

“ROMA(nzo) criminale”

Portrayals of Rome in Third-millennium Crime Genre Screenwriting

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Abstract

In recent years, the city of Rome continues to be ‘read’ by Italian cinema as a privileged habitat for the setting of crime narratives. Some emblematic examples are such recent Italian films as *Suburra (Id., Stefano Sollima, 2015)*, *Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot (They Call Me Jeeg, Gabriele Mainetti, 2015)*, *Non essere cattivo (Don’t Be Bad, Claudio Caligari, 2015)* and *Dogman (Id., Matteo Garrone, 2018)*, which offer the opportunity to explore the creative processes behind the adaptation of successful cross over into television crime narratives and trans/cross-mediated crime narratives such as adaptations, since they are stories and creative processes that transcend the borders between countries and media.

My contribution seeks to engage with scholarly debates about Italian crime narratives, investigating how the case study of the representation of “criminal Rome” provides its own individual contribution to the distinct imagery of contemporary Italian noir.

Keywords: Rome, crime, suburb, non-place, contemporary Italian cinema.

As highlighted elsewhere in this special issue (Re and Coviello 2021), in recent years Italian crime screenwriting has been gradually shifting farther away from setting its narrative locations in the symbolic and productive centre of the country, i.e. Rome, moving towards more provincial and peripheral locations and urban contexts.

Nevertheless, in parallel to this trend, an equally evident, very recent reappraisal of the Italian capital city as a setting for crime films and TV series has also emerged. Of course, the features of Roman criminality have been broadly explored by Italian cinema well before the third millennium, in a number of compelling representations of “a thousand contradictions accumulated over millennia of history” (Severi 1983, 15). The description of the inexorable growth of a vicious underworld in the suburban streets of the metropolis was actually seen so frequently on the Italian screens that several scholars – among them Matteo Santandrea – proposed to classify the vast body of work focusing on delinquency and corruption in Rome in a distinct category: the “Roman crime movie” (Santandrea 2019, 218).

In light of the utterly unique features of these representations, I am going to focus on the particular and varied declinations that the city of Rome has been able to embody in a few recent Italian crime films and TV series. I will start from discussing the way in which these productions portray the official capital Rome as an exorbitant anthill of corruption and immorality where politics, the Church and the underworld fight animalistically for power. This is particularly the case of the *Suburra* franchise, originated by a novel by Giancarlo De Cataldo.

I will then turn to examine how the topography of Rome is shown as a space traversed by gangs that unleash their raids against powerless police forces: this is the context that saw the rise and the epic downfall of the ‘banda della Magliana’ as well as the emergence of the so called ‘mafia capitolina’, which provide the subjects for *Romanzo criminale*, another franchise stemmed from one of De Cataldo’s novels. The final section will briefly discuss the thematic and poetic fulcrum par excellence of the crime genre, that is, the Roman ‘borgata’, made up of depressed areas located on the city outskirts, places – or better ‘non-places’, in the sense given to this expression by French anthropologist Marc Augé (1992) – that appear artificial,

alienating and dehumanizing. Examples are the suburban neighborhood of Tor Bella Monaca and the area of Ostia, a coastal fraction of the municipality of Rome that works as a real ‘city within the city’ tyrannized by a new feral mafia. It is in this ‘no man’s land’ that the Pasolinian and very human anti-heroes of Claudio Caligari’s films drift toward their ineluctable destiny.

The criminal face of power in ‘patrician’ Rome

One of the most frequently represented faces of Rome is undoubtedly that of the ‘patrician’ city, the seat of both the national political power and the Catholic Church as well as the place where many financial and economic decisions are taken. This is the setting of *Suburra*, a complex transmedia franchise that includes a novel (Carlo Bonini and Giancarlo De Cataldo, 2013), a feature (Stefano Sollima, 2015) and a Netflix series (three seasons from 2017 to 2020).

The title, *Suburra*, alludes to the corruption that flourished in the namesake, disreputable quarter of ancient Rome, thus evoking the dissolution that continues to spread unchecked through the city several millennia later. As we are told by one of the characters in the Netflix series, “This place hasn’t changed for two thousand years. Patricians and plebeians, politicians and criminals, whores and priests: Rome”.

Portrayed as a vast anthill of corruption and perdition, in both the film and the TV series Rome emerges as a city where “the insatiable greed of organised crime, the ferocious voracity of a certain type of rotten, dissolute politicians, and the grasping cupidity of various eminent leaders in the Vatican constantly cross paths in an ugly, eternal orgy of violence” (Santandrea 2019, 185).

In particular, Sollima’s film focuses on the sordid power struggles surrounding the breakdown of established political and spiritual powers: the fall of the fourth Berlusconi government, occurring in 2011, is made to coincide with the astounding resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, which he announced in 2013. Writing about the film, Hannah McGill notes that these two events become the “signals of a country on the verge of moral collapse” (McGill 2016, 89).

Set against this desolate backdrop, the city of Rome plays a starring role as the true cause behind the apocalyptic disaster we are witnessing. Sollima’s cinematography makes it appear as a glacial metropolis, almost Nordic in appearance, so cold and colourless as

to be almost unrecognisable, and the effect is amplified by the inclusion of many night scenes, shot beneath an incessant, unnatural amount of rain.

The film is replete with spectacular references to Rome’s ecclesiastical power. Even in the opening sequence, we see the pontiff, his back to the camera, kneeling in prayer before a crucifix, as he confesses for the first time to his young, trusted private secretary that he intends to resign. From its very first episode, *Suburra – La serie* also refers to the ecclesiastical Vatican domain. It opens with a night-time shot of the majestic façade of St. Peter’s Basilica, and the choice of this image alludes to the moral catastrophe sweeping over, and inexorably compromising not just the Holy See, but the sacred image of the city as a whole.

Both the film and the TV adaptation also refer to the corruption that affects the political institutions. One of the main characters in Sollima’s film is a corrupt member of parliament, Filippo Malgradi (Pierfrancesco Favino), who is entrenched in the underworld and is an old acquaintance with a powerful criminal boss, Samurai, since the ‘Years of Lead’ in the 1970s. The corruption of morality and traditional values is clearly represented by Malgradi’s drug-fuelled night of sex in a hotel room with two escorts, one of whom is underage and tragically ends up dying of an overdose that same night.

Then there is the mansion where the young, anxious events-organiser Sebastiano throws a party. The interior also definitely evokes a certain type of Roman society: a bourgeois, affluent, corrupt and debauched society that looks very similar to the type portrayed, just two years earlier, at Jep Gambardella’s sixtieth birthday bash in *La grande bellezza* (*The Great Beauty*, Paolo Sorrentino, 2013). The motley menagerie of politicians, social climbers, industrialists, entrepreneurs, C-list showbiz types, wideboys and escorts is a clear reference to Sorrentino’s film.

Not long afterwards Sebastiano’s father commits suicide, jumping off Ponte Vittorio to escape his debts with the Anacleti mafia clan. In this way, the Tiber river, a symbol of the Eternal City, becomes a place of significant dramatic consequence in the plot.

The Tiber river also comes in the foreground in *Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot* (*They Called Me Jeeg*, Gabriele Mainetti, 2015), a fantasy film with a realistic subtext, straddling the action, crime and the superhero genres. It tells the story of Enzo Ceccotti (Claudio Santamaria),

a small-time delinquent who makes ends meet by dubious means and petty theft in the *borgate*, the rundown Roman suburbs. One day, having stolen a watch, he is being chased by the police. He escapes by jumping into the Tiber, where he accidentally comes into contact with a radioactive substance in the water. Further on, he finds out he has gained a superhuman strength, which he puts immediately to use, first to boost his criminal career, and later to mutate into an actual superhero.

While most of the shooting locations are around a lesser-known, peripheral part of the city, the film nevertheless contains frequent references to Rome’s most symbolic landmarks. Although they are always shown fleetingly, almost on the edge of the frame, these include the Colosseum, the area between Campo Marzio and Castel Santangelo, extensively shown during a frantic police chase, and the Olympic Stadium. This latter site, packed to the brim for the Rome-Lazio derby, is indeed the location where the film’s most tension-filled, pivotal sequence takes place. Up and the down the stadium’s wide staircases, along its external walkways and even within the stands, a hair-raising chase plays out between Enzo and the crime boss known as lo Zingaro (the ‘Gipsy’, played by Luca Marinelli), complete with a fight between the two ‘superheroes’. The buildings and rooftops of the more touristic, monumental districts of Rome return in the final sequence, where Enzo is shown hanging from the highest cornice of the Colosseum, wearing the Jeeg Robot mask made for him by his deceased sweetheart, before flying off to watch over the city at night.

Gangs of Rome

A completely different Roman landscape appears in a number of contemporary films centred on the nefarious deeds of criminal gangs. Their characteristic approach has its roots in the *poliziottesco* movies, which flourished during the 1970s: taking its cue from both American gangster movies and the Spaghetti westerns, this sub-genre reflected a country that was then bloodied by social unrest and terrorist activity. Rome, in particular, emerged as an ideal urban setting for developing this category of films.

The late 1990s saw a resurgence in Italian cinema’s fascination with the blight of Roman crime: a case in point is the second feature by the maverick auteur Claudio Caligari, *L’odore della notte* (*The*

Scent of the Night, 1998). The film is loosely based on a gritty *romanzo verità* novel (Sacchettoni 1986), which is in turn inspired by a true story, namely the criminal acts of the so-called Clockwork Orange gang. Centred upon the story of Remo Guerra, a working-class young man who is both a policeman and a criminal, *L'odore della notte* portrays Rome's criminal topography in all of its glory: “From the grand houses of Collina Fleming to the high-rise blocks of Torpignattara, the city is once again shown as raw, divided, torn by social unrest: wealthy, serene and presumably strait-laced on one side; impoverished, hapless and irreparably disillusioned on the other” (Santandrea 2019, 114-115).

Such a renewed interest in the Roman ‘criminal question’ was to culminate a few years later with the publication of Giancarlo De Cataldo’s novel *Romanzo criminale* (2002). This book can truly lay claim to having reignited a cultural interest in the Italian ‘criminal question’ across the media system, from literature to cinema and television.

Thanks to the author’s masterful reinterpretation of the gangster mythology as well as his renewal of noir storytelling, *Romanzo criminale* turns the true story of the Magliana gang into a kind of legend (Amici 2010, 77-78), while at the same time also using the narrative to investigate the blood-spattered Leaden Years and the tumultuous political upheavals of post-1968 Italy.

The gang depicted in De Cataldo’s plot consists of ‘hungry’, vain-glorious youths (Selvetella 2007, 104) who are at the same time the victims of the dehumanising decline of the Roman working-class suburbs. It offers a clear representation of the transition from a grasping small-time ‘banditry’ to a business-like system of ‘institutionalised’ crime.

Some, such as Millicent Marcus, have seen this this representation as possessing the same “charm, dignity and almost sacred mystery” (Marcus 2008, 394) that Pier Paolo Pasolini had bestowed upon the Roman underclass. As in the case of *Suburra*, the extraordinary success of *Romanzo criminale* also led to a transmedia franchise in a relatively short frame of time. After a film adaptation directed by Michele Placido in 2005, De Cataldo’s novel was further adapted in a TV series produced by Sky Cinema and directed by Stefano Sollima (three seasons from 2008 to 2010). As in De Cataldo’s book, the film also presents us with a “friendship and coming-

of-age tale: one that tells a story of people from the masses, instinctive to the point of cruelty, yet capable of love in their own way” (Dal Bello 2009, 81), animated by the romantic, straight-talking, blue-collar temperament that is typical of the Roman suburbs and amplified by the use of Roman dialect throughout (Trifone 1993, 15).

As for the TV adaptation, *Romanzo criminale - La serie* remains to date “one of the few [...] Italian media products that became a social phenomenon and a vehicle for exporting the national culture” (Boni 2015, 78). It proved capable of innovating the methods of Italian seriality, heralding a nouvelle vague of Italian-style action crime drama in the wake of the American quality television, and paving the way for *Gomorra - La serie* (2014-) and *Suburra - La serie*. The Italian audiences were finally witnessing a crime series featuring realistic sets, gritty, no-holds-barred language, new narrative approaches and stylistic codes, which showed the perspective of the ‘bad guys’ and revisited the tradition of mob films as revived in recent American TV series, such as *The Sopranos*.

Another painful representation of the Roman criminal ‘underworld’ is found in Matteo Garrone’s film *Dogman* (2018), which is based on a gruesome true crime. In 1988, Pietro De Negrì, a dog groomer whose nickname was *er canaro* (the ‘dog man’ of the title) carried out a ferocious murder in his salon in the Magliana neighbourhood, on the south-western outskirts of the city, as a revenge against his former accomplice Giancarlo Ricci, an ex amateur boxer and small-time hoodlum.

Engaging in armed robberies and drug dealing, the odd criminal couple featured in the film – one (the dogman) skinny, meek and calm, the other (the ex boxer) corpulent, hot-headed and violent – belong to a local gang of small-time mobsters which appears very different from the violent and organised crime network that sheds blood in the Rome of *Suburra*.

If anything, the pair’s petty crimes evoke those carried out by the criminals trio in the already mentioned *L’odore della notte*. See for example the scene in which the trio robs an apartment in an affluent Roman neighbourhood: Marcello gets out of the car and looks around the upmarket Roman street almost like a wild animal that has been suddenly released into an unfamiliar habitat. In a similar vein, Caligari’s next (and last) film, *Non essere cattivo* repeatedly focuses on a gang of youngsters who spend their days loitering in a

small, seedy bar in the outskirts of Rome, planning yet another robbery: “Come with us, we’ve got a rock solid tipoff. A Parioli penthouse, we’re talking luxury. When else would you get a chance to get your hands on those keys? A mate of mine works at the hardware store and made me a copy”.

‘Criminal topographies’ in the Roman ‘borgate’

The literary and film examples considered so far bear witness to a clear, ongoing narrative and civic interest developed by various contemporary authors vis-à-vis the Roman *borgate*, a clearly-defined thematic as well as poetic location choice that appears to approach a “suburban area as a condition of the soul” (Raimo 2016).

In the specific case of the Roman hinterland, this suburban area underwent a delicate phase of chaotic construction, passed off as ‘regeneration’, in the 1970s. Peripheral areas such as San Basilio, Tor de Schiavi, Trullo, Ostia, Acilia and the Magliana neighbourhood became so many symbols of urban and social decay, “depressing results of a mistaken calculation reiterated by the administrations which, hypocritically aiming to improve living conditions in outlying communities, produced the opposite effect by ruining landscapes, crushing hopes and aggravating resentment” (Santandrea 2019, 144).

The Magliana gang portrayed in the *Romanzo criminale* franchise formed in that exact geographical context, and yet, on closer inspection, the Roman suburb is kept strictly off-screen in Placido’s film, although it is constantly evoked through the dialogues. Instead, the gang members are shown wandering around a very recognisable Rome and landmarks such as Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere or the Spanish Steps, as many sites that are picturesque and aesthetically appealing for the camera too.

Unlike the film adaptation, the TV series draws attention to the city’s outer suburbs in all their bloodless pallor. It shines a light on the devastation produced by unregulated construction, describing a poverty-stricken place smothered by daunting, stark blights on the landscape: “unresolved, marginal places, incapable of being a convincing blend of city and countryside, characterised only by infinite repetitions of the same grid-like division of land and the same architectural style” (Clementi and Perego 1983, 36). The various neighbourhoods on the edge of the city – from Spinaceto to Val Melaina,

from Trastevere-Testaccio to Trullo, Centocelle and Tufello – take on the visual features and distinctive characteristics of a marginal, and yet authentic Rome which, as Mario Tronti puts it, actually embodies the true communal spirit of the capital (Tronti 1983, 10).

Similarly, the metropolis portrayed in *Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot* is very far from a postcard-perfect Rome. Here we see a city that is almost unrecognisable: peripheral, neglected, abandoned in the clutches of a violent criminal network that acts unchallenged.

The film’s main location is undoubtedly Tor Bella Monaca; this district on the eastern edge of Rome, wedged between Via Casilina and the Grande Raccordo Anulare, the city’s orbital motorway, has often had the dubious distinction of cropping up in the crime pages (Raia 2016). With its skyline of identical ‘cookie-cutter’ tower blocks, Tor Bella Monaca is not only the place where the protagonist, Enzo, resides; it is also home to the den of the criminal gang that rules over the neighbourhood: they too are confined to the desolate streets of this shabby ‘ghetto’, excluded and distanced from the bacchanal of power. For example, the gang leader, Lo Zingaro, refers to his own home scornfully as ‘the kennel’, and we can tell that he hates it from his wretched confession, “I don’t want to die in this place like my father. This place makes me sick; this stink of shit makes me sick”. Tor Bella Monaca stands out as the lawless outer circle of the Italian capital: something like a Roman ‘Bronx’ consisting of squalid, pitiful building sites and betting shops, in addition to distinctive, inhospitable landmarks such as the so-called *serpentoni*, snake-like social housing blocks named R5 and R6.

The constant references to the complex *borgatara* social fabric of Tor Bella Monaca – conveyed, albeit in sci-fi style, by *Lo chiamavano Jeeg Robot* – were instrumentally exploited in the heated political battle that characterised the 2016 Rome local elections (Menarini 2020). When the film’s lead actor, Claudio Santamaria, expressed his support in favour of Virginia Raggi’s candidacy for Mayor, his move was immediately interpreted “in light of his latest role on the big screen: that of a superhero who moves against a backdrop of a corrupt capital city controlled by criminals” (Renzi 2016). This instrumental use of Mainetti’s film continued throughout the first few months of Raggi’s office as newly elected mayor. Right from her first day of work, article in the press emphasised her efforts and commitment to improve life conditions in “the Tor Bella Monaca

district, which was Claudio Santamaria’s neighbourhood in the famous film on a troubled Rome. Hence, the working-class suburbs and refuse collection are on the agenda of the new Mayor of Rome on her first real work’s day on the ground” (Cerami 2016).

The Tor Bella Monaca district was also used as a location for *La terra dell’abbastanza* (*Boys Cry*, 2018), the debut feature film by the Fabio and Damiano D’Innocenzo brothers. Observed through what could be described as a post-neorealist gaze, the district emerge once more as a desperate ghetto, the embodiment of neglect. It is in these desolate surroundings that two post-Pasolinian characters, Mirko and Manolo (Matteo Olivetti, Andrea Carpenzano), live their whole short lives up and eventually fade away. The pair are drawn to what they see as a unique opportunity to change the course of their destiny, namely, joining a criminal organisation. Although it does feature some Gomorrah-style features, such as its coarseness and the extreme realism of the squalor on screen, the portrayal of these delinquents is nevertheless untarnished by the “blind adulation and childish braggadocio seen in the armed street urchins of Gomorrah [...], since here, among the tower blocks on the outskirts of Rome, there seems to exist no criminal mythology, no utopia, no dream of glory” (Santandrea 2019, 180).

Chronicles of poor criminals in Ostia

Another notable “pole of attraction for mafias and delinquency” (Sabella 2016, 104) which often features in contemporary crime reports and has attracted considerable attention from television and film producers in recent years is Ostia. A coastal town that comes under the municipality of Roma Capitale and a city within a city in its own right, in recent years it has seen the emergence of a ferocious new mafia.

Images of Ostia are scattered throughout the whole duration of *Suburra*, the film, and in a sense they drive the plot: the colossal Waterfront speculative construction project that is repeatedly mentioned in the film, evokes a true project proposed since 1999 by architect Paolo Portoghesi to turn the Ostia coastline into a huge tourist attraction, almost a version of Las Vegas. Although never put into operation, the project received support from a vast array of groups and individuals, attracted from the prospect of real estate speculation. In the film, mafia bosses, politicians and prelates

are all involved to varying extents in the struggle to make the project approved.

An example is the scene in which criminal boss Aureliano Adami, nicknamed Numero 8 (Alessandro Borghi), is seen daydreaming and describing his fantasy to his junky sweetheart, Viola, one rainy night in his hideout on the Ostia coast. As he looks out the window onto the lights along the sea front, his fingers trace these wished-for imaginary scenes on the windowpane:

I see this shithole completely transformed. All lit up, cars coming and going on the sea front, neon signs, fireworks, like a non-stop party, day and night. Skyscrapers everywhere, gaming halls, slot machines, casinos... and then a mile-long stretch of restaurants, clubs, people having fun, the hottest babes you can imagine... Everything rich, everything beautiful...

Ostia is also the location where Claudio Caligari placed the plot of his debut feature film, *Amore tossico* (*Toxic Love*, 1983), a docu-drama shot in the reportage style. The cast consisted of former drug addicts who were in a sense playing themselves (Stanzione 2016; 33). Here Ostia appears as “an abandoned, desolate no-man’s-land” (Santandrea 2019, 111), littered with weeds, trash, used syringes: in short, a place of death through which the film’s characters wander aimlessly, starting from the slow panoramic shot that appears along the opening titles.

Some of the local Ostia landmarks are clearly recognisable, and all are heavy with a sense of foreboding that is symbolic of the irremediable downfall of an entire generation: the jetty on Piazza dei Ravennati (where the protagonists meet, in the memorable ice cream scene); the steps of the Regina Pacis church and, in the final sequence, the monument to Pier Paolo Pasolini, which stands, surrounded by scrubland and uncultivated fields, as the derelict symbol of a memory that has been gravely suppressed over the years. Hardly surprisingly, many have suggested that *Amore tossico* (as indeed Caligari’s entire career) owes much to Pasolini’s oeuvre; so much so that one of the film’s most disturbing sequences – that of Michela’s death – is set in front of the director’s monument, at the Idroscalo in Ostia where Pasolini was found dead (Rigola 2020).

These same places return in *Non essere cattivo*, Caligari’s third and last film. Once again, the Ostia *borgata* is the setting for a story that deals with the surge in drug use in the 1990s. And once more, the reference to Pasolini’s legacy seems inevitable (Raimo 2015), albeit reassessed in the light of the radical transformation that shook the archaic, sub-proletarian world of the *borgate* from the 1970s onwards.

The new Generation X represented by Cesare and Vittorio (Luca Marinelli, Alessandro Borghi) moves through a new type of decay and collective dispossession. Although the protagonists are still, like Pasolini’s street boys before them, as many hustlers or *ragazzi di vita*, they are now in the grip of synthetic drugs and end up being tragically drawn to the darkest depths of the suburbs, such as armed robbery or drug pushing. In Caligari’s own words, *Non essere cattivo* should be considered a “snapshot of the final aftermath of Pasolini’s world. [...] Nowadays any religious dimension has been lost; today’s Accattone goes clubbing, he takes and deals in cocaine and pills” (Caligari 2015).

This bleak scenario is tellingly portrayed in a key sequence in which the group of wheezing, heroin-addicted friends gathers on the beach in Ostia, kicking a ball around to stave off the torment of boredom. The dilapidated, half-abandoned shacks – a favourite retreat for local drug users in mid-nineties Ostia; the emptiness of the beach in the winter season; the characters basking in the sun in order to warm up: all these elements suggest the poverty and neglect experienced by the characters.

A remainder of a Pasolinian ethos can nonetheless still be found in the squalid tower block where Cesare lives with his mother and his sick niece, as well as in the derelict shack that Cesare and Viviana choose as their future dream home and where they end up moving in together. In these domestic and family interiors, all the problems, turmoil and poverty that afflict the characters still do not manage to extinguish the warmth of loving and affectionate relationships. For example, the scene in which Cesare tenderly gives his niece Debora a teddy bear as a gift unveils the poignant, delicate bond that exists between the two characters.

Nevertheless, floating above this world like an ineluctable punishment are the spectres of drug addiction, crime, sickness and death. Death spares none, not even little Debora, or Cesare himself:

neither his brotherly bond with Vittorio, nor his new-found love with Viviana can save him. In this way, unlike the other cases we have looked at, *Non essere cattivo* presents us with a criminal microcosm that nurtures no ambition or self-aggrandisement. Instead, these criminals are motivated by the sole purpose of surviving their life of hardship. In the words of Emiliano Morreale, “the characters of Caligari’s film do not move up the career ladder, do not become the kings of Rome, [in fact,] they don’t even know what politics is” (Morreale 2015).

Conclusion

Not unlike Hollywood film noir productions, each of the literary, film and television examples we have analysed portray the city as a place that is “sinister, dual and mysterious, in which the individual struggles and gets lost, with no real hope of integration” (Pravadelli 2007, 133). Italy’s capital city is portrayed along the lines of a somewhat apocalyptic representation. In all of these works, the choice of the Roman suburbs as an ideal location for crime plots is meant to bring to light the most obvious as well as most interesting signs of a derelict humanity, destined for collapse and (self) destruction. Indeed, the screen productions we have examined show how, to quote Paolo Ricci, “Marginal spaces [...] form the new image [...] of Rome as a constantly evolving organism, and not merely a post-card” (Ricci 2016, 50).

Rome is represented as metropolis that is often very remote – in terms of both atmosphere and physical geographical location – from its classic identity, its tourist attractions, its monumental and baroque appearance, that is, from the identity that has become established through an array of glorious imagery in both the national and the global visual culture. We must then acknowledge that, over the years, Italian cinema has enacted a series of transformations aimed at radically changing the audience’s perception of the city of Rome and its urban and social fabric. No less importantly, the international success of many of these productions have multiplied the impact of this changing representation of Rome, transforming the perception of what it means to be Italian (or, more specifically, Roman) in these challenging times.

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