

The Self as the Other in Andrea Camilleri's Detective Fiction

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The modern world presents various occasions in which the self can (vicariously) consider and make real the idea of becoming “the other” or “another”. From self-help books to academic publications about *Possible Selves* (Dunkel and Kerpelman 2006), to computer games such as “Second Life”, in a true postmodern fashion, one can live (an)other life and (an)other's life. One of the best vehicles for this possibility is constituted by reading literary fiction: if Schopenhauer's saying is true, that reading is thinking with someone else's brain, then all reading involves some type of interplay between the self (the reader/the author) and the other or the others (the author/the characters). Some fiction leads to imaginary worlds and an escape to the past or the future; other literary works force the reader to come to terms with the present. The latter finds one of the best examples in detective novels and short stories penned by Andrea Camilleri.

Camilleri himself has often discussed and keeps repeating his literary debt to Pirandello and continues to offer a number of clues which lead to more fruitful interpretations of his works. At least three instances of Camilleri's preoccupation with the self as the other propose themselves for an intriguing analysis:

- 1) the self as the other in which the self is the other—as mirror reflections between reality and fiction (where mimesis is not the focal point)
- 2) the self divided/doubled
- 3) the self as the other as a function of language.

Before embarking on illustrations from Camilleri's short stories, it is useful to mention some social scientific definitions of *the self*. Social psychologists define the self as “a collection of abilities, temperament, goals, values, and preferences that distinguish one individual from another” (Tesser 185). Other scholars claim that “the self embodies human agency and directs volitional processes and goal-oriented behaviors, especially that are central to itself” (Frazier and Hooker 43). Philosophers of language have concentrated their efforts on analyzing the individualizing qualities of operators such as definite descriptions,

proper names, pronouns (Reagan 1993) and on attempting to understand self-reference and self-awareness (Brook 11). Cultural critics underline the fact that “in the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a reflexive project. [...] In the settings of modernity, [...] the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change” (Giddens 32-33). Routine creation and sustaining of reflexive activities are therefore necessary underpinnings of the self’s pursuits.

The “other” does not have a single definition since its meaning hinges on that characterization of the self with which it comes into contact. The other is usually thought of as the object where the self is the subject. The “I”/the self acts upon the “you”/the other. It is this “acting upon” that determines the agent and object roles. There is, nevertheless, also the possibility that the object acts upon the subject in such a way that the other and the self become identical. This is the focus of my contribution.

1. *The self as the other: the self is the other*

1.i. *The self is the other: fictional characters as other real or fictional characters*

Camilleri tends to have Montalbano muse about his role as police inspector and therefore presents him as a self-conscious detective. This leads to a circularity of themes and ideas in certain cases: the fictional detective that “acts” as a “real” and “fictional” character. The function of a *tragediatore*, someone whose role in a situation is so great or exaggerated that he involves the audience in it, has been a recognized trait of Camilleri’s writing (La Fauci 150-163). Camilleri makes a *tragediatore* of Montalbano, as is evidenced in the following example from “Guardie e ladri” (*Un mese con Montalbano*, 1998), where Montalbano is playing *guardie and ladri* with a small boy:

Montalbano raprì la macchina, pigliò un vecchio impermeabile che teneva per ogni evidenza nel vano posteriore, l’indossò, strinse la cintura, alzò il bavero nel tentativo d’*assomigliare a un investigatore dei film americani*, e si avviò alla ricerca del picciliddro. (253, emphasis mine)

Montalbano willingly and happily plays the role of an “American investigator,” to effectively draw whoever is around him into the action in a more participatory manner. This can be seen in Camilleri’s “Una faccenda delicata” (*Gli arancini di Montalbano*, 1999):

“Lei, nella sua carriera, è sempre stato certo, matematicamente certo, che le persone che ha arrestato come colpevoli lo fossero veramente?”

Il commissario tutto s’aspettava, meno che quella domanda.

Raprì la bocca e immediatamente la richiuse. Non era una domanda alla quale si poteva rispondere senza pensarci sopra. [...]

“Alla sua domanda di stammatina: delle persone che ho arrestato o fatto arrestare sono, nei miei limiti, matematicamente certo della loro colpevolezza. Anche se, qualche volta, la giustizia non li ha ritenuti tali e li ha mandati assolti.”

“Le è capitato?”

“Qualche volta sì.”

“Se n’è fatto un cruccio?”

“Per niente.”

“Perché?”

“Perché ho troppa esperienza. Adesso so benissimo che esiste una verità processuale che marcia su un binario parallelo a quello della verità. Ma non sempre i due binari portano alla stessa stazione. Certe volte sì, certe volte no.” (250)

The intertwining of fiction and reality gives Camilleri the pretext to refer to two, among many, points of interest: that of guilt and that of injustice. In many cases, those who commit crimes are skillfully controlled by those who are really guilty of illegal machinations. However, not all of them end up receiving the guilty sentence.

1.ii. *The self is the other: the investigator as the criminal*

The next passage, from “Ferito a morte” (*La paura di Montalbano* 2002), underscores the fact that Montalbano is aware of the deep and troubling connection between the investigator and the criminal:

In bagno, si talidò allo specchio e si fece subitanea ‘ntipatia. Ma come facevano le pirsone a reggerlo e alcune a volergli macari bene? Lui non si voleva bene, questo era certo. Un giorno aveva pinsato a se stesso con spietata lucidità.

“Io sono come una fotografia” aveva detto a Livia.

Livia l’aveva taliato strammata.

“Non capisco.”

“Vedi, io esisto in quanto c’è un negativo.”

“Continuo a non capire.”

“Mi spiego meglio: esisto perchè c’è un negativo fatto di delitti, di assassini, di violenze. Se non esistesse questo negativo, il mio positivo, cioè io, non potrebbe esistere.”

Livia, curiosamente, si era messa a ridere.

“Non m’incanti, Salvo. Il negativo di un assassino, sviluppato, non rappresenta un poliziotto, ma lo stesso assassino.”

“Era una metafora.”

“Sbagliata.”

Sì, era sbagliata, me c’era qualcosa di vero. (52-53)

Our selves are constructed also in virtue of “negatives,” of those

around us that seem to be our “negatives.” Camilleri had been concerned with this topic long before he wrote the preface to a new edition of Karl Marx’s *Elogio del crimine* (2006). Essentially, without the negative, the photograph would not exist: but the negative and the positive separately do not form the whole picture. The self as the other in this case points to a necessary condition: that of the existence of our social “negative,” just as in semiotics, one term implies its negative, so too, in life, one social role implies, in fact requires as a condition *sine qua non*, its complementary part. Clearly, this is not difficult to find, especially with regards to professions and occupations: student/instructor; secretary/director; bank teller/client, etc. But Camilleri’s intent here is not to have the reader simply accept implications of contraries; it is an ethical stance that permeates the core of this positive/negative coupling: Montalbano acts, now and then, also as a criminal, when he opts for less than legal behaviour, when his position as a man, not as a police investigator, has reached the brim of frustration.

This self-awareness of being closely related to the “negative” of himself is continued in the story “La paura di Montalbano”:

Era vero, Livia aveva ragione. Lui aveva paura, si scantava di calarsi negli “abissi dell’animo umano”, come diceva quell’imbecille di Matteo Castellini. Aveva scanto perché sapeva benissimo che, raggiunto il fondo di uno qualsiasi di questi strapiombi, ci avrebbe immancabilmente trovato uno specchio. Che rifletteva la sua faccia. (252)

Camilleri has his readers question the possibility of the existence of the other: we see the image being reflected in the mirror, and the author contends this is problematic since this experience troubles and scares Montalbano. It troubles the detective who sees a criminal reflected in the inner mirror of himself: Montalbano the follower and defendant of legality (though with a number of exceptions) finds the criminal (i.e., the destroyer of legality) in his own reflection. This reflection scares him since, possibly, he cannot predict to what extent he is capable of acting illegally. The self *as* the other brings the self *and* the other together unwittingly and, for the self, with trepidation. It is worthwhile to underline the play on the negative and the positive (the image in the mirror and its reflection): the dualities indicate Camilleri’s preoccupation with the definition of the self, not according to others (which would echo Pirandello’s concerns), but the self according to oneself (which is a different perspective entirely). The reflexive project of creating the self comes to full force and, therefore, Montalbano has to come to terms with his own creation and his own self.

1.iii. *The self is the other: the author as someone else forces him to be; Camilleri as the author of pulp and splatter novels*

The short story entitled “Montalbano si rifiuta” (*Gli arancini di Montalbano* 160-168), first published as “Montalbano contro la banda dei cannibali” in *Il Messaggero* (August 15, 1998), offers a clear and elaborate instance of meditation on the self. From the onset, the narration possesses a very different style, linguistic expression, and content, from that usually expected by Camilleri’s readers who, nevertheless, enjoy the ride. The story begins after the author refers to Leopardi’s description of a sweet, clear, windless night in April which Montalbano enjoys as he drives home slowly. He is tired and he is looking forward to his shower. His day was spent trying to have an old man confess his crime of molesting and killing a little girl. After an exhausting interrogation, one of his men succeeded in having the accused confess to the crime by drastic means. Leaving his favourite restaurant, he observes a man urinating on another man, this last one not reacting because he is too drunk. Montalbano reacts by physically hurting the perpetrator (by kicking him in his testicles). Then, while driving, Montalbano remembers seeing two men dragging a woman into a Nissan, committing what looks like a kidnapping. He spends two hours looking for that car, finally finding it in front of an uninhabited house. He enters without being seen, observes the two men cooking, finds the badly mutilated body of the woman, and overhears the two men urging one another to taste the eye and the calf. He leaves, has time to vomit, and pours gasoline around the house. After retrieving his gun from the car, he uses his telephone card to dial a number.

A man around sixty years of age sits at his typewriter in his house in Rome. The phone rings: it is Montalbano, who asks the writer what he is doing. The author tells him that he is writing a story in which he, Montalbano, is at the point of putting a bullet in his gun, after having poured gasoline around a house. The author asks Montalbano why he phoned. Montalbano tells him that he does not like the story, that it is not his way. The man agrees, but he justifies himself by saying that some people claim that he is an author whose stories are sugary and reassuring, that he is becoming repetitive, interested only in copyright, and therefore it is time that became more updated. Yet, Montalbano is not to be fooled. He tells the author that if he wants to write a story like that, he ought to invent a different protagonist. So the man asks him how he should end the story, to which Montalbano replies: “Like this” and hangs up. The closing of “Montalbano si rifiuta” offers crucial details of Camilleri’s reasoning about his art and the society around him:

[l’autore] “Perché mi hai telefonato?”

[Salvo Montalbano] “Perché non mi piace questo racconto. Non

voglio entrarci, non è cosa mia. La storia poi degli occhi fritti e del popaccio in umido è assolutamente ridicola, una vera e propria stronzata, scusa se te lo dico.”

“Salvo, sono d’accordo con te.”

“E allora perchè la scrivi?”

“Figlio mio, cerca di capirmi. Certuni scrivono che io sono un buonista, uno che conta storie mielate e rassicuranti; ceraltri dicono invece che il successo che ho grazie a te non mi ha fatto bene, che sono diventato ripetitivo, con l’occhio solo ai diritti d’autore...Sostengono che sono uno scrittore facile, macari se poi s’addannano a capire come scrivo. Sto cercando di aggiornarmi, Salvo. Tanticchia di sangue sulla carta non fa male a nessuno. Che fai, vuoi metterti a sottillizzare? E poi, lo domando a tia che sei veramente un buongustaio: l’hai mai provato un piatto d’occhi umani fritti, macari con un soffritto di cipolla?”

“Non fare lo spiritoso. Stammi a sentire, ti dico una cosa che non ti ripeterò più. Per me, Salvo Montalbano, una storia così non è cosa. Padronissimo tu di scriverne altre, ma allora t’inventi un altro protagonista. Sono stato chiaro?”

“Chiarissimo. Ma intanto questa storia come la finisco?”

“Così” disse il commissario. E riattaccò (168)

Although the term metanarrative usually refers simply to narrative about a narrative, in this case, the setting and the characters make it possible for the story to acquire a much deeper cognitive significance. According to Linda Hutcheon:

In metafiction...while he reads, the reader lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional. However, paradoxically, the text also demands that he participate, that he engage himself intellectually, imaginatively, and affectively in its co-creation. This two-way pull is the paradox of the reader. The text’s own paradox is that is it both narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader. (20)

The story presents a number of points about the self and the other. Firstly, the self as the other situation points to Camilleri’s awareness of his “prison-house”: as the creator of Montalbano, he clearly cannot and will not write splatter and pulp stories full of gratuitous and obvious violence when this police inspector is the protagonist. This is a comment on some fictional pulp writing in which violence abounds (clearly for particular effects), but it is not Camilleri’s style. It is said that the aim of the *giovani cannibali* challenged the “serious” Italian literature after the 1980s. However, even though the crude topics as well as the repetition of a ‘slang-ish’ jargon of obscenities and striking images of violence (Lucamante 14) may have the same aim as Camilleri’s, that is, criticism of modern society, Camilleri is distancing

himself from methods employed by these writers (but the question of poetics and ethics of the *giovani cannibali* is much more complex than this; see, for example Senardi 1997). Nevertheless, he clearly shows that he can write like the *giovani cannibali*.

Secondly, Camilleri is aware of his detractors who insist that he is writing reassuring and repetitive stories only to obtain financial gain. How does an author react to this type of criticism? The only cogent way seems to be by presenting his perspective through a short story in which the author deals with his position. Camilleri is ironically stating that, by transforming himself into someone who writes like a *giovane cannibale*, he is trying to be up-to-date (*sto cercando di aggiornarmi*). Nevertheless, the fictional character does not fall for the author's justifications of his position.

Thirdly, Montalbano receives the status of a "real" person who can intervene in the writing process. The meddling by one of the characters in creating fiction is indeed almost a *topos* in some serial detective fiction (and it has plagued writers such as George Simenon, Vazquez Montalban, etc.). This creative involvement is not far from the truth in Camilleri's case, as the popularity of the character played by Luca Zingaretti in the made-for-TV films attests. It is used by Camilleri in other circumstances, such as in the short story "L'impossibilità del racconto":

Da qualche giorno Camilleri mi scassa i cabasisi perché vuole da me un "racconto d'oggi". Siccome lo conosco bene, so che lui intende dire che si aspetta una storia strettissimamente legata all'attualità, alla realtà dei giorni nostri. E qui bisogna subito fare a capirsi: a quale realtà si riferisce Camilleri? A quella che a dosi massicce e quotidianamente ci viene propinata dai grandi giornali italiani e dalle sei reti televisive direttamente o indirettamente in mano al Cavaliere — Presidente o a quella che risulta dai rapporti, dai mattinali che arrivano ai commissariati e alle questure? [...] Ma Camilleri insiste, vuole il raccontino imperniato sulla realtà d'oggi. E io provo a mandargli qualche appunto. Solo che i fatti si svolgono non ai giorni nostri, ma, come dire, domani. Facciamo che la storia è ambientata nel febbraio 2003. Comincio. (MicroMega 2002)

Montalbano is playing *tragediatore* in order to have Camilleri behave in a certain manner. In *La strage dimenticata*, Camilleri himself defines *tragediatore* this way:

Tragediatore è, dalle parti nostre, quello che, in ogni occasione che gli capita, seria o allegra che sia, si mette a fare teatro, adopera cioè toni e atteggiamenti più o meno marcati rispetto al livello del fatto in cui si trova ad essere personaggio. La sua "interpretazione" ha in genere lo scopo di sollecitare non tanto il consenso quanto la partecipazione

più pronta e attiva da parte di coloro che alla scena si trovano ad assistere. Se il tragediatore è veramente capace [...] allora il consenso degli astanti è come un premio, una gratifica; tutti sono pronti, come si dice in gergo teatrale, a mettersi a fare la spalla, a dare la battuta giusta al tempo giusto. (49-50)

Montalbano wins, though only partially, since Camilleri writes a contemporary story on his prodding.

Fourthly, Camilleri, the author, becomes a character who is forced to act in a way that a fictional character demands. And the story ends with Montalbano's gesture of hanging up the phone. The author yields to the character's pressure; and, rumour has it, this pressure is molding the last of the Montalbano novels in which Camilleri and Montalbano will have it out and end their relationship.

In each of these four instances, Montalbano's self and Camilleri's self are forced to behave according to parameters set by others; in fact, they are obliged to become the other. Both Montalbano and Camilleri refuse to change, confirming that a niche constructed by the self must at times be safeguarded. Social psychologists such as Tesser explain this "idiosyncratic niche" as "A life setting that provides the best fit we have been able to negotiate between our physical and psychological environment and our distinctive abilities, temperament, and preferences" (185-86). The unwillingness of both Camilleri and Montalbano to undergo some transformation and to shape their selves differently indicates that their consequential selves are selecting and molding situations so that they afford the possibility of self-expression (Tesser 186). This reflects Giddens's opinion: "A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor—important though this is—in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (54, emphasis mine).

The concern Camilleri shows in this story is not only for the creative process and the manner in which the existing character channels the action, but also for the interface between reality (the critical opinions about an author) and fiction (the author's creativity). The author from Porto Empedocle does not succumb to certain pressures, although he is aware that this stance only confirms certain negative judgments about his writing. This short story proposes that one of the reactions of the self to becoming the other is not that of transforming according to the pressures of the environment or the setting but rather that of keeping its niche intact.

2. *The self divided/doubled into two "selves"*

In a number of instances, Camilleri divides/doubles Montalbano's self into "Montalbano primo" and "Montalbano secundo"; the circum-

stances in which this occurs are all related to some type of ethical choice that the police inspector has to make, proving in this way that each self can be split into at least two other “selves”: the first (“primo”) and the second (“secunno”). Furthermore, since the two “selves” are in direct opposition to the action to be taken, Sciascia’s characteristic attitude “disse e si contradisse” comes to mind. In a stalled situation, or better, in a situation in which stalling is useful, thinking the opposite may be a way out, but invariably, for Montalbano, the “opposite” expresses a cynical attitude based on observations of aging and all that getting older entails. Specifically, Montalbano’s reaction to sexual thoughts is dismissed by Montalbano the second’s ironic line “Con l’età che si ritrova” (*La pista di sabbia*, 82); or when Montalbano has to accept his myopia (99). Camilleri may be expressing the notion that, with age, the self can afford to doubt itself through acquiring a double existence, simultaneously stating a fact and its contrary.

3. *The self as the other: the linguistic consciousness of the self as the linguistic other*

No other modern Italian author proposes more wealth of indirect and direct metalinguistic considerations than Andrea Camilleri. These include sociolinguistic reflections of the role of the dialect(s) shown through the varieties of Italian dialect mixtures, consciousness of the role of *italiano burocratico* in molding Italians’ thinking (already outlined by Pier Paolo Pasolini), semantic frames, and cognitive functions of idiomatic expressions and linguistic commonplaces. Each constitute a fertile ground for thinking about the linguistic self. In Camilleri’s novels and short stories, each character behaves in a predictable sociolinguistic manner, exhibiting a particular style: specifically, the *questore* Bonetti-Alderighi, representative of the Italian government, speaks using *italiano burocratico*; Catarella, the police *centralinista* who obtained his post thanks to pressures from illegal quarters, has his brand of pastiche of Sicilian and interlanguage Italian; Adelina follows her local dialect; and Livia who strictly uses Italian with Montalbano. As Giovanni Capecci discovered, Camilleri starts with language and constructs his characters on the basis of their speech variety:

La lingua fa il personaggio e visto che ognuno ha una personalità, una cultura, un carattere, un pensiero, un legame a una determinata classe sociale, il linguaggio con il quale si esprime assume un carattere soggettivo. Ogni personaggio ha la sua lingua perché ha la sua personalità ed è significativo che Camilleri, nel comporre le sue storie, scriva inizialmente i dialoghi facendo parlare i personaggi e desumendo il loro carattere e il loro modo di agire dal modo in cui si esprimono. (87)

However, of all the characters in all the stories and novels, only Montalbano is capable of understanding and using all of the possible varieties. It is as if he investigated, through all the varieties of language, the wealth of human experiences. His self, however, does not seem to be represented clearly through any of these varieties. This may be due to the fact that Camilleri relies on the *voce narrante/tragediadore* (La Fauci 150-163) to select the appropriate language variety, and none is likely the one that identifies Montalbano.

Otherness, linguistically speaking, is also manifested in Camilleri by the mixture of two or more codes where each one of these codes has a specific function. This function may be sociolinguistic, but it is also affective and cognitive: Camilleri needs to express concepts and feelings using the same language—his own invented pastiche of Italian and Sicilian (Capecci 85). The distinction is Pirandellian: Italian expresses concepts and Sicilian emotion. Camilleri, however, cannot help but create a terrible disservice to both languages with this conceptualization, since all languages and all linguistic varieties have these and other functions (as Jakobson showed).

Camilleri likes to have his protagonist, Salvo Montalbano, repeat that he hates “frasi fatte” and he cannot stand the manner in which certain characters with bureaucratic responsibilities express themselves:

Decisi che la meglio era dirgli tutto.

“Ho intenzione di andarmene. Mimì. Non mi ci riconosco più in questa polizia”.

“Quale polizia?”

“Mimì, sei venuto a sconciarci? Di quale polizia vuoi che parli? Di quella alla quale tu e io apparteniamo!”

“Embè? Dove sta il problema?”.

“Ma come?! E quello che la polizia ha fatto a Genova ti pare una minchiata da passarci sopra?”.

“Ma perché continui a dire la polizia?”

“E come devo dire?”.

“Una piccolissima parte della polizia, una minoranza. Almeno una mela marcia c’è sempre in ogni cesto di mele”.

Dio, com’era ovvio! Quanto gli piacevano, a Mimì, i luoghi comuni, le frasi fatte! Eppure, quella volta, non lo pigliai a male parole. Mi era venuto di ribattergli subito che non si trattava di una sola mela, ma di decine e di decine di mele andate a male, un marciume, ma avevo preferito non raprire bocca. Però, su quello che mi aveva detto, ci ragionai a lungo, macari nei giorni appresso. La cosa, a talirla da tutti i lati, non mi quatrava. Tra l’altro mi dicevo, pigliando per buono l’esempio di Mimì: ma perché il fruttarolo, il venditore di mele, non si è addunato prima che nel cesto c’era qualche mela marcia? O addirittura che tutto, il cesto era marcio? Non se ne è accorto o non se ne è

voluta accorgere? Forse quelle mele addirittura gli facevano comodo? In una intervista al giornale l'Unità, nell'imminenza del G8, Camilleri aveva dichiarato che tutto quello schieramento di forze a Genova gli faceva paura, vedeva tutta la faccenda come la "prova generale" di qualcosa. (54-55)

Montalbano is capable of replying in the same vein to a discourse made of prefabricated expressions, as in the following exchange with the *questore* from *Le ali della sfinge*:

"Se vengono a protestare per il suo modo di fare, le tolgo il caso immediatamente. E anche se lei verrà a Canossa, io farò orecchie da mercante e le dirò: ti conosco, mascherina!". Montalbano venne pigliato da 'na virtigini a sintiri quella sfilza di modi di dire. Gli facevano venir la nausea. Come reagire degnamente? "Insomma, signor questore, chi rompe paga e i cocci sono suoi." (152).

Idiomatic expressions, *automatismi*, and commonplaces indicate thinking with someone else's constructed language. Camilleri is setting up a paradoxical trap: on the one hand, human beings must follow all the linguistic rules, otherwise communication would be impossible, but following these rules, especially those of semantics, results in using a prefabricated frame of mind. The author himself cannot avoid this trap: his critics insist on identifying repeated stereotypes that readers meet in Camilleri's novels, as La Fauci explains:

Nell'universo camilleriano [...] non c'è siciliano che non sia comunicativamente ambiguo ed allusivo. Non c'è vedova che non sia piacente e vogliosa. Non c'è piccolo aristocratico che non sia eccentrico fino alla stramberia. Non c'è giovane amante che non sia ardimentoso e superdotato. Non c'è svedese...che non sia di liberi costumi, ma di animo candido. Non c'è operaio che non sia vittima di vessazioni e, al fondo, un buon uomo e un gran lavoratore. [...] Sotto la penna di Andrea Camilleri, questi eterni luoghi comuni dell'immaginario nazionale vengono però resi appetibili a moltissimi palati mescolandoli con idee ricevute più fresche e piccanti. ... così, nell'universo camilleriano non c'è vicenda della vita pubblica che non abbia contorno di gravi illeciti, di compromessi con poteri occulti e spesso criminali. Non c'è alto rappresentante del potere che non sia corrotto o intellettualmente ripugnante e in ogni caso reazionario. (151-152)

Indirect metalinguistic comments are found throughout Camilleri's novels: style and cognition are inextricably connected in Montalbano's musings about the modern world. The reference to infinitives is a clear comment on Marinetti's *Manifesto* (from *L'odore della notte*, 1: 9-10):

Rimettendosi corcato, Montalbano si concesse un'elegia alle scomparse mezz stagioni. Dove erano andate a finire? Travolte anch'esse dal ritmo sempre più veloce dell'esistenza dell'omo, si erano macari loro adeguate: avevano capito di rappresentare una pausa ed erano scomparse, perché oggi come oggi nisciuna pausa può essere concessa in questa sempre più delirante corsa che si nutre di verbi all'infinito: nascere, mangiare, studiare, scopare, produrre, zappingare, accattare, vendere, cacare e morire. Verbi all'infinito però dalla durata di un nanosecondo, un vidiri e svidiri. Ma non c'era stato un tempo nel quale esistevano altri verbi? Pensare, meditare, ascoltare e, perché no?, bighellonare, sonnacchiare, divagare? Quasi con le lagrime agli occhi, Montalbano s'arricordò degli abiti di mezza stagione e dello spolverino di suo padre..

What conclusions can be drawn from the three instances of the self as the other that Camilleri and his protagonist *commissario* illustrate? First, we all are in some way enmeshed with the other on the level of "the negative": students and instructors, secretaries and directors, policemen and criminals. Camilleri seems to be indicating that this two-way dependency is so obvious that many people do not give it any thought; moreover, if, instead of finding this troublesome, we tried to unravel the interconnections, perhaps the world would be much different.

Secondly, cynicism and irony shine through the doubling/dividing of the self into "the first" and "the second"; the self is not necessarily a packaged whole incapable of dividing or doubling itself. It is, therefore, part of the creative process of construction of the self that allows it to be playful and contradictory towards its own positions.

Thirdly, knowledge of a language, even if its possibility is biologically given, must be incessantly and consciously supported. It is likely that "we are what we speak": the language we use is ours alone, even though the principles of universal grammar indicate common biological origins, the parameters offered by our native language, and by the languages we possess, give us the linguistic basis of self-consciousness. Furthermore, if it is true, as Ray Jackendoff contends, that our conscious thought is linguistic, then we should be concerned about the form of the language of the self. Conscious subjectivity (the *I* as aware of itself) has two possible origins: it is either given at the outset of the human condition, or it is constituted in and through language (Hermans and Kempen 31-45). Although the first interpretation is gaining ground in that language is biologically given (Pinker 1994), the cultural-linguistic and cognitive-linguistic constructive processes cannot be neglected. The basic definition of language as a verbal system of communication must be modified to accept the fact that language is for cognition. It is not a question, therefore, of the ontological perspective of whether the self is at odds with the other through social and prag-

matic actions (Auerbach) or through linguistic small talk (Heidegger), but the question is how language knowledge constitutes the ground on which the conscious self constructs its own self and the other or the others. This is especially important since the technological world is moving towards what Pepperell calls *The Posthuman Condition. Consciousness beyond the Brain*. In other words, if the conscious awareness of the self is largely linguistic, then the type of language we use to create conscious thoughts acquires greater significance, not because the world is a text, but because meaning-making is in our power and we can intervene in the process.

Undoubtedly, students of modern Italy need to be aware of the cultural role of Andrea Camilleri (both from the standpoint of his admirers and of his detractors).¹ A contributing factor to this role resides in Camilleri's skill in weaving metafictional and metalinguistic elements into his writing and his ability to have discerning readers transcend the obvious and focus their attention on the unresolved illogicalities, paradoxes, and ironies of modern life (although the author from Porto Empedocle is wont to say that he wishes his readers laughed less and thought more). This ability is also due to Camilleri's concern with the self as the other.

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¹ See the initial chapter of Demontis 2001 and the most up-to-date collection of material about Camilleri at www.vigata.org

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