

**Original citation:**

Holdaway, Dominic. (2012) Rome Awards : a return to cinema d'impegno?  
Contemporary cinematic engagements with organized crime. Papers of the British  
School at Rome, Volume 80 . pp. 353-354. ISSN 0068-2462

**Permanent WRAP url:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/57956/>

**Copyright and reuse:**

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

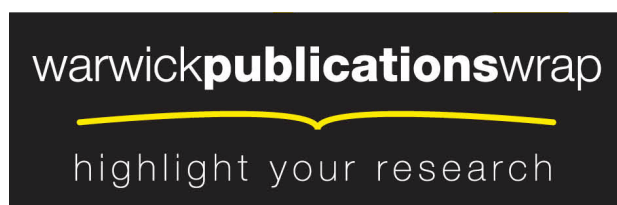
**Publisher's statement:**

Copyright © British School at Rome 2012

**A note on versions:**

The version presented in WRAP is the published version or, version of record, and may be cited as it appears here.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [publications@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:publications@warwick.ac.uk)



<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/>

# Papers of the British School at Rome

<http://journals.cambridge.org/ROM>

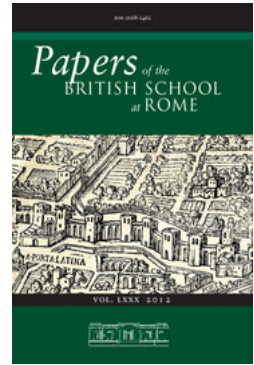
Additional services for *Papers of the British School at Rome*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## Rome Awards: A return to *cinema d'impegno*? Contemporary cinematic engagements with organized crime

Dom Holdaway, (2010–11)

Papers of the British School at Rome / Volume 80 / October 2012, pp 353 - 354

DOI: 10.1017/S0068246212000402, Published online: 24 September 2012

**Link to this article:** [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0068246212000402](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0068246212000402)

### How to cite this article:

Dom Holdaway, (2010–11) (2012). Rome Awards: A return to *cinema d'impegno*? Contemporary cinematic engagements with organized crime. *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 80, pp 353-354 doi:10.1017/S0068246212000402

**Request Permissions :** [Click here](#)

doi: 10.1017/S0068246212000402

*A return to cinema d'impegno? Contemporary cinematic engagements with organized crime*

The success of Matteo Garrone's *Gomorra* and Paolo Sorrentino's *Il divo* at the 2008 film festivals, as well as that of actor Toni Servillo who appeared in both, has drawn comparisons with the tied Palme D'or that went to Francesco Rosi and Elio Petri in 1972 for *The Mattei Affaire* and *Lulu the Tool*, and the special mention to actor Gian Maria Volonté. Both instances have assumed cultural significance as peaks of political Italian cinema. The gap, though, between 1972 and 2011 is a large one, and major social change, from the decline of the 'Democristiani' to the rise of mediocracy, and evolutions in theory — for instance the depreciation of realism and the shift towards popular culture and mass spectators studies —, have altered drastically the notion of *impegno*, or political commitment, in cinema.

The extent to which comparisons such as these are useful in order to trace the evolution of political film is a fundamental question posed by my doctoral research. The central aim is to investigate the political potential of cinema since the beginning of the 2000s, with a thematic focus on the representation of organized crime — the term is chosen carefully to allow an investigation that transcends (without excluding) traditional models of 'mafia cinema'. The project first establishes a 'vocabulary' of this crime cinema by seeking loosely any representation of mafia-like organizations on-screen since the earliest cinema, and outlining both an iconography (*mise en scène*, settings, lighting) and the key issues of film theory (genre questions, interrogations of realism). Placing the organized crime film historically then allows us to shed light on the changes that have accompanied a move into post-modernity.

The crisis of representation and the turn towards the self-conscious that accompanied the move into post-modernity has affected this genre of Italian cinema too. My research argues that strictly political texts cannot exist in the same way; instead, we can find only 'fragments of impegno', as Jennifer Burns has observed in contemporary literature.<sup>3</sup> I seek to find these 'fragments' by comparatively analysing representations of organized criminality from the last decade in relation to issues of identity such as gender and class. Ultimately I seek to outline a model of *impegno* in these films that can be viewed as extremely self-aware (almost to the point of attempting to manipulate the viewer through a sense of *buonismo*), which I term 'performative'. The consequential question that rests at the root of this — and perhaps remains to be seen — is the extent to which this performance of political commitment will become its own phenomenon: whether/when the 'utterance' becomes an 'action' itself (to borrow J.L. Austin's terms).

The three-month research period spent at the British School at Rome was devoted to the question of the post-modern evolution of political cinema. The proximity that the Rome Award provided to primary texts and to critical material (much of which was found at the Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini and the Cineteca Nazionale at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia) extended and boosted my study infinitely. It also

---

<sup>3</sup> J. Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative, 1980–2000* (Leeds, 2000).

allowed me to lay the foundations for a subsequent research project that will adopt a historical approach to the representation of *mafie* since the earliest forms of cinema.

DOM HOLDAWAY (2010–11)  
(*Department of Italian, University of Warwick*)

doi: 10.1017/S0068246212000414

*Water, society and environment in ancient Rome and its hinterland*

This project uses historical and archaeological methods as well as developing geoarchaeological techniques that will be applicable to water systems worldwide. A focus is on the quantitative testing of the hypothesis that Rome's water demand placed its hinterland under water stress. The results will provide information on the control and quality of water resources, the growth and decline of Rome itself and changes in land use, environment and climate in its hinterland.

During the period December 2010 to February 2011, an archaeological survey of surviving aqueduct remains was conducted with the permission and assistance of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma, the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici del Lazio and the Sovrintendenza Comunale. One hundred and fifty locations from the Aqua Marcia, Tepula, Julia, Claudia, Antoniniana, Alexandrina, Traiana and Anio Novus from east of Tivoli to the centre of the city were collected using a handheld GPS. These points shortly will be entered into the ArcGIS program to compare to the maps from Thomas Ashby's *The Aqueducts of Ancient Rome* (London, 1935). Ten samples of calcium carbonate deposits (travertine) from the channels of aqueducts at eight separate locations were collected in accordance with permits from the Soprintendenze. These samples are being prepared for analysis in collaboration with Prof. Bruce Fouke and others at the University of Illinois. This, along with the analysis of ten samples collected in 2010, will reveal information regarding the environment and date of deposition, as well as the water source (which will remove uncertainty regarding the routes and linkages of the aqueducts) and its composition. These eight locations, as well as five others, were surveyed and information regarding the aqueducts (such as channel dimensions and construction styles) and the travertine deposits (such as thickness and the shape of bedforms) recorded.

Several distinctive bedforms were recorded during this research. The reporting of bedforms in the travertine of ancient aqueducts is, to my knowledge, unprecedented. This will enable new advances, not only in the understanding of the operation of these systems, but also in geological understanding of a process involved in coral formation, drinking water aquifers and thought to involved in the formation of the simplest lifeforms on earth and possibly other planets.

The libraries of the British School at Rome, the other foreign academies, the Università di Roma 'La Sapienza' and the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma were consulted heavily as part of the research carried out.

DUNCAN KEENAN-JONES (2010–11)  
(*Program for Research in the Humanities, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*)