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Gomorrah: A Beautiful Lesson of Anthropology²

Summary

This article explores Roberto Saviano's international best-seller *Gomorrah* as an "ethnographic novel", an expression that actually turns upside down and complements the characterization the author himself suggested for his book as a "literary investigation". The main purpose is not so much to analyse Saviano's distinctive non-fictional (or blurred) genre and rhetorical style, but rather to take advantage of his book as a way to consider how cultural anthropology identifies and constructs its own research objects. Notably, focusing on the passages in which the author considers or discusses significant issues such as language, time, space and knowledge, I argue that *Gomorrah* represents a chance to reflect upon how the conventional aims and methods of cultural anthropology are currently challenged and reorganised under present-day neo-liberal corporate capitalism. Finally, while most commentators see *Gomorrah* as a book about the illegal trafficking of the Neapolitan Mafialike criminal organization known as "Camorra", this article provocatively suggests understanding it as an inspired and morally disturbing account of ourselves. An ethnographically sensitive account exploring both legal and illegal practices of production, consumption, and circulation of goods and commodities in which we all are deeply implicated.

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