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Being there: Le Vele as characters in *Gomorrah – The Series*

ABSTRACT

The setting of the TV series Gomorrah – The Series *(2014–present) is the Neapolitan district of Scampia, around and inside a large urban housing project called 'Le Vele'. This setting is where the narrated events (the Camorra's wars and drug trafficking) find their real-life existence. This article focuses on the element of space, with the streets, the buildings and their surroundings also acting as protagonists of the series. This produces an immersive identification not with a single point of view but with a film context that mimetically represents a social milieu. The TV series takes the viewer inside the miserable corridors of Le Vele, creating a feeling of empathy that relies on space, on the scary pleasure of 'being there', witnessing the Camorristi's wretched lives.* Gomorrah – The Series *acts as a kind of horror–melodrama–documentary, where space sustains these three components with its indexicality and its charge of uncanny and grief.*

KEYWORDS

Gomorrah – The Series
Naples – Le Vele
representation of
   spaces
urban environment
architecture
Stefano Sollima
Roberto Saviano
television series

The setting of *Gomorra – La serie* (*Gomorrah – The Series*) (2014–present),[1] the Neapolitan district of Scampia, around and inside a large urban housing project called 'Le Vele', is much more than a mere film set. It is where the narrated events (the Camorra's[2] wars and drug trafficking) find their real-life existence. In our article, we want to focus on the element of space, with the streets, the buildings and their surroundings acting as protagonists of the

1. *Gomorra – La serie*. Broadcast by Sky Atlantic (Italy), 2014–present (two seasons). Created by Roberto Saviano, Ludovica Rampoldi, Stefano Bises, Leonardo Fasoli,

Giovanni Bianconi. Directed by Stefano Sollima, Claudio Cupellini, Francesca Comencini and Claudio Giovannesi. Showrunner: Stefano Sollima.

2. The criminal organization based in the region of Campania.

3. We are certainly not original on this point: this aspect has been already underlined by Penati (2015), Maiello (2016) and Innocenti (2016).

4. *Gomorra* (Garrone, 2008), written by Maurizio Braucci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni Di Gregorio, Matteo Garrone, Massimo Gaudioso and Roberto Saviano; produced by Fandango, in collaboration with RAI Cinema and Sky Italia.

5. Following Roger Odin (2000), the 'documentary mode' proposes to the viewer a reading strategy that triggers the search for traces of reality and truth within the audio-visual text.

6. Sollima is the son of Sergio Sollima, an established genre director, author of crime films such as *Città violenta* (1970) and *Revolver* (1973). He also directed the mini-series for RAI television *Sandokan* (1976).

7. *Romanzo criminale* (2008–10) was also adapted from a book (published in 2002 by Giancarlo De Cataldo) and preceded by a film version, directed by Michele Placido in 2005.

8. On the concept of quality TV and on branding strategies see McCabe-Akass (2007) and Brodesco (2016).

television series as well.[3] With this respect, *Gomorrah – The Series* certainly draws from the two other 'Gomorras' – Roberto Saviano's 2006 book (Saviano [2006] 2007) and Matteo Garrone's 2008 film *Gomorra*[4] – but adds its own, major contribution to the exploration of space and the relationship between representation and object of representation.

Although they share the same title, Saviano's book *Gomorra* and the TV series *Gomorrah – The Series* do not have much in common. If we consider the film by Garrone an 'adaptation', the TV series produced by Sky diverges largely from the events told in the book. In *Gomorra*, Saviano composes a mosaic of stories drawn from reality – records, news and personal experiences. *Gomorrah – The Series* focuses, instead, in its first season on the single story of a Camorra family, the Savastanos, and in its second on the gang war spread among different Camorra factions. Differently from the real Camorra families called by their true names in the book, the Savastanos are a fictional family. The description of the family, the gangs, the environment is certainly based on Saviano's knowledge of the Camorra lifestyle and criminal conduct: the kind of houses they live in, the furniture they love, the paintings they hang on the walls, how they sell drugs and how they kill. However, the TV series chooses to leave aside the first-person, insider, performative journalistic style that so strongly defines Saviano as a writer. In *Gomorrah – The Series* the figure of an observer who stands *externally* from the criminal dynamics is not present. The viewer is secluded inside the Camorra milieu. No outside is possible. If the spectator were to want to identify with the usual 'good guys' – policemen, judges, kind-hearted criminals – in *Gomorrah – The Series* he or she will not find any. There are a few exponents of the State (police officers, prison guards), all of whom have minor, insignificant roles. We can instead observe a precise and deliberate intention on behalf of the authors not to offer any empathy to the characters. In the first episodes, we may think becoming fond of the apparently more innocent character of Ciro Di Marzio, 'l'Immortale', possible, but we soon understand that in no way can we become attached to a character capable of betrayal, double play and cold murder. No endorsement is possible. The mechanism of identification is erased from the start. All the characters appear as evil human beings deserving their terrible faith of mutual killing.

The qualities of Saviano's non-fiction writing style – civil struggle, rigorous honesty, realism, but also a 'young' literary approach to criminal phenomena – find a perfect visualization in the *mise-en-scène* of the TV series, coordinated by the show-runner Stefano Sollima. *Gomorrah – The Series* is in fact produced thanks to two major forces: Roberto Saviano's writing (with his baptismal word 'Gomorra'), which labels the series under a documentary mode,[5] and Stefano Sollima's direction, which adds a fictional mode (the 'gangster movie' plot development) deeply rooted in realism as well. Sollima is the director of two feature films: *ACAB – All Cops Are Bastards* (2012) (about the policemen on duty at the Rome stadium) and *Suburra* (2015) (about organized crime in Rome).[6] Above all, he is the show-runner of the previous, highly successful television series produced by Sky, *Romanzo criminale – La serie* (2008–10).[7] He has a recognizable authorship, founded on authenticity, accuracy, action and strong dialogues. Both Saviano's and Sollima's brands are displayed and used by Sky in its marketing strategy: the 'Gomorra' signifier and the memory of *Romanzo criminale – La serie* define an audio-visual product based on a combination of socio-political engagement and action. Sky itself adds its final warrant as a 'quality tv' producer.[8]

Thanks to these two authorial forces, *Gomorrah – The Series* affirms itself as a show built on the quest for realism and on the 'cult of the existent' (Mazzarella 2011: 7) – foundational features, as we mentioned, both for the construction of Saviano's self-definition (Wu Ming 1 2009: 8–11) and for Sollima's visual style. But how can the authors really manage to stay within a realistic communication space when the development of the plot looks indeed like classical crime fiction, that exploits all the film-genre's usual combination of different story lines (the mafia wars; the conflict inside a gang leading to the betrayal of some of its members; the tension between older and younger generations; the issue of leadership; the weakness of the designed heir…)?[9] The answer lies perhaps in that *Gomorrah – The Series*' quest for indexicality is achieved directly and softly thanks to two factors: language and space.[10] Language is a central element for the realism of the TV series. The choice of the screenwriters to write the dialogues in Neapolitan dialect was not an easy, commercial one, since non-Neapolitan Italian viewers were also forced to see the series with the subtitles. Yet this authenticity (characters speaking the Camorristi's real language) is perfectly functional to the anthropological rooting of the story in its habitat. In any case, as we have mentioned in the first lines of this article, we want to focus on the second element: space. If in the book the narrator acts like a witness and a living proof of realism and truth, in the series this function is played by space.

THE REAL SPACES: LE VELE

Gomorrah – The Series puts the housing complex 'Le Vele' ('the Sails') at the centre of the positional games for power played by the Camorrista families, groups and sub-groups. Le Vele become the scene of a sort of war of position, which has much broader aspirations: the taking of Secondigliano (Scampia) and consequently the governance of the whole territory in the northern suburbs of Naples. Since the Eighties this area has been identified as a cross-road for international drug trafficking managed by the local Camorra. As a kind of synecdoche there is also, in what is really perceived, an identification of the whole Neapolitan suburb with this building complex. Le Vele reify the failure of the Modern Movement's architectural utopia. By the late 1920s, this Movement had become international and wished to discuss technical and architectural issues in the framework of social changes and challenges. The modernist ideals were also applied to social housing, and especially in the post-war period modernist architects gained a strong sense of social responsibility, in that architecture should improve the living conditions of the masses (Henket 2002). They planned large-scale buildings that often followed the residential housing design principle developed by Le Corbusier in the Unité d'habitation.[11] It was an opportunity to build a neighbourhood, a new piece of the city, to provide social housing and services for the poorer social classes. The materiality of the buildings was just the first feature of a broader residential quality. It could catalyse, in turn, the construction of the public city with public spaces and playgrounds linked to the housing projects.

Similarly to what was happening in other parts of Italy and the world, Le Vele – like other public housing complexes designed for the working classes – were in a sense an experimental architectural project that drew up a housing typology that could accommodate many people, while providing innovative structural solutions. Moreover, they were buildings that, with their own scale and on the whole, could have a spatial dimension, so as to constitute an

9. All these features are, for example, present in the celebrated television crime drama *The Sopranos* (1999–2007), where we can find the imperfect heir (Anthony Jr), the conflict between the old guard (uncle Junior) and the new generation (Tony); the betrayal of a member (Big Pussy), etc.

10. Following C. S. Peirce (1998), the ontological connection between 'sign' and 'represented object'.

11. The concept formed the basis of several housing developments designed by Le Corbusier throughout Europe; the most known is located in Marseille.

out-and-out real piece of the city. Built between 1962 and 1974 by the architect Franz di Salvo (even if they were posthumously completed), they were articulated as mega-structures. This answered the needs of a multifaceted functional programme. Unfortunately it is now no longer decipherable, due to the typological changes, the increase in density, and also the missed realization of all the urban and social facilities included in the original project. Originally composed of seven buildings, today only four Vele are still standing, since three of them were demolished between 1997 and 2003. They were characterized by the continuity of paths, not only within each 'dwelling unit' but also through inter-residential connections at different levels. They represented an idea of 'alternative city', with reference to the mega-structures experimented with in the 1950s and 1960s, which originated from Le Corbusier's principles, later materializing in the Unité d'Habitation.

As suggested by many scholars (Gizzi 2011; Di Biagi 2011) the story of Le Vele is common to other housing complexes made in those same years, which interpreted the concepts, developments and utopias of twentieth-century European architecture and urban culture. Those experiences often share the fate of being now at the centre of a heated debate concerning the ways and the reasons for their preservation or redevelopment: the current preoccupation about the degradation of peripheral suburbs often overlaps spatial and social considerations. Le Vele are representative of the European urban culture that was growing while the post-1945 Fordism boom experienced by western nations was changing cities and citizenships. The aim to improve the living spaces for millions of families, who after the war moved to the city, pushed architects, planners and engineers across Europe to take on new social responsibilities in the construction of the 'public city'. As Paola Di Biagi (2011: 63) emphasized, the 'public city' is a twentieth-century urban form, generated from a 'housing issue' that was already evident in the nineteenth century but became central in the following century. The original project of Le Vele wanted to build a new urban area capable of giving a central role to open spaces and to create a network of public and collective spaces as a structural element in order to improve such neighbourhoods.

In fact, the urban programme for 'Scampia' in the 1960s aspired to build an urban plan through those architectures in a place without any historical, civil, social or natural context. However, as is well known, and as also emerges in *Gomorrah – The Series*, Le Vele still stand as mega triangular-shaped structures in the middle of nowhere, since all the expected public facilities were never carried out. The seven buildings were only a part of a vast programme conceived by the so-called 'Law 167' (1962) for social housing. Their project was very innovative and socially progressive; yet, it was never completed in its whole extent. Di Salvo's work was betrayed for several reasons, some linked to the technology adopted and to construction problems, but most of all because of technical and political issues. Since the number of buildings originally planned was reduced, a greater population density was assigned to each of them. All the dimensions, both of the houses and of the internal collective paths, were reduced and the ground floor passages were closed, rendering the atmosphere darker. In the end, the social and urban facilities conceived by the original project were never realized and the spaces originally designed as public became private spaces, also through processes of personal appropriation with fences and gates – as is shown in *Gomorrah – The Series*. Moreover, after the 1980 Irpinia earthquake most of the houses were occupied through legal assignments or the illegal occupation of people who came willingly or

were forced to move there from the centre of Naples. But it was impossible to reproduce in Le Vele the historical stratification and spatial relationships of the city centre, even if people claimed it. Unfortunately the degradation of the spaces continues.

The neighbourhood of Secondigliano (Scampia) is one of the most populated areas of Naples. The neighbourhood boasts huge infrastructures, many scattered and abandoned public parks, a community of Roma, and even a prison. Scampia has the highest concentration of unemployment in Naples (50–75%).[12] The dynamics that govern it – perfectly represented in *Gomorrah – The Series* – are substantially related to drug trafficking. The urban and housing policies for social inclusion are in the middle of a public debate (Laino and De Leo 2002). The controversy is today very animated, since the Municipality of Naples disposed in 2016 the total demolition of Le Vele.

LE VELE AS CHARACTERS

As Marlow-Mann (2011: 164) writes, Scampia became in the 2000s 'one of the most frequented locations of the New Neapolitan Cinema'. Yet, it is Matteo Garrone's *Gomorra* that really brings Le Vele centre-stage for the first time. *Gomorrah – The Series* pays its debts to the film version and its visual strategies, but it is able to expand the interest for the theme of the (literal) 'characterization' of space.

The biblical Gomorrah is a city. Starting from the title of Roberto Saviano's book, the topic of the spatial localization of the narrative is declared to be decisive. Shooting in the real places is, therefore, a matter of vital importance for *Gomorrah – The Series*' artistic ambition, allowing, as we have already noted, the combination of fictional mode and documentary mode. The proximity of reality and fiction plays a key role in the description of the Savastanos' house in Season 1. The interior of the house displays a family painting in Renaissance style on the wall, a huge television screen bordered with a golden frame, ceramic animals, luxury sofas, marble, crystals, a big glass table, etc. On the outside there is a swimming pool. Baroque and kitsch are the dominant styles. Not only can we assume here that Saviano's knowledge of how the Camorra live influences the set construction, but there is much more: the house was in fact a real property confiscated from a Camorra family.[13] The house was just slightly adapted to be used as a set. A billiard table, for example, was removed, since it could appear too artificial or excessive on a television fiction (see IGV News 2014): an exceeding indexicality could produce an impression of hyper-realistic forgery.[14]

The shots of *Gomorrah – The Series* are also 'vehicles of information' (Odin 2014: 615–16) about the Neapolitan suburb of Scampia. In central moments of the plot we can see the Scampia road sign – for example, in 2×07 and 2×12.[15] The will to insist on the indexicality of the spaces is also shown by the choice to often film the landscape from roofs and super-elevated places. These venues or, their opposites, underground garages are the preferred meeting places of the Camorristi (see e.g. episode 2×09). Also the precise illustration of the drug-dealing technique responds to the indexical interest of the series. In particular, in 1×07 and 2×12 we see how drug dealing is organized according to space in order to protect the dealers from the possible intervention of the police. Dealers hide behind barred windows, on spots that always leave them the chance to escape from a back door. They deliver drugs through a loophole, with sentinels on the rooftops of the buildings ready to shout coded messages.

12. Source: Municipality of Naples, online census 2001, with reference to Scampia (8th Municipality): www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/3097.

13. The production even had to face legal troubles because of an extortion made by a Camorra member for the renting of the house (see Sautto 2014).

14. As author Neil Gaiman said: 'fiction has to be convincing, and life doesn't' (Chatfiled 2010).

15. Season×Episode.

This specific idea of the closure of (open) spaces is also transmitted by the TV series at large. What we see is not exactly a district, Scampia, but different feuds, each one owned and protected by its own crowd. The trespassing between one feud and another is strictly regulated. In 2×06 we see an example of how the TV series displays its interest towards the movements of characters through space. A young gangster gets out of a car in the proximity of the complex of Le Vele. He crosses the street, jumps over a wall, climbs a couple of banisters and walks into his gang's yard. A sentinel who sees him from the top of a roof whistles to other gangsters, who move alongside the kid with their motorbikes. Pietro Savastano's second in command, Malammore, gets close and approaches him roughly: 'Where the fuck are you going?'. The young gangster left the yard without the consent of the boss. All the Camorristi of a specific crew have to stay within their territory and respect its boundaries. Fences, walls, closures, gates, doors are all functional elements that circumscribe, delimit a border.

However, when talking about the representation of spaces what is, without doubt, most striking in *Gomorrah – The Series* is the role played by Le Vele. Episode 1×01's last shot is a view of Le Vele. In Season 2 many recaps (the summaries of the previous episodes) begin with a shot of Le Vele. This 'exhibitionism' of Le Vele is the sign of the important role they play in the series. We speak properly about role, since they act like a (main) character in the series.[16] Le Vele first appear in Episode 1×01 of *Gomorrah – The Series*, when we see Ciro's and Attilio's families having lunch together on a terrace. It looks like simple daily life, but the location provides indeed a tense connotation to the scene. There is no possibility of normal life inside Le Vele. Unsurprisingly, Ciro leaves the terrace because he has a crime to commit. He will escape a terrible attack from a rival gang just to go back to find shelter at Le Vele, where he washes his head with rain water falling from the building. Le Vele cleanse from dirt and fear. They even appear to purify from sin. All through *Gomorrah – The Series*, the space of Le Vele holds together the familiar and the unfamiliar, protection and anxiety, comfort and unease.

There are many other scenes where daily life accompanies or hides criminal activities. The very beginning of the TV series, the first sequence of 1×01, is an example of apparent normalcy. Ciro and Attilio are in a car. They stop at a gas station to fill up, talking about Facebook and its use by youngsters. Everything seems normal, but what they intend to do with the petrol is to set fire to their rival's mother's house. In this and many other scenes, the emergence of preoccupying traces, details, elements of perturbation in the most ordinary contexts corresponds quite precisely with the Freudian definition of uncanny. The 'architectural uncanny' that is represented by Le Vele constitutes a fundamental feature of *Gomorrah – The Series*. The complex of Le Vele is something that becomes part of the urban landscape but at the same time remains alien, both for its architectural oddity and for its sociocultural perception. Even if the viewer necessarily gets acquainted with it through the entire TV series, it continues to be troublesome.

Everything in *Gomorrah – The Series* revolves around Le Vele. Boss Pietro Savastano's first and main bunker in Season 2 is a small room with just one window, which provides a direct view of Le Vele. The boss manifests his ideal of dominion and control over the space. We see all through the season don Pietro looking out, shot from the back, his black silhouette emerging from the background of Le Vele. In 2×12, after he manages to kill Ciro's daughter, Pietro Savastano celebrates his partial and momentary victory with a fireworks

show that illuminates Le Vele. The cliché of viewing from above is also central in *Gomorrah – The Series*. In 1×09 a kid, Danielino, is pushed by Ciro to collaborate with his criminal activity. Ciro gives Danielino a pistol, with which the kid goes on the roof of a building facing Le Vele. He points the gun towards the residential complex, then pans the whole, well-known landscape, fostering a new ambition of power over the places he inhabits. The domination of the territory passes through its military control but also the capacity to corrupt politicians and public officers and to influence the urban planners. The Camorra invest great amounts of money in the construction business; so in the TV series we see many construction sites, in Naples but also in the North of Italy and in Rome – for example in 2×12, where Gennaro Savastano (Pietro's son) discusses with his associate/father-in-law on the top of a building. After that scene we see a view of Le Vele, which assumes the role of a sort of patron saint for all the other housing projects managed by the Camorra.

Every character finally desires some sort of contact with Le Vele, especially in his most difficult moments, as happens to Gennaro and Ciro, the two main characters of the TV series. In the dramatic last episode of the first season the Camorra war between the different gangs has spread. Gennaro needs protection and seeks shelter with his young pals at Le Vele. The complex acts like a strange bunker, densely populated and open, but nonetheless reclusive. The even more thrilling Season 2 finale shows Ciro devastated by the killing of his daughter. Gennaro takes the Scampia exit and directs his car towards Le Vele. He walks down a corridor and descends the stairs. The camera follows him in a long take, giving continuity to the action and solemnizing the moment. He enters an abandoned flat, steps onto the balcony, and comes out on the terrace, where we see Ciro on the floor in a dirty corner. At this point the camera lifts up to include Le Vele, in all of their majesty, in the frame.

There is another important scene between the two characters in the second episode of the first season, when Ciro attempts to teach Genny how to kill. He brings him inside the corridors of Le Vele to knock on the door where a drug addict lives. It will be Ciro to shoot him, because Gennarino is not able to. Le Vele are more than a training ground; they are a temple for this wicked initiation rite; they are an evil character that wants to test the braveness of one of its most beloved sons, Gennaro, who will need to become an adult and take on greater responsibilities. In this sequence we see Ciro walking in the central corridor of Le Vele, with Gennarino at his back. The camera is behind the two, following them in a tracking shot.

Also extensively used by Matteo Garrone in his film, this camera movement, forced by the nature of Le Vele and its narrow corridors, can assume a symbolic connotation, depicting Le Vele as *trenches*. A war is taking place in there. Soldiers walk through it. The tracking shot following the characters from behind can be associated with the style of World War I films such as *Paths of Glory* (Kubrick, 1957) or *Uomini contro* (*Many Wars Ago*) (Rosi, 1970).[17] Following this first hint, we can actually draw a few more symbolic connotations of Le Vele as conferred by their representation in *Gomorrah – The Series*.

Le Vele as *Minoss' labyrinth*. A monster, Camorra, hides at its very centre. Le Vele are a confounding environment, where people coming from the outside (and the show viewers themselves) can easily get lost. The presence of an 'evil being' living in its interior is palpable.

Le Vele as *Psycho*'s mother's house. Le Vele stand in the landscape like a sick, dangerous scary mother who threatens the strangers that dare perturb her family (i.e., the perfect balance between sociability and criminality hosted

17. We may also argue that this device recalls Cesare Zavattini's influential notion of 'pedinamento' – the neorealist shadowing, the will to stay close to everyday reality to better represent it (Casetti 1993: 28) – which might in turn connect back to the idea of indexicality.

by the residential complex). For the Camorristi, the maternal side of Le Vele manifests itself as a womb or a nest, protecting itself from the outside world (in particular the police) and granting security and freedom.

Le Vele as a *Panopticon*. The peculiar architecture of the residential complex allows its inhabitants to control everyone coming in and going out, to watch without being watched, to transmit the impression of surveillance to the people who live there. The regulatory force of such *dispositif* is stronger because it is somehow anonymous. A proper, peculiar (sense of) justice is built on this basis.

Le Vele as a *criminal Vesuvio*. The traditional postcard from Naples displays the Vesuvio on the background. Just as the volcano landmarks Naples, Le Vele are an element of the landscape that defines the territory, a sort of synecdoche for Camorra or 'a metonym of urban alienation and social marginalisation' (Marlow-Mann 2011: 164–65).

Le Vele act as the embodiment of inherent contradictions; they respond to antithetical instances; they display a compatibility between the opposites – hospitality and terror, safety and violence, comfort and harshness, surveillance and freedom. The inhabitants live the two dimensions at the same time, while the outsiders just have to cope with the repulsive nature of this inscrutable architectural complex.

CORRESPONDENCES

We can actually notice a deep correspondence between Le Vele's architectural structures and some symbolic connotations reported in the previous paragraphs. *In primis*, a strong physical identification with the panopticon. In fact, the way in which terraces and roofs were built, and the *vicoli* ('rows') shaped by the architecture, determine multiple points of view on the neighbourhood and on the public spaces, both from private homes and from connective elements. However, since these places are without the expected services and facilities – thus losing the possibility to be truly public spaces albeit remaining not private – they became subjected to other rules than those of citizenship and neighbourhood relationships. They became, indeed, the 'public' meeting places where the regime of visibility / invisibility of the organized crime that controls the territory was performed, and the space of overexposure for the power of the local bosses, both in their public (processions, funerals) and in their private manifestations (e.g., Salvatore Conte's staging of a fake love relationship with the sister of his real, transexual lover in episode 2×03).

The concert offered by Genny to his first girlfriend in episode 1×03 directly shows how the 'public' spaces of Le Vele assume a 'private' theatrical dimension. Terraces, staircases, basements are all spatial devices that guarantee the control of the movements and the businesses taking place there. From these devices, the young Camorristi can control all extraneous accesses. At the same time, however, these devices become a way of conversely filtering what escapes (or must escape) control: activities that take place in more secluded locations such as the garages, the terraces, or the basements where the *capi piazza*[18] meet for summit.

The square (la *Piazza*), even though it keeps the symbolic connotation of toponym of the public urban space, is absolutely functional to the economy of the local Camorra. The square is not a square, but a world of power relations, affiliations and exchanges. The 'drug-store square' (*piazza di spaccio*) is at stake in every new change in equilibrium among the different Camorra

gangs, and it is built and rebuilt according to this role: super-fenced, parcelled by barricades, armoured like a deposit, controlled by the scooters' trajectories. Each change of 'property' produces a spectacular dynamic in the construction of the *piazza di spaccio*; every new equilibrium redefines the possible trajectories of the groups establishing their regime of mobilities (e.g. the impediment for Pietro Savastano and his group to leave the district, as negotiated by Genny and Ciro). Also the normal inhabitants are inevitably involved with the spatial pervasiveness of the Camorristi's '*Sistema*'.[19]

Beyond these spaces, which mark a socio-spatial control regime, the road infrastructures are just borders, a sort of buffer zone/no man's land. These transitional spaces, not controlled by the various Camorristi groups, become the places where what would not be possible elsewhere happens, as in the case of the most heinous murders of Pietro's wife or Ciro's daughter. The symbolic dimension of the neighbourhood goes together in *Gomorrah – The Series* with a similarly symbolic connotation of the private spaces. The interior design represents the stereotypical houses of the Camorra bosses, furnished with lavish elements. As Paolo Noto (2016: 299) writes, 'it is from within their domiciles that they can restage their criminal and familial claim to power'. These houses, in their juxtaposition to the squalour and decadence of the public space, act as the model of material success. In the furniture of their houses, the different Camorristi generations manifest a more traditional (Pietro) or contemporary (Gennaro) taste. This 'interior' achievement is nonetheless kept absolutely private.

THE BODY OF THE SUBURB

As we have written before, there is no possibility of empathy with the characters of *Gomorrah – The Series* for the viewer, no possibility of identifying with them. But not all kinds of identification are banned. What persists is what we may call an *aesthetic identification*, not with the single characters but with the television series at large – its writing, visual style, direction, actors, finally its art. This aesthetic identification has a lot to do with space, being an immersive identification not with a single point of view but with a film context that mimetically represents a social milieu. The pleasure of 'being there', to follow the camera through miserable corridors in scary buildings, witnessing the Camorristi's wretched lives, can be described as the 'pleasure of unpleasure' (Studlar 1988: 193) commonly associated with film genres such as horror or melodrama. *Gomorrah – The Series* can certainly be connected to these two 'body genres' (Williams 1991). The body, here, is the body of the city or the suburb, an enveloping body that embraces and suffocates (or literally strangles). We also have to register the strong melodramatic tradition of Neapolitan cinema (Marlow-Mann 2011: 41). Melodrama, we may add following again Linda Williams, has a strong tie with the idea of 'home' and its 'inherent goodness'. *Gomorrah – The Series* – just like *The Wire* in Williams' analysis – defies this connotation, 'channelling automatic feelings about the goodness of home into more moral ambivalent feelings about its simultaneous horror' (Williams 2014: 215). If Le Vele look like a haunted house, if we consider the continuous (masochistic) suffering for the viewer of the show, if we add the element of witnessing that so strongly defines its concept, we can conclude that *Gomorrah – The Series* acts as a kind of horror–melodrama–documentary, where space sustains all these three components with its indexicality and its charge of uncanny and grief.[20]

19. '*Sistema*' is the slang self-definition of the Camorristi's business organization, often involving professionals, businessmen and politicians.

20. This article has been written together by the two authors but the single paragraphs can be attributed: to Alberto Brodesco 'Introduction'; 'Le Vele as Characters'; and 'The Body of the Suburb'; to Cristina Mattiucci 'The Real Spaces: Le Vele'; and 'Correspondences'.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

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