

## CAROL O’SULLIVAN

### **Translation, Pseudotranslation and Paratext: the Presentation of Contemporary Crime Fiction set in Italy**

This is a good moment for the translation of fiction from Italian into English. A new Umberto Eco novel in English is always an event, and he is one of the few translated authors to be guaranteed a place in airport bookshops, but new names are also appearing in English translation, such as Niccolò Ammaniti, whose 2001 novel *Io non ho paura (I’m Not Scared)*, translated by Jonathan Hunt and published by Canongate in 2003, was a notable critical and commercial success.

Italian literature is fairly well represented on the lists of British publishers; one might describe the rate of translation as a steady trickle. Dedalus Books, which publishes gothic and decadent fiction with a *fin de siècle* emphasis, includes titles by Boito, D’Annunzio, Verga and Pirandello. The Hesperus Books list, which includes less well-known work by major world authors, includes a wide range of translated Italian literature: canonical and classic authors such as Dante, Aretino, Boccaccio, Foscolo, Leopardi, Carlo Levi, Machiavelli, Petrarch, Pirandello, Svevo, but also contemporary writers including Edoardo Albinati. The most consistently impressive publisher of translations in Britain is Harvill Press, whose early success, Giuseppe di Lampedusa’s *The Leopard*, has been followed by much other contemporary Italian

fiction including work by Bufalino, Vassalli, Magris, Baricco and Marta Morazzoni, winner, alongside her translator Emma Rose, of the *Independent* Foreign Fiction Prize in 2001 for *The Alphonse Courier Affair*. When we look at the list of past winners of the John Florio Prize, awarded biennially for the best translation from Italian into English, what strikes us is the diversity of genres, periods, publishers and translators represented: many voices, some much better known than others and most making a relatively small impact in terms of sales and literary influence on anglophone culture.

This pattern may be changing slightly. For the last couple of years, crime has been by far the most represented genre in translated Italian fiction. Harvill's publications include titles by Marcello Fois and Antonio Tabucchi which could be called "literary" crime fiction—as indeed could Eco's first and best-known novel, *The Name of the Rose*—but also the more obviously "genre" novels *Almost Blue* and *Day After Day* by Carlo Lucarelli, translated by Oonagh Stransky. Heinemann has published three novels by Andrea Camilleri in the last year: *The Shape of Water*, *The Terracotta Dog* and *The Snack Thief*, all translated by Stephen Sartarelli. Orion is about to publish a second title by Massimo Carlotto, *The Master of Knots*, translated by Christopher Woodall, following *The Colombian Mule*, also translated by Woodall, which was published as part of its New Blood crime series in December 2003. It is these more genre-centric novels which are the subject of this article.

The rapidly growing visibility of Italian crime fiction in English is not an isolated phenomenon, but parallels a marked increase in translation into English of fiction in this genre from all languages. The success of Henning Mankell may be partly responsible for opening the door for the translation of crime fiction ranging from hardboiled noir to the classic whodunnit. A look at the Arcadia "Eurocrime" list is striking for its diversity of source languages: Izzo and Manotti from French but also

Joensuu from Finnish, among others. As with Mankell's Kurt Wallander, many of these translated writers have produced series featuring a named detective, such as Jakob Arjouni's Kamal Kenankaya or Gunnar Staalesen's Varg Veum.

The case of Italian fiction is perhaps unique in that it is being translated into a literary milieu in which English-language thrillers set in Italy already have a very high profile. Michael Dibdin has written nine highly successful novels featuring Aurelio Zen, of the Criminalpol squad, whose cases take him all over Italy, and Donna Leon's forthcoming *Blood from a Stone* will be the fourteenth in the bestselling series featuring Commissario Guido Brunetti, based in Venice. A number of other writers including Magdalen Nabb have had success with a similar format. We must ask what the implications are for translated literature in this genre.

The novels by Dibdin, Leon *et al.* constitute what Mark Chu, whose work on thrillers set in Italy has been fundamental to the development of this article, has called a "significant sub-genre... a fusion of the detective novel, the travel book, and the tradition of Grand Tour literature."<sup>1</sup> The extent to which reading these novels is seen as analogous to the tourist experience comes across very strongly from reviews and cover blurbs: "To read Donna Leon is to be transported instantly to the sinisterly ravishing backwaters of Venice;"<sup>2</sup> "let Leon be your travel agent and tour guide to Venice. It's an unforgettable trip;"<sup>3</sup> "for those who know Venice, or want to, Brunetti is a well-versed escort to the nooks, crannies, moods and idiosyncrasies of what residents call *La Serenissima*."<sup>4</sup> The *Sunday Telegraph* review quoted on the back of Magdalen Nabb's *Some Bitter Taste*, which comments that "Magdalen Nabb's books are set in a Florence so vividly brought to life that I long to go back there after reading each one," enfolds the reader in a feeling of shared experience and membership of an exclusive club with an intimate knowledge of Italy.

At times the books are also presented as an improvement on a mere tourist's experience, as in Julian Symons' comment on the back cover of Leon's *A Venetian Reckoning*: "Like Dibdin's, this is a Venice unknown to tourists;" or Rod Cockshutt's extravagant claim that "[y]ou won't get the Venice of the guidebooks in [Leon's] *Uniform Justice*, but you'll probably learn more in 259 pages about one of the world's few genuinely unique cities than you would in 259 afternoons spent sipping Campari in Piazza San Marco."<sup>5</sup> Dibdin, Leon and Nabb have, over time, acquired a reputation as authorities on Italy. Tobias Jones says of Dibdin's Zen novels that they "effortlessly paint a sharper portrait of Italy than any guide-book, cookbook or academic history."<sup>6</sup>

This effect of reading-as-tourism is fortified by the covers of the books in question, which show, as a rule, photographic images of conspicuously Italian buildings and cityscapes. Some of the cover features come under the heading of what Genette has called the "paratexte,"<sup>7</sup> but to that material must be added the images which are used in the design of the book. Both paratext and images are part of that "fringe of the printed text" which, as Lejeune observes, "in reality controls one's whole reading of the text."<sup>8</sup> Given that "the typographical and other morphological features of a book are as important to the link between author, meaning and reader as the words which they convey,"<sup>9</sup> the paratext is clearly of crucial importance for translation, whose consumption depends on a particular contract of trust between reader, writer and publisher. Some work has been done within the discipline on this<sup>10</sup> but translation studies might usefully take more account of paratext as well as cover design in examining how texts move between languages and cultures.

Although Leon, Dibdin, Nabb, *et al.* write in English, their books are presented as offering privileged access to Italy to the extent that they could be

considered as representative of a kind of pseudotranslation. An important factor in literary publishing is the increase in books set in a non-English-language culture but written in English. These texts offer access to a foreign culture without incurring the added expense of translation, and, as such, are attractive to publishers. We may also speculate that fiction written by an Anglophone writer for an Anglophone audience is less likely to contain cultural material which will make the reader uncomfortable than might a translation.<sup>11</sup> These texts might be considered pseudotranslations, although not strictly pseudotranslations in Toury's sense in that they are in no way explicitly stated to be translations, nor do they seem aimed at bringing something new into the target culture.<sup>12</sup> However, to consider translation, with Susan Bassnett, as "not so much as a category in its own right, but rather as a set of textual practices with which the writer and reader collude"<sup>13</sup> may permit us to read these texts as a variant on the pseudotranslation in that in some ways they behave and are consumed as translations.

Perhaps the prime example of a pseudotranslation in the sense intended here is Louis de Bernières 1994 novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (*CCM*), which, with its setting "abroad," its overtones of magical realism and its author's apparently "foreign" name, is quite easily mistaken for a translation. When asked to name recently read translations as part of a class on literary translation at the University of East Anglia, at least one student in every class would routinely mention de Bernières's novel. This attribution of translated status to *CCM* is partly about theme and content (the foreign setting) but it is also about what Genette has called the "publisher's peritext," the presentational material "that is the direct and principal... responsibility of the publisher."<sup>14</sup> Of primary importance in this case is the name of the author. Genette notes that the author's name can be an important indicator of nationality<sup>15</sup> but does not pause long enough to note that it can also act as a red

herring; for this reason the author's name is crucial in the presentation of pseudotranslations. As Nicci Gerrard suggests in a 1994 interview, de Bernières has “remained an oddly retiring figure in the literary landscape. Perhaps his French name (centuries ago, his family came from Normandy) and his South American content made him seem foreign.”<sup>16</sup> The South American setting of his first three novels, *The War of Don Emmanuel's Nether Parts* (1990), *Señor Vivo and the Coca Lord* (1991) and *The Troublesome Offspring of Cardinal Guzman* (1992), which were conspicuously influenced by magic realism, certainly contribute to an impression of foreignness. Though *CCM* represents a departure in setting from his previous novels, and de Bernières has explicitly described its style as differing from his earlier work,<sup>17</sup> the colourful, busy, hand-lettered cover design by Jeff Fisher,<sup>18</sup> uniform with the three previous novels, links them together powerfully in the reader's imagination. Not only does translation involve a set of textual practices, but a set of paratextual ones. Although at no time do the publishers of *CCM* suggest that the book was not first written in English, the author's name, the setting and the cover design combine to illude the readers that they are reading a translated work of fiction.

A 2004 review by Amanda Craig of de Bernières' *Birds Without Wings*, the prequel to *CCM*, acknowledges that “it might be argued that this is a form of tourism, allowing the reader to patronise quaint foreign ways” but concludes that “de Bernières deserves praise for his imaginative sympathy.”<sup>19</sup> It is this acknowledgement of the possibility of empathetic understanding by an outsider of another culture which underpins the success of the pseudotranslations discussed here, to the point where “while recognising that the narratives are fiction, the setting and the local information are accorded the status of objective truth.”<sup>20</sup>

It is into this publishing climate, with these pseudotranslations in a pre-eminent market position, that Camilleri, Lucarelli and Carlotto are being translated. A most striking feature of these translations is the way in which they come to share in the presentational features of their English-language predecessors. We can identify broad tendencies in the presentation of source and target texts which illustrate this convergence.

The Italian cover images mostly feature the human figure, within the constraints of the different publishers' house styles, but differ radically in style and composition. The covers of the two Carlotto novels, published by e/o, feature tinted pencil sketches of characters ([fig\\_01](#) and [fig\\_02](#)) drawn with thick, crude lines on a yellow background reminiscent of the original yellow covers of the *giallo* (thriller) which gave their name to the genre in Italy. *Il corriere colombiano* (*The Colombian Mule*) features a swarthy man lighting a cigarette, the eponymous "mule" or drug-runner, foregrounding the exoticism of the South American connection. The cover of *Il maestro dei nodi* (*The Master of Knots*) features a woman's leg presented with one foot in a high heel up on a chair while a hand seems to adjust a cord around her thigh.

The covers of books by the Sicilian publisher Sellerio have a very high degree of recognisability in Italy, being presented in a uniform small-format paperback with good-quality black card covers with the author's name and title above the cover image and "Sellerio editore Palermo" below. Sellerio covers feature a central panel generally containing a painting: *La forma dell'acqua* (*The Shape of Water*) is illustrated by the pop artist Allen Jones's "Gonna a pieghe" ("Pleated Skirt") ([fig\\_03](#)). *Il cane di terracotta* (*The Terracotta Dog*) features "Ammaestatrice di cani" by the Italian painter Antonio Donghi ([fig\\_04](#)).

Lucarelli's thrillers are published by Einaudi in the (also highly recognisable) paperback series Einaudi Tascabili "Stile libero." The homogenisation of typeface and the slightly unusual format of books in this series make it possible to vary the cover graphics widely without compromising recognition. *Almost Blue* (the original title) features a cropped drawing of a reptile's back legs and tail ([fig\\_05](#)) while *Un giorno dopo l'altro* (*Day After Day*) features a panel containing a photograph of an empty road receding into the distance ([fig\\_06](#)).<sup>21</sup> The reptile is in fact a character reference, as the serial killer in the novel is nicknamed "the iguana."

Covers fulfil several different functions, as "a marketing device, an aesthetic production, and a representation that may relate to a book's content."<sup>22</sup> The Italian covers described above, while all constituting marketing devices inasmuch as they conform to and reinforce their publisher's brand image, tend to function more as aesthetic productions in themselves (particularly Camilleri) and also relate closely to the book's content (Carlotto and Lucarelli). The covers of the translations function in a markedly different way. The South American associations are abandoned in *The Colombian Mule* for the exoticism (to an Anglophone audience) of the north-east Italian setting, with a view of a particularly well-known Venetian view of San Giorgio seen from the Piazza San Marco ([fig\\_07](#)) under a burnt sky. The monuments stand black against the evening light. The ground is wet. People and pigeons are barely distinguishable against the backdrop. This is a combination of the Italy which is iconically familiar to tourists and a defamiliarisation to do with the time of day and the season. The cover of the forthcoming translation *The Master of Knots* again features a cityscape ([fig\\_08](#)), seen through a wrought-iron gate, under a blue sky. For Carlotto, these are human dramas, in which the characters are foregrounded in the publisher's peritext. The British publisher, on the other hand, emphasises the location



as the key to the narrative,<sup>23</sup> though the unusual wrought iron of the gates in the foreground of the English cover could be read as echoing the novel's sado-masochistic subject matter. The replacement of the original cover designs by images of Italy reflects a fundamental shift in the focus of the story. The foregrounding of what is iconically Italian on the cover makes the Italianness of the setting that much more important than the plot (though not, as we will see, than the genre).

The English covers of Camilleri ([fig\\_09](#) and [fig\\_10](#)) are less iconic in terms of architecture; these novels are set after all in Camilleri's fictional town Vigàta in Sicily. They make great play with light and shade, the heavy iron grill-work over a window seen from below with a light above it, a light illuminating part of a waterside street with the lit buildings reflected on the water, or light falling from an unseen source down a flight of steps with a railing. In each case, the lit portion of the photograph is seen from the darkness, and the illuminated space ends in shadow on all sides. There are no people in these pictures. Interestingly, the first edition of *The Shape of Water* from 2003, though designed in a similar format, uses an opposed image ([fig\\_11](#)), one of blinding sunlight, so bright that the picture looks overexposed, falling on a house with an ornate pediment over the door and the familiar louvred shutters closed against the sunlight, and hiding who knows what in the dim interior.

The translations of Lucarelli published by Harvill ([fig\\_12](#) and [fig\\_13](#)) feature images of neither interior nor exterior spaces, the liminal spaces of arcades, cloisters and colonnades. Of all the translations, these accord the specific content of the novel most cover space, in the first case with the photograph of "Man with Headphones" superimposed on the photograph of Piazza Santo Stefano, and in the second case with the silhouetted figure in the billowing coat walking away from the camera and watched by the shadow of a dog cast on the wall behind him (the serial killer in this

novel is nicknamed the “pit bull”). We would expect strong series coherence in the titles and cover designs of thrillers and crime novels as well as more or less recognisable publishers’ house styles. However, the degree of convergence in design of these translations, and, as we shall see, the pseudotranslations, published as they are mostly by different imprints and publishers, is startling. The most striking comparison might be of the cover for Donna Leon’s novel *Fatal Remedies* ([fig\\_14](#)) with the cover of Carlotto’s *The Colombian Mule* (see above). The pictures are of the same view of San Giorgio from the Piazza San Marco taken from two different angles. Similar images feature on a number of other covers.<sup>24</sup>

English-language fiction set in Italy has been routinely presented for some time using images of Italian architecture. The most consistent use of this design strategy is to be found in the novels of Leon, but work by other writers has gradually come to resemble this template. Magdalen Nabb’s first novel featuring Marshal Salvatore Guarnaccia was published in 1981 and the early titles in this series were published in Britain by the Collins Crime Club. By the 1980s the covers of this long-running imprint, while not perhaps as unattractive as Cooper and Pike judge them to be<sup>25</sup> were certainly looking rather dated (e.g. [fig\\_15](#)). These covers conform to what Powers has called “visual synecdoche”<sup>26</sup> particularly traditional to crime novels “in which a detail stands for the whole atmosphere of the story.” In later titles published in the same series, e.g. *The Marshal at the Villa Torrini* (1993), the objects on the cover are supplemented with images of place. This trend in cover design has continued to the point where in 2004 Heinemann/Arrow, who also publish Leon’s Brunetti novels, brought out a new uniform edition of Nabb’s books with covers which closely resemble the existing Leon format, using views of Florence under dramatic skies (e.g. [fig\\_16](#)), or in the case of *Property of Blood*, using an image

of a familiar type of southern Tuscan villa with cypresses along the skyline. Michael Dibdin's novels, published by Faber, have used a number of recognisably Italian cover images but have been less consistent in the several cover redesigns the series has gone through.

The use of photography on covers may be in part attributable to the increasing availability of images from agencies such as GettyImages, Corbis and Photonica and the technology for photo manipulation which came into use in the early 1990s.<sup>27</sup> However the use of photography here also creates a documentary effect, conferring an impression of greater authenticity on the product.

There is a restricted number of visual tropes involved in these photographs of Italy: principally water, windows, doorways, gates, lamps, columns and arches. This is monumental, architectural Italy, whose visualisation can be traced back to the daguerreotypes of Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3) in their "contrast of strong sunlit walls and darkened recesses... empty of people but haunted by history."<sup>28</sup> In the use of this kind of photograph to illustrate the covers of crime novels, the sense of historical haunting is substituted by the dark actions and events which make up the plot. It is also significant that generally the images of Italy used to illustrate thrillers in English are not peopled, except perhaps by the occasional silhouetted figure, seldom in the foreground. This again echoes Ruskin's "scenes without contemporary Venetians or the paraphernalia of commerce."<sup>29</sup>

The framing of the images is crucial. On the whole, covers do not feature establishing shots but details, partial or cropped images, buildings seen through haze or in poor light. This contributes, as Burns notes of Ruskin's photographs, to the "tourist" experience:

“Being there” is an insistent desire and topos of the travel discourse and Ruskin’s illustrations create the phenomenal experience of being there through the close-up. In contrast to those topographical views that work to locate the traveller in an unfamiliar cityscape and simultaneously efface the labor of the image in rendering the landscape immediately comprehensible, Ruskin’s images disorient the viewer and reproduce the loss of known spatial coordinates as a feature of the travel experience.<sup>30</sup>

A similar effect is achieved by the covers of, for instance, Lucarelli’s *Almost Blue* and Nabb’s *The Marshal Makes His Report*.

The use of photographs of Italy to sell detective fiction is intimately connected to the genre. In a 2002 *Guardian* review of Dibdin’s *And Then You Die*, Tobias Jones calls Italy “the perfect backdrop for noir detective fiction.” Mark Chu explains this as being “due partly to the fact that in the popular British perception, Italy stands essentially for the ‘southern’ traits of criminality, corruption, violence, and passions.”<sup>31</sup> The covers of British crime novels traditionally feature an object which in some ways signifies the plot, often the murder instrument. At first sight the covers under discussion don’t contain much direct representation of the crime, but in fact here Italy is seen as synonymous with crime. It is present in the angles and the play of light and shade in these shots of buildings which suggest secrets and flaws in the otherwise picture-postcard beauty of Italy. Here the three functions of the cover as Kratz defines them come together: aesthetic production (the beauty of Italy), marketing device (selling the tourist experience) and representation of plot (Italy is synonymous with crime).

Given what we have seen about the way translated Italian crime fiction is marketed, what can we conclude about its place in the polysystem and its likely impact? Given the currency of authenticity in the reception of Leon *et al.*, we might expect the advent of “real” translations to pose a threat; in fact, the most interesting feature of the relationship between translated fiction and pseudotranslations is the

high degree of interdependency they exhibit. Far from being displaced from their pre-eminent positions in the literary polysystem, Dibdin *et al.* are called upon to endorse the new arrivals. Michael Dibdin reviewed Ammaniti's *I'm Not Scared* favourably for *The Guardian*. Both *The Shape of Water* and *The Snack Thief* bear a blurb by Donna Leon in the top right-hand corner of the front cover: "The novels of Andrea Camilleri breathe out the sense of place, the sense of humour, and the sense of despair that fills the air of Sicily."<sup>32</sup> The tone of patronage is even stronger in the following *Sunday Times* blurb on the cover of *The Terracotta Dog*: "Camilleri writes with such vigour and wit *that he deserves a place alongside Michael Dibdin and Donna Leon*, with the additional advantage of conveying an insider's sense of authenticity" (my italics).

Sales-wise, these established writers can afford to be generous; certainly the introduction of Italian-set crime fiction in translation has shown no evidence so far of spoiling the market for the home-grown product. Any marketing problems that might be posed for publishers in promoting translations, which have undoubtedly been commissioned at least partly on the basis of the success of English-written crime fiction set in Italy, without destabilising the status (quo) of writers such as Leon and Dibdin, is resolved by figuring the translations as copies of the pseudotranslations, as in the *Sunday Times* review quoted above, or Tobias Jones's Dibdin review quoted earlier, in which he also describes Camilleri as resembling Dibdin: "Italy has produced, in the last few years, a parallel publishing phenomenon very similar to Dibdin."

In this case one might conclude that the success of pseudotranslations such as those by Leon, Dibdin and Nabb has had a positive knock-on effect for translation, in that the public's appetite for novels set in Italy has been well and truly whetted, and this has created opportunities for Italian authors. The next few years will tell if these

translated novels are to be a flash in the pan or if they will achieve comparable success in this country to their success at home, and to the success of the Italian-set crime fiction they have come to supplement. If they do, one thing is certain—there’s more where they came from.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mark Chu, “Someone Else’s Southerner: Opposed Essences in the ‘Italian’ novels of Michael Dibdin, Magdalen Nabb, and Tim Parks” in Anne Mullen and Emer O’Beirne, eds., *Crime Scenes: Detective Narratives in European Culture since 1945* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000), 75-87, 75.

<sup>2</sup> Review in *Ms London*, quoted on the back of Donna Leon, *A Sea of Troubles*.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Mergendahl, *The Rocky Mountain News*, quoted on the Grove Atlantic website at <http://www.groveatlantic.com/grove/wc.dll?groveproc~leonbook~UJ~praise>

<sup>4</sup> Ellen Hale, *USA Today*, quoted on the Grove Atlantic website.

<sup>5</sup> In *Raleigh News & Observer*, quoted on the Grove Atlantic website.

<sup>6</sup> Tobias Jones, “Just because you’re paranoid...” (review of Michael Dibdin, *And Then You Die*) in *The Guardian*, 12 January 2002. It is significant that Timothy Holme, whose five novels, mostly set in Venice and featuring Inspector Achille Peroni, were published between 1980 and 1987, was already the author of several non-fiction titles about Italy.

<sup>7</sup> Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

<sup>9</sup> David McKitterick, “The Acceptable Face of Print” in Ross Harvey, Wallace Kirsop and B. J. McMullin, eds., *An Index of Civilisation: Studies of Printing and Publishing History in Honour of Keith Maslen* (Clayton, Victoria: Center for Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Monash University, 1993), 15-30, 27.

<sup>10</sup> e.g. Mirko Petric, “Judging a Book by its Cover: The Visual Reception of American Literature” in Meta Grosman, ed., *American Literature for Non-American Readers: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on American Literature* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 177-187.

<sup>11</sup> cf. Chu, 87.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995), 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Bassnett, “When is a Translation Not a Translation?” in Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 25-40, 39.

<sup>14</sup> Genette, *Paratexts*, 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Nicci Gerrard, “A soldier and his musical instruments” in *The Observer*, 3 April 1994.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Alan Powers, *Front Cover: Great Book Jacket and Cover Design* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2001), 128-129.

<sup>19</sup> Amanda Craig, review of Louis de Bernières, *Birds Without Wings* at <http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk/books/reviews/story.jsp?story=538344>

<sup>20</sup> Chu, 77.

<sup>21</sup> Italian covers seem to tolerate the “empty” landscape in a way which English covers do not; other examples include the 2002 Repubblica edition of Dino Buzzati, *Il deserto dei Tartari* and Niccolò Ammaniti, *Io non ho paura* (Einaudi, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Corinne A. Kratz, “On Telling/Selling a Book by its Cover” (*Cultural Anthropology* 9.2, 1994, 179-200), 179.

<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting that *The Colombian Mule* was published in English as one of nine “first novels” in a new crime series called New Blood. Most, though not all, of the covers of these nine novels feature

photographs of places, some of which are clearly intended to evoke well-known or plausibly recognisable locations.

<sup>24</sup> I was surprised in the course of my research for this chapter by how consistently Venice was seen by readers and publishers as epitomising Italy, far more so than Florence or Rome. Chu's list of thrillers set in Italy makes it clear that Venice features as the setting for a disproportionate number of titles, particularly of the more generic type (see <http://www.ucc.ie/italian/mysteries.html>). It certainly gives the lie to the *Manchester Evening News* reviewer quoted on the Grove Atlantic website who refers to Leon's "unique Venetian setting."

<sup>25</sup> cf. the reference to "the usual dreary covers" in John Cooper and B. A. Pike, *Detective Fiction: The Collector's Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), 225. I am indebted to Robert Smith of Adelphi Books, Southsea, for drawing my attention to this work as well as other valuable reference material on crime fiction.

<sup>26</sup> Powers, 108.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Karen Burns, "Topographies of Tourism: 'Documentary' Photography and *The Stones of Venice*" (*Assemblage* 32, 1997, 22-44), 31.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>31</sup> Chu, 87.

<sup>32</sup> That Donna Leon, as a writer of Italian-set crime fiction, is writing the blurb for this novel is not so surprising given that it is common for publishers to offer books for review to writers perceived as sharing common interests; however, that an expatriate resident of Venice is seen as qualified to assess the quality of Sicilian-set fiction shows to what extent Italy, a country with deep regional divisions, is seen abroad as an undifferentiated unit.