

# Themes in gomorrah and fort apasc essay



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Matteo Garrone's *Gomorrah* is a stark, shocking vision of contemporary gangsterdom, and one of cinema's most authentic depictions of organized crime. In this tour de force adaptation of undercover Italian reporter Roberto Saviano's best-selling expose of Naples' Mafia underworld (known as the *Camorra*), Garrone links five disparate tales in which men and children are caught up in a corrupt system that extends from the housing projects to the world of haute couture.

Filmed with an exquisite detachment interrupted by bursts of violence, *Gomorrah* is a shattering, socially engaged true-crime story from a major new voice in Italian cinema. It's interesting that this movie intertwines five separate stories of people whose lives are touched by organized crime. Each of the five people may be analyzed from the both themes of death and survival. First of all – Don Ciro (Gianfelice Imparato) who is a timid middleman that distributes money to the families of imprisoned clan members. He may be considered a coward due to the deed that changes not only his life, but the life of other people. When making a delivery, he is ambushed by two angry gangsters with an obvious grudge against their former clan; there is a feud within the clan. As Don Ciro wanted to survive and save his own skin, he later offers to defect to their side. They explain to him their families were murdered by the clan and want retribution, and that they have no need for a money-carrier.

Instead, Ciro leads them to the location where he is given the money for distribution. The couple killed everyone but Ciro, and took the money. As for Ciro, he quietly walks off to an uncertain future. Yes, actually he survived and omitted the death, but he committed a coward deed as he betrayed the

people who trusted him. He put his own life higher than the life of many other people from the society. This makes the audience think over if such survival worth of omitting from the death. Sooner or later the death will find him, and he won't be able to cheat his fortune anymore. The second personage, Toto or Salvatore Abruzzese who is a 13-year-old grocery delivery boy.

He is rather courageous, though a bit weird teen. He joins the gang after proving his courage – he is being shot while wearing a bulletproof vest as a test of bravery. Though this is rather doubtfully as well (his courage) as this deed is rather stupid. Some people try to omit death and any hurt of their bodies, or sacrifice themselves in the name of some deed or some other people, and this young man does not appreciate the life presented to him. He does not know the life price. The next example vividly shows this after he is forced to lure Maria out of her apartment, where his comrades gun her down. There is probably an impression of some kind of game that he plays with his and other people's life. The third hero is Roberto or Carmine Paternoster who is a graduate who works in toxic waste management.

He is rather sensible and kind man and knows the price of life and health of other people. He may be considered to be the sample for other people as he was not afraid to sacrifice himself and directly refuse to do what he supposed to be wrong. When Roberto can no longer contain his disgust, he quits. The next personage – Pasquale is being a tailor who works for Iavarone, a garment factory owner with ties to the Camorra. When his secret work is discovered, he gets under the shooting, though survives and leaves town, taking a job as a truck driver. Here, he is the sample that he could

reach much in his career, but led a double life and that is why when revealed – decided to choose the survival than risking of life. Two more heroes of the movie are Marco and Ciro that are being out of control. Seems, that sometimes they imagine themselves being the personages of some gangster movies that survive everywhere due to their luck and while risking their lives.

Due to their behavior that does not foresee any troubles, and probably, because of the movies that watched, where the main heroes always survived, they are not ready that they may die. They are shot in one incident that they got into. It is interesting to analyze as well the title of the film. The Italian film Gomorrah takes its name from the second of the doomed twin cities of the Old Testament. Impending destruction lurks in the movie's modern day counterpart; the Camorra crime world of Naples, Italy – the title is also a play on words – a regime so steeped in evil that only a cataclysm can rescue it. The new Gomorrah sees its Biblical counterpart, and raises it. The new city's sins go deeper than the earth; they dig, burrow, and settle into the civilization's very foundation. This title at once makes the audience ponder over such two interconnected themes as life and death.

Gomorrah, and its sister city, Sodom, shows us what happens to a civilization built upon the will of man and the promises of false gods. The film, Gomorrah, shows us a modern day society built on those same tenets, and enslaved by sin. Only one character has the insight, and the grace, that allows him to turn away from the burning city and to seek salvation. His epiphany occurs on a road which leads away from one of those toxic quarries. That road is long and lonely; the road to salvation always is.

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Gomorra is in Italian with English subtitles. There is frequent use of foul language, constant violence, and one scene of female nudity in a strip bar. The movie strives for a realistic tone and effect.

It is successful in that goal, but it is harsh and offers no solutions to the evils it portrays. Organized crime has long been a favorite topic in cinema with the gangster film being a favorite Hollywood genre ever since the 1930s.

Gangster films reflected a dark, seductive and hedonistic side of capitalism where the glamour of the gangster lifestyle is only superficially undermined by the obligatory moral ending where the gangsters are either brought to justice or meet a violent demise. Italian gangsters have held the most fascination with The Godfather films, Goodfellas and the television series The Sopranos becoming dominant texts in contemporary popular culture. The depiction of the gangster lifestyle has become progressively less romantic across these texts as they increasingly examine the brutal reality of the criminal lifestyle and mentality. However, nothing has come close to the blunt depiction of Italian organized crime that is presented in the Italian film Gomorra, which depicts the operations of the Camorra. The Camorra clans populate the Italian provinces of Naples and Caserta but their operations in both illegal and legal businesses, with an estimated yearly turnover of 150 billion euros, are global. They have been responsible for more than 4000 deaths in the last thirty years, which is more than any other criminal organization or terrorist group.

Adapted from a best-selling part-literary part-journalistic novel by Roberto Saviano (who has been living under police protection since 2006) Gomorra tells five interweaving stories. The story of an aging money runner and the

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story of a 13-year-old boy who joins a rival clan, are located in the world's largest open-air drug market in Scampia. Another story about a tailor reflects the Camorra's involvement in the Italian fashion industry. A story about illegal waste management comments on the immense wealth the Camorra has amassed through their monopoly on toxic waste dumping, which has had a devastating agricultural, environmental and health impact in Southern Italy. Finally, Gomorrah contains a story about a couple of hothead, wannabe gangster teenage boys. Filled with images from Brian De Palma's Scarface they get way out of the depth while trying to prove themselves. In many ways they reflect the audience whose information about organized crime has come from cinema and television, making them oblivious to the insidious and harsh reality. Director Matteo Garrone wisely adopts a very restrained and straightforward filming style to allow the power of the events on screen to resonate without distraction.

With such raw material there is no need to do anything visually stylistic, which makes Gomorrah feel not so much like a documentary or exercise in cinema verite but rough footage that may have been shot by a passer-by. As a member of the audience you do feel as if you are in the scenes witnessing the events in real time. It's rarely a comfortable sensation but it is absolutely compelling. Gomorrah is a significant inclusion in the gangster genre that takes that next step in removing the mystique and glamour from organized crime. The crime genre has, almost always, been a romanticized vision of gangsters, money and organized crime. Films like The Godfather, Goodfellas and Scarface are perfect examples of this romantic view. Film techniques such as slow motion, fast edits and the use of pop music are ways

filmmakers glorify and magnify violence in these movies. In contrast, it was completely odd to me that the Italian film Gomorrah, which does not follow this pattern, was presented by Martin Scorsese, a filmmaker who is known for such romanticisms.

Although I am very well aware of Scorsese's love for film and Italy, his name at the opening credits was a little jarring to me. After my viewing of the film, however, it felt perfect and fitting. This would be a good companion piece to Goodfellas as they both explore the same themes. This film exceeds and subverts my expectations on what the crime film should be. Gomorrah is a haunting and sprawling tale of organized crime in Naples, Italy. It is based on the book of the same name by Roberto Saviano, an undercover journalist who exposed many of the practices of the Camorra (a criminal organization in Italy). Saviano is currently in hiding out of Italy because of the book as there has been a hit taken out on his life by actual Camorra bosses. The film follows five separate story arcs of everyday people in Naples and how the Camorra has effected their lives.

It opens with three men enjoying the amenities of a tanning salon, the place quickly turns into a slaughterhouse as these men are gunned down in cold blood. We are introduced to these five stories in such a slowly paced way to construct a world we are not invited to view. We meet Toto, a 13 year old boy who becomes involved in this organization by observing a drug deal and returning items retrieved after police seizure. Other stories revolve around Don Ciro who is a fearful middleman that delivers money to the families of imprisoned gangsters, Roberto and his boss Franco who illegally dump toxic waste for the crime syndicate, a skilled tailor named Pasquale who runs a

Camorra owned sweatshop, and finally Marco and Sweet Pea. These two cocky young boys are fascinated by this underworld and continuously quote Al Pacino in Scarface, but when they come across an arsenal of guns, they use the weapons to become part of it. The acts of violence is executed with such precision and nuance although it is portrayed as to be almost random. In that way, the violence in the film is based in a reality that builds tension in almost every scene. The director, Matteo Garrone, plays with this tension.

There is a point in the film where we are almost expecting gun play and brutality but at times it never comes. Somehow, he finds ways to show these acts when we are least expecting them. This just feels so real. It is shot in a documentary style with peering camera work that appears to be drifting or floating between characters which adds to the realism of the film. The grittiness is explored through the use of shadows and light. Most of the film is dark, almost black. We are unable to see characters' faces or set pieces at times, which adds to the feel of intensity throughout the entire piece. We feel a certain looming presence that could be either the Camorra, violence or crime.

Money doesn't seem to be a status symbol or motivation for most of these characters; rather they value survival and power. Characters don't drive fancy cars or dress in an expensive manner. In fact everything seems to be thrown together and shabby and much of the movie takes place in various poor housing projects in contrast to the romanticized view of crime being a lifestyle of excess. In Gomorrah, the only symbol of status is staying alive. The most touching moment of the film comes at the end with Pasquale, the tailor. After surviving an attempt on his life he is forced out of the garment



industry and takes up a job as a truck driver. While at a truck stop he sees the actress Scarlett Johansson on TV at the Cannes Film Festival on the red carpet wearing one of his dresses. Pasquale is heartbroken as he looks onto something he created and can no longer be apart of.

As he watches, the TV commentators spout on and on about her beauty. They note that the dress is “ an apparent simplicity, but it’s really very complicated” which is a statement that can also be made about this film. The scene is shown as a reminder of how big the Camorra actually is – a Hollywood A Lister is wearing a dress from one of their factories. Matteo Garrone delivers a very intense and gripping film. Moreover, he delivers a wonderfully composed and photographed film that warrants high praise and is a technical achievement. He doesn’t glamorize the crime world, but rather he sheds light on the reality of its shadows. The second film to be compared is Fort Apache Napoli (Italian: Fortapasc) that is being a 2009 film directed by Marco Risi about the brief life and tragic death of journalist Giancarlo Siani, who is played by Libero De Rienzo. Despite the somewhat veiled threats of the local political class, Siani continues his inquiries, especially after the “ massacre of the circle of fishermen”.

His articles particularly annoy the local Camorra bosses because they undermine their political and criminal alliances. So, after he was transferred to Naples by his paper, the Camorra meet, and decide to kill, Siani. Siani is shot outside his girlfriend’s house, in the residential district of Vomero, on September 23, 1985. Siani was only 26. This film is a good sample of the courage of the person who is fighting for justice and safety of other people. Though he knows that his actions and his deeds threaten his own life and

may lead him to the death, but he is not afraid to die in the name of other people's survival. It is interesting that the title of this film as well shows the film sense and themes to some extent. It is essential to say that people in line were speculating about how to pronounce the title in Italian.

Somebody gave it the Croatian “ch” sound at the end and thought maybe it should sound like “Fort Apache”. That turned out to be exactly right, as the film is an extended metaphor of the American film: a depiction of a crime beleaguered city, in this case transferred to Naples in the mid-1980s. It's the true story of a sympathetic journalist – journalist for a small town newspaper trying to uncover the truth about the Camorra's deep, but hidden, infiltration of all the underground activities in his Bay of Naples town, and the government corruption which reached to the highest levels. It's a complex story with a large cast and the potential for a very powerful expose but I don't think the director was quite up to the task of making a fully coherent narrative. Marco Risi's compelling new drama FORTAPASC strikingly re-creates the last four months in the life of 26-year-old journalist Giancarlo Siani, during the period in which he begins an investigation into the connection between local government and the Naples mafia. Giancarlo (Liberio De Rienzo) is an idealistic adjunct reporter attached to the Neapolitan suburb of Torre Annunziata. His dream is to become a fully accredited journalist, but editor Sasa (Ernesto Mahieux) isn't interested in investigative stories. When Giancarlo stumbles upon a conversation between local kingpin Valentino Gionta (Massimiliano Gallo) and big boss Carmine Alfieri (Gigio Morra), he seizes the chance to write a real expose.

With the enthusiasm and courage of youth, Giancarlo plunges into the criminal world arousing the deadly anger of the mob. Critically acclaimed, FORTAPASC is a hardhitting take on the murder of idealism. The film's title (pronounced " Fort-a-pash" in dialect) references John Ford's classic western, Fort Apache, and the lawlessness of Mafia-ruled Naples, here brought to vivid, Scorsese-like life. Giancarlo Siani (Naples, September 19, 1959, – Naples, September 23, 1985) was an Italian crime reporter from Naples, who was killed by the Camorra, the Neapolitan crime organization. He started to write in the magazine Osservatorio sulla camorra, and later as a stringer for Il Mattino, the principal newspaper of Naples. He was assigned to the local area editor of Castellammare di Stabia. He wrote articles about the links between organized crime, politicians and construction contracts. Siani was killed on September 23, 1985, in Naples by the Camorra, while approaching his apartment.

At the time he was conducting an investigation of one of their leaders, Valentino Gionta. Gionta was the boss of the Gionta clan, a Camorra clan that was based in Torre Annunziata and controlled cigarette smuggling. On June 10, 1985, three months before he was killed, Siani had revealed that the arrest of Valentino Gionta had been decided by Lorenzo Nuvoletta, head of the Nuvoletta clan, a rival Camorra clan. Siani was preparing a dossier on the Torre Annunziata massacre in August 1984, which left eight people killed and 24 wounded among the Gionta clan, allied with the Nuvolettas at the time. After the massacre tensions between the two clans had increased. In 2000, Angelo Nuvoletta, Valentino Gionta and Luigi Baccante were sentenced in absentia to life in prison for ordering the murder, as well as the

material killers Gaetano Iacolare, Ferdinando Cataldo, Armando Del Core and Ciro Cappuccio. In 2009, the movie Fortapasc based on his life story was released, directed by Marco Risi. The title (pronounced “Fort-apash” in dialect) is a reference to John Ford’s classic western, Fort Apache, and the lawlessness of Camorra-ruled Naples.

Well, the environment, the toxic garbage is connected with the rich in Italy. Many other problems of the south of the world are connected with the rich of the world, so the situation in Gomorrah is kind of like a metaphor of other situations. The confusion between fiction and reality is another interesting problem. It comes from Don Quixote and Sancho Panza and goes down to the boys who go into the colleges in the United States and kill everybody like they are in video games. You have to work from the inside, to create a relationship between citizens and the institutions of power. The Camorra is very strong because they live there, they grew up there, and they are close to people.