

[Spoletonline](#) (journalist Simonetta Campanelli)

Q. Daniela, Michael insists that "Critique of Criminal Reason" was written together, and that you contributed 50% each. Would you care to confirm that?

A. At the moment, Mike is in the kitchen cooking an omelette. My contribution is limited to cracking the eggs, everything else is in his hands, given that only he knows how to turn the thing. So, regarding omelettes, let's say, Mike does 80% of the work, and I do the other 20%. Writing books is different: we do everything together. Literally 50-50. From plotting the book (which takes quite a while, with lots of intense discussion, and various proposed drafts) to the actual writing of each chapter, which we divide equally between us (I write mine in Italian, Mike writes his in English). Then, we pass the chapters back and forth between us, re-writing and revising as we go. Often, we write the whole thing again! In a sense, we "edit" each other's work.

Q. Sorry to ring at dinner-time. Still, I can understand your alarm. Just think, there's an Englishman in your kitchen cooking dinner!

A. I trust him. At least when it comes to cooking omelettes! And his pasta with artichoke sauce is a culinary masterpiece.

2nd Part

Q. When the book was presented in Spoleto, you mentioned that you write in the kitchen, while Mike works in his study. Don't you fight about that?

A. We fight often and furiously about what we are working on. Never about where we work. "Mike's study" sounds very grand, but it is just a small room crammed with books, papers, his computer, and, above all, a vast collection of nineteenth century photographs that he cannot do without. The kitchen is bigger, in any case - there is a large table crammed with books, a laptop computer where I write. There are no old photographs, of course, but our cat, Lionello, spends a lot of time in there scratching away at the finished chapters. If he has an opinion, he isn't very vocal about it...

Q. At the same presentation, someone pointed out the importance of the husband-wife relationship in Critique, saying that it was an evident element of success in your own marriage. Mention was made of a number of famous examples, yet no-one said a word about the essential "pairing" in the novel, the relationship between Immanuel Kant and his servant, Martin Lampe. Would you say that their relationship is inspired by your relationship with Michael (or vice versa)?

A. The longevity of our marriage has nothing to do with it. When we decided to marry 27 years ago, we seemed to spend more time talking about how easy it would be to get a divorce! It will last a year, two at the most, we thought... The thirty-year relationship between Kant and Lampe in "Critique of Criminal Reason" might serve as a model for any couple if duration were the only criterion. But in every other respect, they were a pair to be avoided!

Q. In your opinion, how important is the Kantian imperative in a marriage that works?

A. In theory, Kant's imperative is loaded with good intentions. In practice, it is a signpost to catastrophe. It has no room for compromise, and speaks of duty as an absolute value. Kant himself never married. Doesn't that tell us something?

Q. We know that you are working on your third novel. Could you tell us something about the second? Has it already been published in English? When will it appear in Italy? And is there a common thread in all of the books?

A. "Days of Atonement" is the title of our second novel. It will be available in bookshops in England next August, while the Einaudi edition will appear in Italy in November. In the same period, it will be published in 15 other countries, including America. This story is much darker and more anguish-ridden than the first. Andrew Taylor (best-selling author of *The American Boy*) said that our tales are "grimmer than those of the Brothers Grimm," and we consider it to be a huge compliment. "Days of Atonement" opens with a massacre. The criminal investigation takes magistrate Hanno Stiffeniis to a sinister fortress in the middle of the frozen tundra where more mayhem unfolds. Stiffeniis is obliged to work alongside an eccentric French criminologist, Serge Lavedrine, but the greatest help of all comes from his own wife, Helena, who made only a very brief appearance in "Critique of Criminal Reason." Recently, we signed a new contract for two more books to add to the series. The third, provisionally titled "Heart of Stone," is set on the Baltic coast, where Prussians have collected amber for thousands of years. Now, the French have occupied the area, a series of brutal murders has upset the trade, and Magistrate Stiffeniis must try to make sense of what is going on...

Q. *Try?*

A. Well, we haven't finished the book yet. Anything could still happen!