



# The Shape of Water

*Andrea Camilleri , Stephen Sartarelli (Translator)*

Download now

Read Online ➔

# The Shape of Water

Andrea Camilleri , Stephen Sartarelli (Translator)

**The Shape of Water** Andrea Camilleri , Stephen Sartarelli (Translator)

*The Shape of Water* is the first in Andrea Camilleri's wry, brilliantly compelling Sicilian crime series, featuring Inspector Montalbano.

The goats of Vigàta once grazed on the trash-strewn site still known as the Pasture. Now local enterprise of a different sort flourishes: drug dealers and prostitutes of every flavour. But their discreet trade is upset when two employees of the Splendour Refuse Collection Company discover the body of engineer Silvio Luparello, one of the local movers and shakers, apparently deceased *in flagrante* at the Pasture. The coroner's verdict is death from natural causes - refreshingly unusual for Sicily.

But Inspector Salvo Montalbano, as honest as he is streetwise and as scathing to fools and villains as he is compassionate to their victims, is not ready to close the case - even though he's being pressured by Vigàta's police chief, judge, and bishop.

Picking his way through a labyrinth of high-comedy corruption, delicious meals, vendetta firepower, and carefully planted false clues, Montalbano can be relied on, whatever the cost, to get to the heart of the matter.

*The Shape of Water* is followed by the second in this phenomenal series, *The Terracotta Dog*.

## The Shape of Water Details

Date : Published May 31st 2005 by Penguin Books (first published 1994)

ISBN : 9780142004715

Author : Andrea Camilleri , Stephen Sartarelli (Translator)

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Cultural, Italy, European Literature, Italian Literature

 [Download The Shape of Water ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Shape of Water ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Shape of Water Andrea Camilleri , Stephen Sartarelli (Translator)**

---

# From Reader Review The Shape of Water for online ebook

## Elyse says

"What is the shape of water?"

"Water doesn't have any shape! I said laughing. It takes the shape you give it."

This is my first Andrea Camilleri novel .....and the first in a series. The mystery itself had me curious before I even started reading: "Silvio Lupanello, a big-shot in Vigata, is found dead in his car with his pants around his knees".

The car happens to be parked in the front of town do you spend any prostitutes and drug dealers.

Inspector Salvo Montalbano, is Vigata's most respected detective. He has deep roots in Sicily, the largest Mediterranean island just off of Italy's 'boot'.

Sicily has a rich and unique culture especially with regard to the arts, music, literature, and cuisine. While getting a taste of the culture --Montalbano ( an honest cop) is surrounded by the corrupt and powerful.....making finding the killer a challenge.

Inspectors Montalbano is plenty textured. He is 'enough' cynical. He is 'enough' aloof.....'enough' arrogant.... 'enough' compassionate. He smokes, drinks, loves his food....( but baby octopus-- really?).....lol....his friends, women....and especially his girlfriend ( even with their problems).

Montalbano gracefully solves a crime scene while keeping tabs on what's really important..... his relationships, his Island, his foods, his relationships, and his own moral standards.

Paul and I have watched the TV series "The Glades", which takes place in South Florida. The detective, .... actor played by Matt Passmore, reminds me a little of Inspector Salvo Montalbano...( for anyone in the states who have seen that show).

Matt is always eating....loves his girlfriend too....solves cases with 'ease'.... but he doesn't smoke cigarettes.

I haven't seen THIS TV series ..., but I can imagine the beauty of Sicily.

Great Italian mystery flavors!!!

---

## Ingrid says

2.5 stars

A bit of a disappointment, it was a story as so many others I've read. This was no. 1 in a series. I will try another one at some stage. Usually later books get better.

---

## Claudiu D. says

4.5 stele

Ce roman frumos!

Si frumos este cel mai bun cuvânt pentru a-l descrie. Departe de rețeta anglo-saxona, Camilleri scrie un roman politist absolut superb, foarte original.

Ce te intriga atunci când începi romanul este felul în care Camilleri creionează personajele. În 200 de pagini, apar cam 10 personaje, multe din ele episodice, dar atât de bine conturate încât atunci când afli rezolvarea misterului, ești ingenios și surprinzător, înțelegi ce l-a motivat pe ucigaș, știi ce fel de om este, ești tu l-ai cunoscut în maximum 4 pagini și câteva replici. r

Romanul acesta este foarte aproape de literatură de calitate prin stil. Spre deosebire de Agatha Christie (care este ingenioasă, dar nu neapărat talentată) și de Simenon (care se vrea succint), Camilleri are un stil propriu, este, înainte de a fi un autor de romane politiste, un autor talentat!.

---

## **Lynn says**

The Shape of Water is the 1st book in the Inspector Montalbano Mystery series that takes place in Sicily. A place where goats once roamed in now a place for drug dealings and sexual encounters. It is called the Pasture.

Two cleaners who pick up garbage in the Pasture discover a car with a dead male body. He looks like he died a natural death while having sex. To complicate the matter, he is well known in the political field in the area. Inspector Montalbano does not want to close the case so quickly as he has some questions that he wants answered. Some things don't make sense. He is pressured to close the case.

The book follows the Inspector as he asks questions and meets with quite a few people. The best part of the book for me was Inspector Montalbano. He is honest and hard working. There is a lot of corruption that he has to work through. It was a fast enjoyable read and I will continue with the series.

---

## **Lynne King says**

I watch Inspector Montalbano on the BBC which I thoroughly enjoy and so decided that I had to purchase the first book in the series.

Sicily to me is a magical island (forget about the Mafia for a moment) and the book definitely set the scene for the television series. However, it was the quality of the literature that sustained my interest.

All the ingredients are here for an excellent book. Inspector Salvo Montalbano, who's streetwise, loves his food, a man who appears to have met the woman of his life, Livia, but as she lives in Genoa, and sees her infrequently, he gets up to tricks from time to time. He does this in such an engaging way, that he can, of course, be forgiven.

It is when the body of engineer Silvio Luparello is found and the coroner's verdict is that he died from natural causes that Salvo immediately becomes suspicious. After all, this is Sicily and murders are pretty common. The upshot is that he will not close the case so that the victim can be buried and everyone around him is getting very rattled by this. With skillful writing the plot gradually unravels and, well, it's just a great book. I had a smile on my face when I reached the last sentence.

---

## Outis says

Ultimamente faccio fatica a stare dietro a quello che leggo e ad aggiornare voti e recensioni in tempo. Quindi, con qualche giorno di ritardo, la mio opinione sul mio primo Camilleri: il caso vero e proprio mi è piaciuto abbastanza ma quello che ho preferito è il modo di raccontare di Camilleri. Innanzitutto, ho apprezzato l'ironia che permea tutto il romanzo e si sente fin dall'inizio, poi, anche la lingua, che aiuta a creare l'atmosfera siciliana e che, nonostante contenga qualche parola che non conoscevo (non essendo io siciliana) è comprensibilissima. Insomma, primo Camilleri, ma non ultimo.

---

## Nancy Oakes says

Just past the midway point of this novel, the mother of the victim, local "big-shot" Silvio Lupanello, implores Inspector Salvo Montalbano to uncover what really happened to her son. Lupanello was found dead, pants down around his ankles, in a car in a local area of Vigàta (Sicily) used by prostitutes and drug dealers. Although the coroner has judged that Silvio died of natural causes, his mother knows that something more sinister lies at the bottom of Silvio's death, even if he truly died of a heart attack. She tells him a story about when she was a little girl, and her friend once put water into things like bowls, teapots, cups, and a square milk carton, trying to establish its shape. When asked "what shape is water," she replied

Water doesn't have any shape!...It takes the shape you give it.

She asks Montalbano to discover what really was behind Silvio's death -- the alternative, as she noted was to "stop at the shape they've given the water." Because of where her son had been found and because he'd been caught with his pants down, so to speak, Lupanello and his family name had been disgraced and his cronies were assured of never being part of local politics again. But the inspector had already guessed there was more to the story, and despite pressures from higher-ups, he had prolonged the investigation, refusing to close the case.

Montalbano is an interesting character. He declares himself to be an honest man, but also understands that there's a certain way things work politically in Sicily and he rolls with it. He's funny and cynical, able to mix compassion for others with his duty as a cop. He's involved in a relationship that takes place mostly over the phone, yet doesn't stray with local women. He has a love of good food, which is described throughout the novel. He also has an incredible sardonic wit and is not afraid to speak his mind. As a character, he definitely stands out in the world of fictional detectives, and he, rather than the crime he is working on, is the focal point of this novel.

Camilleri evokes a strong sense of place here, there are rarely any distractions which get in the way of either the main plot or the characters, and there's a sarcastic sense of humor that floats in the background of this book. He makes his people real and believable, which guarantees that I'll be back for the next book in the series. Very highly recommended.

---

## Richard Derus says

Review can now be seen at Expendable Mudge Muses Aloud.

---

## Algernon says

[7/10]

After reading some gloomy Swedish policiers, I decided to head for a warmer climate and check out what the buzz is about this late blooming (he wrote his first successful novels in his late sixties) Italian, or should I say Sicilian, writer. Local colour is the first bait that he sets in my path, drawing me like a patient fisherman into his net. Vigata is a small city by the sea, in the Montelusa jurisdiction - both imaginary localities, but sufficiently authentic for the inhabitants of Camilleri hometown to apply for rechristening Porto Empedocle as the real location for the series events. I used the images from Giuseppe Tornatore movies to picture the city in my mind. The names of the characters are a second baited hook, with their musical resonance and slightly comical echo, suggesting a raucous operetta : Montaperto, Cusumano, Caluzzo, Gullotta, Pecorilla, Cuffaro, Jacomuzzi, Luparello, Portolano and of course Inspector Salvo Montalbano - the central character of the series who makes his first appearance in this book.

Montalbano is a bit of a lone wolf, keeping his cards close to his chest and his mouth shut, an authoritarian team leader with a good dose of self confidence - he makes a good counterpoint to the insecure, depressed Martin Beck I've been reading earlier. Montalbano personality is not yet fully developed, after all there will be other books in the series to flesh him out, but I noticed a dry sense of humour that looks very promising (like the use of 'improcrastinable' in a sentence) and a certain preoccupation with food that I understand will play a greater role in his later profile. His success with women is a little improbable here, but it does make for some good scenes and dialogue.

Before coming to the actual plot (I'm delaying this because i didn't find it all that original or memorable) , I'll draw another parallel to the Swedes (Sjowall & Wahloo) in mentioning the preoccupation with social justice and with exposing the less savoury aspects of society. The ubiquitous presence of the Mafia is partly explained by the poverty of the population and by the entrenched corruption of the system. Here's an example of Montalbano questioning a couple of young men on why they first contacted the underworld instead of the police when they discover a dead body:

- *What did you expect to get out of it?*  
- *We were hoping maybe he could find us other jobs or help us win some competition for surveyors, or find us the right job, so we wouldn't have to work as stinking garbage collectors anymore. You know as well as I do, Inspector, you can't sail without a favorable wind.*

A few pages later we see free enterprise in action, as a local boy spots an opportunity in the large number of law enforcement officers in the region ( *the army, the carabinieri, the local police, intelligence services, special operations teams, coast guard, the highway police, railway police and port police, the anti-Mafia, antiterrorism, antidrug, antitheft and antikidnapping commissions and others - here omitted for the sake of brevity.* ) and sets up an open air bordello (translate as secluded beach) using refugees from Eastern Europe and North Africa.

I come at last to the plot: garbage collectors + secluded beach + dead body + bordello. Montalbano has to unravel the mystery that is not a mystery, since the death is quickly proven as natural causes : the victim had a heart condition. Politicians, judges and police bosses are all trying to pressure the Inspector to close the case, yet something is fishy, there's a frame-up, somebody has tampered with the story. Here is where the title of the novel comes from, in a dialogue between Montalbano and the victim's spouse:

*That is up to you to discover, if you so desire. Or else you can stop at the shape they've given the water. ( 'Water doesn't have any shape! It takes the shape you give it.')*

I'm not sure if I should call this a police procedural (there is a patient accumulation of evidence from crime scene clues and interviews with suspects) or a detective classic a la Hercule Poirot or Maigret (where the brainiac reveals at the end the result of his brilliant deductions). My lack of enthusiasm for the actual crime may be due to a lack of tension and a lack of real surprises - the reveals where pretty much what I expected.

The book is well written, with a good location and complex main character - enough to tempt me to continue with the series.

---

## **Rachel Hall says**

This delightful 1994 novel which introduced readers to Inspector Salvo Montalbano and the fictional town of Vigàta indoctrinates readers into the high comedy and characters of life in Sicily. This is crime fiction with the emphasis on both the location and some very distinctive characters. The actual investigation under the microscope sets the tone but the driver is very much the maverick Inspector Salvo Montalbano, a frequently grouchy streetwise policeman.

The discovery of a high-ranking political player with his trousers down and his sex organ resplendent in the red-light district of Vigàta known as the Pasture (a historical reference from time immemorial), is discovered by two "ecological agents" working for the Splendour Refuse Collection Company. The corpse is easily identifiable as eminent engineer, Silvio Luparello, and whilst it appears that his demise is down to natural causes an insightful Montalbano delays closing the case and sanctioning the burial. Much to the chagrin of Judge Lo Bianco, Montalbano smells a rat.. namely, the seeming coincidence of a man whom has always gone about his business without scandal in the past taking such a risk as to travel to the notorious Pasture where his indecent exposure is surely a mere formality. Montalbano suspects that his election just three days prior to his death to a key party secretary role may have left him at risk of sabotage from the political arena. And when Luparello's shrewd and admirably honest widow secures an audience with the Inspector, it seems he isn't the only one with concerns.

A deftly delivered plot sadly leaves me lumbering several steps behind Camilleri along the way and his speed of thought and subtlety is hugely impressive. Camilleri's tongue in cheek take on the famously corrupt players occupying the highest echelons of government and politics and the ominous Mafioso influence offers an wry and humorous look at crime through the warmth of the honest Montalbano, not averse to playing god himself when the evidence needs massaging! Seen as accessible, Montalbano has a wealth of contacts, including a local pimp who he went to school and a firebrand journalist with a proclivity for predicting the machinations of some people in very prominent places.

A deceptively simple plot with all eyes on a charging Montalbano rushing around in the Sicilian heat against

the backdrop of Camilleri's wry narration. A left-field approach to tackling crime that goes down a treat and at the compact length of 240 pages dictates a fast pace and free-flowing humour. Camilleri even explains the fitting title through the course of the novel, and along with the accompanying cuisine, it all makes life in Sicily sound enchanting. In the words of the Commissioner to Montalbano, "What you've told me is an exercise of the highest intelligence; at moments you seemed like an acrobat on a tightrope, with no net underneath."

---

## **aPriL does feral sometimes says**

Commissario Salvo Montalbano is a laid-back cynic, which is a good thing. He must do his job of detecting crimes and providing justice where he can while placating the powerful chiefs of the many small fiefdoms of competitive interests in Sicily. It is helpful he is a man who sees below the surface of what occurs around him, and he is well-acquainted personally with the various villains with whom he must work whether they be of high status or low. He is perfect as the leading character in this cozy Italian series, vaguely reminiscent in some ways of some of the televised 'Miss Marple' portrayals. His sharp eyes and quick brain miss nothing, but he appears to have the sociable smoothness of many of the politicians who attempt to corrupt him.

'The Shape of Water' is not heavy, dark or sad, but instead the tone is one of not letting mean temperaments or nefarious activities (even if only of-the-heart variety) which most folks engage in to varying degrees derail one's general enjoyment of the day; and even if derailment is in the cards, life goes on, the sun is out, so take a deep breath of the warm fragrant air and plan on winning another day. However, Inspector Montalbano personally is going to get to the bottom of the mystery whether miscreants are brought before a judge or not! He is not above sorting out judgement and punishment on his own when appropriate.

Garbage collectors discover a man's body inside of a car parked in a known spot for prostitution. When the identity of the near-naked man is found to be Silvio Luparello, from a local family of wealth, a patron of various public institutions and politicians, there is quite a flurry of interest. Luparello had recently begun to step out from behind the politicians he supported, and he had recently been appointed provincial secretary of the party. But there were also whispers of money laundering, contract fixing and currency smuggling. Is the Mafia involved? Or was this a simple heart attack? Luparello was only a few days out of the hospital from heart surgery, and from all appearances it looked as if while having illicit sex his heart quit. But Montalbano feels some of the evidence is odd, so despite the mounting pressure to close the case, Montalbano can't stop investigating. He soon is uncovering rather peculiar things, such as the men who found the body also found an expensive necklace near the body that they failed to mention. Could they be concealing something more than an effort to steal evidence?

This novel is an introduction to the good Montalbano, his lover, his neighbors, his co-workers and staff, along with the urban milieu of Sicily. As the first of the series and the first I have read about the character Montalbano, I thought it an easygoing police procedural seasoned with a hidden knowing smile and a reasoned acceptance of human nature.

---

## **Mieczyslaw Kasprzyk says**

Well now...

I decided to try Camilleri because I'd watched one of the Montalbano series on TV. You know how it is, you find the characters and scenery interesting, the story lines are good... you're just hooked and want to try the "real" thing just to see how it matches up.

The first thing I'm going to say is that they don't feel the same. The TV detective is super-cool in that dark Italian way, his team are efficient and work well together. Camilleri's Montalbano... well he's somehow slightly distant, almost aloof in an intellectual sort of way. His team are highly individualistic and almost inefficient (yet seem to get things done in a casual sort of way). Montalbano does the running, almost always on his own. He knows who's in who's pocket and how to manipulate situations. Camilleri's Montalbano is cool in a very different way.

The landscape didn't come across for me, nor did the climate, yet there was something very relaxed about the whole thing, a hint of not rushing about in the heat... even the drive-by shootings and incidental murders have a very laid-back feel to them.

The story is a very interesting one though at times I had to ask myself "who is this character?... what does he mean by that?..." Camilleri seems to write in a casual manner with almost throwaway lines, conversations... almost like you're sometimes catching bits of conversations at the bar or the cafe or in the street. And Montalbano is a bit like that with his detective work. He's piecing it all up in small bits and bats... casually, smoothly.

I think I'm going to like these books...

---

## **Julie says**

6.5/10

A very quick read. Light entertainment. A cross between Colombo and The Sopranos. I suspect I would enjoy the televised version, as this just screams out, "the small silver screen." Good dialogue, fast paced. My main quibble with this one is the translation. My cultural antennae pick up a certain dissonance that trips up the pace at times.

---

## **Michael Finocchiaro says**

I typically avoid crime novels but having spent several vacations during the last decade in south-eastern Sicily and having seen Montalbano's name ubiquitously every where I went, I figured I needed to see whether the enthusiasm was merited. Well, yes and then some. Inspector Montalbano is a very complex personality with a brilliant intellect and a collection of friends and acquaintances that are all quite realistic. And that is without the drool-inducing descriptions of Sicilian cuisine, the gorgeous descriptions of the Sicilian countryside (realistic as I can now attest to) without even going into the complexity and sometimes existential quality of the mysteries he solves. After you have read four or five of the books, perhaps the stories start to be less engaging, but the TV series that was made in Italy based on the books is INCREDIBLE and is worth the 2h for each episode that is needed. This first book is a must for those who want to be drawn into Montalbano's universe or just who wish to take a tour of Scicli/Ragusa aka Vigata.

---

## **Marwan says**

Well, comparing to the previous one I read (the voice of the violin) this one has less humor, but it still has

the smooth writing, the twists and some thrill. Inspector Montalbano is still an interesting character, and the plot was engaging till the end. And as usual, the Italian food references make me drool.

The story revolves about the Politician Silvio Luparello who's found dead at a trash site filled with drug dealers and prostitutes. The post-mortem reveals that there was no foul play and the death was due to a heart attack. So the Commissioner asks Inspector Montalbano to close the case since it's not unusual for a politician to be in such a place. However, Montalbano senses that there's more to this death than it meets to the eye and demands two days before closing the case. Soon he realizes that his hunch wasn't wrong after all and everyone has something to hide.

---

### **José Luis says**

<https://30dediferencia.com/2016/06/02...>

Bien, muy bien. Un libro que no me ha defraudado en absoluto, todo lo contrario. Me ha gustado Salvo Montalbano, es un tipo que desde el principio cae bien, con un carácter mediterráneo y latino en el que los españoles podemos vernos reflejados muy bien. Andrea Camilleri consigue que lo veamos, que nos lo imaginemos, un tipo peculiar, con mucho vivido, posiblemente ya de vuelta de todo, amante de la buena comida y de los placeres de la vida. Con mala leche, gastando ironía por donde va... Creo que es lo mejor de Camilleri, las descripciones de sus personajes y no me refiero al físico sino más bien al plano psicológico.

La historia, el crimen, no es más que una excusa para conocer mejor el mundo que rodea la política, los negocios sucios, la mala vida... Un libro en el que el autor hace gala de su humanismo y donde la crítica social no queda al margen. Aunque el libro es anterior a la saga Bevilacqua y Chamorro me los ha recordado en muchos momentos, Bevilacqua y Montalbano tienen muchos puntos en común.

El libro se lee de un tirón prácticamente así que en breve la reseña del segundo

---

### **Patrick Sherriff says**

I enjoyed this romp through corrupt Sicily led by the engaging protagonist, a police inspector quite happy to discard evidence if it serves the ultimate aim of seeing that justice is done. There's a likeable cast of the good, the bad and the beautiful acting in ugly ways and it all seems almost believable. And while the crime is central to the story, it's the mood, the attitude and the sense of a good man in a corrupt world that keeps you engaged. Enjoyable and I liked the use of notes at the end of the book that give cultural background to what has gone before, with page references, but no distracting footnotes through the text -- an approach I may adopt for my Japan-based mysteries, we'll see.

Download my starter library for free here - <http://eepurl.com/bFkt0X> - and receive my monthly newsletter with book recommendations galore for the Japanophile/crime fiction/English teacher in all of us.

---

### **Laura says**

This is the first book of Inspector Montalbano series. Like Simenon's, it's always a pleasure to read such

series.

4\* The Shape of Water (Inspector Montalbano, #1)  
4\* The Terra-Cotta Dog (Inspector Montalbano, #2)  
3\* Excursion to Tindari (Inspector Montalbano, #5)  
3\* Rounding the Mark (Inspector Montalbano, #7)  
4\* The Patience of the Spider (Inspector Montalbano, #8)  
3\* Acqua in bocca (Inspector Montalbano, #16.5)  
4\* Treasure Hunt (Inspector Montalbano, #16)  
TR The Snack Thief (Inspector Montalbano, #3)  
TR Voice of the Violin (Inspector Montalbano, #4)  
TR Un mese con Montalbano (Inspector Montalbano, #4.5)  
TR Gli arancini di Montalbano (Inspector Montalbano, #4.7)  
TR The Smell of the Night (Inspector Montalbano, #6)  
TR La paura di Montalbano (Inspector Montalbano, #6.5)  
TR Storie di Montalbano (Inspector Montalbano, #6.7)  
TR La prima indagine di Montalbano (Inspector Montalbano, #8.5)  
TR The Paper Moon (Inspector Montalbano, #9)  
TR August Heat (Inspector Montalbano, #10)  
TR The Wings of the Sphinx (Inspector Montalbano, #11)  
TR The Track of Sand (Inspector Montalbano, #12)  
TR The Potter's Field (Inspector Montalbano, #13)  
TR The Age of Doubt (Inspector Montalbano, #14)  
TR Racconti di Montalbano (Inspector Montalbano, #14.5)  
TR The Dance of the Seagull (Inspector Montalbano, #15)  
TR Il sorriso di Angelica (Montalbano, #17)  
TR Il gioco degli specchi (Montalbano, #18)  
TR Una lama di luce (Montalbano, #19)  
TR Una voce di notte (Montalbano, #20)  
TR Un covo di vipere (Montalbano, #21)  
TR La piramide di fango (Montalbano, #22)  
TR La giostra degli scambi (Montalbano, #23)

---

## Matthew says

When a book is described as 'light,' there's usually a negative connotation to this adjective: by *lightness* what we mean is something along the lines of 'written without careful craft,' or sometimes, more simply, 'trivial.'

It's difficult to describe The Shape of Water (or really, any of Camilleri's novels) without invoking this word, but in a sense far different from its usual usage. The 'lightness' that pervades his books is more like that of an Olympic skater executing a triple axel: something incredibly sophisticated and difficult, performed in such a way as to appear effortless. This is writing that glides along without a hitch, an elegant lucidity that never calls attention to itself.

In terms of plot, Camilleri's books are mysteries; as far as their substance goes, they're equal parts whodunit, philosophic meditation, and love-poem to the people and landscape in which they are all set, a sleepy village on the sun-drenched coast of Sicily.

But more than the twists and turns (and there are plenty) that the protagonist, Inspector Maltabano, navigates while uncovering the truth, what has stayed with me about these books is the sense of having sat, for the time I spent in their pages, on the patio of a trattoria overlooking the ocean, leisurely eating amazing food and watching the slow Italian light. Highly recommended for anyone who needs a vacation, but is short on airfare.

---

## **Martina says**

I know, I know. My review of the first Montalbano novel that I've read ("L'odore della notte") was kinda harsh, and it's in stark contrast with what I'm going to say here. But by reading this book, I've understood a thing or two, and reconsidered my opinions.

First off - this is a Mediterranean crime novel. It's not an American type of crime novel, where serial killers are lurking on parking lots, or a Scandinavian novel with dreary landscapes, thick plots and social commentary. It's Mediterranean through and through - you can almost feel the sun, the boiling heat and the good cuisine. The writing is laid back, the people are laid back, and even the murders and shootings which occur in the novel don't seem to spoil the lives of the regular folks.

There are no gruesome murders here - actually, the crimes are depicted as quite tame. Although the mystery isn't simple, Montalbano's uncanny detective sense grasps its intricacies quickly. There is no conventional resolution (i.e. the perpetrators doing time), but that fits in the general tone of the novel, and even more importantly, the setting. Everyone who has lived in this part of the world (not just Sicily, but Southern Europe in general), knows that people are quite lax about the law. So bribing, having unusual informants, bending all sorts of rules (even if you are an organ of law and order) and slashing tires of police vehicles are totally normal and accurately portray life on the south. Besides, even if ordinary people start robbing stores or commit shooting, it's not like they are depraved deviants. They had their own reasons (view spoiler). They do not always have ulterior motives (as is usual in crime novels from other parts of the world), and it's darn funny when those real motives are uncovered (view spoiler)

The book is also prolific in profanities, which is another southern characteristic. The good *commisario* uses them regularly, especially while confronting people, and it's downright hilarious once you get used to it. Another example of hilarity is that Montalbano is more likely to lose his life thanks to the "efforts" of the lazy bums in his own *commissionaria* than to those of professional criminals. As for Montalbano, he is a likeable character. He has a sense of wrong and right, and is always compassionate towards people in need, and by that alone, he wins major points.

All in all, Camilleri has created a nice, funny and unconventional novel, which is a welcome break from all the serious crime novel out there.

---