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The Evolution of Menswear and Masculinity in Modern Criminal Narratives: Investigating *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori*

Marta Martina* [a] Lucia Tralli** [b]

[a] Istituto Marangoni di Milano (Italy)
[b] The American University of Rome

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Abstract

In examining the dynamic interplay of maximalism and streetwear within the criminal genre, our analysis of *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori* uncovers a transformative phase that challenges conventional sartorial narratives, introducing a new lexicon of masculinity. These series, emblematic of youth and excess, reflect a societal evolution towards a multifaceted expression of male identity and power. Through this prism, the narratives not only subvert traditional aesthetic norms of the classical depictions in gangster cinema, but also foster a profound engagement with contemporary viewers. Our discourse, after a first reconstruction of the historical characteristics of the genre, navigates through the nuanced terrain of contemporary maximalism, distancing itself from the misinterpretations associated with "bad taste", to celebrate a composite aesthetic that defies classical taste paradigms. This stylistic approach champions an eclectic freedom that elevates maximalism to a form of narrative and identity expression. In summation, this exploration not only reconfigures established narratives of style, masculinity, and authority but also posits a reimagined conceptualization of excess that synergizes cultural and social capital, heralding a new era in the criminal genre characterized by complexity, vibrancy, and excess.

Keywords: Maximalism; Streetwear; Criminal Genre; Masculinity; Youth Culture.

* m.martina.tutor@istitutomarangoni.org

** L.tralli@aur.edu

Introduction

"The loudest man in the room is the weakest man in the room." This quote from Ridley Scott's *American Gangster* (2007) encapsulates the dichotomy of visibility and power within the criminal underworld, laying the foundation for a nuanced understanding of menswear and masculinity in modern criminal narratives. In the film, Frank Lucas, portrayed by Denzel Washington, admonishes his brother Huey (Chiwetel Ejiofor) for drawing unnecessary attention with his flashy attire, stressing a strategy of blending in rather than standing out. Lucas aspires to a form of *invisibility*, a "cloaking device"[1] that enables him to navigate the treacherous waters of organized crime unnoticed. Lucas's philosophy on the power of understatement is challenged by his own downfall, marked by a lapse into the very hubris he criticizes. It is the infamous chinchilla coat, a gift from his wife, that catches the eye of Detective Richie Roberts (Russell Crowe) and leads to his eventual capture. This pivotal moment illustrates the fine line between power and vulnerability that clothing can represent in the criminal world. This incident encapsulates the tension between power and visibility, between the desire for conformity and the pull of difference within the criminal sartorial code: the choice to conform or stand out is laden with implications for power, identity, and survival. In the realm of cinematic and television narratives, this tension plays out across the wardrobes of gangsters, from the sharply tailored suits of mobsters to the deliberately understated or ostentatious attire of contemporary figures. A similar dichotomy between visibility and invisibility seems to traverse masculinity: long considered the "invisible gendered subject,"[2] within the realm of gender studies, much work within the field has been preoccupied with the disclosure of masculinity as a social formation and discourse, with its rules and expectations, just as much as feminine identities, and with the exploration and identification of the hierarchical lead of masculinities, the hegemonic one, the most "desirable" form of masculinity in a given time and space.[3] Embodying hegemonic masculinity has been a social imperative for men of different generations, particularly those who aimed at getting and/or preserving positions of power and control. The power of hegemonic masculinity resides both in its high visibility, its surreptitious presence within any corner of society, and its apparent normalization to the point of disappearance. Embodying the "right" kind of masculinity has meant, for a long time, wearing the most efficient of all "cloaking devices." Nobody is more interested in this performance than the criminal who is climbing the social ladder in a quest for power, money, control, and social revenge and affirmation. From the standpoint of a *marginalized masculinity* — given his upbringing and frequent lower social status — the gangster tries his best to model himself on the hegemony. This frequently translates into the projection of a hyper-masculine persona "identified within the macho assemblage, expressed as stoicism, hardness, forcefulness, and rebelliousness."[4] As Connell remarks, violence is frequently present in the "assertion of marginalized masculinities against other men."[5] Nevertheless, masculinities — including hegemonic masculinities — are in constant flux. Hegemony is contextual; it changes through time and space. Therefore, significant shifts in the acceptable and desirable masculinity performances have to be understood within this framework. Attitudes, behaviors, homosocial connections, and visible markers such as clothing choices all contribute to the construction of new kinds of masculinities.

This paper explores the transformative role of menswear in delineating masculinity within modern criminal narratives, with a focused analysis of recent Italian television series *Suburra: Blood on Rome* (Netflix, 2017–2020) and *Mare Fuori* (RAI, Netflix, 2020 –). The series, separated by a five-year gap, encapsulate the historical progression from the foundational gangster films of the early 20th century to their

1. Jonathan Faiers, *Dressing Dangerously: Dysfunctional Fashion in Film* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

2. Stephen Whitehead, "Man: The Invisible Gendered Subject?," in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge, UK: Polity; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 351–68.

3. On the hierarchy of masculinities, see Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

4. Chris Hickey, "Hypermasculinity," in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, eds. by Nancy A. Naples, Renee C. Hoogland, Maithree Wickramasinghe, Wai Ching, Angela Wong (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 1.

5. Connell, *Masculinities*, 83.

nuanced portrayals of criminal characters and their sartorial choices in present days.

Produced by Cattleya in association with Rai Fiction and Bartleby Film and intended as a prequel to the homonymous 2015 film (directed by Stefano Sollima), the series was the first original Italian-language series for Netflix. After its world premiere at the *Venice Film Festival* in 2017, it received critical and audience acclaim and was produced for a total of three seasons, ending in 2020. A new spinoff, *Suburraeterna*, was produced in 2023. Set in Rome during the real-life events later known as *Mafia Capitale*, the series revolves around a seemingly endless cycle of violence, corruption, and organized crime that sees the participation of local criminal families, politicians, and churchmen. At the center of the story are the two "spares" of competing criminal families: Aureliano (Alessandro Borghi), a member of the Ostia-based drug dealer Adami family, who at the beginning of the show is the hotheaded and violent younger brother of Livia, the levelheaded future leader of the family, all bleached hair and stormy moods. And Alberto "Spadino" (Giacomo Ferrara), a member of a Sinti criminal family, who the audience finds out early in the first episode, is a closeted homosexual, forced to get married to a woman from another Sinti clan, Angelica (Carlotta Antonelli), by his older brother, Manfredi (Adamo Dionisi). Aureliano and Spadino's on-and-off-again profound affective bond — which for Spadino is far away from brotherly — is at the center of the story.[6]

Mare Fuori, created by Italian TV veteran Cristiana Farina and produced by Picomedia in collaboration with RAI Fiction starting from 2020, is broadcasted both by RAI and Netflix, and is now in its fourth season. After a lackluster start on the national television channel RAI2, a complex series of commercial mishaps ended up with Netflix obtaining streaming rights over the show. After its first run on the global OTT platform, the series rapidly gained a large public, becoming a sort of cult sensation, now distributed in more than 20 countries. *Mare Fuori* revolves around the stories of a group of adolescents who for different reasons ends up in a Neapolitan juvenile correction facility. Some are involved in organized crime-related offenses, because they are part of the *camorra*. In the first season, the undisputed leader is Ciro Ricci (Giacomo Giorgio), the heir of the powerful Ricci family, who has a series of "soldiers" around him. Amongst this group the most relevant characters are Pino "O' Pazzo" (the crazy one, Artem Tkachuk) who will later change allegiances and Edoardo Conte (Matteo Paolillo), the strongest personality amongst them, who will in later seasons took over the role of the leader. Other relevant characters are imprisoned for a combination of lack of luck and opportunities, having grown up in a territory depleted of resources and opportunities for honest survival, like Gianni/Cardiotrap (Domenico Cuomo). Cardio — as everybody calls him — is imprisoned for complicity in a breaking and entering crime that resulted in the death of an elderly person. Finally, the two main characters in the first three seasons of the show are Filippo (Nicolas Maupas), a middle-high class pianist prodigy from Milan who has accidentally contributed to the death of a friend during a trip to Naples, and Carmine di Salvo (Massimiliano Caiazzo). The second-born child of a Camorra family (rival to the Ricci family), Carmine has always refused to participate in his family's illegal affairs, but ends up murdering another young criminal who had attacked him and his girlfriend on a beach. The series revolves around the predicaments of this group of young men trying to survive the harshness of jail.[7]

As for many titles within the crime and gangster genres, both series revolve around a mostly male world. As Catherine O'Rawe argues, Italian cinema (and by extension also TV) in the new millennium has been characterized by "representations of troubled masculinity across a surprisingly wide range of genres" and "a representational economy dominated by the concerns of masculinity."[8] Both series perfectly

6. On *Suburra* and its unique portrayal of a gay character within the Italian context, Spadino, see Dana Renga, "Suburra. La serie as 'Patrimonio internazionale/International Patrimony'," *Series - International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (2018): 63–80 and "#ciaonetflix: *Suburra. La serie* as 'International Patrimony'," in *Watching Sympathetic Perpetrators on Italian Television*, (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 231–56.

7. Surprisingly, despite the series' success amongst audiences, its social media presence and cult-level status in Italy, *Mare Fuori* has received little scholarly attention yet. Amongst the large press coverage, see for example, Mike Hale, " 'The Sea Beyond' Review: Juvenile Detention, Italian-Style. The land of high fashion and Ferraris turns its talents to disposable teenage melodrama," *The New York Times*, October 16, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/16/arts/television/the-sea-beyond-review.html?smid=url-share.

8. Catherine O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 1.

fit the same description. Besides the crime-oriented narratives, which dominate both worlds, the most relevant element is how all young characters navigate their identities, identities that are strongly influenced by homosocial connections, friendships, and rivalries. These connections guide their life trajectories like a compass. As Hammarén and Johansson point out, homosociality has a long history of being connected to the affirmation of hegemonic masculinity, but the concept needs to be complexified by, for example, distinguishing between *vertical* homosociality as "a means of strengthening power and of creating close homosocial bonds to maintain and defend hegemony" and *horizontal* homosociality characterized by "relations that are based on emotional closeness, intimacy, and a nonprofitable form of friendship."[9] This distinction seems useful to describe a network of relationships that in both series keep on oscillating between the two: unprecedented proximity and affection between male friends and constant re-affirmations of power and control by prevailing over others whenever it is possible to do so. Moreover, if homosociality as a reaffirmation mechanism of hegemonic masculinity tends to be associated with more or less explicit homophobic attitudes, both series complicate the situation with openly gay characters and their relations.

Gangster Stories: A Fashion Journey Through the Genre

Our two case studies, *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori*, navigate a unique sartorial landscape. They depict characters whose fashion choices, whether flashy or subdued, intentionally or not, articulate new forms of masculinity and power dynamics within the criminal underworld. Their attire is a response to their environment, a reflection of their personal journey within the criminal milieu, and a statement of their evolving identity. While the clothing and styling of these characters could be interpreted as a departure from the traditional gangster aesthetic, they are, at the same time, deeply rooted in the genre's history. It's essential to recognize that the Italian iteration of the genre has a relatively recent history, emerging primarily in the early 2000s, and heavily influenced by the American style. However, despite its nascent origins, the Italian gangster genre has rapidly evolved, drawing inspiration from its Hollywood counterparts while also carving out its distinct identity. It's undeniable that the majority of influential gangster titles stem from the Hollywood tradition and industry. These films and series have set the standard for gangster iconography, shaping the aesthetic conventions that subsequent productions, both in cinema and television, seek to draw inspiration from, all while sharing the desire to portray a life of excess. For this reason, the subsequent section of this paper aims to delve into the history of gangster iconographies that have been prevalent in the genre, tracing their origins and development over the years.

Gangster films have been part of cinema history since their early days as one of the most popular genres that — through highs and lows — have traversed more than a century of filmmaking. While many national productions out of the U.S. and Hollywood's "classics" see a vast presence of the genre, each has its own specificities. The study of menswear in gangster narratives, which progressed from Hollywood's Golden Age foundations to the conceptually reflexive phenomenon of French cinema, and then culminated into the psychologically dynamic character study fashioned by Scorsese's films, invites a genre that is continuously in tune with its own discourse. This changing sartorial expression of narrative device, which allegorically delineates shifts in masculinity, identity, and power, turns the gangster film into a far more elaborate commentary on the social and cultural dynamics that form our cultural memory, and consciousness of gender and style. The evolution of menswear in these narratives mirrors the different shapes that masculinity takes within the criminal underworld. An evolution that is not only a stylistic trend but also a crucial part of the world-building that sees clothing move from an item within the film to a fashion icon once it has left the screen.

The exploration of menswear and masculinity in gangster narratives is deepened by considering the seminal works that helped to define this genre and continue to demonstrate its evolution. Over the past

On the topic of crime narratives and masculinity in contemporary Italian media, see also Dana Renga, *Watching Sympathetic Perpetrators on Italian Television: Gomorrah and Beyond* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

9. Nils Hammarén and Thomas Johansson, "Homosociality: In Between Power and Intimacy," *SAGE Open* 4 (January 10, 2014): 5.

eighty years, the representation of men's clothing in gangster films has served as a uniquely dynamic ingredient within American cinema and has played a vital yet overlooked part in the cinematic construction of the American male. This visual journey — starting with *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931), *The Public Enemy* (William A. Wellmann, 1931), and *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932); moving through the French New Wave; and culminating in the contributions of Martin Scorsese — illuminates the rich interplay between clothing, character, and rising paradigms of American masculinity.

The 1930s established the visual iconography of the classic gangster genre by providing a template for the gangster's trajectory from ascension to inevitable collapse. The gangster's march through ascending rungs of underworld society is depicted via an escalation from nondescript and modestly ambiguous clothing to the garish and near-foppish wear of custom-tailored suits. This progress in sartorial finery established men's clothes as a pivotal index of the gangster's persona, the clean suit, shirt, and tie serving as key markers of symbolic status, power, and style and obviously signaled the visual evidence of the gangster's more refined social strata. These characters' brash and aggressive masculinity was played up in the film's emphasis on his sartorial vanity, which intrinsically contradicted with his archetypical manliness.[10]

The French films of the 1950s and 1960s, such as *À Bout de Souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960) and *Le Samouraï* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1967), introduced a self-conscious European reflection on the gangster archetype established by Hollywood. Characters like Michel in *À Bout de Souffle* embody a cinematic history, adopting a gangster ideal through a pastiche of styles and behaviors drawn from their American predecessors, in his case, the mimicry of Humprey Bogart's characters. These films play with the conventions of gangster attire, using clothing and gestures not just to support but to substitute characterization,[11] suggesting a nuanced critique of the earlier narratives' more straightforward portrayals of masculinity, vanity and style.

The sophisticated use of costume design in the *Godfather* trilogy (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972, 1974 and 1990) to explore themes of power, identification, and masculinity has been much celebrated in the gangster genre. The clothing of the Corleone family, with its understated elegance, is one of the visual representations of the family and their approach to power, which is powerful, yet restrained, focused on being clear-headed, not flashy. This is an aspect of their leadership, their control, in which discretion, where things appear legitimate, is key. The style of classic menswear they favor — sharp suits, silk ties, and leather shoes that gleam — helps the Corleones project an air of respectability and authority, separating them from the more loudly dressed gangsters of other stories.[12]

Martin Scorsese's films (*Goodfellas*, 1990; *Casino*, 1995) revisit and expand the thematic and stylistic concerns of the gangster genre, leveraging menswear as a storytelling device through which to examine the manifold psychosocial and socio-economic dimensions of the hyper-violent worlds they bring to life. These films articulate in compelling terms the intricate relationship between violence, wealth, and sartorial display, one in which menswear serves as a key narrative tool to evoke the characters' internal states and index the complex dynamics of their social ascent. In *Goodfellas*, for example, the film charts Henry Hill's entree (Ray Liotta) into the mob world through his evolving wardrobe, one that not only marks his changing status but permits us to read each stage of his sartorial journey as a manifestation of his shifting identity. Similarly, in *Casino*, Ace Rothstein's (Robert De Niro) meticulously coordinated en-

10. In this context, we cannot fail to mention Stella Bruzzi who, in her renowned chapter "The Instabilities Of The Franco-American Gangster. Scarface to Pulp Fiction, Casino, Leon," discusses the "unconventional correlation between masculinity and extreme narcissism." See Stella Bruzzi, *Undressing cinema: clothing and identity in the movies* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997): 67–94.

11. "Costumes in this context do not support but rather substitute characterisation. These men become gangsters when they look like gangsters, when their outline fits the mythical silhouette" See Bruzzi, *Undressing cinema: clothing and identity in the movies*, 76.

12. The portrayal of Fredo Corleone is a fascinating way of illustrating the more complicated approach to masculinity and power present throughout the trilogy. Unlike his brothers, whose clothes symbolize their command, and how competent they are, Fredo's clothes, which often have a bit more flamboyance, or aren't as carefully put together, help reflect that he is the family's weakest link. In his clothes, you can see him pushing against the design of power and authority that his brothers have embodied, but have begun to fail him.

sembles function in much the same way, a means of detailing the accouterments and eventual ruination of the character and of illustrating the gangster's consummate concern with appearance as a metaphor for his moral and existential quandaries. Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* (2006) marks the entry into a new decade, evolving again the narrative of gangster menswear. It tells a story of identity, loyalty, and betrayal within the Irish mob and law enforcement of Boston, where clothing is used to delineate the characters' duplicitous lives. Uniforms of all kinds, formal and otherwise, symbolize the characters' attempts to blend into their surroundings, often illustrating their internal struggles with identity. Jack Nicholson's Frank Costello, for example, differs in style from traditional depictions of gangsters. In its place are increasingly chaotic wardrobe choices, which include a seersucker blazer with a purple polo shirt, a leopard-print tie with a Glen plaid jacket, and a leopard-print robe. This wardrobe epitomizes the crepuscular final flames of a disappearing figure within the genre.

Since the sharp suits of the early gangster films, the gradual sartorial shift toward the scruffier casuals of *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999–2007) and the likes could be read in the history of masculinity and evolving ideals of authenticity. That is, it marked the wane of the old, traditional hyper-masculine gangster and the rise of a much more vulnerable, much more ambiguous image of the American man beyond just gangster societies. The result was a new key moment of development in gangster masculinities, moving away from the classical, Scorsesean look of gangsters and spinning off into something far more interesting, invested in the hyper-masculine aura of its predecessors, but in a radically softened, far more realistic, almost documentary kind of way, as these new characters combined vulnerability, brutalism, and a kind of banality of reality. Tony Soprano in his loose, casual tracksuits and bathrobes signaled the death of the well-tailored gangster, replaced by this man who wears the more traditionally relatable, authentic form of American masculinity.

In the case of the Italian cinematic landscape, while the portrayal of mafia and criminal life has always been a staple, it was usually approached through a lens of committed, investigative and even political cinema.[13] These films largely steered clear of any early temptation to romanticize or fictionalize crime, when it still felt raw from real-world wounds. Rarely before the highly successful *Romanzo Criminale* (Michele Placido, 2005) and *Gomorrah* (Matteo Garrone, 2008) — both later adapted into acclaimed TV series by Sky, *Romanzo Criminale – the series* (2008–2010) and *Gomorrah: the series* (2014–2021), Italian media have seen the emergence of a proper *gangster* set of stories, where the criminals where the protagonists and not just the evil enemies, mixing historical accuracy with the suave, dramatized façade of crime.[14] Theirs remains the paradigm by which we still explore and extract this genre's dualities of verisimilitude[15] and hyperbole, visibility, and invisibility within the Italian mediascape. The first engages with a somehow over-the-top historical reconstruction of the criminal underworld of the 70s. The second opens up a new era of contemporary organized crime by depicting the ascent - and fall - of Neapolitan crime-lords. They wore mostly dark and subdued tones, lacking any hint of individuality. An anonymity that suggests they were disposable and interchangeable within their environment.

13. On the topic, see e.g. Dom Holdaway, "Boss in sala. Cultural Legitimacy and Italian Mafia Films," in *Comunicazioni Sociali. Italian quality cinema: institutions, taste, cultural legitimation*, ed. Claudio Bisoni, Danielle E. Hipkins, and Paolo Noto, Vol. 3 (2016): 445–54.

14. *Romanzo Criminale* and *Gomorrah* share with *Suburra* the same narrative process of starting as films and being later adapted into TV series, a form of transmedia expansions that has become quite present for the genre within Italian production, maintaining a profound link between cinematic and television production and narrative imaginaries. On the topic, see again Dana Renga's analysis of the two series in her *Watching Sympathetic Perpetrators on Italian Television*. On the topic of Italian television, see Milly Buonanno, *La fiction italiana. Narrazioni televisive e identità nazionale* (Roma: Laterza, 2012).

15. Regarding the concept of verisimilitude as an aspect of genre iconography and as a means of comparison with the audience's life (costumes that are realistic or appropriate to a particular situation), see Sarah Street, *Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002) and Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

Young and Flamboyant: The New Gangster

The flashy yet calculated dress sense of the gangster has always been a narrative shorthand for criminality, a visual cue that juxtaposes immaculate fashion with the chaos of criminal endeavors. *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori* diverge from the traditional gangster iconography, not only because of the age of their protagonists, actual minors in the latter case and young adults in the first one, but also because instead of trying to replicate the ideal of the businessman, albeit in a twisted manner, of their historical precursors, they are mostly interested in affirming their power by adopting and adapting a specifically young, contemporary, and local ideal of streetwear. "Parodying the classic style of the dominant class was always a priority for those in the criminal world who wanted to prove that they 'made it'," affirms Matteo Guarnaccia. While "dressing in an exuberant and luxurious way was an act of defiance against those in power, and a vessel to entering the popular imaginary."[16] In our cases, however, aesthetics is not merely a rejection of traditional elegance but a complex negotiation of identity within a specific cultural and criminal context. As Jay McCauley Bowstead argues, we can consider these styles as a form of "embodied capital" for those who wear them are mostly interested in the "ways in which competencies in popular (as opposed to elite) culture can function as important expressions of agency and symbolic power in the contemporary world."[17]

The gold chains, camouflage bombers, and exaggerated decorativism seen in *Suburra* speak to a specific kind of visibility and identity assertion within the criminal milieu. Meanwhile, *Mare Fuori* presents a more subdued, streetwear-inspired look that reflects a different aspect of contemporary criminal identity, merging the provincial black of *Gomorrah* with the casual, eclectic and a bit garish style of *The Sopranos*.[18] This blend of streetwear and casualwear marks a departure from the meticulously tailored gangster of yesteryears to a more relatable, grounded figure in a world that, in the meantime, has fully embraced these styles and distanced itself as much as possible from the male sartorial markers of middle/high class of the past. The gangster genre continually evolves, challenging and subverting traditional narratives and iconography. This evolution is not merely about changing fashion but the deeper interplay between character identity and societal expectations of masculinity: the iconic and transformative power of clothing in film highlights the intricate dance between the seen and unseen aspects of character portrayal. In mainstream cinema, costumes typically serve to advance character development and plot, seamlessly integrating into the narrative fabric. Costumes, in the majority of cases, are typically designed to "disappear," thereby supporting character development and plot in "realistic" ways. Since the early days of cinema, though, crime films have oscillated between striving for historical accuracy and artistic stylization. The latter presents an interesting challenge for the costume designer, who needs to find an easier means of achieving relatability rather than pushing for historical accuracy. For the likes of Stephanie Collie, costume designer of one the greatest gangster successes of recent times, the series *Peaky Blinders* (BBC, 2013–2022), opting for heightened realism rather than strict historical fidelity is one way to achieve such a balance: "I would never want to use anything that's historically wrong, but we heighten things to make them more relatable. [...] everything needs to be smart and sharp for us."[19] The result is the creation of a highly stylized past that breathes new life into period pieces. A specific form of modernity that allows a point of entry into history becomes over-stylization, excess, and vibrant color contrasts. The almost uchronic thrive of the costume designing of *Peaky Blinders* — or outside the gangster genre, shows like *Bridgerton* (Netflix, 2020 –) — can be understood as a way of generat-

16. Matteo Guarnaccia, *Malamoda. Come lo stile dei cattivi soggetti ha influenzato il costume* (Milan: Milieu, 2021), 10. Translated to English by the authors.

17. Jay McCauley Bowstead, "Spectacularizing the Male Body. Fashionable Physiques in the Age of Instagram," in *Fashionable Masculinities: Queers, Pimp Daddies, and Lumbersexuals*, eds. Vicki Karaminas, Adam Geczy, and Pamela Church Gibson (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 72.

18. Costume designer Juliet Polcsa created the Italian-American characters in a non-stereotypical way, resulting in a nuanced wardrobe from Tony Soprano's Bathrobe, vulnerable and relatable, Furio Giunta's (Federico Castelluccio) gilded T-shirts, and Silvo Dante's (Steven Van Zandt) pinstripe suit or Paulie Walnuts' (Tony Sirico) very iconic tracksuit suspenders.

19. Collie interviewed in Christopher Laverty, "Peaky Blinders: Q&A with Costume Designer Stephanie Collie | Clothes on Film — Part 33287," *Clothes on Film*, August 16, 2018, https://clothesonfilm.net/2018/08/16/peaky-blinders-qa-with-costume-designer-stephanie-collie-clothes-on-film-part-33287/.

ing new fashion trends inspired by these shows and the narratives' periods. The actualized pieces and styles of the characters end up inspiring collections and trends. A similar phenomenon, without the historical gap, can be observed in our opinion in *Mare Fuori*: even though the series is set in contemporary times, the characters are still wearing clothes and accessories that in real-life penitentiaries would not be allowed. The costume designers took many liberties, particularly after the series became a cult in season two, with the kind of pieces they put on inmates and the level of attention to style that the characters disclose. While in real life, it would be unthinkable to wear chains and dashing jewelry while in jail and fresh-off-the-barber grooming every single day, the series displays a lack of interest in keeping the styling of characters adhering to a strict verisimilitude to reality. As Sarah Street argues "film costumes not only relate to the characters who wear them but also to the audiences who watch them. Jennifer Craik [20] and Joanne Entwistle [21] have suggested that the process of 'lived experience' — how people use fashion in everyday life — must be central to analyses of dress and fashion in contemporary society."[22] By not abiding by the rules of verisimilitude, *Mare Fuori* was able to generate a wave of unprecedented attention and cult status with its mostly young audience, and the impact of the series on contemporary fashion trends and style seems to confirm this. The combination of storytelling, marketing, and strategic symbolic circulation [23] is at the center of a very recent collaboration between the series, the costume designer Rossella Aprea, and two private labels for low-cost, large diffusion Italian brand Oviesse, B.Angel (dedicated to teenagers and young girls) and Utopja (a gender-neutral brand inspired by "street" style). In February 2024, they created two capsule collections for the Spring/Summer 2024 that comprise both items that the characters wear or could wear in the series and a line of t-shirts featuring the main protagonists and their most iconic moments, as well as creative re-interpretations of the series' key themes.[24]

A "Tamarro" Aesthetic

Suburra and *Mare Fuori* are both a testament to the intricacies of language, fashion, cinema, and the norms of society, in which a "tacky" aesthetic becomes an intentional narrative and visual strategy. It is impossible not to summon terms such as "tacky," "trashy," or "kitschy" to describe both series' fashion and styling choices, something that could be summarized with the Italian vernacular "tamarro"[25] or "coatto." Streetwear has always been the badge of subcultural resistance, transforming itself to incorporate the attitudes and experiences of each new urban youth. Similarly, the "tamarro" 's flamboyant intransigence and the hyper-manifestation of masculinity represent an invaluable tool to resist fashion's aesthetic, gendered and broader societal norms. Both series are built on the foundational triad that sustains the principles of both streetwear and subculture: rebellion, identities, and cultural enunciation.

The aestheticization of functionality, characterized by unique and eye-catching designs speaks to the desire for youthful individuality within a larger system of group affiliation. This connection is reflected in the costume design of the series, where characters externalize their criminal identities through a shared "language" of techno-sportswear, bold patterns and accessories, a wardrobe that serves as a visual amplification of streetwear's primary ethos of sartorially standing out from conventional society. In the series, the ones that stand out the most, in all their hyper-masculine manifestations (for example, Edoardo and his many female conquests), are those with more power and control. The hybridization of the genre of streetwear within *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori*, therefore, also dramatizes the genre's own evolution from classically tailored suits of the early 20th century to an ensemble of attires that now better reflects con-

20. Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

21. Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity, 2023).

22. Street, *Costume and Cinema*, 7.

23. Giulia Bonali and Marta Martina, "Clothes on film: Exploring the Intersection of Fashion and Cinema" in *Teaching fashion. An introduction,* ed. Romana Andò (Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2020), 158–170.

24. The collections can be seen on Oviesse's official website at this link: https://www.ovs.it/it/it/c/editorials/b-angel-utopja-x-mare-fuori.

25. Valentina Caiani, "Lo stile di Suburra: Aureliano, Spadino e l'orgoglio tamarro," *GQ Italia*, November 2, 2020, https://www.gqitalia.it/moda/gallery/stile-suburra-look-spadino-aureliano-orgoglio-tamarro.

temporary urban cultures and environments, characterized increasingly by the infatuation for criminal elements. As Guarnaccia, again, highlights:

> In fashion, the fascination toward the delinquent imaginary born in penitentiaries and equivocal environments is now more alive than ever, becoming a cliché among designers by now accustomed to preying on new ideas straight from the margins. It is no longer necessary to be a voyeur; just take a trip to Instagram or influencers' blogs to satisfy any *nostalgie de la boue*, 'nostalgia for the mud,' a lively French expression describing the unhealthy itch of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie toward the sordid and degrading life of the slums. Being or looking shady represents the new idea of coolness amid shaved heads, display of penal-coloniesque tattoos, house arrest-style jumpsuits, sockless sneakers, and aggressive dogs used as accessories. The theatricalization of belonging to the 'wrong side of the street' has entered gestures, language, and looks, and major fashion labels have pushed this risky pantomime forward. The fictitious ghetto is the ideal location for the average young fashion consumer, a tourist on a trip to the margins, attracted by the underworld aesthetic of extravagant savagery. It especially likes the latest 'gym sloppiness' version, which, starting with the joint efforts of European hooligans and New York rappers that began in the 1970s, has achieved full success. After all, what is happening today is unchallenged revenge that the periphery is taking against the center, embodied by the long dictatorship of the middle-class dress, a theme dealt with in depth by French sociologist Maurice Halbwhacs in the 1930s.[26]

Streetwear's trajectory from niche subculture to the mainstream of fashion congruently follows the "tamarro" aesthetics' own upswing in visibility, a recent development in a much longer narrative of co-optation and commercialization that shape cultural attitudes towards subcultures in general. It is streetwear's ability to resonate with the digital age's current preoccupation with fashion as less about the garment itself than the narrative it embodies and the identity that it projects — it's the ability to do what Ted Polhemus describes as either "dressing down" or "dressing up"[27] — which not only provides a useful lens for shedding light on how and why trends are so easily co-opted into the mainstream, but also to ultimately make an argument about why the "tamarro" aesthetic, today, is more than a trend or style, but rather a current that underlies so much of contemporary Italian popular culture. By unpacking this aesthetic through the lens of streetwear, we argue, it becomes possible to see the paradox at the heart of contemporary sartorial trends, which is that while they may emerge within the criminal underworld, they are by no means the exclusive province of it. But more than anything, this cross-examination of the "tamarro" aesthetic and streetwear speaks to the remarkable fluidity of fashion as a communicative medium, where what was once little more than a niche market trend born from the streets of working-class, suburban Rome or Naples[28] can now make the leap into the denizens of cinematic representation, thereby transforming the traditional lines of sartorial demarcation for centuries to come by challenging normative notions of race, class, gender, power, and resistance. In *On Wearing The Film: Madame Satan (1930)*, [29] Jane M. Gaines argues that the bodies on and off screen intersect and, with them, the costume design of cinema, not just as an aesthetics but as an appeal to the viewer's embodied experience. Furthermore, Gaines' idea of costume as "interrogatory"[30] — one that threatens to render the narrative secondary to its own discourse — is particularly appropriate when describing characters who take the decadent decorativism of Spadino, for example, to an extreme. His wardrobe — emblazoned with fire prints, a mix and match of patterns, and a plethora of gold chain necklaces, exemplified by his look during a heart-to-heart conversation with Aureliano in episode eight of the first season — is as much of

26. Guarnaccia, *Malamoda*, 8–9. Translation by the authors.

27. Ted Polhemus, *Streetstyle* (London: Pymca, 2010).

28. It's also intriguing that the city of Naples is renowned for its men's tailoring, embodying a school of tailoring that champions craftsmanship and the classicism of a certain type of Italian Style for menswear.

29. Jane Gaines. "On Wearing the Film: Madame Satan (1930)", in *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*, eds. Stella Bruzzi and Pamela Church Gibson (London: Routledge, 2001), 159–177.

30. Gaines, 165.

a backdrop as is a force that propels the narrative understanding of designs "that were simultaneously 'to be seen' and 'not to be seen' ".[31] As Turney argues about the adoption of the hoodie within youth pare-criminal culture of the 2000s, "unlike earlier incarnations connoting the 'rebel', such as the leather jacket," these clothes offer "the wearer access to socially coded clothing at a low cost." While the hoodie — that all characters in both series wear at a certain point — enable "the wearer to seemingly merge invisibly within those around them"[32] (because everybody wears it, criminal or not), these characters' "armors" are lavishly visible. Flamboyant and flashy, they mark their belonging to their communities of crime — and, hopefully for them, their affirmation of power through the adoption of the boldest, brightest, most noticeable pieces of clothing possible.

Bold Patterns, Bold Lives: Redefining Criminal Aesthetic

Against a backdrop of young men as the new face of organized crime, this younger generation establishes an evolution in the genre's iconography that challenges the typical deployment of style in the genre, producing two different but unique aesthetics. *Suburra* merges traditional and contemporary fashion elements, navigating the conflict between old and new power structures within Rome's criminal underworld. In contrast, *Mare Fuori* uses current young trends to symbolize the internal struggle of young men caught between traditional societal roles and the pursuit of individual identity. As Turney suggests, the dialectic between dress and behavior lies in "an association between dress connoting both a rule-conformity and a rule-deviancy in the same segment of social space".[33] This is the case in the *Suburra* aesthetic, where Spadino and Aureliano are the vanguards of a shift in criminal iconography (compared to the muddy-toned, restrained style of the older generation) and something similar can be said for the young "camorristi" in *Mare Fuori*, particularly Ciro and Edoardo, although in their case it is not a matter of clashing with the previous generation's style, given the fact that Don Salvatore Ricci (played by Neapolitan singer Raiz), Ciro's father, is dressed more or less in the same "tacky" way as his children. The unique combination of flashy and colorful prints; heavy chain accessories, both silver and gold; endless rings on everybody's fingers; gelled haircuts; and a plethora of tattoos to decorate toned and muscular bodies are clearly connotated to be perceived by the audience as part of an underworld of lower-class gang criminals living in impoverished neighborhoods whose origins are readable on their bodies and through their rowdy manners and brazen attitudes. The intriguing element within both series, in our opinion, is that far from proposing a kind of classist determinism through clothing that connotes the characters simply as thugs and impoverished through the adoption of a "bad taste aesthetic," *Suburra* and, above all, *Mare Fuori* have fully adopted and adapted to their protagonists' styles and trends in contemporary youth fashion and helped, even, to launch some of them. The "tacky" fashion suggests a masculinity influenced by a complex interplay between modern and traditional, where the criminal imagery of the past defines tradition: the carefully tailored or subdued criminal of bygone days and the mocking attitude towards the style of the dominant class. *Suburra*'s visual style extends the genre's former obsession with iconic, stereotypical, violent, powerful, and dangerous male criminals; at the same time, it undoes some of the meanings of those representations. The reference here, other than traditional gangster iconography, is the Colombian and Mexican criminal underworld: as *Indiewire*'s reviewer defines it, the series is "Netflix's Italian Answer to 'Narcos' ".[34] Similarly, *Mare Fuori* indulges in the excessive splashy patterned decorativism of the South American neighbors.[35] Togged out in everything from gabber wear to lavish, showy tracksuits, their sartorial selections unfold an Italian style,

31. Gaines, 165.

32. Joanne Turney, *Fashion Crimes: Dressing for Deviance* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 25.

33. Turney, *Fashion Crimes*, 59.

34. Hanh Nguyen, " 'Suburra' Review: Netflix's Italian Answer to 'Narcos' Is a Stylish Mix of Violence, the Vatican, and at Least One Orgy," *IndieWire* (blog), October 6, 2017, https://www.indiewire.com/criticism/shows/netflix-suburra-review-italian-narcos-sex-violence-religion-orgy-1201884389/.

35. The influence of Southern America, as depicted in the series *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015-2017) and movies such as *Carlito's Way* (Brian De Palma, 1993), adds another layer to this exploration, introducing a global perspective on criminal aesthetics that intersects with regional cultural identities and traditions.

composed of a techno-sportswear with garish decoration and jarring pattern in which the *tamarro* "bad taste" becomes an index of the underbelly of global capital; for these characters, though, this is an aspirational alternate reality that jettisons Italy's traditional markers of class and re-writes youth, urbanity, and popular culture. The history of fashion and its relation to social class in the Italian context recalls the work of Paola Colaiacomo in her book *Eleganza Faziosa*, [36] in which the concept of popular dandyism is historicized with the films of Pasolini and the democratization of fashion consumption in post-WWII, which has lead us to where we are today. This slippage from middle class to popular class within a broader sociocultural landscape has had a profound effect on sartorial aesthetics. It is the democratization of fashion, Colaiacomo argues, that has led to the rise of streetwear culture and the semiotic value of individual objects, words, and places. The characters' styles exist as a form of communication. Their aesthetics tell the audience about their origin, ambitions, and power dynamics. For *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori*'s characters, style gives them depth and complexity, makes their stories multi-layered and compelling, and is thoroughly infused into the show's very essence. For example, at the very beginning of *Mare Fuori*'s pilot, we see Carmine — before the arrest — fighting with his criminal brother over the purchase of a heavily printed new T-shirt. While Carmine is trying to stay out of his family business (by training as a hair stylist, of all things), his brother is challenging him over the fact that the money to buy this item comes from the family's drug dealing affairs. From the pilot onward, then, clothing becomes the symbol of social status and class belonging, a matter of contention between characters. Filippo's attire, for instance, is constantly singled out and mocked because of its estrangement from all the others. The insights of costume designers illustrate the practical process of translating these theoretical ideas into the visual language of these two criminal underworlds. Veronica Fragola and Marina Roberti are the designers of the first and the last two seasons of *Suburra,* respectively. Fragola, who also worked for the 2015 movie, has a distinctive approach to the characters. She starts by retracing their past to inform their present aesthetic: each character is profoundly rooted in particular Roman realities (the political elites, the suburbs, the Sinti community, etc.) born of equal parts documentary research and narrative invention.[37] Roberti's continuation of this vision into the later seasons proves that certain styles are deliberately evolved or maintained to reflect a character's internal and social trajectory, demonstrating the personal identity and sartorial expression as co-existent and mutually reinforcing forces. For example, while Spadino's colorful style, made of prints and patches over any kind of piece, from bomber jackets to suits, evolves in an even more exaggerated style, showing a progressive acceptance of his identity, Aureliano's "over the top" hair and styling becomes darker and less showy, marking his solitary involution after the many losses he suffers. A similar process is described by *Mare Fuori*'s costume designers Giuliana Cau (first season), Daniela Salernitano (second season), and Rossella Aprea (third and fourth season). For example, Aprea describes how the evolution of the textures and prints of Edoardo's shirts and the *flashiness* of his jewelry is somehow connected to his progressive rise to power.[38] While at the beginning of the series, we see him mostly in T-shirts — albeit of pretty showy prints — throughout the seasons he starts to wear mostly shirts with powerful and bold colors, black backgrounds, burgundies, greens and golden, with animal patterns and ostentatious prints highlighting his status of the new "king of the jungle." A jungle populated by other "creatures" who love animal prints just as much as him, as a deliberate expression of hyper-masculinity, for example Pino. In synthesizing these insights, we find that the protagonists could be described as "tacky" because their style is a rejection of classical elegance but more accurately because they create an alternate reality informed by youth culture, urban context, and popular sensibilities that redefine the boundaries of taste and style within the genre. These aesthetic choices are not an expression of "bad taste"[39] but rather a collection of strategic elements for narrative

36. Paola Colaiacono, *L'eleganza faziosa. Pasolini e l'abito maschile.* Illustrated edition (Venezia: Marsilio, 2007).

37. Valentina Caiani, "Come i costumi di scena fanno la fortuna di una serie: il caso «Suburra» raccontato dalle costumiste," *GQ Italia*, November 10, 2020, https://www.gqitalia.it/show/article/suburra-costumi-di-scena-fortuna-serie-tv-intervista-costumiste.

38. Stefano D. Onofrio, "Mare Fuori, la costumista racconta i segreti delle camicie indossate da Edoardo," *Ciak Generation*, April 11, 2023, https://www.ciakgeneration.it/mare-fuori-edoardo-camicie-costumista/.

39. The inversion of Italian fashion and beauty trope in another genre (comedy) — where the extraordinary style for which Italians are adulated is replaced by representations of Italians as vulgar and tasteless — is further unpacked by Silvia Vacirca in her essay dedicated to Checco Zalone. Silvia Vacirca, "Dressing Checco Zalone: Popular Italian Cinema and the Rhetoric

construction, as fluid, complex, and multifaceted as identifying the underworld itself.

Masculinity and Self-Expression

Concerning the characters' gender expressions, we can relate them to a form close to the idea of the "spornosexual" male style, "comprising not only a tumescent musculature, but also a tattooed, carefully coiffed, and frequently tanned and depilated body",[40] particularly with its ostentatious display of the body as a technology of the self, intertwined with a juvenile aesthetic. An ancestral decorativism of tattoos and hairstyles constructs a visual language that recodes Italian style through reference to subcultural and provincial club cultures. Aureliano, most of all, is characterized by the very noticeable tribal wings that adorn his neck, while Edoardo has a big tiger tattooed over his heart, a sort of visual representation of his eager and aggressive attitude toward life. The hairstyles have all become quite iconic, and they are as much part of the characters' construction as the clothes. In *Suburra*, Aureliano has bleached short hair in the first season, while his becoming the head of the family in later seasons is marked by a more subdued, darker tone. Spadino's cannibal re-shape mohawk is possibly the most distinctive element of his look, to the point that having cut it in the recent spin-off, *Suburraeterna*, marks a groundbreaking change for the character. As much can be said about Ciro Ricci's gelled side-quiff with a large parting. During the first season, Ciro tries to corrupt Filippo into becoming one of his "soldiers," ordering him to imitate his hairstyle as a sign of respect and submission. Another component is represented in *Suburra*'s predilection for showy cars (from Aureliano's Jeep Wrangler Unlimited to Spadino's Lamborghini Murciélago Roadster)[41] and a love of baroque decoration.

Bringing this aesthetic into the wider conversation on streetwear and street culture requires we also look at music. Piotta's musical contributions[42] to *Suburra* underline a two-fold relationship between the show's aesthetic choices and the broader cultural realm in which the show's visual narrative operates. Folk traditions, singer-songwriter traditions, and rap coexist in Piotta's work, his soundtrack is a vivid rendering of the Roman underworld. This artistic symbiosis is a means by which the show underlines the authenticity of its narrative and its courageous delve into the tropes of violence, desolation streetwear, and the indelible mark of Roman identity remains.

Moving to the outskirts of Naples, the background of *Mare Fuori*, both visually and musically, is trap. The umpteenth feature that weaves together the series with contemporary Italian youth culture, the ever-presence of trap music, is a powerful element of the show. The storylines of Cardio, in particular, are the ones most linked to trap as a full-fledged imaginary. In the first season, he starts to compose his songs as a way of expressing bottled-up emotions, finding in music a way of coping with the violent domestic abuses of his father and his current predicaments as a juvenile prisoner. Galvanized by some early success, Cardio comes out of his shell, shedding his signature black hoodie for bolder clothing choices: red shirts, printed t-shirts, and a new trendy mullet-like hairstyle. He is also — alongside Carmine — one of the few who displays behaviors and attitudes far from toxic masculinity. Mostly soft-spoken and kind, he seems to distance himself as much as possible from the hyper-masculinity that characterizes many of the other inmates. As much as a vehicle of social affirmation and revenge, trap proves to be also a source of distress and pain. A series of unfortunate circumstances lead up to someone else stealing his second tune, spiraling the character into a new, darker phase, paralleled by an extension of his serving time because of a new crime he has committed almost accidentally. The tragic figure of Cardio embodies all the difficulties of this social setting: sometimes, it doesn't matter how much you work for your social affirmation; the context will be stronger than you.

of National Character," *Film, Fashion and Consumption*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (Intellect, 2016): 45–54.

40. Bowstead, "Spectularizing the Male Body," 69.

41. Alessandro Vai, "Le auto di Suburra sono dure come Aureliano e Spadino," *GQ Italia*, October 27, 2020, https://www.gqitalia.it/tech-auto/article/suburra-auto-jeep-wrangler-unlimited-e-supercar.

42. Giuditta Avellina, "Se ami Suburra (la serie), il merito è anche di Piotta," *GQ Italia*, November 9, 2020, https://www.gqitalia.it/show/article/colonna-sonora-suburra-3-canzoni-piotta-recensione.

The Strategic Use of Maximalism in Criminal Couture

The stylistic saturation of our series, replete with forms and colors, articulates postmodern defiance, a direct challenge to the radical minimalism of yesteryears with its sterile spaces and muted palettes. It is a layering of references where taste hierarchies dissolve into a vibrant, eclectic mix that resonates with the postmodern embrace of kitsch as a hyper-text of divergent directions: pop, vintage, ugly-chic, and camp.

This ideological shift towards ostentation not as a marker of the affluent class but as a postmodern stratification reflects a broader redefinition of the concept of luxury. Luxury, reimagined as excess, transcends materialistic confines to engage with sociocultural movements within a broader cultural discourse. After delving into all the previous intricate themes, we would like to conclude with a final reflection on the role of maximalism within contemporary crime narratives, given that, through this lens, the shows engage in a broader dialogue on the evolution of fashion and a specific form of luxury in the contemporary world.

Faiers argues in *Dressing Dangerously*, that items of clothing and accessories typical of the genre (from gloves to hats such as fedoras, from trench coats to pinstripe suits, etc.) become marked by a certain dysfunctionality. Not in the sense of their inadequacy or their superfluousness; but rather in terms of their transcendence. We contend that his concept of dysfunctionality can also be applied to the display of maximalism. More specifically, as he says, the moment when a garment is read, whether visually or textually, as demanding excessive attention opens up a space in which the film's ability to totalize the viewer's engagement successfully can be re-examined. As the costumes stick out – "act out" as it were – in ways that are odd or out of place, they suggest that they might take on a different function or are somehow more significant than we first assumed.[43] Our case studies intricately navigate the nuanced landscape of maximalism in clothing, deliberately distancing themselves from the often misconceived realm of kitsch.[44] This distinction is vital, as maximalism celebrates a rich layering of styles, textures, and epochs, embodying a complex aesthetic transcending simplistic interpretations of taste. This stylistic choice directly contradicts the minimalist adage of "less is more," advocating for an expressive freedom that champions eclecticism. Such an approach aligns with the observation of maximalism as a hedonistic message, where accumulation and stylistic saturation become a form of narrative and identity. With its fearless amalgamation of diverse epochs and styles, this postmodern acceptance and celebration of maximalism echo in the streets of our examples. The aesthetic of Aureliano and Spadino mirrors a culture of personalization and excess with its mix of military boots, plunging necklines, and animal motifs that are present since the very first episode: Aureliano appears on screen with his bleached blonde hair and a t-shirt with a neckline that exposes half of his chest, while Spadino, with his infamous mohawk, is seen buying a luxurious orange Lamborghini in a octopus-printed t-shirt and a deep-black parka. Their attire, in our opinion, resembles the subculture of tuning. Tuning, initially seen as a vernacular pastime, has gradually garnered artistic and sociological esteem. The aesthetic choices of Aureliano and Spadino, Edoardo and Ciro, with their paramilitary and ornately decorative elements, draw a parallel to the world of custom vehicles, where personalization extends beyond mere aesthetics to embody the characters' resistance and individuality within their societal context. The cluttercore aesthetic, a joyful mash-up of styles drawing from motor modification aesthetics, parallels the maximalism in both *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori*. The tuning phenomenon, popularized by the *Fast & Furious* saga, symbolizes a sociocultural shift towards customization and personal expression within the automotive world, mirroring the characters' transformation and resistance within their urban jungle. This alignment with tuning culture — once relegated to niche enthusiasts but now celebrated for its artistic and sociological merit — mirrors the characters' own journeys of self-expression and defiance. Maximalism in our interpretation of the series' aesthetics is not an embrace of kitsch or a fall into graphic overload without purpose. Instead, it represents a deliberate narrative choice, a means of exploring and expressing complex identities by layer-

43. Faiers, *Dressing Dangerously*.

44. Andrea Mecacci, *Il gusto e il suo doppio. Saggi sul kitsch* (Milano: Mimesis, 2021). He articulates this evolution from a bourgeois ideology to a postmodern spectacle. Now, we witness another evolution, more of style hybridization, a phenomenon "Suburra" embodies through its characters and their environments.

ing cultural, historical, and stylistic references. In a distorted manner, this new ideology of luxury is not merely about the flaunting of wealth but about the reconceptualization of excess. It signals a departure from traditional luxury towards a concept that marries culture with social capital.[45]

Summarizing, our investigation into *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori* unveils a new era within the criminal genre, where the interplay of maximalism and streetwear transcends traditional sartorial norms to articulate a new vocabulary of masculinity and power. The series offer a unique perspective on the portrayal of criminality, masculinity, and fashion, challenging traditional narratives and iconography within the genre. While *Suburra* and *Mare Fuori* diverge in their visual styles and character portrayals, they both reflect a complex negotiation of identity within their respective criminal contexts. *Suburra* leans towards a flashy aesthetic, while *Mare Fuori* adopts a streetwear-inspired look. By embracing maximalism, they both challenge traditional notions of taste and luxury, advocating for an expressive freedom that champions eclecticism and personalization. These narratives, rich in youthful exuberance and stylistic excess, mirror a societal shift that embraces diverse expressions of identity and authority. Through this lens, the series not only challenge established and classic aesthetic conventions but also engage in a deeper dialogue with their audience. The strategic use of fashion within these stories highlights the enduring power of clothing as a narrative device, which in our case can be described by three words: young, flamboyant, and excessive.

45. Emily Huggard, Patrick Lonergan and Anja Overdiek, "New Luxury Ideologies: A Shift From Building Cultural to Social Capital," *Fashion Theory*, Vol. 27, no. 4 (June 7, 2023): 555–79.

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Marta Martina – Istituto Marangoni di Milano (Italy)
✉ m.martina.tutor@istitutomarangoni.org
She is a researcher and a lecturer at Istituto Marangoni of Milan. She is interested in the dynamic interrelations between fashion, media, and society. Martina is also the Head of Multimedia Projects for Nuova Libra Publishing House for the textile industry sector. Her work is at the core of trend forecasting and media studies, where she designs new projects that can manage the rapid evolution of fashion culture within the social and media environment. Her practice combines in-depth academic analysis with industrial practices to garner a comprehensive and current approach.

Lucia Tralli – The American University of Rome (Italy)
✉ L.tralli@aur.edu
She is a gender and media studies scholar. Her primary research focuses are grassroots media practices, popular culture, celebrity culture, bisexual representation, and intersectionality in the media. She has published papers and chapters on fandom, media, and gender in several international academic journals and books, and her first book on fan vidding as a gendered practice, *Vidding Grrls. Nuovi sguardi sulle pratiche di genere nei fandom*, was published in 2021 by Meltemi. She is an Adjunct Professor at The American University of Rome, where she teaches, amongst other courses, Media and Gender and Introduction to Visual Culture. She also teaches Gender Studies at Polimoda – International Institute of Fashion Design and Marketing in Florence.