



DISCOVERING THE PARK OF AQUEDUCTS

Anyone who last saw this place in the 1950s would be hard put to recognise it today. It is now an extensive archaeological zone dominated by the arches of as many as seven aqueducts. Following World War II, immigrants used the structures as a shelter or as a support for their lean-to dwellings. The romans called the area “Roma Vecchia” (old Rome), an area inhabited by desperate newcomers hoping for a better life in Rome. Suburban residential districts were then constructed and the area was abandoned. In 1988, the area became a part of the Parco Regionale dell’Appia Antica - its nearly 250 hectares host a ‘spaghetti junction’ of the seven old aqueducts. The Anio Vetus, Aqua Marcia, Tepula and Iulia date back to the Republic. The Aqua Claudia and Anio Novus are Imperial, and the Acquedotto Felice was commissioned by Pope Sixtus V (1587). The Romans were truly great engineers, as can be most clearly seen in their aqueducts. Already in the fourth century BC, twice as much water was available then to each citizen as is available today. The imposing structures of the aqueducts - concrete evidence of this engineering ability - provide the backdrop for Sorrentino’s scene of the performance of a contemporary artist who shocks the public by head butting one of the pillars. This is one of the most ‘oddball’ scenes of the entire film, and Sorrentino’s broadside against radical-chic intellectuals and their interest in artistic practices of little merit.

