

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY OF THE CAMORRA THROUGH JOURNALISM,
RELIGION AND FILM

by

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(under the direction of Thomas E. Peterson)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a socio-economic study of the Camorra as portrayed through Roberto Saviano's book *Gomorra: Viaggio nell'impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della Camorra* and Matteo Garrone's film, *Gomorra*. It is difficult to classify Saviano's book. Some scholars have labeled *Gomorra* a "docufiction", suggesting that Saviano took poetic freedoms with his first-person triune accounts. He employs a prose and news reporting style to narrate the story of the Camorra exposing its territory and business connections. The crime organization is studied through Italian journalism, globalized economics, eschatology and neorealistic film. In addition to igniting a cultural debate, Saviano's book has fomented a scholarly consideration on the innovativeness of his narrative style. Wu Ming 1 and Alessandro Dal Lago epitomize the two opposing literary camps. Saviano was not yet a licensed reporter when he wrote the book. Unlike the tradition of news reporting in the United States, Italy does not have an established school for professional journalism instruction. In fact, the majority of Italy's leading journalists are writers or politicians by trade who have gravitated into the realm of news reporting. There is a heavy literary influence in Italian journalism that would be viewed as too biased for Anglo-American journalists. Yet, this style of writing has produced excellent material for a rich literary

production that can be called *engagé* or political literature. A study of *Gomorra* will provide information about the impact of the book on current Italian journalism. The book was later made into a film with similar religious overtones. The film version, made up of five vignettes, serves as social commentary as explained through cinematic parables. Similar to Saviano's book, Garrone has blurred the lines between objective documentation and artistic embellishment in reporting the Camorra *malaise* on Italian society.

INDEX WORDS: Camorra, Saviano, Garrone, *Gomorra*, *Gomorrhah*, Italian journalism, End of Times, New Italian Epic, Dal Lago, Wu Ming 1, apocalyptic, Mafia, parable, prophet, martyr, Pasolini, Cosa Nostra.

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DEDICATION

To my lost son Massimo who has not been home since May 2007:

—You will travel far my little [one], but we will never leave you, even in the face of our death. You will make my strength your own. You will see my life through your eyes as your life will be seen through mine. The son becomes the father and the father the son.”

—Jor-El as cited in Bryan Singer

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INTRODUCTION

Gomorra: Viaggio nell'impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della camorra, by Roberto Saviano, is an account of organized crime in the Naples area.¹ In my study I will attempt to examine through journalism, history, literature, religion and film how the Camorra is portrayed by a young writer who has been deeply affected by loss and destruction to become a modern-day Italian *vate*, or a poet-prophet. *Gomorra* is a disquieting account of a culture that has no moral authority. The author evokes society's fundamental beliefs about sin, evil and redemption to create a literary work that compels the reader to think about the future.

Saviano draws on Italy's rich past to present a current state of lawlessness and to warn of inevitable destruction that will follow. Ultimately he finds his voice through the literature of apocalypse to warn of dire consequences to his region and to the rest of the world:

In apocalyptic eschatology, the expectation is also that God will work to accomplish his purposes for humanity [...]. From this perspective, human existence and therefore human history have become so contaminated and corrupted by sin and evil that [human history] is basically unredeemable, at least from any human perspective. There is not enough in human history worth salvaging. So, in order to accomplish his purposes in the world,

¹The English language translation of the book *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System* is translated by Virginia Jewiss.

and to vindicate the faithful, God must destroy present history as we know it and begin again with something totally different. The images of cleansing and purification are often used, most often in the symbol of fire as a way to talk about ridding the world of all evil influences. (Bratcher n.p.)

With *Gomorra*, Saviano becomes a prophet, conveying his experience with the supernatural (the world of evil) to humanity. His prophecy warns of a desolate future. The title is a play on words with the biblical city of Gomorra and an organized crime society known as the Camorra.

Saviano writes a compelling account of the clandestine particulars of that organized crime network. He combines gonzo journalism, religious references and philosophy to produce an apocalyptic eschatology. His book and the film version have had a powerful effect on scholars and the general public. In fact, Saviano is forced to live under police protection. The recent global economic collapse can be attributed to many of the same moral, ethical and legal failures chronicled by Saviano.

Gomorra begins as a journalistic recounting of the crime and corruption that permeate southern Italy, reaching into much of the world. The Camorra is not new and many articles and books have been written about organized crime in southern Italy. Saviano's exposé is unique because of the literary style in which he documents the evolution of the organization and makes moral judgments about its threat to society.

Dereck Daschke, in *City of Ruins: Mourning the Destruction of Jerusalem Through Jewish Apocalypse*, has many insights about the personal suffering as well as group trauma that result in apocalyptic literature. He points out that there is a relationship between mourning as found in symbolic loss and national trauma and mourning as a theme of apocalypse. He insists

that national trauma and symbolic loss are ruptures in the continuity of reality, and that the only way to mend it is to face the losses head on, with immediacy: “The persistence of the apocalyptic mentality through millennia attests to its enduring appeal as a model for comprehending the actions and motivations of others or inspiring one’s own” (Daschke 30).

The ancient apocalyptic genre was not confined to a single culture or religious tradition:

External influence is important but internal developments are important also. There is a subtle inter-relationship between the two. The early Jewish writers relied heavily on mythology, which was the traditional language and thought form of religion of the time. (Collins 35)

The apocalyptic genre also appears in Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Greek, Latin, Islamic and Persian literature. The choice by Saviano of *Gomorra* as his title invites speculation on many levels. Gomorrah is mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments as a metaphor for the consequences of unrepentant sin. References are found in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Matthew, Luke, Romans, Peter, Jude and Revelation. The ancient apocalyptic genre is not confined to a single culture or religious tradition. These writings continue the early apocalyptic belief in a “cosmic realm” over the real world of historical event.

Wu Ming 1 (Roberto Bui’s *nom de plume*) described Saviano’s style of work as representative of a potentially new literary genre.² “New Italian Epic” is a term coined by Wu

² Wu Ming is the pen name for the Italian authors who formed from the Luther Blissett community in Bologna. Wu ming means “anonymous” in Chinese. They are a group of literary and pop culture writers whose writing style is often referred to as the “nebula.” Wu Ming Members refer to their literary style as “New Italian Epic.”

Ming 1 at a seminar on contemporary Italian literature at McGill University in 2008 and on an online publication in 2008 titled “The Italian Perspective on Metahistorical Fiction: The New Italian Epic” (Wu Ming 1 n.p.). The central idea is that current Italian authors working between 1993 and 2008 should be examined as a literary movement. He presents Saviano as foremost among these writers. Some of Wu Ming 1’s observations are noteworthy. They identify the characteristics of the apocalyptic eschatology in *Gomorra*. His list includes: (1) ethical and political motivations, (2) narratives that offer a possibly different solution to historical reality, (3) expanding the genre to produce disturbing effects, (4) the choice of stories that have a complex allegorical value. The initial choice may not even be intentional: the author may feel compelled to tell the story and later on understand what he was trying to say, (5) blurring the line between hard reporting and “personal mutterings,” (6) an explicit preoccupation for the loss of the future (“New Italian Epic: We’re Going to Have to be Parents” n.p.).

But what is apocalyptic literature and how is it relevant today? D. S. Russell describes apocalyptic literature in the following way: “Like an underground stream, it has flowed on undetected, sometimes for centuries at a time, breaking surface every now and again, particularly in times of crisis and persecution [...]” (xxi). He makes a distinction between apocalypse, which he calls a literary type and apocalyptic, which he classifies as an intellectual movement. He identifies apocalyptic literature as a historical “movement of mind” which can be identified as a literary type. Russell has studied the early apocalyptists and offers some guidelines for classification. He states that most of the writers were not systematic theologians. They were poets and visionaries who expressed their convictions in terms of ancient and contemporary imagery, both imaginative and obscure (Russell xviii). His broad classification is:

The form they take is fairly uniform and the contents follow a recognizable pattern. Ethical exhortations are usually placed within a historical perspective and are followed by an eschatological prediction made known to the speaker by divine revelation. (3)

Russell classifies apocalypticism as a “religio-social movement,” but such a movement expresses itself in different ways as a result of changing historical conditions: “It is not possible to give one formal cognitive definition of apocalypticism. It is not as much concerned with ‘systematic consistency’ as it is with the demands of the immediate crises. Its net [...] sweeps up different themes, traditions and genres” (11). His classification identifies apocalypse as a genre which shares important characteristics and motifs with other related genres: “The apocalyptic writers are not to be traced back to any given party at all but, at different stages have emerged from quite diverse groups, known and unknown, and from men who owed no allegiance to any party at all” (30).

Apocalyptic literature has had a wide range of topics; no definitive use and characterization has been achieved. The variety and breadth of the literature does suggest that there are some shared interests; among those holds are the destiny of the world and the people in it. One of the common characteristics worth noting is the overthrow of earthly conditions in a great catastrophe. From the earliest writings to mystical practices and present day evangelism, there is a tradition of using apocalyptic literature to address society’s ills. This literary tradition probably originated with Zoroaster, the Persian prophet. Zoroaster’s message was one of the first to say that people are responsible for their moral choices in a world where good and evil are at war with each other. This message found its way into Egyptian and Hellenistic literature and

was widely distributed throughout the Hellenistic world, always influenced by its environment and culture:

The pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Parmenides, and other Greeks were healers, purifiers or seers. Empedocles, a pre-Socratic philosopher, claimed to have been called to heaven by a divine voice. This experience was recorded in other cultures by other seers or prophets. Many in the twentieth century, for whom the apocalyptic vision had been a broken myth, have rediscovered its power in contemplating the possibility of nuclear winter, major nuclear accidents and ecological disaster. (Barkun 15-16)

According to Adela Yarbro Collins, it was the Jewish writers who developed the apocalyptic form, between the years 250 BCE and 100 CE. These were years of crisis, suffering, war and the loss of the Temple, which marked the end of the homeland for the Jews. The climax of the events that inspired Jewish apocalypse was the Jewish War of 66-70 BCE when the Jewish state was ended. The resulting Jewish apocalyptic writings were concerned with loss, mourning and the conflict between good and evil. Much of this apocalyptic writing addressed the communal salvation of the nation, while some was concerned with the salvation of the individual. In Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature the writer speaks in the name of some revered man of the past, what historians of religion and anthropologists call the holy man, the divine man or the shaman (Collins 12).

The style was taken up by Christian writers where the theme became the fact of evil. The revelatory Christian texts are about societies, organizations and institutions at odds with God. Christian apocalypses made significant stylistic changes, namely, the author did not write in the

name of a revered figure from the past. The author of Revelation identifies himself by saying: “I am your brother and your companion in distress [...]” (Revelation 9:1 *The Harper Collins Study Bible and Revised Standard Version*). Revelation is concerned with the here and now and the changes that had to be made for a better life. It is not concerned with telling the future, but with commenting on the ills of the present. Its message is that there is a moral directive that controls history and a consequence and a judgment based on that moral directive. God is portrayed as breaking into history to overcome evil. According to Elisah Alonzo King in his book *That Grotesque Last Book in the New Testament, Revelation. What Is It, Why, When, How and by Whom Was It Written and What Is Its Message Today?*, the message strongly resonates that good is the goal of history and that there are consequences if evil rules. John’s Revelation is the last book of the Bible and is the most significant of the Christian apocalypse literature. The eschatological process in the book of Revelation involves destruction of the earth and destruction of the dwellers on earth. In *City of Ruins*, Daschke makes the case that the basis for apocalyptic literature is psychological trauma:

Yet we must admit that if apocalyptic can ‘cure’ part of a culture, at the same time that part of culture must be, in some way, ‘ill.’

The type of disorder with which apocalypse might be understood [...] has been labeled creative illness. [...] Creative illness, then shares its symptoms with organic, pathological mental illness, neurosis and psychoses. But its root etiology does not derive from something wrong in the mind, but from something wrong in the world which the mind is trying to understand and resolve. In creative illness, attempts are made to bridge the gap between what

was and what is by positing new ideas about the important aspects of the world and their interrelationship. (23)

The literature of the Bible is fundamental and transformational to western civilization and reflects many of the teachings of the Greeks. It is not surprising that Saviano chose the Bible for literary references for his work. The area where it was written was the scene of constant and fierce turmoil, as is the situation in southern Italy today.

After World Wars I and II, there was renewed interest in apocalyptic literature. Kurt Vonnegut's 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse Five, or, the Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* is a notable example. The protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, survives the firebombing of Dresden, but has episodes of spontaneous time travel and encounters with an alien species, the Tralfamadorians. Vonnegut's novel is the result of his own trauma as a soldier in World War II.

Study of various interpretations of the apocalyptic texts indicates that they are inspired by psychological trauma resulting in loss and mourning:

They concern themselves with images and insights that reach beyond their own literal or historical themes. The prophets lay bare their own emotional lives and reveal disturbed emotional states. This type of literature has grown out of disappointment and disaster. It has been associated with wars, rumors of wars, upheavals of nature such as earthquakes, devastating fires, etc., and especially it has been associated with the sufferings of the righteous. [...] Scholars identify two types of eschatological teachings, they are called this worldly and other worldly. This worldly is concerned with national and material matters. Other

worldly' is concerned with universal truths and spiritual meanings.

Other worldly' matters are offered as solutions to worldly matters.

(Collins 34-35)

Inga Pierson's dissertation, *Towards a Poetics of Neorealism: Tragedy in Italian Cinema 1942 - 1948*, argues that Italian neorealist films are tragedies. Her premise is that the genre grew out of the turmoil in the 1940s, between the war and the democratic elections of 1948. Pierson writes:

Neorealism is a mode of expression that represents an exceptional mentality and a rare sense of political and rhetorical freedom. As a transitional phenomenon, neorealist cinema can also be seen as an interruption' in the great Italian comic and melodramatic traditions (in theatre and film) to which Italian filmmakers returned in the 1950s. Thus, in my argument, the tragic vein functions doubly as signifier of aesthetic phenomenon neorealism' and of the social and political chaos of postwar Italy. (1)

She examines the collaboration between Italian film makers and writers while focusing on the fact that they incorporated practices from other countries, notable American Depression era realism. It is apparent that Saviano's work has been influenced by the neorealists. In choosing apocalyptic for his style, he continues neorealism's tragic themes, but goes beyond the story of the downfall of a single hero to the downfall of the nation.

Today the theme of apocalypse is common in film, computer games, novels, much of current literature and church pulpits. Defining apocalyptic literature and giving clear criteria is difficult, after all, writers and mystics have been evolving this form for thousands of years.

Russell says there are specific elements that the early apocalyptic writers used and general themes that persist throughout time (Russell 12-13). For our purposes in studying Saviano's work, we will concern ourselves with general themes. To understand the general criteria for apocalyptic literature, let us define the meaning of the word itself. It is derived from a Greek word (*apokalypsis*) meaning to uncover or unveil. The term is translated into English as revelation and first came into general use by early Christians who were conveying some information about a supernatural world. This type of literature is concerned with the history of the people, duality and end times. King put it well when he wrote of the book of Revelation:

In periods of calm the book appears meaningless and extravagant. Against the background of some natural crisis, (or war) its wildest imagery becomes natural and the truths which lie behind its wildest imagery leap out on us, like flashes of lightening. [...] Revelation is the unveiling of a truth or principle which clears or enlarges our thoughts. Truth unknown to us before it is unveiled and becomes a revelation to us. (7)

The enduring power of apocalyptic literature is its relevance across time and culture as it offers a means for understanding and healing psychic wounds.

In literary circles, authorial intent and how it should be determined has been debated for years. Many believe that the details of the author's life are irrelevant and that the text should be the only source for meaning. Certainly, it would be presumptuous to speculate whether or not Saviano used apocalyptic merely as a literary device, or if indeed he experienced a mystical revelation. Nonetheless, it is appropriate to examine his background and experiences to gain some understanding of his vision. Saint Augustine's *Confessions* give us a map for trying to

understand this author. Augustine asked himself how his childhood influenced him, why he was reared as he was and taught what he was taught. Like Augustine, Saviano has been forthcoming and consistent in interviews and his book has made clear his values. In chapter eight of *Gomorra*, “Don Peppino Diana,” Saviano writes that one has to find something to fuel the soul in order to carry on: “Christ, Buddha, civil commitment, ethics, pride, anarchy, the fight against crime, cleanliness, persistent and everlasting rage, southernness. Something. Not a hook to hang on. More like a root, something underground and unassailable” (GO 232)³. With this list we are given the elements of the author’s value system and a key to the contents of his work. Saviano exhibits the passion and heroism of a man speaking out against the Camorra, and so the author tells us what he holds dear and acknowledges his passion.

The Revelation of John was probably chosen by Saviano as a model for his literary work, because it is concerned with resistance. Prophecy such as John’s was used as a protest against the Romans:

It is relatively easy to make a case for the significance of apocalypses with regard to social relations, conflict, and issues of power. [...] Those who see themselves as oppressed by the dominant social system need an alternative symbolic system to the dominant one in order to imagine what of social change is needed.
(Collins 16)

The life that brought him to this work has been noted as being that of an exceptionally bright son of divorced parents. He gained a broad range of knowledge of the culture of the Naples area,

³ Quotations from Virginia Jewiss’ English language translation of Saviano’s *Gomorra* will be used and cited as “GO” along with the page number.

because he grew up there. While Saviano mentions only his father in *Gomorra*, he was reared in the home of his mother. Saviano's parents were both professionals, his mother a teacher, his father a physician. His father's reaction to the oppressive culture was deeply moving to the young Saviano, and in turn he recounts some details in his book.

Professionals are likely to have a unique perspective on their place in society. In addition to training in ethical behavior, a professional is trained to put the interests of the client above personal interests. Such a perspective from both of his parents would likely have given the author a sense of responsibility to his community. It is clear from his writing and his interviews that Saviano has a bedrock of principles, a sense of mission and a vision.

Saviano's interviews usually refer to his attachment to the Naples area and his belief that he is a product of that environment. In chapter ten of *Gomorra*, he writes:

I've never been able to take enough distance from the place I was born and the behavior of people I hated; I've never felt myself truly different from the fierce dynamics that crush lives and longing. Being born in a certain place means you're like a hunting dog, born with the smell of the hare already in your nose. You chase after the hare even against your own will, even if, once you catch it, you snap your jaws and let go. I was able to follow the routes, streets, and paths with unconscious obsession, with a cursed ability to understand completely the conquered territories. (GO 280)

He often insists that he sees Naples as his birthplace, his home and his anchor. In interviews he refers to his looks as being like those of the criminals of the area. Thus, he sets himself apart

from the rest of Italy and identifies again with the southern part of the country. His education, the religion that permeates the culture, and Marxism (a staple of intellectual thought in much of Italy) are foundations for his book. While one's theology and philosophy are not always connected to religious practice, they are surely connected to each other.

The author has challenged accounts in the press which said his interest in the Camorra began while he was working as a reporter. He states that it began when he first looked for work and realized the control that organized crime had over his environment. As a young man, he worked as an assistant with a Chinese textile manufacturer, a waiter at a Camorra wedding, on a construction site and at odd jobs. He worked for an anti-mafia watchdog group, poring over police reports. These experiences taught him about the Camorra.

In addition to the environment that has surrounded Saviano from birth, he has been influenced by a rich intellectual life. As a philosophy major, he studied the great questions of human existence, and reflects this on many levels. As a student of philosophy, he must have addressed the question of the existence of evil. Fundamental questions addressed in the course of studying philosophy are: How can God exist in the face of evil? How can they be compatible? Can man's spirituality be a more reliable experience than empirical and logical reasoning? Russell notes that:

Aristotle, heir to Socrates and Plato, was concerned with the role of morality and living the good life. This moral philosopher gave us a standard for addressing our own ethical questions in attempting to understand the purpose of life. (81)

It is apparent, both in his book and in his interviews, that Saviano considers himself burdened with knowledge that must be expressed. In his book, *La bellezza e l'inferno*, Saviano

opens by explaining his moral duty as a “writer” and what it entails. In his description, he likens it to that of a martyr who is bound to bear witness to a “truth” that will fall on many deaf ears:

A chi crede che per diventare adulti bisogna caricarsi in groppa i fallimenti di un altro, piuttosto che rilanciarsi insieme a una sfida. A queste persone non va. Certamente si sa per chi si scrive, ma si sa anche per chi non si scrive. Io non scrivo per loro. Non scrivo per persone nelle quali non mi riconosco, non scrivo mandando lettere verso un passato che non posso né voglio più raggiungere. Perché se guardo indietro so che rischio di finire come la moglie di Lot, trasformata in statua di sale mentre guardava la distruzione delle città di Sodoma e Gomorra. (13)

And in the face of accusations that his book will harm Italy by reducing tourism dollars, Saviano says again that: “Raccontare è resistere, raccontare non significa diffamare il proprio Paese, ma amarlo” (Arduini n.p.). The Biblical prophets often expressed themselves in the first person singular. Their intent was to link themselves to an ongoing revelation. Russell points out:

This important aspect of apocalypticism is that it takes the reader back to its oldest forms [...] to a stage in religion where the clairvoyant, knows and forecasts. [T]he apocalyptic visionaries express this identity by using the first and not the third person singular. I, Enoch, saw and beheld. I, Moses, I, Ezra, and so forth. (68)

Italy’s difficulties that have influenced the apocalyptic state described by Saviano are national in scale and result from a weak government. Unification only came to Italy in 1860;

the country has never had the strong nationalism of other western nations. Italy's lack of cohesion and unity are well known and documented in numerous books such as Tobias Jones' *The Dark Heart of Italy* and *A Concise History of Italy* by Christopher Duggan. The phenomenon has resulted in a type of provincialism that continues to plague Italian national unity even today. Jones is insistent that Italians have a strong inferiority complex as a result. He points out the historic use of words like "whore" and "harlot" from Dante and Boccaccio to the present-day man on the street when referring to the state. Italians do not generally fly their flag as other western countries do, except for soccer, which is one of the country's few unifying elements. The contempt that some northern Italians have for southern Italians is also well known. Numerous epithets, such as "Africans," are used against the southerners.

All this leaves ground for the Church to supply the missing unity. It is everywhere; majestic cathedrals, nunneries, monasteries, and men and women of the cloth are practically on every street corner. In *The Dark Heart of Italy*, Jones writes of southern Italy: "It is a place of mournful and austere Catholicism" and he indicates the use of Constantine's motto, "With the sign of the cross we will win" as being commonplace (229). Jones writes that the Vatican has systematically worked against any strength the state might acquire. He makes the startling assertion that in 1948, in Naples, when it appeared that the Communists were going to win the election, thirty-six Madonna statues began to shed tears. The Liberation government, formed after World War II, would not have had enough political clout without the Catholic Church, which insisted on being made the official state religion. It was not until 1984 that a delicate renegotiation of a 1929 treaty regulating relations between Italy and the Holy See resulted in dropping Catholicism as the official state religion.

In pictures, Saviano is often seen wearing three rings representing the Trinity, commonly worn by men in Campania. Religious jewelry is given at confirmation. It is not uncommon for many nonbelievers to wear religious symbols, more as a matter of connection to place than religious expression. In the southern part of Italy this iconography seems to be the culturally unifying element. There is a popular Christianity and an official Christianity. In Campania they both have immense influence. It is therefore reasonable that someone from southern Italy would know and use the literature of the Bible for expression of deeply felt emotion about his homeland. Daschke notes: “The persistence of the apocalyptic mentality through millennia attests to its enduring appeal as a model for comprehending the actions and motivations of others or inspiring one’s own” (30).

There are observations in *Gomorra* that show a familiarity with the great literary works that address human interaction with the divine. Saviano is clearly familiar with Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and Homer’s epics. He acknowledges the influences of Marxism and religion, seemingly incompatible points of view. But they both share a humanism that is the basis for *Gomorra*. Saviano references Marx throughout his book. Marxism today has so many branches, divisions and points of view that even Marx once said of a group calling themselves Marxist, “if that is Marxism, then I am not a Marxist” (McLellan 443). Saviano is certainly familiar with and sympathetic to Marx’s humanistic philosophy. He does not elaborate on whether or not he adheres to everything advocated. Saviano is perhaps typical of these types of scholars since he is eclectic in picking and choosing the parts of “Marxism” that appeal to him. He avoids an outright political point of view, probably because of the divisions in Italian politics. There are remnants of the fascist and communist extremes that make it difficult to reach a broad audience if either a left or right

political party is endorsed. Saviano avoided a political perspective by choosing apocalyptic literature, making his denunciation of unfettered greed and exploitation acceptable to a wider audience.

Bertolt Brecht is named by Saviano as being a major influence and most like him in world view. Brecht was a Marxist, but was also familiar with the Bible and referenced it often in his work, having been reared by a Protestant mother and Catholic father. He was also influenced by the environment in which he worked, the turbulent period in Germany between the two world wars. There are other journalists working in the Campania region who have consistently reported on crime there. Among the most noted is Rosaria Capacchione, who works for *Il Mattino*, the local paper of Caserta, Saviano's home town. She has been covering the crime beat since the late 1980s with fearless thoroughness. In his book, Saviano acknowledged her work. He must have been exposed to her reporting while growing up.

The economics of the area were a major influence on the writer. According to Saviano, organized crime is the largest segment of the Italian economy. He states that Italy could not have had the economic clout to be admitted to the European Union were it not for the finances generated by crime. Yet no organization or person has summoned the will to attack and solve those problems. The courts are full of cases that go on forever and seldom reach satisfying results.

Gomorra has been made into a film, directed by Matteo Garrone, which is deserving of study in its own right, but also as a supplement to the book's prophetic message. Garrone's film, titled *Gomorra*, adds a visual element to the work. It was created through collaboration between Saviano and Garrone. It introduces the unique perspectives and techniques that film can bring to narrative. Garrone's visual elements underscore and elaborate on the book's themes. The movie

opens with local mobsters in the artificial light of a tanning salon. In Christian mythology God is represented as the light of the sun. Garrone has mentioned in many interviews that this artificial blue light was important in establishing the setting for his film, because it is artificial and thus is a parody of spiritual light. In Christianity, light is seen as the essence of God, truth, salvation and peace.⁴ He remains true to Saviano's examination of moral issues through biblical reference. Five stories from the book were chosen to weave into his film; each becomes a parable. One of the film's great novelties is represented by its reliance on the teachings and especially the parables of Jesus. The film develops from apocalypse to parable to further develop the themes of the book.

John C. Lyden's book, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*, has presented film as serving a religious function and offers guidelines for assessing film in that light. His work will be used as a source for examining the religion of *Gomorra*, the film. His three criteria for film as religion are: a worldview, a set of values and a ritual expression that unites the two. Neorealism and its influence on the book and film will also be examined. Since the author writes from the "inside," there is a compelling immediacy. *Gomorra* the book and the film *Gomorra* can be classified in the neorealist genre. They share a pseudo-documentary style. The film is less "documentary" and more fictionalized than the book. Both works are a continuation of the neorealism tradition in Italian art. Common characteristics that will be examined are: 1. a

⁴ Here are several examples of light references from the Bible alone: 2 Samuel 22:29; Nehemiah 9:11-13; Job 33:28; Psalm 4:6; Psalm 18:28; Psalm 36:9; Psalm 43:3; Psalm 56:12-13; Psalm 89:15; Psalm 97:11; Psalm 104:1-3; Psalm 119:105; Psalm 119:130; Isaiah 42:5-7; Isaiah 42:16; Isaiah 50:10; Isaiah 60:19; Micah 7:9; Matthew 5:13-16; Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:33-35; John 1:3-5; John 3:18-20; John 9:5; and Romans 13:12.

democratic spirit, with emphasis on the value of ordinary people; 2. a compassionate point of view and a refusal to make facile moral judgments; 3. a blending of Christian and Marxist humanism; 4. an emphasis on emotions.

This dissertation will examine Saviano's work as the accumulation and presentation of information about the criminal activities of the Camorra. This has been classified as investigative journalism, docufiction and other labels that reflect the curious nature of Italian journalism and Saviano's style. The author uses journalistic recitation of events and facts to offer a condemnation of a culture and an examination of its ethics and morals. Yet his journalism goes beyond a mere recitation of facts to become prophecy in the tradition of Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Augustine, Saint Francis and the Apostle John.

Both the film and book are products of a style of journalism called *giornalismo d'inchiesta* (investigative journalism). Saviano's journalistic style intends to influence readers or to lead them to a certain flow of ideas. Italian journalism has traditionally been based on the perspective that there are two truths: emotional truth and factual truth. The Italian obsession with *bella figura* is one manifestation of this way of thinking. According to William Porter, the *bella figura* involves more than merely dressing well, looking good and admiring fine art (17). It is a social label that also describes acting properly, knowing the rules of etiquette, using the proper societal mores. Enacting the *bella figura* means rising up to certain situations and knowing what is appropriate and when to do so. Celest Stewart says that in short, it is acting with discriminating tastes. The *bella figura* also implies loyalty. Behaving appropriately and respectfully is important to maintaining the right neighbors and business partners (Stewart, n.p.). Former mayor of Palermo Leoluca Orlando writes the following about *bella figura*:

This concept, which might be understood as cutting an impressive figure,‘ is of course almost a secular religion to all Italians, but especially to [southern Italians], for whom the elegant appearance has traditionally masked and to some degree transformed the impoverished reality. (21-22)

Jones writes about the chasm between appearance and reality, stating that the country has lost any sense of where truth lies. Emotional truth is the basic goal of Italian journalism, and Saviano’s journalism is true to that standard rather than to factual accuracy.

In my study of *Gomorra* (book and film) I will examine the general themes of apocalyptic eschatology as identified by Russell. The general divisions are: (1) history of the people, (usually with ethical exhortations); (2) duality; and (3) end times. Chapter 1 of this dissertation will analyze ~~Part One~~” of the book *Gomorra*. ~~Part One~~” of Saviano’s work consists of five chapters that are the author’s ~~history~~ of the people.” These first five chapters use aspects of investigative and gonzo journalism, neorealism, and personal experiences to report the depth and breadth of corrupt business practices that threaten the future. ~~The Port~~” is the first chapter *Gomorra*. Naples is established as the center of the ever widening and ever more corrupt practices of an interconnected economy that has no restraints of law or morality. This chapter also introduces biblical themes that are ethical exhortations. ~~Angelina Jolie~~” is the second chapter of *Gomorra* and reveals the corrupt practices of the high fashion industry and exposes their effect on the downward pressure on business to compete at any costs. It also gives a picture of the terrible toll unfettered capitalism is taking on workers.

~~The System~~” is the third chapter of *Gomorra* that details Camorra business practices. It gives an explanation of how the System originated and what its business model is today. The

success of these criminal activities is revealed and then Saviano discloses how they are corrupting other countries and economies around the world. “The Secondigliano Wars” is the fourth chapter of his work, and it names the actual crime families and divulges the power they wield. It is an examination of how terrible life has become under the Camorra economic rule. The future is threatened, because this criminal evil has corrupted the family structure and contaminated the children.

“Women” is the fifth chapter of *Gomorra*, and it examines the changing role of women in this lawless culture. Because of Italy’s long history of female worship, the role of woman is often confused with the Great Mother or *prima materia*. The role of the female as participant in lawlessness and evil has significant symbolism for the eschatology.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation examines “Part Two” of *Gomorra*, and it deals with the last six chapters of Saviano’s book. These are the chapters that are concerned with duality and the “end times.” “Kalashnikov” is chapter six of *Gomorra* and deals with the AK-47 and its inventor, Mikhail Kalashnikov. Saviano paints the Russian as an ominous threat. Kalashnikov represents the personification of an evil that is labeled by Hannah Arendt as “the banality of evil” (xvii). The Hebrew concept of duality as the battle between good and evil is introduced. The Satan persona, as understood over time and culture, is examined. “Cement” is Saviano’s seventh chapter, and it details the corrupt practices in the construction business and its role in rewarding and promoting agents of evil. Business is examined as an actual agent of malevolence.

“Don Peppino Diana” is the title for chapter eight of *Gomorra*. In apocalyptic literature there is a “voice” that leads the narrator or scribe to the “truth” that must be told. This chapter identifies Don Peppino Diana as the “voice” that inspires the mystical experience of the author. “Hollywood” is Saviano’s ninth chapter that examines the Greek view of duality. Its subject is

the interplay of film, literature and art with the material world of the Camorra. “Aberdeen, Mondragone” is the name for chapter ten of *Gomorra*. This chapter uses these two cities as synonyms for Sodom and Gomorrah. They represent a corruption that must result in God’s wrath and destruction. They foretell the destruction that is inevitable in the final chapter of *Gomorra*. “Land of Fires” is the final chapter and develops the theme of the end times. Fire and water destroy the land, just as they are prophesied in the book of Revelation.

Chapter 3 of my dissertation is entitled “The Film *Gomorra*.” The film uses five parables from Saviano’s book to underscore and give a visual presentation of a godless and hopeless life. This chapter examines the collaboration between Saviano and Garrone. It examines the fidelity to the biblical themes and the use of a visual medium for enhance of theme. This dissertation will explore *Gomorra*’s mutually influential relationship between journalism, literature and film and Saviano’s use of apocalyptic eschatology to weave them together. It is divided into three parts, chapter 1 of my research investigates the reporting of the Camorra and the type of journalism used to expose the crime organization. Chapter 2 of my dissertation explores the socio-economic history of the Camorra and its people. Chapter 3 examines the vision and prophecy of the author, and chapter 4 studies the film *Gomorra* through parables and its interpretation of the author’s message.

CHAPTER 1

SAVIANO AND REPORTAGE: ITALIAN JOURNALISM

Comprehension...means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to,
and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be.
—Hannah Arendt as cited in GO n.p.

What is reality? What is Roberto's reality? The journalism of *Gomorra* has been questioned by critics and reviewers, most of whom are not familiar with the nature of Italian journalism. To better understand Saviano's reporting, it is important to understand the historical Italian mode of news reporting. According to Alessandro Mazzanti, there is a difference between the American style of reporting “factual” news and the way Italian journalists traditionally report. In his book, *L'obiettività giornalistica: un ideale maltrattato. Il caso italiano in una prospettiva storica-comparativa (1800-1900)*, he explains that the difference lies in the way Italian journalists have historically viewed objectivity in news reporting. Since the 1990s, these professional and cultural differences have decreased, but there is still a uniquely Italian tradition that can be seen in writers such as Saviano that differ from professional norms in the United States.

“Impartiality” is a word that is synonymous with fairness, justice, correctness and objectivity. Although Italian journalists and their American counterparts tend to agree on the definition of the word, the two cultures have historically differed in the way it is employed in professional news reporting. Before discussing the use of objectivity among journalists, one should define it in specific terms.

According to Lawrence M. Hinman, some philosophers have argued that ethical issues are characterized by impartiality. This requires that one avoid giving one's own interest any consideration. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill are examples (2009, 10). In his book, *Ethics: A Pluralistic Approach to Ethical Theory*, Hinman defines impartiality in ethical terms as treating everyone and everything equally. For many philosophers this is an essential moral point of view (380).

On an individual level, impartiality is more easily accepted as a subjective interpretation. People view and experience things differently. Family background, life experiences, and personal biases all shape one's world view. For this reason, it is almost impossible to be completely objective when interpreting the surrounding environment. That same personal perspective can be shared collectively by those who have a similar point of view. In this way, one chooses one's social circles, political affiliations and even personal relationships based on shared viewpoints.

French journalist and philosopher Jean-François Revel argues in his chapter titled ~~Information~~: "L'Objectivité Existe" that in a dictatorial regime, information is slavishly controlled and there is limited variation in news reporting. He says freedom of expression is not a luxury that one has in reporting the news, so subjective views are suppressed. In a free society, citizens are allowed to exercise their subjective interpretations of the truth and thus maintain the cherished pluralism of a liberal democracy (Revel 97-98). The problem of being objective is more acutely contested in the realm of journalism when the one reporting the news is not perceived as being fair.

A reporter could consciously or unconsciously cover the news in a way that would solicit praise from his colleagues and boss at the expense of impartiality. It is even possible to reach a

realistic level of objectivity or is it merely a hopeless ideal? Revel says universal truth is questioned in most fields of study where a pluralistic approach that acknowledges diverse truths is considered the norm. He still argues for journalistic professional standards in trying to achieve objectivity.

Common sense would dictate that impartial, objective news based on facts and truth contributes to a well-informed community, which is essential for a healthy democratic society. Misinformed or poorly informed citizens are at a higher risk of not making the best decisions since their perception of their surrounding environment is distorted. A well-informed individual is able to contribute to his society in a more constructive way.

Si la théorie de la connaissance, la philosophie des sciences ont critiqué depuis longtemps l'idée naïve d'une vérité absolue, en revanche, la pratique de la science n'en continue pas moins de reposer sur le système de la vérification et de la preuve. Elle rejette impitoyablement la fausse monnaie. En un mot, si l'objectivité absolue n'existe pas, l'effort pour y parvenir existe bel et bien. C'est vrai aussi dans le journalisme, malgré la difficulté supplémentaire d'opérer sur une matière en fusion, semée de piège, minée de mensonges et secouée de passions. Reste néanmoins que l'humble collecte et la vérification des faits atteignent, quand on s'en donne la peine, à une approximation de vérité: toujours flottante, certes, entre le plausible et le certain, mais dont il est hypocrite de dire qu'elle est interchangeable avec n'importe quelles informations farfelues ou falsifications grossières. Et

d'ailleurs, si l'objectivité dans ce modeste sens réaliste et quotidien, était une utopie, comment se fait-il que tant de gens de par le monde s'affairent à lui barrer la route et à obtenir que la presse renonce à diffuser des nouvelles exactes? (Revel 100)

According to Revel, objectivity does exist even though it is possible to have subjective interpretations. But data collection in the news reporting process should be done with the same professional empiricism as that of a scientist who runs a controlled experiment.

All major American newspapers are organized to accommodate the subjective style and the objective model of news reporting. Within a newspaper, there are the chronicle/factual sections which are separate from the editorial columns that are reserved for opinionated journalism. Both forms are recognized as valid mediums of news reporting. According to Professor Robert W. McChesney from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin Madison:

[D]emocracy requires that there be an effective system of political communications, broadly construed, that informs and engages the citizenry, drawing people meaningfully into the polity. [...] While democracies by definition must respect individual freedoms, these freedoms can only be exercised in a meaningful sense when the citizenry is informed, engaged and participating. (5-6)

Based upon the above definition, chronicle and editorial news pieces qualify as healthy forms of journalism. Tendentious news can also productively involve people with the political and civil system of a democratic society, which is the ultimate goal of a healthy democracy—to involve its citizens.

In Italy, chronicle news reporting is often mixed with editorial commentary. The emphasis to separate the two is not practiced rigorously. Italian news reporting is traditionally of a style called *colorato* (colored). Mazzanti writes that among professionals, the tendency for “~~factual~~” news in communicating events is generally regarded as a typical feature of Anglo-American journalism. The “~~colored~~” style is attributed to the Italian way of reporting the news. This does not mean that there are not elements of “~~factual~~” in the Italian style or that some “~~color~~” does not exist in American journalism. But, these are the simplified explanations of the two contrasting styles. This is an Italian definition of *colorato*:

Per *pezzo di colore* si intende, nel vecchio gergo giornalistico, un articolo che dia colore a un determinato avvenimento: che cioè, invece di riportare i fatti nei termini obiettivi e scarni della cronaca (in ipotetico bianco e nero) li completi e li arricchisca con note caratteristiche di ambiente, con la descrizione degli aspetti di cronaca minore, che spesso poi sono quelli più rivelatori di una situazione, in chiave di ironia benevola. In genere, il pezzo di colore non è mai pubblicato da solo, ma insieme a quello di cronaca. Di un determinato avvenimento, come ad esempio un dibattito alla Camera, il giornale dà un resoconto di cronaca (come si è svolta, cioè, nei dettagli la seduta) e un pezzo di colore (ove ci si sofferma, con tono più distaccato, sulle informazioni e sulle battute da corridoio, sui pettegolezzi, che hanno fatto da sfondo al dibattito, sulla descrizione particolareggiata dei protagonisti, sulle impressioni del pubblico ecc.[...]). Così pure per un processo, per

una partita di calcio: ma il pezzo di colore, che troppo spesso si è identificato con una concezione retorica del servizio giornalistico, e che è, com'è facile per la mancanza di gusto e di cultura di certi giornalisti, va giustamente scomparendo, essendo del servizio di cronaca anche il compito di dare l'impressione dell'ambiente insieme e contemporaneamente con le informazioni essenziali.

(Mario Lenzi as cited by Mazzanti 121-122)

The use of the word ~~“factual”~~ should be attributed to a news article free from elements that would embellish it. Mazzanti writes that the main goal of a ~~“factual”~~ piece is to note accurate facts and descriptions. Factual reporting views all other information as secondary. In *pezzi di colore* (colored pieces) the unconventional use of personal impressions, a nonessential description of the surroundings and the first person narrative are all common elements typically used in Italian news reporting. These communication elements are decisively frowned upon in Anglo-American style journalism. Italian journalist Piero Ottone wrote that a competent journalist should: ~~“Ascoltare e non parlare: il giornalista, il vero giornalista è uno spettatore, non un attore”~~ (1987, 11). Ottone was one of the first and leading Italian supporters of gatekeeper style journalism before many professionals had begun to accept it as a viable means. According to Morris Janowitz, there are two differing journalism styles in democratic societies that are classified as ~~“advocate journalism”~~ and ~~“gatekeeper journalism.”~~ Advocate journalism is Saviano's style of writing. Advocate journalists tend to intervene in the world that they are reporting, and they use journalism as a correctional tool for various social injustices. Advocate journalists prefer to educate their readership rather than inform it. Adding color is one of the primary means for advancing their cause:

[T]he [advocate] journalist has clients and has professional relationships with his clients. The audience of a medium are the journalist's initial clients, and he has the obligation to perform services which are "good" for the client and on his behalf, regardless of the client's preferences and beliefs. But his client linkage is weak because of the ease with which the audience can shift its loyalties. Moreover, in a democratic society the media are open, and unintended audiences figure as clients. The [advocate] journalist does not perform a specific service for a particular individual. He seeks to assist the members of his audience to relate themselves symbolically to the institutions of collective problem solving. The journalist thereby performs a task designed to create the conditions under which the individual citizen, and administrative and political leaders, can take action. There is an analogy with the schoolteacher, in that the journalist too is concerned with mind sets and thought processes in the first instance, and here lies the core element of professional-client relations in journalism. (Janowitz 620)

It is the professional responsibility of the advocate journalist to speak on behalf of these groups who have suffered a perceived injustice. When trying to correct a social injustice, the advocate-journalist relates to his clients in the role of the lawyer (621).

In contrast, the gatekeeper journalist views his client relationship in a very different way. Gatekeeper journalism is based on a self-correcting system of social and political control (620).

With gatekeeper journalism, the client is entrusted to use his own ability to judge for himself. The gatekeeper journalist's goal is to process information and to comment. The reporter seeks to place information in a proper cultural perspective and to assist the client in understanding his relationship to the sociopolitical process: "In short, it is to enhance his underlying rationality" (620). In order to achieve this goal the journalist sometimes has to present undesirable information to the reader even if it causes the reader to resist. It is hardly a purely "rationalist" interpretation, because it recognizes the irrational and emotional elements in social relations. For the gatekeeper, the professional-client relationship assumes that the reader has the potential to respond and that this potential needs to be maximized (620).

Advocate journalism exists both in Italy and the United States, but it is more widely accepted and practiced throughout all rubrics of Italian newspapers.¹ For example, there is not a specific designation for editorial comments in Italian newspapers. The whole paper is used for

¹ There are varying degrees of objectivity in the continuum of news reporting. Some scholars like David Folkenflik believe that British newspapers are considered to be less objective than their American counterparts.

To American eyes, the British media operate in a looking-glass world in which the major TV news channels—the BBC and Sky News—try to serve up the news without opinion, but Britain's big daily newspapers are pretty clear about what they favor. And that inversion offers some insight into the debate over media bias [...] in the U.S. (Folkenflik n.p.)

For further information about this difference, please refer to David Folkenflik's NPR article "In London, A Case Study in Opinionated Press."

editorial comment. The *articolo di fondo* (“the in-depth article”) offers a good example. It invariably occupies column one at the left margin of the front page. The content is customarily political, even though this part of the paper would normally be reserved for factual news in an American journal (Porter 9): “The most striking characteristic of Italian daily journalism is a preoccupation with politics. A good deal of the average front page—generally around one third—traditionally has been given over to discussion of party affairs” (Porter 9).

Mazzanti writes that it is not common to find articles or books in Italy defining a recommended and universally accepted form of Italian journalistic practice. But when professional rules of objective reporting (gatekeeper style) are identified, they have typically been associated with Anglo-American journalism. They have traditionally been seen as “foreign” to Italian journalism practices. Among industrialized countries, Italy has been particularly slow to institutionalize a universal code of “objective” news reporting. Paolo Murialdi explains that Italian journalism has developed much more slowly than the other industrialized countries due to depressed socio-economic factors of the nineteenth century that led to a delayed industrialization of the national economy (33). Historian Galante Garrone wrote the following when explaining the historical situation of twentieth-century Italian journalism: “Il vizio di scrivere e di leggere i giornali e le riviste anche in Italia è ormai inestirpabile” (Garrone as cited in Murialdi 33). Giorgio Pini had open disregard for journalistic objectivity. Pini was an Italian politician and prominent journalist who supported the Fascist party. He is a good example of a politically-slanted journalist. While he served as the chief editor of *Popolo d'Italia*, Pini wrote the following:

Esiste una distinzione fondamentale tra i giornali d'opinione e i giornali d'informazione. Questi ultimi si limitano a raccogliere la

maggior quantità possibile di notizie, senza vagliarle da un punto di vista qualsiasi. Sono i giornali amorfi, le gazzette senza personalità propria, liberali per definizione. Invece i giornali d'opinione, siano essi politici e letterati, si propongono di influire sul lettore, di indirizzarlo verso una determinata corrente di idee, di combattere per una causa. (Giorgio Pini as cited by Mazzanti 81)

Gatekeeper journalists believe in separating facts from opinions in their news reporting. They tend to trust in the ability of the journalist to choose what is worth reporting while maintaining a certain distance and neutrality. This definition of objectivity, found in an Italian journalism dictionary, says the gatekeeper style is preferred Anglo-Saxon reporting.

Obiettività—Uno dei presupposti dell'etica e della deontologia professionale del giornalismo anglossasone, e uno dei termini più discussi nel dibattito giornalistico italiano degli anni Settanta. L'O. consiste nella trasposizione reale dei fatti, nella neutralità e imparzialità del giornalista. È sin troppo facile sostenere che l'O. è impossibile perchè la selezione delle notizie, la loro gerarchizzazione, l'impaginazione, il titolo, il taglio dell'articolo, l'uso delle fotografie sono altrettante tappe di una rappresentazione della realtà che riflette il punto di vista di chi la attua. È inevitabile che, anche in mancanza di manipolazioni deliberate, una notizia rifletta la sensibilità, la cultura e l'ideologia del giornalista nonché le caratteristiche produttive del giornale. Questa impossibilità filosofica di raggiungere l'O. non impedisce però considerarla una

norma empirica utile per raggiungere il maggior grado di verità possibile. Talvolta i limiti presenti nella nozione assoluta di O. sono un alibi per non considerarla più valida nemmeno come regola empirica, concludendo che, non esistendo verità, ciascuno è legittimato a raccontare la propria versione parziale. I giornalisti che ragionano in questo modo si comportano come uno scienziato che decide di darsi alla magia dopo aver constatato di non poter spiegare razionalmente tutti i misteri dell'universo. (De Martino 156)

Ottone says that the true ideal of journalism is to use words for reference and for reporting without ulterior motives (1996, 28).

Mazzanti notes there are many Italian supporters of colored journalism, but that the vast majority of Americans defend the gatekeeper style of journalism. Recently things have begun to change in Italy as there is a trend to move towards the American style. The objectivity debate is still strong in the United States, but the overwhelming majority of American authors continue to push objectivity as a necessary means of achieving good journalism. According to Frank Luther Mott, American journalism schools insist that a newspaper's main responsibility is to report the facts and not to defend a political party or an economic power. Revel argues for objectivity in journalism. He believes that unregulated relativity is too often the accepted norm in European journalism. Revel adamantly rejects the belief that one cannot realistically aspire to objective truth in journalism. He points out the fallacies of this argument. Revel questions why universal laws and controls are accepted in the other sciences, but not in news reporting (Revel 100).

Until recently, there were no Italian schools dedicated to journalistic professional training. Many of Italy's reporters have been literary writers, professors or politicians who have all been grouped under the general classification of "intellectuals." These professionals have gravitated into the profession of journalism rather than having been formally trained in the profession. This is the case for Saviano who studied philosophy. Even today, there are few formal Italian journalism schools. Anglo-American style journalism has had objectivity as its standard for over a hundred years, while *giornalismo colorato* has historically been the accepted norm in Italy.

It is important to note that there have been differences in how Italian reporters view objectivity in factual news reporting. Many Italians, such as the intellectual Umberto Eco, journalists Lilli Gruber and Emilio Fede, have traditionally thought that objectivity is a difficult ideal, so it is therefore naïve to even pretend to be objective. Lilli Gruber has been known to anchor the news while sporting a pro-Ulivo political party pin on her shirt. Emilio Fede is openly biased in favor of his employer Silvio Berlusconi. For this reason, there is a general skepticism by the Italian audience.

For all of his life, Italian journalist and intellectual Ottone was a minority voice in his advocacy for the gatekeeper style. During a famous debate with Umberto Eco, Ottone argued for objectivity and against what Eco called *il mito libero-borghese dell'obiettività* (the liberal bourgeois objectivity myth). Umberto Eco called the "naïve" belief in objective news reporting *una manifestazione di falsa coscienza, ideologia* (Mazzanti 193):

Il giornalista non ha un dovere di obiettività. Ha un dovere di testimonianza. Deve testimoniare su ciò che sa [...] e deve testimoniare dicendo come la pensa lui [...] compito del giornalista

non è quello di convincere il lettore che egli sta dicendo la verità, bensì di avvertirlo che egli sta dicendo la «sua» verità. Ma che ce ne sono anche altre. Il giornalista che rispetta il lettore deve lasciargli il senso dell'alternativa. (Eco as cited by Mazzanti 194)

Ottone and Eco were on opposing sides during the national debates on journalistic objectivity.

Ottone said the following in response to Eco's arguments against the implementation of a professional code for objective standards:

È vero che l'obiettività assoluta della parola non esiste ma Umberto Eco ha torto, secondo me, a porre il problema su questo piano, perché finisce col dire cose tanto ovvie da diventare irrilevanti. È come se, scoprendo un bambino a rubare la marmellata, cominciassimo a disquisire sulla irraggiungibilità dell'onestà assoluta. L'onestà assoluta sarà un'utopia, va bene: però la marmellata non bisogna rubarla. (Ottone as cited by Mazzanti 195)

William E. Porter concludes that most Italians are mistrustful of newspapers rather than seeing them as a reliable source of information. This is due in part to the long political association that most Italian papers have had. Rather than being «product journals», most Italian papers have been «political journals.» A study of Italian journalism shows that most of the analysis of the Italian press has been critical. Newspapers hold little importance to most Italians, or to the way the Italian polity functions, or to the quality of Italian life. The newspaper's main importance is in their service as a channel of political communication (Porter 202).

Porter, citing findings of a commercial survey research firm (Makno), concludes that Italian readers have little trust in the reliability of newspapers. The survey was commissioned by RAI's TG2. The news service conducted a study of reader perceptions of, and attitudes toward, newspapers. Based upon a particular question, the three most popular responses each indicated that the papers are not to be trusted (Porter 197).² In contrast, American newspapers have made it their professional duty to try to maintain as much objectivity as possible when reporting non-editorial news. All leading American newspapers have a section dedicated to editorial news, and the editor for that section seldom gets involved with the factual news part of the paper without compromising his professionalism.

In Italy, the whole newspaper is used as an instrument to both report and comment on the factual news of the day. Italy continues to have newspapers that would be viewed as mouthpieces for various political parties, the Church and other private interests. In short, one can often profile a reader's political orientation by the type of newspaper that he or she reads (e.g. *L'Unità*, *Il Giornale*, *L'Avvenire*, *Il Manifesto*, etc.). *L'Unità* is an Italian left-wing

² One question called for choosing from a group of choices to complete a sentence that began with "I do not believe that journalist in Italy:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| a) do not have the importance they deserve. | 12% |
| b) have about the importance they deserve. | 21 |
| c) are a privileged and arrogant group that needs discipline. | 14 |
| d) inflate and distort news, misleading public opinion. | 29 |
| e) are determined, in their reporting, to guide political choices. | 29 |
| f) are serious, honest people, but are not free to write the truth. | 32 (Porter |

newspaper, founded as the official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and is today strictly linked to the Italian Democratic Party. *Il Giornale* is an Italian daily newspaper characterized by strong opposition to the Italian Communist Party. *L'Avvenire* is the daily paper of the Italian Bishops' Association and represents the Church hierarchy. Although not officially connected to any political party, *Il Manifesto* identifies itself as communist. A group of left-wing journalists championing critical thought and social activity founded the paper as a monthly review in 1969. *La Repubblica* was founded in Rome in 1976 with the unprecedented ambition of becoming a national paper. Trying to be national with the unique tabloid format made the paper original and novel among Italian newspapers at that time, helping to propel it as one of Italy's leading dailies. Officially the newspaper is left-wing oriented but not aligned with any particular party. In the first issue, *La Repubblica* openly declared itself independent but not neutral.

The Agnelli family owns *La Stampa* which retains a controlling interest in carmaker FIAT. The paper is centrist in its political orientation and probably the most similar to Anglo-Saxon newspapers. But it has been criticized for not being more national in its news coverage. Unlike *La Repubblica*, it maintains its strong regional influence rather than trying to dedicate more news to national coverage. Founded in 1876, *Corriere della Sera* was the newspaper for the Milanese middle class. It has since become a leading national paper. Although slightly left leaning politically, *Corriere* is generally considered one of the most politically independent papers:

Come ha ben dimostrato Domenico Settembrini nel suo recente volume sullo «spirito anti-borghese», si crea in Italia un intreccio perverso che porta ad emarginare—a partire, appunto, dal biennio

1911-12—le forze politiche, di orientamento populistico e giacobino, che daranno vita—dopo una fase di transizione (1911-1925)—a quattro distinte egemonie ideologico-politiche: quella fascista (1925-1943), quella antifascista (1943-1948), quella democristiana (1948-1968), quella comunista (1968-1983). Tutte e quattro queste egemonie ideologico-politiche hanno in comune un orientamento anti-borghese e antimoderno che, sia pure temperato dal pragmatismo (che ho denominato “machiavelliano”), hanno ostacolato il radicarsi di un sentimento positivo nei riguardi del mercato e dell’impresa, cioè dei due motori principali dello sviluppo economico e della modernizzazione. (Mazzanti 13-14)

Mazzanti explains that since the 1980s, a struggle between political and economic influences has played out, pulling and pushing the papers in contrasting direction (14):

I giornali di partito—grande anomalia del sistema giornalistico italiano—ci sono ancora, ma non hanno più la centralità di un tempo. [...] I “giornali-partito” ci sono ancora, ma stanno evolvendo verso forme maggiormente orientate [...] al “servizio” e all’“informazione.” (Mazzanti 15)

None of the major American newspapers are owned or openly espouse a political ideology in the chronicle news section of their papers (e.g. *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*).³ Even in the United States editorial rubric, it

³ According to Folkenflik, most mainstream news organizations promise to uphold the mantra of reporting “without fear or favor.” But this same rule is not as apparent among American cable

is considered unethical to avoid presenting a balanced forum for opposing arguments. Porter writes that intellectual, emotional, and institutional ties with politics significantly distinguish the Italian journalist from the average professional in Britain or the United States. He states that the process by which the Italian journalist comes into the profession is political in the broad sense. Both the trade union and the national professional society to which an Italian journalist belongs are deeply involved in direct political activity: ~~It~~ "in no other major country are the connections so pervasive" (42). Massimo D'Alema, Benito Mussolini and Walter Veltroni are just a few of Italy's politicians who have actively engaged in politics and journalism careers.⁴

news: ~~There's~~ "less of a distinction on cable channels, where intense opinion shows are often rewarded with high ratings" (n.p.).

⁴ There is another tie between journalism and politics in Italy represented by the character of the journalist-politician, a type more visible in that country than in the United States. Only three percent of the members of the United States Congress in 1974, for example, were journalists—sixteen of a total 535. Over six percent of the Italian Parliament that same year were members of the profession—sixty of a total of 945.

More striking than the differences in numbers is the number of party leaders in Italy who are professional journalists. Among the sixty in the Italian Parliament are Giulio Andreotti, several times premier; Pietro Ingrao of the Communists, who was to become president of the Chamber of Deputies in 1976; Ugo La Malfa, longtime leader of the Republicans and one of the most respected figures in the country's politics; Giovanni Spadolini, exeditor of *Corriere della Sera*, who played a leading role in the Senate from the day of his arrival; Giorgio Almirante, leader of the far-right *Movimento Sociale Italiano*; Arnoldo Forlani, secretary of the Christian Democrat party; and Luigi Longo, a leader of the Communists since the end of the Second

Revel says the Italian style of news reporting has even neglected to ensure pluralism. The partitioning of the television stations among Italy's leading political parties under the Christian Democrats did not ensure a healthy pluralism as originally intended. Instead it introduced a type of competing pluralism that compromised objective reporting. In 1975 a law providing for the "reform" of RAI was passed. It established two new broadcasts: Telegiornale 1 (TGI) was controlled by the Christian Democrats and TG2 was created to reflect the views of the left wing parties (Porter 21). Revel criticizes this poor attempt to ensure pluralism of the press as follows:

Pour excuser cet empiétement, même dans les pays libéraux, on avance que la survie d'un secteur libre "garantit le pluralisme", et que d'ailleurs on "organise le pluralisme" à l'intérieur des médias étatisés. C'est ainsi qu'en Italie on a depuis longtemps attribué une chaîne de télévision à la Démocratie chrétienne et un autre à la "sensibilité" socialiste ou communiste. Nous voilà retombés dans ce qu'il faut dénoncer comme une imposture. *Le problème de l'information n'est pas réglé simplement par le choc des propagandes contraires.* C'est dans la subtile déformation des nouvelles elles-mêmes que réside le vrai danger pour l'objectivité. Plus que les diatribes, les pouvoirs haïssent le petit fait précis qui

World War. The president of the republic from 1964-1971, Giuseppe Saragat, was also among the list (Porter 49).

dérange: [...] La liberté d'opinion n'a de prix qu'appuyée sur l'exactitude de l'information. Le pluralisme véritable découle de cette richesse de l'information. (101-102)

According to Porter, the most significant difference between the Italian journalists and their counterparts in other countries is the Italian inclination to view almost everything outside of personal relationships through a political lens. Other journalists would not normally interpret the quality of education, or law enforcement, or the state of the water supply predominantly as partisan political concerns. But the Italian journalist sees elements of the social dynamic as politics and hence places them in the domain of politicians (Porter 49-50).

Director Garrone contrasts his cinematic approach to Saviano's book version of *Gomorra*:

I was very worried when I went to prepare to the film [based on Saviano's book by the same name]. The situation was quite different when I went to shoot the film in the summer of 2006. The book had only been published two weeks before, Saviano was completely unknown, and the book was not yet a bestseller. Even though I was worried, the local people love cinema and were very eager to help. I didn't want to make a film against ~~the~~ "System," but about ~~the~~ "System." I wanted to make a film that didn't judge, that showed how they lived and the human conflicts. The audience can judge, if it likes.

Fortunately, I'm not under protection. I wasn't, unlike Saviano, strictly interested in a journalistic type of denunciation. When I met him to discuss the project, I told him that, if ~~you~~

agree to work with me, I'm going to go in another direction." I feel that the book and the movie complement each other. (Porton n.p.)

Critics who have found fault with Saviano's journalism in *Gomorra* expect work based on the tradition and goals of American journalism which are listed below and outlined by David T. Z. Mindich in his book, *Just the Facts: How Objectivity Came to Define American Journalism*. These are all cardinal rules to the gatekeeper journalist:

- 1) Detachment—making sure that the facts speak for themselves (15);
- 2) ethics of non-partisanship—journalists must defer from involving their personal opinion (40);
- 3) inverted pyramid technique—a style of writing that presents the most important facts in the first paragraphs, leaving details to be reported later in the article (64);
- 4) facticity: ~~naïve empiricism~~—reliance on facts and verification of sources to report the truth or the accurate reality of an event (95);
- 5) balance—the important goal that leads to an unbiased news report where both sides should be given equal space to present their views. (113)

Ottone has alluded to the proverbial five W's used by Anglo-American newspapers to shield against colored news reporting by stripping the first sentence of an article to the most basic information possible:

Per il primo caso, quello in cui si enunciano gli elementi essenziali, gli inglesi hanno inventato la regola dei cinque "w," secondo la quale l'apertura deve rispondere a cinque domande, che in inglese cominciano appunto con quella

lettera dell'alfabeto: *who, what, when, where, why*, chi, che cosa, quando, dove perché. La prima frase dovrebbe enunciare chi ha fatto che cosa, e quando e dove l'ha fatto, e per quale ragione. (Ottone, 1987, 91-92)

Porter explains that Americans generally have trusted the media as institutions and journalists as professionals as a result of the gatekeeper reporting style. For this reason, there is an uncommon societal role for reporters in the United States. Americans view journalists as part of the healthy democratic system necessary for a functioning society, because they trust journalists as professionals. The journalist has even been a frequent hero in adventure stories. *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Superman* are just some of the shows that featured a journalist as the primary character role. In the 1940s actors James Cagney, Cary Grant and Tyrone Power played reporters who were quicker than the police and more honest than judges (Porter 196). According to Porter, no other country in the world has journalists as stock heroes like the United States. This would not be possible if the journalism profession were not seen as independent.

Consider the others in the American gallery: the cowboy, the private investigator, the frontiersman, the gangster—all of them figures who, first of all, wear no man's yoke. Even the policeman-hero is commonly portrayed as a rebel against, or at least a circumventer of, his superiors. (Porter 196)

In Italy, journalism has been viewed in a completely different context. According to Mazzanti, modern Italian journalism was born just after the Italian Unification and was influenced by the political movements of the times. The main objective of those journalists was to influence the population to accept and understand the importance of the cause of Unification.

In other parts of Europe and the United States, the party-press evolved into a style of factual reporting that Italy has not fully embraced. Mindich writes that although many journalists reject the idea of “pure” objectivity, they still strive to achieve it by implementing the “ritual of objectivity.” He explains that these are a series of professional routines set up to shield journalists from blame and legal action. Objectivity thus becomes a goal. Mindich writes, “One journalist told me that ‘objectivity’ was not attainable, but like the North Star, was a fixed mark to help journalists to stay on the right course” (10). The initial problem is establishing a clear understanding of what it is to be objective and then establishing how to reach the objective North Star. Unlike their American homologues, some Italian journalists believe that by openly acknowledging the journalist’s bias in news reporting, the reader is less likely to be deceived or manipulated. A “hidden agenda” is less likely to be passed off for unbiased reporting:

Most Italian dailies are classified as *giornali d’informazione*, the best translation of which might be “news newspapers,” complete with the emphasis to distinguish them from journals of opinion, political party publications, and those with specialized content such as sports. Many journalists pull an ironic face when they use the phrase, and it is standard small talk to say that Italy in fact has no such newspapers. (Porter 8)

Saviano is definitely an advocate journalist who uses color to report on the Camorra. Unlike the traditional Italian journalist however, Saviano does not openly espouse his politics. His social commentary is of a moralistic tone. His literary and journalistic *mélange* epitomizes the strong Italian tradition of intertwining journalism and literature. A subjective (colored)

reporting and muckraking investigative style are more similar to certain American journalistic anomalies such as New Journalism and Yellow Journalism.

There have been factions who support the advocate style of reporting news in the United States. Robert Jensen, an American journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin, has presented the case for opinion journalism (“colored journalism”). His paper on the reporting of the Gulf War argues that the way in which “facts” are constructed in a story is as important as the facts themselves. He writes: “Objectivity’s objectivity is illusionary. Objectivity is easily manipulated. Objectivity left unexamined does more to obfuscate than to explain” (1992, 21). His point is that objectivity is a standard defense of shoddy work. What is called “objective reporting” becomes a means of maintaining the hegemony of a ruling class. Unlike Revel, Jensen states that in journalism the rules of “objectivity” keep reporters hemmed in and discourage examination of those big picture questions. He believes that most journalists are slavishly reliant on “official sources,”—those people in positions of some authority (2006, 5).

Jensen presents the case for advocate journalism as the Italians see it. In his paper, *The Myth of the Neutral Professional*, Jensen sums up the attitude of proponents of *colorato* journalism. His premise is that neutrality is a code word for defending the existing system:

In the political and philosophical sense in which I use the term here, neutrality is impossible. In any situation, there exists a distribution of power. To either overtly endorse or reject that distribution is, of course, a political choice; such positions are not neutral. To take no explicit position by claiming to be neutral is also a political choice [...]. As South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu has put it, neutrality typically means choosing the

side of the oppressor: ‘If you are in a situation where an elephant is sitting on the tail of a mouse and you say, Oh no, no, no, I am neutral. The mouse is not going to appreciate your neutrality.’
(2006, 3)

Englishman Alan Rusbridger, Editor-in-Chief for the *Gaurdian*, believes that an advocate style of journalism gives more room to voices that challenge conventional wisdom (Folkenflik n.p.). Even between American and British newspaper reporting, Rusbridger says coverage is different. He points to the discrepancy in covering the build up to the 2003 Iraq war. For him, American reporting was less critical (gatekeeper) than British coverage, which was more openly skeptical of the war. Rusbridger attributes this “healthy” skepticism to the broader range of acceptable opinions in British reporting (Folkenflik n.p.).⁵ But even if there is a differing degree of objectivity in British versus American news coverage, they are both considered less politically-oriented compared with the overtly politicized style of Italian journalism. English and American journalism follow a professional rule for maintaining a minimum amount of objectivity.

⁵ Folkenflik cites Nick Boles, a conservative member of British parliament, as evidence of English newspapers being less gatekeeper in style than the American ones:

‘In Britain, we feel that it’s better to know where people are coming from and then to make up your own mind about what you think, because the truth is nobody can be completely impartial and objective,’ Boles says. ‘I mean the idea [that] *The New York Times* doesn’t have a political point of view—it’s ridiculous. It does, but it twists itself into knots in an attempt to pretend that it doesn’t.’ (Boles as cited in Folkenflik n.p.)

In regards to objective news reporting, there are other elements that influence Italian journalism in a unique way. The relationship between Italian politics and newspapers is often intertwined. Current Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has been accused of having a conflict of interest as head of the state while maintaining his vast private media empire.⁶ He controls six of the seven national television channels and a publishing stable consisting of nationally distributed magazines and newspapers. Jones has commented on the fact that Italy is divided in its politics as strongly as ever:

Italy is not a single entity, but rather a country of two opposing sides. The country is, in fact, probably as divided now as it was during the civil wars of the 1940's or the 1970's. There is the same visceral loathing between two halves of the same country.

(232)

According to Jones, the rift between the political left and right has enabled Berlusconi to use his media to attack opponents and to gin up support for legislation designed to cover up marginal activities or punish opponents. What passes for programming is really propaganda or else cheap pornography (239). This politically-charged environment of journalism detracts from the development of an effective “watchdog” journalism. When *La Repubblica* criticizes Berlusconi, the paper's claims can be compromised in the public's eyes, because it is viewed as having a political ax to grind. Due to partisan constraints, Italian investigative journalists are limited in

⁶ Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, President Giovanni Leone, Secretary of the Italian Socialist Party Bettino Craxi and Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti are additional examples of abuse of power preceding Berlusconi.

being able to reveal political corruption or abuses of power. Jones covers a variety of media scandals that illuminate corruption throughout the industry.

Unfortunately, reporters can be part of the scandals rather than covering them objectively. One was a sport scandal involving the influential commentator Luciano Moggi. He was accused of having taken bribes to promote certain soccer players over others in the Serie A Italian professional soccer league. Another one that Jones covered involved the government-owned station RAI which was implicated in a sex scandal that involved the Prince of Naples, Vittorio Emanuele. There was an investigation that produced tapes of one of television's most respected female reporters using sex to get access to a post-fascist politician.

In the investigation of organized crime, informants are an important source. But facts and information obtained from police records of *pentiti* and used by Saviano are drawing criticism.⁷ *Pentitismo* was hoped to be a tool to break the code of silence of the mafia, but its critics claim it is being used as retaliation and is an unreliable source of information. Jones writes of the results of this suspect information: "The outcome of political show-trials is already written at their inception" (201). Saviano cites *pentiti* confessions throughout *Gomorra*.

By Italian investigative reporting standards, he represents a uniqueness in his "whistle-blowing" journalism that is more similar to an American model of watchdog journalism, often labeled "muckraking." Many view American journalism as the "Fourth Estate of Democracy." Being deemed a special proponent of a healthy democracy, it has the privilege of being the "watchdog" over political power, the idea being that good investigative journalism should

⁷ A *pentito*, literally meaning "penitent," is used to describe a person associated with organized crime, but who collaborates with the police in return for immunity from prosecution.

provide a check on political power. In this sense, American journalism is not just an informative profession, but deemed a vital pillar of the United States Republic.

According to Mindich, one finds such examples of watchdog journalism with the likes of Paul Anderson of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, who brought to light the Teapot Dome Scandal in the 1920s. There is also Clark Mollenhoff from the *Des Moines Register* whose dedicated investigations helped lead an important blow against government corruption in the 1960s and 1970s. More recently, Seymour Hersh exposed the Abu Ghraib prison tortures in Iraq to international attention. Janowitz notes the following in comparing European journalism to American journalism:

In the United States, the mass circulation newspaper developed—in contrast to the European press—as a non-party press. It was and remains a commercial enterprise; and its social and political roles were grafted on as a result of the efforts of the muckraker novelists and journalists. The reformist tradition was an expression of ethical and religious impulses grounded in a philosophy of pragmatism. The crusading editor and reporter, the individual defying organized interests and corrupting forces, searched for the facts and presented them dramatically. The muckraker represented, moreover, the belief that the newspaper had the potential—through the power of the press and public opinion—to overcome the weaknesses of the political institutions. It is in this concept that there is a direct line of continuity between the muckraker and the advocate. (622-623)

The most famous of the American whistleblowers were two young journalists from the first half of the 1960s: Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein of *The Washington Post*. They discovered the break-in at the Watergate Hotel and were the first to reveal the scandal in August of 1972. Their investigative journalism triggered the eventual resignation of President Nixon in 1974.

Muckraking, however, suffers its own criticism of “color.” Certainly its practitioners become impassioned by the material they uncover. Michael Moore, Ralph Nader, Carl Bernstein, Bob Woodward, and Studs Terkel are random examples of recent American investigative reporters whose styles vary immensely. In any country, investigative reporters face criticism, deserved and underserved. In spite of his actions to clean up the meatpacking industry after Upton Sinclair’s exposé entitled *The Jungle*, Theodore Roosevelt is quoted in his autobiography as labeling Sinclair a crackpot, hysterical, unbalanced and untruthful (246). Yet Roosevelt’s own commission found that almost everything Sinclair wrote was substantiated (247).

Italian investigative journalism is not traditionally as strong and certainly not seen as a “watchdog” or “fourth power.” In the past, real investigative reporting had been severely limited, because of the conflicting ownership of the journals. Italian papers generally treat the powerful with kid gloves, thus a Saviano type of reporter has been almost nonexistent. During the *tangentopoli* scandal that occurred in the 1990s, the two powers that had traditionally controlled Italian news (political and economic) were in a complete identity and credibility crisis and thus neutralized in censoring what was reported. At that time, a lot of the journalists’ usual caution and self-censorship disappeared. The mantra became: publish anything on anyone. Thus, the traditionally restrained news reporting changed into a Wild West of journalism. Robert

Miraldi defends this kind of subjectivity and activism in news reporting. He believes that objectivity is a straightjacket mentality that decreases the range of information and opinion. His book on the history of muckraking advocates impassioned investigative journalism as necessary for defending against evil and inching society forward. This type of journalism continues to be used throughout the world where reporters have any freedom to work. Blogs and Internet exposés have taken up the form.

Saviano could certainly fall into the category of investigative reporting, because he exposes the hidden Camorra that influences both the political realm and the private sector. Saviano is similar to a muckraker, because he criticized the wrongdoings of power. In this case, he focuses primarily on the Camorra. He has almost made himself into a sort of journalistic martyr, because of his courage in speaking out for nonpolitical motives. Saviano is forced to live in hiding for the investigative reporting that he has written. Yet he does not appear to be reckless in his reporting of gossip and hearsay as he clearly cites his sources whether they are in first person account or third.

What is most significant and most Italian about his journalistic style is the way he combines literature with journalism. This is very typical of Italian reporters as mentioned above with the *colorato* style. Traditionally, Italian newspapers have been heavily influenced by a more literary register since most of the journalists are educated in literature. The vocabulary register of a typical Italian newspaper is elevated. Unfortunately, this has continued to make Italian papers more elitist. One example is the *terza pagina* (third page). Even though the name remains, it is no longer located on the third page of a typical journal. It does continue to signify the page reserved for intellectual and cultural information. Usually, it is an entire section of the paper dedicated to a creative writer or to someone in the fine arts.

Saviano's style is influenced by this tradition. Throughout *Gomorra*, he alludes to literary works.⁸ He assumes a testimonial account of what he has witnessed. In many ways, Saviano is also similar to Ezekiel from the Bible, because he portrays Italy's demise in much the same way as Ezekiel foresaw the end of Israel.⁹

One Italian literary style is Verismo, which strives for literary objectivity. This nineteenth-century movement avoids lyrical and autobiographical techniques in the narrative voice. Unlike Saviano's narrative style, Verismo focuses on the plot by excluding the author's personal involvement. The Verista writer's objective is to study what is real in a way that is similar to creating a human documentary." Often the narration is simplified to pure dialogues and depictions of landscapes. Sicilian writer Giovanni Verga epitomizes this style of "objective" literature. Almost like an anthropologist, he wrote about the daily lives of Sicilians exposing the unembellished hardships and difficulties of the common people (Casta 168). Saviano borrowed some of these techniques in his unvarnished recording of the daily lives of people who suffer under the yoke of the Camorra.

But Saviano is most similar to the great literary writer Leonardo Sciascia, who used a type of "investigative" writing to describe the real injustices of the Cosa Nostra through literary fiction. Many of his novels take place in Sicily and deal with the Sicilian Mafia. During the

⁸ Specific literary references found in (GO): (35) Vittorio Bodini; (56) Emilio Salgari; (211) Luciano Bianciardi, Pier Paolo Pasolini; (212) Giorgio Caproni, Pier Paolo Pasolini; (241) Frà Dolcino; (255) Homer; and (258) Ezra Pound, Julius Evola.

⁹ (Ezekiel 4:1–24:27): Ezekiel condemns his fellow Judeans (3:22-24), warning them of the destruction of Jerusalem as a consequence of living in sin (4:1-3).

1960s he dedicated two books to the Cosa Nostra problem: *Il giorno della civetta* (*The Day of the Owl*) and *A ciascuno il suo* (*To Each His Own*).

Sciascia, like Saviano, was openly critical and skeptical of the Italian government's inability to contain organized crime. Both writers have gone so far as to accuse specific politicians and government workers of collaborating with organized crime members. Sciascia accused the Christian Democrat political party of wrongdoings when it was under the leadership of Giulio Andreotti just as Saviano has openly accused Silvio Berlusconi (Saviano, "Italy Demands Answers, Not Smears and Threats: Extraordinary Protest in Support of Press Freedom Will Mark Growing Concern Over Silvio Berlusconi's Grip on the Media" n.p.).

Sciascia's intellectual work is of a writing style that could easily transfer to Italian journalism. His exposés of the Mafia and its corrupt links to the Italian government preceded Saviano's work. Sciascia never formally worked as a journalist, but he was a writer who researched the Mafia and wrote in a style similar to that of an investigative journalist. In fact, he was an active politician and novelist who had a specific political agenda in denouncing the Sicilian Mafia:

Sciascia claimed in the sixties that in *The Day of the Owl* of 1961 he'd been the first Sicilian writer to deal with the mafia in a work of imagination. *Nobody had underlined this problem in a work of fiction for the mass market.* I did, he said firmly in 1965. (Robb 149)

Peter Robb argues that Sciascia was not the first to denounce the mafia through literature. Robb states that Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* was one of the three factors of that exposed Sicily in the 1950s. Another was the reformer and writer Danilo Dolci who drew

international attention to Sicilian poverty. The third factor was the people themselves who said that the mafia existed (Robb 148). Robb claims that the progressives of the 1950s especially disliked *The Leopard*, because of its pessimistic acquiescence to the *Mezzogiorno* status quo. This sentiment is best captured by don Fabrizio's great denunciation of hopes for change as depicted in the chapter where the liberal functionary Chevalley asks the Prince to join the Italian senate. The prince refuses:

In Sicily doing well or doing badly doesn't matter. The sin we Sicilians never forgive is simply that of doing. We're old, Chevalley, terribly old. For at least twenty-five centuries we've been carrying magnificent and heterogeneous civilizations on our backs, all of them coming fully perfected from outside, not sprouted from ourselves, not that we've made our own ... for two thousand five hundred years we've been a colony. I'm not complaining when I say it. But we're worn out and exhausted all the same ... Sleep, my dear Chevalley, sleep is what Sicilians want, and they will always hate anyone who wants to wake them ... (Lampedusa as cited in Robb 148)

Lampedusa exposed the complacent mentality of a southern Italian society that resists change. Although portrayed in a poetic fashion, this inability to change fosters passivity and allows the mafia-like mentality to flourish and persist. This is important for understanding the southern Italian mindset and how it pessimistically accepts the current state of affairs. Cesare Segre explains the situation in the following way:

Non siamo un paese moderno come la Francia o gli Stati Uniti. Alle spinte secessionistiche, motivate in parte dal modo affrettato con cui si operò l'unificazione, si aggiunge la presenza di una secessione in atto: quella operata dalla Camorra e da Cosa Nostra. Ciò implica l'esistenza di una doppia moralità (anche la malavita organizzata ne ha una), di una doppia giustizia, di una doppia concezione della vita associata. Il rapporto dell'individuo con lo Stato è ancora conflittivo: lo Stato, oltre a non essere lungimirante (anche la politica internazionale dell'Italia per la cultura è peggio che misera), non sa essere equo ed efficiente, l'individuo considera lo Stato un avversario da frodare o raggirare per quanto possibile. Sul piano etico, se si è riusciti in parte a sottrarsi alla sessuofobia di stampo religioso, non si è in cambio maturata una moralità dei doveri e dei diritti. (46-47)

In Sciascia's work, the lines between these roles of fact and fiction were fuzzy at best and often nonexistent. Sciascia would extensively research the Mafia problem, but then express his factual research through fictionalized characters. These were people who had made up names and fictional lifestyles but who faced real Sicilian problems in dealing with the Mafia. A *ciascuno il suo*, a novel in which an academic named Professor Laurana attempts to solve a double homicide. He is eventually murdered for interfering in local politics. The double homicide turns into superficial speculation about motives for the locals. In pessimistic fashion it is assumed that the pharmacist should have known the reason for his own murder and thus deserved the consequences. This novel is a classic example of how Sciascia's work dealt with

fundamental, if rarely simple, moral quandaries that were often set in the world of law and order, right and wrong (Salerno n.p.).

According to Sergio Roeder, Sciascia painted a picture of contemporary Sicily. Sciascia detaches himself from the facts and problems that he publicly denounced. Even though he writes against the Mafia, he never uses a judgmental tone, but rather an “objective” one. He simply reports the facts in a matter-of-fact way so that the readers can draw their own conclusions. This is different from *Il Giorno della civetta* where the protagonist wants to return to Sicily to fight against social injustices (Roeder n.p.). Some common themes found both in *A Ciascuno il suo* and *Gomorra*:

- 1) there is a tragic view of the social conditions in Sicily and Naples. Both are economically ruined—victims of poor government and of organized crime;
- 2) citizens distrust the police and the establishment;
- 3) there is an awareness of political corruption among government officials and a deep skepticism of any effective anti-Mafia force;
- 4) distrust of the Church that is viewed as being generally corrupt too;
- 5) the idea that even those who are not actively involved with organized crime would never collaborate with the justice system for fear or distrust of the government (*omertà*). In the mindset of the residents, one who collaborates with the authorities is generally just a *cretino* or “naïve fool” (Roedner n.p.).

Other elements that are similar between Sciascia’s and Saviano’s work are the portrayal of common Sicilian and Neapolitan traits. One of these is the typical southern Italian code of silence known as *omertà*. On the opposite side of these pessimistic ingredients, there is the naïveté common to both protagonist and authors. Roedner says they both share the label of

cretino. Even Saviano seems to report things in a childlike way by expressing his disgust and surprise at the wretched state of existence. This irony does not contrast with the basic pessimism reflected by the authors. Roedner writes: «Ironia non contrasta con il pessimismo di fondo ma è il modo di Sciascia di affrontare la questione, con intelligenza analitica e non con toni da comizio e da crociare per questo è stato poco capito e apprezzato dai professionisti antimafia» (n.p.).

His work laid a blueprint for Saviano's in that it avoided association with the extremes of Italy's left and right to forge a body of work based on moral and ethical issues (unlike politically-oriented writers such as the Nobel Laureate Dario Fo). But he was religious and used religion in his work. Vincenzo Salerno complains that in academia and in the press, six decades of sometimes hostile influences ranging from Existentialism to Catholicism, from communism to neo-fascism, have eroded the popular appreciation of objective social commentary. He says that even a superficial glance at Italian newspapers is sufficient to confirm that the country's journalists are obsessed with their own opinions, engaged in a bizarre egocentric ritual that takes precedence over unbiased reporting (Salerno n.p). Paul Ginsborg writes in his book *Italy and Its Discontents*:

The narrowness of control in television [in Italy] was mirrored by that in the media in general. In the mid-80s, for example, FIAT controlled *La Stampa, Il Corriere della Sera, La Gazzetta dello Sport*, and all the magazines of the Rizzoli publishing house. The oil billionaire Attilio Monti owned an extensive press empire in the provinces, including daily papers in Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Cecchi Gori dominated film production and

owned a large string of cinemas. All this added up to an oligopoly unmatched in the other European democracies. (111)

Saviano's reporting technique is a combination of different styles and influences that combine to make up his own distinctive writing method. He is Italian in that he uses color to embellish his reporting, and he is an advocate journalist championing a cause. He sporadically references fictional literature to illustrate a moral point. But he is different from the traditional Italian journalist in that he does not take an overt political stance while advocating his message. Instead, he employs an apocalyptic literary technique to avoid the polarizing effect of politics. He is unusual for employing a style of investigative journalism (muckraking) that has rarely been seen in Italy. Hence it is not reasonable to expect Saviano's journalism to be measured by traditional Anglo-Saxon standards of objectivity. As we shall soon see, his journalism provides the same function as that of John's in his book of Revelation. It is presented by a seer who has experienced the history of the people emotionally as well as factually.

CHAPTER 2

AN ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE CAMORRA AND THE PEOPLE

“Winners have no shame, no matter how they win.”
 —Niccolò Machiavelli as cited in GO n.p.

Part 1 of *Gomorra* consists of chapters one through five. These are the chapters Saviano uses to establish the “history” of his apocalyptic eschatology, using a gonzo journalistic recounting of information. *Gomorra*’s “history of the people” has prompted discussion among contemporary critics and scholars, who try to determine the book’s genre: Is it *reportage*, part of a serial, a detective novel, sociological research, or in the realm of travel journals (Weber 524)? The book has been labeled “New Italian Epic” by literary scholar Wu Ming 1 (“Premessa alla versione 2.0 di *New Italian Epic*,” n.p). Luigi Weber refers to Saviano’s literary work as “un giallo apocalittico” (an apocalyptic detective novel), falling into the modern field of “~~lit~~-blogging” (524). He notes that Saviano’s writing career started out by blogging for *Nazione Indiana* and he was scarcely read from 2003-2005 (525, 527). Saviano constructs a narrative out of archival materials such as newspaper articles, surveillance recordings and official files. He creates an overlapping between the textual and the extra-textual (Chimenti 37). Jason Pine finds the work “courageous, insightful, and extremely problematic” (431). He labels the book a historic event, literary movement and ultimately a transmedia franchise (431). Labels such as these are attempts to classify the recounting of the facts of organized crime and their economic impact in Campania. All are efforts to understand Saviano’s approach, but no one has identified these literary techniques accurately as apocalyptic eschatology.

Alessandro Dal Lago argues against what some have called the “docufiction” label in favor of what he calls “docu/fiction.” He avoids the word docufiction, because he does not believe that Saviano has spawned any new type of narrative style. He offers Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* or Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as examples of an already established genre. For that reason, he chooses the less original term of docu/fiction to deemphasize any perceived originality in style (36). Chimenti argues against literary critics who judge Saviano negatively against existing literary criteria: “Only the most significant works of an epoch exceed the limits of traditional form. In those works, traditional structures cease to be immediately recognizable, yet the new ones are not fully formed” (39). This does not mean that one should abandon the formal narrative duties of a novel. But as Walter Benjamin wrote: “Un’opera significativa o fonda il genere oppure lo liquida; nelle opere perfette le due cose si fondono” (Benjamin as cited in Chimenti 39).

Saviano has acknowledged that his book is enhanced by literary license and when asked if the book was more fact or fiction, he answered, “It is some and some” (Grimes 2). In an interview, Saviano explained his motivation for writing *Gomorra*:

I wasn’t sure readers would like it but people are generally fed up with the kind of fiction and folklore that we are fed in tales about crime. I’m familiar with these very Italian quarrels, and when you talk about your country abroad you’re always accused of slandering your country. In fact Italian cultural institutes don’t invite me because they think that. People think you’re pointing the finger but you can’t remain silent about what’s happening in your country. You have to tell people. (Barlow n.p.)

There are differing viewpoints as to the originality in Saviano's narrative style. Scholars, like Chimenti and Wu Ming 1, say that Saviano's book does not fit into an orthodox literary genre. Weber argues that *Gomorra* is not even a novel. He calls it a "travestimento" (disguise), because, "non intende essere un romanzo. E non reca, in nessun luogo del paratesto editoriale" (Weber 528). Wu Ming 1 has coined the label New Italian Epic (NIE) to describe the recent body of literary works written in Italy by various authors since 1993. Like other NIE works, *Gomorra* shows a particular kind of metahistorical fiction that exhibits unique qualities that are influenced by Italian context.¹ The seven characteristics Wu Ming 1 uses to identify the NIE are as follows: 1) refusal of the detached and a "coldly ironic tone" ("Premessa alla versione 2.0 di *New Italian Epic*," 13); creating an "unforeseeable point of view" that often communicates ethical or political overtones through the narrative (14); combining complex narratives with a "popular" attitude (17); using narratives of alternative histories and "potential uchronias" that offer a different solution in contrast to the historical reality (19); incorporating dissimulated linguistic experimentation that seeks to advance the story more than adhering to traditional rules of prose (20); employing unidentified narrative objects (21); and an emphasis on community and "transmedia" (23).

Wu Ming 1 lists the "narrative object" as one of seven the characteristics to describe *Gomorra*. He explains the narrative object as follows:

Fiction o non-fiction, prosa e poesia, diario o inchiesta, letteratura e scienza, mitologia e pochade. Negli ultimi quindici anni molti

¹ Wu Ming 1 first used the term NIE in 2008 during a seminar on contemporary Italian literature at McGill University in Canada. He later developed the concept and expressed it in a type of literary manifesto titled "Memorandum."

autori italiani hanno scritto libri che non possono essere etichettati o incasellati in alcun modo, perché contengono quasi tutto. [...] Non è soltanto un'ibridazione «endo-letteraria», entro i generi della letteratura bensì l'utilizzo di qualunque cosa possa servire allo scopo. (2009, 41)

One theoretical problem posed by *Gomorra* is identifying the difference between the concepts of «realism» and those of the «textualization of the real.» As a narrator, Saviano jumps from place to place and is privy to conversations that are presented as though he has superhuman abilities. Here is what Dal Lago writes about this omniscience:

Ma l'equivoco principale è quell'io narrante che saltella qua e a suo piacimento: talvolta parla a nome di singoli altri, a cui non dà il nome, talvolta a nome della comunità. Certe volte è proprio lui, ma non sempre in primo piano. Segue le faccende un pò da lontano, poi decide di zoomare, scende in pista e dà un spintarella alla storia. Così entra in scena, ci tira dentro e ci fa immedesimare nei personaggi. (41)

Dal Lago does not think that Saviano's work presents any new type of narration that has not been seen before. He rebuts those such as Wu Ming 1 who claim that Saviano's version of a multiple narrative «P» is not original at all: «Ora, a me non mi sembra proprio una grande novità. Innumerevoli romanzi d'avanguardia, sperimentali, post-moderni ecc. mettono in scena giochi diegetici infinitamente più complessi, funambolici» (43). But he does go on to explain, as does Chimenti, that the narrative «P» in *Gomorra* is not simply an actor. Behind it there is the author's name and especially the real life Saviano. He is the one who is investigating the Camorra.

Chimenti explores realism and Saviano's textualization of the real. He offers an analysis of what this dissertation is calling the "history of the people" in *Gomorra*:

Rather than a univalent and self-evident concept, realism in literature is of course always the effect of a specific way in which the real is constructed at a textual level. In literary work, we never find the real as it is, but rather a layering of realism—a manipulation of the real, and not a mirroring of it. A "thematic" realism may be identified, which represents determinant aspects of how individuals inhabit their world, and is linked to socio-political themes. The elements of reality to be thematized are, in this case, the dominant articulations and power relations of a specific society at a specific time. (40)

Chimenti's observations on what Wu Ming 1 calls the narrative object involve the literary dimension of thematic realism in *Gomorra*. He states that thematic realism includes stylistic elements that produce a mimetic effect, such as the enrichment of literary language by spoken language. As a result, this can sometimes result in a simplification of syntax. He gives this example of parataxis over hypotaxis (40):

We performed the usual chant, his catechism:

"Robb , what do you call a man who has a pistol and no college degree?"

"A shit with a pistol."

"Good. What do you call a man with a college degree but no pistol?"

–A shit with a degree.”

–Good. What do you call a man with a degree and a pistol?”

–A man, papà!”

–Bravo, Robertino!” (GO 169)

The stylistic, rhetorical and psychological effect helps to create a sense of realism in the above dialogue by linking it to the textual codification of reality, rather than to the reality of what is being described. For Chimenti then, realism is a rhetorical domain that has a purely textual effect contained within the limits of the text and its codes. The codes can produce both the message as well as the manner of its own comprehension: “What is deconstructed is not the reality of the event, but, rather, the rhetorical apparatuses that convey and spectacularize the latter” (Chimenti 40). In a book like *Gomorra* where the spectacularization of the real may impede the trauma of experience, writing itself makes it possible. In this way, it can seem even more real than reality, when it causes certain semantic levels to emerge: “This is not a linguistic *divertissement*, but an attempt to reach a cognitive experience of the even—which was denied during its original media coverage” (41).

Saviano’s book grew out of his observations of the way life in southern Italy has been affected by crime and fueled his decision that he must chronicle the Camorra’s contemporary activities. In telling the story of the Camorra, he uses pieces of reality for his novel that come from archives, quotations from other books, newspaper articles or from literary and extra-literary sources. He uses them to inform the reader about a certain event or historical period. In this way another type of realism is created within the text, rather than originating solely from the representation or simulation of an external world. Historical references extend into the literary fiction: “In other words, the reader does not quite know whether to assign them to the actual

experience of the extra-textual author, or to the fictional author within the textual simulacrum. The result is the creation of an “undifferentiated referential area,” opening on to a direct image of the times.” Chimenti calls this “textualization of the real” (42).²

Central to *Gomorra*’s apocalyptic message and its “history of the people” is the very real presence of criminal activity. The Camorra is considered to be a mafia organization and is one of the oldest and largest criminal organizations in Italy. The other three large established Italian-based criminal organizations are known as the Cosa Nostra (Sicily), the Sacra Corona Unita (Apuglia) and the Ndrangheta (Calabria). All four of these Italian crime organizations have similar attributes, one of which is their cultural code of silence called *omertà*.³ Former Palermitan mayor, Leoluca Orlando, wrote that *omertà* had long since become a national affliction when he confronted the Cosa Nostra (29). He claims that his fight against the Mafia started to be won when a flood of *pentiti* came forward, breaking the code. Each of their testimonial’s added one by one to the picture of “an evil state within a state” (86-87). Saviano condemns this culture of silence by offering resistance and “the word” as fundamental to overcoming the power of organized crime.

² “This term is taken from Maurizio Grande (2002), a scholar of cinematography. Grande conceptualizes the “textualization of the real” with an obvious reference to cultural semiotics, and to the work Juri Lotman in particular (see Lotman and Uspenskij 1995; Ivanov *et al.* 1980)” (Chimenti 48).

³ Although there does not appear to be an exact understanding of the etymology for *omertà*, Lupo postulates the following: “[O]mertà, deriverebbe alle radice *uomo*, significherebbe essere per eccellenza uomo, che virilmente risponde da sé alle offese senza ricorre alla giustizia statale” (2004, 17)

He explains *omertà* and gives his readers an understanding of what drives his own motivation through a story of a young teacher:

The logic of *omertà* isn't so simple. What made the young teacher's [confession] scandalous is that she considered being able to testify something natural, instinctive, and vital. In a land where the lying is considered to be what gets you something and truth what makes you lose, living as if you actually believe truth can exist is incomprehensible. So the people around you feel uncomfortable, undressed by the gaze of one who has renounced the rules of life itself, which they have fully accepted. And accepted without feeling ashamed, because in the end that's just how things are and have always been; you can't change it all on your own, and so it's better to save your energy, stay on track, and live the way you're supposed to live. (GO 279-280)

Orlando explains that in the past Mafiosi had been tried as individuals and generally acquitted because *omertà* intimidated witnesses (99). Traditionally, the Mafia used to pay lawyers for defending arrested members and to give a "salary" to families whose men were in prison or killed, thus permitting the Cosa Nostra to fund a criminal version of social security and enforce its code of *omertà*. Those rejecting *omertà* could have their shop or business damaged or pay with their life as a lesson (Orlando 141).

Another common characteristic of the southern crime organizations is their historical distrust of the government. Carlo Tullio-Altan likens being a government worker in Sicily to being a foreign presence in a hostile land: *—H funzionario di pubblica sicurezza sta nel suo*

ufficio o nella sua casa come in una fortezza in mezzo ad un paese nemico” (Leopoldo Franchetti as cited in Tullio-Altan 71). Duggan says that this animosity between the Italian citizen and the State was present from the onset of national unification. Between the 1850s and the end of the nineteenth century, Italy’s ruling class was not markedly different in composition from other European nations. But it was smaller and included fewer industrialists than the United Kingdom, Belgium or France, due to the weakness of the bourgeoisie in Italy: “This narrowness gave rise to feelings of acute vulnerability, and was one reason why governments felt driven to use repression so often in defense of the status quo” (Duggan 136-137).

Duggan believes that a paranoid ruling class and a failure to improve the economic situation in Italy, especially in the South, deepened the tension between Italy’s citizenry and politicians. Military and police forces were often employed for much of the new Italian state’s existence: “The police had extensive powers [in the nineteenth century]: a man could be sent to a penal island for five years merely on suspicion of being a criminal” (137). For Duggan, the problem in using coercion to defend the status quo was that it undermined the moral foundation of liberalism that most Italians already viewed skeptically in the 1800s. As a result, a vicious cycle was set in motion that would fester among the Italian citizenry: repression caused anger and hostility and this made the country’s rulers feel still more isolated and threatened.

In this hostile environment, the Sicilian government developed a precarious relationship with the Cosa Nostra. Tullio-Altan describes the situation in the following way: “E qui, l’amministrazione governativa è come accampata in mezzo ad una società che ha tutti i suoi ordinamenti fondati sulla presunzione che non esista autorità pubblica” (Leopoldo Franchetti as cited in Tullio-Altan 71).

The distinction made by some between the words “Camorra” and “Mafia” are noteworthy. Orlando writes about the complexities of understanding the Mafia and notes the multiple theories about the origins of its name:

The theory that has always seemed most reasonable to me holds that “Mafia” is a corruption of the Arabic *Mu* (“strength”) plus *Afah* (“to protect”). Yet what I find most intriguing about this word is not the exotic etymologies reaching far back into Sicilian history, but the fact that during the years of my youth, “Mafia” was almost never said. I was aware that it existed—both the word and the reality it stood for—but I apprehended it the same way that one catches a faint aroma on the wind, something familiar yet not quite identifiable. (9)

Sicilian writer Sciascia says that the first recorded mention of the Mafia was in 1830. He defined the Mafia during a televised interview: “La Mafia è un’associazione per delinquere. Con fini di arricchimento per i propri associati, che si pone come intermediazione parassitaria, ed imposta con mezzi di violenza, tra la proprietà e il lavoro, tra la produzione e il consumo, tra il cittadino e lo stato” (Sabatini). Later in the same interview, Sciascia confides that the Mafia after World War II evolved into something very foreign to the one with which he grew up. He says that in relationship to the Mafia of his childhood, today’s Mafia is an *impazzimento* (madness) (Sabatini).

In economic terms, the Mafia is considered a service organization. According to Ginsborg, their activities do not principally involve the production of commodities, but the provision of services: “Only that theirs were not always services carried out with agreement of

the person concerned or economic unit owning the good,‘ nor were their services necessarily beneficial in intent, other than to themselves” (196).

Salvatore Lupo argues that the word “Mafia” can be difficult to define.⁴ For him, the term mafia (lowercased “m”) is often used to describe any criminal organization operating under a similar structure to the Sicilian super elite criminal culture known today as the Cosa Nostra. Sicilian or not, the name mafia is often used to describe diverse criminal organizations such as the Camorra, the Sacra Corona Unita, the ‘Ndrangheta, Chinese organized crime, Russian gangs, etc. According to Lupo, the word has appeared continuously since the mid-nineteenth century in reference to unspecified, but various political, economic, anthropological, social, historical and other phenomena in general (2009, 1). For Lupo, the most commonly accepted definition of Mafia (capitalized “M”) among journalists today refers to the regional criminality of Sicily just as Camorra refers to the Campania based criminal culture (2009, 1-3). This is the preferred definition of Mafia for this study of the Camorra.

What then is the Camorra and how is it different from the Mafia? The exact origins of this Neapolitan crime organization are unclear. Tom Behan notes in his book, *The Camorra*, that there is evidence of criminal gang operations in Naples throughout many centuries. According to the British scholar, all of these gangs arose among the city’s poor. Since they were mostly

⁴ Discussion of the Mafia was considered taboo in the past, but today there is an endless deliberation among linguists about the origins of the word “Mafia.” According to Orlando, some believe that it comes from the Arabic word *Mahias* meaning “bold” or “braggart.” Another theory is that it derives from a Saracen tribal name that once dominated Palermo, *Muafirr*. An alternative hypothesis is that the word derives from *M’fie*, the name of the caves used by Saracens as hiding places (Orlando 9).

illiterate people who never kept written records it is difficult to identify with certainty how the Camorra began (9). A fundamental difference between the Mafia and the Camorra lies in their origins. The Camorra is a product of urban poverty probably beginning in the nineteenth century, but Behan says that the Mafia has completely different origins being rural and having started later (25).

The Sicilian Cosa Nostra's power structure is vertical, but the Camorra is horizontally organized. Therefore each Camorra clan operates independently, and is inclined to compete among themselves. In a Darwinian way, this renders the Camorra more resilient when top leaders are neutralized, because new clans can rise up to supplant the old ones. Camorrista clan boss Pasquale Galasso verified this phenomenon in court: "Campania can get worse, because you could cut into a Camorra group, but another ten could emerge from it" (Behan 184). The Mafia can enjoy long periods of internal peace, but Camorra gangs have not been able to set aside their long-term rivalry and mistrust (59). Tullio-Altan explains the difference in these two crime organizations:

Se la mafia rappresentò, e in parte rappresenta tuttora, un fenomeno di potere legato ad una certa classe sociale, quella della borghesia e del patriziato siciliani, che direttamente o indirettamente la controllavano, la camorra napoletana ebbe un carattere più popolare, tanto che il Villari la definì il governo naturale delle plebi napoletane [...], e meno legato ad una struttura di classe di tipo borghese nella sua versione meridionale, anche per la minore compattezza e omogeneità di questa classe nel meridione continentale in rapporto a quella dominante in Sicilia. (73)

For Saviano, the economic power of the Camorra System lies exactly in its continual turnover of leaders and criminal choices. He explains that the Camorra clan boss' reign is always brief. Saviano writes:

If the Camorra had all the power, its business, which is essential to the workings of the legal and illegal scale, would not exist. In this sense every arrest and maxi-trial seems more like a way of replacing capos and breaking business cycles than something capable of destroying a system. (GO 202)

The Mafia has maintained its traditionally rural characteristics: total territorial control, discretion, the myth of "honor" and a close-knit family structure normally absent from the Camorra. Camorra gangs tend to be open organizations, but the Mafia *cosche* are generally family structured (Behan 29). Behan suggests that the history of Naples best explains why a Camorra type organization arose in Italy and why it has remained such a dominant feature of the city for the past two hundred years (10). Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Naples was the third largest populated city in Europe. During the 1600s, Naples often vied with Paris as the second largest city. But as Behan notes, a seventeenth-century international economic recession caused stagnation as exports declined. The plague of 1656 depleted sixty percent of the population (10). There were incentives (tax breaks, perceived job opportunities) to attract people from the countryside into the city. When they arrived, they found a lack of jobs and high levels of poverty which created an environment for violent revolts in seventeenth-century Naples. This fostered a repressive network to control the unpredictable population.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Italy was left behind as the other European power states experienced economic expansion during the industrial revolution. Naples lagged

even farther behind northern Italy in a quasi feudal system where the ruling power feared innovation. Here is his description of the situation of a large number of nonproductive inhabitants:

As the decades and centuries progressed it became clear that population growth was not being matched by an increase in production. Indeed, by 1871 35,000 people, out of an active population of 220,000 were still employed as cooks, chambermaids and gardeners, the same percentage as in the first half of the seventeenth century. (Behan 10)

He noted another problem which is debatably still relevant; there was a lack of a dynamic entrepreneurial spirit among the middle class. Up until the French Revolution, most of the middle class thrived on government monopolies and the production of commodities such as tobacco, silk and linen, which were protected by tariff barriers, and therefore had no interest in innovation” (Behan 11). Most of the decisions were carried out within the immediate family circle, and very few bourgeois took on investment and manufacture (11).

The Church and the British navy under Horatio Nelson put down a 1799 revolt that had not garnered sufficient support from the people. The Camorra emerged to fill the chaotic vacuum of power in the years between 1799 and 1815, when the Bourbon dynasty was not yet fully restored:

In the following period, the middle classes organized themselves into secret societies such as the Freemasons and the Carbonaria, and negotiated with the Bourbons. But for the vast majority of Neapolitans the Camorra became their only voice, the only way in

which their presence was felt: in this fashion the Camorra was a class-based mass phenomenon, one of the most popular illegal manifestations of the nineteenth-century European history. (Behan 12)

The etymology of Camorra is as obscure as the origins of the society. According to Behan, the first official use of the word occurred in 1735 when a royal circular consented to the licensing of a gaming-house, including the “Camorra avanti palazzo” (Camorra in front of the Palace) (Behan 10).⁵ Its officially recorded appearance predates the first recorded use of the word Mafia by more than one hundred years (1865).⁶ It appears that Camorra is a fusion between the word *capo* (boss) and the Neapolitan street game, the *morra*.⁷ “Alternatively, it was the word used to describe the rake-off earned by the *Camorristi* from goods being delivered or transported around the city; in other words, it was a word used to describe extortion” (10). In 1820 the first official documentation of the Camorra as an organization appears in a police report:

[P]olice records detail a disciplinary meeting of the Camorra. Such an event indicates a qualitative change: the Camorra and *camorristi* were no longer simply local gangs living off theft and

⁵ This is the modern day Royal Palace in Piazza del Plebiscito, where a gaming-house had existed for many centuries (Behan 10).

⁶ “[P]er la prima volta nel 1865, ne appare il nome in un documento ufficiale (S. F. Romano, 1963, pagg. 31 e segg.) [...]” (Tullio-Altan 67).

⁷ *Morra* is a popular game in Italy that involves two players trying to guess the right number. They must shout it out as the fists thrown openly against each competitor (Behan 10).

extortion; they now had a fixed structure and some kind of hierarchy. The first written statute of a Camorra organization was also delivered in 1820, once again indicating a stable organizational structure among the underworld, and the second statute was discovered in 1842. There were initiation rites, and funds set aside for the families of those imprisoned. (13)

The squalid social and economic conditions of nineteenth-century Naples fostered a breeding ground for the Camorra. Naples continued to be both politically and economically stagnant. Behan explains that control of impoverished and alienated masses was a service that the Camorra could offer local rulers.

In *Gomorra*, Saviano creates a leitmotiv for the wasteland theme. For him, Campania is still a land full of desperation where the Camorra continues to exploit the socio-economically repressed. He reports that in 1989 Naples had one of the highest ratios of drug pushers to inhabitants in all of Italy. This ratio is now the highest in Europe and among the top five internationally (GO 64). Saviano's writes: "I was born in the land of the Camorra, in the territory with the most homicides in Europe, where savagery is interwoven with commerce, where nothing has value except what generates power. Where everything has the taste of a final battle" (300). His twenty-first-century description could just as easily have been used for nineteenth-century Naples and harkens to T. S. Eliot's 1923 Modernist poem titled *The Waste land*. Eliot's poem shifts between prophecy and satire. Among the vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures to which it alludes is Dante's *Inferno*. In particular, Eliot's intertextuality includes reference to *Inferno*, III. 55–7: and *Inferno*, IV. 25–27 when he writes:⁸

⁸ 63. si lunga tratta

Unreal City,
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
 I had not thought death had undone so many.
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (v. 63-65)

Saviano goes to similar extremes to drive home his bleak portrait of life in Naples; extremes that hark back several centuries.

For most nineteenth-century Neapolitans, violence appears to have been the realistic solution for dealing with the miserable existence because the economic reality impeded any alternative solution (13). Saviano believes that this same desolate situation has changed little in the last two hundred years. Here is what he wrote about life in Naples in 2007: “It seemed impossible to have a moment of peace, not live constantly in a war where every gesture is a surrender, where every necessity is transformed into weakness, where everything needs to be fought for tooth and nail” (GO 300). Compare Saviano’s statement with this description of a nineteenth-century inmate’s life that was controlled by the Camorra:

He wasn’t able to eat, drink, smoke or gamble without a
camorrista’s permission. He had to give him a tenth of all the

di gente, ch’io non avrei mai creduto

che morte tanta n’avesse disfatta. (*Inferno*, Canto III. 55–7)

64. Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
 non avea pianto, ma’ che di sospiri,

che l’aura eterna facevan tremare. (*Inferno*, Canto IV. 25–27)

money he was sent, and had to pay for the right to buy and sell, as well as paying for both essential and superfluous things. He even paid to get legal advice, as if he were granted a privilege: he even paid when he was poorer and more naked than the walls of his cell, he was forced to deprive himself of everything. Those who refused to accept such impositions ran the risk of being clubbed to death. (Marco Monnier as cited in Behan 13)

During the Risorgimento, liberals were forced to rely on the Camorra for stability. The Camorra had become mercenaries within Naples, acting as secret policemen under Ferdinand II's reign, as liberal oppositionists during the final years of Bourbon rule and then as official policemen immediately following Unification: "The Camorra had played all of these roles for money; there is no evidence of *Camorristi* having had any consistent political opinions" (19). They were roaming the corridors of power, so they became more politically active. Behan says that they not only extorted money for smuggling goods, but also forced merchants to buy smuggled goods: "Once [merchants] had paid off the Camorra, traders found that they were still paying far less than the official price" (19). This meant a significant revenue drop for the new administration, but the merchants did not want to change their habits:

They chose the lesser of two evils. If they paid a tax to the sect [the Camorra] they only ran the risk of being discovered by tax inspectors and suffering a minor conviction; but if they paid the tax inspectors then they were certain of being caught by *camorristi* and given a good beating. So they paid a tax to the sect. (Marco Monnier as cited in Behan 19)

The post-Unification period up to the turn of the century constitutes the Camorra's second phase, and is characterized by the Camorra's steady advance into many areas of Neapolitan society. The last half of the nineteenth century proved to be even more economically devastating for Italy and the South in particular.⁹ Behan says that as the Camorra became directly involved in commerce for the first time, council contracts and rebuilding projects dominated the city's economy. This is a significant point at which the Camorra began its long parasitic influence on Neapolitan commerce. The repercussions can still be seen today in modern-day Italy. The extension of suffrage in 1882 and 1889 led to more Camorra in political influence. The liberal leadership relied on the Camorra for votes (Behan 21).

According to Tullio-Altan, the nineteenth-century citizenry was not prepared to assume civic responsibility. This was the typical Italian attitude in the years immediately after national unification:

Non bisogna dimenticare che gli elettori, nella loro grande maggioranza, in tutte le regioni italiane e non solo del meridione, erano ancora portatori di uno scarso senso di responsabilità sociale e di sensibilità per gli interessi collettivi della società civile dello stato, non avendo subito, nella loro generalità, alcun processo formativo in questa direzione dall'ambiente nel quale erano nati e si erano formati: su di essi pesava duramente la storica arretratezza socio-culturale del paese. (74)

⁹ Naples and the South began to fall economically even further behind the rest of Italy. Poverty remained rampant and surfaced in particular virulent form in another outbreak of cholera in 1884. Cholera is endemic to Naples, which last suffered an outbreak in 1973. (Behan 20-21)

This is the period when the Camorra began to gain political protection, even leading street protests in 1893 against the massacre of Italian workers in Aigues-Mortes in France (Behan 21). The Camorra's attitudes toward politics remained purely mercenary, and the Republican Party made an accusation in its newspaper in 1879:¹⁰

We have heard that Questura policemen are being subsidized by gaming-houses, and that the average daily amount is the tidy sum of ten lire! One could say that the Camorra are always around, all that changes is the uniform of the lazy bourgeois and that of the idle police official (Behan 22).

Saviano writes that the situation has worsened: "Campania is now the Italian region with the highest number of cities under observation for Camorra infiltration. A total of seventy-one municipal administrations have been dissolved since 1991" (GO 46).

The rise of the Socialist Party (PSI) and trade unionists helped to bring a voice and a new vision of a better future. The socialists also began to attack the collusion between the city council and the Camorra, a campaign which led to the conviction of a councilor for corruption and eventually to the resignation of the entire council in November 1900 (Behan 22-23). Such public awareness helped to put the Camorra into check by setting a precedent for other public and effective trials:¹¹

¹⁰ Distribution of the Republican Party's newspaper had incidentally been banned by the local police headquarters (Behan 21).

¹¹ Behan cites such public inquiries as that conducted by Giuseppe Saredo that was instituted in November 1900 and the 1911-12 mass trial investigating the murder of a Camorrista named Gennaro Cuocolo (23-24).

By the outbreak of the First World War, however, the word “Camorra” had all but disappeared from normal usage. For example, the new songs about the Neapolitan underworld began to talk about *guappi*, or *guapparia*, which more to do with individual attitude than membership in an organization. (Behan 24-25)

During the Fascist years, the Camorra was almost completely stamped out of existence. This changed during the Allied invasion of Italy, the Americans had close links to Italian-American “advisers,” many of whom were Sicilian Mafiosi. In 1943, American and English agents stationed at the Allied Headquarters in Algiers landed covertly in Sicily to gather military information, encourage acts of sabotage and meet with individuals who would later take control of the island. According to Behan, these agents made contact with “Pro-Allied anti-Fascists” through Lucky Luciano, one of America’s major gangsters. He claims that there is clear evidence of collaboration between Mafia boss Luciano and the United States authorities. Through him, the Allies contributed significantly to the resurrection of the Mafia in Italy (33). They enlisted the help of elderly corrupt politicians who had been pushed aside by Fascism. All the Mafiosi had to do was to proclaim their “anti-Fascism” to become part of the Allies’ administration. For both the Americans and the British, the thought of encouraging socialists and communists was completely abhorrent (35).

When the Allied administration and Italian authorities became aware of a Mafia reappearance, they placed known leaders under observation. This meant concentrating on Sicily but not on Naples where there was not yet a visible Camorra. With the Allies’ attention focused on Sicily, Naples became a convenient staging post for Mafia activities:

[W]hile the contraband trade disappeared from the other areas of Italy soon after 1945, it became rooted in Naples, constituting one of the city's principal economic activities: during the war food dominated the trade, followed by various Allied goods, then clothes and textiles, then cigarettes and electrical appliances, and finally hard drugs from the 1902 onwards. (Behan 37)

The Mafia continued to consolidate its power in Naples cultivating a new generation of Neapolitan criminals. These developments lead to the rise of Camorra groups totally distinct from the Mafia over a period of two decades (Behan 38-39). A "new Camorra" began to emerge that was fostered by the influx of private sector growth and government *clientelismo*. Even today, this unhealthy Camorra dominance exists in Campania (GO 46-47).

During 1980 and 1983, a gang war was being fought everywhere in the Campania region which left hundreds of dead:

These gang wars also had an important lasting effect on Naples and Campania: that of intimidating the local population. Until then the Camorra had been a fairly sporadic if worrying phenomenon in the eyes of the public, but the continual news of mass murders and shoot-outs obviously created a climate of fear and conditioned Neapolitans to accept permanently high levels of Camorra activity. (Behan 59)

All states function not only on the basis of law and regulations, but on interpersonal contacts and informal relations. But these latter relations outweigh the former in Italy, threatening to engulf them. According to anthropologist Amalia Signorelli, modern Italian

clientelism has been defined as “a system of interpersonal relations in which private ties of kinship, ritual friendship, or friendship type are used in public structures, with the intent of making public resources serve private ends” (Signorelli as cited in Ginsborg 100). Ginsborg explains the role that clientelism plays in Italian government:

In the history of the Italian Republic the public patron, a politician or civil servant, acted as a sort of gatekeeper, distributing selected public resources (jobs, pensions, licenses, etc.) to clients, friends and relations in return for fidelity, both personal and electoral.
(100)

This historically unhealthy form of “charity” reflected a particular Italian culture of clientelism in the international surveys conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. When asked about factors influencing the best way to “succeed” in life, the Italians, more than other nations, consistently put “knowing the right people” very high on their list of priorities. They also place great stock in having “political contacts” as being a key ingredient (101-102).

Saviano uses the first half of *Gomorra* to document the present culture of crime that has grown out of this long history of criminality. In these early chapters he explains the Camorra’s current business practices and warns of their growing reach around the world. These chapters explain the “economic history of the people” which leads to the dire apocalyptic warning of the second half of *Gomorra*.

The first five chapters are “The Port,” “Angelina Jolie,” “The System,” “The Secondigliano War” and “Women.” They are based on the socio-economic woes of Naples and the Campania region. Chimenti suggests that film theory offers a typology for better understanding these chapters. The book, *Lo sguardo e l’evento*, by Marco Dinoi identifies three

figures (graft, drawing and insert) to be used in analyzing film. Chimenti alludes to them as a useful source in understanding Saviano's novel. Dinoi's typology was conceived for "a medium that functions with technical modalities that can only be metaphorically transposed to literature" (Chimenti 43-44). The first form, graft, refers to the narrative situations that focus on historical events and recontextualize their meaning. Chimenti explains that recontextualization of the past results from parallel plots and autobiographical elements. It can also be achieved by the matching of apparently distant and autonomous events through a narrative or dramaturgic strategy. Typically the graft is a combination of the material derived from the writer's imagination, from his or her personal life or from research in the field:

Of Dinoi's three figures, the graft recurs most often, and belongs to the tradition of the historical novel in general. The term refers to those narrative situations that focus on historical events and recontextualizes their meanings. To have a graft, though, history must not be reduced to a mere backdrop of the scene, nor should it be manipulated by the text. Rather, the recontextualization of the past happens because of a development of parallel plots and autonomous events through a narrative or dramaturgic strategy.

(Chimenti 44).

The second figure, the insert, manipulates meaning by inserting a fictional character or element that advances the articulation of the narrative. The third figure, drawing, introduces objects that are historically accurate and autonomous from the narrative (44-46).

In the first chapter of *Gomorra*, Saviano begins giving information about the pervasive crime that radiates out from Naples, carefully building his report to establish both the depth and breadth of illegal activities of the Camorra. Chimenti notes that Saviano himself (or rather his textual simulacrum) is grafted, as an ever present narrative “I used to go to the port to eat fish” (GO 9). This entrance point might be deemed a suspicious anecdote if criticized in gatekeeper journalistic terms, for this is not purely a mirror of reality. Phrases like these are entrance points that signal a passage between the historical world, autonomous from and preceding the text, and the world constructed within the novel. They textualize the real by means of literary praxis. In this way, *Gomorra*’s readers journey through the events by following parallel routes. At times, the reader crosses a path that is recorded in real-life documents. At other times they are lead some distance to imagination and literary creation (Chimenti 44).

The literary embellishments include Saviano’s biblical references and literary allusions which create the awareness that there is more to his story than a mere recounting of facts. The first paragraphs are about Chinese expatriates whose dying wishes were that they be returned to their homes for burial. As the chapter opens, their dead bodies are being spilled onto the ground from a container that was dropped by a crane. The dead Chinese have been frozen and stacked in containers that are moving through the port of Naples to their homes.

The Chinese bodies are a parody of John 11:1-45 which tells of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. An essential tenant to the Christian religion is the resurrection from the dead. But in this vivid picture, Saviano foreshadows the final chapter which introduces “Death,” one of

the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. In the book of Revelation, Death's companion is Hell. Saviano uses chapter one to begin to describe the hell that has been created by the Camorra.¹²

They looked like mannequins. But when they hit the ground, their heads split open as if their skulls were real. And they were. Men, women even a few children, came tumbling out of the container. All dead. Frozen, stacked one on top of another. (GO 3)

In chapter one the port of Naples is used to represent the cultural pollution that has overcome the area. The author achieves this through a careful grafting of illegal activities and literary allusion. The sentences: "Everything that exists passes through here" and "The port of Naples is an open wound. The end point for the interminable voyage that merchandise makes" convey that this port and this book have universal themes (GO 4). The use of "open wound" is a reminder of the image of Christ on the cross and of the stigmata. Many classrooms throughout Italy feature a crucifix at the head of the class. Stigmata are painful open wounds given to the faithful, said to have been received by Saint Catherine, Saint Francis and most recently by Padre Pio. According to the Catholic Church, the stigmata indicate that those who receive them are mystics.

Saviano details the connections between manufacturing in China, corruption in Italy and the contamination of the worldwide economy as goods move through the port of Naples and the Camorra system. He gives an account of the intricate patterns of commerce that go on and he

¹² "I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence and by the wild animal of the earth" (Revelation 6:8).

establishes his mastery of the facts of his topic. He uses documented information such as the following graft:

In April 2005, the Antifraud unit of Italian Customs, which had by chance launched four separate operations nearly simultaneously, confiscated 24,000 pairs of jeans intended for the French market; 51,000 items from Bangladesh labeled “Made in Italy”; 450,000 figurines, puppets, Barbies, and Spider-men; and another 46,000 plastic toys — for a total value of approximately 36 million euros.
(GO 8)

He goes beyond a mere recounting of facts, using one of the many biblical images that appear throughout the book and the film. He says that the port is the “eye of the needle” and the ships that pass through are the “camel”: “The biblical image seems appropriate: the eye of the needle is the port, and the camel that has to pass through are the ships” (GO 6). It was intended as a lesson about the harm that greed and love of money can cause as noted in Mathew 19:23-24. Jesus taught that salvation would come to a rich man if he sold his worldly goods and gave them to the poor.

Saviano introduces another religious term when he writes of cargo containers that have duplicate numbers so that they can pass untaxed through the customs checks. He satirizes the way the Camorra moves illegal goods into the Italian ports by falsifying their records.¹³ When

¹³ Dante lampoons Church Simonists through a perverted baptism as depicted in the *Inferno*, Canto XIX. Dante’s irony is that while the baptismal font is normally the opening to spiritual freedom, his are the reverse. In his hell, each font serves as a kind of oubliette to entrap rather than to free souls.

the first number is recorded it ~~b~~aptizes” the other containers with the same number (GO 7). In the Catholic Church, baptism is the ~~g~~ate” or ~~d~~oor” to its faith. It is through baptismal rights that a soul can be redeemed. He links this religious practice with the world of evil, establishing one of his literary allusions to duality.

He introduces a water theme, using the criminal pollution of the port by evil as a continuing metaphor in other chapters of the book and again in the movie. He goes on to describe the ships entering the Gulf of Naples as though they were ~~l~~ike babies to the breast, except that they’re here to be milked, not fed. The port of Naples is the hole in the earth out of which what’s made in China comes” (GO 4). Saviano even likens the ship traffic into the port to a sort of violent sodomizing of Naples: ~~It~~ is as if the anus of the seas was opening out, causing great pain to the sphincter muscles” (GO 6). Saviano continues this violent motif by describing the port as a kind of wasteland of sin and filth:

The port is detached from the city. An infected appendix, never quite degenerating into peritonitis, always there in the abdomen of the coastline. A desert hemmed in by water and earth, but which seems to belong to neither land nor sea. A grounded amphibian, a marine metamorphosis. (GO 8)

The first chapter of *Gomorra* introduces the narrator in a first person singular narration, which follows the literary tradition of apocalyptic literature. Daschke notes that apocalypses and dreams depend heavily on narrative to convey their importance. This is also true for the articulation of many other important cultural forms, such as myth, epic, and history. In apocalyptic narration, the concern is for the narrative form of the seer’s experience, which is often told autobiographically, in the first person, or at least puts his emotional life at its center

(Daschke 36). Through a vague first person narration, Saviano tells of his arrival at the port and his experiences with the Chinese, who seem to populate the place. We are never told why the narrator has come to the port, but the apartment and the warehouse work are his introduction into the seamy business of moving illicit merchandise through Naples.

Working as a longshoreman teaches the narrator about the all-consuming business of beating the competitor's prices and all the tricks the Chinese, North Africans and Italians must use to keep prices low and satisfy consumers. In working at the docks, Saviano evokes the Christological image of the fisherman, used as a symbol for Christ, the apostles, and Christianity since the earliest days of the Church.

The narrator tells his reader about the Chinese mafia, "The Triad." The Triad is yet another symbolic affront to the Holy Trinity. This Sino-Italian connection confirms that, since the 1980s, the Camorra has diversified into a truly cosmopolitan business that is spreading contamination both domestically and abroad. Not only is the System working in collaboration with the emerging market of mainland China, but it is also cultivating its own non-Italian workers within the confines of the European Union.

Saviano ends the chapter by denouncing the consumer's obsession with lower prices and the corruption that follows when business competes for business by whatever means are available. He writes of the older business model of the Italian clans, stating that they evolved from selling smuggled cigarettes to selling consumer goods. He writes that addiction to consumerism has replaced nicotine habits. With this chapter the narrator has established several themes that carry throughout the book. He has introduced biblical and literary references. He has established the enormous amount of worldly goods that are involved in illegal activities. Specific factual information about the countries and international companies involved with crime

has been given. He has reminded us that the consumer's addictions are the driving force for this massive corruption. Saviano has warned that there is a cutthroat price war developing, as discounts mean the difference between life and death for agents, wholesalers, and merchants. He has used a unique narrative style and the literary technique of graft. He has demonstrated a fundamental role that literary imagination can play in realizing the world. For Chimenti, the narrating "I" established in this chapter of *Gomorra* is a strong testimonial position. Without being documentary, it instills one with "una certezza che non potrà mai avere alcun tipo di conferma" (Saviano as cited in Chimenti 48).

"Angelina Jolie"

In chapter two, Saviano captures the globalized nature of the Camorra giving descriptions of the hostility between the Camorra clans and what are perceived as Chinese interlopers. The narrator has established a relationship with one of the typical Chinese workers who keep the economy of the port flowing. The reader is introduced to what the narrator calls the "urban agglomerations" of Naples. These are towns described as lumps of cement and tangles of streets, a setting that echoes earlier Neorealist styles that depict harsh gritty scenes of poverty.

He names specific towns that have no regulations and no planning; they are ripe for business gambles that can make or break their backers. The city of Foggia is nicknamed "Califoggia" and the region of Calabria is called "Calafria." The area where most of these towns are found is called "Las Vegas," a name that connotes pure and unrestrained capitalism to the Italians. These towns make up the area where small factories have sprung up to produce goods shipped abroad to capitalize on the cachet of the term "Made in Italy." With each

manufacturer shaving prices, lowering quality, and trying dirty tricks, there is a race to the bottom for wages and benefits for the workers (GO 17).

The narrator offers a boy named Emanuele as an example of what life in those slums does to the young people, symbols of Italy's future. According to Ginsborg, the Camorra has been more likely to involve adolescents and even whole families in activities such as the selling of drugs than their mafia counterparts (200). Emanuele was a fifteen-year-old boy killed by the police as he committed a robbery with a toy gun. The boy's eulogy is given by the parish priest, Padre Mauro:

For all the responsibilities we can assign to Emanuele, the fact remains that he was fifteen years old. At that age, the sons of families born in other parts of Italy are going to the pool, taking dance lessons. It's not like that here. [...] Fifteen is an age that knocks at the conscience of those who merely play at legality, work, and responsibility. An age that doesn't knock gently, but claws with its nails. (GO 24)

The narrator writes: "I went to Emanuele's funeral" (GO 23). Chimenti explains that this is an event constructed within *Gomorra*, which textualizes the real by means of literary praxis. It is a historical event that recontextualizes meaning.

Next, the author takes the reader inside manufacturing facilities of the big fashion houses. He lifts the veil of glamour and sophistication associated with "Made in Italy." He claims that this label means that a garment was made in the sweatshops of Naples. He paints a picture similar to the garment workers in America before labor laws began to protect them: underpaid workers working in miserable and dangerous quarters, too frightened for their jobs to make

demands. He blames business practices associated with consumerism for making it difficult to have any recourse (GO 26). Saviano details the manufacturing style, calling it Post Fordism. Antonio Gramsci was an Italian intellectual who lived during the time of Fordism. He painted a similarly bleak picture of Fordism. He was a founding member and onetime leader of the Communist Party of Italy and his writings mostly deal with the analysis of culture and political leadership. Gramsci was a renowned thinker within the Marxist tradition, and he is prominent for his concept of cultural hegemony as a means of maintaining the state in a capitalist society. Gramsci once wrote about Fordism:

This is the point of view from which one must examine the ~~puritanical~~” initiatives of American industrialists like Ford. It is obvious that they do not concern themselves with the ~~humanity~~” and the ~~spirituality~~” of the worker, which are crushed. This humanity, this spirituality, used to be realized, within the sphere of work, in productive ~~ereation~~”; it reached its highest point in the work of the artisan, wherein the worker’s individuality was wholly reflected in the object created and the link between art and labor was still very strong. But his form of humanity and spirituality is precisely what the new industrialism fights against. (Gramsci 116)

The Jungle, by American writer Lewis Sinclair, complains about the lack of social programs and the general proletarian malaise during the first half of twentieth-century America. This fictional book is based on real social issues of his time and drew controversial debate. The politically motivated book closes with a message to organize into unions. Saviano also ended his

book with a cry for resistance: “To set oneself against the clans becomes a war of survival, as if existence itself [...] were merely a way to survive, not the meaning of life” (GO 300).

Saviano repeats the technique he establishes in chapter one of using insert to illustrate his theme. In this case he tells the reader about Pasquale, a skilled garment worker who was one of the best of the workers. Chimenti notes that Pasquale is a fictional character, but his experience is almost surely representative of a real individual. Here Saviano introduces for the first time his theme of prophecy, which becomes stronger in later chapters:

[Pasquale] was like a prophet when he spoke about fabric and was overly fastidious in clothing stores; it was impossible even to go for a stroll with him because he’d plant himself in front of every shop window and criticize the cut of a jacket or feel ashamed for the tailor who’d designed such a skirt. He could predict the longevity of a particular style of pants, jacket or dress, and the exact number of washings before the fabric would start to sag. (GO 33)

As Pasquale “moonlights” for the Chinese, the narrator is given an opportunity to tell the reader about the connection between China, Italy, and the fashion industry. No one is innocent of what is going on in terms of exploitation of workers, tax violations and smuggling. Even the government is complicit. The injustice of this exploitation overwhelms Pasquale. His character is not the same documentary material that constitutes characters like Francesco Schiavone or Cosimo Di Lauro. They are well-known figures in the Camorra who were arrested after years as fugitives. According to Chimenti, Pasquale is subjected to the needs of the text, and as a result, he becomes functional within the interstitial space between reality and its representation. A graft

such as this one, allows for some mediation between the two planes, installing textual meanings upon real events. Pasquale's testimony begins from the text and then intersects the territories of the real before coming back to the texts (Chimenti 45).

The famous scene of Angelina Jolie is a catalyst. As typically found in the NIE, we see insert used to capture and inhabit the historical past. The insert directly manipulates textualized events and characters in Saviano's narration. The insert introduces a fictional character or element that advances the text toward the articulation of the narrative. For example, Pasquale, himself a fictional character, watches Angelina Jolie at the Oscars (45). The contradiction between the wealth displayed in Hollywood and his own impoverished life, the lack of recognition and respect for his talent, all came crashing down on Pasquale. He cannot go on in his business. Pasquale is reduced to driving a truck for the Camorra, and his great skill is wasted. As Pasquale faces his future, without even the trade that gave him such pleasure and dignity, the reader is given a poem popular with the peasants who had to face the stupidity of their leaders in World War I. The poem ends with, ~~their~~ "their verdict is on governments and history" (GO 35).

At the end of this chapter we are offered Marx's *Capital*, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, John Maynard Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* and Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as guides that fall short of defining what is happening to the people caught up in this illegal and immoral form of unfettered capitalism. The narrator's statement is that each of these books has ~~a~~ "a forgotten page that never got written." This appears to be a cryptic allusion to the fact that none of these books offers a spiritual guide. Saviano states: ~~And~~ "And when work is only about staying afloat, surviving, when

it's merely an end in itself, it becomes the worst kind of loneliness" (GO 35- 36). We are being led to a religious and humanistic perspective of the world's economy.

–The System”

Chapter three, –The System,” is about the business practices in the Naples area and the people who participate in what they call *il sistema* (The System). The Secondigliano System is one of the powerful clans. Because of flexibility and lack of legal restraints they are making profits unimaginable for any legal industrial conglomerate (GO 38-39). The author describes their motives and economic practices as being driven by greed. He introduces his recurring theme which is also found in the Bible: –For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (1Timothy 6:10).

While there are graft characters in earlier chapters, (Saviano's –” narrator in –The Port,” Emanuele in –Angelina Jolie,” Pasquale in –Angelina Jolie”) this chapter does not have a specific graft character. We do see in this chapter the third figure of Dinoi's typology known as drawing. Chimenti writes: –The term relates to objects that appear just as they are in history, that is, texts that are autonomous from the narrative, and that may be immediately recognized as such by the reader” (45). Drawing thus configures the narrative in realistic way, because it interacts with the other two figures (graft and insert) (45-46).

Saviano gives the reader factual information about the criminality he abhors. The businesses that are part of the System have a management apparatus that is referred to as the –Directory.” Saviano exposes the Directory. He names the family clans and the towns they are in. Then he follows their trail to Germany, Spain, Brussels, Vienna, Portugal, London, Ireland,

Finland, Denmark, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Canada, the United States, New South Wales and South America. Their immense success is emboldening them to operate in Cuba, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. He writes: “Never in the economy of a region has there been such a widespread, crushing criminal presence as in Campania in the last 10 years. Unlike the Sicilian Mafia groups, the Camorra clans don’t need politicians; it’s the politicians who need the System” (GO 47). Behan reinforces the factual authenticity when he writes that part of the reason for the offshore financial operations is to help launder money. Even though the actual financial operation may take place in the country of origin, in legal and bookkeeping terms the transaction takes place in a foreign country. Extortion and intimidation are the oldest forms of Camorra activity that are still important today. In 1992 the shop owners’ association ASCOM declared that nearly forty-six percent of shops pay protection money in Naples, compared with a national average of twelve percent (Behan 116).

This chapter gives the actual business plan of the Camorra: “The Camorra is made up of groups that suck like voracious lice, hindering all economic development, and others that operate as instant innovator, pushing their businesses to new heights of development and trade” (GO 45-46). Furthermore, the Camorra leadership has started investing in organizations that deal primarily with public and private sector contracts (Behan 112). Saviano states that there has never in the economy of a region been such a widespread, crushing criminal presence as in Campania in the last ten years. He names the film, *Mi manda Picone* to emphasize that the clans are so prosperous that the dole system is not necessary anymore.¹⁴ The mention of the film is

¹⁴ The 1984 film takes place in Naples and is about Salvatore who puts aside money that he accumulates at the expense of the Camorra. He goes to a hospital each day to assist patients and visitors. Eventually a mysterious woman asks him to do something strange. Lucella Picone asks

significant as it introduces another aspect of dualism that will be more fully explored in Part Two of *Gomorra*, specifically the question of reality and illusion.

In “The System,” Saviano again refers to the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible.¹⁵ He focuses on greed, the love of money, as supplanting the love of God. The chapter ends with a parody of the Mass when one of the *Camorristi* tries to “repent” for a “sin” committed against a boss:

Legend has it that Paolo Di Lauro’s dauphin, Gennaro Marino, known as McKay, went to comfort the boss in the hospital where Domenico lay dying. Di Lauro accepted his solace and then took him aside and offered him a drink: he pissed in a glass and handed it to McKay. Word had reached the boss of his favorite’s behavior, things he simply could not condone. The boss was aware of his dauphin’s desire for autonomy, and he longed to pardon him, [...].

him to verify whether or not her recently-deceased husband is in the morgue. After purloining Picone’s journal, the suspicious Salvatore discovers that the dead husband was an insurance collector for the Camorra. Hoping to exploit this secret, Salvatore starts making the rounds “on behalf of Picone.” The mafioso’s widow finds out about Salvatore’s fraudulent scheme.

¹⁵ Portrayal of the Camorra’s perverse religious parody by Saviano echoes that of Dante’s satire of the Church in the eighth level of the *Inferno* in the *Malebolge*. The damned are banished to this realm for sins of fraudulence and malevolence. In a Karma-like way, the *contrapasso* (divine retribution) is relevant to the sin committed. For Dante, it is a divine expression of a logical relationship between the offense and the correlating punishment. In the 8th circle of Cantos 18-23 the counter-step punishment often parodies the Church (pouches 1-6).

Legend has it that McKay drank it all, every last drop. A swig of piss resolved the first schism to occur within the leadership of the Di Lauro clan. (GO 58-59)

Dal Lago, one of Saviano's harshest critics, reinforces the religious theme when he complains that Saviano is aspiring for a moral retribution by using the urine motif:

La verità è che la minzione di Saviano ha un chiaro valore di retribuzione morale rispetto al famoso episodio dei Visitors. Chi d'urina ferisce ... Walter Schiavone-Tony Montana-Al Pacino avrebbe potuto commentare, con un personaggio dantesco: «Così s'osserva in me lo contrapasso.» (Dal Lago 64)¹⁶

–The Secondigliano War’

In Chapter 4, –The Secondigliano War,‑ a representative of the Spanish cartel, Raffaele Amato, decides to withhold money from drug traffic. This is in essence a declaration of secession and is met with retaliation and war. The reason for the war was a love of money (GO 74). According to Saviano, there has been an 80 percent increase in cocaine consumption from 1999 to 2002 (67). Saviano draws a direct connection to affluence, unrestrained business

¹⁶ As Dante peregrinates through the *Inferno*, Canto XXVIII, he alludes to Bertrand de Born in this quote. Born about 1140, Bertran was a French nobleman whom Dante calls the unsurpassed poet of arms in Provençal. He supposedly tricked his brother out of ownership of the Hautefort castle and eventually displaced him. This act of treachery condemned Bertrand to hell for being a sower of discord.

practices and the increased use of cocaine. In this environment the rule is *laissez-faire* and *laissez-passer*. The idea is to let the market regulate itself.

Saviano's passion and commitment to his message inspires some of his best writing. He creates the drama and vitality of the mafia movies such as *Scarface*, *Goodfellas* and *The Godfather*. He uses colorful phrases, rich with imagery: "Enough of this passing word from mouth to mouth, of messages sticky from the saliva of too many tongues [...]" (GO 60), and "Then again, you don't divide up an empire with a handshake. You have to cut it with a knife," and "he needs to be prepared for their claws in his flesh" (GO 61). Pasquale, the garment worker who cannot use his talent, becomes the narrator's guide through this rung of hell that is the drug trade. Pasquale is an attendant for Saviano in much the same way that Virgil serves as a companion to Dante. Both Pasquale and Virgil serve as objective voices commenting on the underworld around them. Pasquale is "subjected to the needs of the text, thus becoming functional within the interstitial space between reality and its representation" (Chimenti 45). As he tours his own hell, Saviano admits that: "Neutrality and objective distance are not places I have ever been able to find" (GO 73).

As the wars and competition continue, the gang leader, Cosimo, decides to involve children in the business, increasing his manpower and insuring that the next generation is damned by the corrupt way of life. The vast numbers of young people who sell drugs for the Camorra are often nameless victims themselves. The Camorra youth are likely to die very young or spend long periods in jail, because they lack the money to hire a lawyer or to influence the judiciary system: "They are also useful fodder for politicians who need to silence any criticisms that they are soft on crime" (Behan 113). But the war goes on. When the men are arrested, they know their sons will have to take on positions in the terror and the cycle will continue.

Neorealism used children as bystanders looking on, a depiction of children as blank slates.¹⁷

There is an understanding that the children are the future. In the Bible the suffering children are possessed of the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:14).

Again the narrator ends a chapter about the general and widespread horror of the clan wars with a character graft. It is a story (also used in the film *Gomorra*) of a fourteen-year-old boy, Pikachu, who wants to be part of a clan. He is “baptized” into the machismo and ordered to kill a friend’s mother. We are told how boys like Pikachu are recruited. They want to become successful businessmen as they see business practiced in their neighborhoods. We learn that these boys are taught to use drugs so they can work long hours and do the horrors of their jobs. It is a sad and frightening picture of the fathers’ evil passed to the sons. The Christian doctrine of original sin is based on the concept that we have inherited our nature through Adam’s original act of rejection of God’s law. Bible verses that articulate this include Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12-21 and 1Corinthians 15:22. Sin entered the world because of Adam and is passed from father to son.

According to Behan, Camorra gangs encourage young men under the age of eighteen to participate in violent crimes or murders since they cannot be tried as adults (114). He reports that between 1984 and 1985 the Naples Juvenile Court dealt with fifty cases of alleged murder. The number of underage youth charged with crimes doubled during the 1980s and increased another twenty-eight percent between 1990 and 1992, with the largest increase, ninety-three

¹⁷ In discussing Vittorio De Sica’s Neorealism film, *Shoeshine* (*Sciuscià* in Italian), Pierson notes: “[The film] commemorates the countless children who lost their families and friends during the conflict while, metaphorically, it commemorates condemned innocence of all ages” (149).

percent, relating to under fourteen-year-olds, who cannot even appear in court (114). Saviano writes that these boy capos die for money and power. They do it at all costs and in defense of the only way of life they understand. In a wiretapped conversation, a boy working for the Camorra explains who the neighborhood capos are: “They’re young kids, the talking dead, the living dead, the walking dead...they kill you without even thinking twice about it, but you’re already as good as dead” (GO 114).

The rest of the chapter is made up of descriptions of the most ruthless and bloodthirsty of acts and references to the loss of the victims’ souls and beliefs. Along with an accounting of the violence, there is an introduction of retribution. In the end, the System uses its own methods to punish those who betray them by sealing their victims’ lips with a cross cut into their flesh. This gruesome act signifies that the victim betrayed the faith of greed by which they all live. The clan has assumed the role reserved to God. The Bible has numerous prohibitions against revenge. Romans 12:19, Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 32:35 and Proverbs 20:22 are all among the many warnings to God’s people against taking vengeance into their own hands.

In “The System” Saviano has given the reader a view of how the “end times” are being constructed. He used the metaphor of the sun, just as religious philosophers have done for thousands of years, to represent God. He has his mobsters challenge the sun, showing that they are not blinded even by that supreme light. Even as the mobsters look directly at the sun they remain unflinching.

“The Women”

In chapter five, “The Women,” the narrator states he will give the reader “an existential truth that gives itself to you: the realization of how things work, the path the present is taking”

(GO 136). Italian values and behaviors are influenced by the country's long history with the Catholic Church and the country's interpretation of the Church's teachings. Concern for women and children is not unique to Italy; literature and journalism in other countries often focuses on the condition of women as well as children. But, there are few, if any, other Western countries where Madonna exaltation is so visible an influence. Since the time of the Romans, who imported Isis worship from Egypt, female worship has been an important aspect of religion in Italy. Although many theologians argue that there is a difference between the cult of Madonna and the worship of other female deities, there has always been a strong cultural veneration for a female supreme being.¹⁸ The place of "mother" in Italian culture has traditionally been sacrosanct. Consequently, Italian culture is sometimes contradictory and inconsistent in how it defines and acknowledges the role of the female, but it has remained constant that the female is the vessel that produces the future of the country. Saviano's eschatology would therefore be concerned with the role and future of women.

Saviano states that women are always part of clan power dynamics, as they are prominent in Italian culture. He paints two pictures of women in Campania. The first is a traditional role as dependent, the other is warrior in the criminal battle for money. For the first role, the monthly allowance is the "must-have." Even when the male is dead or in jail, the clan makes regular deliveries to his female dependents. That is part of the "benefits" package of employment.

¹⁸ A particular example of Neapolitan female exaltation can be seen in the religious feast of the Madonna dell'Arco in Santa Anastasia. The *Fujenti* rites are of particular note as many believe they hark back to pagan origins. For a more detailed explanation of this Marian celebration, see James J. Preston's, ed. *Mother Worship: Themes and Variations*.

Children eventually go into crime to help support their mothers and the female members of the family.

Saviano writes: “The typical image of the Camorra woman is of a female who does nothing but echo the pain and will of her men” (GO 141). The role of comforter is an important one for the traditional woman of the working classes. The woman’s role is to convey grief symbolically to the community. They go to the funeral and they imitate the ritual of sobbing and shrieking that their mothers demonstrate (GO 153). Pine comments on Saviano’s description of women’s rituals, saying that performed grief is not false grief. He explains that most Neapolitan women are “culturally condemned” to publicly express their pain with an antiquated symbolic code resembling the century-old melodramatic musical theater genre called the *sceneggiata* (scripted part). He writes that for a young female in this milieu, attending her first funeral for a Camorra victim is like losing her virginity: it means to be initiated into the world of women. He confirms Saviano’s observation that young girls mimic the dramatic sorrow of their female elders (433-444).

Pine does criticize Saviano by saying he risks totalizing a perceived “culture of violence” when he recounts the widely reported crossfire killing of a fourteen-year-old girl in 2004, and he questions Saviano’s reportage in the matter. He indicates that the story is one that we might label a graft:

There have been numerous contestations of Saviano’s narratives, particularly this last. Comments on several blogs indicate that journalists and the friends and family of the victim refute Saviano’s description of the girl, the murder and her funeral. They argue that he refashioned her in seductive clothing so that she

would conform to the “precocious” protagonist he created for his novel.” They refute his claim that the neighborhood boss attended the funeral and that the deceased girl’s cell phone rang from where she lay in her coffin. Some readers argue that Saviano did not even attend the funeral. (Pine 434)

The transformation of clan business has meant a change in the role of the women and their new role is that of warrior in the battles for economic supremacy. Even the women have lost any conscious understanding that there is a line that should not be crossed. The author states that the face of the Camorra power is increasingly female, which presents an ominous specter for his eschatology. As we learn about the contamination of the mothers and children we realize that the future is bleak. The narrator tells us:

Many of them will bear children who will be killed, or they will wait in line at the Poggioreale jail to bring news and money to their husbands. But for now they are just little girls in black. It is a funeral, but they are all carefully dressed: low waist and thong underwear showing. Perfect. They weep for a friend, knowing that this death will make them women. And, despite the pain, they had looked forward to this moment. [...] Perennial, tragic, ongoing. (GO 153-154)

In concluding this examination of Part one, there are several critical assessments that should be made. Dal Lago comments on Saviano’s style by stating that he creates a narrative triune (author, actor and eyewitness) to graft fact with literary embellishment. He tells the story and history of the Camorra from three different points of view that often blur into each other and

become difficult to distinguish. He claims that from a journalist's viewpoint, *Gomorra* would be poorly written because of its symbolization processes. Dal Lago explains Saviano's narrative style as follows:

Noi sappiamo già che l'io narrante, in *Gomorra*, è infradiegetico, perché non solo narra in prima persona, ma questa è *dentro* le vicende narrate (a dire che il vero, *Gomorra* è anche indirettamente, anzi anonimamente, una narrazione metadiegetica, perché riporta racconti di altri, non meglio specificati). Ma dire che l'io narrante di *Gomorra* è infradiegetico non gli rende giustizia. Scompaginando le sicurezze della narratologia, *Gomorra* è un libro in cui infradiegesi e extradiegesi si si alternano secondo il ghiribizzo dell'autore (42).

One reads *Gomorra* with the assumption that ~~la~~ "scrittura rientra in una dimensione comunicativa" (Dal Lago 9), and interprets the text as ~~una~~ "macchina-di-scrittura che produce un certo effetto di verità" (36). Dal Lago does not interpret Saviano as a mystic or prophet. He writes that *Gomorra* has been written to emphasize Saviano's triunal narrative ~~è~~ "for selfish means. For him, Saviano becomes almost omniscient in his narration and eye witness accounts as part of a process done to make himself into a hero in both literary and in laymen terms: ~~La~~ "parola eroe vuol dire due cose: in letteratura, protagonista di una narrazione e, nel discorso comune, essere eccezionale che combatte qualche tipo di nequizia [...]" (44). For Dal Lago, Saviano is striving for both through a polyvalent narrator role.

In Part one of *Gomorra*, Saviano has given us a panoramic chronicle of the Camorra in its contemporary state. It is Saviano's testimony and description of the current Camorra, an

economic history of the people of Naples with ethical exhortations. Saviano has compiled information about what the Camorra is and how it operates. He has provided insight into the pervasiveness of its criminality, not only in Naples, but throughout Italy and the world. He has given a description of the people who are controlling this environment and the people who are its victims. He has made visual and literary allusions to Christian morality versus rampant greed and he has claimed that Naples has become a godless culture. Saviano has used a mix of journalistic styles and cultural traditions to create his exposé. He has laid bare his own intense emotional commitment to telling and warning the world of what it is facing. Saviano now moves into the second phase, where he examines the facts he has presented from the perspective of apocalypse and eschatology.

CHAPTER 3

APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY: DUALITY AND END OF TIMES

“People are worms and they have to stay worms.”
—from a wiretapped conversation as cited in GO n.p.

The second half of *Gomorra* uses a range of literary and theological sources to complete an apocalyptic eschatology. There are six chapters; each develops an attribute of apocalyptic eschatology. Those chapters are: “Kalashnikov”—the evil one, “Cement”—agents of evil, “Don Peppino Diana”—prophecy, “Hollywood”—duality, “Aberdeen, Mondragone”—retribution, and “Land of Fires”—destiny. Saviano offers a warning based on his personal revelation and on his fears for the ultimate destiny of mankind: “What is certain, however, is that his book now consolidates and typifies a literary canon founded on the ‘rhetoric of the apocalypse’” (Pascale as cited in Pine 432). In creating his cautionary tale, Saviano develops themes taken from the Bible and literature. Dal Lago has realized that Saviano’s message is an emotional one:

E tuttavia, dato che si allude a cose esistenti o possibili, c’è un problema di *verosimiglianza*. Non dobbiamo chiederci, insomma se ciò che racconta Saviano in prima persona sia banalmente vero, ma *verosimile*, se cioè sia adeguato alla conoscenza morale della camorra. (52)

Pine says of Saviano’s writing: “He moves his narrative forward with sometimes ethnographically rich but always dramatized tales of the infamous, martyred and anonymous participants (willing and unwilling) of the economic empire he seeks to describe” (432). Saviano

acknowledges Hannah Arendt, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Bertolt Brecht as influences, all of whom had strong beliefs. The biblical themes of Satan, agents of evil, duality, prophecy and “end times” create a condemnation of what the author believes are the destructive consequences of corruption and greed.

In *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals*, John C. Lyden gives direction for understanding Saviano’s use of religious themes. Lyden writes that the Catholic Church has taught that culture is incomplete and Christianity fulfills culture by adding revelation to reason, grace to nature and church to the secular. This perspective of Christ above culture results in artistic attempts to marry culture and Christianity. Christ transforming culture is a reformed approach which attempts to bring the larger culture closer to Christian values. Christ above culture and Christ transforming culture are often seen in Italy’s artistic traditions (Lyden 14-15).

In his book on Pasolini, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade*, Armando Maggi has written some observations about spirituality as a common theme in Italian literature. The following quote by Maggi shows the threads of spiritual influences in the development of Italian literary tradition:

I would like to explain the connection between my interest in Renaissance mysticism, Neo-Platonism, demonology, and this new study of Pasolini’s last works. In my two books on demonology, and spiritual beings in early modern culture [...] (*Satan’s Rhetoric* [2001] and *In the Company of Demons* [2006]), I intended to show that the study of demonic presences and possession, a central issue of Renaissance culture, necessitated a shift from its external conditions (historical, social, cultural, etc.) toward its inner

workings, so to speak. In other words I explained demonology as a densely philosophical, scientific, and theological system that can be understood fully only if we investigate how it functions in the recesses of the mind, at the boundary between the conscious and the subconscious [...] where the battle between good and evil takes place. (Maggi 18-19)

–Kalashnikov”

The *Gomorra* chapter titled “–Kalashnikov” personifies a Satan figure to develop a theme of duality, the battle between good and evil. This Satan illustrates the generally accepted argument that religious concepts are based on archetypes. He grows out of the book of Revelation’s four horsemen, harbingers of the “–end times.” The one who rides a pale horse is the arch villain, Satan. The red horse is ridden by war (Revelation 6:1-5). Both of these archetypes are represented by Lieutenant General Mikhail Timofeyevich Kalashnikov, the personification of evil and inventor of the AK-47. Kalashnikov serves the role established for Satan in the Bible of tempter, fallen angel and Antichrist.

Revelation’s Satan is sometimes embodied as a snake, other times a dragon. In chapters 12-13 of Revelation, Satan is described as the ancient dragon who tried to consume the cosmic woman. In 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, the adversary is described as “–the lawless one.” The word “–Antichrist” does not appear in Revelation, but it does appear in 1 John and 2 John of the New Testament. He is the same John considered by some scholars to be the author of Revelation. The “–Antichrist” is at times pictured as Satan’s chief helper and in some literature as Satan himself. Over time, various interpretations have converged and the “–evil one” has tended to

become one personification, variously referred to as the Antichrist or Satan. Eventually the role of Satan has become more malevolent. In the New Testament, particularly in Mark, Satan becomes an adversary to God. In Mark, Christ's acknowledgement of his role and Peter's denial of Jesus summarizes the choice before mankind of whether to deny or accept a courageous role in the battle that allows no neutral ground.¹ Many of the world's religions and philosophies share a doctrine that the world is under two irreducible elements and attempt to define and understand them. This kind of duality is often at the core of many religions and philosophies. It is the central conflict in apocalyptic literature and the book *Gomorra*.

Kalashnikov fills the role of Satan, and that evil is linked to a denunciation of greed that advances corrupt business practices. Kalashnikov is painted as the epitome of the clan businessman: "[H]e does what he has to do to win, and the rest is none of his concern" (GO 179). Saviano says that because of the AK-47, criminals around the world can bring terror to their friends, enemies and innocent bystanders. It has become the true symbol of free enterprise and has made Naples a Wild West: "Nothing in the world [...] has produced more deaths than the AK-47. It has killed more people than the atom bomb [...] more than HIV, more than the bubonic plague, more than malaria, more than all the attacks by Islamic fundamentalist" (GO 176-177). He does not spare American attitudes about guns and American laxness in controlling them. He insists that they are easily acquired from American military bases. These weapons are efficient, cheap to produce and readily available. They are ubiquitous in Naples and throughout the world. War is no longer the exclusive domain of armies (GO 178).

This fallen angel was a poet and a Lieutenant General in the Russian Army. When he was charged with designing a weapon for the army, he credited the Bible and his reading of

¹ Pagels explains the social evolution of Satan in pages 36-61 of her book *The Origins of Satan*.

literature with giving him the principles to make his design (“Guns of the World”). During an interview Kalashnikov said: “I wrote poetry in my youth, and people thought I would become a poet. But I didn’t become one. There are many bad poets out there without me. I went along a different path” (“Kalashnikov ‘Wanted to Be Poet’” n.p.).

Kalashnikov, who has retired in Russia, is revered around the world for his invention. He has been awarded the prestigious Hero of Russia award. The narrator writes of a pilgrim who comes to pay homage to Kalashnikov, icon of terror and destruction. He finds a spritely old man who receives a gift of money here, a golden tribal mask there: offerings to a man admired for the evil he makes possible. There are pictures of children throughout his apartment. Not grandchildren, but children named to honor his work (GO 173-175). Chimenti writes that incidents such as these have been singled out as being particularly troublesome to those who “chose to read *Gomorra* not quite as a novel, focusing on purely event-based referentiality. In other words, the work is criticized for not confirming itself as a mirror of reality” (44). Donadio questions the pilgrimage the narrator claims to have taken with a Kalashnikov admirer as being “suspiciously perfect” (Donadio as quoted by Chimenti 44). The narrative “I” which Chimenti, among others, has found puzzling becomes prominent in this chapter: “Saviano himself (or rather his textural simulacrum) is grafted as ever present” (Chimenti 44). What critics are questioning is a movement by the author into his revelation of the mystical. Saviano has used Kalashnikov as a graft to create a meaning beyond the mere recounting of facts of the AK-47 as a weapon.

In her book *The Origin of Satan*, Elaine Pagels’ explanation of Satan corresponds to Saviano’s description of Kalashnikov. She has made the case that Satan is a reflection of how we see ourselves and others: “Satan has, after all, made a kind of profession out of being the

‘other’; and so Satan defines negatively what we think of as human” (xviii). Pagels says the evolution of our concept of Satan has been long and complex. Satan first appears in the Bible (Numbers and Job) as one of God’s own. Satan was a messenger (the Greek word *malak*) or an angel (Greek word *angelos*). Pagels explains:

What fascinates us about Satan is the way he expresses qualities that go beyond what we ordinarily recognize as human. Satan evokes more than greed, envy, lust, and anger we identify with our own worst impulses [...]. Originally he was one of God’s angels, but a fallen one. Now he stands in open rebellion against God, and in frustrated rage he mirrors aspects of our own confrontations with otherness. (xvii)

Pagels adds that: “Evil then, at its worst, seems to involve the supernatural—what we recognize, with a shudder, as the diabolic inverse of [...] God as ‘wholly other’” (xviii).

As a philosophy student, Saviano would be aware that there are many approaches for trying to understand and resolve the conflict between the benevolent and the malignant. When he chose the apocalyptic for his literary device, he chose the Judeo-Christian view that “truth” is to be found in the conflict between “good” and “evil.” Paul, the first Christian, took the religion out of its Jewish setting into the wider world of the gentiles. As a Greek, he likely was aware of the Greek view that dualism was caused by the dichotomy of spiritual and material. But his writings are based on the Hebrew view that morality and righteousness are the important goals for mankind. According to Nancy Scott, Paul’s writings are primarily concerned with ethics and morality, as are the canons included in the New Testament:

The primary issue of the gospel is the problem of moral bankruptcy and God's deep grace that reaches into the heart to change its natural posture. And only this change will allow us to seek and to embrace truth. Our moral problem is deeply involved with our willingness (or unwillingness) to seek and embrace the truth about ourselves and about God. (Scott n.p.)

From a psychological point of view, evil has been identified by Carl Jung as an archetype that resides in the human unconscious (Iaccino xi). According to Jung, archetypes are archaic or primordial images that are not fully developed but rather are forms similar to the Platonic *eidos* (xi). Karen Romanko notes that Jung found these expressions in tribal lore, mythology, fairy tales, religious systems, and primitive art: "Archetypes are the collective unconscious, a part of the psyche which was the first to evolve and now provides the necessary link with humanity's ancestral past" (xi). James Iaccino agrees in the preface of his book, *Jungian Reflections within the Cinema: A Psychological Analysis of Sci-Fi and Fantasy Archetypes*, that religious concepts are based on archetypes present in the human unconscious. He writes that the Jungian shadow has been represented in various movies as an oppressive society or an alien race that is determined to maintain control and order in the universe (ix).²

² According to Jungian psychology, the shadow aspect is part of the unconscious mind consisting of repressed foibles, shortcomings and instincts. Jung theorized that everyone casts a psychological shadow. Since it is instinctive and irrational, the shadow is prone to projecting onto others. The shadow projects one's personal shortcomings into a perceived moral deficiency in someone else. In psychological terms, the shadow projection screens and deludes individuals by forming an ever thicker illusory buffer between one's ego and the real world.

Pagel notes that there are diverse biblical stories about the evil origins of Satan:

Yet they all agree on one thing: that this greatest and most dangerous enemy did not originate, as one might expect, as an outsider, an alien, or a stranger. Satan is not the distant enemy but the intimate enemy—one's trusted colleague, close associate, brother. He is the kind of person on whose loyalty and goodwill the well-being of family and society depend—but one who turns unexpectedly jealous and hostile. Whichever version of his origin one chooses, then, and there are many, all depict Satan as an *intimate* enemy—the attribute that qualifies him so well to express conflict [...] (49)

Saviano quotes Hannah Arendt, whose work, according to Larry May, is primarily about the manifestation of evil. Arendt makes the case that evil is banal; it was she who coined the phrase “the banality of evil.” Her premise is that evil is done by people who put career or financial gain above ethics and principles. In his book, *Hannah Arendt*, May says that Arendt faults “normal” people who put deference to superiors and personal ambition first in their lives.

There is a strong literary tradition for Arendt's view of evil. She was influenced by Immanuel Kant, whom she acknowledges in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Arendt writes about the necessity of resistance, a theme Saviano uses throughout *Gomorra*: “For Kant, the moment to rebel is the moment when freedom of opinion is abolished. If you do not resist evil, the evildoers will do as they please” (1982, 50). In the *Inferno*, Dante also writes of the indolent ones whom he encounters in the vestibule of hell. Here he finds Pope Celestine V, who made the “great refusal,” rejecting the right choice:

e dietro le venìa sì lunga tratta
 di gente, ch'ì non avrei creduto
 che morte tanta n'avesse difatta.

Poscia ch'io ebbi alcuno riconosciuto,
 vidi e conobbi l'ombra di colui
 che fece per viltade il gran rifiuto. (Canto III, v. 55-60).

Celestine V became pope in 1294 and soon after abdicated the papacy in fear of his ability to lead. Dante decides to banish Celestine V for abdicating and hence allowing the “evil” Benedetto (Pope Boniface VIII) to ascend to the papal throne. In Canto III of the *Inferno*, Dante places the *ignavi* in the anti-chamber of hell. They are deserving of neither heavenly joys nor infernal pains. They are left in this insipid part of hell to march under a blank banner for eternal damnation; the *ignavi* are doomed to a “banal” existence.

Gomorra's Satan, Mikhail Kalashnikov, is the epitome of the banality of evil. During a visit to Germany, he once said: “I’m proud of my invention, but I’m sad that it is used by terrorists. I would prefer to have invented a machine that people could use and that would help farmers with their work—for example a lawnmower” (Connolly n.p.). The former Red Army officer was opening an AK-47 exhibition in a weapons museum. Kate Connolly says that his comment was reminiscent of Albert Einstein’s remark reflecting on his role in the development of the atom bomb: “If only I had known, I should have become a watchmaker.” This man, who has unleashed so much evil on the world, lives in a modest way in a leased apartment in an obscure town at the foot of the Ural Mountains. He was an ordinary soldier who obeyed orders to unleash a terrible instrument of war and destruction without questioning its use. The narrator relates Kalashnikov to the evil that is the Camorra:

The AK-47 did on an international scale what the Secondigliano clans did locally, by fully liberalizing cocaine and allowing everyone to become a drug trafficker, user or pusher; thus freeing the market from pure criminal and hierarchical mediation. In the same way the AK-47 allowed everyone to become soldiers, even young boys and skinny little girls, and transformed people who wouldn't be able to herd a dozen sheep into army generals. [...]

In every photo Kalashnikov's face, with its angular, Slavic forehead and Mongolian eyes that shrink into tiny slits as he ages, is serene. He sleeps the sleep of the righteous. He goes to bed tranquil if not happy, his slippers tucked neatly under his bed. Even when he is serious, his lips are pulled up like those of Leonard "Gomer Pyle" Lawrence in *Full Metal Jacket*.

Kalashnikov smiles with his lips, but not with his face. (GO, 178)

The reference to Leonard Lawrence is one of many uses of film (popular culture) to illustrate what evil does to the human mind and how it "dehumanizes" participants. Saviano contrasts Alfred Nobel (the father of dynamite) with Kalashnikov. Nobel is painted as a man who became distraught over the harm caused by his invention. On the contrary, Kalashnikov is at peace with what he has done, enjoying his old age and reminiscing about good times with old friends. He is a man who accepts no responsibility for his actions: "[H]e embodies the daily imperative of the man of the market: he does what he has to do to win, and the rest is none of his concern" (GO, 179). Pine notes that Saviano links this failure of responsibility to "unrestrained neoliberal capital" (432). Revelation 3:15-16 gives support to Arendt's definition of evil and

Saviano's condemnation of Kalashnikov: "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that either you were hot or cold. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth." Dante alludes to this same biblical verse spoken by Christ in reproof of Laodicea: "e he visser senza infamia e senza lodo" (*Inferno*, Canto III v. 36).

The 2005 funeral of Pope John Paul II in Rome is the setting for a reunion of the author with his estranged father. Saviano uses this encounter to echo Pasolini, who wrote that Pope Paul VI represented the duality inherent in the modern church (Maggi 23). Chimenti has noted that *Gomorra* is sustained by an ethical tension that echoes Pasolini (47). On the one hand, the Pope represents the "blind forces of power" but he also represents the redemptive potential of charity. For Pasolini, the Pope represents decadence in modern times and he also represents the primary repository of our lost sense of the sacred (Maggi 23, 72-73):

Although he uses the metaphor of the crucifixion to describe Paul VI's position, Pasolini makes clear that Paul VI does not remind him of Christ at all. Paul VI is only the "metaphorical image" of the modern impasse that suffocates the modern Church. Paul VI, Pasolini concludes, has two options. He can either resign from his role as Celestin V, the "most saintly" among the popes, did, or he can trigger a religious schism by separating the "clerical Fascism" from the Catholic Church, thus reinstating "the teaching of the apostle [Paul] whose name he [Paul VI] has chosen." Paul's teaching, Pasolini reiterates, focuses on the centrality of charity. (Maggi 72-73)

The author uses these observations about the symbolic role of the Pope to illustrate the “modern impasse” that men of southern Italy are facing. The figure of Saviano’s father is not in touch with his sons’ lives: “We hadn’t seen each other in two years, and even though we lived in the same city, we never met. [...] My father was highly embarrassed. He didn’t know what to say or even if he could greet me as he’d liked” (GO 165-166). He uses the Pope and his father to illustrate Arendt’s view that judgment and choices are the essence of morality. Saviano’s father is a doctor who lives and practices in Naples. Saviano is disturbed that his father has become part of the mindset that is Naples. Through his father’s experiences he knew the cosmic significance of the choices we make.

“Cement”

Chapter seven, called “Cement,” attempts to show that greed, calling itself business, has corrupted the whole fabric of society. “Cement” portrays consumerism and unrestrained business as agents of evil. The book of Revelation references Satan (the Beast) as the spirit of greed that will rise up in the world (13:1). The Beast is described with seven heads and ten horns which are the various evil spirits that join with greed (13:1). The world is condemned as it follows evil desires to acquire material possessions and power (13:3). Saviano’s disciples of Satan are men who are committed to business and profit, unfettered by restraints of morality and ethics. “Businessmen. That’s how the Caserta Camorristi describe themselves, nothing more than businessmen” (GO 191).

Saviano continues his focuses on unrestrained capitalism and consumerism by noting the men who practice the corruption he documents (GO 15-16). Arendt has written: “This moral and intellectual crisis of the West did not, however, originate with totalitarianism; it had its roots

deep within the western tradition” (1982, 95). The Bible condemns the greedy as followers of Satan in Ephesians 5:5: “Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

The economics of land in southern Italy has been one of the causes of Italy’s problems. Ginsborg’s book, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, supports Saviano’s premise that corrupt business interests are the major cause of the ongoing corruption. After the war, efforts were made at land reform, but the old land barons managed to influence the laws and the peasants generally received only poor or useless land (1990, 132-133). Ginsborg explains that under the agrarian reforms, the landowners in the South were generously paid for the land that went to the peasants. Therefore they had capital to invest in the building boom that came in the postwar period (1990, 183). The “economic miracle” of the postwar years caused dramatic changes in the structure of Italy, the grave disequilibrium between the North and South grew even stronger (1990, 216). There was a mass migration out of the South, with many of the young men going to the northern cities like Milan and Turin, where they found work in construction (1990, 222-223):

If we look first at the building boom, the pell-mell expansion of the southern cities was a case study in the triumph of private interests over public needs. The monstrous, unplanned sprawl of cities like Naples and Palermo was founded on the close collaboration between building speculators, proprietors and local administrators. [...] the public works department purchased cheap agricultural land for the construction of public housing, and then provided the major infrastructure – streets, water, electricity, etc.—to link the

periphery to the centre. As a result, the land that lay between increased by as much as ten times in value. As Chubb has written, with commendable restraint: “certain clearly defined property interests were at stake in the areas favoured by the city administration.” (1990, 287-288)

The most corrupt area in Naples, according to Saviano, is his home town of Casal di Principe. Even as far back as Mussolini, authorities have been trying to curb the violence and crime. Saviano becomes overwhelmed with the pervasive greed and criminality he sees everywhere:

He talked about Cosa Nostra as if it were an organization enslaved to politicians and, unlike the Caserta Camorristi, incapable of thinking in business terms. [T]he Mafia wanted to become a sort of antistate, but this was not a business issue. The state-antistate paradigm doesn't exist. All there is, is a territory where you do business—with, through, or without the state [...]. Businessmen, that's how the Caserta Camorristi define themselves, nothing more than businessmen. A clan made up of violent company men and killer managers, of builders and landowners (GO 190-191)

Saviano visits the tomb of Pasolini, which he describes as a pilgrimage to a place where he can reflect on his goals as a writer. He states that he does not consider Pasolini as his secular saint or a literary Christ, but he introduces Pasolini to further his condemnation of consumerism. After the visit, Saviano introduces the phrase, “I know and I can prove it,” which becomes a refrain and homage to Pasolini (GO 213). Pasolini's most controversial film, *Salò o le 120*

giornate di Sodoma (Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom), is a denunciation of fascism. In *Lettere luterane (Lutheran Letters)*, Pasolini equates consumerism with the right wing politics of fascism and the Christian Democrats (1983, 79-80). He says that repression worsened in the thirty years after the fall of Fascism: “Because, on the one hand, of what we can call official, national conformism, the conformism of the ‘system’ has become infinitely more conformist from the moment when power became consumerist power [...]” (1983, 20). Much of his work listed capitalism and consumerism as fundamental problems of society: “In realtà Pasolini credeva che il livellamento prodotto dal consumismo fosse l’espressione di una nuova forma di fascismo [...]” (Hanshe 6).

In his film *Medea*, Pasolini contrasts Medea’s mythical consciousness with Jason’s world of reality:

Pasolini believes that both capitalism and orthodox Marxism aim at the destruction of the pre-industrial cultures he admires both in Italy and in the Third World. Alienation derives not merely from working in a world where one’s work product is controlled by an exploitive capitalist class, but it may also be caused by the loss of a sense of a mythical identity, a sense of harmony with nature that is destroyed by pragmatic, technological civilization. (Bondanella 279)

Maggi writes about Pasolini’s resistance in his book *The Resurrection of the Body*. He argues that Pasolini hated all forms of social, political and intellectual conformity. He points out that Pasolini was passionate in standing against the “blindness of conformity” and that he stood for a “reading of reality” that rejected complacency and conformity. Pasolini’s work encourages

resistance to the imposition of rules and coercive codes (Maggi 5): “In other words, the duty of intellectuals would be that of rejecting all the lies which through the press and above all through television inundate and suffocate the admittedly inert body of Italy” (Pasolini, 1983, 26).

Pasolini wrote the screenplay *San Paolo (Saint Paul)*, which lauded Saint Paul as an intellectual involved in controversy and a theologian. *San Paolo* applies the historical template of the life of Paul to Pasolini’s contemporary era; for this purpose he assigns “equivalent” cities to the biblical cities of Jerusalem, Damascus, Athens and Rome. In this way, Paul is inserted into the period between post World War II and 1968 (Pasolini’s adulthood). Pasolini has become a visible influence on many aspects of intellectual thought in Italy. Pasolini, like Saint Paul, was committed to the “theological and the apocalyptic” (Maggi 22-23). In *Gomorra*, Saviano echoes Pasolini’s denunciation of consumerism. Similar to Pasolini, he addresses mythology and its crucial role in civilization:

Credo che nel Sacro Pasolini identificasse quegli aspetti irrazionali che appartengono alla realtà. Il sacro si identificava anche alle culture antiche, pre-borghesi, che Pasolini amava e di cui soffriva l’estinzione rispetto alla vittoria di quel tipo di laicismo che è tutt’uno con il consumismo. (Hanshe 10)

Pasolini felt that the culture of consumer capitalism was destroying Italy’s traditional values and causing a weakening of the peasant culture:

Pasolini ebbe un preponderante interesse per il “sacro,” per la configurazione di una nuova modalità del sacro successivamente alla morte di Dio. Se attraverso le “armi del dialogo,” il monoteismo, per esempio, viene sventrato di significato, una volta

usciti da quella crisi dobbiamo inventare ~~“festival di espiazione”~~ e ~~“giochi sacri”~~ come dice Nietzsche, perché l’ateismo è solo una fase transitoria, da oltrepassare. (Hanshe 10)

Pasolini was one of Italy’s most influential film makers in the 1960’s, the period following neorealism. Peter Bondanella writes that his films were designed to challenge ~~“bourgeois consumerism”~~ through allegory and parable. He used elements of traditional religion in shocking juxtapositions. An example is the way he used cannibalism to evoke the Eucharist (Bondanella 283-284):

[H]e explored mythic notions of the transitions from primitivism to civilization, to the implied disadvantage of the latter. His own utopias were located as far away as possible from the modern, capitalist, bourgeois world of which he felt himself a member and a victim. (Nowell-Smith 92)

Pasolini writes about the drug culture in Italy, blaming it not on organized crime, but on the loss of traditional values brought on by the consumerism he denounced (1983, 58-62), and he devotes a chapter in *Lutheran Letters* to the destructiveness of a ~~“false obedience”~~ rather than a healthy resistance (68-73).

Gomorra is a work of resistance, as was the work of Pasolini and Brecht. Saviano describes his own philosophy as Brechtian. He says Brecht had a way of looking at things in terms of their fundamental relationship to the larger world: ~~“He thinks of the empty plates that led to the French Revolution rather than the historical figures of the Jacobins”~~ (GO 212-213). This is also a biblical way of viewing the world and the people in it: ~~“And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my~~

family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Proverbs 31:8-9 phrases it another way: “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Saviano identified Brecht as sharing his zeitgeist. Brecht’s first play was *Baal*; the name of the play’s counter-hero: “Baal is the ancient Semitic god whose worship was characterized by fertility rites and human sacrifice and who generally became a synonym for evil in the Judeo-Christian tradition” (Hill 42-43). Brecht is characterized by Robert Brustein in his book *The Theatre of Revolt* as creating theatre that was revolt. He says Brecht’s work is typified by preaching, protest and persuasion. He described Brecht as being involved with the brutal, the Satanic and the irrational aspects of human nature. Brecht blamed man’s aggressive instincts on the capitalistic system. “Brecht’s revolt, therefore, is double layered. On the surface, it is directed against the hypocrisy, avarice, and injustice of bourgeois society; in the depths, against the disorder of the universe and the chaos of the human soul” (Brustein 232). Brustein writes that where Brecht once identified evil with fate and assumed it to be fixed, he now identifies it with bourgeois society and assumes it to be changeable (251).

In *Bertolt Brecht*, Claude Hill points out that much of Brecht’s poetry is modeled after the psalms, hymns and prayer books. He further states that Brecht’s plays are full of biblical quotations and parodies.

When Brecht took a militant antichurch stance he only behaved in a manner which was typical for many intellectuals who were disenchanted with a church that, together with the nobility and the military, sustained the class-ridden empire of the Kaiser. [...] On the other hand, it was Luther’s German Bible that impressed itself

upon the future poet and continued to color his literary style throughout his life. Asked which book had the greatest impact upon him, the freshly acclaimed playwright replied: “Don’t laugh...the Bible! (Hill 21)

The years after the two world wars were chaotic and seem to have influenced Brecht’s work:

The decisive experiences of the young Brecht were despair and cynicism caused by the chaotic conditions of postwar Germany.

To which we must add an unusually strong sensuality. A peculiar fixation on the rot and decay of organic life, and an excessive individualism bordering on anarchy. (Hill 41)

Brecht’s work, like Saviano’s, often emphasized “truth”, as in his play *Leben des Galilei* (*Galileo*). Hill explains that after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima the entire focus of the play was changed. For him, Galileo’s character changes from a cunning hero into a coward who cheats the truth. Because of his betrayal, the Galileo character fails to set a standard for future scientists: “As Brecht himself admitted, the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima strongly affected his conception of Galileo’s character” (Hill 113).

In “Cement”, Saviano gives examples of clan businessmen as agents of evil in the same mold as Brecht’s aggressive bourgeois capitalists. Parmalat, the huge dairy supplier, was controlled by the Casalese clan. They practiced aggressive business underscored by threats, extortion, and destruction. Saviano calls Italy the country of creative financing and decriminalization of false accounting. He introduces what Chimenti has labeled drawing through a detailed record of the collapse of the milk businesses and its use of fraudulent practices. This

drawing confirms his premise that business, not just the Camorra, is corrupt (GO 196-197). Pine has affirmed Saviano's analysis:

Through spectacular violence, systemic intimidation and the appropriation of vital public resources the Camorra has evoked an indeterminate mix of paralyzing fear, uneasy tolerance, ambivalent complicity and outright collusion among the popular and upper classes, including the corporate and political elite. [...] Indeed Saviano's intervention is long overdue. (432)

There is an account of the Spartacus maxi-trial given to further reveal the extent of corrupt business practices. The trial lasted seven years and twenty-one days. It grew out of the state's witness testimony given by Carmine Schiavone against the Casalese clan and allied criminal businesses. Out of that trial grew other trials, related to corruption in the construction business (GO 199).³ There were investigations of clan corruption into the public works contracts. Eventually many of the criminals were sent to jail. The people arrested and sentenced were described as being part of a mosaic of power that had escaped constraints for more than twenty years. They considered themselves businessmen who had been turned into criminals by judges, magistrates and journalists (GO 200-201). The rationalizations of the convicted clan members echo Arendt when she writes of the Nuremburg suspects:

³ Of particular note were the Bourbon canals, which had not been restored since the eighteenth century. There were accusations that that the clans had been in charge of the renovation project for years. Rather than investing the money into the canals, the Camorra spent the money on their own construction businesses, which consequently became successful throughout Italy (GO 199).

Hence the problem was how to overcome not so much their conscience as the animal pity by which all normal men are affected in the presence of physical suffering. The trick used by Himmler [...] consisted in turning these instincts around [...]. So that instead of saying: What horrible things I did to people!, the murderers would be able to say: What terrible things I had to watch in the pursuance of my duties, how heavily the task weighed upon my shoulders! (1963, 106)

When Saviano begins to expose the construction business, he focuses on concrete. Everything, he says, flows out of the concrete: ~~he~~ pays detailed attention to the main source of Casalesi wealth, illegal nation-wide construction projects” (Pine 433). Saviano explains that concrete is the simplest way to make money as fast as possible (GO 214). His assessment of all the complexity and potential corruption of the construction business could be used to explain the 2008 worldwide collapse of the housing market:

The builder’s skills are those of the mediator and the predator. He possesses the infinite patience of a bureaucrat in compiling documents, enduring interminable delays, waiting for authorizations that come slowly, like the dripping of a stalactite. He’s like a bird of prey who flies over land no one else notices, snapping it up for a few pennies, then holds on to it until every inch, every hole, can be sold for astronomical amounts. The predatory businessman knows how to use his beak and claws. And Italian banks seem made for the builders; they know to grant the

builder maximum credit. And if he really has no credit and the houses he will build are not enough of a guarantee, some good friend will always back him. (GO 214-215)

The image of the builder as a bird of prey using his beak and claws, echoes biblical depictions of Satan as snake or beast.

Ginsborg traces the ascent of the cement interests to the failures of government in the decade 1958-1968:

When the so-called regulatory plan was approved by the [Palermitan] city council in 1959, some six-hundred _variations_ accompanied it, all of which tended to increase building density or infringe on land reserved for public use.

Such abuses were common throughout Italy and southern Italy in particular. Palermo was an extreme case, made even worse by the collusion between city administrators and the Mafia. As the agrarian sector became less important, the major Mafia families moved their attention to the cities, especially Palermo. The construction industry and the municipal wholesale markets became their stronghold [...]. (1990, 288)

Saviano gives the terrible toll taken on individuals and society by shoddy construction, unregulated banking practices, exploitation of labor, rotten scaffolding and bogus insurance. He claims that the building trade is a path of upward mobility. After starting out as killers, extortionists, or lookouts, criminals can move in the construction business. The most successful individuals move upward to glamorous positions like owning newspapers or becoming managers

or financial sharks (GO 216). It does seem ironic that it was the Romans who invented concrete, using sand from Naples, and built their empire on it. This quotation is another use of the foul odor leitmotif to convey corruption:

And so when I find myself among the best, the really successful businessmen, I feel ill. Even though these men are elegant, speak quietly, and vote for leftist politicians. I smell the odor of lime and cement emanating from their socks, their Bulgari cufflinks, and their bookshelves. I know. I know who built my town and who is building it still. (GO 218)

After denouncing corrupt businesses, particularly the men in the construction business, as agents of evil, Saviano ends with, “I take no prisoners” (GO 219). This echoes John’s prophecy: “But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). Pine poses the following question: “While *Gomorra* is a stunning example of *la denuncia*, or a public denunciation, it struggles with its own status as a speech act. Are their denunciation and exposure sufficient? Where do they lead?” (Pine 432)? We shall see that they are part of an evolving eschatology.

“Don Peppino Diana”

The chapter titled “Don Peppino Diana” opens with a description of the uprising among the people of Casal di Principe over the murder of the local priest and prophet. This chapter makes clear the author’s intention in his use of the narrative “F”, examined by Chimenti. Throughout the long history of religions, there is often a revelation from a supernatural being,

usually a divine voice: God, an angel, or a prophet from the past. Each of the three Abrahamic religions was formed by a mystic. Moses talked to God to receive the commandments. Mohammed was called by God through Gabriel and received the Quran's divine revelation. Jesus is portrayed as the ultimate mystic, the unification of the human and divine. The Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as a Jewish apocalyptic priest. Saint Francis, Clare of Assisi and Bonaventure, Thomas Merton and Simone Weil are acknowledged mystics. The two roles of mystic are described:

The prophet, for the most part, delivered his message by means of the spoken word which might subsequently be put into writing either by himself or by his disciples or by future editors or redactors. The apocalypticist, on the other hand, remained concealed behind his message which he recorded in a book for the faithful among the people to read. [...] This stress on the literary presentation of divine truth is characteristic of the whole apocalyptic school of thought. (Russell 64-65)

In John's Revelation, "the voice" identifies himself and gives his charge:

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this." (Revelation 1:17-19)

Don Peppino was a native who had returned to Naples because of his commitment to his religion. He followed a divine voice. He was a sincere priest who did not conform to the norms of local church people or the community. Don Peppino said: “We ask the Church not to renounce its ‘prophetic’ role so that the means for speaking out and declaring will result in the ability to create a new conscience under the sign of justice, an ethical and social solidarity” (GO 224). Don Peppino wrote a religious, Christian text with such a potent message that threatened the Camorra clans. The text was distributed on Christmas Day with the title “For Love of My People I Will Not Keep Silent.” Don Peppino’s message caused the author’s conversion. He becomes Saviano’s “voice”: “I have never for one instant felt pious, yet Don Peppino’s words resounded with something beyond religious. He created a new method that re-established religious and political speech” (GO 229).

Don Peppino defined his own role and the roles of prophet which Saviano assumes:

Our prophetic commitment to speak out must not and cannot falter; God calls us to be prophets. The Prophet is a watchman: he sees injustice and speaks out against it, recalling God’s original command (Ezekiel 3:16-19). The Prophet remembers the past and uses it to gather up new things in the present (Isaiah 43). The Prophet invites us to live, and himself lives in solidarity and suffering (Genesis 8:18-22). The Prophet gives priority to the life of justice (Jeremiah 22:3; Isaiah 58). We ask the priests, our shepherds and brethren to speak clearly during the homilies and in all those occasions that require courageous witness. We ask the Church not to renounce its “prophetic” role so that the means for

speaking out and declaring will result in the ability to create a new conscience under the sign of justice, an ethical and social solidarity. (GO 224)

Saviano becomes a prophet when he takes up the priest's message. Chimenti addresses the fact that some of the information given about the priest is factual presentation of his papers: "The third figure of this typology is the drawing. [...] In *Gomorra*, these include letters from Don Peppino" (Chimenti 45). The priest is presented both as inspiring prophet and as voice of a very real situation. Saviano believes in the power of inspired words and disparages those who discount their power through intellectual apathy (GO 223, 229). He gives the priest's assessment of the causes of the problems. He lists criminality and the economic, social and political failures that plague the Naples area. Solutions lie in employment, housing, health and education. There is a general mistrust of the establishment because of the age-old failure to solve these problems and the suspicion that politicians are giving cover and granting favors to the corrupt. There are insufficient legal protections of person and property. The judicial system is archaic and slow. There are inadequate laws (GO 227-229).

This chapter continues the message that Satan works through the banality of evil and resistance is the only salvation. Don Peppino confronted evil with action. He believed that impartiality was not possible. He was committed "to understand, to transform, to bear witness, to speak out" (GO 229). He preached that there could be no harmony between the Christian creed and the clans. The Camorristi believed they could pervert Christianity to their own ends and create an alternate world, capturing and using the potency of the Christian myth to their own ends. It is good to kill if that killing is to protect themselves and their businesses (GO 229).

The Camorra pervert ~~the~~ word” through rituals borrowed from Christianity. Drug cuts are made in threes to honor the Christian association. Criminals make the sign of the cross regularly. Contaminated drugs are often blessed with water from Lourdes to prevent costly deaths from their poor quality. They use the *pugnitura* to give their activities a semireligious persona—the ritual pricking of the finger and then dripping that blood onto an image of the Madonna of Pompeii. When potential clan members kiss the Madonna image, the candidate becomes part of the clan. Top officials believe that they must bear the weight of the clan’s sins for the well-being of the group, creating a Christ or redeemer figure. A dual universe is created, where the rituals of religion are used by the clan to reinforce its belief systems (GO 226-227).

The clan murdered the priest on March 19, 1994—the feast day of San Giuseppe; symbolic because this was the priest’s name day. At this point, the author gives his motivation for writing *Gomorra*: “[Don Peppino] had to keep his instrument—the word—the only instrument that could alter the reality of his time, on the tip of his tongue” (GO 229). Saviano says faith in something is essential: Christ, Buddha, civil commitment, ethics, Marxism, pride, anarchy, the fight against crime, cleanliness, persistent and everlasting rage, Southernness. Saviano credits the priest’s belief in ~~the~~ word” as the thing that gave him and can give others the strength to resist (GO 232). He echoes an interpretation found in Revelation 1:10-11:

I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, ~~Write~~ what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.”

After the priest's death, the narrator comes to an understanding and commitment to what he calls the "word." Its meaning is not just metaphorical, but real. He understands that "good" can only be achieved through seeking and telling "the truth": "To speak out, testify, take a stand. The word, with its only armor: to be spoken. A word that is a vigilant witness, that never stops seeking the truth. The only way to eliminate a word like that is to kill it" (GO 236). Saviano, as a prophet, is concerned that "the word" will not be heard. In a 2009 article, he explains that his greatest fear is losing credibility rather than being killed by the Camorra:

But the worst terror, which attacks me all the time, is the fear that they [the Camorra] will manage to defame me, to destroy my credibility, to blacken my name and besmirch all that I've lived for and for which I'm paying the price. They've done this to everybody who has spilt the beans.

They did it to Peppino Diana, the priest they killed and defamed the minute after his death; to Federico Del Prete, who worked in the mayor's office and was killed at Casal di Principe in 2002; to Salvatore Nuvoletta, a policeman who was killed in 1982 when he was barely 20 years old, and buried at once for fear that he was related to the powerful Camorra family of the same name. No sooner has the national press shown an interest in your existence than the rumours and ambiguous stories about you start. In my world, you are guilty until proved otherwise. And then the media withdraws, like a snail into its shell.

And on it goes, until the next death, of someone whose only crime is to have been born in a country where truth has ceased to exist. (—Roberto Saviano: *On the Run From the Mafia*” n.p.)

He gives a few hopeful stories of people who resist the banality of evil and become committed to action. They become disciples of ~~the~~ word.” One of them, Cipriano, preaches the eschatology of Sodom and Gomorrah:

Remember. And the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire; he destroyed those cities, and the entire plane, and all the inhabitants of the cities. [...] We must risk becoming salt, we must turn and look at what is happening, [...] where life is added to or subtracted from your economic activities. Don't you see that this is Gomorrah, don't you see? (GO 242)

Don Peppino's death leads the author to assess the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah as revelation. He quotes Genesis 19:24-26 and Deuteronomy 29:22 as the inspiration for his vision of the future (GO 242-243). Both quotations deal with the utter destruction of the land because of evil. Saviano warns that the people of Naples are doing this to themselves by allowing those who are obsessed with money to overwhelm their communities. While the author does not quote any other passages from the Bible, the idiom that the people have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage is the clear message (Genesis 25:29-34). This chapter's message is: ~~For~~ the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains” (1 Timothy 6:10).

The end of the chapter on Don Peppino moves into the author's assessment of ~~the~~ word” which he says was the priest's weapon. This chapter says that grief is often experienced as being

“closed up” meaning that a person is no longer speaking. Grief, mourning, depression are experienced as losing speech (GO 241). “The word” is a metaphor for faith, and the courage and commitment that grow out of faith. John 1:1 reads: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” For Saviano, his word becomes a type of therapeutic salvation as he explains in his book *La bellezza e l’inferno*: “Scrivere, adesso, diventa anche un mezzo per dare voce al dolore che ho provato nei primi mesi [di solitudine], quando il venticello delle accuse delle calunnie montava in proporzione alle vendite del mio libro” (10). He later adds, “Scrivere è resistere, è fare resistenza” (12).

“Hollywood”

The chapter titled “Hollywood” explores the connection between the criminals of Naples and their vision of the world as shaped by Hollywood movies. Saviano should be familiar with the philosopher’s question: What is reality? After examining the Camorra through the Hebrew version of duality, he explores the Greek view that duality is the contradiction between the spiritual (or transitory) and the material. The criminal world of the Camorra is shaped by the movies, and movies are produced to reflect the criminal world. This chapter opens up critical and philosophical questions about mimesis. We are led to question how art can lead to catharsis, how experiencing art affects us so deeply.

At this point in our discussion, we should make an important distinction between the archetypes per se and the objects to which they relate. Archetypes should not be regarded as fully developed pictures that reside in the collective unconscious, rather, they are *forms without content* [similar to the Platonic *eidos*], representing

the possibility of a certain type of perception and action.” One might say that each image is more like a negative, waiting for the necessary experimental influences to define it. (Iaccino xi-xii)

Iaccino adds that objects within the environment provide substance to the archetypes and make them more anthropomorphic and meaningful to each person (xii). Russell addresses the question of duality by the apocalyptic writers as being an examination of the Kingdom on earth and the Kingdom in heaven. He states that the prophets attempted to present an integrated world; that revelation and prophecy are attempts to make the tangible and the transient as one (Russell 107-111).

Christopher Rowland writes that what the apocalyptic offers is an unmasking of reality, showing believers that the reality they experience is not “~~true~~” reality. It can transform the world to match the divine reality that the text reveals. Whether representing the voice of a threatened community or the upbraiding of a corrupt one, the writers are fully aware of two separate realities. One is manifest and distorted, and the other is latent and impending:

Revelation is a potent reminder of collusion with evil and the necessity of the recognition of the demands which are in accord with God’s justice. Its apocalyptic form refuses to accept disguises, however sophisticated, behind which bland and empty gestures can cover up the distorted face of an unjust order.

Apocalyptic represents Judaeo-Christian tradition's classic form of the unmasking of reality and the refusal to rest content with superficial and cosy appearances.

Revelation and the apocalyptic tradition have frequently been a resource for those who have sought to criticize and distance themselves from existing institutions, whether political or ecclesiastical. (Rowland 129-130)

Daschke adds that apocalyptic writers suggest that at some point in the possibly near future, this reality will supplant earthly reality completely: “In an apocalypse, this conundrum and alienation is presented as conflict of cosmic realities. The temporal disjunction is symbolically transformed into the envisioned juxtaposition of divine and earthly reality” (59).

Lyden offers some explanations for the relationship between criminals and crime films. To make his very complex analysis simple, he states that film ritualizes myth. He states that there are changeless aspects of movie-going that make it ritual. First is a prescribed form with established protocols and procedures; second is traditionalism and third is rules and governance. Films have recognized symbols and characters that represent established and understood meanings. Film also creates an artificial world that presents an orderly and structured world that attempts to inject meaning into human experience. Lyden notes that in the case of gangster movies such as *Scarface*, there is an opportunity for viewers who feel they have been excluded from the power structure to find an alternative (Lyden, 2003, 91).

Lyden reminds us that in order to understand film, one must try to understand how it functions for its audiences, the beliefs and values it conveys and its ritual power to provide catharsis of the emotions associated with a range of life's problems and situations (2003, 246).

The mute life forms are rather nice depictions of Carl Jung's archaic man. The primitive type of being possesses a “pre-logical” state of mind where concentrated, mental activity is impossible;

instead, there is a strong reliance on emotions and a strong ~~belief~~ that everything is governed by external, magical forces. [...] The alternative is that no one will survive if the shadow impulses are released without some type of collective restraint. *The Planet of the Apes* movies are excellent parables of the end times, because they relate the perpetual struggle faced by humankind: the battle between one's conscious and the shadow. If mankind is to endure, it must try to appease both sides in new and creative ways.

(Iaccino 36, 51)

Irving Singer has addressed these themes in his book, *Cinematic Mythmaking: Philosophy in Film*. He believes watching movies is like dreaming. He says that in both we are mesmerized and immersed in what is being flashed before us. Singer states that film ~~supremely~~ lends itself to the transmittance of mythic themes" (9). He argues that the technical devices used in making film distance the audience from anything else and therefore put the audience into a receptive attitude that is stronger than life itself.

[W]e are not just lured into but also engrossed by the quasi-realistic character of images that flit before our eyes in semblance of the world outside. The mythic experience combines [...] the unreal as well as the real, the unnatural as well as the natural. In film their visual, sonic, and even kinesthetic components are joined as in no other art form. (Singer 10)⁴

⁴ Marshall McLuhan gave the world the phrases ~~the~~ "the medium is the message" and ~~global~~ "global village." McLuhan, a Catholic, studied and wrote about popular culture's expression of dualism.

Gomorra gives a picture of the kitsch homes and lifestyle of gangsters who ape what they see in movies. Walter Schiavone is a Camorra boss in Casale who built a villa to copy Tony Montana's house in *Scarface*. Saviano describes the villa: "There is no way to tell what's behind the walls, but they make you think it must be something extravagant." After Walter Schiavone's life crumbles into dust, we are told, "The same wall he had built to make his villa impregnable now prevented his quick escape" (GO 245, 248). The homes of the criminals are built to compete with each other in extravagance and showiness. These houses are Hollywood versions of permanence and authority, done to support the myth of wealth, power and permanence. Eventually, they become victims of their owners' excesses, abandoned castles. They are tangible reminders of illusionary power. The author states it is the criminal world that models its behavior after the movies. He cites *Scarface*, and uses this chapter to note Hollywood's influence on criminal behavior (GO 251).⁵

The Godfather, translated as *Il Padrino* in Italy, is a movie noted for many influences on mob activity. Formerly the mob boss was referred to as *campariello* or *campare*, but they now use *padrino*.⁶ The dress and mannerisms of movie mobsters are studied. Cosimo Di Laurio, one

He argued that technology has no moral bent, but is a tool that shapes society's conceptions. His work followed the ancient philosopher's concepts that the mind and body are radically different kinds of things. For further reading, see his book titled *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

⁵ The 1983 film by Brian De Palma follows Cuban refugee, Tony Montana and his close friend Manny Ray who build a drug empire in Miami. Montana's mania begins to grow as his empire grows and as he faces the numerous adversities of the drug dealing world.

⁶ Francis Ford Coppola's 1972 film is a story about the Corleone Mafia family.

of the top bosses, is described as dressing like Brandon Lee in *The Crow*.⁷ Female bosses have their body guards dress like Uma Thurman in the movie *Kill Bill*.⁸ The style of criminal execution has changed to reflect the way Quentin Tarantino had his fictitious killers shoot. The result is a more cruel and slow death for victims (GO 250).

Many of the American directors who popularized and developed the gangster genre in Hollywood films are Italian American. The best known are Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather* series, *The Cotton Club*), Martin Scorsese, (*Goodfellas*, *The Departed*), Brian De Palma, (*Scarface*, *The Untouchables*), and Quentin Tarantino (*Kill Bill* series, *Pulp Fiction*). Saviano claims that most of the movie criminal archetype characters are based on Camorristi from Campania. Al Capone, who came from the Naples area, inspired two motion pictures. Capone would show up on the set of Howard Hawks' 1932 movie to make sure that he copied the movie's character. He understood that the film depiction would be more real to the world than his own persona: "It's not true that films are a lie, that you can't live as in the movies, that as soon as you stick your head out of the theatre, you realize things are not the same" (GO 250, 251, 256). Lyden writes the following in explaining how film captures human meaning in a special way:

Films can provide a "spiritual realism" not by attempting to directly portray the holy (which cannot be portrayed) but by a

⁷ The Alex Proyas' 1994 film is about a guitarist who is brought back to life by a crow a year after he and his fiancée are murdered.

⁸ Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill Vol. 1* film is about a former female assassin who was betrayed by her boss Bill. After surviving an ambush attempt, she awakens from a coma and plots a vendetta against her former boss and his squad of eclectic assassins.

simple realistic style that conveys the real emotions of characters in all their anxieties. This realistic style serves to point up genuine questions about meaning and purpose, or their loss, and so encourages the viewer to look at a deeper level of reality and meaning. The infinite cannot be filmed, but the finite can be, and when portrayed realistically it will express the true longing, in all its misery and imperfection, for the infinite. (2003, 25-26)

There are those who miss the message of duality in this chapter. Dal Lago claims that Saviano's descriptions are detached from the reality of Naples. He criticizes Saviano film veneration as being "Narcissus at the cinema" (61). Commenting on the scene in which Saviano imitates the gesticulating *Scarface* character Tony Montana, he points out how exaggerated Saviano's writing style is:

Come un'arroganza possa essere insieme impettita e gesticolane mi è chiaro (provate voi, magari davanti a uno specchio, ad assumere con arroganza un'aria impettita e a mettervi a gesticolare—io non ci sono riuscito). E quanto al fantasma di Tony Montana (che nel film di De Palma è uno schizzatissimo Al Pacino), se avesse sorpreso qualcuno a pisciargli nella vasca, gli avrebbe sparato all'istante, altro che accoglierlo con gesticolante e impettita arroganza. (Dal Lago 63-64)

The "*Hollywood*" chapter continues the theme of myth and reality by describing the criminal's love of art:

In the land of the Camorra people are also passionate about art and literature.” One of the bosses named his children, Ben Hur, Jesus, and Emiliano Zapata. Another boss was a serious student of psychology, studying Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan: “[Camorra boss Sandokan] liked reading epics. Homer, the Arthurian legends, and Walter Scott were his favorites. (GO 257-258)

Other bosses loved music and collected art. Tommaso Prestieri was a Naples criminal who was apprehended, because he risked capture to attend a musical performance. Prestieri was sentenced to prison where he lived with the knowledge that his two brothers had been murdered, but he stated at his sentencing: “In art I am free. I don’t need to be released from prison” (GO 258).

Here are educated men, cultured men, doing unspeakable things. All have the justification that they are doing their duty. They faithfully serve Mammon, whose domain is economic power. Yet, in their minds, there is another reality:

In a post-literate world, it is possible that visual culture will once again change the nature of our relationship to the past. This does not mean giving up on attempts at truth, but somehow recognizing that there may be more than one sort of historical truth, or that the truths conveyed in the visual media may be different from, but not necessarily in conflict with, truths conveyed in words.

History does not exist until it is created. [T]o acknowledge the authenticity of the visual is to accept a new relationship to the

word itself. We would do well to recall Plato's assertion that when the mode of the music changes, the walls of the city shake.

(Rosenstone 43-44)

In the end, the criminals, their families and their palaces are dust. The movies about them play on. The art they adore lives on. Saviano says that cinematographic references everywhere create mythologies of imitation: "If elsewhere you may like *Scarface* and secretly identify with him, here you can *be* Scarface, but you have to be him all the way" (GO 257).

"Aberdeen, Mondragone"

The chapter titled "Aberdeen, Mondragone" is about the relationship between the towns of Mondragone, Italy and Aberdeen, Scotland. To build his eschatology, the author draws parallels between these cities and Sodom and Gomorrah. In Genesis 19:24-25 Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by "brimstone and fire from the Lord of heaven." In Christianity, Islam and Judaism, they have become symbols of unrepentant sin resulting in God's wrath. The consequences of their wickedness echo through the millennia and are used in *Gomorrah* to foretell a coming doom for the entire world. This chapter makes clear that the book is not about local corruption. It is about the hegemony of the Western world.

Augusto La Torre founded the La Torre family in Mondragone, Italy. They see themselves as part of the long history of Italy, going back to the Caesars. La Torre was so successful with his operations in Aberdeen that he is referred to as Rockefeller. Because La Torre has so much power, Scotland has allowed him to avoid extradition to Italy (GO 262). His empire is built in large part on drug trafficking, but includes many other businesses. His connections have broadened to South America and Holland (GO 263). This encourages other

young men from Italy to immigrate to Scotland, corrupting Britain's young people (GO 266-267). To keep his worldwide system going, La Torre has had to keep an iron grip on Mondragone.

It is useful to note that the history Saviano relates of these two towns gives them symbolic meaning as representatives of western hegemony. Eventually, La Torre and others in his clan were caught. The criminal justice system plays a strange role in these international criminal dealings. A Camorra member who does business in London is on the payroll of the Camorra, but British libel laws and failure to criminalize the corrupt business practices give him protection from exposure. When caught, La Torre clan members have given state's evidence to get leniency in their trials. Clan members struck deals for reduced sentences that allowed them to keep many of their privileges of power. Even in jail, the mob boss extorted money from people outside by having his mother or driver deliver the demands. When the state confiscated property, there was an astounding amount of wealth uncovered. They found a villa modeled on that of the Roman emperor Tiberius. These seizures included 230 million euros in property, 323 million euros in businesses and equipment worth 133 million euros. A great deal of information about the corruption has come out, confirming that Rome is the number one place for drugs and illicit real estate investments. Informants have also made authorities aware that diamonds are the asset of choice for money laundering and the La Torre criminals have resorted to counterfeiting when they were short of cash (GO 226).

Saviano describes Mondragone as a place where savageness is the true value of commerce, again equating evil with commercialism. The judge who heard the criminal case said it was a place where, "Truth is always the powerful people's version of things" (GO 279). And the author says it is a place where "living as if you actually believe truth can exist is

incomprehensible” (GO 280). The lives of the people caught between these two cities and in the immoral culture they have created are compared to:

the sensation of being crushed in a reality like a chicken coop crammed full of starving birds, ready to eat and be eaten [...]. A feeling of no exit, of being constrained to join the big battle or not exist. I returned to Italy thinking about the tracks on which high-speed trains travel; the capital flowing into the great European economy rushes in one direction, while the other—southbound—comes everything that would be infectious elsewhere, entering and exiting through the forced nets of the open and flexible economy, creating in the continuous cycle of transformation—wealth elsewhere, but without triggering any form of development in the lands where the metamorphosis began. (GO 281)

The deterioration of the area resulted in unregulated dumps springing up where a city had once thrived: “Rubbish has swollen the belly of southern Italy, stretching it as if it were pregnant, but the fetus never grows” (GO 281). This leads us to the final chapter and the prediction of the “end times.”

“Land of Fires”

The final chapter is “Land of Fires.” The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: war, economic depression, death and Satan appeared in earlier chapters and made their mark. Fire and water are universal symbols that are used in the book of Revelation and in *Gomorra*. Fire as symbol is used in the religion, myth and art of nearly all cultures. Fire can be used as a symbol

for transformation, purification, destruction or new beginnings. Water is used in literature and the Bible for transformation and salvation; from the story of Noah and the flood to baptism into the church.

The clans have created a wasteland known as the Land of Fires. Revelation 20:9-10 and 20:14 all refer to the “lake of fire” that serves as the place of final judgment and punishment for the unrighteous. Saviano makes the dump the metaphor and the vehicle for the final judgment: “But as for the cowardly and faithless, the polluted, murderers, fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

The South of Italy is the end of the line for the useless and toxic refuse of an unregulated and unrestrained economy. The landfills and pits of southern Italy have become deadly dangers for the inhabitants and for future inhabitants. The author states that the clans have no conscience and no sense of social responsibility. They are spoiling their own towns and the areas around their estates. Their business decisions are short-term and their lives are short. They have no concept of long-term planning. Decisions are based on the here and now (284-290).

The crime and abuse that the author has labeled “business” take a primary position as the cause of Naples’ problems. A farmer bought farmland, only to discover it had been used as a dump for the Banca d’Italia and the old paper money was leaching lead into his cauliflower field. Cows that feed in contaminated fields develop diseases that are masked in order to sell their contaminated milk. At night trucks that are supposed to be transporting compost are actually dumping toner from Lombardy and Tuscany; once those chemicals are inhaled, they lodge in the red blood cells (GO 282).

The dump is the indicator of the economic cycle. The South of Italy is said to be the end of the line for the dregs and toxic waste: “On no other land in the Western world has a greater amount of toxic and nontoxic waste been illegally dumped” (GO 283). The areas of southern Italy that have the highest unemployment rate, the largest number of volunteers for the police and army (dangerous occupations) and the highest criminal activity are the areas where toxic waste is being sent. Those areas are Campania, Sicily, Calabria and Apulia. Cocaine and illegal waste management are the cash cows of clan businesses. Continuing the odor theme noted by Dal Lago, he writes that the odors indicate a recurring theme in *Gomorra* (54). Saviano makes it clear that the smell in the hinterlands of Campania are overwhelming. The land has been saturated and once those chemicals are inhaled they lodge in the hair follicles and red blood cells causing cancer, respiratory problems, ulcers and kidney problems.

Saviano continues his denunciation of immoral and irresponsible business as the cause of this destruction. He says that the chain of those involved in this illegal contamination of the South starts with the large companies that are more interested in profit than civic responsibility. Warehouse owners take the products and falsify the documents to disguise what is going on. False identification forms and deceptive analytic codes are regularly used. Next are the haulers who take the waste to the dumping grounds. And last in the chain of this process are the land owners who allow the dumping. Managers of authorized landfills turn their heads. Owners of abandoned quarries or farmlands allow the dumping. Fundamental to the whole process are government officials who, through corruption or incompetence, don't inspect.

Saviano names the primary villain in this process as *lo stakeholder*, a term favored by business and corporations. These are shady entrepreneurs (agents of evil) behind the whole process. The stakeholder is charged with finding out how to make the project more profitable,

by finding ways to shortcut or overturn regulations. Stakeholders are concerned with image and must project that they are successful, businesslike and stable, they appear to be legitimate.

Today the Chinese stakeholders are heavily involved in illegal waste removal. They are taking over a million tons of Europe's high tech waste. The Hong Kong stakeholders are working their businesses to make Naples a hub for European waste moving through for burial in China. This business of waste has been so profitable for Italy that the 2003 investigators named the file King Midas. Saviano claims that the savings to northern businesses energized the northern economy and enabled Italy to enter the European Union (GO 292-293).

Saviano names Albania, Costa Rica, Romania, Mozambique, Somalia, and Nigeria as part of a worldwide network of contamination. He says that when the tsunami tidal wave hit, hundreds of drums of waste were washed up in Somalia. The media attention to relief efforts drowned out the information of the immensity of what was found. He notes that another way to dispose of waste is to fill a ship's hold with toxins and then sink it, making money from the insurance on the boat and practically eliminating any cost to dispose of the stuff. Saviano claims that investigations have determined that there are eighteen waste management firms in Naples. Fifteen have confirmed ties to the Camorra.

There is an annual thirty percent increase in landfills. When a landfill reaches capacity, Gypsy boys are paid fifty euros to burn off the waste. Surrounding lands are then contaminated with dioxins from the fires. Agriculture, which formerly exported fruit and vegetables, is being destroyed, because the land has been so contaminated. Landowners have to sell their land for a pittance to the clan; then that land becomes another dump.

The Land of Fires is the name given to the Giugliano-Villaricca-Qualiano triangle near Naples. After a landfill has been burned off, the clan builds houses on it. They get permits to

build, because the land was originally zoned as farmland. The houses can be built cheap and locals buy them for the low price. The author says the land suffers a constant and repeated abuse.

The theme of the children is repeated as the reader is told they are hired to drive trucks that are so dangerous no adult will do the job. These children have no idea of the harm that is being done to their bodies through exposure to the chemicals. Shepherds, guarding their sheep, are used as lookouts for the dumps. If anyone in authority appears to be coming, they notify the clan to take action. Shepherds guarding their sheep were the first to become aware of the birth of the Messiah, and Christ himself is often depicted as the Shepherd. Because of these business practices, the local agriculture is collapsing, the plants are diseased and the land is infertile. Cancer rates have increased by twenty-one percent in recent years. The author says: “The Land of the Fires looks like a constant and repeated apocalypse” (GO 297). The author presents the “end times” in simple moral terms: “I tormented myself trying to grasp if it was possible to try to understand, to discover, to know, without being devoured or destroyed. Or if the choice was between knowing and being compromised, or ignoring—and thus living serenely” (GO 299). Saviano explains the struggle to oppose the Camorra in pessimistic terms:

To set oneself against the clans becomes a war of survival, as if existence itself—the food you eat, the lips you kiss, the music you listen to, the pages you read—were merely a way to survive, not the meaning of life. Knowing is thus no longer a sign of moral engagement. Knowing—understanding—becomes a necessity. The only necessity if you want to consider yourself worthy of breathing. (GO 300)

The “Land of Fires” is the author’s prophecy for our future. He has detailed a pervasive, overwhelming and ultimately threatening criminality. He blames the world of greed and corrupt business. This chapter identifies the Land of Fires as the epicenter of the “end times.” The author tells us that we now live in a world where our choices are to command or be commanded. We have become beasts of profit and our lives are battlefields with no hope to survive, merely to go down after a good fight. He states: “In the land of the Camorra, knowing the clans’ mechanism for success, their modes of extraction, their investments, means understanding how everything works today, everywhere, not merely here” (GO 300).

Saviano has used the book of Revelation as a guide for his allegory of a spiritual path that has been forsaken for another that leads to desolation and destruction. He has shown that the moral decay in the land of the Camorra has permeated the world. The book of Revelation ends with the country turning into a burning sea of glass: “The first angel blew his trumpet, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were hurled to the earth: and a third of the earth was burned up; and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up” (Revelation 8:7). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire. There are many examples in the Bible of evil being destroyed by fire: “Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah” (Exodus 9:24). Dante’s hell rains fire in Canto XIV of the *Inferno*. There is a desert of red-hot sand, upon which flakes of fire float down slowly. Myths such as Homer are full of heroes and gods who steal fire or try to extinguish fire. Maggi writes that Pasolini cites Sodom in *The Letter of Jude* as an example of the penalty of eternal fire (2). Maggi says that Sodom is unquestionably an apocalyptic city that is punished because of its abandonment of God (2-3).

Religious symbolism appeals to emotion and to intellect. In Judeo-Christian mythology and literature fire is associated with divinity, with the dual acts of destruction and renewal. Fire

has historic and universal symbolism for redemption as well as destruction and evil. In the Bible, the Creator is often alluded to as a consuming fire (Isaiah 10:17, Exodus 24:16-17, Daniel 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29). Throughout the Bible there are references to fire as both a redemptive sign and as a judgment from God: “The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night” (Exodus 13:21). In Luke 12:49 Jesus is quoted as saying he came to bring fire to earth and he yearned for it to be kindled. In Acts 2:3-4 the Holy Spirit appears at Pentecost as “tongues of fire.”

The book of Revelation ends with the Christian message of the offer of a better life: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who hears say ‘Come.’ And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift” (Revelation 22:17):

Pasolini insists on Paul’s “unknown God” and on the centrality of the resurrection, because both concepts indicate an unreasonable belief in the renewal of the world. Pasolini is not interested in the Pauline apocalypse, because he espouses the apostle’s religious creed, but rather because by emphasizing Paul’s faith in the upcoming apocalypse, he highlights the present corruption and shame in the world. [F]or Pasolini, the corrupt world exists as a constant, perennial, and apocalyptic expectation. The world itself calls for an impossible renewal. (Maggi 88)

The last few paragraphs in *Gomorra* give Saviano’s vision for the ultimate destiny of mankind as he is floating in a polluted stream. The author-prophet continues the water

symbolism begun in *The Port*.” His chapter on Mondragone pointed out that it was a place where Italians enjoyed the sea, but had become a place polluted by crime (GO 261). In the film *Gomorra*, Garrone continued the book’s thematic water symbolism. Water holds deep symbolic meaning for humans across time and culture. Water is also a symbol for Mother Earth.

Revelation 22:1-2 states: “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.” In Revelation 8:10 the water has become bitter and many people died from the water and in 16:4 the rivers and streams of water became blood: “There is consistently an eschatology note in the message spelt out by Johannine water symbolism” (Ng 193).

One of the universal water symbols is death of the old and birth of the new. In Christian mythology it is used to wash away sins, as in baptism and holy water: “[I]n the milieu of Jesus’ baptism the water symbol acquired a sense of purification” (Ng 143). Further instances of flowing water as cited by Wai-Yee Ng are in Deuteronomy 8:7, 8:3, Leviticus 15:13,1:9, 8:21 and Hebrews 9:19. All of these offer water as a cleansing metaphor: “[I]n Numbers 19 water, together with blood—burned to form ashes, is designated the means of purification from sin” (Ng 169).⁹ In the prophetic books there is a great advance in the symbolic meaning of water.”

⁹ *With the Mosaic law*. Water is specified in some of the ritual laws as the element used for ritual washing. It is used in the washing of the inner parts of animals for offering (Lev 1:9, 12, 8:21) and the rinsing of ceremonial vessels (Lev 6:28). In the Mosaic law, there is an initial use of water for personal purification. For Levites specifically, the law says, “To purify them, do this: sprinkle the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves” (Num 8:7). In another law, the use of running

The word itself is used more extensively [...]. It is in the prophetic books that the water symbol takes on an eschatological reference to the Spirit” (Ng 172):

We can hardly overstate the theological significance of “water” found in the Pentateuch. Most of the later theological use of “water” originates from here.

At creation. In Gen. 1:2 “the waters” refers to the primeval waters, representing all that there was in universe over which the Spirit of God hovered, through the six days of God’s work of creation. [...] The extensive use of the term “waters” in the creation account is a prelude to the extensive use of “water” in biblical language. [...] Though the Gospel of John makes no direct mention of this Garden of Eden, the idea of fertility and abundance lies behind some of its use of “water.” (Ng 166-167)

John is the author of Revelation, but it is not known absolutely if he is the same author of John I and II, with which there are many similarities. The use of water symbolism is extensive in each of these books. It is uncertain whether the author of the books of John intends a symbolic meaning in every mention of “water” or how many of the references are theologically significant. According to Ng, water symbolism here is treated not only as “metaphorical” symbolism but also as “thematic” symbolism. She notes that water symbolism by John frequently notes baptism, new birth or purification (49, 51). Jesus is the fulfillment of all Israel’s eschatological hope, including the Samaritans’, is what I have already affirmed in the last

water” is designated for the cleansing of uncleanness (Lev 15:13). These establish the longstanding association of water with cleansing in the Israelite religion. (Ng 168)

chapter. That is, the very symbol of “water” and its double meaning intricately speak for anticipation and fulfillment (Ng 105).

Saviano is floating in a tainted stream, a symbol of the corruption of today’s world. His survival in that stream offers hope through resistance. His final words are: “Hey you bastards, I’m still here” (GO 301). This is a quotation from the film *Papillon* (1973), a famous Resistance film.¹⁰ In spite of seemingly impossible obstacles to freedom, the character never gives up. He resists the hegemony that makes such a horrible place possible. Even though he is surrounded by water, *Papillon* attempts to float to freedom and he triumphantly shouts, “I’m still here” (301).

Saviano began his book with an account of Camorra criminal activity in Italy. In the first half of his book, he gave a documentary style accounting of the depth and breadth of corruption. He showed that this corruption was spreading throughout the world, affecting the world’s economy. He avoided typical left/right political assessments in examining Italy’s economic situation. Instead, he chose moral terms to convey his deep concern for Italy’s future and the future of the world. He used a documentary style but was frank in acknowledging that his own perspective influenced the material. The second half of the book introduced biblical and literary themes to sound deeply felt warnings. Saviano’s message is that each of us bears a moral responsibility to speak out and resist corruption and immorality. He told the reader about the

¹⁰ Frankline J. Schaffner’s 1973 film is based on the true story of Henri Charrière. He is wrongly convicted of murder and sentenced to life in a penal colony in French Guiana. Determined to escape Charrière repeatedly fails and is subjected to various punishments and solitary confinement, before he finally succeeds. In symbolic fashion Charrière attempts to escape by sea.

danger of ~~the~~ 'great refusal' and created a Satan figure to illustrate the banality of evil. Then he gave specific types of business people that find a path to financial success through corruption. He addressed duality both in the Hebrew and Greek view. And finally he offered a warning about the consequences of the corruption and unrestrained consumerism that he documented. He used fire symbolism to relate his concerns to biblical warnings. Then he offered a hope for the future by using water as theme and symbol, representing salvation through resistance.

CHAPTER 4

GOMORRA AS FILM: FIVE PARABLES

—“The World is yours.”
—*Scarface* as cited in GO n.p.

Gomorra, the film, is an interpretation of the book, *Gomorra*. It was directed by Matteo Garrone, and its credits acknowledge both Saviano and Garrone as screenwriters. In an interview, Garrone acknowledged Saviano’s contribution: “It was impossible for him to write every day, but he was my fact-check for the screenplay” (Garcia, 2009, n.p.). It is difficult to know exactly what Saviano contributed to the film, but examination indicates that Saviano’s religious themes influenced the content of the film while Garrone’s education and life experiences influenced the technical and visual aspects. The task was to take Saviano’s book, epic in scope, and adapt it to film. They chose parable, favored by Jesus as he interpreted and taught moral lessons. Parables employ the everyday to point to a hidden reality that is not always visible: “The kingdom of heaven is like a buried treasure hidden in a field, which someone has found and hid; then in his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).

In creating this film interpretation of Saviano’s eschatology, Garrone expanded five incidents from the book into five parables. He used those parables to construct a parallel world that illustrates the loss of a moral compass and how that affects the fate of the people. Garrone’s visual style was influenced by silent film, realism and neorealism. Both Garrone and Saviano have identified Dreyer, Pasolini, Brecht and prominent neorealist directors as influences on their

work. Both men frequently reference Hollywood gangster movies. This chapter will examine the directing and editing of *Gomorra*, and the influences that contributed to it. The film used montage to weave five different stories into a unified construct by converging the parables into a cohesive narrative of desperate, hopeless lives and the “end times” that await them.

Garrone says his film is intended as a universal message; crime lords and drug dealers are everywhere (Barlow n.p.). Garrone’s movie illuminates Saviano’s pessimism about the future of the world and the failure of morals, ethics, religion, judiciary and government to solve systemic problems. He supported Saviano’s condemnation of consumerism as a root cause of problems in Western culture by singling out Nike in an interview as being typical of American companies that exploit poor repressed people: “What we see in the movie is not only a problem in Naples. Crime lords and drug dealers take advantage of poor people everywhere. Big American companies like Nike exploit poor, repressed people too. It’s a universal subject” (Garrone as cited in Barlow n.p.).

Garrone’s statements confirm that he approached the film as an eschatology. In one interview he said:

Also, some actors did not have the entire script. They only knew the script day by day. They did not know that they were dying in the end. At the beginning of the shooting, those actors were supposed to think they were outsmarting everybody in the script.

It was hard to convince them they were dying in the end. (Garrone as cited in Alexander 10)

In another interview Garrone said: “We decided on five stories and main characters. We wanted to make not only a crime film about Naples but also a metaphor about a more global

situation. The film's story is told from the point of view of the slaves, not the masters" (Garrone as cited in Porton n.p.). Garrone further explains in the same interview: "In Italy, there is a strong emphasis on social comment [...]. And I was also attracted more to adapting Saviano's book because of the characters and the images, not because of the message" (Garrone as cited in Porton n.p.). An analysis by Lyden of the ultimate gangster movie *The Godfather* gives some observations that could just as well describe Garrone's *Gomorra*:

There is not an obvious "moral" to the story, and to moralize its point is to simplify a complex text to which audiences will return precisely because it is both evocative and provocative of a range of values and concerns. This is the role of all great myths: to provide a resource for an ongoing wrestling with our own cultural questions. (2003, 163)

The use of parable to complement Saviano's apocalyptic work is affirmed by Lyden's definition of film as religion. He writes that when film is religious, each story (1) conveys a set of values, (2) offers methods for dealing with suffering and injustice and (3) has the power to affect the way we think outside the cinema (2003, 3-4). Theologians make a distinction between myth and parable. According to the Oxford Dictionary parable is a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson ("Parable", 2010, n.p.). The word parable comes from the Greek *parabolē*, meaning a literary device for conveying moral or spiritual matters. H. W. Fowler in *Modern English Usage* states that parable is designed "to enlighten the hearer by submitting to him a case in which he has apparently no direct concern, and upon which therefore a disinterested judgment may be elicited from him" (535). The form has been used in so many cultures and over such a long time that an exact definition can be difficult. Parables are often

written in such a way as to have two meanings, one literal and the other allegorical. The bleak hopelessness of the stories in *Gomorra* follows Lyden's definition of parable. Lyden argues that myth attempts to resolve tensions, but parable conveys that there is no resolution. Lyden writes: "Whereas myths satisfy their hearers through visions of vindication and wholeness, parables convey a challenging vision of the world that stresses risk-not-security, weakness-not-strength, and death-not-life." (2003, 25)

Almost from the beginning of cinema, a century ago, there have been examinations of film theologically:

The New England Congregational minister Herbert Jump was one of the first offering a theological rationale for movies in his pamphlet "The Religious Possibilities of the Motion Picture" (1911). Jump likened the church's use of movies to Jesus' use of parables [...]. Writing as a contemporary of Jump, [...] Vachel Lindsay also believed cinema to be an important medium for religious ideas and spiritual sentiment. In "The Art of the Moving Picture" (1915), he argued that by offering a universal language through its picture—writing—its hieroglyphic images—silent movies could in the hands of a "prophet-wizard" become "a higher form of vision seeing" (Johnston 310).

In the book *Gomorra*, the chapter titled “Hollywood” deals with film as myth. Saviano named gangster movies that criminals in the Naples area use to feed their own psychological needs in dealing with the stress of their lives and their unconscious.¹ Saviano explains:

It’s not the movie world that scans the criminal world for the most interesting behavior. The exact opposite is true. New generations of bosses don’t follow an exclusively criminal path; they don’t spend their days on the streets with the local thugs, carry a knife, or have scars on their faces. They watch TV, study, go to college, graduate, travel abroad, and are above all employed in the office of the mechanisms of power (GO 250).

Saviano says the 1972 film, *The Godfather*, is an example of this criminal trend where life imitates art. No one in Sicilian or Campania criminal organizations ever used the word *padrino* before the film came out. *Padrino* is derived from the philologically incorrect translation of the English word godfather. The word *compare* had always been the term used to label the head of the family or an affiliate. But ethnic Italian mafia families in the United States started using “godfather” instead of *compare* after the Francis Ford Coppola film. *Compare* and its diminutive, *compariello* eventually fell out of use (250).

In creating his film, Garrone rejected this traditional Hollywood gangster movie genre. The director explains his approach:

¹ In the “Hollywood” chapter alone, Saviano identifies these specific underworld themed movies that the criminal world scans for model behavior: *Scarface* (245, 255, 256); *The Godfather* (250, 256); *The Crow* (251); *Kill Bill* (251); *Il camorrista* (252); *Pulp Fiction* (253); *Taxi Driver* (254); *Goodfellas* (256); and *Donnie Brasco* (256).

It was interesting for me to show the Camorra as regular people and not as monsters [...]. Even you or I could do such things if we were born into that situation. The real locations I chose [tenements that resemble prisons] are like characters in the movie. In the book there's a language of reportage that I wanted to keep for the audience to feel like they are on the inside. To do it I had to become invisible as a director. The subject of the movie is so sensitive that I also gave up the music because I didn't want the audience to be affected. It made the situations and the power of the Camorra more banal (Garrone as cited in Barlow n.p.).

Film critic Anthony Lane has written: "only after a second dose did I get the measure of Garrone's mastery, and realize how far he has surpassed, not merely honored the author's courageous toil." (Lane n.p.)

Garrone's approach has reinterpreted André Bazin, a preeminent film scholar best known for his advocacy of film that represents reality. He argued that film can provide a spiritual realism by conveying emotions and addressing questions that bring the viewer to a deeper level of reality and meaning: "In any case, the

does not ordinarily show us everything. That is impossible—but the things he selects and the things he leaves out tend to form a logical pattern by way of which the mind passes easily from cause to effect" (Bazin 35). In his review of the realism in *Gomorra*, film critic Peter Bradshaw affirms Garrone's success in interpreting *Gomorra* as eschatology when he writes:

After the final credits, it is hard to escape the fear, even the despair, that this whole area—all of Naples, all of southern Italy—

is suitable only for a rain of fire from the heavens, or maybe a 1,000-year quarantine, like an ethical or indeed literal Chernobyl. (Bradshaw n.p.)

The film, *Gomorra*, begins with parallels of the Old Testament creation story of Genesis. While not offered as parable, this opening serves as the genesis of the five stories in the film and establishes that the film will interpret Saviano. The opening sequence sets up the reason for all that happens later, establishing the emotional tone with startling and rich imagery. Saviano used the last book of the Bible, Revelation, as a model for his eschatology. The movie used the first book, Genesis, to lay the foundation for each story. As the film opens, there is a void and the audience hears a strange sound, creating tension, because so much is left unknown. The blank screen is soon filled with an artificial blue light. It is a profoundly religious scene, paralleling the opening verses of the Bible where God is represented as the light of the sun and light is an essential creation of the world and hence his creation. Traditionally the colors of sunlight are represented as yellow, orange and red. Blue is the complement or almost opposing light on the color wheel. Being a painter, Garrone is very aware that the arrangement of colors around the color sphere is considered to be in correlation with light wavelengths.

A picture slowly emerges of a semi-naked man basking in the strange blue light. Other men are introduced, creating an atmosphere of male locker room joviality and brotherhood. This scene references Italian preoccupation with outward appearances and Saviano's observations about a gangster's narcissism. The men wear religious necklaces, traditionally given to Italian men at their confirmation. The artificial light symbolism introduces the construct of dualism, the world of God and a godless world. In his book Saviano has one of the crime bosses say to his

son: “This face hasn’t seen the sun for years and years” (GO 129). Christ is represented in most of the western religious traditions as the light of the sun:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless void and darkness was covered the face of the deep, while a wind from swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. (Genesis 1:1-6)

The use of naked men in a tanning salon also echoes the story of the Garden of Eden where the concept of sin is introduced. According to scholar Joseph Campbell, eating the forbidden fruit shows humanity’s sudden awareness of opposites—good and evil (Moyers n.p.). Like Adam and Eve, these naked men have a choice of whether to obey God or risk being damned: “I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen 3:10) and God said, “Because you have done this, cursed you are” (Genesis 3:14).

Suddenly some of the men begin shooting others, leaving them in pools of blood. As the camera lingers over the dead bodies, the blue light intensifies. The surviving men casually walk out of the tanning salon, echoing a scene from Saviano’s book: “after the service they calmly left the store—calmly people say—as if they had just bought a cell phone [...]. Blood everywhere. It seems as if his soul had drained out of the holes that riddled the body” (GO 116). It is the beginning of the Secondigliano wars, Camorra brothers turning against each other, referencing Genesis 4:8-11, where Cain killed his brother Abel.

A quick camera cut to people counting money visually connects the killings in the tanning parlor with Saviano’s message that money is indeed the root of this evil. He wrote:

“Economic victory is more precious than life itself” (GO114). Montage continues, creating the narrative pace of the entire film. The director uses adjacent shots to create meaning not otherwise recorded. The camera goes to a young boy in a soccer shirt, Totò, played by Salvatore Abruzzese. Totò’s story will illustrate the recurring biblical theme that the sons bear the sins of the fathers. We see this theme later in the film in the story of Roberto, which depicts the “end times.” Saviano focuses on the plight of the children throughout his book. In

“Women” he writes: “The girl will be much better if she can get herself courted by the best, and, once she has snared him, hold on to him put up with him, hold her nose and swallow him” (GO 137-138). In “The Secondigliano War” he informs: “The clans enlist the boys as soon as they’re capable of being loyal. Twelve to seventeen years old” (GO105). Saviano tells of a horrifying experience he had as a child: “I was only a boy [...] the corpse fell to the ground like a melting icicle. We watched undisturbed without anyone telling us this was no sight for children. Without any moral hand covering our eyes” (GO 99). “Don Peppino Diana” gives us:

The Camorra gives the name *family* to a clan organized for criminal purposes [...] the conversion to honesty is considered a betrayal worthy of death [...]. For the Christian, shaped to the school of the Word of God, *family* means only a group of people united in shared love, in which love means disinterested and attentive service, in which service exalts him who offers it and him who receives it. The Camorra claims to have its own religiosity, and at times it manages to deceive the inexperienced or ingenuous. (GO 227-228)

Saviano's message is that the children represent the future and they are being sacrificed to the System they are forced to live under. This question of the future of humanity is central to Judeo-Christian philosophy. It is considered in both the Old and New Testaments. In Exodus 20:5, God proclaims that he will punish the children for the sins of the fathers even to the third and fourth generation. The guilt born by Adam's descendants for his sin is addressed in 1 Corinthians 15:22. From the beginning of the history of the Jews, chronicled in Exodus, there is an ongoing wrestling with the subject of how the future is affected by each generation's morality (Exodus 34:6-7 and 20:5, Deuteronomy 24:16, Ezekiel 18:20).

When Totò is introduced into the film he is symbolically wearing religious jewelry: a cross for an earring and his confirmation necklace. He is also wearing three rings on one hand. It is a fashion trend in Naples that symbolizes the Trinity. The camera focuses on Totò's innocent face and follows him in his diligent delivery of groceries for his mother. Throughout the film, Garrone uses these close-ups to create images that convey Saviano's themes. In the ongoing tradition of Italian film neorealism, Totò becomes a symbol of the future and a blank slate that events are written on. There are quick cuts back and forth to establish the hopelessness of Totò's environment. We are shown a drug deal and other scenes of Totò's shabby complex.

Water symbolism, introduced in *Gomorra* the book, is used here to further illustrate the lack of cleansing and healing in Totò's world. There is a scene of children playing in a plastic swimming pool on a rooftop. The location is the actual *Vele*, a setting used by Saviano. The children are confined to this cheap, small, plastic pool when there are beautiful beaches nearby. From a Jungian perspective, water is a common symbol of the unconscious. In baptism a person is plunged into water and is said to be "reborn" when arising out of the water. This symbolizes the descent of consciousness into the unconscious and the resulting new and fuller life. The

cinematic water scenes, however, can be viewed as a parody of the Christian baptism that is supposed to be a ritualistic enlightenment. The *Vele* is used throughout the film to underscore poverty and to convey the narrow, confining limits of lives there. Saviano described the *Vele* in “The Secondigliano Wars” chapter: “The rotten symbol of architectural delirium [...] powerless to oppose the narcotraffic machine that feeds on this part of the world” (GO 63). This shot is the only one in the movie of children playing. There are no scenes of intact families in the film. Michael Covino points out that even though this is the sunny Mediterranean, scenes are shot in washed-out colors, somber greys and blues (73). The lack of sunlight becomes integral to mood and theme.

The camera cuts to the next parable in which Don Ciro (Gianfelice Imperato) appears. He seems to be a kindly small-town businessman, perhaps an insurance salesman, visiting customers. As his story progresses, Don Ciro will become the central figure in a parable that contrasts with one of Jesus’ most memorable lessons, “The Good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37). Samaritans were a branch of the Jewish religion that was looked down upon by other Semite branches; there was hostility between the factions. Jesus taught that the Samaritan earned salvation when he helped his neighbor and his enemy. The message of this parable is that the people of God should “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37). Good Samaritan has become a common noun to describe a charitable or helpful person. The parable of the Samaritan was given by Jesus in response to an inquiry about an Old Testament admonition to love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). The questioner asked, who is one’s neighbor and Jesus gave this parable to teach that even an enemy is to be treated with compassion and dignity. This is a fundamental concept to any notion of human rights. Many of the world’s religions and much of literature addresses this question of how to treat others. Jesus himself is quoted in Mark 12:31 as

saying: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Saviano has Don Peppino Diana preach from Jeremiah and Isaiah: “The Prophet gives priority to the life of Justice” (GO 224). The Samaritan parable, as used in the film, illustrates Saviano’s statement that: “In the land of the Camorra, the theory of modern rights is turned on its head” (GO237). In this parable, however, Don Ciro will accept no responsibility for his neighbor.

Before Don Ciro’s parable develops, the camera introduces Marco (Marco Macor) and Ciro (Ciro Petrone). Their story becomes a perversion of the biblical allegory known as the “Prodigal Son” (Luke 15:11-32). This parable can be read on a literal and allegorical level in reference to a father and his love for his son, or about the Son yearning to correct man’s sins committed against the Father. In *Gomorra*, its message is about mankind’s need for love and acceptance and the yearning of the father to accept and embrace his child within the Camorra clan. The prodigal son asked for his inheritance early, left the family home to squander it and finally worked in a pigsty, particularly symbolic to the Hebrews of Jesus time as “unclean.” When this youngest son wanted to come home, his father accepted him without reservation and with honor. Garrone’s prodigal sons are simple teenagers, untalented and without resources. They too have descended to an “unclean” life. They express their feelings of impotence by invoking the myth of the gangster film *Scarface*. They talk about their lives being short. They understand the hopelessness of their positions. They, like the biblical prodigal son, have strayed into godless lives and are desperate for acceptance, for power and for belonging.

The next parable is introduced when the camera cuts to an elegant representative of the Italian high fashion industry. The parable of the talents, found in both Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-28, is interpreted in this cinematic vignette. Bidding is going on for manufacturing jobs to produce goods cheap and fast. Pasquale, chief of a tailor shop participating in a bidding

war, is worried about the bidding process resulting in lower wages and longer hours. He is a recurring character in Saviano's book, assuming the role of guide through the Hades Saviano describes. In the film story he becomes a symbol of the people.

The last story, the "end times," is introduced when the action moves to an abandoned gas station where businessmen are examining a tank. A camera cuts to a group of businessmen in an abandoned quarry, discussing how much illegal waste they can dump. Franco (played by well-known actor Toni Servillo) tells a young man that their future depends on young people becoming part of the System. Here Garrone continues the theme of the future being lost through the corruption of the children. The book has a description of the Camorra's business plan: "Bring in the kids, promote them to the rank of soldier [...]. Boys who work in delicatessens and butcher shops, mechanics, waiters, and unemployed youth are to become the clan's new and unforeseen power" (GO 79). The children are predestined to pay for the sins of their fathers. Pasolini addresses this same ancient theme in *Lettere luterane*:

Uno dei temi più misterioso del teatro tragico greco è la predestinazione dei figli a pagare le colpe dei padri.

Non importa se i figli sono buoni, innocenti, pii: se i loro padri hanno peccato, essi devono essere puniti. [...].

Per la prima volta in vita mia, riesco così a liberare nella mia coscienza, attraverso un meccanismo intimo e personale, quella terribile, astratta fatalità del coro ateniese che ribadisce come naturale la punizione dei figli." (2009, 17-18)

Each of the parables continues, developed slowly into a coherent whole as the camera cuts back and forth. Garrone's narrative motif follows Saviano's occasional use of a third person narrator:

The director was Matteo Garrone, experienced in both document and drama, who says that the material was so visually powerful that he filmed it as if he were an accidental witness, ~~a~~ passerby who happened to find myself there by chance." This approach turns out to be apt: many sequences consist of casual motion from face to face and back, rather than formal editing, as if Garrone were watching, not directing. Much of the camera work is handheld, as if it were impromptu. The only element that resembles a visual motif is the recurrence of a blue tinge in some shots, possibly to suggest contiguous atmosphere. (Kauffman n.p.)

In this ~~re~~visionist gangster movie" Garrone ~~uses~~ a painterly eye to create images that are both impressive and heartbreaking" (Petraakis 43).

Marco and Ciro decide to rob some African immigrant drug pushers. As their story develops, the setting becomes unrelenting in drabness and squalor. The water theme is continued with an empty swimming pool behind the men who are robbed, and in the image of an empty, unused bathtub when the boys act out a scene from *Scarface*. Iaccino writes that from a Jungian perspective, nearby waters would normally signal a birth which would be transpiring: but in this case there is an absence of the consciousness from the shadow depths of the unconscious. The boys continue to be closely tied with the animal psyche and are not fully aware of their own self (Iacchino 153). After a robbery, the boys are warned by the local capo that they should not

disrupt the area, but the boys are inured to violence and too starved for some sense of power to accept the clan's prohibition. It is their undoing. They stumble onto a cache of mob weapons, Kalashnikovs and Berettas. The director continues water imagery by having the boys go to the shore to shoot their guns, pretending to be their hero from *Scarface*. This disturbing scene is the first to show one of southern Italy's beautiful beaches, but the boys are never immersed or cleansed by the water there: "This is not the familiar image of Naples—the seaside here has nothing to do with the charming walk that skirts the sea. [...] Is this still Naples" (Agrisani n.p.)?

Shooting their guns has made the boys feel potent, so they go to a brothel where the blue artificial light intensifies. God's light is not present. At the peak of their erotic adventure, the boys are dragged out, beaten and threatened with murder if they do not return the guns. They are left battered and crying. Soon the local capo, representing a father figure, invites them into the System, which has become a metaphor for family. This father image echoes Saviano's musing about his own father in the chapter titled "Kalashnikov." There he introduced the father-son dynamic, addressing the theme of choices and their effect on the sons. As a sign of acceptance, the capo offers the boys a job and money to kill someone. The boys feel that they finally have respect and belonging, but this story of Marco and Ciro is a perversion of the "Prodigal Son." These sons are not welcomed home by a father and forgiven as they are in Luke 15:31-32. They are ambushed and killed. The boys' bodies are scooped up by a shovel and offered up like a sacrifice. This ends the movie and establishes it as an eschatology. The viewer is left with another void and the sound of water, polluted by the dead bodies, lapping on the shore. This image echoes Saviano's moving statement and use of water symbolism to describe his reaction to the criminality and godlessness that was destroying his world:

I ran to the shore and climbed to the rocks. Haze mixed with darkness so I couldn't even make out the lights of the ships crossing the gulf. The water rippled, the waves were beginning to pick up. It seemed as if they were reluctant to touch the mire of the battle-ground, but they didn't return to the distant maelstrom of the open sea. They were immobile, stubbornly resisting, impossibly still, clinging to their foamy crests, as if no longer sure where the sea ends (GO 121).

Pasquale's (Salvatore Cantalupo) parable continues. It becomes a didactic story about the harm done to individuals and society when workers are not respected and rewarded fairly for their abilities and contributions. His story is particularly poignant in conveying how evil can cast a shadow over anyone who seeks the light through generosity or altruism, loyalty or art. New themes and conflicts arise in each successive scene" (Petraakis 43). John Milton's sonnet, "On His Blindness," expresses the meaning of Pasquale's parable:

When I consider how my light is spent
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent, which is death to hide,
 Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest He, returning, chide; (Milton 342)

The poem alludes to the parable in Matthew 25:14-30. A departing master gives his three servants money (talents) in proportion to their ability to increase value. When the master returns, the first servant reports that he doubled his talents to ten and the second that he doubled his to

four. The third servant is denounced when he reports that he buried his talent for safe keeping and did not use or increase it.

After Pasquale learns about the new contract's longer working hours and unfair pay, he takes a night job with a Chinese competitor. A camera close-up reveals Pasquale's pride when the Chinese workers show him respect by calling him "Maestro." He gives the money he has earned to his young wife and son; his pride is evident as he falls asleep, exhausted from the night job. Garrone says one of his favorite scenes is the Camorra attack on Pasquale's car as he is going to work at the Chinese factory. It spins out of control, crashing through a collection of early Roman reproductions. Garrone finds it esoteric and mysterious (Porton n.p.). The destruction of these Roman symbols can be interpreted as a metaphor for the destruction of Italy, which Pasquale has come to represent. Pasquale is badly injured in the accident and refuses to come back to work in the factories. He is offered more money and finally told that he is vital to the company's success. It comes too late. He walks away from the craft he loves and the exploitive relationship he has had to endure. He takes a job driving a truck, his act of resistance. At the end of his story he stops at a truck stop and sees a television picture of Scarlet Johansson wearing one of his dresses. He never received recognition or adequate pay for creating such a beautiful thing. Italy and the world have lost a valuable talent and face a bleak future because of it.

Don Ciro's story is seemingly the most innocent. This ordinary middle-aged man has many friends in the *Vele*. A tracking shot follows him through the labyrinth of the complex, and establishes his connection to it. These long sweeping pans are among the very few used in the film. They are used to capture the "dehumanizing architectural nightmare" of such a place and are reminiscent of Rosi's film *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands Over the City*, 1963) (Covino 75). A

background scene shows him helping a family move out of their apartment, because it has been ruined by water. This is another perversion of the biblical symbolism of cleansing and redemptive water. He delivers money to families whose loved ones are dead or in prison. He seems to be concerned for everyone. He is helpful to Maria, whose husband is in jail and whose son has joined an enemy branch of the Camorra.

As the story progresses, we realize that Don Ciro's story is perhaps the most sinister. He has nothing for the people with whom he has lived and worked. When Maria is forced to leave her home, she goes to him for help. She is desperate. Don Ciro turns his back and walks away. He turns in his own comrades to the rival Camorra gang to save himself. He epitomizes the banality of evil. He is the opposite of the theme central to the *–Good Samaritan.*”

Young Totò and his friends realize at early ages that the only future for them is the System. When the Secondigliano war breaks out, Totò's best friend ends their friendship by joining another faction. Again, brother is turned against brother. Totò is slowly sucked into the criminal world, too young to fully understand the consequences. As a new young recruit he is baptized into the clan's perverted world with religious symbolism. The scene is created from Saviano's description of the same type of initiation in *–The Secondigliano Wars*” (GO 104). First the boys are outfitted with bulletproof vests. Then they are led into a mysterious black hole, symbol of the entrance to Hades. Next, they are baptized by being shot with bullets, instead of being cleansed with water. The bullets knock them down and mark their little bodies. They are told they are now men.

Totò continues to deliver groceries to his friend's mother, Maria, but he is ordered to help murder her. This is the same Maria that Don Ciro denies. She carries the name of the mother of Jesus. A close-up captures the anguish on the child's face as he resists but understands that he

has no choice. Totò induces Maria to come out so clan members can shoot her. She calls out to Totò as she lies dying, but Totò turns his back and walks away. He has denied Maria and truly entered a godless world. In Matthew 25:40 Jesus says: “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

The final parable completes the eschatology. Garrone comments: “you can see the consequences of their choices and you can see the atmosphere where they live” (Garcia, 2008, 27). This story is about the toxic waste being brought into Naples by its own people. Franco goes about his work, work that can destroy the world. Franco recruits a young man named Roberto, played by Carmine Paternoster. A camera close-up captures the worn and worried look of Roberto’s father as he anxiously introduces his son to Franco. Covino writes that Roberto represents the author-narrator of the book, Saviano. Roberto is the only presence of that narrator in the film (74). The young apprentice’s father knows that opportunities for his son are limited in Naples and decides to help Roberto find a good job. This cinematic vignette echoes Saviano’s story of his father’s introduction of guns in the book. Both are about choices.

A scene shows Roberto the attaché in Venice, enjoying a life of travel and authority. He is with Franco who is polished and presents a *bella figura*. The scene in the abandoned quarry is juxtaposed to tell the magnitude of the danger that the toxic waste represents. It is presented with a quick cut that makes the viewer aware of this danger as the underbelly of the “good life” that these men lead. When a drum of toxic chemicals is accidentally spilled on a truck driver, the on-site hands refuse to continue working. Franco hires children to drive the trucks. They are so small that they have to sit on cushions to reach the pedals. In the supplementary DVD of his film, Garrone stated that this scene is one of the most successful, comparing it to a circus scene

with Toni Servillo as the elephant trainer (Garrone). The children are symbolic of a future being sacrificed to greed, more evidence that the sins of the fathers are being visited on the children.

Next Franco sits beside the bed of a very sick man, negotiating to lease more of his land for illegal dumping. The old man is so sick that he is only able to say one thing, “euro,” but that is enough to explain the cause of the “end times.” A close-up of Roberto indicates that he is absorbing the true implications of what is happening to the land and the people on it. As the men are leaving, an old woman who is disoriented (perhaps from the contaminated land) gives them a box of beautiful lush peaches. Continuing Saviano’s theme of odor representing evil:

And when I find myself among [...] the really successful businessmen, I feel ill. Even though these men are elegant, speak quietly, and vote for leftist politicians, I smell the odor of lime and cement emanating from their socks, their Bulgari cuff links, and their bookshelves. (GO 218).

Franco stops his car on the highway and orders Roberto to throw the fruit away just before the young man contemplates eating it. He says; “Can’t you smell it” (Garrone)? The peaches represent Italy: “A symbolic relationship between the earthly harvest and the heavenly harvest is unquestionable here, as the harvest is a common eschatological symbol used in the Old Testament, the apocalyptic, the New Testament and the rabbinical writings” (Ng 127).

In his book, *Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity*, Robert S. C. Gordon gives examples of Pasolini’s use of metaphors: “The road and the moon are metaphors of history and desire, of the bewildering, receding experience of conscious reality, shadowed by death and the failing voice of Ideology” (239). Gordon interprets Pasolini’s use of the road, the moon and the tide in *Uccellacci e uccellini (The Hawks and the Sparrows, 1966)*. Two characters embark on a

Brechtian journey which has no end. The two protagonists' progress along strange, massive half-constructed road bridges—literally roads to nowhere (Gordon 237).

In *Gomorra*, we see that Garrone has borrowed this same road metaphor in the story of the peaches and the film's ending scene of the tide and sounds of the ocean. Saviano's book ends with the narrator offering resistance by insisting: "I'm still here" (GO 301). In the film version the road symbolism that Pasolini favored is repeated with a shot of the long empty road that Roberto has to walk as he leaves the System. The film offers a message of resistance as Roberto walks away from Franco, in a different direction.

In creating his film, Garrone has used a variety of techniques and exhibited several influences. Garrone is the best source for understanding his work. He has been interviewed extensively. Garrone says: "It's very important for me to think that screenwriting is not something that is closed. Cinema is a very handcrafted process, like painting" (Garrone as cited in Garcia, 2009, n.p.). Garrone's montages and close-ups create individual compositions within the film. He credits Pasolini also with teaching him the value of close-ups of faces (Porton n.p.). He used little background music, leaving the emphasis on the images to create feeling and mood. Of his camerawork Garrone has said: "In the way that I shoot, I try to be very, very simple. It's important to give the audience the feeling of being there" (Stone n.p.).

In another interview Garrone explained his cinematographic style in the following way:

I didn't go to film school; I trained as a painter. Since I was interested in figurative art and composition, this helped me when I became involved in filmmaking. Perhaps all of the paintings I saw from my days of museum-going stuck in my unconscious. In the case of *Gomorra*, I might have been unconsciously invoking

Francis Bacon, whose paintings are very animalistic and carnal.
(Porton n.p.)

Garrone gives us direction for understanding his work when he says he is interested in visual style and more interested in human conflict than in making traditional “message movies” (Porton n.p.). The following quotation gives insight into the film’s transition from Saviano’s “documentary” style to Garrone’s style of advancing the theme with allegory. He says:

For me cinema is connected with this (touches heart), not with this (touches head). When I go to cinema I like to be surprised emotionally, and not to understand what they are saying rationally. That was the best way for me to give back the strong emotional impact I felt. (Stone n.p.)

It is apparent that much of Garrone’s style is borrowed from silent film techniques. Garrone has stated that dialogue was basically unimportant to his film. He uses it sparingly (Barlow n.p.). There are clips of him instructing his actors to improvise their lines and to use as little dialogue as possible. He used local actors whose accents were so thick that subtitles were necessary, even for Italian audiences. His visual style borrowed two basic silent film techniques, editing and close-up. Garrone’s work reflects a painter’s eye, which draws from a variety of visual techniques: “Always, always, we were thinking about image” (Garcia, 2009, n.p.).

Film historian James Card devotes much of his book *Seductive Cinema: The Art of Silent Film* to an overview of the silent film industry. Card believes that:

[T]he close-up gave the medium its soul. [...] I will even go so far as to suggest that there has never been a great film without close-ups. In fact, a great film was never made *until* close-ups came into

general use. [...]. It is in the close-up that the film player enters a realm of acting undreamed of in the whole tradition of theatre.

(21, 23).

Garrone has acknowledged silent film master Carl Theodore Dreyer as a major influence. Card singles out Dreyer as an internationally recognized master of silent film and an advocate of close-up (23).² Dreyer's work is echoed in *Gomorra*, both in content and visual effect. The camera focuses almost entirely on the faces of the protagonists. Each parable is developed by this technique, showing the emotional range of each central character. When asked in an interview if it were a deliberate strategy to avoid long shots and focus on the physiognomy of the face Garrone answered:

That comes from studying many of the masters of cinema— Dreyer, for one. And this is also something Pasolini writes about of course. But, yes, close-ups of faces were very important for this movie. I was lucky to have found some actors who had a background in theater but also were from the area; they knew what they were talking about when they said the lines. (Porton n.p.)

Dreyer's work seems to reflect his familiarity with church and religious themes. The titles to his films include obvious references to religion: *The Parson's Widow* (1920), *Leaves Out of the Book of Satan* (1921), *The Word* (1955) and *Thou Shalt Honor Thy Wife* (1925).

² -Nothing in the world can be compared to the human face. It is a land one can never tire of exploring. There is no greater experience in a studio than to witness the expression of a sensitive face under the mysterious power of inspiration. To see it from inside and turning into poetry" (Carl Dreyer as cited in Card 23).

Dreyer is noted for the stark cinematography, careful compositions and very long takes used in *Gamorra*. Lyden description of Dreyer's style could as well describe aspects of Garrone's:

Carl Dreyer creates a sense of "absence" through a sparse technique that limits editing, camera movement, and plot action to a minimum. In this way, according to Schrader, these films evoke a sense of "transcendence" by pointing beyond the emptiness of the "everyday" to a higher reality. (2003, 26)

Roger Ebert comments give some insight into Garrone's techniques. He calls attention to the silent film as a medium without words that used the camera to convey the essence of character through faces. He notes that Dreyer cut film into a series of startling images. Dreyer fragmented space, disoriented the visual sense and shot in close-ups to keep his emphasis on the faces of his characters (Ebert n.p.).

Garrone's film is of the *auteur* style, although the influences of numerous directors and film theorists are present.³ He came to *Gomorra* with a background of life experiences and projects that prepared him to be a director of auteur cinema. He was born in Rome in 1968. His father is the prominent film critic Nico Garrone and his mother is a painter. His grandfather was the noted actor Adriano Rimoldi who starred in Vittorio De Sica's 1943 masterpiece of

³ Auteur theory started in France during the 1940s as an outgrowth of the cinematic philosophies of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc. In the auteur theory the director is considered the "author" of the movie more than the writer of the screenplay. Fundamental visual elements such as camera placement, blocking, lighting, and scene length, rather than plot line, convey the message of the film. Auteur theorists argue that the most cinematically successful films will bear the personal stamp of the director. (Auteur Theory n.p.)

neorealism, *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children Are Watching Us*). Garrone studied and practiced as a painter until his interests turned to film making. His background as a painter gave him valuable experience using images to create emotional responses. Richard Porton alludes to Garrone's visual approach when he notes the differences between Saviano and Garrone in creating similar emotional responses. He writes that Saviano aims for intellectual provocation by marshalling facts and political outrage within a narrative framework, but Garrone is more interested in creating emotional frisson with startling images: "Trained as a painter, Garrone possesses one of the sharpest eyes in contemporary cinema" (Porton n.p.).

Sidney Lumet's book, *Making Movies*, explains the intricate teamwork involved in making a movie. According to him, a director must be a manager as well as an artist. Therefore, many directors develop a team of people that they like to have with them when working. Garrone has a team that he consistently works with: screenwriter Massimo Gaudioso, cinematographer Marco Onorato (his mother's longtime companion) and editor Marco Spoletini. Using a permanent team gives Garrone's films consistency and allows him greater control over his work (Porton n.p.). Robert Radovic has noted that this teamwork allows for very sophisticated camera work: "He expertly creates layers of tension through the very conscious limitations imposed on the depth of field" (19). According to Radovic, what elevates *Gomorra* above the genre of the grainy gangster flicks is the dogged completeness of its look and action.

Garrone's previous films were compatible to *Gomorra* in style and themes. The first 1996 short film, *Silhouette*, won Italy's Golden Sacher award. This gave the impetus to use *Silhouette* as part of a collection of short films to compose his first long film, *Terra di mezzo* (1997). This first long film was about the problems of Rome's immigrants, documenting their struggle to survive. Garrone then directed *Ospiti* (*Guests*, 1998) also about immigrants' lives.

Next he completed *Estate Roma (Roman Summer, 2000)* about life's losers living in Rome and then *L'imbalsamatore (The Embalmer, 2002)* about different forms of unhappiness. In 2004 he released *Primo amore (First Love)*, a bizarre and stylistic film about a man determined to starve his girlfriend. This was considered one of Italy's most original and bitter films (–Bibliography of Matteo Garrone” n.p.).

While this dissertation is not concerned with neorealism per se, some features of neorealism are notable influences on Garrone's film. Garrone himself has acknowledged the influence of neorealists:

–Of course, I am informed by Italian cinema, by Rossellini, DeSica, Visconti and then by Fellini,” he observes. –Also, by Italian painters, especially Caravaggio. I can't explain in a word what this means for me to be Italian but I think there is a line that connects my work with the work of the great masters of the past.” (Garcia, 2008, 27)

Garcia sees much influence of neorealism, but quotes Garrone on the subject when she examines the film's techniques:

There is, in *Gomorra*, a nod to Italian Neo-Realism: It shares with those films a portrayal of Italy's political and social landscape from the perspective of ordinary people. –I don't think it makes any sense today to make Neo-Realism,” Garrone observes. –It's a subject that is connected to that period. Realism, to me, means that the movie is true.” (Garcia, 2009, n.p.)

Garrone stated in an interview that the major influence on his version of *Gomorra* was Rossellini's *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1946) (Porton n.p.). Considered a masterpiece of neorealism, the film is six episodes set in the period following the invasion of American troops in Italy. Rossellini used camera intercutting to create a sense of realism. His stories were about the desperate social reality of his time. Although Garrone has distanced himself from being labeled a new neorealist, he uses squalid film locations, hand held cameras and natural lighting while emphasizing the lower classes and naturalism. These are all qualities associated with neorealist cinema. He readily acknowledges the influence of neorealist directors, particularly Rossellini (Porton n.p.).

Argument continues about how neorealism should be defined and who actually started it. Films of the postwar period were revolutionary for the time because Italy's economy imposed limitations of set, use of nonprofessional actors, rough lighting and simple camera work. The result was a neorealist documentary style which has been copied and developed throughout the world:

[L]a pauvreté des moyens, les difficultés d'exécution sont souvent bénéfiques à l'œuvre d'art. L'obligation—faute de studio—de tourner dans la rue et dans les maisons, la photo grisâtre consécutive à l'absence de groupes électrogènes, le caractère sommaire d'un découpage fait par à coups et souvent même improvisé, donnent à cette «actualité reconstituée» l'apparence d'authenticité d'un témoignage. (Leprohon 101)

The setting of *Gomorra* is dingy and dirty, the concrete is crumbling and paint is peeling. There are no scenes of intact family units and no joy except in a few sinister contexts (the two

hoods shooting stolen rifles on the beach). In the tradition of neorealism, the film avoids scenes that seem to glamorize crime. Garrone's camera focuses on small details of dreary lives—narrow corridors and cramped kitchens of the public housing project *Vele di Scampi*. Poverty, boredom and confinement are the visual messages. The labyrinth of narrow passageways underscores the hopelessness of the lives there. There is no way out. The movie includes an actual drug deal, accidentally recorded, because it was going on as the scene was being shot (Porton n.p.). Garrone has said that they could only shoot for a few hours each day, because the people there are using crack cocaine. It made them more aggressive as the day wore on (Boslaugh n.p.). Gordon's observations about *Gomorra* relate to the reality of the film:

[T]he manner in which the film casts itself as an ideal vehicle for metaphor in film, through its fabulistic alterity, takes us back to Pasolini's dual assertion in his theory that to express concepts, cinema must work in parables, in metaphors, and that to express the self, it must work in poetry, in metaphor, in both cases *because* cinema is irretrievably bound to reality. (239)

Michael Covino compares Francesco Rosi's *Le mani sulla città* with Garrone's scenes. He points out that Rosi's film worked to convey the ugliness of the city which resulted from construction rackets, corrupt government and other fraud. His scenes were stark and depressing, but Covino feels that Rosi's film conveyed a warmth and love that Garrone did not have in his stark realism of the actual site (Covino 72).

Leprohon quotes an article by the director Alberto Lattuada on neorealism that ends: "Cette confession éclairera nos folles vertus secrètes, notre foi dans la vie, notre fraternité chrétienne, d'ordre supérieur" (Lattuada as cited in Leprohon 107). Leprohon's observations

about the inherent morality of neorealist films inform our evaluation of *Gomorra*. Leprohon cites the films *Sciuscià* (*Shoeshine*, 1946), *Paisà* (*Paisan*, 1948) and *I bambini ci guardano* (*The Children are Watching Us*, 1944) as dealing with subjects of childhood innocence and adult injustice (Leprohon 111).

Mira Liehm traces the beginnings of neorealism to Naples. Nino Martoglio's 1914 *Sperduti nel buio*, (*Lost in the Darkness*) and Gustavo Serena's 1915 *Assunta spina* (*Neapolitan Blood*) are cited as being a first source of neorealist style. He classified the Naples style as pioneering the use of crude realism and authentic environment and of using natural lighting and the squalid backdrop of the Neapolitan lower classes. Liehm also acknowledges *Assunta spina* as introducing other techniques picked up by neorealists with scenes filmed on the streets, with natural light and emphasis on visual impact (14).

Elvira Notari, a female Neapolitan director, made *A santa notte* (*A Holy Night*, 1921). This film is about abused women in the poorest level of Neapolitan life. The film was shot entirely on location. Notari's son played a shoeshine boy whose type became a staple in Italian film. The character's influence can be seen in the children of the film *Gomorra*, particularly Totò. The shoeshine character, embodied by Gennariello in *A santa notte*, was a product of the Neapolitan streets, living and dying from poverty. This same street urchin-depserado character was immortalized in De Sica's *Sciuscià* twenty-five years later (Liehm 15). Liehm credits Futurism with bridging the gap between the Neapolitan school and neorealism. Futurism was about respecting authenticity, rejection of traditional bourgeois values and interest in the Italian landscape. Futurists saw film as an opportunity to explore their interests in the avantgarde and wrote many articles about different aspects of cinema, particularly possibilities of movement and montage (16, 17).

Roma città aperta (*Rome, Open City*) was released in 1945 and shown at the Cannes Festival in 1946. This commercial and critical success moved Italian cinema further into what was eventually labeled neorealism. According to Liehm, *Roma città aperta* was concerned with social issues and immediate circumstances. There is a strong Christian message of moral authority and characters symbolically representing good and evil. Don Pietro, the priest, represents God's judgment when he rails against the Nazis: "Rossellini always insisted on a certain coherence in his entire work, expressed, above all, by its spiritual essence" (Liehm 46).

By the 1980s, Italian film industry suffered a decline, and there was difficulty in finding funding and a lack of critical evaluation of work being produced, but a group of directors emerged by the 1990s who were putting a strong imprint on their films. These directors ushered in a return to the auteur style: Gabriele Salvatores, Daniele Luchetti, Mimmo Calopresti, Nanni Moretti, Giuseppe Tornatore, Enzo Monteleone, Marco Tullio Giordana and Francesca Archibugi. Italian critics have labeled them *neo-neorealista*, *minimalista* and *carino*. They, along with *Gomorra*, are lumped under the classification of New Italian cinema and are noted for an absence of heroes and grand narratives (Ferrero-Regis 112-114): "[T]he New Italian Cinema is a discourse in which other discourses such as film criticism, politics, economy, culture and philosophy intersect" (Ferrero-Regis 123).

Saviano frequently refers to Hollywood created gangster films. While Garrone rejects the genre's use of myth, he does borrow some techniques from the same source. Lyden writes:

Stephen Spielberg utilized different techniques, including more hand held camera and a more realistic depiction of violence, in his "serious" films in order to unnerve and disturb the viewer rather

than indulge the viewer's sense of pleasure in the images (2003, 30).

Garrone often does his own hand held camerawork. Following Spielberg's attempts at creating a realistic depiction, he has talked about casting as being fundamental. He used professional actors such as Toni Servillo, but he credits the use of locals, many of whom were actual criminals, with contributing authenticity. Some of his actors were recruited from prison and others had local theater experience. He says, "It was important to work with people who have been conditioned by the System" (Porton n.p.).

One of Italy's earliest directors was Luigi Maggi. His first 1911 film, *Nozze d'oro* (*The Golden Wedding*), dealt with the Risorgimento and his second was *Satana* (1912), whose theme is the problem of evil: "Un thème unique illustré par des actions différentes, en l'occurrence le problème du Mal incarné par Satan dans trois épisodes, l'un biblique, l'autre médiéval, le dernier moderne, où le démon apparaît sous l'aspect d'un roi de l'acier" (Leprohon 26).

The next big movement in Italian film making was when Mussolini came to power and took over the film industry using films as propaganda. It seemed the most efficient way to reach the masses, and he believed that the future of communication was through film and not books. Fascist films were melodramatic, with strong emphasis on authoritarian values (Leprohon 79-80). Because of Mussolini's repression of creativity, there was an explosion of works that represented long repressed themes and values when the war ended. According to Leprohon, postwar films were influenced by a new literary movement developing at the end of the nineteenth century. He examines the objectives and characteristics of this new direction in *Le Cinéma italien*. These new works focused on social and political concerns and were interested in "truth" rather than propaganda (Leprohon 47). Visconti filmed *Ossessione* (*Obsession*, 1943) even before the

collapse of the Fascist regime. It was based on an American novel but set in Italy: “Visconti stressed the solitude of his heroes by the ugliness of their environment [...]. The concern with labor and capital is an important supporting theme” (Liehm 55, 56).

The tradition of literary adaptation is deeply imbedded in Italian film production. Many directors such as Visconti adapted great literary works of the past for the screen, thus adding a new chapter to the interrelationship between the language of literature and the language of film (Liehm 169). Pasolini, whom both Saviano and Garrone acknowledge as an influence, was a poet, novelist and director. Pasolini once said that the literature of the future was film. Many of his films were adaptations of literary works (Moliterno 239-240). Pasolini often used analogy as he did in his filmscript, *San Paolo (Saint Paul)*. He chose Paul of Tarsus as an apocalyptic figure, the announcer of the end of our (current) times (Maggi 43). For Pasolini, this basic concept of his poetics serves as a paradoxical rhetorical device that includes both similarity and opposition (Maggi 21):

In the foreword to Saint Paul, titled “Project for a Film of Saint Paul,” Pasolini states that the “poetic idea” of his film is a “transportation of Saint Paul’s life to our times.” In *Il sogno del centauro (The Centaur’s Dream)* he offers a few basic examples of analogical approach to Paul’s life [...]. (Maggi 27)

Pasolini examined many aspects of Christian religion in his films and has been quoted as saying: “Si è detto che ho tre idoli: Cristo, Marx, Freud” (Hanshe 2). His 1968 film *Teorema* is a cinematic parable of realistic images. Pasolini has stated that the protagonist (Terence Stamp) is not meant to represent God, but is any god (Canby n.p.). His most controversial film was *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma (Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom, 1975)*. Gordon writes: “the

metaphoric impact of the film itself reinforces and reiterates the always tendentiously literal motif-metaphor of consumption in relation to consumption or consumerism of neo-capitalism” (236).

His 1964 movie *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*) won the international Catholic Film Prize in addition to two awards at Venice. It is about the life of Christ. Pasolini believed that the epic journey toward the sacred finds its most significant crossroad in the places inhabited by those who live outside the “conformity” of capitalistic society, the poor and the oppressed: “The places of their existence (the ugly areas at the outskirts of a modern megapolis) are the last remaining outposts of the sacred” (Maggi 43).

In an interview in *The Guardian* on August 13, 1973, Pasolini explained his style of directing:

I avoid fiction in my films. I do nothing to console, nothing to embellish reality, nothing to sell the goods. I pick actors whose sheer physical presence suffices to convey this sense of reality. I do not pick them at random but in order to offer examples of reality. From *Decameron* [1971] on, the *personaggi* of my films are exactly the opposite of the ones you find in television or in the so-called escapist cinema. And that is only on the level of the figurative aspect. From here on in, that is what counts: this physicality of the characters, imposing itself [...]. (Leyda 346-347)

From the early works of neorealist directors up through Pasolini there is the recurring theme of resistance. In *Roma, città aperta*, a priest, Don Pietro, is the heroic figure who helps with the

resistance. Pasolini advocated the preservation of local dialects often manifesting his leftist sympathies through the representation of his proletarian characters' speech (particularly Roman). This was usually done in a crudely realistic but not wholly accurate fashion. Garrone seems to have been influenced by this perspective as he used locals whose dialects were so thick the Italian version of the film had subtitles. Pasolini used and advocated close-ups to capture emotion and convey realism. His influence is also apparent in Garrone's emphasis on close-ups of faces and a minimum of long shots.

The influence of Bertolt Brecht is apparent in the stories developed for the film, *Gomorra*:

Brecht is an extremely divided artist, [...] characterized not by cathartic emotional effects but by preachment, protest, and persuasion. [...] [He is] absorbed with materialistic motives behind human ideals. [...] [He is a social rebel in] attempting the salvation of mankind through a change in the external environment. [...] Brecht is intensified by his savage indignation and his harrowing vision of life. [...] But Brecht is a lyrical, dramatic and satiric poet of fierce intensity; and few Puritan theologians have been more fascinated than he with the brutal, the Satanic, and the irrational aspects of human nature. [H]e remains an essentially moral and religious poet. [...] Brecht's revolt is therefore double-layered. On the surface it is directed against hypocrisy, avarice and injustice of bourgeois society; in the

depths, against the disorder of the universe and the chaos in the human soul. (Brustein 231-232)

Brustein says that Brecht had a fascination with American culture and with religion, showing influence by Upton Sinclair in *The Jungle of Cities*. In it, Brecht used Christian parallels; the oriental lumber dealer represents Jesus Christ, Marie represents Mary Magdalene and Worm represents Peter. (242)

Garrone's adaptation has initiated interesting discussion. Significant among them is Ilaria Serra's paper about Italian cinema's process of adapting from text to screen. Her premise is that there should not be a debate that centers on "infidelity" in adapting literature to film. She argues that is an "outdated" discussion, citing *Gomorra* as an example of a current successful project. Her argument is that Italian directors like Garrone are using "magistic substitutions" that becomes its own creative choice. The success of this film both in the popular milieu and with critics indicates that he has been successful (Serra 17-20).

CONCLUSION

When Alexander conquered the known world, he introduced a form of globalization that fundamentally changed the world. Today we are experiencing another globalization, which Roberto Saviano recognized and addressed in his book *Gomorra*. The world is so connected and globalized that it is being referred to as flat. Saviano recognized that future of the world is not going to be determined by political philosophies or economic theories, but by how humans behave and interact. Some years have passed since *Gomorra* was published. How have the work and its prophecy been received? How accurate has the prophecy been?

Saviano had information from a physically small area of a geographically undersized country in a big and complex world. Yet he was able to see and tell a prophetic vision that cataclysmic events have verified. Near economic collapse, begun in 2006 and reaching a peak in 2008, echo Saviano's warnings. Who would have imagined that there would be an implosion of the housing market or nations around the world would see a near collapse of their banking systems. Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal are teetering on the edge of default, posing dire threats to the European Union. Research is being published that unveils a banking and investment system that is both callous and corrupt. An oil spill on the Gulf Coast was caused by greed; British Petroleum circumvented precautions, using many of the construction shortcuts Saviano denounced. British Petroleum is suing Halliburton and other subsidiaries that apparently suffered the same greedy myopia. What other traps are out in the oceans waiting to be sprung?

In Italy, the Bishop of Naples has been indicted for real estate corruption, and the Prime Minister has been indicted for soliciting sex from underage girls. In late September of 2010, Italian investigators seized 30 million dollars of the Vatican's money from its own bank on charges of suspected money laundering. And on the world front, an Associated Press release of September 8, 2010 listed a chrome plated AK-47 with a picture of Saddam Hussein on the pearl handle as one of the national treasures recovered by the National Museum in Baghdad. Japan's nuclear power plant crisis has revealed money saving construction shortcuts, causing an economic and emotional toll almost beyond comprehension. The head of the International Monetary Fund has resigned amid allegations of sexual assault. The list goes on, but the message is consistent; economies rise and fall based on a variety of factors, but there is always an ethical and moral component. Adam Smith, the great proponent of capitalism, recognized the role morality plays in the good order of an economy. His first book was *The Theory Of Moral Sentiment* (1759) written seventeen years before *An Inquiry Into The Nature and Causes Of The Wealth Of Nations* (1776). Smith early on recognized that corruption is hard to define, yet it can destroy a nation's economy, indeed its very existence.

How was it possible that Saviano made such accurate observations when the great economists, the Nobel Prize winners, the stock market analysts, failed to grasp the enormity of what was to come? Saviano himself explained it; he judged the world in the light of the eternal truths of the past. He applied the lens of morality and ethics, just as did the ancient prophets, and he found his vision. The book soared to the top of the bestseller list in Italy and has been translated and sold in fifty-two countries. Saviano has consistently indicated that his book is not about Naples, it is about the world through Naples. Others have recognized the book's universal message:

A powerful work of reportage, *Gomorra* became a literary sensation when it appeared in Italy last year, selling an astonishing 600,000 copies. It started a national conversation, but also won its 28-year-old first-time author uglier accolades: death threats and a constant police escort. He now lives in hiding. [...] Part economic analysis, part social history, part *cri de coeur*, this crushing testimonial is the most important book to come out of Italy in years. Like Conrad's London, Saviano's Naples is also one of the dark places of the earth. He tugged a loose thread in the fabric of Italian bourgeois respectability and kept pulling until nothing was left. (Donadio, 2007, n.p.)

After the System notoriously issued death threats, Saviano began living a hermit's life of isolation. Hermit prophets can be found in the literature and history of many countries. John the Baptist and Jesus, who spent forty days alone in the desert, were the first Christian monastics. There is an evolution from them through Thomas Merton, contemporary hermit monk, who wrote extensively about social justice. For a long time Saviano lived anonymously in simple rooms, with few possessions, moving frequently. The extent of his withdrawal is so intense that it is difficult to know where he lives now. It is rumored that threats against Saviano have become so intense he has left Italy. The measure of the success of *Gomorra* as prophecy and social commentary is the number and intensity of responses it has elicited:

He is unquestionably a symbol, not just of the Italy that refuses to be cowed by mobsters, but of the universal right to freedom of speech. A group of Nobel prize-winners, including Günter Grass,

Orhan Pamuk and Dario Fo, wrote an open letter to the newspaper *La Repubblica* after it was reported that the godfathers had set Christmas as the deadline for Saviano's elimination. Extracts from *Gomorra* have been read in piazzas up and down the country. And more than 200,000 people have signed a petition in support. Saviano said he had been particularly moved by the Nobel laureates' letter. But, after two and a half years of isolation and persecution, the strain is beginning to show. [...] "Living shut up like an animal turns you into an animal. You become mistrustful. You think that everyone wants to trick you. You envy other people because they're free. You've had the strength—or the stupidity—to speak out, and they've kept quiet." (Hooper n.p.)

Both book and film have received critical and popular success:

Shortly after its publication in Italy in April of 2006, *Gomorra* sold more than 600,000 copies and succeeded in dragging the *camorra* into the center of national public attention. For the first time, the fine details about the thriving economy of violence and corruption that lattices Campania and reaches around the globe came under intense national scrutiny. Initially in Naples, people who read the book nervously thought: *What will happen next?* Saviano openly named names and detailed criminal acts and associations. Months later, he pronounced the same words at a public press conference in the central piazza of his Campanian

home town Casal di Principe: “Schiavone, Bidognetti, Zagaria: you are worth nothing.” He urged the town’s residents to oust the fugitive bosses who still lurk among them. Uttering the names of *camorra* members and telling their stories, Saviano explained, makes it possible to understand: “Each individual will then decide how to react.” (Sannino as cited in Pine 431)

The film *Gomorra* has its own success, working as an interpretation of the book: “It is Matteo Garrone’s movie that puts real faces on Saviano’s characters” (Nadeau n.p.). Each story is a vivid insight into the everyday lives of Italians who encounter unrepentant sin. The film won five European film awards, including best movie, best director and best cinematography, as well as Grand Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival in 2008. Its failure to win an Oscar has been labeled more of a judgment against Hollywood values than against the film itself. *The New York Times* wrote: “Mr. Saviano said he was sorry the film was not nominated. He said he didn’t think it fit Hollywood’s vision of organized crime as something really glamorous” (Donadio, 2009, n.p.). When Optimum released *Gomorra* in the United Kingdom, they announced that it was the only Italian film ever released to six figures: “It’s a testament to how strong the film is and how positive the reviews were” (Spearing as cited in Gant n.p.).

Saviano’s work has drawn intense response from critics and scholars. In his book *La bellezza e l’inferno*, Saviano explains that his greatest fear is not being found and killed by the Camorra. His biggest fear is his “word” being discredited: “La peggiore delle mie paure, quella che mi assilla di continuo, è che riescano a diffamarmi, a distruggere la mia credibilità, a infrangere ciò per cui mi sono speso e ho pagato” (14-15) Iaccino, in his analysis of film used as religion, gives some explanation of why a prophet would fear for his “word”:

The alternative is that no one will survive if the shadow impulses are released without some type of collective restraint. The *Planet of the Apes* movies are excellent parables of the end times because they relate the perpetual struggle faced by humankind: the battle between one's conscious and the shadow. If mankind is to endure, it must try to appease both sides in new and creative ways.

(Iaccino 51)

Saviano's work has been examined from a variety of perspectives, many of which seek to discredit him. His recounting of facts has been endlessly examined, and many of those complaints are worth noting. Pine's observation is typical; he says that the great omission in the work is its failure to address the problem of government:

One of the greatest flaws in Saviano's work is his relative silence regarding the culpability of the Italian government. Despite a thorough mining of public record, Saviano fails to deliver adequate accounts of the entanglements of the *camorra* and Italy's political institutions. (435)

Even Garrone has affirmed that government is an ongoing problem:

It's such a responsibility, because I don't know if the things will change [for the] better because a lot of Camorristas now are in jail, but I haven't seen many politicians in jail. And the Camorristas worked with political. So I don't know if ... the government will be able to work, come inside, and really change something. So I'm curious to see what will change. (Swanson n.p.)

Rachel Donadio wrote the following in *The New York Times* addressing the unusual narrative of *Gomorrah*:

Far more problematic, though, is the difficulty in pinning this book down. In Italy, *Gomorra* was described as a “docufiction,” suggesting that Saviano took liberties with his first-person accounts. Farrar, Straus & Giroux calls it a work of “investigative writing,” a phrase that suggests careful lawyering. Some anecdotes are suspiciously perfect—the tailor who quits his job after seeing Angelina Jolie on television at the Oscars wearing a white suit he made in a Camorra sweatshop; the man who loves his AK-47 so much he makes a pilgrimage to Russia to visit its creator, Mikhail Kalashnikov. Did the author change any names? If so, readers aren’t informed. These are not small matters, and should have been disclosed. (2007, n.p.)

From a literary perspective, Saviano is at the epicenter of a debate. Two of the most recognized are Wu Ming 1 and Alessandro Dal Lago. Wu Ming 1 believes Saviano’s writing style is a nascent new genre of novel, the New Italian Epic (NIE). He coined the definition at a 2008 seminar on contemporary Italian literature held at McGill University in Montreal called “Up Close and Personal.” For him, *Gomorrah* represents a wave of literary works written in Italy by various authors starting at the end of the “First Republic.” He identifies NIE as a historical novel that shares certain identifiable stylistic characteristics and common themes that are often

expressed in allegorical ways. *Gomorra* represents a type of metahistorical fiction that derives from the Italian context.¹

Wu Ming 1 explains in bullet point form what he means by the NIE. Its main characteristics are:

1. Ethical commitment to writing and storytelling, which means: a deep trust in the healing power of language and stories;
2. A sense of political necessity—and you can choose between the broader and the stricter sense of the adjective “political”;
3. The choice of stories that have a complex allegorical value; The initial choice may not even be intentional: the author may feel compelled to tell the story and later on understand what he was trying to say;
4. An explicit preoccupation for the loss of the future, with a propensity to use alternative history and alternative realities to force our gaze into imagining the future;

¹ Amy J. Elias defined metahistorical romance as a type of historical fiction in *Sublime Desire: History and Post-1960s Fiction*. Metahistorical fiction is a literary means by which the author tries to access the sublime of the past in order to know history. Paradoxically it is done in the context of the political. Elias argues that the postmodern trend is to confront the historical sublime rather than represses it. Postmodernists seek to grasp sublime history but concurrently have lost confidence in the narrative needed to accomplish this goal. As a result, there is a rebellious trend to the traditional western historical novel (Elias 50-60).

5. A subtle subversion of registers and language. “Subtle” because what’s important is not language experimentation in and of itself; what’s important is telling your story in what you feel is the best possible way;
6. A way of blending fiction and non-fiction that’s different from the ones we’ve gotten used to (e.g. Hunter S. Thompson’s “gonzo journalism”), a manner that I dare describe as “distinctly Italian,” which produces “unidentified narrative objects”;
7. Last but certainly not least, a “communitarian” use of the Internet to [...]—“share a hug with the reader.” (2010, n.p.)

Wu Ming 1 states that in *Gomorra* the fusion of nonfiction and auto-fiction is uniquely subtle. On the one hand it looks like a powerful report on Naples’ organized crime and the way it operates in the globalized economy in a “painfully real” way. But Wu Ming 1 acknowledges that, *Gomorra* is no ordinary piece of journalism (2010, n.p.). He says that there are also autobiographical, introspective chapters. He recognizes that the prose is almost visionary. “The narrating I’ frequently hallucinates and hijacks’ the points of view of other people, intentionally playing on the confusion between the author, the narrator and a narrating I’ that doesn’t belong to any of them” (2010, n.p.):

Saviano indifferently uses police reports, judicial documents and personal experience, and describes the camorra adopting a first-person narrative, but the “I” of the novel isn’t always the real Roberto Saviano. The book oscillates between objective accounts

and literary renditions of facts. [...] If Saviano uses the first person to describe things he didn't actually witness it's because that is the most effective way of telling them, the most communicative one, the most absorbing one. [...] Saviano doesn't only jump over the barriers between fiction and non-fiction: he utterly ignores them. I don't know on what shelves bookshop clerks are putting *Gomorra* now. I suspect that the success of the book allows them to overcome embarrassment and put the book in those displays of best-sellers at the entrance, where there are no particular genre distinctions. (Alessandro Vicenzi as cited in Wu Ming 1, 2010, n.p.)

In his own book titled, *Vieni via con me*, Saviano writes:

La narrazione è più efficace proprio quando non cerchi di riprodurre fedelmente la vita, ma quando con onestà la trasformi in un racconto. [...] In fondo se sei uno scrittore ti senti straniero ovunque tranne che sulla pagina, e forse anche questa è la magia di chi lavora con le parole: doversi riconquistare ogni volta sul campo la legittimità a pronunciarle. (9-10).

At the conference titled "The Italian Perspective on Metahistorical Fiction: The New Italian Epic," Wu Ming 1 stated that *Gomorra* is different from "nonfiction novels" and hyper-subjective news stories in the tradition of so-called "New Journalism" or "gonzo journalism," because Saviano's work is more unsettling: "I believe that the most appropriate adjective is 'uncanny'" (2010, n.p.). He uses the word "uncanny" when describing *Gomorra*, because

“uncanny” is the way Sigmund Freud’s word “*unheimliche*” is most often translated into English: “*Unheimliche* is used for things that look repulsively strange and attractively familiar at the same time” (Wu Ming 1, 2010, n.p.). He sees the difficult relationship between the narrator and his father as symbolic of something bigger:

It casts light on the ambiguous “double-consciousness” several Southern Italians are painfully aware of. The narrator is the child of a culture that he cannot really renounce, and although he deeply despises the mafia and fights against it, he knows that the mafia is part of that culture, that it is consistent with that culture. In fact the narrator shares some deep conceptual frames with the people he denounces, and he admits it by sharing with us memories from his childhood, conversations with his father. To the narrator’s eyes, the camorra is uncanny, it’s repulsively strange and attractively familiar at the same time. *Gomorra* is an unidentified narrative object about an unidentified feeling. The readers read their way through an “uncanny valley,” and Saviano walks through another “uncanny valley”: a larger one, a social one, an anthropological one. (Wu Ming 1, 2010, n.p.)²

² Wu Ming 1 alludes to Japanese engineer, Mori Masahiro, who coined the phrase “uncanny valley” in 1970 to describe the mixed emotions of horror and rejection that one can feel in succession. When one experiences this period of revulsion before evolving into a positive it one is known as the “uncanny valley.” According to Mori’s hypothesis it is a transitory negative feeling before experiencing appreciation (Wu Ming 1, 2010, n.p.)

Wu Ming 1 further alludes to the “uncanny valley” metaphor to describe the way careful readers interpret the unidentified narrative object:

There’s a phase in which you start asking yourself: how is it possible that Saviano witnessed a scene like this? Mobsters using heroin addicts as guinea pigs to test newly arrived stuff, junkies collapsing after they shot up, people left to die? Where the hell was Saviano to see anything like this? Who’s the narrating I? If this is undercover journalism, what is Saviano’s cover? Where is he hidden? Is the narrator Saviano? Am I reading a piece of journalism or am I reading a novel disguised as a piece of journalism? You just entered the “uncanny valley” of the unidentified narrative object. Less attentive readers may never experience this, because they take everything for granted. (Wu Ming 1, 2010, n.p.)

He explains the struggle to understand Saviano’s narration as being an “uncanny valley” that can eventually be overcome: “you go on reading the book and gradually understand what Saviano is trying to do, and you not only accept it: you’re moved by it, because this thing does the job very well, and doubts and revulsion are replaced by admiration” (2010, n.p.). Wu Ming 1 believes that many of those who criticized *Gomorra* for its “ambiguity” and accused Saviano of “having confused things,” never got through the uncanny valley. For him, they stopped reading right in the middle of the uncanny valley, and never got out of it (2010, n.p.). This is particularly important to consider when talking about books with an unidentified narrative object, because they always have an “uncanny valley.”

Perhaps the most prominent of Saviano's critics is Dal Lago, who does not see *Gomorra* as a narrative innovation. In his book, *Eroi di carta. Il caso Gomorra e altre epopee*, he criticizes Saviano's literary content and form. He does acknowledge the popular success of Saviano's book:

Critiche, apprezzamenti, distinguo, ironie, stroncature. Ma di una cosa nessuno dubita: la preminenza di Saviano nella letteratura contemporanea. Anzi, *Gomorra* è la pietra di paragone per stabilire se l'idea di questa nuova epica sia un'operazione spregiudicata di marketing, il tentativo di fissare un canone per la *fiction* italiana oppure il riconoscimento di un movimento letterario innovatore. (Dal Lago 10)

Unlike Wu Ming 1, he does not think that Saviano's narrative style is unique. He believes that the success of Saviano as a writer is not due to the quality of the work but due to the carefully cultivated image of a hero. Through a sort of osmosis, he transitions from real life to an "eroe di carta" (a paper hero):

Dobbiamo chiamare in causa la nozione di prima persona. In letteratura non è mai un concetto scontato. Sul piano della pagina scritta, troviamo l'io narrante, la prima persona letteraria, dietro la quale spunta una seconda persona, l'autore senza la quale la prima persona non esisterebbe. Ma nel caso di *Gomorra* ce n'è anche una terza, ovvero la prima persona reale o esistenziale, che è sia oggetto delle prime due persone del testo, sia la loro condizione di esistenza (senza il Saviano in carne ed ossa "eoinvolto" in prima

persona in certe vicende non avremmo né l'autore né l'io narrante).

(Dal Lago 31-32)

Dal Lago explains that Saviano's narrative is a sort of trinity one epiphanizes to one's liking, incarnating into one of two people (author and actor) while always assuming that the first is present (the "uncontestable" eyewitness). Traditionally in literature, there is the "I" narrator, the literary first person, behind which there is the author, or "second first person." Without the author, there could not be a first person narrator. But in the case of *Gomorra*, there is even a *third* first person. It is the real or existential first person that is the subject of the first two (narrator and author) in the text. For Dal Lago, it is through the in-the-flesh "first person" Saviano that the narrative trinity is completed:

L'una non può che rimandare alle altre due. Appena si legge la prima frase di *Gomorra* declinata in prima persona ("Quando il gruista del porto mi raccontò la cosa..."), si sa che l'autore sta rivelando, per bocca dell'io narrante, la sua verità *esistenziale*. Non importa che ciò-che-è-accaduto venga dal racconto di *altre* persone (per esempio, il gruista del porto). La trinità delle persone-Saviano sta lì a dimostrare che ciò che si sta leggendo è la verità. La struttura trinitaria incombe fin dalla prima pagina sul lettore e gli intima: "Sappi che io [cioè i tre io in un uno] dico il vero!" (Dal Lago 32)

Dal Lago asserts that if *Gomorra* were mere investigative reporting, it would be a poor journalism, because Saviano does not always cite his sources:

Poco conta che nel testo, contrariamente a quanto promesso dal risvolto (~~un~~ libro [...] scrupolosamente documentato”), *non sia presentata alcuna documentazione*. Si è riportato qualche brano di intercezioni e di atti processuali; ma non un riferimento alle fonti, a testi o autori, non un ringraziamento a persone conosciute, come inquirenti o colleghi, giornalisti o scrittori che siano. [...] È la voce di una sirena che prende per mano il lettore e gli dice: “Vieni con me e saprai”. (Dal Lago 30-31)

This blurring of the three different first persons allows Saviano to be everywhere in the Camorra world. He keeps his distance by observing like a fly on the wall. But at other times, as in “The Port” chapter, he is a direct participant. His omniscience allows him to be an expert insider of the Camorra. In many ways, Saviano’s triune narration makes him into a *vate* or poet-prophet who foresees gloom and doom for the people’s sins. In this sense, his word and testimony transcend journalistic accountability and reach almost a sublime level of faith. It is almost as if he is saying, “Either you are with me or against me in the fight against the Camorra.” As Dal Lago points out, the reader is manipulated into believing the sacrosanctity of the author’s word. Saviano writes: “Ciò che io Roberto Saviano ti sto raccontando non è solo il frutto di un’inchiesta, ma anche quello che ho vissuto e di cui porto tracce profonde dentro di me, essendo nato e cresciuto in questo ambiente” (Saviano as cited in Dal Lago 37).

Dal Lago claims that Saviano’s life on the run has given him instant credibility as a hero that is carefully cultivated by the same Saviano. Dal Lago further claims that by choosing not to write a crime fiction or a journalistic piece, Saviano has escaped the restraints of traditional literary criteria. He has written something that is neither one nor the other, or perhaps a little bit

of both. In any case, he has confused many readers by blurring the conventional lines and thus making the novel even more illocutionary. Dal Lago writes: “Il senso del libro di Saviano potrebbe essere condensato nell’affermazione ‘Io vi dico, correndo i miei rischi, che la camorra è così e così’ (illocuzione), al che il pubblico risponde: ‘Sì, è così’ (perlocuzione)” (39). In other words, Saviano insinuates: “My book holds the moral truth, because I have run many risks to write it” or “I am risking a great deal, because I have written the truth” (Dal Lago 39).

In a book review by Wu Ming 1, *Gomorra* is applauded for its unique way of revealing the truth by dancing between the confines of objective reality and fiction. A truth can be told through fiction. In fictions, such as parables, the substantive details may be lacking, but the message can still be true. He argues this could certainly be the case for Saviano’s *Gomorra* where the author has embellished the undocumented facts:

È un punto di vista [quello dell’io narrante di *Gomorra*] straniato e fermo al tempo stesso (fermo” nel senso di fermezza, coerenza, dirittura morale). “È” raccoglie e fonde le parole e i sentimenti di una comunità, tante persone hanno plasmato—da campi opposti, nel bene e nel male—la materia narrata. Quella di *Gomorra* è una voce collettiva che cerca di “arburare lo stomaco dell’anima”, è il coro un pò sgangherato di chi, nella terra in cui il capitale esercita un dominio senza mediazioni, àncora a una “radice a fittone” il coraggio di guardare in faccia quel potere. “È” è la comunità aperta di chi sceglie “Cristo, Buddha, l’impegno civile, la morale, il marxismo, l’anarchismo, la lotta al crimine, la pulizia, la rabbia costante e perenne, il meridionalismo. Qualcosa.” [...] “È” è

l'autore e testimone oculare, senz'ombra di dubbio. Altre volte Saviano si immedesima e dà dell'io a qualcun altro di cui non svela il nome (amico, giornalista, poliziotto, magistrato). Altre volte ancora s'inserisce a metà o alla fine di una storia per darle un urto, inclinarla o rovesciarla, spingerla contro il lettore. Eccoci, seguiamo un personaggio un po' a distanza, nascosti, e a un certo punto arriva di taglio un ~~mi~~ disse quando lo incontrai" (o qualcosa del genere). È uno zoom violento sul personaggio. Quest'ultimo si rivolge a Saviano, e grazie all'io narrante *Saviano siamo noi*. (Wu Ming 1 as cited in Dal Lago 40-41)

Dal Lago rebuts that Wu Ming 1 should really be applauding Saviano's ability to alternate the narrative triune rather than for revealing any new truths. The reading public is of the general opinion that Saviano's *Gomorra* has revealed some special relationship between crime and the globalized economy. Dal Lago contests this: ~~La~~ tesi che il capitalismo globale è criminale, o per natura o perché colonizzato dalle mafie, accenderà le fantasie, ma dice proprio poco. È tautologica e moralistica" (16). Starting from the assumption that ~~la~~ scrittura rientra in una dimensione comunicativa" (9), Dal Lago interprets the text as ~~una~~ macchina-di-scrittura che produce un certo effetto di verità" (36). But Saviano is determined to convince us that what he is writing is based on objective facts that he has witnessed rather than openly acknowledging the fictional nature of his novel. Dal Lago is critical of the way in which Saviano ~~maniupates~~" the reader into blindly accepting the writer's words: ~~A~~ me un'idea di letteratura basata sull'adesione al punto di vista di un autore che *pretende* di essere creduto ed è garantito dalla sua parola, e solo da quella, non piace per niente" (39). Dal Lago accuses Saviano of ~~trickery~~" in

confusing the reader. He believes that this nebulous narrative is part of a selfish plan to build himself into a perceived hero. This self-promoting martyrdom is Saviano's way of rendering himself into a hero committed against evil in a conflict of "excessive extremes":

La vicenda di Saviano—al tempo stesso letteraria, retorica e mediale—sintetizza gli aspetti che ho delineato sopra: l'umanismo morale, l'insorgere del Bene contro il Male variamente declinato in termini tetralogici, l'eroismo, la voracità dei media per le contrapposizioni a forti tinte. (Dal Lago 88)

In short, Del Lago argues that Saviano's "F" triune in *Gomorra* cultivates a heroic myth process rather than reveal any new truths about the Camorra. He notes that *Rolling Stone* magazine proclaimed Saviano the Rockstar of the Year in 2008, which he says is an essential ingredient to Saviano's pop culture sanctification (89). He further complains that a consequence of Saviano's worldwide fame as a bestselling author and hero is that it is difficult to critique the writer and his book. Dal Lago points out that Saviano's own statements and actions have positioned himself so that if one criticizes his media personality then the truthfulness of his message is compromised. If one discusses the quality of the book, then the man's public service is attacked and therefore delegitimizes him in favor of the criminal powers that want to kill him. And if one criticizes Saviano the writer, it is because of jealousy (Dal Lago 89-90).

Wu Ming 1 takes the opposite position. He argues that Saviano is held to unfair standards by those who dislike *Gomorra*. He wrote:

I guess [they] never had such perplexities in reading a book by Hunter S. Thompson. Nobody ever cared about what was true and what was fictional in Thompson's writing. What's the difference

here? The difference is that *Gomorra* is far from being an ironic piece of work. *Gomorra* is d-e-a-d-l-y serious. (2010, n.p.)

Dal Lago makes interesting literary references, stating that Saviano is modeling himself into a hero similar to one found in a detective or murder mystery novel. Through a process of symbols, Saviano is carefully constructing an image of the disgruntled, but moralistic hero detective—not one of Agatha Christie’s protagonists: “bensì in quelli giallo-neri tipo *private eye* o *polar*, contestuale, d’atmosfera” (44). This type of hero is typically uncertain of his role, overtly pessimistic, disenchanting but of a romantic temperament with a rock-solid morality. The Saviano hero is more like Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe:

[Egli assomiglia ad] un funzionario che ne ha viste tante, decifratore di ambienti e di psicologie più che di enigmi (l’ispettore Maigret); o, al limite, un essere schizoide, mezzo angelo e mezzo demone, ossessionato da orrendi crimini irrisolti e che tali resteranno (i poliziotti dei primi romanzi di James Elroy).
(Dal Lago 44)

The common denominator for the Saviano-inspired-hero archetype is that similar heroes are “scetticamente, saggiamente o disperatamente *umani*” (44). Saviano’s inspired hero types are not geniuses like Monsieur Dupin or *blasé* supermen with some kind of substance foible (Sherlock Holmes). They are people like us except that they are specialized in brutality. Dal Lago has some insight into the mystical dimensions of Saviano’s work when he realizes the connection to characters who are travelers on our behalf to “the other side.” At first, they are not omniscient, but they eventually become seasoned with insightful knowledge of the dark side. Whether they are heroes or protagonists, they are all more or less fragile (44).

Dal Lago declares that Saviano's ultimate goal is selfish and egocentric, because he wants to use *Gomorra* as a means to build himself up through a literary space similar to how Silvio Berlusconi builds himself up in the political arena (145). In defining the type of hero image that Saviano is so careful to construct, Dal Lago writes:

Apparentemente, dunque, il nostro Philip Marlowe partenopeo ci prende per mano e ci conduce, con tutte le sue umanissime titubanze, negli inferni della camorra. Ma proprio in virtù dei giochi narrativi che entusiasmano i nuovi critici (io molteplici, pretesa etica di verità, sovrapposizione di romanziere e reporter, di testimone e attore e così via), egli rimanda essenzialmente a se stesso. Se la camorra è l'oggetto di sfondo. Saviano (uno e trino) è il vero protagonista di *Gomorra*. (Dal Lago 45)

According to Dal Lago, Prime Minister Berlusconi has made almost every national election a referendum about himself rather than focusing on the national Italian issues. Saviano is similar to Berlusconi in making himself a symbol of resistance. Effective energy to combat the real Camorra threat is diverted into hero worship. The result is that Saviano has become an untouchable symbol that has diverted the people's attention. Dal Lago claims that through a complex system of symbols and allusions, Saviano has indeed made himself into a "paper hero," playing the part of narrator-witness. Dal Lago alludes to the fact that through mnemonia of the famous "Io so" (I know) by Pasolini, Saviano is to inherit the title of modern day *vate*. The "Io so" allusion by Saviano is in reference to a prose journalism piece written by Pasolini in a 1974 edition of *Corriere della Sera*. The article was titled "Cos'è questo golpe? Io so." In it, Pasolini claims to know the names of various guilty Italian officials involved in unethical and

immoral dealings. Pasolini was mysteriously murdered just under a year later after this article appeared. When Saviano writes, “Il mio so [è] l’io so del mio tempo”—it is as if he were claiming to be the Pasolini of our time (Dal Lago 63).

Dal Lago concludes that the NIE under which *Gomorra* has been classified is nothing more than a product of successful marketing by the Luther Blissett Project (Wu Ming Foundation) and not the fruit of innovative writing (151):

Il potere della verità ha goduto di tale successo letterario che, d’ora in poi, i libri di successo diventano sinonimi di verità.

Poiché l’eroismo è garanzia di letteratura, questa è garanzia d’eroismo.

Scrittore di successo ed eroe sono la stessa cosa.

(Dal Lago 151)

If Dal Lago is correct in his assessment of Saviano, perhaps it is only fitting that *Gomorra* conclude with a Hollywood ending. The book ends with Saviano in the prophet role (narrator-actor). He writes: “I thought of the final scene of *Papillon*, based on the novel by Henri Charrière and starring Steve McQueen. [...] It was an absurd thought, but at certain moments there’s nothing else to do but humor your own delirium [...]” (GO 301). Perhaps Dal Lago is correct when he writes that Saviano is riding the waves of mass media success to who knows where.

Pasolini made clear that his observations were intuitive and did not offer or feel the need to offer proof. Saviano followed the same intuitive path, but added reportage to support his opinions. Ultimately, *Gomorra* is a literary work of moral clarity and emotional commitment.

Will it change anyone or anything? Has it illuminated a great truth? These questions are the test of its value. Only time will determine whether *Gomorra* is a great work or a short lived phenomenon, but it is certainly a link in the chain of writers and works that come from a mystical vision.

In creating his vision of the future, Saviano was true to his inner vision of morality, but he used a variety of tools to convey that message. In this study we examined those tools. In the first chapter there was an examination of Italian journalism and notions of reportage. Much of the criticism directed at the book grows out of its recounting of facts. In examining Italian attitudes toward reporting we learned that there is a difference between Western journalism's so called "objective" reporting and Italian emphasis on "interpretation." In evaluating the reportage, it was important to understand Saviano's intention as he presented his reporting. It was important to understand how his having worked as an Italian journalist contributed to the approach. And it was important to understand expectations of Anglo-American readers, which are different from those in Italy. Saviano used four quotations at the beginning of *Gomorra* and each gave some clue to his message and interpretation. His quotation from Hannah Arendt: "Comprehension...means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be" gave his reader to understand that he saw "reality" as a situation that needed interpretation and comment (Arendt as cited in GO n.p.).

The second chapter of this paper addressed the recounting of the facts. In keeping with the tradition of apocalyptic eschatology, this is a "history of the people." This chapter examined the first five chapters of *Gomorra*. They presented the organization of the System, a history of the infighting, the people being affected and the geographic setting. Using Naples as a starting point, Saviano showed that the corruption has tentacles to reach into far corners of the globe.

“The Women” and “Angelina Jolie” were examined as chapters that presented specific incidents to establish the devastating effects of the pervasive criminality of the people. Saviano gave us a Machiavelli quote: “Winners have no shame, no matter how they win” (Machiavelli as cited in GO n.p.). With that quotation he established the overarching lack of morality that results in such atrocities. This dissertation examined the presentation of the “history of the people” as it laid a foundation for the eschatology that came in the second part of *Gomorra*.

Part two of *Gomorra* was examined in the dissertation as Saviano’s eschatology. His quotation of a wiretapped conversation, “People are worms and they have to stay worms” illustrated the despair the author felt about the future of the world and the people in it (Unknown phone conversation as cited in GO n.p.). He used contemporary events and people to symbolize age-old concepts. He gave us a Satan figure, agents of evil, a prophet, concepts of duality and two Biblical allegories of the “end times.” He made clear that he himself had become a vessel for prophecy, charged with encouraging resistance. Saviano used his prophecy to lay out a clear moral message based on his own belief that “faith” and “the word” are essential to the continuation of civilization.

Finally, this study examined *Gomorra*, the film as an interpretation of Saviano’s eschatology. Both Saviano and Garrone are young men, of a generation that has been influenced by film as a medium for expression. As scholars are examining a rapidly changing world of communication, the visual impact of film becomes a medium of increasing importance. Italy’s traditional approach to film has included an emphasis on interpreting literary works. This will increase as each generation becomes more and more dependent on technology for communication. Saviano’s quote from *Scarface*: “The world is yours” resonates on two levels

(Montana as cited in GO n.p.). It reminds the reader that film has become the source for our culture's myths and it warns that the world has been taken over by a godless criminality.

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