here we observe non-mafia characters utilizing a sort of *omertà* to conceal the truth and yet transmit a message to one another. Although they are not in the least connected to mafia activity, through their communication they illustrate the mafioso type motif.

Another element of the mafioso type motif within literature is through the culture of Sicilian proverbs that correspond to the tradition of the code of silence. Proverbs are essential to verbal expression in the Sicilian language, and more specifically they are vital to mafia communication. They convey meaning without being too direct or overly frank, and they are clearly understood through their relation to Sicilian rural and nautical life. Before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, proverbs were relatable to everyday reality more than single words or direct statements because the average person in Sicily had little to no education and was only familiar with farm life or fish mongering, so their preoccupations were money, family, love, and health. The following are common Sicilian sayings that have to do with the value of reservation and the parsimony of words in society:

A facci irata teni la vucca sirrata. (from the 17th century)
[Meaning: If you see an unhappy face, keep your mouth shut]
(Alaimo, *Proverbi siciliani* 17)

A lu cantari l'oceddu e a lu parrari lu ciriveddu.
[Meaning: Leave the singing for the birds, let the brain do the talking; or in other words "banter is for idiots; talking is for the smart"] (Alaimo 18)

Voi sapiri qual è lu megghiu jocu? Fa' bene e parra poco.
[Meaning: Do you want to know what is the best game? Do well and speak little]
(Alaimo 53)

Although such proverbs are not used within the text of the Montalbano novels, their essence and "feeling" are expressed through the fabric of the narratives. In the detective's conversations with mafia boss Balduccio Sinagra, as well as with Don Tanu *u grecu*, Montalbano and his interlocutors often reveal crucial information about new mafia activity without actually saying

anything. Through the omission and elimination of words and sentences, their silence provides clues and confirmations for the detective's investigation. Within the criminal organization of Cosa Nostra the code of silence is a major aspect of *omertà*, while among Sicilians this silence relates to the culture of anonymity and passively involving oneself in other people's business. In Cosa Nostra this silence has to do with supporting the survival and maintenance of power within the mechanism, while everyday Sicilian society utilizes this code of conduct or attitude, which relates to the long history of foreigners and the exploitation and repression of Sicilians. For such reasons one encounters praises of silence and contempt for garrulity within Sicilian folklore. The following fable is familiar to many Sicilians:

Once upon a time Speaking and Eating asked King Solomon which of them should dominate man's mouth, and Solomon decided that Eating should dominate man's mouth and not Speaking, for fear that Speaking might become man's downfall. Ever since, a man has been the more successful the less he speaks (Anonymous: "La Mafia," manuscript in the Biblioteca della Società Siciliana per la Storia Patria in Palermo, n.d.)

In Sicilian culture, numerous proverbs emphasize silence as a virtue, further enlightening the Sicilian and mafioso traits of taciturnity and anonymity within society. The following is a sampling of such proverbs:

L'omu chi parra assai nun dici nienti, l'omu chi parra picca è sapienti.
(The man who speaks much says nothing; the man who speaks little is wise)

Bell'arti parrari picca.
(To speak little is a beautiful art)

Cu è surdu, orbu e taci, campa cent'anni 'mpaci. (Pantaleone 1962, 193)
(He who is deaf, blind and mute lives a 100 years in peace)

Lu parrinu cummogghia lu calici, e nui ci avemu a cummigghiari l'unu cu l'autru.
(Cutrera 1900, 29)
(The priest covers the chalice and we must cover one another) (Hess 109-110)

La tistimunianza è bona sinu a quannu nun fa mali a lu prossimu (Alongi 1887, 76)
(Testimony is good so long as it does not damage your neighbor)

Zoccu nun ti apparteni né mali né beni (ibid)
(If something does not concern you, say neither good nor bad about it)

Chiddu è bonu chi vidi e taci (Boissevain 1964, p. 45)
(A good man is he who sees and keep silent)

L'omu ch'è omu nun rivela mai mancu se avi corpa di cortella (Uccello 1965, p. 23)
(The man who really is a man never reveals anything, not even under knife blows)

*Zucca, zucca – cu parra va sutta.*¹⁰
(Pumpkin, pumpkin – he who talks gets buried)

Una parola male detta, ne viene una vendetta.
(One wrong word entails vengeance)
(Hess 111-3)

Not only can talking act as a defect, it can also be an offense and dangerous to one's life. Ratting someone out, or *pentitismo*, is the extreme example of breaking the code of silence within the context of mafia, with grave consequences, and furthermore they are also go against Sicilian core values as demonstrated in the mafioso type. Silence and taciturnity are qualities widely admirable in Sicilian society – and not just in the mafia – because they are part and parcel of keeping secrets and maintaining loyalty and respect for one's fellow man. But on the other hand, these same traits can also indicate disloyalty and disrespect, depending on the context in which they are used. So just as in the case of words, the act of silence can be either a beneficial or a detrimental action. There are many instances within the Montalbano novels as well as Camilleri's historical novels in which characters, whether mafia related or not, observe the code of silence. Even Montalbano uses silence and allusiveness to communicate or avoid communication. It is a manipulative tactic, especially when he is prodded by his superior Bonetti-Alderighi for sensitive information about mafia cases, for which Montalbano unauthorized to investigate. The detective crosses the line in the eyes of the State by meeting and

¹⁰ In Sicilian peasant culture the *zucca* often refers to a person who refrains from speaking: “Testa ca nun parra si chiama cucuzza” or in other words, the head without a tongue resembles a pumpkin in the sense that it remains silent. (Storaci 14)

conversing with mafia bosses without the authorization of Montalbano's superiors (such as Bonetti-Alderighi), and in addition to the falsehoods that he declares to such authorities. These secret encounters and the untruths, are representative of the mafioso type since they are highly reminiscent of veiled mafia activity and the *omertà* that protects it.

3. The Tendency toward Anonymity

The tendency toward anonymity is strongly tied to the code of silence that Sicilians and the mafia share. One leitmotif widely utilized to illustrate anonymity is the anonymous letter. The anonymous letter is the one of the most common ways to communicate information without ties to responsibility. In the collection of short stories, *Un mese con Montalbano*, Camilleri entitles one of them "La lettera anonima," that relates a story of jealous love and betrayal. The letter is a death threat used to gain the attention and assistance of Montalbano and to gain the upper hand in love: "Annibale Verruso ha scoperto che sua moglie gli mette le corna e vuole farla ammazzare. Se la cosa capita, la responsabilità è vostra!" (*Un mese con Montalbano* 7). In this case the anonymous letter functions as a passive but powerful action that provokes emotion and risk.

Camilleri's literary predecessor, Leonardo Sciascia, certainly utilized the anonymous letter to demonstrate Sicilianità or the *mafioso* "feeling." One notable example is offered by the novel *A ciascuno il suo*, which begins with the main character and later victim of the mafia, Professor Laurana, receiving an anonymous and threatening letter. In *Tutto Camilleri*, Gianni Bonina interviewed Camilleri and inquired about the motif of the anonymous letter and the similarities to Sciascia:

Bonina: Nello stesso *Il giorno della civetta* Sciascia tratta il tema della lettera anonima. Anche in *Un filo di fumo* ne abbiamo un esempio nell'esposto al procuratore del re. E un altro esempio è la lettera di commissione. Più avanti lei si servirà spesso di questo strumento. Lo vede come una denuncia o come una delazione? Positiva o negativa?

Camilleri: La lettera anonima può essere tanto denuncia quanto delazione e avere valenza sia positiva che negativa. Si usava dire che le lettere anonime bisognava cestinarle proprio perché anonime, perché chi le aveva scritte non aveva trovato il coraggio di firmarle. Ma non sempre si trattava di mancanza di coraggio o di pura viltà.

Bonina: Infatti in Sciascia come in lei la lettera anonima assume a volte un ruolo centrale. Succede solo in Sicilia di dare ascolto agli untori?

Camilleri: Non credo che succeda solo in Sicilia di dare ascolto agli untori. Vede, quando qualcuno dichiara fieramente di aver cestinato una lettera anonima significa che l'ha letta fino alla fine per rendersi conto che era anonima. Prima l'ha letta accuratamente e poi l'ha sdegnosamente cestinata. Noi siciliani ce la conserviamo in un cassetto. (53)

Numerous Camilleri novels and short stories feature the anonymous letter and in turn create suspense within the narratives. Another example of this can be found in *La caccia al tesoro*, a sort of *Silence of the Lamb* noir, in which Montalbano receives anonymous and cryptic letters that lead to a psychopathic killer and his deranged crimes. In the short story "Il quarto segreto" from *La paura di Montalbano*, the story mentions the different manifestations of the culture of anonymity, concerning a work-related "accident" that results in a death but is masking a homicide. Detective Montalbano listens to the son of the victim who discusses his father's business and the culture of anonymity:

'Quest'uomo da sempre è il rivale di mio padre. È un mafioso, non sono io a dirlo, ma le condanne che fino a qualche tempo fa ha avuto. Ora però le cose per lui sono mutate, l'onorevole Posacane è una sua creatura. Papà con la mafia non ha mai voluto convivere, malgrado qualcuno sostenga la necessità di questa convivenza. E ha pagato: appalti truccati a suo sfavore, macchinari incendiati, rifiuti di fidi da parte di certe banche, minacce telefoniche, lettere anonime e via di questo passo. Poi quattro mesi fa, c'è stato il primo incidente in un nostro cantiere a Gibilrossa'. (Camilleri 188)

Camilleri may leave out the mafia all together, and yet throughout the narratives he almost always weaves in an element of *mafiosità* and “feeling” *mafioso* whether it is through the code of silence, the anonymous letter, or *pentitismo*.

4. Literary Representation of Feeling Mafioso in Camilleri’s Novels

In the text *Mafia in Literature*, Corinna del Greco-Lobner outlines Sicilian literary manifestations of *mafioso* behavior. Del Greco-Lobner examines mainly De Roberto, Verga, Capuana, Lampedusa and Sciascia, but she does not mention Andrea Camilleri. So I will apply her theory to Camilleri, further expanding on it by adding to her examples of feeling *mafioso*.

According to del Greco-Lobner:

In most Sicilian literature, unless the author purposely chooses to share information with the reader, Mafioso behavior must be discovered through character motivation or through personal feelings that reveal Mafioso tendencies. Clues may emerge in the way a character speaks, in his philosophy of life, even in his obsession with death. Often conclusions can be only tentative since the parlance of the Mafia, fictional or otherwise, goes beyond the boundaries of conventional speech as Mafiosi are unwilling to take risks by expressing in words or motions information only members are called to understand. When dealing with writers as subtle as the Sicilians, the Mafioso’s discretion in communication can lead to careful stylistic choices that ask the reader to decipher not what the author says but what the author means. Shortly, the writer’s technique becomes similar to the Mafia’s, as it demands intuition on the reader’s part to detect and decode the message. (del Greco-Lobner 20)

Camilleri’s Montalbano novels illustrate the features of *mafiosità* as a narrative motif that appears through characters and their dialogues and Montalbano’s narratives and methods as an inspector. In the 2012 novel *Una lama di luce* there is an important conversation between the former mafia lawyer Guttadauro and inspector Montalbano in which they communicate through a game of cryptic language and storytelling:

Guttadauro, omo mellifluo, cortese e piricoloso come un sirpenti, era l'avvocato della famiglia mafiosa dei Cuffaro. Praticamente 'nni era il portavoci.

I pisci aveva abboccato. Addecidi di lasciarlo agghiacciato per tanticchia. Mai addimustrarisi troppo 'ntirissato.

-“Avvocato, le chiedo scusa, ma potrebbe richiamarmi tra una decina di minuti?”.

-“Come no?!”.

Annò 'n cucina, si preparò il cafè, annò 'n bagno, si lavò la facci, tornò 'n cucina, si vippi 'na cicaronata di cafè, si addrumò 'na sicaretta.

Il telefono sonò.

Lo fici sonari. Sollivò il ricevitori al decimo squillo.

-“Mi dica, avvocato”.

-“Prima di tutto la scongiuro vivamente di accettare le mie scuse per l'ora. Certamente l'ho svegliata, l'ho tolta dalle braccia di Morfeo”.

-“Chi gliela dà questa certezza che fossi abbracciato a Morfeo?” ribattì il commissario.

L'avvocato si scantò che Montalbano, che forse non sapiva chi era Morfeo, avissi quivocato offinnennosi per l'insinuazioni. Doppo un attimo di 'mparpagliamento, chiari:

-“Non intendevo minimamente...Lei certamente sa che [...]”

-“Allora meglio così. Mi trovo a Punta Raisi e sto per prendere un volo”.

-“Dove va di bello?”.

-“A Roma. I soliti affari”

Che consistivano nel parlari a qualichi onorevoli compiacenti o a qualichi grosso funzionario che s'occupava d'appalti pubblici, alternando 'na promissa a 'na minaccia.

[...]

-“Le volevo dire che ieri sera abbiamo avuto il piacere di vederla in televisione. Guardi, è stato un coro di meraviglia. Ma lo sa che sta che è una bellezza?”.

-“Grazie.”

-“Alla facci tò e dei Cuffaro” aggiungi mentalmente.

-“Che Dio le conservi a lungo questa bella salute e quella bella intelligenza che possiede” proseguì Guttadauro.

-“Grazie” arripiti.

Abbisognava portari pacienza con 'sta genti che usava parlari a cuda di porco, 'ntorciuniata, ma 'n forma esplicita. Ma prima o po' sarebbi arrivato al dunqui.

(Camilleri 161-5)

This is a quintessential Sicilian method of communication, of alluding meaning through a second narrative and irony. In the above scene the mafia lawyer Guttadauro contacts Montalbano in a careful but forward manner. He slyly complements Montalbano for his appearance on television, which was staged in order to get a reaction from the Cuffaro mafia family. Guttadauro dances around the issue by complementing Montalbano on his “marvelous appearance.” Before Camilleri, Sciascia had written narratives that featured allusive storytelling in order to indirectly

illustrate reality. *A ciascuno il suo*, *Il giorno della civetta*, *Il contesto*, and other works also offer good examples of cryptic communication.

Another instance of cryptic meta-narration is in Camilleri's historical novel *Il birraio di Preston*. There is a scene in which a *mafioso* (Mistretta) is confronted by another mafioso (Don Memè), who alludes through a story as to why the former must die. He expresses a serious and direct topic through an indirect and metaphorical story. Don Memè and Mistretta are discussing why putting on the play *Il birraio di Preston* is problematic to the Vigatesi. The Don recalls a story from his childhood to illustrate his point: he tells about how he used to fly his kite in the airport area of Palermo, a terribly windy and densely forested area – a completely irrational and unsafe place to fly a kite. The story aims to point out metaphorically that putting on this play in Vigàta is the equivalent of flying a kite in the Punta Raisi area. It is unrealistic and even dangerous to Mistretta's life. But Mistretta is unable to make the connection. Then Don Memè requests to speak in "latino" or in other words, frankly. Mistretta is confused and asks, "So then what do you speak when you want to be obscure?" Don Memè replies, "We speak in Sicilian" (42). This means that to speak Sicilian is to speak obscurely and cryptically, and moreover what it means by "feeling" mafioso.

Once again Camilleri demonstrates this mafioso type in *L'odore della notte*. In the following quote he illustrates how remaining silent is also a root and a result of the failure of the State, and therefore of civil justice:

‘[...] A questo punto arriva il professor Tommasino, Gargano gioca con lui ad ammuccia-ammuccia, aspetta che quello si allontani, poi insera gli sportelli e si mette ad ammuttare la sua macchina fino a quando non precipita di sotto. Immagina, e immagina giusto, che ci sarà qualche stronzo che incomincerà a cercare il suo catafero, fattosi pirsuaso che si tratta della vendetta della mafia. Con la valigetta in mano, dopo manco un quarto d'ora è su una strada dove passano macchine. Domanda un passaggio a qualcuno che macari paga profumatamente perché non parli.’

[...] ‘Ma ti devi rassegnare, Fazio. Le cose stanno proprio accussì. La giustizia, di questi tempi, può andare a pigliarsela in culo. Bah, lassamo perdiri.’ (*L’odore della notte* 188)

Silence as a narrative device was utilized in Sciascia's mafia-themed and cryptic novels. Judge Falcone was familiar with the tactic of silence, both as a Sicilian and as an expert on Cosa Nostra and its mode of communication. The breaking of silence is equally powerful and can deeply change a situation or narrative. So in both literature (fiction) and nonfiction, we can see the use of silence or the breaking of silence as a narrative device that is part of the “feeling” *mafioso* motif, or rather type.

5. Camilleri’s Peasants and “Feeling” Mafioso

In several scenes of *Il gattopardo*, Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa illustrated the virtue of silence. In the following description of Donnafugata and Sicily, silence is represented metaphorically through the natural environment, in particular through the ironic contrast of the deafening intermezzo of the countryside (of both nature and man): there are harsh rumbling sounds of a horse and buggy, the sea, a dog, and even the plants and trees are sharp and disturbing. Through this environmental description Lampedusa then comments on the immemorial silence of rural Sicily:

Venere brillava, chicco d’uva sbucciato, trasparente e umido, e di già sembrava di udire il rombo del carro solare che saliva l’erta sotto l’orizzonte; presto s’incontravano le prime greggi che avanzavano torpide come mare, guidate a sassate dai primi raggi; poi bisognava dirimere oscuri litigi di precedenza fra i cani da mandria e i bracchi puntigliosi, e dopo quest’intermezzo assordante si svolgeva su per un pendio e ci si trovava nell’immemoriale silenzio della Sicilia pastorale [...] (*Il gattopardo* 94).

Silence interrupts the pastoral Sicilian landscape as if in a symphony of sounds. It is part of nature and it is part of daily life for as long as can be remembered. The Sicilian culture and the

mafia culture overlap in their modes of communication, implying that both share one root.

Before there were Sicilians and before there was mafia, there was nature, and subsequently there were *contadini*, or peasants. Camilleri sets most of his novels in Sicily during either the Italian Uprising, the Fascist era, or the present day. Peasants, or *viddrani* in Sicilian, are not always his primary focus; however, they are an integral aspect of his narrative voice within the peasant world.¹¹ The author depicts this realm through characters, narratives and language. His most explicit means of conveying the *viddrani* culture is through the prevalent use of Sicilian expressions and proverbs. The Sicilian language evolved alongside the peasant world of *casalinghe*, *artigiani*, *contadini*, *pescatori* and alongside the culture of *mafia*. Before Italy's Unification, illiteracy was common among the majority of Sicilians, so naturally the oral tradition, its proverbs and expressions thrived throughout the succeeding generations. Henner Hess writes on the intertwining worlds of the peasants and the *mafiosi* and the respect that the former had for the latter:

The Sicilians nourish an ideal of human existence which is far removed from the real existence of most of them. Alongside the somewhat sombre and mysterious type of the

¹¹ According to the Treccani dictionary online, these are the definitions of villano s. m. e agg. (f. -a) [lat. tardo *villanus* «abitante della villa», cioè della campagna: v. villa]:

1. s. m. a. Nel medioevo, chi risiedeva nella *villa*, la terra aperta che si contrapponeva al borgo e al castello, nella condizione di servo della gleba. Quindi, con sign. più generico, uomo di campagna, contadino: *e a' villani rivolto disse «Vedete, signori, come egli m'aveva lasciato nell'albergo in arnese ...»* (Boccaccio); *Allora il buon villano sorge dal caro Letto* (Parini); *Come assiso talvolta il villano Sulla porta del cheto abituro* (Manzoni); e al femm.: *i baldanzosi fianchi De le ardite villane* (Parini); *arnesi ... quanti Ne porta in petto, al collo e sulla testa La v. elegante il dì di festa* (Giusti). Oggi questo sign. è vivo solo regionalmente o in alcuni proverbî: *v. affamato è mezzo arrabbiato*; *al v. la zappa in mano*; *carta canta e villan dorme* (cioè, con un documento scritto in mano, le persone, e specialmente quelle semplici e sprovvedute, sono più tranquille sull'applicazione dei patti convenuti).

b. estens. Persona rozza di modi, poco civile e poco educata (come venivano polemicamente considerate le persone di campagna da parte di chi viveva in città): *sei un v., una v.; non fare il v., la v.; comportarsi da v.*; com. il prov. *scherzo di mano, scherzo da villano*; in alcune espressioni si riallaccia al sign. primitivo, mantenendo una connotazione spreg.: *villano rifatto, rincivilito, rivestito*, chi, pur avendo elevato la propria condizione economica e sociale, conserva (per lo più agli occhi degli appartenenti a classi sociali superiori) animo e modi rozzi e volgari.

uomo di rispetto, who exacts respect by a glance, a gesture or a word, who can settle problems and who in his own way matches up to the power criterion, there is the largely related type of the old-time *civile* and the Spanish *gentiluomo*, a man who is educated, intelligent and superior, without everyday worries, and hence in a position to devote himself to nobler things. This is the lifestyle to which the peasant pays tribute whenever he addresses landowners, especially aristocratic ones, lawyers, priests and, last but not least, *mafiosi* as ‘Don’. (Hess 40)

Rural life influenced language so much so that even today Sicilians continue to utilize expressions and proverbs from that world (sometimes unknowingly since they are so integrated). These deep peasant roots are one of the reasons why in Camilleri’s novels, dialect is not only spoken by the *viddrani* but also by inspectors and policemen, comical characters such as agent Catarella and Montalbano’s housemaid Adelina, everyday citizens of Vigàta, and *mafioso* types like Don Balduccio Sinagra. In fact, the author’s voice is well known for this synthesis of Italian and Sicilian.¹² Through the incorporation of Sicilian dialect and expressions, the author illustrates the diverse linguistic “shades” of a Sicilian town like Vigàta. Qualities such as sagacity, ignorance, wit, cunning, pleasure and suffering, animate the characters’ socio-economic conditions and state of mind. In the Montalbano stories and historical novels such as *Il birraio di Preston* and *Il gran Circo Taddei*, the Sicilian peasant vernacular is often contrasted with the standard Italian spoken by bourgeois characters, non-Sicilians (such as Livia or Northern Italian officers) or State officials (such as the Questore Bonetti-Alderighi and the secret agent Lohengrin Pera). The interpretation of “old” mafia (versus the “new” mafia) and the *mafioso* feeling can also be connected to this world since it is deeply rooted in Sicily’s agricultural past.

¹² Camilleri writes on his unique voice: “Ecco, il problema è stato l’individuazione di una voce mia. E l’ho scoperta del tutto casualmente: raccontai a mio padre una cosa molto buffa che era accaduta in uno studio televisivo e mio padre rise molto. Poi tornò mia madre e mio padre le disse: “Andrea ha raccontato una cosa, guarda, che è successa oggi nello studio” e cominciò a raccontarla. Poi si fermò e disse: “Raccontagliela tu, perchè tu gliela racconti meglio di me”; e allora io gli chiesi: “In che senso gliela racconto meglio?”. Così scoprii che per raccontare adoperavo senza saperlo parole italiane e parole in dialetto, e quando avevo bisogno di un grado superiore di espressività ricorrevi al dialetto. Tutta la mia scrittura che è venuta dopo è una elaborazione di questa welementare scoperta avvenuta allora.

In the short story “Sostiene Pessoa” (from *Gli arancini di Montalbano*) an elderly farmer character is also a poet and the father of a mafioso who belongs to the “new,” violent generation. When the farmer learns of his son’s cruelty, he kills him with one shot to the head. Within the dialogue of this narrative, Camilleri utilizes Sicilian dialect and venerates the *viddranu* Antonio Ferletto:

‘Voi siete Antonio Ferletto?’

Il ‘voi’ gli era venuto spontaneo e con quel particolare tono che indicava considerazione, se non rispetto.

‘Sì’

‘Da quanto tempo non vedevate Giacomo?’

‘Da cincu anni. Vossia mi cridi?’

‘Vi credo’.

[...]

‘Perché vi si gelò il sangue?’

‘Per comu ridiva, commissariu. Non ci parlammo cchiù, lui restò corcato, io venni qua a preparargli il mangiari. Per lui solo, io non potiva, mi sintiva una manu di ferru ca mi stringiva la vucca dello stòmacu’.

S’interuppe, fece un sospiro. Montalbano rispettò quel silenzio.

‘Quella risata mi sonava sempri dintra la testa’ ripigliò il vecchio. ‘Era una risata parlante, ca diciva tutta la virità supra a me’ figliu, la virità ca iu non aveva mai vulutu cridiri. Quanno le patate furono pronte, lo chiamai. Lui si susì, trasi ccà dintra, posò u revòrbau supra a tavula, principiò a mangiari. E allura iu ci spiai: ‘Quanti cristiani hai ammazzatu?’. E iddru, friscu come se si parlasse di formìcole: ‘Otto’. E doppu disse una cosa ca non mi doveva diri. Disse: ‘E macari un picciliddro di nove anni’. E continuò a mangiari. Madunnuzza santa, continuò a mangiari! Allura iu piglai u revòrbau e ci sparai darrè al cozzo. Un corpo solo, come fanno coi condannati a morti’.

‘Giustiziato’ aveva detto Fazio. E aveva detto giusto. [...] (62-63)

The father kills his son as if he were a sick farm animal needing to be put to sleep. The single shot to the head is also reminiscent of mafia execution-style killings. Here is another overlapping of mafia and Sicilian peasant culture.

On a larger scale, Camilleri’s presentation of a Sicilian–Italian dichotomy conjures up the enduring social divide and Southern repression that has plagued Italy for centuries, otherwise known as the Southern Question. Unlike the majority of Sicilians from the 1920s to the ‘50s, Andrea Camilleri had a privileged upbringing. His family had a sulfur business and owned much

land, which enabled it to hire farmers to maintain the land and to pay for Camilleri's education. At the same time he was able to learn humility, having witnessed the collapse of the family's sulfur business and the deterioration of its property. The young Camilleri was exposed to the Sicilian oral tradition mostly through the stories told by his grandmother Carolina, the people of Porto Empedocle and its *circolo* (social club), in addition to the peasants who worked his family's land. So, it is only natural that his novels reflect the full spectrum of diverging and overlapping Sicilian realities of the *piccolo-borghese* and the *viddrani*. Camilleri's childhood memories are essential to the culture he portrays in his novels. The author's individual experience includes the Sicilian vernacular, proverbial language, stories of betrayal and cuckolding, political and social dilemmas, eccentric love affairs, among others, most of which have some connection to Porto Empedocle's history. The author states in an interview with literary critic Gianni Bonina: "All this mixture [of the fantastical and mythical] came from a certain oral peasant culture that I had absorbed. I was four years old, when a farmer (*villano*) named Minicu told me a bunch of fables and adventure tales" (227). The young Camilleri was so enchanted by the stories that he made an agreement with the farmer: for every two tales he would give the farmer a pack of cigarettes.¹³ We also learn about Camilleri's connection to the peasant culture from his novels *Il gioco della mosca* and *Gocce di Sicilia*. Bonina describes *Il gioco della mosca* as an "epic compiled from the oral tradition and not translated from written or archival documents, but reproduced accurately from memory" (Bonina 87). According to Bonina, just as Pirandello borrows names from places and things in order to baptize his characters, so does Camilleri by raiding his own prodigious memories (Bonina 89). The fact that both authors refer to their personal experiences speaks to their appreciation for introspection and

¹³ Interestingly, Camilleri produces novels while he smokes cigarettes. He is prolific in both literature and cigarette consumption.

the Sicilian oral tradition. *Il gioco della mosca* is a sort of tribute to the writer's most influential and colorful memories. Camilleri explains the origin of certain terms he utilizes in his work. For example, in the historical novel *Il birraio di Preston* we encounter the term "chioviri a assuppaiddranu," which means to rain so much as to soak a peasant. As a child, Camilleri was fascinated with the imaginative stories told by the *viddrano* who worked his grandfather's land. One day he observed this farmer during a sudden rainstorm: regardless of the downpour, the farmer continued to work calmly and whistling all the while. At Camilleri's offer for shelter, the farmer replied: "Ci fici u caddru" (*Ci ho fatto il callo*), which figuratively means, "I'm used to it," and literally means, "I've built up a callus." So throughout the years of enduring drizzling rain, the farmer had built up a tolerance to rainstorms, thunderstorms, tornadoes, even the Great Flood.¹⁴

In the detective Montalbano novel *Il campo del vasaio*, a corpse is found on farmer Pasquale Ajena's land, but the search comes to a halt because of an excess of rain and mud. The policemen hypothesize about when the search can continue depending on the weather, and farmer Ajena says with conviction: In about an hour "[...] *farà occhio. Garantito al limone. Doppo ripiglierà*" (22). In the meantime the farmer offers the investigators some of his homemade foods: "*Lo voli tanticchia di tumazzo frisco con una bella feddra di pani di frumento fatto aieri?*" After an hour of savoring cheese, bread and wine, the sky clears up just as the farmer predicted. Ajella in this scene is representative of the genuine wisdom and therefore authority that many peasants contribute to Camilleri's narratives. One of Camilleri's earlier

¹⁴ This is my paraphrase of a quote from *Il gioco della mosca*: "*Chioviri a assuppaiddranu*" = piovere a inzuppa contadino: U viddrano che lavorava la terra di mio nonno, Zu' Minico, e che da piccolo mi affascinava raccontandomi storie fantastiche e storie di briganti, lo vidi un giorno zappare sotto un temporale improvviso, tranquillo e fischiettante. Al mio invito a mettersi al riparo: "Ci fici u caddru" mi rispose. Ci ho fatto il callo, l'abitudine. A forza di sopportare la pioggerellina, si era mitridatizzato contro il temporale, la tempesta, il ciclone, lo stesso diluvio universale" (pp. 33-34, *Il gioco della mosca*).

novels, *Il corso delle cose*, also opens with an innocent farmer who discovers a corpse and is reluctant to get involved in the investigation, given that the proverb says: “*salta il tronzo e va in culo all’ortolano*,” which implies that the farmer always gets the short end of the stick.¹⁵ They are predestined to an inferior position in society. From such narratives, readers can see how both the character Montalbano and author Camilleri treasure and sympathize with the peasant culture. There is a truth and wisdom from Nature that no-one can deny. Farmers, fishermen, artisans, etc., although uneducated and at times illiterate, have intelligence and wisdom that comes from their experience and the passing down of stories and proverbs.

Many of Camilleri’s novels reflect on the Risorgimento ideals of the *popolo*, nationhood and morale, and at the same time they re-evaluate such subjects by questioning the authority of the State and revering the memory of rural life. In the past the Sicilian rural life was regarded in a negative light. Henner Hess discusses this pessimistic notion:

Physical labour is generally despised as inferior. The life of the Sicilian peasant, the *contadino*, has never enjoyed the kind of positive interpretation which the German countryman has received through the ideas of the Romantic movement, or the American farmer through the glorification of the pioneer settlers. Contact with the soil and with animals is felt to be humiliating and unclean. (Hess 40)

Contrary to Hess’ observations on the interpretation of peasantry, Camilleri’s historical novels shed a positive light on Sicilian rural life and its deep roots in the culture. While his detective novels center around the inspector Montalbano’s investigations, they also admire the “peasant world” of *artigiani*, *contadini*, and *pescatori* by giving much attention and validity to their opinions, testimonies and lifestyle. The characters from this world reflect real people, who are appreciated and even honored in a way that has mostly been foreign to Sicilian literature until now. They are not represented as members of an inferior underclass, with no hope for survival,

¹⁵ More on the proverb: “Se per un colpo di vanga salta in aria un tronchetto, inevitabilmente andrà ad infilarsi in quel posto l’ortolano.”

but rather as a thriving culture, rich in storytelling, colorful expressions and proverbs. In Camilleri's detective novels, rural characters often appear as witnesses to crimes, while in the historical novels they are protagonists and show considerable complexity. Sometimes they play complementary roles, while at other times they are the principal focus of the narrative. Camilleri clearly considers this world important and crucial to his formation as a writer, as a Sicilian, and a human being. This appreciation translates to the page as a genuine reverence for the life and culture of the *viddrano*.

6. The *Sbirro* and “Feeling” *Mafioso*

Another representation of the “feeling” *mafioso* is Montalbano's behavior as a *commissario* and inspector. Many times throughout the narratives he is called a *sbirro* or *mafioso* because of his unconventional and illegal actions. First of all, is the *sbirro* related to the *mafioso* mentality or “feeling” *mafioso*? If so, is Montalbano a *sbirro mafioso*? From an etymological perspective, the word *birro* is an obsolete equivalent of *poliziotto*; adding the ‘s’ in front of *birro* negates all legitimacy from the person so designated. It would be the equivalent of the American “pig,” used pejoratively to refer to the police. ‘Sbirro’ also denotes a person with the cleverness and slyness of a spy, an investigator or an informer; one whose existence is dependent on criminals; and to be even more thorough, it also describes a person who lives outside the limits of civil and moral law – an outlaw. The Commissario Montalbano easily meets these characteristics. There are numerous instances of Montalbano behaving like a *sbirro* or even being referred to as *mafioso*. He violates the police code numerous times through deceit, breaking and entering, stealing, consulting the mafia and threatening people with blackmail. The

difference between the corruption of the State and that of Montalbano is that the representatives of former are working to cover their own backs, to protect individual reputation and power, while Montalbano breaks laws for the protection of human life and rights and to question corruption within the State. The following are examples of Montalbano going beyond the limits of civil and moral law in his crime investigations:

Domanda: quale sarebbe stato il dovere del commissario Montalbano?

Risposta: accompagnare l'infortunata all'ospedale.

Domanda: perché allora non lo faceva?

Risposta: perché in realtà il dottor Salvo Montalbano, un verme sotto le mentite spoglie di commissario di polizia, voleva approfittare di questo momento di turbamento della signorina Mariastella Cosentino per abbatterne le difese e sapere tutto di lei e dei suoi rapporti con Emanuele Gargano, truffatore e assassino. (*L'odore della notte* 208)
[...]

Nessuno avrebbe pensato a un coinvolgimento di Mariastella Cosentino. E lui se la sarebbe scialata a vedere la faccia di Guarnotta quando avrebbe visto il catafero di Gargano accuratamente avvolto nel nylon: perché la mafia l'ha incartato? si sarebbe domandato, sgomento. Ma era uno sbirro. (*L'odore della notte* 217)

In *Il cane di terracotta* Montalbano is accused of being just as bad as the mafia, while in *Il gatto e il cardellino*, *Il ladro di merendine*, *La pista di sabbia*, and *La voce del violino* he plays “god” and violates the police code by breaking and entering private property, consulting the mafia and utilizing anonymous video footage, and by deceiving people in order to get a confession—all without the approval of his superior. In *La gita a Tindari* not only does Montalbano consult the mafia boss Don Balduccio Sinagra, he also disguises himself as a “uomo di onore” in order to obtain a confession about a hideous crime. In “Un caso di omonimia” (from *Gli arancini di Montalbano*) Montalbano is mistaken for a mafia hitman, who must carry out a job. He receives a phone call at his local trattoria and is given a New York phone number to call in order to find out the whereabouts of the victim. Montalbano decides to take as many steps necessary to get to the bottom of this story, but he gets so deep into the character of the “killer” that he is mistaken for the actual one by the police who have been investigating the case for a week:

‘Abbiamo fatto trenta, facciamo trentuno’ si disse scavalcando, non senza una certa fatica, il davanzale. Si trovò dintra a un salone vastissimo, quadri e mobili di gran valore. Un’ampia scalinata di legno, coperta da uno spesso tappeto, portava al piano di sopra. Montalbano mosse un passo e si paralizzò. Che fesseria stava facendo? Perché si comportava esattamente come un killer? [...] Si voltò, ebbe appena il tempo d’issare il piede che si sentì agguantare per le spalle. Si divincolò e, reagendo con una prontezza che lo meravigliò, mollò un cazzotto in faccia non a quello che gli afferrava le spalle ma a un altro che gli stava allato. Quello che lo teneva gli assistimò una poderosa ginocchiata alla schiena mentre l’altro, riavutosi dal cazzotto, gli sparava un pugno nella pancia. Il commissario cadì affacciabocconi, le braccia gli vennero piegate darrè alla schiena, senti, ammammaloccuto, lo scatto familiare delle manette. (*Gli arancini di Montalbano* 71)

I interpret Montalbano as an inspector who exhibits the feeling *mafioso* motif. Although he crosses the line of the police code and manipulates the law, he is neither a *sbirro* nor a *mafioso*, but rather a paradigm of *mafiosità* and *Sicilianità*.

7. Concluding Thoughts on “Feeling” *Mafioso*

In omitting overt references to the mafia or relegating it to a secondary narrative role, Camilleri seems to share the general attitude that Sicily is not just about mafia – but very much a part of Sicilian culture and one of the roots of its societal problems. Society is so focused on mafia that the true problems affecting peoples’ well-being, such as inequality and poverty, are not seen as the results of exploitation, racketeering, and collusion that is linked to the institution of the State. The mafia is different from feeling *mafioso*, and you cannot have the latter without the former. In Camilleri’s world view, mafia should also apply to the State, and he goes to great pains to point the inextricable link between mafia crime and State corruption. State of mafia and State are so indistinguishable that it is difficult to explain their differences. Feeling *mafioso* is a way to include mafia culture but also to exclude mafia reality. In doing so, Camilleri alludes to

the criminal organization, its bosses, its crimes, and its history, while at the same time revealing to the reader a culture of bravado, an attitude that non-mafia people can possess and express.

CHAPTER 2: THE OLD MAFIA-NEW MAFIA MOTIF

Don Fabrizio a Chevalley: 'Sono una rappresentante della vecchia classe, inevitabilmente compromesso col regime borbonico, e ad esso legato dai vincoli della decenza in mancanza di quelli dell'affetto. Appartengo ad una generazione disgraziata a cavallo fra i vecchi tempi ed i nuovi, e che si trova a disagio in tutti e due. Per di più, come lei non avrà potuto fare a meno di accorgersi, sono privo d'illusioni.'

-*Il gattopardo*, (Lampedusa 164)

A Brief Introduction to Camilleri's "Old" and "New" Mafia Motif

Two of Andrea Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels overtly distinguish between an "old" and a "new" mafia. Within the narratives, the old mafia is represented by the elderly and "retired" bosses Balduccio Sinagra (in *La gita a Tindari*) and Tanu u grecu (in *Il cane di terracotta*), who evoke a more "honorable and orderly" image of the mafia. Irrespective of their criminal backgrounds, the two old bosses provide "wisdom" and "reason" in a topsy-turvy and often inhumane society, in which even such figures disapprove of certain mafia activity and behavior. According to Camilleri's novels *Il cane di terracotta* and *La gita a Tindari*, the old mafia generation aimed to comply with *omertà*, or Cosa Nostra's code of honor, in which members of the organization respected the roles within the hierarchy, maintained silence when confronted with outside authorities, and always kept their word on matters. All decisions about business or violence had to go through the chain of command, and violence was the last means of maintaining power or achieving a goal. No one could start a new business or commit a murder unless approved by the boss, or *capo*. At some point in the timeline of Cosa Nostra, this "honorable" and "orderly" image of the Sicilian mafia became tainted by a new wave of

“degenerate” and “toxic” mafia. Camilleri does not narrate the cause of a shift in paradigms; however, the narratives do illustrate a clear division between two forms of Cosa Nostra. In *La gita a Tindari*, the ailing and retired boss, Balduccio Sinagra, refers to two specific aspects that separate old mafia from new mafia: a) the issue of respect for *omertà*, and b) the level and type of violence. The first aspect manifests as a new trend of self-regulation and the disregard of the Cosa Nostra’s code of honor. The second aspect is seen as what the character Balduccio describes as the adoption of “limitless” and “ruthless” forms of violence, to the point of utilizing murder and human life as a means to profit economically and politically.

In *Il cane di terracotta*, the old boss Tanu *u grecu* refers to one major aspect of the “new” mafia which seems to threaten the very existence of Cosa Nostra, regarding their inability and unwillingness to interact and collaborate. Similar to Balduccio’s complaints, this problem also translates to a lack of respect for *omertà*. Tanu *u grecu* elaborates on more specific points and describes the new generation as being incapable of communicating effectively, and therefore unable to listen to and respect its superiors. No longer a hierarchy, the organization has evolved into a monarchy, with the ignorant and uncontrollable mafia bosses as leaders. Within the context of the original *omertà*, the new generation of mafia is interpreted as dishonorable, irrational and reckless. Unlike true *uomini d’onore*, they are more like bandits acting on their own accounts and using violence and carrying out business beyond the limits of the old mafia. But whereas bandits, as defined by Hess, act on a social or political motive, new *mafiosi* act on individual and clan motives for the purpose of economic prosperity.¹⁶

¹⁶ In *Primitive Rebels*, Hobsbawm distinguishes between social banditry and the *mafia*, characterizing the latter as more permanent and powerful, and being more of an institutionalized system of a law outside the official law: “In extreme cases they (*Mafias*) may amount to a virtual parallel or subsidiary system of law and power to that of the official rulers” (5-6). Hess, too in *Mafia and Mafiosi*, compares bandits with mafia. He likens the former to a revolutionary of two main characteristics: either one who defies the law

Camilleri's depictions of new mafia demonstrate a major departure from the original hierarchical structure of Cosa Nostra, with a threat to contaminate its once "pure" form under the code of honor. Through a chronology of representations of this mafia dichotomy, Camilleri cultivates a mafia motif that characterizes the degeneracy of one power (the old mafia), the corruption and imminent failure of another power (the State), and the spawning of new "mafia" and "State" as interdependent powers. The new mafia, therefore, acts as a sort of catalyst of change and ultimately of both the mafia's and the State's downfalls. The "new and old mafia" motif illustrates not only the rise of the new mafia and its lawless ways, but also the development of life-enhancing and life-threatening business and politics. In this chapter, I will explore the old and new mafia dichotomy through the various instances within a selection of Camilleri's Montalbano novels, all the while elaborating on the historical and socio-cultural background necessary for a deeper analysis. It will be important to highlight the mechanism of Cosa Nostra and *omertà*, its evolution over time, the origin of the new and old mafia myth, and the literary and cinematic interpretations of this motif. Addressing these aspects will allow me to set the stage and support my argument on the "old" and "new" mafia motif, which ultimately implies the anxiety of evolution, one that can be an unsettling progression of human beings and technology. The underlying theme that becomes evident is biological life, and the issues that derive from its alteration, extension or cessation. In other words we are discussing bio-politics and the business of life. Further along it will be evident how this concept of bio-business acts as a precursor to the motif of mafia as a "scapegoat" for the failure of the State as an institution responsible for the implementation of civil law and justice.

and runs from it for fear of persecution; and/or one who may be a victim of the aristocracy and defender of the peasant class such as in the Robin Hood pattern (8).

1. Origins and Transformations of the Myth of Old and New Mafia

Before delving deeper into the mafia within Camilleri's novels, it is necessary to state the following disclaimer: Even within fiction, likening old and new mafia is a daring task because of the ever present danger of misinterpretations and the human tendency to directly relate art to real life, and vice versa. There is no doubt that literature and cinema can and do subconsciously influence public opinion and perspectives on the mafia. Oftentimes artistic representations of a real socio-economic phenomenon dominate an audience's interpretation and create a universal myth. Prior to looking at the function of the mafia as a narrative motif, we must deconstruct and demystify the idea of an older and more "benevolent" mafia. One of the most important anti-mafia voices, Judge Giovanni Falcone also had one of the most valuable contributions to the dismantling of the mafia's system of power. In his reflections on the criminal organization, he addresses the myth of the "new mafia," and reveals the problems associated with categorizing and distinguishing between the immorality and violence of old and new generations of mafia. His main argument shows how over time there is indeed a transformation in the criminal organization; however that distance in time should neither diminish nor enhance the true reality and danger of the mafia. For Falcone, the stark comparison of one generation of mafia to another provides ground for a fundamental miscomprehension of the socio-economic and cultural phenomenon. In his memoir he writes on this issue:

È necessario distruggere il mito della presunta nuova mafia o, meglio, dobbiamo convincerci che c'è sempre una nuova mafia pronta a soppiantare quella vecchia. Già alla fine degli anni Cinquanta si parlava di 'mafiosi senza principi' che avevano trasformato la vecchia, rispettabile mafia contadina in un'organizzazione malavitosa implicata fino al crollo nella speculazione edilizia. Allora si parlava di Tommaso Buscetta come del mafioso nuovo stile, privo di remore morali e di valori, quello stesso Buscetta che oggi viene indicato come un uomo d'onore vecchia maniera!

Tutte le volte che Cosa Nostra si converte ad attività più redditizie e sale il livello di pericolo sociale da essa rappresentato, non si sa far altro che parlare di nuova mafia. Una

sentenza della Corte di Cassazione del 1977 afferma con incredibile sicurezza che la vecchia mafia non era una associazione criminale mentre la nuova lo è: altro contributo delle istituzioni alla non-comprensione del fenomeno e alla disinformazione. (*Cose di Cosa Nostra* 104)

Establishing such a law that declares the “vecchia mafia” *not* a criminal association, and therefore less of a threat to society, can be one of the many reasons behind the generation of the old and “good mafia” myth. If the law designates such a clarification, it reflects the common view and influences future opinions on the mafia. If we were to put all the pieces together of laws as such, gossip, individual experiences, film and literature, in the end misunderstanding and disinformation are the main culprits of the diffusion of this myth of an old and “harmless” mafia. Without a clear perspective of the organization’s history and context, it is unproductive to consider the criminal organization as a “good” or “bad” one, since mafia is a real and permanent threat to civil society. The only “good” form of mafia is possible from the mafia’s perspective and from anyone who is willingly associated and who abides by mafia code. Using the criminal organization’s language, “good” mafia translates into upholding *omertà*, or rather the “code of honor” which is explained under the following list of rules—or commandments—as understood according to Tommaso Buscetta’s testimony to judge Falcone:

- 1) non desiderare la donna di altri uomini d’onore
- 2) non rubare
- 3) non sfruttare la prostituzione
- 4) non uccidere altri uomini d’onore, salvo in caso di assoluta necessità
- 5) evitare la delazione alla polizia
- 6) non mettersi in contrasto con altri uomini d’onore
- 7) dimostrare sempre un comportamento serio e corretto
- 8) mantenere con gli estranei il silenzio assoluto su CN, non presentarsi mai ad altri uomini d’onore da soli, in quanto le regole impongono che un altro uomo d’onore, conosciuto da coloro i quali devono mettersi in contatto, garantisca la rispettiva appartenenza a CN, pronunciando le parole: ‘Quest’uomo è la stessa cosa.’ (*Cose di Cosa Nostra* 98)

Consistent with the rules of “men of honor” are also the various names for “honorable” mafia members as well as the “dishonorable” ones. The terminologies for the ideal *mafioso* are *uomo di rispetto*, *uomo d’onore* and *omo di panza*, while a *pentito* is at the other end of the spectrum, referring to the lowest form of dishonor to the organization.¹⁷ These names convey a set standard for the mafia in what they distinguish within the organization as “good” mafia from “bad,” and “right” from “wrong.” Although within the realm of Cosa Nostra, the code of honor (*omertà*) is the paradigm, outside this mechanism the code has no relevance and hence the “good versus bad mafia” classification is void of meaning. So, yes, the dichotomy within the criminal organization *is* a reality, while within society, among its institutions and laws, this distinction is void of meaning. Furthermore, the goodness of a man of honor is not determined by his generation but through the aforementioned rules that make him a *uomo di rispetto*. In other words, the old and good, and the new and bad are in no way synonymous or interdependent concepts. And once again the idea of a once benevolent and beneficial mafia is merely an invention of cultural memory and politics.

Further testimony to the misconception of a so-called “benevolent” mafia can be seen through the chronology of events involving the mafia in Sicily and the United States. Judge Falcone reiterates the inaccuracy of this legend of an old “noble” mafia, and dismantles the myth by focusing his attention on the mafia’s timeline of violence:

Ma la vecchia e nobile mafia è soltanto una leggenda. Ne sono prova gli episodi criminali più efferati e spettacolari del dopoguerra. Se tralasciamo la strage di Portella delle Ginestre e gli assassini di diversi sindacalisti, possiamo ricordare: nel 1963, la prima guerra di mafia culmina nell’esplosione di una Giulietta imbottita di esplosivo che falcia sette carabinieri; nel 1969, il massacro di viale Lazio a Palermo mette in luce la crudeltà di Cosa Nostra; nel 1970 la mafia è implicata in un tentativo di colpo di Stato, il cosiddetto golpe Borghese; nel 1971 il procuratore della Repubblica di Palermo viene

¹⁷ The expression “omo di panza” translates as “uomo di pancia,” which denotes a man who can keep a secret and remain silent when it comes to mafia activity. It is someone who can maintain a “poker face.” This is the opposite of *pentito*.

assassinato; nel 1974 il contrabbando di tabacco in massima espansione testimonia il raggiungimento di un livello che *avrebbe dovuto* suonare per le istituzioni come campanello d'allarme; nel 1980 Cosa Nostra controlla gran parte del traffico mondiale di eroina destinata agli Stati Uniti [...]. (*Cose di Cosa Nostra* 104-05)

So just by looking at the facts in mafia history it is clear the degree of destruction and violence, and how clearly threatening was the old mafia. It is indeed true that Cosa Nostra grew out of a rural and smaller form of mafia, and developed into an urban and even global criminal organization, managing a much larger economic model. Historian Paolo Pezzino outlines this phenomenon in his book *Le mafie*. He explores the original perpetrators of a so-called “mafia benigna” and locates a statement made by anthropologist Giuseppe Pitrè recorded in *L'inchiesta sulle condizioni sociali ed economiche della Sicilia*, and dating back from 1875-1876:

‘Anzi tutto ci è una mafia benigna. La mafia benigna è quella specie di spirito di braveria, quel non so che di disposizione a non lasciarsi soverchiare, ma piuttosto soverchiare, quel fare del ‘farceur’ come dicono i francesi. Dunque maffioso benigno per dir così potrei esserlo anche io, io non lo sono, ma insomma lo può essere anche qualunque persona che si rispetti, e che abbia una certa alteratezza esagerata, e quella disposizione, come dissi poc’anzi, a non lasciarsi sopraffare ma a sopraffare, quella volontà di mostrarsi coraggioso, di esporsi alle lotte, e via scorrendo.’ (Pezzino 26)¹⁸

Pezzino then properly argues that Pitrè defended and diffused this erroneous notion of a “benign” mafia as the following statement reveals: ‘[la mafia] non è setta né associazione, non ha regolamenti né statuti’, ma ‘è la coscienza del proprio essere, l’esagerato concetto della forza individuale, [...] donde la insofferenza della superiorità e, peggio ancora, della prepotenza altrui’ (Pezzino 32).¹⁹ This type of mafia as “consciousness” is primarily a culture and way of life, and

¹⁸ This passage is cited from pages 950-951 of the following text: Carbone, Salvatore, Renato Grispo, and Leopoldo Sandri. *L'inchiesta sulle condizioni sociali ed economiche della Sicilia: 1875-1876*. Bologna: Cappelli, 1968. Print.

¹⁹ Pezzino elaborates further on Pitrè’s thesis: “Fu però negli anni successivi che le tesi sulla mafia ‘benigna’ e sul maffioso come uomo d’onore, dotato di uno spiccato ed elementare senso di giustizia, troveranno completa elaborazione: un ruolo essenziale in questo processo lo ebbe il palermitano Giuseppe Pitrè, illustre figura di studioso delle tradizioni popolari. [...] Le tesi di Pitrè furono riprese negli ambienti economici e politici dell’isola, oltre che da prestigiosi scrittori come Luigi Capuana, che nel 1892

reminiscent of what Sciascia describes as the mafia “feeling.” However, there is a fundamental difference between Sciascia’s definition and that of Pitrè, insofar that the latter equated the characteristics and behavioral traits of the mafia with the actual mafia and their activity, therefore deeming it innocuous and a question of ethnicity, while the former acknowledged the existence of a mafia “feeling” separate from the criminal organization.²⁰ Such considerations as Pitrè’s attempted to legitimize the criminal organization. Pezzino then also writes on this effort to legitimize the mafia, in particular with the judicial case of Palizzolo-Notarbartolo. In 1893, the Palermitan deputy Raffaele Palizzolo was accused and tried for the murder of a banker of noble decent, Emanuele Notarbartolo. In addition, Palizzolo was accused of mafia association, but he and his supporters used this as fuel to create a defense highlighting the positive aspects of Sicilian honor, and arguing the benefits of the mafia and *omertà*. According to their defense, the mafia provided the backward and poor people of Sicily an opportunity of economic and social security.²¹ Numerous sociologists, historians and anti-mafia prosecutors and judges have long since turned statements of this kind on their heads, including one of the central voices against the

pubblicò un libretto su *La Sicilia e il brigantaggio*, riportando in appendice il saggio di Pitrè che abbiamo citato, e sostenendo che della mafia, di ‘quella piovra sociale [...] leggendaria dagli statuti solenni, dall’organizzazione formidabile, dalle cerimonie di massoneria deturpata’, lui, per quanto aguzzasse lo sguardo, non era riuscito ‘a trovare traccia’” (Pezzino 32).

²⁰ I elaborate on the mafioso type motif in chapter one of my dissertation.

²¹ Regarding Pitrè and the trial of Palizzolo, Nancy Triolo highlights: “He [Pitrè] also played a prominent role in what has been called the “caso par excellence” of Mafia violence and clientalism: the Palizzolo trial. Pitre and other important citizens were conspicuous in their defense of Raffaele Palizzolo, an elected Palermo deputy, noted criminal chief, and the presumed perpetrator of the homicide of G. Notarbartolo, a reform-minded Banco di Sicilia director. Furthermore, Pitre and other conservative politicians (and some noted criminals) were instrumental in the foundation of the Comitato pro-Sicilia, an organization created to defend Palizzolo as a victim of northern calumny (Palizzolo was tried in Bologna) and judicial error. Feeding on feelings of exploitation and separatist sentiment, local chapters of the Comitato pro-Sicilia sprang up around the island and quickly became a popular, rapidly spreading, violent political movement in both rural and urban contexts. As a final note, conservative politicians also encouraged the spread of this movement and managed to use it to wring special laws and public works concessions from the State (Barone 1987:318)” (Triolo 313).

mafia, Judge Rocco Chinnici, who proclaimed that the mafia is best symbolized by the Trinacria: three bare legs with Mercurial wings, all together spinning around a snake-infested Medusa head with glaring eyes. In other words, the mafia is a master of cunning, swiftness and illusion, and definitely not one to truly help the community.²² What may seem like charity to the community is in reality a way to keep others in debt (of any kind of “favor”) and therefore to maintain financial and political power. Palizzolo’s defense and the “continental” politicians argued the benefits of the mafia, and promoted the criminal organization as possessing “mystical” qualities. Consequentially this sort of connection between mafia and State later became the political platform of the pro-Sicilia party, and the senatorial election of Marchese Antonio Starrabba di Rudini, whose political position proclaimed the mafia as a benign and actually beneficial entity. His platform stated: “This benign *maffia* [...] is a spirit of bravado, that unidentifiable determination not to be put upon [...], which is thought to be a common heritage of all Sicilians” (Lupo 63; Notarbartolo, *Memorie*, 223-24). In addition, such thinking was contemporaneously supported and dangerously legitimized by Pitrè, who happened to be one of Palizzolo’s most ardent supporters:

Palizzolo poté tornare a Palermo in un tripudio di folla, che salutava in lui il simbolo della Sicilia umiliata e offesa dalla giustizia dello Stato: proprio in occasione del suo processo il sicilianismo fornì una delle sue più chiassose manifestazioni, con la costituzione di un ‘Comitato Pro Sicilia’ al quale aderirono importanti nomi della cultura, dell’economia e della politica siciliana, e il cui manifesto programmatico fu redatto da Giuseppe Pitrè, il più autorevole teorico della mafia come dato culturale. Era allora destinata a rimanere senza conseguenze l’ulteriore denuncia, che veniva dalle autorità, del carattere associativo della mafia, con la scoperta, da parte della questura di Palermo, nel 1898, di una ‘vasta associazione di malfattori, organizzati in sezioni, divisi in gruppi’, e con (35) stretti collegamenti fra di loro: una vera e propria ‘Commissione’ provinciale che regolava i rapporti e dirimeva i contrasti fra le cosche.” (Pezzino 36)²³

²² These statements are quoted from Fabrizio Calvi’s book *La vita quotidiana della Mafia dal 1950 a oggi* (p.35), and were made shortly before Judge Rocco Chinnici was killed by the mafia on July 28, 1983.

²³ Pezzino outlines the case of Palizzolo and Notarbartolo: “[...] la sera del 1° febbraio 1893, in una carrozza ferroviaria di prima classe, nel tratto fra Termini Imerese e Palermo, fu ucciso l’ex direttore del Banco di

So far we have discussed the old and new mafia, the good-benign and bad-malignant mafia, but a distinction has also been made between what sociologists and anthropologists call “low” and “high” mafia (*bassa e alta mafia*). These two entities are separated by their differing degrees of economic, political and social power. As Corinna del Greco-Lobner also acknowledges, this contrast between low and high is even more relevant to understanding the phenomenon of Cosa Nostra since it reflects the socio-economic conditions that plagued Sicily for centuries (Lobner 17). All of which created a climate ripe for corruption and organized crime.²⁴ Methods such as *clientelismo* and *raccomandazioni* were not only guarantees of survival, but also of economic and social success. Once again Falcone’s words ring true:

Sicilia Emanuele Notarbartolo, appartenente a una prestigiosa famiglia aristocratica. I sospetti si appuntarono su un noto uomo politico palermitano, il deputato Raffaele Palizzolo, che aveva avuto duri scontri con Notarbartolo: quest’ultimo si opponeva alle spregiudicate speculazioni finanziarie di Palizzolo, membro del consiglio di amministrazione del Banco di Sicilia, e dei suoi amici. La vicenda fu lunga ed ebbe momenti di grande drammaticità: al centro di un’estesa clientela, con agganci importanti in questura e prefettura, oltre che a Roma, Palizzolo era protettore di mafiosi e delinquenti, e lui stesso sospettato di avere diretta partecipazione nei traffici di alcune cosche. Si trattava tuttavia, di relazioni che non scandalizzavano l’ambiente siciliano: colui che veniva indicato come esecutore materiale dell’omicidio di Notarbartolo, Giuseppe Fontana, mafioso di Villabate che poteva vantare una lunga serie di assoluzioni da gravi accuse, fu assunto, dopo l’omicidio, al servizio del principe di Scalea, come amministratore di un suo fondo. Arrestato all’inizio del 1894 insieme ad altri mafiosi di Villabate (non per l’omicidio Notarbartolo, ma per associazione delinquere), e nuovamente scagionato dal tribunale di Palermo per insufficienza di prove, anche per la testimonianza resa a suo favore proprio dal principe di Mirto, le cui terre erano minacciate dal brigante Francesco Paolo Varsalona. E quando, ricercato per l’omicidio di Notarbartolo, Fontana deciderà di costituirsi, il principe lo farà accompagnare dal suo avvocato, nella carrozza con lo stemma di famiglia, direttamente all’abitazione del questore. [...] A seguito delle numerose testimonianze che indicavano l’on. Palizzolo come mandante, il processo fu sospeso, Palizzolo fu arrestato e incriminato. Processato a Bologna nel 1902, fu condannato, ma ancora una volta un intervento della Corte di cassazione capovolse la situazione: il processo fu annullato per un vizio di forma della sentenza, e ripetuto a Firenze nel settembre 1903, a dieci anni dall’omicidio. Il risultato fu un’assoluzione completa” (36).

²⁴ “Sicily’s political structure has always been marked by a very definite situation – an extraordinary weakness of the formal government machinery, popular mistrust and even hostility towards all state organs, and a withdrawal into an informal system of self-help institutions, chiefly the family and clientelist groups. This lack of loyalty towards formal organisations is not, in the historical perspective, some irrational factor, but must be understood as an entirely purposive, rationally motivated behaviour pattern. It is a product of Sicilian history. Even a cursory glance at historical facts permits two important conclusions – first, Sicily never was the subject of its own history but invariably a colonially ruled

In Sicilia, per quanto uno sia intelligente e lavoratore, non è detto che faccia carriera, non è detto neppure che ce la faccia a sopravvivere. La Sicilia ha fatto del clientelismo una regola di vita. Difficile, in questo quadro, far emergere pure e semplici capacità professionali. Quel che conta è l'amico o la conoscenza per ottenere una spintarella. E la mafia, che esprime sempre l'esasperazione dei valori siciliani, finisce per fare apparire come un favore quello che è il diritto di ogni cittadino (*Cose di Cosa Nostra* 132)

A potent power lies behind the mafia's facade of favors and "good" deeds, that all function as a replacement for the law and civil rights.²⁵ The appearance of "good" and "protection" is what creates myths like the "good bad guy" trope—of the gangster with scruples, or the criminal with standards. Such myths are fabrications of the mafia and the human psyche, and are only real in fictional accounts, much like in the English legend of Robin Hood.²⁶ The non-fictional mafia can never be separated from its detrimental acts. They can do "good" if they want, but the blood they shed and the agony they create, will always dominate their existence. As human beings we all possess the tendency to fabricate identities and mold them to our likings, just as do the entertainment industry, politics, and any public realm, even social networks. Some historical personalities attempted to reach beyond their dominant characteristics. For example, real-life bandits such as Salvatore Giuliano fought for the protection of the people against the government. The notorious *mafioso* Lucky Luciano helped the United States defeat Fascism in

territory, and second, this rule was subject to frequent changes. Both these factors – remoteness and change of the centre of government – made it difficult for the population to identify with the exponents of government, quite apart from their usual impotence." (Hess 15-6)

²⁵ Michele Pantaleone focuses his attention on the evolution of the mafia, in particular in debunking the myth of the "noble" mafia. He writes: "Per la mafia—che nel 1943 tramite la consorella d'oltre oceano era riuscita ad agganciare i servizi segreti americani—è stato facile gioco inserirsi nel sistema del potere politico nazionale, trasferendovi le proprie esperienze e intrecciando rapporti con altri notabili politici e con burocrati senza scrupoli. Con tutti costoro essa si servì della vecchia prassi del "reciproco favore" col quale i boss di tutti i tempi hanno costruito i loro successi e le loro fortune. Questa nuova espansione della mafia su tutto il territorio nazionale è stata favorita anche, e soprattutto, dal fenomeno dell'emigrazione degli anni Cinquanta-Sessanta, fenomeno che ha portato nel Nord una massa di forza lavoro ed elettorale, in seno alla quale erano anche molti "picciotti," dei quali la mafia si è servita per controllare i rapporti industria-lavoro-voti per conto di quelle stesse forze politiche per le quali si era impegnata in Sicilia sin dall'immediato dopoguerra" (*Omertà di Stato* 28).

Italy, and was also an example of a real-life gangster who gained fame as a sort of celebrity. More recently, within the Irish mafia, Whitey Bulger had a beneficial role as an FBI informant on Cosa Nostra. Regardless of these strategic and helpful jobs, there has never been a “benign” or a “good” mafia, and there never will be. Exhibiting a strong sense of courage and dignity is not particular to the mafia, nor is it to Sicilians. It is a human trait that can occur in infinite circumstances. Refusing to accept abuses and organizing protection is a natural reaction to social suffering and economic oppression, and not an ethnically specific one. As Pezzino notes, Pitrè and his followers tended to caricature and classify the mafia as an ethnicity, henceforth giving it a Robinhood-*esque* image of bravery, generosity and justice in the service of the people.

Since the beginning of a concrete formation of the Sicilian mafia (in the 1860s), there has been a steady trend of violence, with the quantity of killings peaking during the most intense mafia clan wars of the 1960s-80s, and up until the maxi-processo of the 1990s. Since then mafia violence has decreased; however, this observation does not separate the past from the present. Regardless of generation, Cosa Nostra is a phenomenon that should be viewed as a continuum of developments, and not as a mechanism made up of separate or individual parts, differing in time, space, and levels of violence. In his memoir, Falcone noted how over the years the mafia went through a major metamorphosis:

Negli ultimi tempi si sono registrati alcuni mutamenti negli uomini d'onore. Il vecchio mafioso contadino aveva costumi austeri consoni al suo contesto. Il mafioso urbano di oggi ha assimilato la cultura del consumismo e si è adeguato ai canoni del mondo moderno diventando funzionale a esso. Conserva però qualcosa di cui gli altri membri della collettività sono privi: la cultura della appartenenza e la fedeltà a valori fondamentali. In un mondo privo di punti di riferimento, i mafiosi tendono a conservare la loro identità. (Falcone 78)

According to this account, the mafia’s “evolution” has to do with a change in its surroundings—a move from country to city life—and therefore a metamorphosis into an urban economic model.

Regardless of the change in location and business, the mafia still maintained the core values of their organization: of loyalty, the culture of property, the code of silence (*omertà*), etc., as well as their hierarchical mechanism of power:

[...] il mafioso che si è arricchito illegalmente e si è inserito nel mondo economico legale – e ancor più di lui i suoi discendenti – non costituisce segno del riassorbimento e del dissolvimento della mafia nell'alveo della società civile. Né oggi né domani. Perché il mafioso non perderà mai la sua identità, continuerà sempre a ricorrere alle leggi e alla violenza di Cosa Nostra, non si libererà della mentalità di casta, del sentimento di appartenenza a un ceto privilegiato. (Falcone 130)

In real terms, we can establish that on one hand there is what Falcone distinguishes as the metamorphosis from Sicilian rural mafia to Sicilian urban mafia. In addition, there is what Hess describes as an extensive cultural exchange between the Sicilian mafia and the Sicilian-American mafia.²⁷ These developments attest to the manifestations of Sicily's history of harsh and exploitative conditions that encouraged the formation and transformations of Cosa Nostra. What we discover through a deeper perspective on the development of the mafia, is that its features and mutations were and are a natural progression, just like any other socio-economic and cultural phenomenon. The research and studies like those of Falcone, Chinnici, Pantaleone, Pezzino, del Greco-Lobner and even Hess, all highlight the falsity of the myth of a "good" and "noble" mafia, and at the same time they explain the illusory characterizations of mafia (the Trinacria) that have infiltrated politics, society, economics, and the human psyche.

²⁷ According to Hess, "The concept of nuova mafia, however, has acquired another meaning and now describes the (real or reputed) organisations of Italo-American or Palermo gangsters who develop their illegal activity in the areas of bootlegging, gambling, prostitution, drug trafficking, the control of big markets, the building trade, and so on. These are no longer young people who, at a later stage in their careers, will succeed to the positions of a Mazzaresse or Vizzini, but something new and different. This type of the new mafioso has emerged in connection with the emigration of millions of southern Italians to the USA, the formation of a specific subculture within American society, assimilation to new social, economic and technological conditions, and finally re-emigration to Sicily – in short, a process of extensive cultural exchange" (Hess 161-2).

When one considers the aforementioned metamorphoses of the Sicilian mafia, it becomes possible to determine to which types of mafia Camilleri's narratives are referring. The "old" mafia of the Montalbano novels (ie, Balduccio Sinagra, Tanu *u grecu*, and the likes) resembles the so-called "noble" and "benign" mafia of Pitrè's account. At the same time it also resembles what Falcone describes as the *contadino* or "rural" manifestation of mafia. Lastly, this "old" generation could also be related to what Hess and Pantaleone explain as the Sicilian mafia that was left behind during the mass emigration to America. Camilleri's "new" mafia (as represented by Don Balduccio's son Japucchino, etc.), instead, can be identified with what Falcone describes as the "urban" mafia, as well as what Hess characterizes as the Sicilian-American mafia. The question still remains, why and for what purposes such representations of mafia? What meanings do they convey? Let us first look at the mafia legacy within film and literature to better comprehend the mafias within the Montalbano novels.

2. The Myth of Old-Good and New-Bad Mafia through Literature and Film

In *Mafia in Sicilian literature*, Corinna del Greco-Lobner refers to Giovanni Cucinotta's text *Mafia: dove, quando, perché* as an authority on the problem with the old mafia—new mafia dichotomy. Del Greco-Lobner also highlights the ineffectiveness and arbitrariness of such a distinction, unless one specifies the more substantial changes that occur within the organization due to the evolution of society, politics and the economy:

[...] 'once more today we hear a distinction between 'old' and 'new' Mafia. It's difficult to know, however, or to explain where the 'old' starts and where the 'new' begins.' (Cucinotta 30) In spite of necessary adjustments to differing economic, political circumstances 'the soul' of the Mafia has not changed. Cucinotta explains that there has been 'an evolution' not a 'revolution' which has increased its power. Machiavellian to extremes and thus profitably opportunistic, the Mafia's motto all along has been 'change

with continuity,' (Cucinotta 31) which points to the necessity of flexibility according to the situation. (del Greco-Lobner 4)

This notion and strategy of changing with the times has been famously interpreted in film, in particular in *The Godfather*, when the Corleone business is in danger of being overpowered by the Sollozzo clan, that moves on to new business matters (narcotics) in order to become more economically and politically powerful. Vito Corleone resists this change and suffers harsh consequences for his refusal to move forward. In fact, historically, there has been an inter-dependent relationship between the old and new mafia. In many instances, just as in the *Godfather* films, the old mafia designates the Sicilian mafia of the 1940s-60s or Cosa Nostra, while the new mafia defines the Sicilian-American mafia that began in Sicily but immigrated to America. The first group flourished because of Sicily's economic, political and social circumstances as previously outlined, and while the Sicilian immigrant in general experienced much hardship throughout the adjustment to America, the Sicilian *mafioso* immigrants, although in a different country with a different language and customs, found an ideal setting for their "business affairs," or rather organized crime.²⁸ According to Henner Hess' study on the mafia and its origins, America was a breeding ground for mafia activity because of the combination of 1) a cutthroat and unforgiving atmosphere and 2) the tightly knit nature of the Sicilian/Italian culture.²⁹ Interestingly enough, for Hess the common factor of the Italian-American gangster and

²⁸ Henner Hess describes the plight of the Sicilian immigrant: "The Sicilian who emigrated to America at the turn of the century found himself in a country where the pioneering spirit, the myth of the robust self-made man, was still very much alive. He came to a world where it was up to the individual to seize his chance and make his fortune, even though by not altogether legal means, by bending the law or, if necessary, by using force. In his competition with the long-established and favoured immigrants (English, Scandinavian or German), the southern Italian at first found himself in a very unfavourable situation: he came from an agrarian society, he did not understand the language of the country, and his social prestige as a Catholic and dark-haired southerner was low" (Hess 162).

²⁹ Hess: "[...] among the millions of immigrants there were many young *mafiosi*, *picciotti*, who had to flee from the reach of the state organs. Illegal immigration, however, did not mean the conclusion of their

the Sicilian *mafioso* has more to do with their Sicilian culture than their relation to the old *mafioso* ways.³⁰ What this description can imply is the clear distancing of the “new” generation of mafia in America and its continued evolution into a much larger and more global business mechanism. This new wave of mafia also existed within Sicily, and additionally the Sicilian-American connection was highly influential to Cosa Nostra’s economic model:

Le due organizzazioni hanno dunque mutato abitudini e mentalità in funzione dei paesi in cui si sono sviluppate. La duplice evoluzione si è risolta in pratica in una progressiva autonomia, oggi totale, della mafia americana. Anche nel genere di attività: se gli americani fanno dello sfruttamento delle case da gioco e della prostituzione una delle loro principali attività, i siciliani rifiutano; se gli americani si sono specializzati nei mercati illegali, i siciliani tendono a mischiare legale e l’illegale, e, pur non organizzando il traffico di droga sul proprio territorio, vi partecipano a titolo individuale con temibile efficienza. [...] Si tratta comunque di un genere di attività (prostituzione o gioco d’azzardo) che non reca alcun prestigio a un uomo d’onore. È tollerata a titolo personale, ma provoca un richiamo all’ordine se diventa troppo vistosa. (Falcone 125-6)

From an historical perspective, considering the real life events and socio-political effects of the mafia, it becomes clear that within society the myth of the new and old mafia dichotomy is also a fabrication of literature and film.³¹ In some instances, the misunderstandings and misinformation fed to the general public are a product of decades of artistic and cultural representations of mafia and the natural effect that time has had on human memory. It is not a

careers; on the contrary, in the United States they found conditions which greatly favoured *mafioso* activity. The national groups immigrating into America, and in particular the Italians, formed subcultures within the American society, and the exponents of these subcultures were very much aware of their cultural peculiarities. In addition to relations of kinship and friendship a further unifying force among the immigrants was this marked sense of ethnic community. The *compaesano* from the same place of origin, in whose vicinity one would frequently settle, became a *compare*. This circumstance on the one hand lent a new ethnic cohesion to *mafioso* groupings and, on the other, created an atmosphere of *omertà* which favoured their activities, a subcultural *omertà vis-à-vis* the American state and its security organs” (163).

³⁰ Hess: “The Italo-American gangster may be described as a *mafioso* because he shares certain characteristics with the *mafioso* of Sicily. At the same time the differences must not be overlooked; undoubtedly he owes his label not so much to the features he has in common with the *vecchio mafioso* the old *mafioso*, as simply to his Sicilian origin” (163).

³¹ I am referring to *The Godfather* films, the film *Milano calibro 9*, and Camilleri’s Montalbano novels and television adaptations.

coincidence that within the Italian fictional novel, the explicit juxtaposition of old and new mafia as a literary subject did not appear until the 1980s and 1990s, with Enzo Russo (*Il quattordicesimo zero*) and Alfio Caruso (*Tutto a posto*), and subsequently Andrea Camilleri's oeuvre.

Prior to such literature, the mafia films of Francis Ford Coppola, Fernando DeLeo, and Francesco Rosi (among others) took precedence in illustrating the “good” and “bad” dichotomy of the mafia within the organization. In many cases the distinction is taken out of context and represented without deeply considering the historical background of the mafia. Without the general knowledge and perspective of the development of the Sicilian mafia and its evolution, it becomes an impossible task to represent the continuum of Cosa Nostra's history, and consequently it becomes difficult to refrain from judging one generation of mafia against another, and in the end glorifying the older form of the organization in its original and “unaltered” form.

Within the realm of cinema, there have been numerous representations of the old and new mafia dichotomy. In Fernando di Leo's 1972 cinematic adaptation of Giorgio Scerbanenco's *noir* series, in particular *Milano calibro 9*, the characters Chino and his “father” Don Vincenzo epitomize the benevolent form of “old mafia” and express nostalgia for the past: Don Vincenzo is old, blind and crippled—“un uomo finito.” In a conversation with the former mafia member Ugo Piazza, Chino explains how “l'americano” (new mafia) goes against the old mafia's principles, and for this he is even more threatening: “L'americano fa troppo chiasso. Bombe in pieno giorno. Una volta li faceva sparire con più cura. Ora ha molta più gente. [...] Più sono, e meno si controllano. [...] Si vede che impegni grossi ha. Damme retta, stammi a largo Ugo. Non dura” (Scene 1:00:53; De Leo). Don Vincenzo then speaks to Ugo about the new generation of

mafiosi and their limitless violence. He refers to the end of the “real mafia,” stating: “La chiamano mafia ma oggi sono bande, bande in lotta e concorrenza fra di loro. La vera mafia non esiste più. Quando quelli della droga vogliono investire i loro guadagni, costruiscono palazzi e quelli dell'edilizia sparano. Che c'entra la mafia? La vera mafia è morta” (Scene 1:01:00; De Leo). At face value, this scene illustrates an idealization of the old mafia, as a “superior” and “purer” form of mafia from the perspective of the older generation’s methods and standards. And although there is truth in the notion that the new generation has deviated from the old generation of mafia, creating a very different type of organism, ranking one above the other expresses a validation of mafia. The character Vincenzo degrades this newer manifestation of mafia as a lower form of crime, like “bands” or “gangs,” implying that they have neither rules nor collective codes.³² He declares that the era of *omertà* and respect of the hierarchy (the “real mafia”) has ceased to exist. What may appear as a decline in “honor” and “respect” within the criminal organization, is more appropriately characterized, from an unbiased standpoint, as a change in mechanism, and more specifically, in the allocation of power and the methods of enforcing power. So to say that one generation was less violent and more “humane” than another, is extremely misleading and obstructs the lens for further viewpoints. We cannot measure the inhumanity within the nuances of violence, and hence it is problematic to idealize the “old mafia,” but we can note the differences in context and practices of the mafia. In the end it is most important to keep in mind that the mafia is in fact an ever-changing “phenomenon,” and can never be pinned down to one set of features. It is an organism that evolves with time and under the circumstances. Mafia is not independent of its surroundings, and so it is always adjusting itself in order to thrive. Not only is it like an octopus with tentacles touching all aspects

³² *Bandits* and *bands* as defined by Hess and Hobsbawm.

of society. It also has the flexibility and adaptability of camouflage (mimesis) to change according to its surroundings and circumstances.

Another cinematic example of the old and new mafia distinction is in Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* trilogy, where Don Vito Corleone represents the old generation of Sicilian mafia. The family *consigliere* Tom Hagen advises the Don about the benefits of the narcotics proposition:

HAGEN: [...] There's more money potential in narcotics than anything else we're looking at. Now if we don't get into it, somebody else will—maybe one of the Five Families, maybe all of them [...] they can buy more police and political power. Then they come after us. Now we have the unions, we have the gambling—and they're the best things to have—but narcotics is the thing of the future. Now if we don't get a piece of that action, we risk everything we have, I mean, not *now*, but in ten years from now. (66)

Don Corleone reiterates to Sollozzo the “old mafia” principles that he wishes to uphold:

DON CORLEONE: I said that I would see you [Sollozzo] because I heard that you were a serious man to be treated with respect. But I must say no to you. And I'll give you my reasons: It's true, I have a lot of friends in politics, but they wouldn't be friendly very long if they knew my business was drugs instead of gambling, which they regard as a—harmless vice; but drugs is a dirty business. (68)

The “old” mafia that is illustrated through Coppola's Vito Corleone, was all about profiting financially from providing services and some external commodities. They offered physical, financial and political protection to other business owners, politicians, etc. within the mainstream of society, in exchange for money and reputation. In addition, the market of gambling, alcohol and prostitution, acted as a commodity to enhance mainstream life (or *bios*). Through these services and products the mafia of the “Corleone” generation (or in other words the first generation Sicilian-American mafia) profited and grew as an economic and socio-cultural mechanism. This wave of mafia brought their traditions of Cosa Nostra to the US and invented a new economic model of prosperity. As Hess discusses in his study, the change from rural Sicily to American city life (New York, Chicago, Detroit, etc.) paved the way for a transformation of

the mafia from a local business of “protection” to an economical empire, and therefore the American sense of “business.” The *Godfather* novels and films offer insight into this transition from a small town like Corleone to the big city, of Postwar Sicily and the influx of Italians to the US (of Don Tommaso from Corleone, and Don Fanucci to Don Vito Corleone in NYC), as well as the shift from the first generation of Sicilian-American mafia to the second (Vito to Michael).³³

With the development of a “new” generation of mafia (for example with Lucky Luciano and Murder Inc.), the “old” mafia was confronted with a new product that went beyond the previous services and substances. This new area of business involved life-altering substances: narcotics. The old mafia’s services and “products” contributed to the “improvement” of life at the cost of threatening and/or ending the lives of others: extending/enhancing life through extending services and controlling/ending life. The new mafia’s services, such as those of Murder Inc., pushed this to the limit with life-altering drugs that could either alter, enhance or end life. In contrast with Vito Corleone, Michael instead represents the new generation of mafia that *is* involved in the business of life-altering and life-enhancing drugs and activities or the beginnings of “Bio-Business.”³⁴ This conception of mafia and bio-business will later be seen in

³³ The mafia is intriguing for its constant need to have leadership. And when one leader is ousted, it is imperative that there be a replacement. There are multiple instances of replacements in the *Godfather* films. Chronologically, the first one is Vito Corleone murdering Don Fanucci from New York City. He takes over the service of providing protection for his fellow *paesan*’ who struggle as immigrants in New York. The next “replacement” is when Vito returns to his hometown of Corleone and murders Don Tommaso, and in doing so he takes over the Genco olive oil business and the title of Don Corleone. The third replacement happens when Don Corleone refuses to expand his business to provide narcotics. As a result he is shot down and unable to lead the business. His son Michael is put into power, and agrees to join the market for narcotics.

³⁴ This first film (*The Godfather Part I*) illustrates the Sicilian-American mafia and its evolution from the Sicilian mafia Cosa Nostra.

Camilleri's dichotomy of old and new mafia, the such will also convey the larger issue of new developments and the ethical concerns that accompany them.

3. Old Mafia and New Mafia in the Montalbano Novels

There are two main types of mafia that are illustrated in the Montalbano narratives: the old mafia, which describes the original formation and ruling of Cosa Nostra, involving men of honor and their code, *omertà*; and the new mafia, which portrays a deviation from *omertà* and mafia superiors, and more violence and inhumanity. Overall Camilleri highlights the old mafia generation by giving it a voice through characters and illustrating only their perspective. The new mafia is primarily represented through other characters such as the old mafia who inform Montalbano of its violence and business enterprises. Not by accident, the new mafia does not have its own narrative voice, but is only referred to and is spoken about critically in the third person. These narrative tactics remove the characters and audience even more and in turn dehumanize and demonize the new mafia. As a consequence this lack of voice and the criticism of new mafia offer a strong contrast between the old and new mafia, and in the end paints the old mafia in a positive light and the new mafia in a negative one.

But what about that which is in between old and new? How does Camilleri narrate and represent the transition of change? In addition, what are the implications of these representations? Camilleri's short story "Trappola per gatti" illustrates a weakening Sinagra "dynasty," and furthermore a deterioration of *omertà*. In this story the Commissario Montalbano exploits store owner and *pizzo* collector for the Sinagras—Pepè Rizzo who is a pawn for the Sinagra family—in order to stage a robbery and liberate Rizzo from his mafia duties. This

Boccaccesque *beffa*—of making a deliberate mockery by toying with social and cultural norms—causes much laughter among the people of Vigàta, highly reminiscent of the *brigata*'s reactions to the more humorous stories of the *Decameron* that illustrate the human vices and virtues through ten days away from a physically and morally decaying Firenze.³⁵ In “Trappola per gatti” Camilleri writes: “Il primo a riscuotersi dall’attonimento fu Giosué Musumeci. E rise. Dopo tanticchia, ridevano tutti, chi lacrimando, chi tenendosi la panza, chi addirittura rotolandosi a terra. E quella risata segnò il principio della decadenza della famiglia Sinagra” (*Un mese con Montalbano*, 118). Since the laughter of the *Decameron* illustrates joyful reactions to comical stories, told at a time of suffering and the very serious circumstances of the plague, it is probable that Camilleri is either suffering and in dire straits or that he is parodying the *brigata* and evoking a serious circumstance (the mafia) and the townspeople’s unexplainable reaction to it (laughter). My belief is that the latter remains true in the sense that the author is utilizing the mafia as a motif and therefore as a narrative device to elicit a reaction and possibly an opinion on the subject.

First of all, what are the characteristics of the “Sinagra dynasty” and its downfall? Let us begin this examination by reflecting on the old and new mafia dichotomy. In an interview, Camilleri reflects on the distinction between old and new mafia through the perspective of his character, old mafia boss Don Balduccio Sinagra:

Bisogna tenere presente, ed è fondamentale per capire i rapporti con Montalbano, che Balduccio Sinagra appartiene alla vecchia mafia. Che aveva un suo codice. Orrendo, mostruoso, tutto quello che si vuole, ma *codice d’onore*. Per esempio, in nessun modo dovevano essere ammazzati donne, vecchi e bambini. Quindi, anche per Balduccio, può esserci un limite all’orrore. (Bonina 274)

³⁵ The “beffa” was famously and originally demonstrated in Italian literature by Giovanni Boccaccio. The “beffa” is a practical joke that mocks or satirizes another person, mainly highlighting human weaknesses such as foolishness, naiveté, greed, disloyalty, etc.

As a matter of fact, in *La gita a Tindari* Don Balduccio laments to Montalbano about the new generation of boundless violence. He describes the differences between old and new mafia in the following quote: “[...] abbiamo macari fatto sbagli grossissimi, ma sempri abbiamo saputo ca c’era una linea ca non doviva essere passata. Mai. Pirchi passannu quella linea non c’era cchiù differenza tra un omo e una vestia” (122). More specifically, Balduccio speaks about his own grandson, Japichinu Sinagra, who has his hand in organ trafficking. This level of criminality and violence is far removed from civil life and even *omertà*. Life is the most important asset for the mafia, and so economically speaking, it became opportune for them to also get involved with technological and health innovations. This means that in doing so, they break boundaries by commodifying biological life which sometimes means that in order to improve and extend life, the expense becomes ending life: through ending life for organ trafficking, they can extend life through organ transplants. Medical progress and its inventions which can do good or bad, through the lens of the mafia it can turn into an evil tradeoff. What was once a business of killing in order to ascertain the survival of the criminal organization and their business, now becomes a business of killing or ruining lives in order to assure the survival of others, mainly the privileged and those connected to politicians in power. From the client’s perspective, the mafia and its business partners make money because there are no longer people who want to suffer and bear their own burdens. The mafia supplies illegal services because there is a demand for ways to bypass the “cross” via narcotics, alcohol, gambling, human and organ trafficking, etc.³⁶ For such implications of new mafia bio-business, Balduccio reaches out to the Commissario Montalbano to “purify” and “save” the integrity and humanity of Cosa Nostra.

³⁶ In the Catholic tradition, Jesus Christ encouraged followers to carry their own cross: take responsibility and deal with their own problems. But with the mafia, business thrives on the weakness of humans and their inability to cope with burdens. Cosa Nostra is full of conundrums and contradictions such as worshipping the Lord, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary, and yet completely ignoring the Ten Commandments, in particular “Thou shall not kill,” “Thou shall not commit adultery” and “Thou shall not steal.”

“Sostiene pessa,” Camilleri’s short story from *Gli arancini di Montalbano*, also displays a similar tendency of the old mafia’s need to “purify” and “save” the integrity of *omertà*. In this short story, the father of a mafia killer is driven to kill his own son, who is not only a *mafioso*, but a merciless and unstoppable killer. The son brags to his father about his killings, which does not spare children. The father, who until now denied the harsh reality of his son, is so disgusted by the son’s attitude toward the homicides as if they were “successes,” that he feels the need to remove any future possibility of more bloodshed:

Io ci spiai pichí girasse armatu e lui m’arrispose ch’era pichí si potivano fari incontri tinti, cattivi. E si misi a ridiri. E a mia mi s’aggilò u sangu [...] per comu ridiva, commissariu. Non ci parlammo cchiù, io non potiva, mi sintiva una manu di ferru ca mi stringiva la vucca dello stòmacu.

‘Quella risata mi sonava sempri dintra la testa’ ripigliò il vecchio. ‘Era una risata parlante, ca diciva tutta la virità supra a me’ figliu, la virità ca iu non aveva mai voluto cridiri. Quannu le patate furono pronte, lo chiamai. Lui si susì, trasì ccà dintra, posò u revòrbaru supra a tavula, principiò a mangiari. E allora iu ci spiai: ‘Quanti cristiani hai ammazzatu?’. E iddru, friscu come se si parlasse di formìcole: ‘Otto’. E doppo disse una cosa ca non mi doveva diri. Disse: ‘E macari un picciliddro di nove anni’. E continuò a mangiari. Madunnuzza santa, continuò a mangiare! Allora iu pigliai u revòrbaru e ci sparai darrè al cozzo. Un corpo solo come fanno coi condannati a morti. (“Sostiene pessa” 62-3)

Although the narration is not explicit about the particular mafia generation of the farmer’s son, this mafia killer clearly represents the “new mafia” characterized by limitless and exaggerated violence. The father, although a farmer and also a poet, and nowhere near a *mafioso*, in a way represents the old mafia “contadini” which held up standards—ones that discouraged the unnecessary violence especially towards women and children. The old mafia exercised violence as the last option, for the defense of *omertà* and the survival of the organization.

A similar vision of old and new mafia is present in *Il cane di terracotta*, in which an elderly and embittered mafia boss, Tanu “*u grecu*,” consults the Commissario Montalbano to exit the mafia organization that has become by now tainted, and to ultimately reveal new information

about the burgeoning mafia business activity. In order to cut ties with the new mafia, Tanu must violate the code of honor (*omertà*) and become a *pentito*. Through a face to face meeting he confesses his knowledge of the organization to the Commissario because he is disillusioned about the current and future state of the mafia and *omertà*. In speaking to an outsider of the mafia Tanu enters the role of *pentito*, one of the worst transgressions one can commit in Cosa Nostra. Tanu illustrates to Montalbano the development and condition of the mafia through an analogy of the evolution of transportation. The old generation of “men of honor” are described as horse and buggies: slow, steady and consistent. At the other end of the spectrum, the new “men of honor” are compared to the automobile: going from simple first cars to the fastest and fanciest Ferraris. The old boss implies that the new generation has become so enthralled with the surface of things—such as speed and high technological accessories—that they have forgotten what is most important: a solid and enduring foundation. For Cosa Nostra such a foundation consists in an undying loyalty to *omertà*. That is their constitution, the law behind the system. A break in that loyalty has resulted in a disconnection with the older generation, and in particular with the code of honor. In the following quote, Tanu shares his thoughts with Montalbano:

Questi picciotti sono nuovi nuovi, parlano con gli apparecchi e non con le persone, manco ti canusciono, non sanno chi sei stato, e se lo sanno se ne fottono allegramente, manco fra loro capace che s'accanuscino, si parlano col computer. A farla breve, questi picciotti non taliano in faccia a nisciuno, appena ti vedono in difficoltà con una machina lenta, ti jettano fora strata senza pensarci due volte e tu ti ritrovi dintra un fosso con l'ossa del collo rotte. (*Il cane di terracotta* 23)

According to Tanu, the new generation of mafia has no logic or system, and so can no longer be considered the same mechanism as Cosa Nostra. When members explicitly violate the code of honor, the organization becomes a completely different system. Since there is no way of reversing the development of a new mafia, Tanu wants out even if his own death is imminent. Normally he would be breaking mafia code by informing the police and abandoning Cosa

Nostra, but because the code has already been contaminated/alterd by the new generation all is set to the wind and to the law of “to each his own.” Now one must live by his own rules if he wants to survive. This resembles the natural law exercised by Antigone when she went against Creon’s orders not to bury her brother Polynices.³⁷ Antigone responds to Creon: “It was not Zeus who gave me this decree, nor did Justice, the companion of the gods below, define such laws for human beings. Nor do I think that your decrees were so strong that you, a mortal man, could overrule the unwritten and unshaken laws of the gods” (313). Sophocles’ protagonist takes law into her own hands, even if she is following the laws of god. She decides on her own to dishonor the law of the State enforced by King Creon, and to follow the law that resembles natural law or bios.

In the short story “Il quarto segreto” from *La paura di Montalbano*, Camilleri’s narrative highlights the distinction between “good” and “bad” *mafiosi*:

Su Telegigàta c’era l’onorevole sottosegretario Carlo Posacane che inaugurava un’opera pubblica, una specie di autostrada che collegava il suo paese natale, Sarcocco (abitanti 313), con una foresta di pali in cemento armato della quale non veniva specificata la funzione. Alla presenza di trecento compaesani (i tredici assenti votavano forse a sinistra), il sottosegretario disse che lui non era per niente d’accordo, e gli dispiaceva tanto, col suo compagno di partito e ministro il quale aveva affermato che con la mafia era necessario convivere. No, la mafia andava combattuta. Solo che bisognava distinguere, non generalizzare, non fare di ogni erba un fascio. C’erano uomini, galantomini specchiati—disse vibrante di sdegno l’onorevole sottosegretario—che si erano sempre battuti per la giustizia, addirittura sostituendosi allo Stato quando esso latitava, ed erano stati ripagati da una sedicente giustizia col marchio infamante di mafioso! Questo, col nuovo Governo, non sarebbe mai più accaduto—terminò l’onorevole in un tirribilio di applausi. Allato a lui, Vincenzo Scipione inteso ’u zu Cecè, omo di rispetto, grande elettore del sottosegretario e titolare dell’impresa costruttrice, s’asciucò, commosso, una lagrima. (*La paura di Montalbano* 126-7)

³⁷ “To leave the dead unburied was an offense against the gods, for it was the religious duty of the relatives of the dead to give them a pious burial. [...] The *Antigone* of Sophocles, like his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, shows how human beings cannot ignore the demands of the gods. Antigone is a heroine who is willing to incur a lonely death rather than dishonor the gods by obeying the king’s command” (*Mythology*, 313-4).

Comparing old and new, honorable and dishonorable becomes problematic when discussing the mafia, since it can suggest nostalgia for the idea of mafia and a romanticizing of their traditions, even within the context of fiction. Regardless of generation or phase of evolution, the mafia has never been an honorable or humane organization. Through the lens of Sicily's history of exploitation, economic and social struggles, the subject can be understood as being much more complex and worthy of a wider analysis. The distinction between old and new mafia within the Commissario Montalbano novels—where the first is romanticized and the second feared—can be interpreted metaphorically for how older generations often feel about their younger counterparts on all subjects: while one loses momentum in its social, economic and technological development, the second continues to advance steadily and seems far removed from the past. The aging group tends to venerate their ways of life and scrutinize those of the youngsters. It is a natural process of separating and protecting oneself from whatever seems to be foreign and bespeaks a sense of insecurity. A good example of this sort of anxiety is in Pirandello's novel *Vecchi e giovani* in which the Sicilian writer addresses the concept of old and new generations, and the issue of change in relation to Sicily and the rest of the world. Pirandello conveys that the young are not unlike the old, and therefore history unfortunately repeats itself. Change is an illusion, just as the Greek ruins in Girgenti are a mirage of Roman glory. Similarly, De Roberto's novel *I vicerè* (1894) also addresses such issues as the nature of man and change, and lack thereof. In a monologue, the character Don Giacomo Uzeda, prince of Francalanza, explains his beliefs:

La storia è una monotona ripetizione; gli uomini sono stati, sono e saranno sempre gli stessi. Le condizioni esteriori mutano; certo, tra la Sicilia di prima del Sessanta, ancora quasi feudale, e questa d'oggi pare ci sia un abisso; ma la differenza è tutta esteriore. Il primo eletto col suffragio quasi universale non è né un popolano, né un borghese, né un democratico: sono io, perché mi chiamo principe di Francalanza. (De Roberto 303)

In previous literature, a similar belief is expressed in *Il gattopardo* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa in a conversation between the youthful nephew Tancredi and the older figure and uncle Prince Don Fabrizio Salina. The first obviously represents the forthcoming future of Sicily, while the latter conveys the old ways. The two characters argue about the future of Sicily—Salina defends the monarchy while Tancredi agrees but in a different way. Salinas is for the king, but Tancredi differs in who he believes to be “king”: “Per il Re, certo, ma per quale Re?” (Lampedusa 41). He argues that if Sicily wants to remain the same (that is under the hegemony of a king), it is necessary that everything must change: “Se non ci siamo anche noi, quelli ti combinano la repubblica. Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi” (Lampedusa 41). In order to maintain such a hierarchy then there is a need to keep the people quiet. In other words, there would be two parallel worlds existing side by side, but one of those would have hegemony. Later in the novel, Don Fabrizio agrees with Tancredi’s notion and surrenders to the reality: “Noi fummo i Gattopardi, i Leoni; quelli che ci sostituiranno saranno gli sciacalletti, le iene; e tutti quanti Gattopardi, sciacalli e pecore, continueremo a crederci il sale della terra” (Lampedusa 168). This implies that Sicily will never change its structure of power because of its deep historical roots in the hierarchy. Sure, the people will be different in generation, the features of social positions will differ, but the mechanism will endure. So change from past to present, monarchy to republic is only a facade for the much deeper foundation of persisting reality.

In contrast to his predecessors De Roberto, Pirandello, Lampedusa, and Sciascia, Camilleri’s characters express somewhat different views on change and evolution. The noventarian The mafia character Tanu *u grecu* differentiates himself from the new wave of *mafiosi* who speak through *apparecchi*, implying not only that they rely on technology to

communicate (as opposed to the old way of eye-to-eye meetings and giving one's "word" as a symbol of trust), but more importantly, that they use the technology defectively. In place of listening to their seniors and abiding by *omertà*—for instance in deciding whom to execute or what business to carry out—they disregard the hierarchy; instead of building on their seniors' knowledge and experience with the code of honor, they ignore such benchmarks. What may be implied by Camilleri through his "quasi-heroic" mafia bosses Balduccio and Tanu—and the distinction between an old and systematic mafia versus a new and reckless one—is a metaphor of the evolution of the mafia and possibly on civil society itself. Within the context of organized crime, the "new" *mafiosi* and their conduct have degenerated, contaminating the founding principles of *omertà*. Within a social framework, it is not so much the technology that corrupts an institution, but rather human conduct and its implementation of technology. All institutions have an infrastructure, a mechanism through which society can apply itself. Cosa Nostra's infrastructure is *omertà*, which can be utilized correctly or incorrectly within the organization. From a wider angle, this metaphor of mafia's evolution and downfall also alludes to the potential decay of ethics and therefore humanity.

There seems to be a significant chronological transformation of the mafia within Camilleri's novels, or more specifically the mafia's timeline of decay. *Il cane di terracotta* (1996) is the first novel to indicate a critical change in the criminal organization, with Tanu "u Grecu" becoming the victim of the new generation. "Una trappola per gatti" (1998) and *La gita a Tindari* (2000) both hint at the decaying institution of *omertà*, the first through the *Decameron*esque allusion, and the second through the old mafia boss Balduccio. In the later novels all mafia instances are illustrated through the lens of the old mafia generation. The dominating perspective is that of the old mafia, through accounts of memories and nostalgia for

the “olden” days, and through the narrations of fear regarding the merciless violence and irrational actions of the new mafia.

Within novels such as *Il campo del vasaio* (2008), *La danza del gabbiano* (2009), *Il gioco degli specchi* (2011), and *Una voce di notte* (2012) the old mafia is additionally utilized within the plots of non-mafia homicides in order to divert attention and cover up the true culprit of a non-mafia crime. *Il campo del vasaio* provides a more detailed explanation of the differences between old and new mafia violence, and the reasoning behind classifying a mafia-related homicide:

Che si trattava di un omicidio di mafia non aviva avuto dubbio da quanno Pasquano gli aviva ditto che lo sconosciuto era stato ammazzato con un unico colpo al cozzo. Trattamento tipico, che univa con un filo ideale la peggiore e crudele sdilinquenza a certi metodi contemplati da onorevoli usanze militari.

Ma qui ora stava assumanno qualichi cosa di più.

Chi aviva ammazzato gli stava volutamente fornendo precise ‘nformazioni proprio sul pirchi e sul pircome dell’ammazzatina stissa.

Intanto, quest’omicidio era stato fatto, opuro ordinato, che era la stissa cosa, da qualichiduno che agiva ancora nel rispetto delle regole della vecchia mafia.

E pirchi?

Semprici la risposta: pirchi la nova mafia spara a tinchitè, a dritta e a manca, a vecchi e a picciliddri, indove capita e non si degna mai di dari ‘na spiegazioni di quello che ha fatto.

La vecchia mafia, no: spiegava, cuntava, chiariva. Certo non a voci o mittenno nivuro supra bianco, chisto no, ma a segni.

La vecchia mafia era maestra di semiologia, che sarebbi la scienza dei segni che servino a comunicare.

Morto ammazzato con una pala spinusa di ficodinnia supra al corpo?

L’abbiamo fatto pirchi ci ha pungiuto di troppe spine, di troppi dispiaciri.

Morto ammazzato con una petra dintra alla vucca?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè parlava assà.

Morto ammazzato con le dū mano tagliate?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè l'abbiamo attrovato con le mani nel sacco.

Morto ammazzato con i cabasisi 'nfilati dintra la vucca?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè è andato a ficcare indove non diviva.

Morto ammazzato con le sò scarpe supra al petto?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè sinni voliva scappari.

Morto ammazzato con l'occhi cavati?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè non voliva arrendersi all'evidenza.

Morto ammazzato con i denti cavati?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè voliva mangiari troppo.

E via allegramenti di chisto passo.

Perciò la decodificazione del messaggio gli arrisultò subito chiara: l'abbiamo ammazzato come meritava pirchè ci ha tradito per trenta denari come fici Giuda.

E quindi la conclusione logica viniva a essiri che lo sconosciuto era un mafiuso, 'giustiziato' pirchè traditore. Il che era, finalmente, un primo passo avanti.
(*Il campo del vasaio* 110-1)

The old mafia was one of signs and messages, even when it came to homicides. The real life *pentito* Tommaso Buscetta confirmed this in his dialogues with Judge Giovanni Falcone. Given the characteristics and the mafia's code of violence (similar to Dante's *contrapasso*), passing a crime as mafia-related is possible, and even more feasible is representing a mafia crime in literature. Nevertheless, Detective Montalbano, approaches crimes with the following attitude: it is "non-mafia related until proven mafia." Within the novels, Montalbano is the first one to doubt the mafia as the culprit. He is rightly the devil's advocate. Perhaps because he (and Camilleri) truly believe that not all crime in Sicily *is* mafia related, but also due to the fact that in

Sicily and Italy the mafia has had such an influence on society (from economics to politics) that by now the issue of “mafia crime or non-mafia crime?” is arbitrary, for a new norm has emerged in the timeline of mafia influence. This new norm of mafia illustrates that mafia and state power are now so intertwined and dispersed that it becomes problematic to locate where the power lies, and whom has the responsibility of that power. So, the question to pose is if it is even possible to locate the cause of crimes and failures of institutions, and if so can there even be a solution? Does fighting corruption and complex power require these same approaches, just as Montalbano does by fighting fire with fire? In the next section, I will show the ways in which the old mafia battles against new mafia by breaking mafia code very similarly to Montalbano who breaks police conduct in order to understand the truth in cases.

4. Pentiti and the Contamination of *Omertà*

Change is continuous and terrifying, as Lampedusa put it so well via his character Don Fabrizio: “Appartengo ad una generazione disgraziata a cavallo fra i vecchi tempi ed i nuovi, e che si trova a disagio in tutti e due” (Lampedusa 164). With the threat of the end of the Sinagra dynasty and the end of “old” mafia ways, in *La voce del violino*, one of the methods of retaliation is to defect from the mafia, or in mafia terms, *pentirsi*. It is the only way to survive, apart from adapting to the new mafia, outside the mafia. Becoming a *pentito* marks the contamination and forthcoming end of *omertà* and potentially of a new “generation” of mafia. *La voce del violino* narrates a scene between Inspector Montalbano and the Questore Bonetti-Alderighi: Montalbano is taken off the investigation due to his unconventional actions. The term “pentito” surfaces during their

conversation, evoking a sense of violation of *omertà* within the mafia and the “ten commandments” within the Catholic tradition:

- ‘Lei ha commesso una dissennatezza che ha messo in seria difficoltà il lavoro del dottor Arquà.’
- ‘L’ha scritto nel rapporto?’
- ‘No, nel rapporto non l’ha scritto, non voleva, generosamente, danneggiarla. Ma dopo si è pentito e m’ha confessato tutto.’
- ‘Ah, questi pentiti!’
- ‘Lasciamo perdere.’ (*La voce del violino* 94)

Later Montalbano speaks with Arquà about this “confession” and Montalbano informs him that acting as an “informant” is a sin. This seems to be meant in the double sense of the Catholic sin and the violation of *omertà*:

- ‘Ah, senta, Arquà. Lo sa che la delazione è peccato? S’informi col dottor Lattes. Dovrà di nuovo pentirsi’ (*La voce del violino* 95)

The theme of the *pentito* continues within the narrative, with Camilleri referencing the mafia families and the members who have become “pentiti” as a result of a chain of events:

- ‘Tutti presenti, dunque, però tutti stuffati a morte perché, fatta eccezione dell’omicidio Licalzi, da due mesi non capitava niente di sostanzioso. Per esempio, le famiglie Cuffaro e Sinagra, le due cosche che si contendevano il territorio e che erano solite far ritrovare, con bella regolarità, un morto ammazzato al mese (una volta uno dei Cuffaro e la volta appresso uno dei Sinagra), parevano da qualche tempo avere perso l’entusiasmo. E questo da quando Giosuè Cuffaro, arrestato e fulmineamente pentito dei suoi delitti, aveva mandato in galera Peppuccio Sinagra il quale, arrestato e fulmineamente pentito dei suoi delitti, aveva fatto chiudere in càzaro Antonio Smecca, cugino dei Cuffaro, il quale, fulmineamente pentito dei suoi delitti, aveva inguaiato Cicco Lo Càrmine, dei Sinagra, il quale...’ (*La voce del violino* 112-3)

This leitmotif is important to the topic of old and new mafia within the literature, because it marks the destruction of *omertà*. Within the context of society, its collapse may even be the only form of “good mafia.” For Cosa Nostra a *pentito* is instead “bad mafia” and hence is immediately disowned by the organization. A *pentito* breaches the code of honor when he discloses mafia information to State authorities. He is not even considered

“mafia”—as in Tommaso Buscetta’s case—but the lowest form of life, and the enemy, equivalent to *sbirri* and anti-mafia intelligence. *Pentitismo* is one of the catalysts of change between one generation of mafia and another. Where the *pentito* trend begins, the new mafia and the destruction of *omertà* and transformation of Cosa Nostra also begin.

Throughout Camilleri’s novels *Il cane di terracotta*, *La gita a Tindari*, and *La voce del violino*, the old and new mafia motif demonstrates a fundamental change in the system of power of Cosa Nostra. It reflects a new wave of beliefs and disbeliefs, a different structure of power, a new culture of *pentiti* formed from the old mafia that adheres to *omertà*, and of a new culture of mafia that disobeys and hence re-defines the code of honor. Moreover, and more specifically, this new mafia presents new business enterprises that differ from the old ones. As illustrated in *La gita a Tindari*, the new mafia transgresses the old mafia business – of providing entertainment services and products to enhance and protect life (wealth and politics) – and transforms the commodities into services that extend life, by oppressing or ending lives. The “new” mafia is in the business of altering life to enhance life, and ending life in order to extend it, or extending life by ending it. This is bio-politics and bio-business that they promote and from which they profit in order to grow and maintain their empire’s wealth and economic power.

From a narrative point of view, the contrast of old and new and the differing concerns between the old and new mafia, all work as a way to express an anxiety of change and the ethical concerns that arise as a result of pushing limits. Historically, economically, and culturally Sicily has not been a place of change, let alone positive change; Lampedusa’s pessimism rings true too frequently. The reality is that evolving globally is terrifying, questions of humanity—of what is humane, of what is just—are

constantly present in new horizons. The older generations have a foundation, a history with which to compare the new developments. The young generations do not have that comparative advantage, they do not have that analytical experience. The old and new mafia motif present the anxiety of change in literature and in life.

CHAPTER 3: THE SCAPEGOAT MOTIF³⁸

MONTALBANO: ‘Ho sempre fatto il mio mestiere con onestà. Da galantuomo. Se davo la mia parola a un delinquente, la rispettavo. È stata la mia forza [...] Manco contro il peggio delinquente ho fabbricato una prova! Mai! Se l’avessi fatto mi sarei messo al suo livello [...]’

–*Il giro di boa* Camilleri, 12

Introduction

Camilleri’s 2003 novel *Il giro di boa* begins with detective Montalbano’s outrage for the inhumane events of the 2001 G8 meeting in Genova. Montalbano’s reaction to the events and the criminal case (of human trafficking) narrated in the novel, is clearly connected to the issue of State as an institution that protects itself as opposed to protecting the very citizens that it serves. Monica Jansen’s research on this particular event explores Italy’s state of emergency during and after Genova 2001, and the fascist behavior of law enforcers, who as a result became scapegoats for the State’s failure to protect its citizens and uphold justice. Jansen writes:

Essere fascisti equivale dunque a difendere lo stato anche contro i propri parametri di giustizia e ciò causa una dissociazione nella mentalità dei poliziotti tra l’identificazione con il proprio mestiere e con il ruolo di tutelare la sicurezza cittadina da una parte, e un distacco crescente sia dalla loro ‘famiglia’ politica – rifiutano il fascismo a livello partitico istituzionale – sia dai loro avversari convertiti in nemici: “Siamo automi, macchine perfette che si muovono senza pensare. Macchine senza cuore e senza pietà, e il nostro è un saluto a un avversario che abbiamo riconosciuto.” Insomma, i poliziotti si sentono doppiamente traditi e così diventano in un certo senso il simbolo e il capro espiatorio per la paralisi politica italiana: traditi dalla politica e dall’opinione pubblica – la stampa viene accusata di costruire un’immagine falsa della bestialità “nazista” della

³⁸ I am aware of the positive connotations that this concept holds. My use of “scapegoat” is not in the religious and sacrificial sense, but in the more general meaning “as the bearer of fault.” According to the police in the Montalbano novels, the mafia is the usual suspect for crimes even when there are no clear indications of guilt.

polizia. Definirsi fascisti diventa così anche un modo per costruirsi un'identità forte contro il disprezzo degli altri. (Jansen "Fascismo e fascismi dopo Genova 2001")

Looking back at Italy's history of politics and the State, one of the most notable instances of scapegoating was with the former Prime Minister Aldo Moro. The "conspiracy of silence" from the State, regarding Moro's abduction and murder, was a clear message of government inefficiency:

As for Moro, he was primarily a victim of political manipulation, or perhaps more pointedly, a scapegoat for government inefficiency and official double talk aimed to hide a pattern of intrigue complex enough to elicit the admiration of the cleverest writer of mystery stories, Sciascia being the most skilled among them. Enforcers of law and order were united in a conspiracy of silence that eventually led to the death of the doomed captive. (Lobner 90)

Traditionally in Sicilian literature that features the mafia or mafia culture as subject matter, women and honor have been represented as the main scapegoats for murders. Two major examples are from Giovanni Verga's novel *I Malavoglia* and *Cavalleria rusticana*. Both feature women and honor as the motivations behind vendetta murders. In Verga's account both "literature and music cooperate in meeting the needs of the godfathers who found crimes of passions ideal allies in defending their masculine prerogatives and in venting their Mafioso outrage for the insult they had endured" (Lobner 63). In *Il giorno della civetta* Leonardo Sciascia not only reflects on Verga and his famous work *Cavalleria rusticana*, but also makes a strong statement about the State and corruption:

'Ever since the time when, in the sudden silence of the orchestra pit, during *Cavalleria Rusticana*, the cry of 'Hanno ammazzato compari Turiddu!' first chilled the spines of opera enthusiasts, criminal statistics and number symbols of the lottery in Sicily have had closer links between cuckoldry and violent death. A crime of passion is solved at once so it is an asset to the police; it is also punished lightly so it is an asset to the mafia.' (*The Day of the Owl* 36)

In the Montalbano novels, Camilleri reverses Verga's use of crimes of passion to cover up mafia crime, and instead narrates mafia crime as a cover up for crimes of passion. In addition,

Camilleri incorporates the Sciascian treated *topos* of State and mafia in order to convey a deeper message: the mafia as scapegoat highlights the deficiencies and corruption of the State. What we see is a conglomeration of current events and political atmosphere, the remnants of Verga's scapegoat motif, and Sciascia's cynicism of separating mafia from State. Camilleri's motif of mafia as a scapegoat has two main representations. The first one is illustrated through police officials who either immediately assume or disbelieve the mafias involvement in a crime. The second form of the motif is demonstrated through domestic homicide or "*delitto di passione*" that cover up the true culprit by simulating old mafia methods of execution or wars. Within the narratives, both of these forms of "scapegoating" relates to a broader topic about the State and civil society: that one need not take for granted the State and its role of authority, nor should one assume that the State is sanctuary from the mafia and institutional corruption. The criminal organization is treated as the scapegoat for all of society's woes, when in reality society and its corrupt institutions are the true root of the problem. In this chapter, I will discuss the two major occurrences of the mafia as scapegoat motif, and ultimately demonstrate the implications of this paradigm as a much larger issue at hand: the failure of the State and the justice system.

1. Assuming Mafia as Culprit

Many of Montalbano's crime investigations begin with the mafia as the usual suspect for crimes for reasons of vendetta, an execution via *contrappasso*, or in mafia family rivalries. For the criminal case presented in *L'odore della notte*, the culprit is not even minimally linked to the mafia, and yet throughout much of the novel, numerous officials still refuse to believe otherwise. Early on in the novel, the case of the missing investment banker Gargano is mentioned and

several main characters immediately assume the mafia's involvement. Montalbano (or Camilleri) analyzes the various schools of thought on the possible culprit: "La seconda [scuola] opinava che il ragioniere, incautamente, si fosse approfittato dei soldi di qualche mafioso e ora stava a produrre concime a una para di metri sottterra o serviva da mangime ai pesci" (*L'odore della notte*, Camilleri 15-6). Further on in the story, inspector Augello is still set on mafia vendetta as the motive behind the banker's disappearance and possible death. He states, "L'idea mia, che è pure di Guarnotta, è che tra i clienti più grossi c'era qualche mafioso il quale, vistosi truffato, l'ha fatto fuori" (*L'odore della notte*, Camilleri 31). However Montalbano never falls easily for such mafia hypotheses, and retorts: "[...] Intanto mi devi convincere che esiste un mafioso tanto fissa da non capire che quella di Gargano è una volgarissima truffa. Semmai il mafioso avrebbe obbligato Gargano a pigliarselo come socio di maggioranza. E poi: questo ipotetico mafioso come avrebbe fatto a intuire che Gargano stava per truffarlo?" (*L'odore della notte*, Camilleri 31). The last instance of the mafia "fixation" within this particular novel is from a scene in which Montalbano views and comments on a news broadcast given by journalist Niccolò Zito, who interviews the investigator Guarnotta on the Gargano-Pellegrino case. Guarnotta is still fixated on the mafia theory due to the autopsy's conclusion on the cause of death.³⁹ Meanwhile, the journalist Zito, as well as Montalbano, is unconvinced of mafia involvement. Montalbano has the final word through his authoritative judgment on the issue at large:

Non c'era niente da fare, Guarnotta era amminchiato con il pupo. Mafia doveva essere e mafia era.

Zito: 'Abbiamo avuto modo un'oretta fa di parlare per telefono col dottor Pasquano che ha terminato l'autopsia sulla salma di Giacomo Pellegrino. Ci ha detto che il giovane è stato ucciso con un colpo solo, sparato a distanza ravvicinata, che lo ha colpito proprio in

³⁹ A single bullet shot right in between the eyes is characteristic of a mafia execution, and this is enough evidence for inspector Guarnotta to conclude the mafia as culprit even if uncharacteristic with a small caliber gun. Niccolò Zito's comment undermines such a conclusion, and emphasizes the unusualness of a small caliber pistol for mafia homicides, therefore his questioning of such a conclusion.

mezzo agli occhi. Il proiettile non è fuoriuscito, è stato possibile recuperarlo. Il dottor Pasquano dice che si tratta di un'arma di piccolo calibro'.

Guarnotta: 'Ebbene?'.

Zito: 'Ecco, non le pare un'arma anomala per la mafia?'

Guarnotta fece un risolino di compatimento.

Guarnotta: 'La mafia adopera qualsiasi arma. Non ha preferenze. Dal bazooka alla punta di uno stuzzicadenti potesse addivintare un'arma letale.'

Si vide la faccia alloccuta di Zito. Evidentemente non arrinisciva a spiegarsi come uno stuzzicadenti potesse addivintare un'arma letale.

Montalbano astutò il televisore.

'Tra queste armi, caro Guarnotta' pinsò [Montalbano], 'ci sono macari quelli come a tia, giudici, poliziotti e carrabbina che vedono la mafia quando non c'è e non la vedono quando c'è.' (*L'odore della notte* 192)

Through the scrutinizing observations of Montalbano and the journalist Zito, Camilleri makes a statement.⁴⁰ This dynamic narration conveys that, *yes* the mafia has been a strong influence on our institutions that were once less affected by the *piovra*, and therefore it is difficult to remove or think otherwise due to the timeline of history and collective memory. There was even a time in which the majority of public figures and citizens denied the existence of the mafia.⁴¹ Times have evolved, and at this point in time of Montalbano's world the State's institutions are no longer threatened by the corrosive touch of the mafia, they are already tainted in every which way by the mafia. Previously Cosa Nostra and the State's relationship was more of a parallel nature, just as Giovanni Falcone described when discussing the difficulty in comparing the State with mafia:

Il dialogo Stato-mafia, con gli alti e bassi tra i due ordinamenti, dimostra chiaramente

⁴⁰ They never jump to conclusions and are always looking for further practical information in order to uncover the truth. The two are often reminiscent of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective duo Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

⁴¹ Camilleri's fellow Sicilian Leonardo Sciascia's brilliant novel *Il giorno della civetta* comments on the so-called "non-existence" of the mafia, that up until the 1960's was openly denied as a reality.

che Cosa Nostra non è un anti-Stato, ma piuttosto una organizzazione parallela che vuole approfittare delle storture dello sviluppo economico, agendo nell'illegalità e che, appena si sente veramente contestata e in difficoltà, reagisce come può, abbassando la schiena. Non dimentichiamo che la mafia è l'organizzazione più agile, duttile e pragmatica che si possa immaginare, rispetto alle istituzioni e alla società nel suo insieme. (*Cose di Cosa Nostra* 82)

But since the time when Falcone highlighted this parallelism of mafia and State, the mafia has evolved and is no longer such an organism. In the case of Montalbano's world (and today's society), it is understood that the State *is* completely overwhelmed and overpowered by mafia. The two institutions are neither separate nor parallel, but rather interdependent entities, or even one in the same. In this sense, it can be nearly impossible to decipher the source of society's problems, and distinguish good from evil or functioning from failing institutions.

The coexistence and collaboration of State and mafia in the Montalbano novels reflects this more evolved mechanism, where the lines between the two are inherently entangled. It is certainly easy and obvious to blame the mafia for the stunted growth, and the backwardness of Sicily, and the Italian State. The real situation is instead more complex and deserves thorough scrutiny, just as Montalbano's investigations implicate. There is more to crime that meets the eye, and likewise more to the State that meets the eye. Knowing how to read mafia messages and codes of actions and signs is an art and a science, and so it is not enough to merely match a particular symbol to a signifier. The inspector Montalbano is the ideal decoder of signs, symbols, and codes. Not only is he the cryptographer, but he is also the beholder of these messages, that are sometimes an enormous responsibility. In fact, many times Montalbano discovers truths revealing such terrible inhumanity and criminality within the State, that to disclose them would be akin to metaphorically setting off an atomic bomb within society.

In the short story "Capodanno" from *Un mese con Montalbano*, the Russian mafia is brought into the picture by the true culprit of a domestic homicide. The inspector Augello

attempts to convince Montalbano of this theory:

‘A Mosca l’avevano minacciato. Pare, sempre secondo la signora, che avesse dato fastidio alla mafia russa’

‘Ma che minchiata! Se la mafia russa lo voleva ammazzare, che bisogno aveva di venirlo a fare qui? No, Mimì, è stato qualcuno che sapeva che Provenzano doveva cangiare càmbara a preparargli il tranello. La cammarera ha portato sicuramente il pacchettino alla ventotto, ma da lì qualcuno lo ha fatto sparire per obbligare Provenzano a entrare nella ventidue. Poi questo qualcuno non ha più avuto modo e tempo di rimettere il pacchettino a dirci che è servito come esca. Tu che te n’intendi di fimmine, com’è la signora Rosina?’ (*Un mese con Montalbano* 318).

Although there is a possibility that the crime is connected to the Russian mafia, the likelihood is slim and Montalbano once again is suspicious of such allegations. For the inspector, in this case the mafia is innocent until proven guilty, while the wife of the victim is guilty until proven innocent. “Capodanno” narrates another example of Camilleri’s paradigm of domestic crimes attempting to pass for mafia crimes. This attempt in using the mafia as a scapegoat to domestic crime is another way to illustrate the weaknesses and inadequacies of the State: that state officers and officials are often incapable of seeing corruption and crime within society. That yes, mafia is imbedded in our society, but the point is that injustices and violence are committed every day, and many times they are not mafia related.

2. Simulating *vecchia* mafia violence & mafia war

Given the long history of violence and vendetta, the Sicilian mafia is well known for its organized and systematic methods. And thanks to criminologists, sociologists, anti-mafia investigators, and heroes such as Falcone and Borsellino, we know about the inner workings of Cosa Nostra. Based on such information, and from a literary and cinematic perspective, it is feasible to represent a mafia homicide in order to literally “get away with (a non-mafia related)

murder.” As a matter of fact, many of Camilleri’s novels and stories narrate cases that resemble mafia crimes, homicides or wars in order to deviate from the true culprit, and from a narrative perspective, the central plot. At the same time, such deviations also comment on civic and social institutions and their treatment and mistreatment of power. Novels such as *La forma dell’acqua*, *L’odore della notte*, *Par condicio*, *Le ali della sfinge*, *Il campo del vasaio*, and *Una lama di luce*, feature the mafia as a possible yet false culprit to a crime. These instances are part of the scapegoat paradigm since they place the blame, even if temporarily, on the mafia, and attempt to fool, even for just a nanosecond, the reader, Montalbano and the State.⁴²

In Camilleri’s detective Montalbano stories, there are numerous crimes that resemble a traditional Cosa Nostra homicide due to the utilization of certain weapons, such as the *lupara* (the mafia’s preferred weapon of choice) with a blow to the head, or through the use of a violent and deathly counter punishments (a sort of *contrappasso*). One novel that conveys a mafia homicide through *contrappasso* is *Il campo del vasaio*. In this story a domestic murder, as a result of a love triangle. Although the victim of the murder is related to the mafia Sinagra family, the murder is unrelated to mafia activity. The wife who is the true culprit to the crime, takes advantage of her husband’s mafia background, and his low performance as a “man of honor,” and simulates a mafia *contrappasso* in which the victim is punished in a way that reflects his “violation of *omertà*.” In the following quote Montalbano contemplates the case and weighs the facts with the mafia’s history, and reading in between the lines:

Che si trattava di un omicidio di mafia non aveva avuto dubbio da quando Pasquano gli aveva detto che lo sconosciuto era stato ammazzato con un unico colpo al cozzo.
Trattamento tipico, che univa con un filo ideale la peggiore e crudele sdelinquenza a certi metodi contemplati da onorevoli usanze militari.
Ma qui ora stava assumendo qualichè cosa di più.
Chi aveva ammazzato gli stava volutamente fornendo precise informazioni proprio sul

⁴² Most of the time, it is thanks to Montalbano that the true culprit of the crime, not the mafia, is revealed.

pirchè e sul pircome dell'ammazzatina stissa.

Intanto, quest'omicidio era stato fatto, opuro ordinato, che era la stissa cosa, da qualichiduno che agiva ancora nel rispetto delle regole della vecchia mafia.

E pirchè?

Semprici la risposta: pirchè la nova mafia spara a tinchitè, a dritta e a manca, a vecchi e a picciliddri, indove capita e non si degna mai di dari 'na spiegazioni di quello che ha fatto. La vecchia mafia, no: spiegava, cuntava, chiariva. Certo non a voci o mittenno nivuro supra bianco, chisto no, ma a segni.

La vecchia mafia era maestra di semiologia, che sarebbi la scienza dei segni che servino a comunicare.

Morto ammazzato con una pala spinusa di ficodinnia supra al corpo?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè ci ha pungiuto di troppe spine, di troppi dispiaciri.

Morto ammazzato con una petra dintra alla vuca?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè parlava assà.

Morto ammazzato con le dù mano tagliate?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè l'abbiamo attrovato con le mani nel sacco.

Morto ammazzato con i cabasisi 'nfilati dintra la vuca?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè è andato a ficcare indove non diviva.

Morto ammazzato con le sò scapre supra al petto?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè sinni voliva scappari.

Morto ammazzato con l'occhi cavati?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè non voliva arrendersi all'evidenza.

Morto ammazzato con i denti cavati?

L'abbiamo fatto pirchè voliva mangiari troppo.

E via allegramenti di chisto passo.

Perciò la decodificazione del messaggio gli arrisultò subito chiara: l'abbiamo ammazzato come meritava pirchè ci ha tradito per trenta denari come fici Giuda. E quindi la conclusione logica viniva a essiri che lo sconosciuto era un mafiuso, 'giustiziato' pirchè traditore. Il che era, finalmenti, un primo passo avanti.

(*Il campo del vasaio* 110-11)

However, Montalbano does not take the bait, especially when a crime is so defined and easy to decipher. In fact, the easier a message is to read, the more suspicious the inspector is of the crime. And in *Il campo del vasaio* the message is clearly pointing to the “vecchia” mafia, which for him is exactly who the culprit is not.

In *Una lama di luce* a homicide resembles a mafia assassination due to the method of violence used—a single gunshot to the head in addition to the burning of the car and the body of victim—but in fact the murder and the incineration of the evidence are orchestrated purposefully to pass for a mafia execution, and therefore to deviate from the true culprit. In the following

exchanges inspectors Montalbano and Fazio contemplate and exchange their reasoning in order to overrule the mafia as culprit:

‘Dissi che l’identificazioni sarà difficili dato lo stato del catafero. Comunque, a ‘na prima taliata, a lui ci pari che l’omo è stato ammazzato con un colpo sulo alla nuca e che aviva i pusa e le cavigli ligati col filo di ferro’.

‘Nzumma, ‘na prassi mafiosa?’

‘Accussi pari’.

‘A ti ti pirsuadi?’.

‘Boh’.

Il cellulari di Fazio squillò.

‘Mi scusasse’ fici portannosi il telefonino all’oricchi.

Dissi pronto e ascutò ‘n silenzio.

‘Grazie’ concludì.

Taliò il commissario facenno ‘na smorfia.

‘Mi diissi il nomi del proprietario della machina’.

‘Cu è?’

‘Carmelo Savastano’.

Montalbano ci misi nenti ad addigiriri la notizia. Non era ‘na novità che complicava le cose, anzi forsi le rinniva cchiù facili.

‘Ma Savastano che ci trase con la mafia?’.

‘Boh’ arripiti Fazio. (*Una lama di luce* 150)

[...] Savastano non era un mafioso, ma un piccolo sdilinquenti. Allora pirchè era stato adopirato il rituali della mafia?

E ccà macari c’erano dù risposte: o aviva fatto ‘no sgarbo a qualichi mafioso o il rituali sirviva a ‘ndirizzari le indagini verso la parti sbagliata.

Mittemo che Savastano fossi stato attrovato morto ‘n terra in una strata qualisiasparato ‘n facci o al petto, ‘nzumma senza nisciun tiatro mafioso, di chi avrebbi sospittato ‘mmidiato?

Di di Marta naturalmente.

L’unico che potiva aviri un autentico moventi, se aviva accaputo com’era annata veramenti la facenna della rapina e dello stupro.

(152)

[...] ‘Lei non è capace di scimmiettare il mio taliàno. E a pinsarici bono, manco tutto il resto. Confermo quello che dissi a Fazio. Un solo colpo alla nuca, caviglie e polsi legati con fil di ferro. Un’esecuzione di tipo mafioso in piena regola’.

‘Niente che possa portare a un’identificazione?’.

‘Sì. Due dita...’

‘...del piede sinistro amputate’ concludì Montalbano. (155)

[...] Fu mentri nisciva dalla questura che gli vinni 'n menti come fari per aviri la cirtiza che l'ammazzatina di Savastano non aviva nenti da spartiri con la mafia.
(156)

Detective Montalbano is a master at ruling out the mafia. He shows his expertise once more in a staged televised interview between himself and the journalist Niccolò Zito. The goal is to elicit a reaction from the mafia families in order to overrule their involvement in the homicide case:

“A prima vista, tutto porterebbe a supporre un'esecuzione tipicamente di mafia”.
“Direi proprio di sì. Sono infatti determinato a indirizzare le indagini in questo senso”.

“Ma Savastano vi risultava essere un picciotto di mafia?”.

“Non se la prenda a male, ma mi permetta di non rispondere a questa domanda”.

“Potrebbe essere stato ammazzato per aver commesso qualche errore o per aver disobbedito a un ordine?”.

“Non credo”

“Può spiegarsi meglio?”.

“Mi auguro che non sia il primo di una serie di omicidi che riaprano la guerra tra cosche, come quella che insanguinò la nostra terra qualche decennio fa. Per questo farò in modo, con tutti i mezzi, di stroncarla sul nascere. E, se ce ne sarà bisogno, chiederò un aumento straordinario d'organico”. (*Una lama di luce* 158)

What becomes evident through all of these scenarios is a spectrum in which on one side there is the State and its corrupt and narrow-minded officials who deem everything mafia related, while on the other side there is Montalbano and his agents and allies (Fazio, Zito, etc.) who see beyond the façade of mafia and who aim toward an ideal of justice.

Another way in which crimes can pass as “mafia-related,” is through the display of a mafia war between families. In the short story, “Par condicio” (from *Un mese con Montalbano*), a mafia wife from the Cuffaro family murders her husband and attempts to place the blame on the Sinagra family. In this description, Montalbano recalls the old days of Vigàta when wars between mafia families were typical occurrences and therefore a rivalry had been established:

Quando Montalbano arrivò fresco di nomina al commissariato di Vigàta e dintorni era oggetto di contenzioso tra due ‘famiglie’ mafiose, i Cuffaro e i Sinagra, le quali, volenterosamente, tentavano di mettere fine all’annosa disputa facendo ricorso non alle carte bollate ma a micidiali colpi di lupara. ‘Lupara? Ancora?!’ stupì Montalbano

parendogli quel sistema, come dire, arcaico, in tempi nei quali le mitragliette e i kalashnikov s'accattavano nei mercatini paesani a tre un soldo. ("Par condicio" *Un mese con Montalbano* 41)

Given the ferocious history between the Cuffaro and Sinagra families, imagining such a homicide is not so unrealistic. The husband was shot in the back of the head with a *lupara*—a sawed-off shotgun—as in an execution for a violation of *omertà*. Due to the two families' histories, what follows this murder is a full-on eye-for-an-eye war, which seems to overshadow the first homicide. But for inspector Montalbano, the focus remains on the original case. His objective is to scrutinize such crimes that resemble mafia activity and prove that not just the mafia is made up of criminals, but so are everyday people and State officials for reasons of jealousy or greed.

Passing a crime or a homicide off as a mafia job is sometimes narrated as a punishment for a business owner who has not paid his dues, or "*pizzo*," such as in *Le ali della sfinge*. In this novel the initiator of the simulation is actually inspector Montalbano, who provokes a store owner in to a state of anxiety by implying that it was the mafia who burned his store down for not paying his *pizzo*. The store owner, Signor Morabito, is a so-called victim of arson, but Montalbano knows that the store could not have been burned down by just anyone, but in fact by the store owner himself. In order to create a state of crisis in Morabito, Montalbano insists that the real criminal here is the Sterlino family who did not receive its *pizzo*. Here the mafia is used as a scapegoat for a domestic crime, in order to provoke a confession from the true culprit.

Another short story that also features this kind of motif is "L'avvertimento" from the collection *Un mese con Montalbano*. In this narrative, typical mafia features such as paying the *pizzo*, a burnt car, and a poisoned dog, are all used to imply mafia involvement, when in fact they are all used to cover up a jealous wife's rage against her husband. Montalbano discusses with

Carlo Memmi the possible offenders (mafia) of the crime:

‘Se l’incendio della sua Toyota risulta doloso’ fece Montalbano ‘è segno che le hanno mandato un avvertimento’

‘Ma avvertimento di che?’

‘Signor Memmi, parliamoci chiaro. Un avvertimento, al mio paese e macari al suo, visto e considerato che lei è nato qua, ha sempre un doppio significato.’ [...]

‘Sono passato dal salone. Ho domandato a Dédé se aveva...’ [...]

‘Se aveva regolarmente pagato il pizzo?’

‘Sì’ confermò Carlo arrossendo.

‘E l’aveva fatto?’

‘Sì’ ripeté l’omo diventando una vampa di foco.

(“L’avvertimento,” *Un mese con Montalbano* 151-2)

[...]

‘E lei non sospettò di sua moglie?’

‘Mai! Non mi passava neanche per l’anticamera del cervello! Ero scantato, terrorizzato da quello che credevo un avvertimento mafioso. Poi, l’altra mattina, mi ha telefonato il perito. E io ho cominciato a ragionarci sopra. c’era stato un precedente. [...]

(“L’avvertimento” *Un mese con Montalbano* 158)

The integration and acceptance of the the *pizzo*, even if shamefully, are evident within this narrative. After some convincing and manipulating, business owners like Memmi, and Morabito from *Le ali della sfinge*, admit to Montalbano their participation (even if disapproving) in the mafia’s economic model. In addition, the title of the short *giallo l’avvertimento* (or warning) and Montalbano’s possible hypothesis to the imaginary culprit of the crime (the Sterlino family), are both suggestive of the typical old mafia style of communicating through messages like arson and poison. Such illustration of the mafia as scapegoat to everyday crime, conveys a slightly different sense than to the first type of representation that involves the State. Camilleri’s motif here expresses the ease and mistake of attributing warnings and crimes to the mafia. As examined in Chapter 1: “Feeling” *Mafioso* Motif, the mafia’s methods and style of communication are shared not just by mafiosos but also by the non-mafia characters. Crimes can feature mafia methods, either purposefully, as in *Il campo del vasaio*, or unpurposefully as in *Le ali della sfinge* and “L’avvertimento.” Could this be a subtle statement about mafia ways and the Sicilian people, or

even in a more global sense, of human nature? Let us look at further examples of the scapegoat motif to better understand the narrative and thematic purposes.

3. Montalbano versus the State

Within Camilleri's novels, both the police force and the mafia manipulate and violate their own codes in ways that alter and question the very foundation of their institutions. We can see a pattern of law-enforcers (including Montalbano) exploiting their power numerous times by suspending and surpassing their code of conduct. In *La voce del violino*, this manifests in the police's accidental killing of an innocent young man (Di Blasi) and more immorally in the planting of evidence to cover up their guilt. The inspector Montalbano is anonymously informed about this injustice (via a former mafia lawyer and his informers) and confronts officer Panzacchi, the one in charge and responsible for the decision to cover up such a terrible mistake. Montalbano informs Panzacchi about the concrete evidence against him and his police squad for the death of Di Blasi. In a heated discussion, Montalbano corners Panzacchi to amend his injustices, for the State's reputation is at risk. The mafia were Montalbano's informants to Panzacchi's planting of evidence, and they are ready to blackmail the police at any moment:

Montalbano: Non sono stato io a registrarlo. C'erano, nelle vicinanze, due persone che hanno visto e documentato. Amici dell'avvocato Guttadauro che tu ben conosci

Panzacchi: Questo è un brutto imprevisto

M: Assai più brutto di quanto tu possa pensare. Ti sei venuto a trovare stretto tra me e loro.

P: Permettimi, le loro ragioni le capisco benissimo, non mi sono altrettanto chiare le tue, se non sei mosso da sentimenti di vendetta.

M: Ora cerca di capire tu a me: io non posso permettere, non posso, che il capo della Mobile di Montelusa sia ostaggio della mafia, sia ricattabile.

P: Sai, Montalbano, io veramente ho voluto proteggere il buon nome dei miei uomini. Immagini cosa sarebbe successo se la stampa avesse scoperto che

avevamo ammazzato un uomo che si difendeva con una scarpa?

M: E per questo hai messo in mezzo l'ingegnere Di Blasi che non c'entrava niente nella storia?

P: Nella storia no, nel mio piano sì. E in quanto ai possibili ricatti, mi so difendere (*La voce del violino* 154).

Montalbano may be unconventional and at times unlawful, but he refuses to be blackmailed or taken hostage by the mafia. That would imply that he too could fall into the vortex of the State's failed institution. With the information he was given by the mafia, Montalbano cannot claim either innocence or neutrality.

Is the inspector a *sbirro*, a corrupt officer, or a hero?⁴³ In fact, the Commissario Montalbano is not excluded from abusing his power as a police investigator/officer. He violates police code numerous times through deceit, breaking and entering, stealing, consulting the mafia and threatening people with blackmail. The difference between the corrupt officers and Montalbano is that the former are working to cover their own backs, to protect individual reputations and power, while Montalbano breaks laws for the protection of human life and rights, and to challenge or uncover corruption within the state. He may be a renegade, sometimes called a *mafioso* by his colleagues and superiors, but in his world (as well as in the real world) there is no longer a clear division between good and evil, or between mafia and State. Instead, there are many shades of each, often times overlapping. Camilleri reflects on Montalbano's relationship with the mafia and criminality: "Montalbano non si attiene alle regole, questo sì, ma ciò non significa avere un rapporto non sano con la criminalità. Sarebbe la negazione di tutto ciò che ha fatto contro i criminali. E per quanto riguarda l'ispettore generale di Ps Messina io non 'deploro la condanna' perché incontra Giuliano, deploro al contrario la non condanna di un alto

⁴³ In the Italian language, a *sbirro* is defined as: "Agente di polizia; guardia al servizio di un'autorità (e in età moderna il termine ha assunto una connotazione sempre più marcatamente spreg., soprattutto in riferimento ai corpi di polizia di Stati e governi invisi per il carattere autoritario)" [Battaglia, Salvatore. *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*. Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1961. Print. (p. 677)]

funzionario che a Natale portava il panettone a un bandito. Montalbano, una cosa simile, non se la sognerebbe nemmeno” (Bonina 274).

In many instances Montalbano crosses the line to the point of disguising himself as mafia either by chance or by his own necessity for information. As I quoted previously, in “Un caso di omonimia” (from *Gli arancini di Montalbano*) the inspector is mistaken for a mafia hit man with whom he shares the same name. He receives a phone call at his local *trattoria* and is given a New York phone number to call in order to find out the whereabouts of the victim of the job. Montalbano decides to take as many steps as possible to get to the bottom of this story, but he gets so deep in to the character of the “killer” that he is mistaken for the actual one by the police, who have been investigating the case for a week. The detective reflects on his questionable actions: “Che fesseria stava facendo? Perché si comportava esattamente come un killer?” (Camilleri 71). After being told he has in fact jeopardized the police operation, Montalbano still remains in his renegade state of mind, continues to carry out the rest of his role as Montalbano “killer,” but only to make the last phone call too late, revealing his incredulity. At this point the people behind the plan, the mafia, give the address of a shoe store and the entire crackdown is exposed:

‘L’unica persona a sapere che il piano era andato a monte era la signora Cosentino.’

‘Giusto. La quale, mentre voi mi portavate in caserma, ha telefonato da casa sua al bar di New York. Ma voi avevate messo il suo telefono sotto controllo e lei, la signora, non lo sapeva.’

‘Giusto’ fece a sua volta il capitano. ‘In tutta questa storia, il marito...’

‘...non c’entra assolutamente niente. Non gli è mai passato manco per l’anticamera del cervello di fare ammazzare sua moglie. Era lei che voleva sbarazzarsi di lui. Non so come, ha contattato qualcuno per inscenare un finto tentativo d’omicidio. Lei vi ha avvertito e si è fatta mettere sotto protezione. Il mio omonimo killer però non sapeva che, andando in quella villa, sarebbe caduto nella trappola. Se confessava, avrebbe fatto il gioco della signora: non avrebbe potuto dire altro che era stato pagato per ammazzarla. E il marito se la sarebbe passata assai male.’ (“Un caso di omonimia” 76).

In this case it is the wife who attempts and fails to orchestrate a mafia hit for personal reasons, while inspector Montalbano is included into this plan whether he likes it or not. Although the whole situation is a case of omonimia, it is no coincidence that Montalbano's role as police inspector and his conduct are food for thought: where exactly does he stand on the spectrum? This short story overlaps the detective and a mafioso with the same name, playing on the double identity and therefore double existence of the character Montalbano.

As stated previously, *Il giro di boa* begins with Montalbano's reaction to the disgraceful outcome of the 2001 G8 summit in Genova. The inspector is so vehemently ashamed and disgusted with the police force that he contemplates permanently leaving the force. Although Montalbano is not perfectly law-abiding, he has never beaten or tortured anyone, especially peaceful protestors; he has never planted evidence to cover up a crime; and he has always kept his word even for a criminal. In his speech to Livia he says: "Ho sempre fatto il mio mestiere con onestà. Da galantuomo. Se davo la mia parola a un delinquente, la rispettavo. È stata la mia forza [...] Manco contro il peggio delinquente ho fabbricato una prova! Mai! Se l'avessi fatto mi sarei messo al suo livello [...]" (*Il giro di boa* 12). So, although Montalbano often goes beyond the limitations of his power to obtain information, it is never for his own individual needs and never against a code of humanity. Moreover, his actions are much more of a risk to his own job and safety, than to the people he protects. Montalbano's own code allows for going beyond the limits of lawful and mafia code in order to reveal corruption and defend human life.

4. Concluding thoughts

According to the Inspector Montalbano novels, the Italian State is outdated in its views on ethnic groups, social groups, methods of interrogation and investigation. When it comes to the

mafia, the State is cowardly and enabling and in turn produces a corrupt and powerful relationship between the two entities. This is Montalbano's perception of the State, and the novels' point of view as well: the State is a threatening force to humanity and justice. At times, it is the enemy to the public just as much as the mafia. The State as enemy is even more terrifying especially with the mafia at its side, since the first one legitimizes the second and at the same time, the second reverses this effect for the first. And in doing so the two forces morph in to a insurmountable beast. In Camilleri's investigative novels this evil force is demonstrated by a variety of character defects that human beings possess, such as lying, cheating, greed, arrogance, racism, misogynies, and other corrosive vices.

While the objective of the State force is inherently flawed, that of Montalbano is one of humanity and counteracting inequalities. Perhaps one could even mention the word "hero" if only for Montalbano's intentions, since there are many times in which the methods of attaining his goals seem "anti-heroic," illegal, dangerous and sometimes fatal to others. In *Il campo del vasaio* Montalbano dreams he must make a choice between joining the mafia or the State. If he chooses to side with boss Totò Riina, agent Catarella will shoot him dead. If he chooses the State, Totò Riina will kill him. Montalbano is given a double-edged sword: both institutions are corrupt and both are condemning. The opening scene begins with Montalbano's nightmare in which the *questore* Bonetti-Alderighi comes to Montalbano's house to hide from the mafia, who has apparently "taken power" over the state:

"Ma come, Montalbano, non sa niente?"

"No".

"La mafia stanotte ha preso potere!"

"Ma che dice?!".

"E come voleva che andasse a finire nel nostro sventurato paese? Una leggina oggi, una leggina domani, e siamo arrivati a questo punto. Mi dà per favore un bicchiere d'acqua?". At this point the *questore* disappears from the scene, and the *capomafia* Totò Riina enters. La càmmara era illuminata, ma Bonetti-Alderighi non c'era cchiù, al posto sò c'era

assittato un omo curto e tracagno, con una coppola in testa, che riconobbe subito. Totò Riina! Era stato liberato dal càzaro! Allora il questore non era nisciuto pazzo, quello che gli aviva ditto era la pura e semplici virità!

“Bonosira” disse Riina. “Mi perdonasse l’ora e il modo, ma ho picca tempo e fora c’è un elicottero che m’aspetta per portarmi a Roma a formare il governo. Qualichi nome ce l’ho già: Bernardo Provenzano vicepresidente, uno dei fratelli Caruana agli Esteri, Leoluca Bagarella alla Difesa... Ma io vengo a lei per una domanda e lei, commissario Montalbano, deve dirmi subito o di sì o di no. vuole essiri ’u mè ministro dell’Interno?”. Ma prima che Montalbano potissi arrispunniri, dintra alla càmmara comparse Catarella. Doviva essiri trasuto dalla porta ristata aperta. Tiniva il revorbaro in mano, lo puntò verso il commissario. Grosse lagrime gli vagnavano la facci.

“Si vossia dottori ci dici di sì a quisto sdilinguenti io l’ammazzo di pirsona pirsonalmente!”.

Però, parlanno, si era distratto. Accussì Riina, cchiù lesto di una serpi, scocciò il revorbaro sò e sparò. La luci della càmmara s’astutò e... (*Il campo del vasaio* 11-2)

Montalbano then reflects on the meaning of his dream and what surprised him the most:

Cos’è che t’ha fatto cchiù ’mpressione tra tutto quello che hai sognato?

Il fatto del cangiamento.

Quale?

Che quanno sono tornato dalla cucina, al posto di Bonetti-Alderighi c’era Totò Riina.

Chiarisci.

Che al posto del questore, rappresentante della liggi, c’era il nummaro uno della mafia, il capo di quelli che sono contro la liggi.

Cioè mi stai dicenno che nella tò cammara, nella tò casa, in mezzo alle cose tò, ti sei trovato a ospitare tanto la liggi tanto chi è for a della liggi.

Embè?

Non può essiri che dintra di tia la linea di demarcazione tra liggi e non liggi si sta facenno ogni jorno meno visibile?

Ma non dire minchiate!

[...] La scena di Catarella sta a significare che chiuttosto che accettare la proposta di Riina ero pronto a spararmi.

Montalbà, sei sicuro che Freud l’avrebbe interpretato accussì?

Sai che ti dico? Che me ne stracatafotto di Freud. E ora lassmi dormiri che mi tornò il sonno. (*Il campo del vasaio* 13-5)

One matter, though, presents itself as undeniable in the narrations: justice is a romantic and unrealistic notion. Within the Montalbano novels, it almost never attainable or necessarily desirable. In *L’odore della notte* Fazio, Mimì Augello and Montalbano imagine a cinematic interpretation of their investigation:

Mimì Augello: “[...] La macchina si allontana sempre di più, addiventa un

puntolino. Fermo immagine. Appare una scritta: 'E così il male trionfa e la giustizia va a pigliarsela nel culo'. Titoli di coda'

'Non mi piace questo finale' disse Fazio serio serio.

'Manco a mia' commentò Montalbano 'Ma ti devi rassegnare, Fazio. Le cose stanno proprio accussì. La giustizia, di questi tempi, può andare a pigliarsela in culo. Bah, lassamo perdiri'. (*L'odore della notte* 188)

On one side of the spectrum there is the State, and the officials and authorities that buy into the mafia as the only real problem. On the other side is Montalbano, Zito, Augello and Fazio, who believe in justice but find it impossible to attain within the framework of the State, for reasons previously stated.

At the end note of the novel *L'odore della notte* Andrea Camilleri writes:

L'idea di far svolgere a Montalbano un'indagine (alquanto anomala, quasi un divertissement) su un "mago" della finanza mi fu suggerita dalla lettura di un articolo di Francesco La Licata intitolato "Multinazionale mafia" dove si accennava alla vicenda di Giovanni Sucato che "riuscì, con una sorta di catena di Sant'Antonio miliardaria, a metter su un impero. Poi saltò in aria con l'auto." Soprattutto diverse sono state le mie intenzioni nel contarla. E la mafia qui non c'entra per niente, malgrado la convinzione del dottor Guarnotta, uno dei personaggi. Tuttavia, devo pur sempre dichiarare che nomi e situazioni sono inventati e non hanno riferimento con la realtà (221).

Although the Camilleri himself claims that the mafia has nothing to do with stories such as *L'odore della notte*, one could argue that it is not the mafia that acts as the subject matter, but rather the absence of mafia action and the influence of mafia history, its economic and political hold on society. The scapegoat motif is a manifestation of the mafia's influence on society (and even literature), and has a mission to convey the problem of State. For the institution is not separate from mafia. The power of the two is diffused to such a degree that deciphering one from the other becomes an impossible task.

CHAPTER 4: CAMILLERI'S MAFIA-DETECTIVE NOVEL

“La grande assente nella narrativa d’indagine italiana degli anni Settanta e Ottanta è stata la mafia e, di conseguenza, la Sicilia [...]”
(163, Massimo Carloni, *L'Italia in giallo*)

1. Re-dimensioning the *Romanzo di Mafia*: Inspector as Activist and Mafia as a Measure of Humanity

Up until this point my dissertation has explored and analyzed three key mafia motifs of Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels, within the context of Sicilian and mafia culture and literature. With all that considered, it now becomes necessary to address the subject of genre and contextualize these motifs within the realm of detective fiction and more specifically within the context of the *giallo*. The question arises, why even study the genre of detective fiction, widely considered a minor literature? Whether major or minor, literature in general is multi-dimensional and offers new perspectives on culture, history, philosophy, and the like. The detective novel provides much more than just a cultural cure to bored housewives, or a guilty pleasure for restless young adults. As Stefano Tani highlights in his book *The Doomed Detective*, the detective novel has a “double expression” which is made up of two “ones” (as in “selves”): the “mechanical one of sensational intrigue” that reflects the mass-produced culture, and the “lyrical one” that reflects the intellectual audience (16-17). This theory derives mainly from Antonio Gramsci, who commented on the *giallo* and declared how the literary genre goes beyond

escapism. The following is his writing on popular literature from *Letterature e vita nazionale* (Torino 1950):

Il romanzo poliziesco è nato ai margini della letteratura sulle 'cause celebri'... romanizzate, colorite con l'ideologia popolare intorno all'amministrazione della giustizia... Il passaggio da tale tipo di romanzo a quelli di pura avventura è segnato da un processo di schematizzazione del puro intrigo, depurato da ogni elemento di ideologia democratica e piccolo borghese: non più la lotta tra il popolo buono, semplice e generoso e le forze oscure della tirannide (gesuiti, polizia segreta legata alla ragione di Stato o all'ambizione di singoli principi, ecc.) ma solo la lotta tra la delinquenza professionale o specializzata e le forze dell'ordine legale, private o pubbliche, sulla base della legge scritta.

Il grande delinquente è stato spesso rappresentato superiore all'apparato giudiziario... da Javert [il poliziotto protagonista dei *Miserabili* di Victor Hugo] nasce forse una tradizione secondo cui anche il poliziotto può essere 'rispettabile'. [...]

Per il tempo [le avventure poliziesche di Sherlock Holmes] erano eccitanti, oggi quasi per nulla e per varie ragioni: perché il mondo delle lotte poliziesche è oggi più noto, mentre Conan Doyle in gran parte lo rivelava, almeno a un gran numero di pacifici lettori. Ma specialmente perché in Sherlock Holmes c'è un equilibrio razionale (troppo) tra l'intelligenza e la scienza. Oggi interessa di più l'apporto individuale dell'eroe, la tecnica 'psichica' in sé, e quindi Poe e Chesterton sono più interessanti... Le novelle del Padre Brown sono 'apologetiche' del cattolicesimo e del clero romano, educato a conoscere tutte le pieghe dell'animo umano dall'esercizio della confessione... contro lo 'scientismo' e la psicologia positivista del protestante Conan Doyle. (Benvenuti and Rizzoni 44)

Detective novels indeed do so much more than unravel mysteries to a crime. Although categorized as a minor literature, it is unfair for them to be judged as less important work. No matter what sort of detective novel, whether American, British, or Italian, works such as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* and even De Marchi's *Il capello del prete*, have almost always offered a critique of social, political, and economic institutions. The Italian *giallo* that came into fashion thanks to American and British imports, has almost always illustrated stories that express the cultural, social, political and economic conditions and issues at stake in Italy. For instance, *Il capello del prete* by De Marchi illustrates a story that underlines the exploitation of southerners and the consequences of their economic and social circumstances. Scerbanenco's novels centered on the doctor turned

detective Lamberti demonstrate the social and political conditions of Milan in the 1960s: on one hand the novels have a tendency to criticize the mounting consumerism of the 1960s, while on the other they sympathize with the working class and its struggles. Gadda's answer to the detective novel—*Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*—is an anomaly within the *giallo* genre, for the fact that the guilty are never discovered and there is no resolution. The mixture of regional language, of plots and subplots, reflects how the author considers reality: a grand *pasticciaccio*, or rather a complexity of elements, from people, to languages and behaviors, that are then spoiled by the horrors and ignorance of society, hence the negative suffix *-accio*. So in other words, *Quer pasticciaccio...* represents the complexity of reality in its essence. Sciascia's *Il giorno della civetta* reveals the tension between northern and southern Italy, and the threatening political power of the mafia throughout the country. What all these detective novels have in common is their undeniable reflection of social, political, and economic circumstances.

Similarly to De Marchi, Gadda, and Sciascia, Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels reveal the truth about crime, but also more specifically, the truth about police and political corruption, mafia evolution, new illegal business, social indifference, and wider global issues. In effect, the detective novel for Camilleri is a peek into fictional and non-fictional worlds. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "fiction reveals truth that reality obscures," while Stephen King says that fiction is "the truth inside the lie." Following Emerson's and King's thought, fiction, and particularly the detective novel, is not just an escape into an imaginary world, but also an insight into the author and the author's world that surrounds and influences him or her.

In *Delitti di carta nostra*, Luca Crovi summarizes the more recent Italian detective fiction and the burgeoning tendency toward a variety of sub-genres and characteristics:

Una cosa è certa: gli autori italiani in questi anni hanno rivoltato come un calzino tutte le forme dei romanzi di *detection*, recuperando il più possibile l'humus, l'aria e i sapori della nostra terra, dando vita a personaggi plausibili che assomigliano a quelli che ci è capitato di incontrare nella vita di tutti i giorni (dal malinconico Duca Lamberti all'inquieto Commissario Montalbano, dal pensieroso Commissario De Vincenzi allo spavaldo Lazzaro Santandrea, dallo sbracato Pericle il Nero al cauto Commissario Santamaria, dall'impomatato Ascanio Bonichi al colitico Sarti Antonio). (Crovi 11)

Crovi then outlines the earlier forms of the *giallo* and authors' handling of mafia. The nineteenth-century authors Cletto Arrighi and Emilio De Marchi presented narratives that highlight the conflict of innocent versus guilty, which greatly influenced the detective genre in Italy. With regards to mafia, in Arrighi's stories there is representation of the Black Hand, while in De Marchi the narratives present a tension between reason and remorse, the problems inherent to feudal society, and the decay of Enlightenment philosophies. In fact, in many ways the Commissario Montalbano reflects a similar thought and philosophy reminiscent of the Enlightenment and Romanticism: he questions the justness and power of the State; he uses unorthodox and at times illegal methods to discover the truth; he defends and aids the marginalized, the exploited, and the powerless, such as immigrants, women, the LBGT community, the poor, the elderly, mafia *pentiti*, and prostitutes.⁴⁴ At times Montalbano becomes a Christlike figure in the sense that he refrains from judging a person on the basis of demographics, but rather aims at understanding circumstances and protecting that person's rights, which the detective realizes are endangered by the State's abuse and misuse of power.

Camilleri's Commissario Montalbano also exhibits many characteristics of Augusto De Angelis' Commissario De Vincenzi, a character created in the 1930s for a detective novel

⁴⁴ In *La danza del gabbiano* Camilleri invents a transsexual character "Giovanna" who has a secret relationship with a mafioso. In *Il ladro di merendine* we see Tunisian immigrants while in *Il giro di boa* there are middle eastern child immigrants. *La forma dell'acqua* features a politician hiding his sexual orientation, as well as the community of prostitutes in Vigàta.

series.⁴⁵ Both De Vincenzi and Montalbano are avid readers (Wilde, Plato, Lawrence, Freud, Saint Paul's letters), they both meditate on virtues and vices, and are not overly concerned in resolving cases and putting the guilty in prison, but are more interested in the human soul and in a quest for the truth. Both characters strive to throw light on the moral corruption of the bourgeoisie, and are disturbed by the environment that surrounds them. There are resemblances to the detective Montalbano in the following description of the Commissario De Vincenzi: "Quotidianamente sente un grande amaro in bocca e un senso di oscura desolazione nel cuore. È un sensitivo, in fondo, un romantico a cui lo studio dell'anima umana, a ogni nuova esperienza, procurava soltanto dolore" (Crovi 23). Camilleri also echoes De Angelis' anti-fascist tone, Montalbano being often referred to by inspector Fazio as a "Communist" In reality, Montalbano merely believes in the goodness of humanity. In contrast to the Communist allusions in Camilleri's detective are autocratic and xenophobic demeanor represented by State authorities and their associates (the police commissioner Bonetti-Alderighi, Arquà, Dottor Lattes), in addition to the narrow-minded journalists such as Pippo Ragonese, who subconsciously or explicitly blame the marginalized for Italy's problems.

Another aspect of the detective novel that Camilleri draws from his predecessors is language. In Carlo Emilio Gadda's *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* the Inspector Ingravallo speaks a dialect from the Emilia-Romagna region, which is similar to the use of dialect in Camilleri's detective novels. The Inspector Ingravallo gives acute introspection of the characters' traits through a critical lens. Gadda utilizes Ingravallo to unveil small and large intrigues of Fascist Rome, addressing nobles and poor folk with the same disarming irony. Like his predecessors, Camilleri utilizes mechanisms of the detective novel to create a narrative that

⁴⁵ Augusto De Angelis is considered by some as the "father" of the *giallo*. His Commissario De Vincenzi was utilized for a Italian detective television series in the 1970s. Although he was originally from Rome, his novels take place during Fascist times in Milan.

conveys not only emotions but also moral messages. Crovi states that the *giallo* is a mask under which lies the tragedy of our modern age. He lists Sciascia, Bufalino, Moravia and others under this category of authors who use the mask of the *giallo* to reveal real life issues. Camilleri demonstrates this mode in *Il giro di boa* and *La voce del violino*. Rather than to a mask, which denotes hiding, I would compare the *giallo* to a cube, because of its multi-dimensional and multi-temporal narrative. Camilleri's *gialli* (as opposed to Sciascia's) are not attempting to hide the main issues at stake but rather to demonstrate numerous shades of quotidian problems and their relation to much more complex issues, even if there is no resolution. Unlike Sciascia's cryptic novels, the Montalbano novels explicitly express today's troubles and corruptions leaving little to question or suspect. As I discussed in Chapter 2 à propos of the old and new mafia motif, Camilleri's stories open up a discourse on bio-politics in the sense that they reveal the ethical concerns that new technologies and new businesses can bring up, especially when they operate with the support of political institutions and their authoritative figures.

Such concerns ring true for the detective Montalbano, whose role as law enforcer is often overshadowed by his unconventional methods. Regarding this mode of power, an important influence for Camilleri is Giorgio Scerbanenco's character, former doctor and inspector Duca Lamberti. Like Montalbano, whose actions sometimes border on the illegal and are often criticized as "acting like God" or acting "mafioso," Scerbanenco's protagonist uses physical force and threats. Lamberti is even presumed guilty of euthanasia on one of his patients. Montalbano is also involved in ambiguous and controversial situations that raise the question of whether he is working for the justice system or for criminals. There is a parallel between Montalbano and Lamberti in that both are fatherless. This circumstance raises the issue of

protection and survival, but also a sense of liberation of the individual from his origins.⁴⁶ It is as if both inspectors are given the liberty to act as they like without the fear of being judged by their fathers. In the following quotation from *Venere privata*, Scerbanenco describes Lamberti's prison sentence and the protagonist's acquisition of language and code of behavior in order to survive:

Dopo tre anni di carcere aveva imparato a passare il tempo con i mezzi più semplici...In carcere aveva imparato a non dire parole superflue...In carcere aveva imparato anche ad ascoltare, i compagni di cella avevano lunghe e bugiarde storie da raccontare, storie della loro innocenza, storie di donne che li avevano rovinati, tutti Abele uccisi da Caino e tutti Adamo corrotti da Eva...In carcere si diventa anche intelligenti, e le parole hanno molto valore, quelle dette e quelle ascoltate; nella vita libera, incensurata, c'era sciupio e svalutazione della parola e dell'ascoltare le parole: si continuava a parlare senza sapere bene quello che si diceva, e si ascoltava senza capire [...] (*Venere privata* 1966)

This mode of conduct, of taciturnity and silence, resembles the Sicilian way to communicate, as well as that of the mafia, or to be more specific what I demonstrated in Chapter 1 as the Mafioso Type. This leads my analysis to the contextualization of mafia within the detective genre.

2. Mafia in Italian Detective Fiction

So what does mafia look like within the detective genre? And what do mafia motifs do for the genre? First of all, within the realm of the *romanzo giallo*, before Andrea Camilleri there was De Marchi, Sciascia, Gadda, De Angelis, Arrighi, Scerbanenco, Enzo Russo, and others. From the long line of Sicilian authors, Sciascia was fundamental for Camilleri. In *The Doomed Detective*, Stefano Tani reflects on Sciascia and his literary influences:

He seems to have been influenced by Pirandello in his perception of the ambiguity of reality and by Manzoni in his use of irony and of a masterful plain style. In the late thirties his literary interests took shape as he began to read the French rationalists of the

⁴⁶ Lamberti's father died of heart attack after the inspector's prison sentence.

Enlightenment (Voltaire, Diderot) and then American fiction writers such as Dos Passos, Caldwell, and Steinbeck. These two trends in his early readings developed later in his literary career, on the one hand, into a rational and critical preoccupation with the moral and political state of Italy, a preoccupation that becomes civil commitment, *littérature engagé* in the French pamphleteers' tradition (historical investigations such as *La scomparsa di Majorana*, 1975; satirical novels such as *Candido*, 1977; the pamphlet *L'affaire Moro*, 1978) and, on the other hand, into an interest in a realistic novel of action with social concerns, which is apparently regionalist (the Sicilian setting) but actually a metaphor for a wider reality (novels such as *Il giorno della civetta*, 1961; *A ciascuno il suo*, 1966; *Todo modo*, 1974). (Tani 53)

Sciascia's Sicilian setting and the metaphorical references to a wider reality are elements highly relevant to Camilleri's novels. There are, however, many more authors and elements that influence the Montalbano novels. From the perspective of detective fiction and mafia fiction, the novelist whom Camilleri resembles most, with regard to using mafia as a part of the narrative, is Enzo Russo, whose novels were blatantly characterized by mafia in that they could even be categorized as "romanz*i* di mafia." While Camilleri's Montalbano novels do not fall into such a genre, they may present a new form of mafia novel, as in the "giallo-romanzo-di-mafia" or the "detective-mafia-novel." Categories and labels aside, the point is to convey that Camilleri treats both the detective novel as well as the mafia novel differently. Let us examine more closely how Camilleri differs from previous detective novelists and mafia novelists. Afterwards, we may draw conclusions about what the differences implicate, and whether there is in fact a new genre or innovation.

Critic Massimo Carloni reflects on Enzo Russo: "L'involontaria complicità tra narratore ed estensore che l'autore adombra nella *Presentazione* è la spia dell'atteggiamento che si vuole indurre nel lettore: vedere il fenomeno dal di dentro, nelle oggettive condizioni socio-economiche in cui si è sviluppato, senza pregiudizi moralistici, per capire e non per giudicare" (Carloni 164). Russo takes into consideration the evolution of the mafia of the last decade and observes the various parts of the vertices. As opposed to Camilleri's mafia descriptions, Russo

explores the mafia's strategic business models by explaining them in detail from the inside out (Carloni 165). He even goes so far as to have characters research the origins of the mafia phenomenon as well as the roots of *Sicilianità* (Carloni 166). This sort of internal examination within the narrative is non-existent in Camilleri's novels. The detective Montalbano is Sicilian through and through and embraces his Sicilian-ness in his personal and professional life: from his appetite for food and women, from the way he communicates allusively and in Sicilian, to the way he investigates, interrogates suspects, and consults *mafiosos*. At times Montalbano reflects on certain historical anecdotes of the evolution of the mafia. However, most of the historical aspects are quick references or are woven into the dialogues involving old mafia bosses.

In questa ottica la mafia, che in quegli anni ancora si muoveva in un ambito sostanzialmente agricolo, rimane un po' sullo sfondo e sfocata nelle articolazioni interne, anche se l'analisi spietata della mentalità siciliana ci aiuta a capire le radici profonde di questo fenomeno. Il romanzo quindi, pur nella sua diversità rispetto agli altri due, completa il discorso avviato dall'autore: attraverso gli occhi prima di un anonimo mafioso, poi dei vertici di Cosa Nostra ed infine di un commerciante e proprietario terriero, Russo, siciliano trapiantato al Nord, ha ricostruito cinquant'anni di violenza in Sicilia, senza moralismi o patetiche difese d'ufficio, cercando di porre davanti al lettore, in modo chiaro e talora persino didascalico, la realtà: quella che per troppo tempo in Italia pochi hanno cercato di sondare e descrivere nella sua complessità e pericolosità sociale. (Carloni 166)

Carloni notes another author relevant to mafia within detective novels: Alfio Caruso. He writes: "Alfio Caruso (1950) affronta, con i suoi romanzi pubblicati a partire dal 1991, il fenomeno mafioso, partendo dalla sua riorganizzazione in vista del nuovo millennio" (167). By "new millenium" Carloni refers to a new generation of mafia and its hand in new technology. In the novel *Tutto a posto* Caruso writes: "Lamantia ebbe l'idea d'impossessarsi della NAM, che per noi è come l'AT&T per voi [...] Tutti ne avrebbero tratto beneficio: il mercato, le aziende, specialmente quelle siciliane [...] bisognava chiudere con la droga e con le sue vittime. La droga non si controllava più, un tumore che minacciava le famiglie e lo stato" (Carloni 177). This

image of new mafia is quite dissimilar to Camilleri's representations, that convey, through the characters Don Balduccio and Tanu, a great concern for the new generation of mafia who are going beyond drugs by moving on to more inhumane business (organ and human trafficking) and as a result making *omertà* obsolete.

In *L'italia in giallo* Massimo Carloni elaborates on Enzo Russo's *Uomo di rispetto*, a sort of mafia "autobiography" that explores the fifty years of mafia as seen from the inside. Russo writes with extreme realism and utilizes an anonymous narrator who confesses to a diligent writer in such a way that the novel proposes itself as a quick historical reconstruction of the mafia phenomenon from the *latifondo* to heroin (163).⁴⁷ From the following description one gets a sense of the illustration of mafia within Russo's work:

L'involontaria complicità tra narratore ed estensore che l'autore adombra nella *Presentazione* è la spia dell'atteggiamento che si vuole indurre nel lettore: vedere il fenomeno dal di dentro, nelle oggettive condizioni socio-economiche in cui si è sviluppato, senza pregiudizi moralistici, per capire e non per giudicare. Che questa esigenza sia fortemente avvertita da Russo lo testimonia anche *Il quattordicesimo zero* che pure prende in esame l'evoluzione mafiosa dell'ultimo decennio osservata dalla parte dei vertici. (Carloni 164)

From such quotations, it is clear that Camilleri was not the first to represent the old and new mafia within detective fiction. Russo treats the topic of the old and new mafia from a close view within the organization, which is different from Camilleri, who only gives the old mafia a narrative voice, and refers to the new one via the old. It will now be pertinent to examine the characteristics that distinguish the novels with a mafia motif from other detective novels.

⁴⁷ "*Uomo di rispetto* si presenta come l'autobiografia di un mafioso raccolta dall'autore e adattata per la stampa; questa esigenza di estremo realismo giustifica il ricorso alla finzione dell'anonimo narrante che si confessa al diligente estensore e fa sì anche che il romanzo si proponga come una veloce ricostruzione storica del fenomeno mafioso 'dal latifondo all'eroina'." (Carloni 163)

3. Camilleri's mafia in detective fiction: a new dimension?

Because of his birth in Porto Empedocle, Sicily, it is only natural for Camilleri to base his stories in Sicily and focus on its culture, language and history through a wide variety of colorful characters and scenarios. His detective novels have summoned a huge following of Italian and international readers (in both original language and translation) and a large audience for the successful Italian television series, *Il Commissario Montalbano* (1998-2011). Departing from legendary detective fiction precedents such as Georges Simenon, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, and fellow Sicilian Leonardo Sciascia, Camilleri's detective novels have reached a new level of production and consumption.⁴⁸ Since 1994, Camilleri has published 26 detective Montalbano novels, out of which 21 feature the mafia through one of the three motifs. With what follows, I will elaborate on how his novels depart from Simenon, Montalbán and Sciascia.

More importantly, they have achieved new linguistic and literary dimensions, redefining the label of “minor literature.” In the detective Montalbano novels, *Il ladro di merendine*, *La gita a Tindari* and *Il giro di boa*, Camilleri crafts rich plots and sub-plots by layering reality and fiction. The narratives illustrate a literary space that is very familiar to readers—the detective novel—and at the same time features a foreign place (the Sicilian town of Vigàta) that has its own universal appeal.

Through the narration of the Commissario Montalbano's experiences, we perceive a recognizable yet uncanny dimension, similar to a mosaic. The novels are fragmented from the interaction between the exterior and interior worlds, and the sub-plots and main plots; second, they are phantasmagoric since the setting, gastronomy, linguistic code, mafia types and

⁴⁸ Georges Simenon wrote and published 75 novels and 28 short stories featuring the Commissaire Maigret between the years 1931 to 1972.

characters are all typical of Sicily, and yet when pieced together they crystallize to form a new and fictional place. All of these features contribute to a recognizable and relatable literary space and place, and at the same time, they enchant and encourage us to search for a deeper message. What follows is an examination of the stylistic and narrative methods Andrea Camilleri uses in the aforementioned novels, setting the author apart from his peers. This will shed light on the innovations and mafia motifs employed by Camilleri to guide the reader through his literary place and space.

From the very beginning of the three novels, the reader is launched into the unconscious mind of Inspector Salvo Montalbano, witnessing—like a fly on the wall—the awakening of a conflicted and reflective protagonist. Each story begins with a representation of his interior and exterior worlds and their effect on each other. In *Il ladro di merendine*, the story begins with Montalbano's tormented sleep caused by overindulgence in food, foreshadows the coming investigation and his subconscious reaction:

S'arrisbigliò malamente: i linzòla, nel sudatizzo del sonno agitato per via del chilo e mezzo di sarde a beccafico che la sera avanti si era sbafàto, gli si erano strettamente arravugliate torno torno il corpo, gli parse d'essere addiventato una mummia. [...] La persiana sbatté con violenza contro il muro e Montalbano di scatto si susì a mezzo del letto, gli occhi sgriddrati dallo spavento, persuaso, nel fumo del sonno che ancora l'avvolgeva, che qualcuno gli avesse sparato. In un vidiri e svidiri il tempo era cangiato, un vento freddo e umido faceva onde dalla scumazza gialligna, il cielo era interamente coperto di nuvole che amminazzavano pioggia. (*Il ladro di merendine* 9)

Il giro di boa reveals an insomniac Montalbano, tossing and turning through the night, not because of his eating habits, but for his anxiety about police corruption:

Nuttata fittusa, 'nfami, tutta un arramazarsi, un votati e rivotati, un addrummisciti e un arrisbigliati, un susiti e un curcati. E non per colpa di una manciatina eccessiva di purpi a strascina sali o di sarde a beccafico fatta la sira avanti, perché almeno una scascione di quell'affannata insonnia ci sarebbe stata, invece, nossignore, manco questa soddisfazione poteva pigliarsi, la sira avanti aviva avuto lo stomaco accusì stritto che non ci sarebbe passato manco un filo d'erba. Si era trattato dei pinsèri nivuri che l'avevano assugliato

doppo avere sentito una notizia del telegiornale nazionale. ‘All’annigatu, petri di ’ncoddru’ era il detto popolare che veniva esclamato quando una insopportabile serie di disgrazie s’abbatteva su qualche sbinturato. E per lui, che già da qualche mese nuotava alla disperata in mezzo a un mare in tempesta, e si sentiva a tratti perso come un annegato, quella notizia era stata uguale a una vera e propria pitrata tiratagli addosso, anzi una pitrata che l’aviva pigliato preciso ’n testa, tramortendolo e facendogli perdere le ultime, debolissime forze. (*Il giro di boa* 9)

Deep down the detective is quite sensitive, and so he is shamed and outraged after hearing about the actions of the police force at the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa. He feels as weak as if he was drowning in a tempestuous sea, and impelled to leave the police force. In the following quotation from *La gita a Tindari*, Camilleri illustrates the strong connection Montalbano has with his subconscious: “Che fosse vigilante, se ne faceva capace dal fatto che la testa gli funzionava secondo logica e non seguendo l’assurdo labirinto del sogno, che sentiva il regolare sciabordio del mare, che un venticello di prim’alba trasiva dalla finestra spalancata. Ma continuava ostinatamente a tenere gli occhi inserrati [...]” (9). Beneath these comedic and dramatic scenes is an insight into the protagonist’s struggle between his interior and exterior realities. That which unfolds around him consciously and unconsciously affects the inspector. These prologues reveal the essence of detective Montalbano and the fundamental preoccupations of the three novels: the right to human life and the use and abuse of power.

At first, we seem to be omniscient along with the author, but, as we continue reading, our views become obscured through the story’s quick and continuous interruptions. We encounter his external world: dialogues between Montalbano and his colleagues, his long-distance girlfriend Livia, and culinary experiences. In the meantime, we also observe his internal world of nightmares, reflections on investigations, meditations on aging, losing mental sharpness, and on his lonely life as an unmarried and orphaned fifty-year-old man. These internal and external elements are defining traits in Camilleri’s narration and they create two effects. On the one hand,

they paint a recognizable and relatable world: the zooming in on Sicilian life, the stereotypical characters, their particularities, and the daily concerns and crimes of Vigàta. On the other hand, the narrative pieces of Vigàta, Montalbano, Sicily, Italy, and beyond, allow us to form a unified idea of our global society and ultimately to aid us in understanding the more universal issues.

Camilleri's method of writing is a source of his novels' phantasmagoric dimension. Literary critic Ornella Palumbo touches on Camilleri's various narrative devices, and notes how he was largely influenced by Diego Fabbri, screenwriter for the 1960s' Italian television series *Maigret*, based on Simenon's original novels.⁴⁹ Fabbri wrote scenes on separate sheets of paper, placing them on the floor, and putting them one by one in a non-sequential order. Through this process both Fabbri and Camilleri construct their intertwining stories (Palumbo 23). More specifically, Camilleri usually begins his process from a current event, which touches him on a personal level and then builds around that nucleus. Once he has decided on a central point, a series of branches is born, all of which end up forming the novel. The following is a quote from Camilleri which illustrates his creative process:

[...] io non so inventarmi nulla dal nulla. Proprio ho una necessità di partire sempre da qualcosa di già accaduto, letto, sentito dire. [...] Io comincio a scrivere quella cosa che mi ha colpito, scrivo quell'episodio, comincio a costruirmi attorno. Naturalmente poi il racconto si allarga. Allora devo fare dei passi avanti, dei passi indietro rispetto al nucleo centrale, costruendo una sorta di ragnatela a rovescio. Cioè io parto dal punto centrale e da questo nascono una serie di diramazioni che finiscono col formare il romanzo [...] (Sorgi 80-81)

I agree with Palumbo's assertion that Camilleri's method of creation contributes to a sort of enchantment. For my analysis, this enchantment is directly related to what I define as phantasmagoric. Two other important sources of the phantasmagoric are the interaction of main

⁴⁹ Ornella Palumbo writes: "Fabbri comprava un libro, ne sforbiciava materialmente le pagine, poi le disponeva per terra a una a una in ordine non sequenziale, come in un mosaico, secondo l'intreccio che via via gli si rivelava funzionale all'efficacia del racconto televisivo" (23).

plots with sub-plots, and the linguistic code of the novels. *Il ladro di merendine* exhibits two main homicides: that of a Tunisian man shot down while on a fishing boat on international waters, and that of a Sicilian man found dead in the elevator of his apartment building. From the very beginning, Montalbano juggles the two incidents, which seem to be two distinct and unrelated cases. While the first case appears suspicious and complicated to the inspector, the second one just seems to be a domestic incident, involving a jealous and greedy wife's revenge on her husband. As the stories build in detail, Montalbano locates a common thread between the two cases, and a much deeper concern of terrorism. The Tunisian woman Karima is the murdered Sicilian man's mistress, and her brother happens to be a wanted terrorist. In addition, there are two other sub-plots unfolding and overlapping in this novel: someone has been stealing Vigàta's schoolchildren's snacks and Karima's eight-year-old son is missing. This layering of stories is not new to the detective genre. The types of sub-plots utilized, however, may be a novelty. Camilleri layers the local and domestic with the global and international. Doing so renders the novel even more complex and gives the reader more than just one mystery to ponder, but existential and global issues of migration and race relations, bio-politics and ethical concerns that can surface now in any small town in the world.

Il giro di boa opens with a deluded Montalbano as the result of the events of the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa, in which police authorities suspended the human rights of peaceful protesters, brutally beating and planting evidence against them. The inspector's reflections on state corruption are a prelude to his impetus to defend human rights in the issue at large from two different but related cases. The first case involves the corpse of an Italian man found on the seashore. The second is the disembarking of a group of clandestine children and the untimely death of one of them. Human trafficking is the crime that connects the two cases. Prior to the

boy's death, Detective Montalbano comes face to face with this young boy trying to flee from his so-called "family." Unaware of the situation, the inspector unknowingly reunites the child with his exploiters and becomes aware of his death a few days later. Montalbano's failure to see through the orchestrated façade and his rage after realizing his mistake, represent Camilleri's reflection on all those incidents in which the voices of the innocent are muted and end up in inhumane hands. Authorities should help, but do not because of their distorted view of reality (in the case of Montalbano), their indifference, or corruption (in the case of State authorities). The distorted visions of reality are often due to the very institutions that rule society: power is so diffused and difficult to pinpoint that discerning friend from enemy or right from wrong becomes an impossible task.

La gita a Tindari reveals another social stance against inhumane activity: organ trafficking. A broader mafia business enterprise originating in different places and at different moments connects three separate homicides. The inspector discovers a curious sequence of murders: the twenty-something computer nerd and pornography fanatic, Nenè Sanfilippo; the elderly couple Mr. and Mrs. Griffo on their excursion to Tindari; and Japuchino Sinagra, the unruly nephew of old boss Don Balduccio. Montalbano finally learns of their connecting link after reading Sanfilippo's disturbing novel about a robot world in which robot adults and children are used for their organs. Two other hints come from Don Balduccio, who in the first instance reveals how his nephew is involved in dirty business, characteristic of the "new" mafia. In the second instance, Balduccio laments of his poor health and his need for a kidney transplant. Through Balduccio's coded language, typical of the Sicilian mafia, Montalbano uncovers a daunting reality in which not only the mafia is involved, but also politicians. For the critic Palumbo, Camilleri's narrative interactions cause the reader to "[...] cadere di gusto nella tela di

una realtà ricca di presenza umana, sonora, colorata, bizzarra, domestica, mai noiosa, spesso sorprendente, qualche volta paradossale” (57). Moreover, we are inclined to navigate through the interlacing stories, and locate that which is familiar to us, not just from a cultural point of view, but also from a social one.

After highlighting the intersection of subplots in the three novels, it is important to discuss a second element that falls under the phantasmagoric, which is linguistic code. The novels’ language is a mixed use of Italian and Sicilian. Simona Demontis’s book on Camilleri’s works explores his use of language and notes how readers are immediately struck by the peculiarities of language composed of different registers and linguistic layers. She writes, “Chi si accosta, infatti, a uno qualunque dei suoi libri viene colpito di primo acchito dalla peculiarità del suo linguaggio connotato dall’uso di diversi registri e strati linguistici: lingua italiana, dialetto, lingua mescidata, lingue straniere; linguaggio aulico, medio, volgare” (14). In short, Camilleri uses Italian as a touching stone for his code: the base language is recognizable even within sentences that feature highly *Sicilianized* words and expressions. The essential distinction between Camilleri’s novels and other detective fiction novels is the prominence of *Sicilianità* and – as I elaborated earlier – the mafioso type present in language, rhetoric, and storyline. Camilleri’s creates his own code through these elements and in doing so, also illustrates various dimensions: that of Vigàta, Montalbano’s unconscious world, the mafia realm, and a critique on society and the State.

Within such a framework, the Sicilian and mafia mode of communication act as characters do in stories: sometimes minor ones and sometimes principal, these modes are devices that give dimension and momentum to the narrative. Demontis uncovers another facet of the novels’ language: she notes that Camilleri uses language to hide himself as the narrative voice,

blurring the lines between narration, plot and story. Although the narrator is not directly involved in the plot, he still speaks the same colorful language as the characters, and is at the same time in close proximity to the disinterested and neutral observer (14). This illusory absence of the author, à la Roland Barthes' *Death of the Author*, makes room for the reader to enter the literary space from an intimate perspective. The reader, who could be an observer "from afar" of Montalbano's rough night in bed, becomes the observer "up close and personal." He is given the tools to feel what the inspector feels, to hear the voices in his mind, to wake up with him from his nightmares.

Food is revealing of Montalbano's state of mind and inner tension: if he is nervous or tormented by an investigation, he loses his appetite or eats without *gusto*. He is miserable if starving and hasn't the time to eat a slice of *tumazzo* ("farmer's cheese") and some *ulive* ("olives"). Too many sardines *a beccafico* ("stuffed and rolled sardines made to resemble birds") provoke nausea and nightmares. In the right mood, some octopus *a strascinasali* (boiled baby octopus, "dressed in olive oil and lemon juice") or *triglie fritte* ("fried mullet") is a great comfort. At times, food is the only form of relief from his solitude, investigations, and his disappointment in the State and civil society. Each culinary experience reveals the effect of the exterior world on the inspector's unconscious. Montalbano's sensitive relationship with food is a significant element in Camilleri's novels, and is steeped in Sicilian culture.

Within the context of the *giallo*, Andrea Camilleri's detective novels have demonstrated not only a unique linguistic code, but also a layered and phantasmagorical dimension. As readers, we navigate through this dimension by connecting mafia motifs, Montalbano's emotions, thoughts and appetite, to his meals, investigations, and real-life events. In the end, what can come from this connection is a profound critique of society. As if restoring a work of art, we can gather the

pieces of this mosaic and construct a new one: the stories illustrate Vigàta and the inspector Montalbano, but ultimately they send a universal message on life and humanity.

Within the genre of the Italian detective novel, or the *giallo*, Andrea Camilleri's Montalbano contributes certain elements which are new to the genre. These aspects include the three mafia motifs that I have outlined in my first three chapters: the *mafioso* type, the old and new mafia dichotomy, and mafia as a scapegoat for the failure of state. Since nearly all of Camilleri's detective Montalbano novels reference or explicitly incorporate the mafia into the characters, narratives or plot, the possibility of a new "genre" or "framework" becomes more evident. Leading or significant characters such as Don Balduccio Sinagra, Tanu *u grecu*, the Cuffaro and Sinagra families all represent the mafia as a criminal organization and the culture of the mafia (as in *omertà* and mafia communicative code). As mentioned in Chapter One, even non-mafia characters exude mafia culture by demonstrating a mode of communication that is either very allusive and cryptic, or focuses on silence and the exclusion of information in order to communicate a specific message. Within this group of non-mafia characters is first and foremost the Commissario Montalbano, who, thanks to his "mastery" of the *mafioso* mode of communication, is able to decrypt mafia messages and interact with mafia bosses. Within the narratives, Montalbano's conduct as an inspector and law enforcer are often criticized by his superiors (chief commissioner Bonetti-Alderighi), his colleagues (inspector Arquà, il dottor Lattes) and local journalists (Pippo Ragonese) as being borderline "mafioso." At times the accusations are excessive, while at other times they are close to being accurate, since Montalbano often steps over the line, by lying or threatening others, in order to obtain information or a confession. In this sense, the inspector disregards police code and its standards and enforces his own natural law (Antigone's law) where no rules apply to him. As opposed to

being characterized as a “mafioso,” I consider this sort of autocratic behavior closer to that of a renegade or a bandit because Montalbano is suspended between two major forces of power: mafia and State. Through the novels we gather that neither force is perfectly in line with what could be considered good conduct; and Montalbano is aware of this fact. For this reason, he does not completely trust either one, and therefore can only truly rely on his own “code” of law and his unorthodox informers and accomplices, such as childhood friend and local brothel owner Gegé, his housemaid’s son and smalltime thief Pasquale, friend and local journalist Niccolò, and the old mafia bosses Balduccio Sinagra and Tanu *u grecu*. Montalbano moves investigations in new directions by demystifying the mafia as sole culprit for crimes and questioning the authority of the State. To deconstruct the stereotype of the mafia and the State as innocent, Montalbano goes beyond the limitations of police code, and in the meantime gains information on the truth of the case. This representation of detective story may be analyzed as a metaphor of finding truth in the world, and discovering the complexity of power in society. Montalbano is not just investigating a criminal case, he is also functioning as an examiner of power relations in Sicily and Italy (of mafia and State), and in turn of the true complexity of power politics in our global society.

CONCLUSION

Although author Andrea Camilleri excludes the idea that his detective novels deal with the subject of mafia, in the four chapters of this dissertation I have endeavored to show that the mafia is indeed represented, in three distinct motifs. Chapter One dealt with the first motif of “feeling” *mafioso*. Chapter Two analyzed the second motif: the dichotomy of old and new mafia. Chapter Three explained the third motif of the use of the mafia as a scapegoat for the failure of State. Finally, Chapter Four explored and discussed the possibility of a new vein in the detective fiction genre: mafia-detective.

In Chapter One, the dissertation investigated the “feeling” *mafioso* motif through the lens of anthropology, criminology, history, sociology and economy. This examination then elaborated on *mafiosità* in Sicilian literature, both fictional and non-fictional. My secondary sources aided the dissertation in contextualizing the various manifestations of the “feeling” *mafioso* motif within the detective Montalbano novels. Hence, the chapter explored the various manifestations of the “feeling” *mafioso* motif: a) *omertà* and the code of silence; b) the culture of anonymity; c) cryptic language and allusive storytelling; d) the shame and display of *pentitismo*; e) crude peasant ways; and f) *sbirro*-like conduct. The chapter illustrated examples from twelve of Camilleri’s detective Montalbano novels, and demonstrated how the author’s characters, plots, and language often illustrate the manifestations of this motif, further enforcing a *mafioso* type.

Chapter Two examined the old and new mafia motif in the Montalbano novels. Through an examination of mafia history and the tradition of mafia in literature, this chapter interpreted the representation of the dichotomy of old and new mafia, and the breakdown of *omertà*. To

provide a foundation, the dissertation studied the mechanism of Cosa Nostra and *omertà*, its evolution, the origin of the new and old mafia myth, and the literary and cinematic interpretations of this motif. The chapter then examined Camilleri's novels, within this context. The dissertation concluded that within the Montalbano novels, this dichotomy and motif work as a medium to express an anxiety over change and the ethical concerns that come with the mafia's – or rather society's – technological and biological advancements.

Chapter Three explored Camilleri's illustration of mafia as a scapegoat to the State's inefficiencies and corruption. For background, the chapter looked at the history of the tendency to blame the powerless or the usual suspects in real life, myth, religion and in Sicilian literature. Additionally, the dissertation looked at the history of mafia and State relations. It then closely examined the manifestation of scapegoating the mafia within the detective Montalbano novels, and found many instances in which the detective was confronted with the tendency to blame or pass off a crime as mafia related, even when there is no connection. This motif helped to cast light on the phenomenon of power and the difficulty in locating it within today's societal institutions.

Chapter Four discussed the development of a new vein in the detective fiction genre: the mafia-detective novel. The chapter considered Camilleri's inclusion of mafia characters, the mafia motifs, and crimes within narratives. It also studied the history of detective fiction, the *giallo* and what makes Camilleri's novels stand apart. The three mafia motifs that the dissertation examined are major aspects that distinguish the detective novels from others. The chapter concluded that these three motifs have a double task: each of them works to help to create suspense, tension, and a Sicilian tone; and in addition they help narrate and open up the discourse on bio-politics, bio-ethics and bio-business in Sicily and beyond.

In addition to the literary value of the mafia motifs and mafia genre in Camilleri, this dissertation aimed to demonstrate how the representation of mafia is also a means to reflect on ethics, society, and humanity. The motifs are a lens through which Camilleri views life and its falsities, stereotypes, illusions, desires, and fears.

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