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Portrait of Michael Corleone in the Godfather Trilogy, by Francis Ford Coppola

Jean McCrowell

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by

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This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Harvey Knull
Dean of the Graduate School
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to show a correlation between the statements and actions of the character of Michael Corleone in Francis Ford Coppola's Godfather trilogy and the six phases of the romantic myth, as defined by Northrop Frye. During the evaluation the following premise was developed: Michael Corleone can be considered a hero despite his violent nature.

The procedure of this study was to examine the dialogue and behavior of the character of Michael Corleone in the Godfather trilogy. I have demonstrated that his speech and actions show he is what Frye calls a demonic, romantic hero who completes a quest.

In its conclusions, this examination argues that Michael Corleone is, in fact, a hero who completes the quest of converting his business into a legitimate enterprise. He undergoes a physical and mental transformation twice, once in becoming the Mafia overlord, and again in reverting to his basic concerns for his immediate family.

This study also discusseded the nature of the medium's contributions to the development of this epic story's design used in the Godfather trilogy. Especially important in the presentation is the work of Al Pacino as the leading character in all three works.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cinematic Genre: Gangster

The increase in the number of gangster films in the past five years would suggest acceptance of this genre by the movie-going public. Perhaps the collective repression of violence is exorcised through the actions of the criminal protagonist. Dr. Irvin Gadol, a Dallas clinical psychologist, explains the love-hate relationship which audiences have with the cinematic gangster.

> Violent pictures flourish during times of economic reversal, when people are stressed out and feel very constrained. When you can't buy what you want, having unrestrained violence through mobster films is especially satisfying. (Wuntch, 8/2/91, Grand Forks Herald, sec C., p.1)

The economy, sociology and psychology of the U.S.A. were altered because of the Depression in the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s. The frustrations of the people as they struggled to earn money and to accept changing social ideals were released through the violence played out in movies. The economic and social upheavals of the 1980s and 1990s are similar to those of the 1930s and 1940s. In both cases, the disparity is great between the minority who has economic freedom and the majority who strives for that same freedom.

Fictional motion pictures based on real-life events have been part of cinematic history at least since The Great Train Robbery (1903). When fact mingles with fiction, differentiation between the two is difficult. The Godfather trilogy, though based on a work of fiction by Mario Puzo, is steeped in the tradition of La Cosa Nostra (the Mafia).

The gangster leader is a symbol of success to those who think the legitimate attainment of power and wealth is beyond their reach. Even someone like the hero-outlaw Robin Hood represents an expression of that which the "normal" member of society dares not express--unrestrained lawlessness. However, romanticizing an enigmatic organization such as the Mafia indicates a purposeful ignorance of their nefarious undertakings. Richard Gambino, in an article written by George De Stefano for Film Comment, provides a superb rationalization for Americans' love for the cinematic Mafia. "The key to the Mafia mania . . . is that Americans yearn for the aura of l'ordine della famiglia that emerges . . . Values of belonging, loyalty, control of one's life, canny ability to assess people and events, and palpable rather than abstract human relations . . ." (1987, 22). The ideal family atmosphere? Perhaps not, but movies about the Mafia romanticize "the myth of the harmonious family" as much as they romanticize "the myth of the gangster."

Stanley J. Solomon, in Beyond Formula, explains that ". . . criminals seem to have been--and continue to be--glorified in films: proficiency in any job seems admirable when we are not directly threatened by it" (166). The successful cinematic gangster is

elevated to a demi-god because he escapes the police deftly, attains power and wealth illegally and stands aloof emotionally. Despite the murky picture of humanity which the gangster presents, he becomes an idol.

Thus it has been for the character of Michael Corleone in the Godfather trilogy. Michael is a paradoxical character, who among other traits, is both treacherous and repentant. He has his brother, Fredo, killed for siding with an enemy of the Family. Yet Michael shows loving tenderness toward Apollonia and Kay, his wives. Capable of love, anger, remorse, murder, and extortion, Michael's great range of emotions and behaviors is exhibited in his speech and actions in all three Godfather movies.

Historical Background of the Mafia

Before a discussion of the fictitious Corleone family, with a focus on Michael, can take place, some grounding in the authentic Mafia tradition can provide a perspective for the reader. The heightened awareness which Michael uses to manipulate others is similar to that used in the real-life Mafia.

Numerous definitions of the word "Mafia" have been posited, none of which has proven wholly serviceable. Dwight C. Smith, Jr., in his 1975 book, The Mafia Mystique, wrote at length about the possible geographical and etymological origins of the Mafia.

> One source traced the Mafia to 1282 and the Sicilian Vespers, an historic occasion when the Sicilians rebelled against their French conquerors under the battlecry "Morte alla Francia

> Italia anela!"-a sentiment ("Death to the French is Italy's cry!") from which its name presumably emerged as an acronym. (Smith 41)

Later however, Smith clarifies the confusion of the acronym:

> Joseph Albini was the first modern writer to call attention The American Mafia, 1971) to the incongruity of `. . . Italy's Cry' in 1282, nearly six hundred years before Italian unification under Garibaldi. (Smith 351)

Claire Sterling, in her 1990 book, Octopus, offers yet another origin of the word "Mafia."

> It is more often said to stand for 'Mazzini Autorizza, Furti, Incendi. Avvelenamenta': Giuseppe Mazzini, nineteenth-century leader of the Risorgimento that freed and unified Italy, [sic] is held to have 'authorized robberies, arson, and poisoning' in Sicily to fight the Bourbon monarchy. (47)

An ally of Mazzini, Garibaldi organized a group of rebels called Red Shirts, an offshoot of which was referred to as squadri della mafia. Nearly 700 years after the Mafia's small beginnings, Joe Valachi, testifying to the McClellan Senate Committee in 1963, described the hierarchical structure of the Mafia, and offered them the "correct" name--La Cosa Nostra.

> Each family had a boss, sometimes known as a 'don'; an underboss; a consigliere, who served in some kind of staff capacity near (but not beneath) the underboss; . . . caporegimes who held intermediate authority . . . 'lieutenants'

> . . . ; and other associates, underlings referred to as 'button men,' 'buttons,' or 'soldiers.' (Smith 231)

In addition to its convoluted political structure, the Cosa Nostra also has a familial atmosphere. According to Valachi, during his initiation ceremony, the omerta (code of silence) was symbolized by burning a piece of paper in his hand while reciting in Italian, "This is the way I will burn if I betray the secret of this Cosa Nostra" (Maas 97). Joe was also given a gombah--a godfather, a guardian. Finally, his godfather pricked Joe's trigger finger and after the blood trickled out, Mr. Maranzano (the Don of his Family) said, "This blood means that we are now one Family" (Maas 98).

Since Valachi broke omerta, others like Nicholas (the Crow) Caramundi have testified against their Dons and sent them to prison. Thus, the Cosa Nostra, like any family organization, has a complicated pecking order, replete with rules for conduct. The structure of the fictional Corleone family[1] in The Godfather, though not as clear cut as the Families of Maranzano or Luciano, can best be illustrated by the outline below:

Vito Corleone--Don, Capo, Head of Corleone Family

Sonny (Salvatore)--Subcapo, underboss

Tom Hagen--adopted son, Consigliere

Fredo--Token Caporegime/Lieutenant

Michael--after Vito's illness, Don, Capo

Salvatore Tessio--Caporegime/Lieutenant

Peter Clemenza--Caporegime/Lieutenant

Philip Tattaglia--Don

Emilio Barzini--Don

Ottilio Cuneo--Don

Anthony Stracci--Don

The Corleones

The three Godfather films, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, focus on the Corleone family, who are members of the Mafia. Coppola collaborated with Mario Puzo, author of the novel, The Godfather (on which the first film was based), on the screenplay for each film. A character study of Michael Corleone, the protagonist of all three motion pictures, through examination of his words and actions, will demonstrate his struggle toward self-awareness. His development from a Marine hero to a much-feared Mafioso emerges during The Godfather when, fearing for his father's life, Michael begins to make deadly, irrevocable decisions.

Michael's maturation in his role as Don of the Corleone Family takes place in New York, Sicily, Las Vegas, Miami and Cuba. Every encounter he has with a Family member or an enemy of the Family brings about further development of his personality. As his obligations increase, he pushes himself to meet the demands on his time and energy. His real family, his brothers and sister, his wife and children, suffer most from his in attentiveness.

Each male of the Corleone family has traits which make him memorable despite the main focus on the character of Michael Corleone. His gentle-seeming father, Vito, from whom Michael receives the most moral support, has a deep vein of revenge. Though

he is less bloodthirsty than Michael, we witness Vito's graphic murder of Don Ciccio and Fanucci in The Godfather Part II. Sonny and Fredo, Michael's brothers, are petulant and pathetic, respectively. Sonny's hot-headed and reactive manner causes his own death. Fredo, a sad buffoon, is granted status in the Family as a token lieutenant because he cannot handle important responsibilities.

Michael possesses the traits of his father and his brothers. Like Vito, he is tender and loving, initially toward Apollonia, his first wife and later, in New York, to Kay, his second wife. Like Sonny, Michael loses his temper, but over Corleone family issues, not Cosa Nostra issues. Like Fredo, Michael has a melancholic spirit which surfaces during times of self-doubt.

Even though he embodies some of the spirit of his father and brothers, Michael displays through his words and actions a slow and deliberately unemotional nature. His status as Don requires a multi-dimensional thought process; he must think of different solutions to the same problem. To prepare for an enemy's decision, his thinking must parallel his enemies' to arrive at the same conclusions before they do.

Al Pacino is well-cast in this drama. His short stature and dark, brooding countenance play to the stereotype of the swarthy Sicilian overlord. Pacino's vocal range, facial gestures, and physical presence all contribute to the believability of the character Michael.

His vocal range is illustrated in scenes with the characters of Pentangeli, Connie, and Vinnie. He raises his voice to exert control

over those around him. A chilling scene in the second film includes Michael yelling at and demanding from Tom an answer about the identity of Kay's miscarriage (aborted fetus). At a time when some men would have mourned, Michael replaces sorrow with anger and the need for control; thus, instead of crying, he screams.

Pacino plays the idiocratic character boldly. At first Michael is the innocent. Smiling and making eye contact are signs of his naive openness and willingness to give of himself. After his journey into the wilderness of his Sicilian roots, Michael is quietly forceful. His face creases and darkens from deceitful scheming.

Pacino's body language also speaks of Michael's surrender to the Mafia system. His physical stance is the typical military position, feet apart to prove a solid grounding. At the end of the first film Michael accompanies Carlo to the car where he is garroted. Michael watches and walks away, arms swinging awkwardly as if he were a puppet. Michael maintains this disembodied posture through the second film.

In the third film we see Michael's youthful spirit rekindled. He smiles, touches people, laughs. Having come full circle with his inner struggles, Michael's friendly, easy-going attitude is genuine.

Thus, Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino, is a three-dimensional character whose words and actions show the development of a hero. In The Godfather, Michael goes through the stages of the romantic hero as defined by Northrop Frye. At the end of The Godfather Part II, as he broods over lost memories, the penitent spirit which we see throughout The Godfather Part III arises and

takes shape. The third movie depicts Michael resolving past inner conflicts as he reconciles with his ex-wife Kay, his children Anthony and Mary, and passes on the role of Don to Vinnie, the illegitimate son of Sonny. To illustrate the variability of Michael's persona, I will examine dialogue and behavior paramount to the development of his "heroic" character, to show that by the end of the trilogy he completes a quest.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to show a correlation between the statements and actions of the character of Michael Corleone in the Godfather trilogy and the six phases of the romantic myth, as defined by Northrop Frye. I hope to illustrate that the romantic hero completes a quest.

In his 1957 book, Anatomy of Criticism, Frye defines the romantic myth as "the tendency to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience" (139-140). By this, Frye refers to a mingling of mythological with human elements. Joseph Campbell in Myths to Live By (1972) describes how the behavioral patterns in our lives resemble those in ancient myths. Further, if we choose to identify and develop those patterns, we will live fuller lives by connecting with a deeper, ancient, more human existence.

For example, the Godfather trilogy is a fictional work, but it could be the biography of a real Mafioso, such as Joseph Valachi, Nick Caramundi or Frank Costello. The pattern of a hero can exist in

a work of fiction or in real, human life. An individual can act as Macbeth acted and not be a monarch, but a banker. Thus, a mythological element is manifested in human behavior.

Michael Corleone, a romantic hero, undergoes numerous changes; and he is therefore a dynamic, three-dimensional character. His maturation is dependent on the unfolding of the six phases in the romantic myth, which Frye sets forth as:

Birth of the Hero

Innocent Youth of the Hero

Quest

Conflict

Symbolic death

Disappearance of the Hero

Reappearance and Recognition of Hero

Maintenance of Integrity

Contemplative Withdrawal from the Action

Isolation

Frye also stresses "the complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest" and "a threefold structure is repeated . . . for instances, . . . the successful hero is a third son, or the third to undertake the quest . . ." (187).

These quest phases are further complicated by the demonic imagery, present in any discussion about a sub-culture, especially one outside the mainstream. Frye describes demonic imagery in relation to the human world as:

> . . . a society held together by a kind of molecular tension of egos, a loyalty to the group or the leader which diminishes the individual, or, at best, contrasts his pleasure with his duty or honor. (147)

His definition of the demonic human world closely approximates that of the Mafia. He designates the leader of such a society as:

> . . . the tyrant-leader, inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is ego-centric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers (148).

The role of Godfather demands unerring loyalty because for the Mafia to be successful, the macro-society must remain ignorant of their existence, but continue to provide them with capital through gambling, prostitution, etc.

Michael's words and actions as they interplay within the six phases of the romantic myth are the criteria for this study. Demonic imagery permeates any drama about the Mafia, and will be discussed when relevant. Dialogue quoted is from all three films, abbreviated as follows: GF I, GF II, and GF III.

CHAPTER II

GODFATHER I

Innocent Youth of the Hero

As The Godfather opens at the wedding reception of Connie (Corleone) Ricci, we see the second stage of the romantic myth: the innocent youth of the hero. In this phase, the hero is emotionally and sexually undeveloped. At this time, Michael has a relationship with Kay, who will become his second wife. In the film, they are not openly sexual, although they are in Puzo's novel.

However, the atmosphere is not devoid of sexuality because his mother, Eleni, sings an erotic song and dances the tarantella. Sonny, the eldest son, and Lucy Mancini, one of Connie's bridesmaids, openly flirt with one another and later sneak away into a bedroom.

The "innocent youth" stage in a drama about "normal" society also represents emotional immaturity. However, in a drama such as the Godfather trilogy, which is an inversion of reality, this stage represents the time in Michael's life when he had principles. He sequestered himself from the Corleones' illegitimate business by attending Dartmouth and serving in the Marines.

Michael and his girlfriend, Kay, are present at Connie Corleone's wedding reception. A prodigal son, Michael is visibly wary at having to attend a function where the Mafia outnumber the "outsiders." Luca Brasi, Vito's strong man, provides the fodder for a story Michael

tells Kay. When he has finished the story of Vito's power through intimidation, Michael says, "That a true story. That's my family Kay, that's not me." This is one instance in which Michael tells the truth about his family and their violent business. He and Kay do not mingle, but remain at a table peripheral to the crowd and are visited by Michael's brothers Fredo and Tom. Although Michael denies he is like his family (i.e., part of the Mafia), he copies his father's behavior by having people come to him. The importance of his presence is emphasized by Vito's refusal to take the family photo until Michael arrives. Kay's reluctance to be in the family photo, may be symbolized by the shadow cast from her straw hat.

The next sequence, set in California, speaks to the lengths to which Vito will go for one who is under his care. Vito's godson, Johnny Fontaine (a singer allegedly modeled after Frank Sinatra), needs intervention to land a movie role. Tom, the consigliere, pleads Johnny's case to Woltz, the producer who shunned Johnny. Tom explains that, "Mr. Corleone is Johnny's godfather. To the Italian people, that is a very religious, sacred, close relationship" (GF I). Woltz refuses to acquiesce to Vito. The next scene is one of the most famous in the first film. Woltz awakens beneath heavy, sticky sheets. The strings solo emphasizes that Woltz is controlled like a marionette. The music grinds to a crescendo and is interrupted by his screams as he pulls back the bloody covers to reveal the head of his beloved racehorse, Khartoum. This chilling scene symbolizes Vito's ability to manipulate anyone, to destroy the object of adoration--in Woltz's case, his racehorse--to wrench the spirit away

from his adversaries. As in other important sequences in this trilogy, Coppola frames the vignette. He shows a shot of Woltz's mansion at sunset, as Tom arrives to discuss Johnny's future in acting. At sunrise, the mansion in a soft, pink glow, seems an unlikely setting for such a brutal slaughter of a magnificent, money-making animal.

Although Michael repudiates any kinship with the Family business, months later when Vito is shot and incapacitated, Michael immerses himself in the retaliation against Virgil Sollozzo and Police Capt. McCluskey and commits his first two murders. The hit on Vito is precipitated by a meeting between Sollozzo (nicknamed The Turk) and the Don. His refusal to give one million dollars to support Sollozzo's newest venture into narcotics leaves Vito with five bullet holes and a stay in the hospital. Michael, the son most like his father, has the chance for retaliation.

Fredo and Sonny lack the consummate skill to pull off the double murder. Fredo cannot handle the responsibilities of driver and bodyguard for his father, dropping his gun in an attempt to shoot at the would-be assassins. Unable to protect Vito, Fredo cries and collapses near his wounded father. Sonny, reprimanded during the meeting with Sollozzo for his lack of control, would sometimes rather exercise his sexual prowess than be readied for the position of Don. He lacks the calm resolve to murder without emotion. Michael, on the other hand, has the courage and mettle to finish this one piece of business.

Before Michael visits his father in the hospital the next evening, he dines with Kay in her hotel room. He kisses her good-bye and informs her that he has no way of knowing when he will see her again. Once he gets to the hospital, he discovers that Vito's guards have been dismissed. Coppola emphasizes a son's fearful search for a father who may already have been killed, in having Michael travel down two long hallways to find Vito. Their tender reunion is played out in the darkened corridor after Vito is safely hidden there.

Later, as Enzo, a family friend, and Michael wait on the hospital's front steps, posing as Corleone Family guards, the tension builds. Michael commits his first lie in reaching inside his coat for a gun which is not there. He understands how to bluff his way through with this act of passive-aggressive resistance. Once the hitmen have driven past, Enzo reaches for a cigarette and, shaking uncontrollably, is unable to light it. Michael lights Enzo's cigarette and notices that his own hands do not shake. Despite the strain of the past fifteen minutes, he is calm, but attentive. He realizes that his temperament is suited to this nerve-wrenching type of work. The scenes in the hospital establish Michael's sober-mindedness in responding to conflict. His patience and tenderness illustrate his balance of emotions, thoughts and actions.

Shortly thereafter, Capt. McCluskey (Sollozzo's bodyguard) and other police officers arrive to take care of the intruders-protectors. McCluskey orders Michael's arrest. Michael buys time for Sonny's men to rescue him by taunting McCluskey, "What's the Turk paying you to set up my father, Captain?" (from The Godfather) and

gets a broken jaw. He uses words which push McCluskey to assault him. Outside the hospital Michael is defiant toward McCluskey. However, Michael is not a real threat, here in front of the hospital, because he protects his father's life with nerve, not a gun.

The director employs a motif here, repeated throughout the trilogy, of gates and fences as protection. Once Michael is inside the gates he's protected; outside the gates of the hospital, his jaw is broken.

Michael is on the threshold of a life decision. Faced with turning into a man like McCluskey who finances his legitimate lifestyle with illegitimate funds, Michael challenges McCluskey as a way of challenging his own values. Once he decides to kill, he has consciously chosen to follow another life path. In the act of killing McCluskey, Michael has repressed the part of his conscience which would nudge him every time someone is killed on his orders and thereby has chosen to be oblivious to (or rationalize) his violent behavior.

Quest: Conflict

The third phase of the romantic myth, the quest, has four stages: conflict, symbolic death, disappearance of the hero, and reappearance and recognition of the hero. As Robert Hatch describes him, "Michael is that stock fairy-tale hero--the least regarded, youngest son, whose sword alone can lop off the dragon's head" (444). Michael enters upon his first quest when he chooses to murder Sollozzo and McCluskey, and thereby shows the calculating, cunning side of his

personality. His verbal skills come into play as he methodically lays out a plan by which he can kill both Sollozzo and McCluskey. Michael's reasoned plea to Sonny, Tom, Clemenza and Tessio is delivered through clenched teeth, with an eerie resemblance to his father's sluggish speech.

> They want to have a meeting with me, right? It will be me, McCluskey, and Sollozzo. Let's set the meeting. Get our informers to find out where it's going to be held. Now we insist it's a public place, a bar, a restaurant, some place where there's people so I feel safe. They're gonna search me when I first meet them, right? So I can't have a weapon on me then. But if Clemenza can figure a way to have a weapon planted there for me, then I'll kill them both. (GF I)[2]

Sonny and the two older capi laugh at the thought and consider it a childish vendetta for the broken jaw McCluskey gave Michael. Tom had just argued against killing Sollozzo, who, with police protection, was "invulnerable." He does not laugh with the others because he knows Michael's plan can work. As an attorney and consigliere[3] (advisor), Tom understands that Sonny's plan of brute force against Sollozzo and Tattaglia is too costly. Tom urges caution because he is uncertain that the Corleone Family can retain the strength, with Vito on the sidelines, to overcome a cooperative effort by the rest of the crime Families.

Despite Tom's warning, the scene is set. Michael is like his father, he looks and thinks like him. As he sits in the black leather wing chair with his legs crossed, he displays his calm-under-

pressure trait. He is oblivious to the extent to which his life will change after the murders are committed. His naiveté is countered with the cool assurance of a man who has met his calling. His self-assurance shows in his matter-of-fact planning of two murders, ones that he will commit. He rationalizes McCluskey's murder by implying that a cop who's mixed up in drugs can be killed with impunity--the press can be sold the story. McCluskey is a paid flunky, a reactive aide-de-camp. He can reroute a cop's beat before a crime and conveniently "lose" evidence after one. Despite his situational usefulness, McCluskey is disposable.

Because his father is Don, Michael steps into the shoes of responsibility differently than other Mob members would. He decides to murder Sollozzo and McCluskey and argues against the wisdom of the older and experienced members--Sonny, Tom Hagen and Clemenza. He asserts to Sonny that "it's not personal . . . it's strictly business." Michael refuses a lowly button man status of waiting to be told when to murder. He uses managerial foresight to plan and carry out the murders that change him from a law-abiding citizen, estranged from the Corleone family business, to one who revels in the power of the Mafia.

Quest: Death-struggle

In the death-struggle, the hero must fight against the opposition. In medieval terms, Sollozzo and McCluskey are the dragons which must

be slain for the kingdom (Corleone territory) to be free again. To quote Northrop Frye, "The central form of quest-romance is the dragon-killing theme . . . the monster is the sterility of the land itself . . . present in the age and impotence of the king, who is sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound . . . (Frye 189).

Vito is the wounded king, injured by the power of the monster, Sollozzo. Vito's youngest son prepares for battle by eating Chinese take-out food with the others before leaving. The task before him is not a leisurely supper, but calculated murders.

On route to the meeting place--Louie's Restaurant in the Bronx--Sollozzo's driver feigns a detour. Michael, his voice almost shaking, asks, "We're goin' to Jersey?" (GF I) He slowly adjusts his hat to conceal his apprehension.

The bare setting of the restaurant highlights Michael's mental preparation for this meeting. His scruffy five o'clock shadow and rumpled shirt are possibly meant to outwit his adversaries. Michael looks unprepared for a meeting, and that is what he wants Sollozzo and McCluskey to think. His disparaging stares, medium angle, with the actor looking up--are lost on his opponents. His left facial muscles, out of place from the broken jaw, appear to form a smirk.

He and Michael speak in Sicilian until Michael can't find the right words and switches to English. Sollozzo insists that he wants a truce. Michael excuses himself and goes to the bathroom to obtain the gun, hidden there for him by Clemenza's men. Michael comes back to the table and sits down as if he had lost his nerve. As Sollozzo

begins another tirade in Italian, Michael's anger increases. His rapidly scanning eye movements suggest he has blocked out most of Sollozzo's conversation. In the background, an El train squeals to a stop. Suddenly he stands and shoots Sollozzo in the forehead. He turns and shoots McCluskey in the neck. As McCluskey's last gasps gurgle from his throat, Michael shoots him in the forehead. The El train recommences its journey. With a slight hesitation, Mike pivots, drops the gun and runs from the restaurant. Clemenza had instructed him "to come out shooting," but he needed time to compose himself before carrying out the murders that would change his life.

His killing of Sollozzo and McCluskey sets into motion all the other events of the film. Because McCluskey was a police captain, the police department cracks down on Mafia-run businesses. In turn, the other Families pressure the Corleones to relinquish some of Vito's political influence (similar to most-favored nation trade status) and Fredo is sent to Las Vegas to work under the tutelage of Moe Green. A Hollywood montage follows, showing time passing. A newspaper headline reads: "3rd Month of Gangland Violence."

Quest: Disappearance of the Hero

In this phase, the hero leaves the main scene of the action to recuperate after the battle. In George Lucas' The Empire Strikes Back (1980), after Luke Skywalker has fought Darth Vader, Luke travels away from the battle scene to receive instruction from Yoda. Likewise, Michael leaves New York after the murders and is tutored by Don Tommasino. Immediately after Michael kills Sollozzo and

McCluskey, he sails to Palermo, Sicily. His Sicilian adventure, steeped in the Old World culture, teaches him how to slow down his life and his thinking--techniques integral to his becoming a successful Don. John Yates writes that, "There is no gap between this cruel Sicilian world in which Vito was born, and the same world Michael walks through sixty years later." (Godfather Saga: The Death of the Family 159).

The lessons Michael learns are both obvious and subtle. He learns to dress and act the part of the modern peasant. To obtain his bride, Apollonia, he must court her in the traditional Sicilian fashion, including the entourage of chaperones.

Coppola employs a gate as a framing device to signal the beginning and end of their relationship. In both instances, the gates are open and thereby connote lack of protection. As Michael leaves for their first date, he drives out of the courtyard, through the gate pillars. Soon they are married and tenderly celebrate their wedding night. Emotion not seen before from him, nor ever to be seen again, is played out this night. Michael then spends much of their marital relationship preparing Apollonia for American life, by teaching her how to drive and how to speak English. During a driving lesson, Michael learns of Sonny's death and that he must return to America.

Near the end of his stay in Palermo, Michael learns a valuable lesson about trust. Though he lives a simple, private life, his enemies trace him to Sicily and he must flee to Syracuse. Apollonia wants to surprise him by driving the car from the gate to the door. After Fabrizzio puts the bags in the car, he runs away. Michael sees

this and realizes the danger. He cries out, "No, no Apollonia!" and runs toward the car, but it is too late. As Apollonia starts to drive the car through the pillars, she dies in the explosion meant for Michael. He trusts few people after this. For the first time since the confrontation by McCluskey in front of the hospital, Michael's words and actions are useless. Perhaps his later lust for power is compensatory, closely tied to this situation in which he was powerless to help his wife Apollonia.

His life in Sicily revealed passions which he had not experienced in America with his family or Kay, his girlfriend. Life in Sicily, expressed through love, music, dance and food, showed him the depth of his emotions and his roots. Once those emotions, objectified in his marriage to Apollonia, were shattered at her death, he repressed his sensuality.

The death of Sonny quashes Michael's image of his brother's unparalleled ability to overstep injury. That Sonny could be set up and murdered also confirms for Michael that the superior man is one who can use reason before force.

His personality change suggests a repression of his identification with the passion of the Sicilian culture. He now identifies with the violent, fighting spirit of his oppressed ancestors because his beloved Apollonia has been killed. From this point on, he sublimates all emotions except for anger (his principal emotion) and sorrow. Michael's sublimation of sensitivity toward others builds a strong Godfather persona. Unfortunately, his lack of compassion is directly inverse to his lack of objectivity.

Reappearance and Recognition of the Hero

After his exile in Sicily, Michael returns to America a widower. Having lost the love of Apollonia, he must now replace it. Despite his lack of communication with Kay, his former girlfriend, he approaches her, not as a romantic suitor, but as a businessman. We see in this exchange a man so divorced from his feelings that he does not see a need to explain the lapse in communication. Despite his apparent social awkwardness, his actions are calculated. He needs Kay to provide him with children and security.

As Kay is leaving the elementary school where she teaches, Michael steps out of a black Chrysler and prefaces his marriage proposal by reminding her of the secrecy of his job. "My father's no different than any other man" attests to the paradoxical resignation, pride, and rationalization taken in his role as understudy to Vito. He implies, by his condescending assurance that the Corleone family will be legitimate in five years, that she needn't be concerned about his business. Was it so long ago when he insisted "That's my family Kay, that's not me"?

KAY

Michael, why did you come here? Why? What do you want from me after all this time? You didn't call me or write me.

MICHAEL

I came here because I need you, because I care for you.

KAY

Please stop it Michael.

MICHAEL

Because I want you to marry me.

KAY

It's too late. It's too late.

MICHAEL

Please Kay, I'll do anything you ask. Anything to make up for what's happened to us. Because that's important Kay. Because what's important is that we have each other, that we have a life together, that we have children, our children. Kay, I need you and I love you. (GF I)

Michael's repeated use of the words "Kay" and "because" is an analytical appeal to her emotions. He never sways from his approach to talk her into marriage, an arrangement convenient for him. He explains that it is important for them to have a life together. On a deeper level, he must have someone in the house to express love for him, because he himself is unable to express love.

He says "I need you" twice. He does need her, much more than he loves her. Paramount to his success as a Godfather, he must project the "correct" family image, one of a loving wife and children. His actions to corral Kay into marriage are made obvious by his attempt to maintain eye contact, to hold her in his sphere of influence.

Kay may realize that she is a last resort for him when she tells him it is too late for their relationship. His slight tug on her arms as he entreats "Please Kay" is symbolic of his denial of Kay's

emotions. Unable or unwilling to gauge her reaction to his marriage plans, Michael does not listen because he knows that, despite their many years apart, she will always be enchanted by him.

At the end of this scene, Michael signals to the driver, who then pulls up in the black car. Michael opens the door and Kay steps in. He has acquired another asset and Kay has resigned herself to the marriage. Yet she has neither expressed love for, nor a desire for marriage with, Michael.

Maintenance of Integrity

In defining this stage of the romantic myth, one must keep in mind the original conception of Northrop Frye and how that conception changes in light of the demonic imagery present in the Mafia's world of inverted values. "In romance the central theme of this phase is that of the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience" (Frye 201). In the Godfather trilogy, a story about an organized system of illegal factions, the gangsters represent the integrity of the world of experience. Those who challenge the authority of a Capo or Don, through a double-cross or a plea for independence, are punished (usually) by death.

The cinema story goes directly to 1954, with Anthony their son about three years old. (Kay and Michael's marriage was not celebrated on screen.) In his first meeting as Don, Michael keeps a firm hold on the reins of power only with Vito's intervention. By sitting in a chair against the wall instead of behind the desk, Mike shows his reluctance to take the lead. Clemenza and Tessio inquire

about their move to independence. "Be patient," he tells them. He promises that in six months, after the Las Vegas enterprise is established, they can have a piece of the action. (A prophetic statement since Michael gets his own independence in less than six months, after Vito's death.) Clemenza and Tessio immediately appeal to Vito, who wants to remain in the background. Vito encourages obeisance to Michael, while reminding them he is semi-retired. Although Michael's power has been questioned, his fidgeting with a cigarette lighter and staring hawkishly, are his only visible signs of irritation. Michael announces two decisions: one, that "Carlo will be the right-hand man in Las Vegas," and two, that "Tom will no longer be consigliere." Tom asks for an explanation. Again, Vito must intervene. He explains that he suggested to Michael that Tom step down as consigliere.

TOM

Mike, why am I out?

MICHAEL

You're not a wartime consigliere Tom. Things may get rough with the move we're trying.

VITO

Tom, I advised Michael. I never thought you were a bad consigliere . . . .

TOM

Maybe I could help . . . .

MICHAEL

You're out Tom. (GF I)

Tom shows his own security by questioning Michael. Michael wants Tom to serve him in a different capacity. Tom is bewildered at being demoted, especially since he knows how ineffective Carlo is. Tom is the link to the overworld of legitimate business and thus cannot have his hands tainted by murder. Michael's negative reaction to Tom makes obvious his weak point--lack of a power base. He is upset that his father must defend him because he is not responsible for the decision. Michael's Mafio-political influence is not securely based within himself, but is built from the image of authority that others project onto him. The capi and lieutenants who answer to him provide Michael with power because they don't question his decisions or motives. Because he lacks authentic leadership based on many years of experience, Michael bluntly
ends the conversation.

Michael's comment about Carlo is a lie. His only plans for Carlo are murder plans. He has no intention of employing Carlo in any capacity. Vito didn't trust Carlo, and says so on Connie's wedding day.

After all but his bodyguard and his father have left the room, Michael feels comfortable enough to loosen his tie and sit in the chair of authority. Vito pats Michael on the chest and then on the face as he walks behind his son. Vito's fatherly pat does not ease Mike's tension. He needs his father's acumen to give him a grounding in the business, but he must wait for his father's death so he can have a future. However, Vito's presence at the meeting

indicates Michael is not ready to go solo, as evidenced by his inability to deal with dissenters.

The first business trip Michael takes alone, with only Tom as reinforcement, is to Las Vegas to buy out Moe Green's casino holdings. Away from Vito's gentle tutoring, Michael can exercise his own style of negotiation--delivering an ultimatum. Slicked back hair suggests Michael's vampirish intent (of taking away territory), but his shoulders, sagging with recent failings, tell of deeper struggles. During this scene a vocal characteristic becomes evident, a certain tenseness exists whether Michael raises his voice or speaks sotto voce. Moe Green, (modeled after Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel) has disciplined Fredo in public. Fredo, like his brow-beaten sister Connie, excuses Moe's behavior as friendly and not serious. Michael ends the meeting with Moe by slowly spinning away from the table, hiding the frustration, but not too far beneath his well-polished facade of control.

The final interaction between Vito and Michael is set in the backyard of their Long Island residence. Unlike the meeting in the den where Michael is stymied by Vito's presence, here he gently reassures his father that he can handle the business. Vito is pensive and ruefully admits that he wanted a better life for his son. In the financial relay race toward legitimacy, he passes the torch to Michael with a specific warning about Barzini. He begins and ends this scene with words of caution.

VITO

So, Barzini will move against you first. He'll set up a meeting with someone that you absolutely trust, guaranteeing your safety and at that meeting you'll be assassinated. I want you to arrange to have a telephone man check all the calls that go in and outta here--

MICHAEL

I did it already Pop.

VITO

Because--

MICHAEL

Pop, I took care of that.

VITO

Oh, that's right. I forgot.

MICHAEL

What's the matter? What's bothering you? I can handle it. I'll handle it.

VITO

I knew that Santino was gonna have to go through all this, and Fredo. Fredo was--and I never, I never wanted this for you . . . . I thought that, well, when it was your turn you'd, that you'd be the one to hold the strings, Senator Corleone, Governor Corleone, something.

MICHAEL

Another pezzanovanta [big shot].

VITO

Well, this wasn't enough time Michael, wasn't enough time.

MICHAEL

We'll get there Pop. We'll get there. (GF I)

Michael has picked up the torch for legitimacy and will now live out his father's dreams, not his own. He becomes caught up in the succession of power forgetting that, as one gains collective power, one loses individual importance. Once Michael acquiesces to Vito's wishes, he becomes more important to the group (the Family) and less important to himself. Michael does not realize until much later, during the time between the second and third films, that he loses his identity for the greater good of the collective.

At Vito's funeral, Michael does not openly mourn, but conducts business near the coffin. He rechannels uncontrollable emotions by substituting revenge for sadness. Though he loved his father, he will not cry, but instead plots to outwit the other Families. The traitor now in Barzini's camp--Tessio--asks for a meeting. Michael discusses the matter with Tom.

TOM

I'd always thought it woulda been Clemenza, not Tessio.

MICHAEL

It's the smart move. Tessio was always smarter, but I'm gonna wait--after the baptism . . . and then I'll meet with Don Barzini, and Tattaglia, all the heads of the five Families. (GF I)

However, he doesn't wait until after the baptism of Connie's son, but arranges for the two events to coincide. His first decision as Don

Michael is based on deception. His speech does not match his actions.

At the baptism, Michael Corleone speaks for Connie's son, Michael Rizzi. As he renounces, ". . . Satan, . . . his works and . . . his pomps," we can see that the hit on the leaders of the five Families is Michael's baptism into the role of Godfather. The incisive judgment--to kill all the members of the five head Families--is made clear by its cinematic opposition to the baptism. Each murder is intercut with a stage in the baptism; as Michael renounces "Satan" we see Moe Green shot in the eye. In the world of demonic imagery, cultural attitudes are inverted: the celebration of death is sacred, and life, represented by baptism, is profane. Killing is an older ritual than baptism. Killing is a primordial, instinctual ritual sanctified by blood. Baptism is an unnatural, imposed cleansing ritual sanctified by water.

Michael remembers the story of the young Vito who Don Ciccio knew would return as an angry man to seek revenge. Don Ciccio, Vito and Michael all realize that killing the plant at the root prevents revenge. By killing the heads of the five Families, as well as finishing personal vendettas against men such as Moe Green, Michael has now made a place for himself in Las Vegas. He can own the casinos at one-tenth their value. The baptism sequence ends in a crescendo of mixed sounds: the baby's cries, the priest's words, and organ music.

After the baptism, on the cathedral stairs, Michael orders Carlo to go home and await instructions about his role in Las Vegas. Later

at the Corleone compound, Michael quietly slips into Connie and Carlo's house to obtain Carlo's admission of guilt before killing him. Mike's unnerving, quiet displeasure comes through in his dialogue.

> Today I settled all family business, so don't tell me you're innocent Carlo. Admit what you did . . . Come on, don't be afraid aid Carlo. Come on, you think I'd make my sister a widow?. . . Only don't tell me you're innocent because it insults my intelligence and makes me very angry. (GF I)

His speech and actions still don't jibe. Verbally he expresses anger, but physically, he is restrained. He sits warily, sustaining eye contact; he does not quake with rage. Once he reprimands Carlo for withholding the truth, Michael continues the charade of the Vegas trip. Carlo's luggage is deposited in the trunk and Michael escorts him to the car, as if to wave goodbye.

Although as Don, Michael is a smooth, passionless ruler, his anger spills over in a dangerous, emotional eruption. Gone is the fidgety negotiator with the swollen jaw. That man existed before his life in Sicily, Sonny's murder, the betrayals. Now he can stomach the garroting of Carlo, whose flutter-kicks shatter the windshield. Carlo's death foreshadows Michael's ability to have his brother Fredo killed.

As the movers pack belongings for the move to Las Vegas, Connie Rizzi pushes her way into her brother's office and accuses him of killing her husband Carlo. Michael denies ordering Carlo's murder. Minutes later, after the hysterical Connie has been removed, Kay sees

the official induction: two men (Rocco Lampone and Clemenza) kiss Michael's hand and call him Don Corleone. Al Neri, Mike's bodyguard, shuts the door to Michael's den. Kay remains shut out of his life until they temporarily reconcile in The Godfather Part III. By ordering the group hit, Michael has taken care of business, but with the murder of Carlo, he has also distanced himself from his sister and his wife. Michael openly lied to Connie and to Kay about his part in Carlo's death.

At the end of the first film: Vito has died; Sonny has killed Philip Tattaglia and in turn, has been killed by Barzini's men; Sollozzo and McCluskey have been killed by Michael; and Moe Green, Emilio Barzini, Anthony Stracci, Ottilio Cuneo, Sal Tessio and Carlo Rizzi have all been murdered on Michael's orders.

With this group hit, Michael establishes a pattern of killing rather than negotiation. Vito gently reasoned, but had Luca Brasi for insurance. Michael has no one who is loyal in the same way because he alienates people through deception. Vito would use muscle, strongly, directly. Michael understood how to use the muscle so well, so subtly, that people only speculated that Michael took action, but people knew when Vito took action. When Michael sits down at the bargaining table, he has no intention of compromise. If he can't own someone through blackmail or scare tactics, he has them killed. He doesn't try to make offers. Now that Michael has assumed control, he does not kill anyone, but every plan of action is pondered over by him. He doesn't use skill or cunning unless someone interferes with him, then he unrelentlessly pursues them.

Robert Hatch, writing for The Nation, asserts that Michael undergoes a transformation of sorts during The Godfather, Part I, " . . . from modest war hero to reptilian gang chief" (Hatch 444). When one compares the murders of Sollozzo and McCluskey to the group hit (during the baptism), one sees that Michael's unwillingness to negotiate and zeal for control through violence have escalated between the first and the final acts of murder.

In The Godfather we see Michael rise to power as he takes responsibility in his role as Godfather. He moves from what New Yorker critic Pauline Kael refers to as the sunny world of innocence to a shadowy one of experience after the double murder of Sollozzo and McCluskey. In that one act, Michael has changed his world and is no longer part of lawful society.

Indeed, his outer appearance has altered dramatically from his pre-Don times to his post-massacre days. At his sister's wedding he wore his Marine uniform--his hair short--he personified the innocence of the outside world. At his nephew's baptism, his hair is combed straight back and his uniform is the expensive suit of a Mafioso. The character changes more than his costume in this film. We also see his management by ingenuity.

At the end of the first film, Michael is favored by his servants, one of whom, by shutting the door to the study, shuts Kay out of Michael's life. This is the height of his career as Don. Though he has had many people killed, he hasn't completely alienated his family. The total alienation from his family occurs in Part II.

CHAPTER III

GODFATHER II

Maintenance of Integrity

The form of The Godfather Part II differs greatly from The Godfather. The film opens with a still shot of an empty chair, presumably in memory of the irreplaceable Vito. The film is a comparison of Vito and Michael, and "does not compare a success with a failure, but shows how the success leads directly and inevitably to the failure. The seeds of Michael's destruction lie in Vito's social and economic success, his rise to power" (Hess 85). John Yates has a different impression of the directorial message of The Godfather Part II. "His success at following his father's lead, and the devastating inadequacy of Vito's example as a model for action in Michael's generation, is clearly established by the jumps between the two men's stories" (Yates 163). Hess attributes Michael's failure to Vito's success, Yates, to Vito's failure. Coppola sets the pattern of parallel lives, not action. We see Michael and Vito at significant stages of their careers. Starting the film in Sicily shows the importance of Vito's life.

The move to Lake Tahoe, Nevada, is like a rebirth, a way of starting fresh in new territory, but with the advantage of experience and increased reputation. The sale of the Genco Olive Oil Co., before the move to Nevada, signals an end to the old ways. The Old

World touch will be gone when Michael deals with his business rivals. For instance, Michael has purposely altered the atmosphere of the den. The chairs are arranged in a circle near a fireplace. The lakeside compound in Lake Tahoe includes a boathouse, to which Michael retreats for solitude. Michael's ability to entrap people in his web of deceitful intrigue is symbolized by the surveillance equipment disguised as spider webs outside the windows.

Throughout this film, Michael must fight more dragons. This time those who oppose him are people he once trusted and who once trusted him. Pentangeli, Roth, Fredo, Kay and Tom oppose him for different reasons, but they all want independence from him. His leadership style is not like Vito's. He does not have a quiet rage beneath a controlled paternal persona, but instead, exhibits a vociferous anger toward his opponents. Michael's ire is more obvious than before. He raises his voice more often in this film than he did in The Godfather. We see the riotous dissolution of his marriage and of the relationships with his sister Connie and brother Fredo. Even at this stage of his life, while his children are still young, he begins to question his ethics, but continues to rely on the family pattern of violence. It is only at film's end, during his estrangement from Kay, and later in solitude, that he begins to contemplate his promised conversion to the legitimate business world.

The movie opens with a large reception at the Las Vegas compound, for the confirmation of Anthony, Michael's only son. This gala event is bigger and more gaudy than any party held by Vito. Frankie Pentangeli cannot stomach the fancy canapes, because they do not

provide real sustenance. He is also dismayed that the band fails to pick up his cues and improvise some standard Italian tunes. Anthony's reception, so different from Connie's, shows how much has changed since Vito died. At Anthony's reception, Michael is not the outsider, but has tainted his heritage by including outsiders. Professional dancers entertain the guests, instead of the guests entertaining themselves by dancing.

Other incidents suggest that the old ways, and the respect for them, have gone. Senator Geary, accepting an endowment in Anthony Vito Corleone's name, degrades the newly settled, Vegas immigrants by mispronouncing Anthony's namesake as VIE-TOE CORE-LEE-AWN. In the seclusion of Mike's den, Geary again pokes fun at Michael's Italian heritage by sarcastically pronouncing "Corleone" with an Italian accent, thereby stereotyping Michael and his family. Geary signifies that the "humble immigrant" persona does not wash with him.

The scene with Geary contrasts with Vito's meetings with Bonasera and Nazorine during Connie's wedding at the beginning of the first film. Vito, seated, plays with a cat. Vito stands and comforts both visitors who have come to him for help. He will help them because legitimate society has failed them. Michael has contributed to the University (of Nevada), and expects in return a state gaming license. Here, Sen. Geary represents a character like Capt. McCluskey, from The Godfather, a corrupt man with a title bilking legitimate society. Michael has a cool style of negotiation. His self-containment is demonstrated by tilting back his leather chair when he's planning an attack.

As Michael tries to negotiate a Nevada gambling license, he concedes that both he and Geary are "part of the same hypocrisy." In a final gesture of symbolic war, Geary, thinking he has won the battle, aims the miniature cannon on Michael's desk toward the Vegas don. Michael wins the battle later when Geary is set up to believe that he killed a prostitute and that only the Corleones can set it right. While Geary seeks a cash settlement for his influence, Michael's influence is never seen except that Geary's accident happens at one of Michael's casinos. Geary then willingly gives Michael his gambling license.

Connie, his sister, must wait on line to see Michael, and when she does see him, he is indignantly paternal. Their exchange establishes a pattern of behavior, Michael playing the stern father and Connie playing the sometime-capricious, sometime-compliant daughter.

Next Michael must do battle with Frankie Pentangeli who wants permission to wrest Clemenza's former territory from the Rosato Brothers. Pentangeli, admittedly tired and drunk, leaves Michael's den after he has demanded that Michael mediate the problem.

No one would have argued with Vito the way Pentangeli argued with Michael. No one dared raise a voice to Vito because he believed in cooperative reasoning, and brute force personified, a.k.a. Luca Brasi, which Michael lacks. Because Michael has no brawn to match his brains, he starts his fall from grace, from the integrated system of his father.

That night there is an attempted hit (kill) on Michael. As Michael walks into the bedroom, Kay asks why the drapes are open and

with only the slightest hesitation, Michael drops to the floor, just as the barrage of bullets demolishes the room. He takes action to protect Kay and covers her body with his. Michael errs in not suspecting his own brother Fredo--the only one who would have had access to their bedroom. Johnny Ola and Frank Pentangeli would not have been able to gain entry to the interior of the house. No one suspects Fredo of plotting against Michael, because Fredo cannot control his wife. Consequently treason appears to be far from his milquetoast character.

This is the second time Michael escapes injury. During the first film of the three, his first wife Apollonia is killed instead of him. When Vito is shot, he goes to the hospital in a coma, near death. Michael suffers no physical injuries, but suffers emotionally. The attempted hit on Vito occurred outside, as he ran toward the car. The attempted hit on Michael happens on his territory, in the supposed safety of his home. It is against the code of Mafia ethics to try to whack (murder) someone in his home. So Roth, working through Fredo, took a big chance.

Michael realizes that someone within the Family has set him up. He suspects Hyman Roth and Pentangeli and visits them both. While he is gone, Tom heads the Family. Michael briefs Tom in hushed tones:

MICHAEL

> There's a lot I can't tell you, Tom, and I know that's upset you in the past . . . . You felt it was because of some lack of trust or confidence. It's because I admire you and I love you that I kept things secret from you. That's why at this

moment you're the only one I can completely trust. Fredo? Ah, he's got a good heart, but he's weak and he's stupid and this is life and death. Tom, you're my brother.

TOM

I always wanted to be thought of as a brother by you Mikie, a real brother.

MICHAEL

I know that. You're gonna take over. You're gonna be the Don. If what I think has happened has happened , I'm gonna leave here tonight. I give you complete power, Tom, over Fredo and his men, Rocco, Neri, everyone. I'm trusting you with the lives of my wife and my children--the future of this family. (GF II)

Michael shows tenderness toward Tom and, rare for Michael, trust. He has excluded Tom from previous discussions, because he was thinking ahead to an occasion such as this. What he says in this case shows the sincerity and trust Michael can exhibit or pretend to exhibit. In many exchanges Michael shows devisive motives to manipulate people. Viewers are cognizant of Vito's advice as he says, "One thing I learned from Pop was to try to think as people around you think. Now on that basis anything's possible" (GF II). In a crisis situation, Michael displays calm, reasoned arguments. Though Tom is not his real brother, Michael trusts him more than he trusts Fredo. After all, Fredo became suspect when he fumbled the gun at the fruit stand when Vito was shot. Tom is also vulnerable to Michael because as the outsider, Tom starves for attention from him. He willingly

grabs the bone of responsibility which Michael throws to him. A tender scene with his son Anthony follows Michael transferring power to Tom. Michael is a versatile man, one moment a leader, the next, a sensitive father. He sits on Anthony's bed and talks gently about this special day, the day of his first communion. Bells chiming a lullaby provide the transition to the next Vito sequence. Something both Vito and Michael have in common is a deep concern for their children, and are like wolves in protecting them from danger.

The movie story shifts to the past and Vito's early years. This snapshot of Vito's life indulges in the romanticization of the Mafia shows the destitution of the Italian immigrant. Vito loses his job because Fanucci controls the owner of the grocery store and employs his nephew in Vito's stead. Poverty-stricken and filled with a sense of justice, Vito is befriended by Clemenza and Tessio. As the sequence flashback ends, Vito, Eleni, and Clemenza admire the "new rug," homeyness (which contrasts with the next scene showing Michael being without roots). The main point of this flashback sequence is that Vito joins the Mafia because he has no job; Michael joins to protect the family (The Corleones).

He is on the train, always on the go, this time on a fact-finding mission to Miami and to New York. He must determine whether Roth or Pentangeli ordered the hit at the Vegas compound. Pentangeli wouldn't have had time to plan it after his meeting with Michael. It would also take some guts to try to hit someone after eating his food and drinking his liquor.

In Miami, Michael visits Hyman Roth. He tests Roth by asking, "Pentangeli is a dead man. You don't object?" Roth looks away and says, "He's small potatoes." Roth realizes that Pentangeli is an old and close member of the Corleone Family and that his insult might build enough animosity between Pentangeli and Michael that he (Roth) could control both of them. By hiring people from New York (and not Miami) Roth set up Pentangeli.

In New York City, Michael visits Frank Pentangeli, who lives in the former Corleone house. Al Pacino shows great range of vocal abilities when he indirectly accuses Pentangeli of ordering the hit on the Las Vegas compound. His indignation at being attacked at home is accented by his short pacing back and forth. Michael wants to determine if Pentangeli attempted the hit on him as revenge for not mediating the Rosato Brothers' matter. He wants to make sure Pentangeli is innocent by feigning the need for restitution. Michael knows Pentangeli is not guilty because he does not look down when Michael confronts, screams at him. His body language is that of someone hurrying through a business discussion. He leaves his coat and hat on. To direct Pentangeli's attention, Mike sits opposite him and verbally spars Pentangeli into a corner.

MICHAEL

I want you to help me take my revenge.

PENTANGELI

Michael, anything. What can I do?

MICHAEL

Settle these troubles with the Rosato Brothers . . . .

PENTANGELI

Mike, I don't understand. I don't--look, I don't have your bra in for big deals . . . and Hyman Roth in Miami, that, he's backing up those son of a bitches.

MICHAEL

I know he is.

PENTANGELI

Then why, why do you ask me to lay down to them Mike?

MICHAEL

It was Hyman Roth that tried to have me killed. I know it was him . . . . My father taught me many things . . . he taught me keep your friends close, but your enemies closer. Now if Hyman Roth sees that I interceded in this thing, in the Rosato Brothers' favor, he's gonna think his relationship with me is still good. . . . That's what I want him to think. I want him completely relaxed and confident in our friendship. Then I'll be able to find out who the traitor in my family was. (GF II)

Michael's cunning forethought comes through in this passage. He sits closer to Pentangeli near the end of their talk, as if he's letting him in on a secret. He thinks from both Roth and Pentangeli's perspectives in order to arrive at the most reasonable decision. His strength as he plays people off one another is evident in the scenes with Roth and Pentangeli.

Later, when the Rosato Brothers, working for Hyman Roth, try to kill Pentangeli, they falsely attribute the order to Michael, "Michael Corleone says hello" (GF II). Pentangeli doesn't die, though he is garroted to the point of unconsciousness and left for dead. He later turns State's evidence as revenge against Michael, who he mistakenly believes tried to have him killed. The staged hit on Pentangeli, courtesy Roth, is meant to pressure Michael to invest in Cuban casinos.

Again, Michael must leave Las Vegas. In Cuba, Michael is exposed to the seamy side of life. Pauline Kael describes Michael as conscious of his behavior. "Driving through the streets of Batista's Havana, . . . Michael sees the children begging, and he knows what he is: he's a predator on human weakness" (Kael 65).

In partnership with Hyman Roth, Michael plans to invest two million dollars in some casino holdings in Cuba. After the meeting he sees rebels being arrested in the streets. He realizes, when a rebel kills himself and the arresting officer with a grenade instead of being arrested, that the government is in trouble and that the deal with Hyman Roth is unsound. Michael determines that Roth planned on taking his money and assassinating him long before the meeting in Havana. He is uncomfortable with the paternal role Roth has assumed, because it puts him in the position of playing the lesser role of son.

Michael was looking for absolute proof that Roth gave the order for him to be killed. He was sure when he met with him in Miami because of Roth's reaction to the suggestion of having Pentangeli

murdered. He went to Cuba for absolute proof and as a show of faith to Hyman Roth, so that Roth would not suspect Michael knew.

After his brother Fredo arrives with the money, Michael adds another piece to the puzzle of those who aided in the attempted hit on him. Notice the hesitancy of Fredo in the following excerpt. He fears that Michael knows of his involvement with Ola and Roth. Perhaps Michael encourages this reaction by avoiding eye contact with Fredo.

FREDO

Mikie, what the hell's going on, anyway? I'm totally in the dark.

MICHAEL

The Family's making an investment in Havana. This is a little gift for the President.

FREDO

Oh. Well, that's great. Havana's great. It's my kind of town. Anybody I know in Havana?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Hyman Roth? Johnny Ola?

FREDO

No. I never met them. (GF II)

Fredo feigns ignorance of the Havana investment to dissuade Michael from suspecting his involvement with Ola and Roth. However, Fredo's body language tells all when he looks away at their mention. Michael has baited Fredo and caught the informer in a lie. Fredo also gives

himself away when he mentions that Havana is his kind of town. Havana offers diversions similar to those offered in Las Vegas, lots of money, sex, freedom--the kind of freedom Fredo never had in New York. But how would Fredo know that unless he had already been there to visit Ola and Roth? As Michael and Fredo take an afternoon respite at a quaint, sidewalk cafe, Michael's cunning in what he says to Fredo shows him contemplating an action to dominate his brother.

FREDO

. . . Mikie, I was mad at you. Why didn't we spend time like this before? . . .

MICHAEL

Senator Geary's flying in from Washington tomorrow night with some people, some government people. I want you to show 'em a good time in Havana.

FREDO

That's my specialty, right?

MICHAEL

Can I trust you with something Fredo?

FREDO

Of course Mike.

MICHAEL

Later on in the evening, we're all invited to the presidential palace, a reception to bring in the new year. After it's over, they're gonna take me home in a military car, alone, for my protection he'll be assassinated.

FREDO

Who?

MICHAEL

Roth. It was Roth who tried to kill me in my home. It was Roth all along. He acts like I'm his son, his successor, but he thinks he's gonna live forever. He wants me out.

FREDO

How can I help?

MICHAEL

You just go along as though you know nothing. I've already made my move.

FREDO

What move?

MICHAEL

Hyman Roth will never see the new year. (GF II)

Michael implies that Fredo is the traitor. Two statements point to his supposition of Fredo's siding with Roth: "Can I trust you with something?" and "You just go along as though you know nothing." He sarcastically hints that he cannot trust Fredo. In an earlier conversation with Tom, Michael admitted that he considered Fredo weak and stupid.

In this scene, Fredo is almost ready to confess to his involvement with Ola. Fredo shows emotion easily and is visibly agitated by his guilt. Michael, maintaining eye contact, detects his brother's stress and steers the conversation from a familial interchange to a business one. Michael reminds Fredo of his role as glorified

entertainment director--a role which Fredo resents and had tried to supplant by his involvement with Ola. How could Michael expect Fredo to entertain Senator Geary in Havana unless Fredo knew the city well?

Later, Fredo proves himself the traitor when he suggests that Senator Geary " . . . might try one of those local drinks, pina colada, Cuba Libre . . ." (GF II). When Johnny Ola arrives, Fredo gasps his name, composes himself and turns back to the group for official introductions. Michael's suspicions are reconfirmed later at the sex club when Senator Geary asks Fredo how he found this joint. Fredo replies that Johnny Ola brought him there. Michael, extremely uncomfortable, stands near the back and looks at his watch twice. His overt despair at hearing Fredo admit to a previous relationship with Ola is revealed as he covers his eyes and bows his head.

The reception at the palace affords a view of the disintegration of the relationship between Michael and Fredo. As the militia weave through the guests, Michael winds his way to Fredo. He delivers the kiss of death and says, "I know it was you Fredo. You broke my heart. You broke my heart" (GF II).

The next five minutes in the film illustrate Michael's range of emotions, from compassion to explosive anger. Departing Cuba, Michael urges Fredo to accompany him on the ride through the rioting crowds. Fredo cannot allow himself to be protected by his brother who a few moments before guaranteed his death with a kiss. Michael's return to Las Vegas is without fanfare. He is Caesar returning from a lost battle. A cold compress on his eyes, Michael lets down his

defenses with Tom to talk of Fredo. Minutes later, Michael shrieks for the identity of Kay's miscarriage--"Was it a boy?" (GF II) As Michael mourns the death of his child, the film returns to Vito's life and opens with Fredo's cries.

This sequence illustrates Vito's rise to power, in sharp contrast to Michael's decline. Vito must face Fanucci, representative of the brute force mentality that got Vito's father murdered. He must kill Fanucci to rescue the Italians who were Fanucci's prey, small shop owners like Vito's former employer. While Vito waits in Fanucci's brownstone, a religious festival is celebrated outside. At this point in the film, we can contrast the baptism-murder spree scene in the first film with this religious festival-first kill scene. After Fanucci enters the hallway, Vito steps forward and shoots him in the heart, below the right eye and in the mouth. The scene ends as Vito and his family enjoy the post-festival crowds from their tenement steps. Vito holds baby Michael in his arms and says, "Michael, your father loves you very much." As Vito's fatherhood was renewed with the third child, Michael, the adult Michael has two children and has lost his third child to miscarriage.

Michael trades sunny Cuba for his chilly compound at Lake Tahoe. The toy car that Tom gave Anthony for Christmas, abandoned in the snow, has started to rust, just like Michael's relationships with his children. At a low point, he wanders through the house thinking about his lack of emotional connection with Fredo through disloyalty and the loss of his unborn son with Kay through miscarriage. His world is starting to disintegrate from neglect (just like the red toy

car) and he feels perplexed. In a darkened room near the fireplace, hunched forward, whispering Italian, Michael has the only conversation we see with his mother. Just as he had a final conversation with his father, so he does with his mother, except that even from his mother, he wants fatherly advice.*

MICHAEL

Tell me something, Ma. What did Papa think . . . deep in his heart? He was being strong. Strong for his family. But by being strong for his family . . . could he lose it?

MAMA

You're thinking about your wife . . . about the baby you lost. But you and your wife can always have another baby.

MICHAEL

No, I meant . . . lose his <u>family</u>.

MAMA

But you can never lose your family.

MICHAEL

Times are changing. (<u>GF II</u>)

Long-time New Yorker film critic Pauline Kael argued that " . . . when Michael asks his mother (Morgana King) how his father felt deep down in his heart the question doesn't have enough urgency" (Dec. 23, 1974).

That Michael seeks his mother's counsel is proof enough of his darkness of spirit and his need for support. However, Michael does not seem to want the maternal advice she gives to him. Instead, he wants a substitute father--a role Mama Corleone cannot fill. By

felt deep down in his heart the question doesn't have enough urgency" (Dec. 23, 1974).

That Michael seeks his mother's counsel is proof enough of his darkness of spirit and his need for support. However, Michael does not seem to want the maternal advice she gives to him. Instead, he wants a substitute father--a role Mama Corleone cannot fill. By visiting with his mother, Michael shows the vulnerability of a little child asking help from a parent. His internal (mental) collapse begins with this stymied exchange.

The next Vito flashback sequence illustrates Vito interceding on the behalf of Mrs. Columbo a widow friend of Eleni who has been evicted. When the landlord discovers Vito's status in the neighborhood, he is more than accommodating. Using silence to manipulate, Vito gets him to lower Mrs. Columbo's rent by $10.00. Vito realizes his far-reaching dominion when his side glances to Genco, his business partner, elicit the desired effect from Mr. Roberto. Vito enjoys a life free from poverty, hunger, problems which plagued him only a few years before. This sequence invites us to contrast Vito's wealth of spirit and vitality for life with Michael's downfall. Michael faces the greatest test of his integrity against the legitimate world, the government.

During the congressional hearings, the continued secrecy of the organization is at risk with the testimony of Ciccio and Pentangeli. Peter Biskind raises the dead-end plot complication. "The implication is that since Michael didn't take the Fifth, he left himself open to perjury charges. Pentangeli has to testify to nail

him. But would Pentangeli not have testified if Michael had taken the Fifth? He was the star witness" (Biskind 95). Michael testifies the day before Pentangeli does and clearly lies about his involvement in the Mafia. When asked about the McCluskey-Sollozzo murders, the group hit on the heads of the five Families, casino holdings, and gambling interests, he denies all. As with many of the scenes in the Godfather trilogy, Michael is shown in left profile. His American-touting statement challenges the Committee to offer evidence of his wrong-doing.

> In the hopes of clearing my family name, in the sincere desire to give my children their fair share of the American way of life without a blemish on their name and background, I have appeared before this Committee and given it all the cooperation in my power. I consider it a great dishonor to me personally to have to deny that I am a criminal. I wish to have the following noted for the record: that I served my country faithfully and honorably in World War II and was awarded the Navy Cross for actions in defense of my country, that I have never been arrested or indicted for any crime whatsoever, that no proof linking me to any criminal conspiracy, whether it is called Mafia, or Cosa Nostra, or whatever name you wish to give, has ever been made public. I have not taken refuge behind the Fifth Amendment though it is my right to do so. I challenge this Committee to produce any witness or evidence against me, and if they do not, I hope they will have the

> decency to clear my name with the same publicity with which they now have besmirched it. (GF II)

Michael does not deny his guilt, but states that "no proof. . . has ever been made public" (GF II). Surrounded by harsh lights and people, he appears pale and defenseless. Though his voice remains even, his statement is a plea for life.

Another element to Michael's maintenance of integrity is dealing with the disloyalty of Fredo. He questions Fredo about the depth of his involvement with Roth and Roth's location. In a room overlooking the lake, Michael stands in silhouette against the large picture window and Fredo sits subordinate to him in a chair. Fredo explains how he became embroiled in Ola and Roth's plan.

> MICHAEL
>
> I've always taken care of you.
>
> FREDO
>
> Taken care of me! . . . I'm your older brother Mike and I was passed over! . . .
>
> MICHAEL
>
> You're nothing to me now. You're not a brother, you're not a friend. . . . Fredo, when you see our mother, I want to know a day in advance so I won't be there. (GF II)

Fredo fully expresses his frustration with the reversal of roles; that he, as the older of the two (after Sonny's murder), was not allowed any leadership positions. Michael's insensitivity toward Fredo might have led to the temptation of money Roth offered. Fredo has left himself so vulnerable through candid disclosure, that he has

fully reclined, leaving his jugular open for attack. After this conversation Michael gives two orders, one to Fredo, that he is exiled, and the second to Al Neri, that Fredo is to be disposed of after Mama Corleone's death.

Michael's integrity is also challenged by Kay when she announces that she will leave him and take the children. The scene takes place in their Washington hotel room after his vindication before the Committee; the children play in the hall as their parents fight. At the beginning of this scene, Michael sits on the couch, unbuttons his vest and relaxes. He is not threatened by Kay because he does not know she wants a divorce. When he understands the fight is on, he stands and paces, just as he did at Pentangeli's house. Note that Michael's temper flares when he says, "I don't want to hear about it!" Soon after his verbal rage, the argument escalates to violence, when Michael slaps Kay off her feet.

KAY

The children are outside, we're going. . . . Michael, I'm not going back to Nevada. I brought the children to say goodbye to you.

MICHAEL

There's some things I'd like to talk to you about. Some things that have been on my mind, changes I want to make.

KAY

I think it's too late for changes Michael. I promised myself I wasn't going to say anything and now I--

MICHAEL

Too late. . . . [Cut to hallway where Michael's shouts are clearly heard.] Nobody is going Kay--not you, not the kids. No one. . . . Now you're my wife, they're my children. I love you and I won't allow it. That's it. [Cut back to hotel room.]

KAY

Michael you say you love me and then you talk about allowing me to leave. For God's sake . . .

MICHAEL

There are things that have been going on for years between men and women that will not change!

KAY

. . . Look, look what's happened to us Michael. My God, look what's happened to our son, Michael.

MICHAEL

Nothing's happened to our son . . . Anthony's fine! . . . I don't want to hear about it! I don't want to hear about it! I don't want to hear about it! I don't want to hear about it! OVER!

KAY

At this moment I feel no love for you at all. I never thought that would ever happen, but it has.

MICHAEL

. . . Kay, what do you want from me? Do you expect me to let you go? Do you expect me to let you take my children from me? Don't you know me? Don't you know that that's an

impossibility, that that could never happen? That I'd use all my power to keep something like that from happening? Don't you know that? . . .

I know you blame me for losing the baby. . . . I'll make it up to you Kay. I swear I'll make it up to you. I'll--I'm gonna change; I'll change. I've learned that I have the strength to change, and you'll forget about this miscarriage and we'll have another child and we'll go on. You and I, we'll go on.

KAY

Oh--Oh Michael. Michael you are blind. It wasn't a miscarriage. It was an abortion. An abortion Michael, just like our marriage is an abortion--something that's unholy and evil. I didn't want your son Michael. I wouldn't bring another one of your sons into this world! It was an abortion Michael. It was a son, a son, and I had it killed because this must all end! I know now that it's over. I knew it then. There would be no way Michael, no way you could ever forgive me, not with this Sicilian thing that's been going on for 2,000 years!

MICHAEL

You won't take my heir! . . . You won't take my children!

KAY

They're my children too. (GF II)

In this emotionally charged scene, a communication pattern emerges. Kay uses Michael's name at the end of clauses; whereas

Michael uses Kay's name at the beginning of clauses. He is actively bargaining for an extension of their marriage, while she is stating her final decisions. Michael starts bargaining with Kay after he accuses her of not understanding his ability to manipulate. He expresses the frustration of a hurt lover. He then launches into an "I know what's best" paternalistic tone. Then he becomes like a young boy, pleading his case before his mother, "I can change; I'll make it up to you."

He tries to control Kay by raising his voice, to convince her that she doesn't want to leave him. He then attempts coercion through plea bargaining "I'll change." Michael's connection to the world of emotions is crumbling. At the height of this scene, he asks Kay "Do you expect me to let you go?" Here he subtly communicates that possessiveness equals love, and that a divorce would shine a light on his own inadequacies. Later, when he says, "I've learned that I have the strength to change . . ." he indicates his intent on reform. Does he believe that if he were to change, the marriage would not? His ability to change hinges on his divorce from Kay. Though he does not realize this at the time of their argument, he does realize the stress he's placed on his family. During his time of contemplation, he becomes aware of the constraints he placed on himself.

Tension, visible in his trembling lips, is expressed through violence toward Kay. Critic Robert Johnson accurately analyzes Michael when, overwrought after Kay tells him she had an abortion,

> Michael, who is so enormously skillful at evading blows aimed at him, and who is so enormously skilled at disguising what he

> is really thinking and feeling, is visibly staggered by this blow. Trembling with mounting rage, he slaps Kay across the face. Yet it is she who has delivered, by far, the worse blow. (Johnson, 159-60)

Throughout the discussion, he has paced about the room, first lighting a cigarette and then pouring a glass of water, distractions meant to soothe his nerves.

Michael has lost the one woman who would put up with his traditional, gender-separate lifestyle. The only woman left to him now is his sister Connie. Theirs is an emotionally incestuous relationship: Michael protects Connie as a husband/father would. Connie raises his children as a wife/mother would. However, Connie can raise the children with Italian-American values. Kay, an Irish New Englander, can't give Mary and Anthony a background in traditional Italian values.

The last sequence dealing with Vito's youth occurs in Sicily. Vito and his young family tour vineyards and eat a hearty meal of pasta. Vito stops at Don Ciccio's seemingly to pay respects, but after Tomassino introduces him to Don Ciccio, Vito guts Don Ciccio with a stiletto. As they escape, Tomassino is shot and paralyzed. Tomassino, now confined to a wheelchair, replaces Ciccio as the region's godfather. Has Michael seen this murder? He is so young, probably two or three, but old enough to be aware of the adults' reactions. Was it here that he learned of vendetta, such as the one he has against Fredo?

In the present, the death of Michael's mother is the loss of a source of emotional stability. Though he was not openly convivial with his mother, he performed well the role of dedicated son. Her death opens the door to Michael's final act of vengeance--the murder of Fredo.

At Vito's funeral, Michael was keeping a pledge to his father--find the traitor in Barzini's camp. At Eleni's wake, Michael keeps a pledge to himself--remove the traitor from the Corleone family (Fredo).

Avoiding the mourners, specifically Fredo, Michael has retreated to the boathouse. His preoccupation with revenge renders him numb to sorrow. Now that their mother is dead, Connie can fully play the mother in Michael's life, and intermediary for Fredo. The body language between Michael and Connie is similar to that between a king and his subject and the behavior modeled earlier, during Anthony's reception. Connie kneels in front of him to pledge her loyalty. He makes eye contact, but also stares off into the distance. He touches Connie's face and she kisses his hand as he agrees to see Fredo. In the house, as he hugs his older brother, Michael and Al Neri lock eyes in the previously understood command--it's time to kill Fredo. The scenes with Connie and Fredo illustrate Michael's lack of sincerity. The way he touches both his siblings conceals his emotions. An outsider could not detect that Michael was hugging Fredo for the last time instead of in a gesture of familial mourning.

Finally, he has a meeting with Tom. Now Tom's loyalty is questioned. Because Tom probably lied to Michael about the

miscarriage/abortion, Michael distrusts Tom. He has also discovered that Tom has been job hunting outside the Family.

The dispute between Tom and Michael arises because Tom acknowledges his humanity; he expresses his feelings. Tom sees Michael using violence as a cure-all, when he asks him,"You've won. You wanna wipe out everyone?" "Just my enemies," is Mike's answer. The allusion here is that everyone is disposable and Tom could be killed too, if he is disloyal.

The final scene between Michael and Kay epitomizes his power in shutting her out of his and their children's lives. Staying past the visitation time, Kay is at the back door waiting for a good-bye kiss from Anthony who refuses to budge from his Aunt Connie's side. Michael enters the kitchen, sees Kay and strides to the door, shutting it in her face. He is emotionally hurt by Kay and gains power by controlling when she can see the children. By shutting her out of his life, literally and figuratively, he can regain a sense of control.

Michael clears the roster of business associates at the end of this film much as he did at the end of the first movie. The day Fredo is shot by Al Neri seems to be another leisurely day at the Tahoe compound. As Fredo, Neri and Anthony are about to set off on a fishing expedition, Connie suddenly appears and escorts Anthony away from the murder scene.

The overcast day mirrors Michael's mood of depression following Fredo's murder. As Fredo begins to chant a Hail Mary (his prayer for a good catch), he is shot off camera. Michael watches the scene from

the boathouse, and bows his head when the act is finished. Watching his brother die for disloyalty is the final act of violence for Michael.

At the end of the second film, we see him alone and pensive. He has, at this point, lost his family; both parents are dead, both brothers are dead and his wife has left him. Brooding, he remembers through a montage flashback past events, like Pearl Harbor Day (the day he signed up for the Marines and Vito's birthday) and traveling in Italy as a toddler. As he sits in his den and then outside (in a garden similar to his father's), he begins to realize the import of all his actions. Now everyone is gone, many because he has had them killed. Now Michael is alone, just as Vito was when he first immigrated. He has so few people left in his organization whom he trusts. Most of all, he cannot trust himself. Michael now enters the phase of contemplative withdrawal.

Fighting the dragons has proved to be Michael's undoing. He has maintained his integrity, his standing in the Mafia, by following his father's example. Michael used psychological force until that was ineffective. After the mind games and threats failed, his only recourse was violence. He had to eliminate those who worked against, not with, him.

Michael starts to break off relationships. By Kay's pleaded suggestion, they divorce. However, at a time when few men received custody, Michael does, and thereby maintains control by limiting Kay's time with their children. Michael seems to enter an asexual

phase. He has no romantic interests until a small, reconciliatory spark is ignited between him and Kay in The Godfather Part III.

Michael also stays separate from his brother Fredo, and finally, has him killed. Michael always has meetings with people. No one has the luxury of talking with him at their discretion Meetings are conducted at his convenience only.

CHAPTER IV

GODFATHER III

Quest

In The Godfather Part III, Michael's quest cycle continues with the completion of his major quest, the desire for legitimacy. It is a journey toward freedom from his self-imposed isolation from others.

Not dramatized are the years between the two movies, Parts II and III--1959 through 1979--years spent divesting his illegitimate holdings and deeply contemplating his life. This is revealed by the director's use of a montage sequence which shows this phase of Michael's character development. A series of flashbacks shows Michael remembering significant life events. In fact, the large number of flashbacks shows how contemplative Michael has become. Therefore, the audience of The Godfather Part III knows that Michael has had time to reflect on his life, the triumphs and the sorrows. Also, with age a knowledge of his weaknesses and past mistakes evolves. He wants forgiveness from his ex-wife Kay, his children Mary and Anthony, and from God. But first he must absolve himself of his past sins in order to rekindle his interest in living.

The film opens with a montage of the abandoned Las Vegas compound, a madonna in silhouette, floating remnants of a boat and an old, red, toy wagon. Swirling leaves, suggestive of the autumn of Mike's life, might be interpreted as the last image of his cold heart. The image

of leaves lap-dissolves into the New York skyline, a sunny day and the warm interior of Don Michael's new headquarters. New York is his second chance at life. He preserves the knowledge of his life's work, but refashions himself in the image of his father, Vito, by returning to their first home base. Michael is writing a letter to Mary and Anthony, requesting their attendance at a ceremony where he will receive the San Sebastian medal. Through voice-over narration by actor Al Pacino, his penitent tone is established by, as he states it, "a new period of harmony in our lives" (GF III).

The scene in which Michael receives the San Sebastian medal is reminiscent of the last scenes of the first two films. At the end of The Godfather, Michael is being paid homage by three men. At the end of Part II, he is evaluating his life through memory flashbacks.

The last time Michael was in church (in Part II) he watched his son's first communion. In the first film, Michael renounced Satan while he had people executed. This time he's committed to change. The pledge, taken in church, confirms his solemn manner. Now, as he receives this honor, he recalls an event for which he wants punishment, not reward. He remembers standing in his boathouse, watching Al Neri kill his brother Fredo. Ordering Fredo's death is his deepest, darkest sin, a sin Michael can't forgive himself for.

The first time we see Michael in trilogy, he is wearing his Marine uniform. In Part III, in the bestowal of the San Sebastian medal, he is wearing a dark blue uniform reminiscent of Marine dress blues. His salt and pepper crew cut further accentuates the mock military costume and is friendlier than his earlier coifs. Michael's uniform

in Part III indicates a return to his pre-Mafia days. Imitative of the ceremony of knighthood, or the awarding of the Navy Cross, the awarding of the San Sebastian medal makes him one of the chosen again. He has a cause, to reverse the illegitimacy once the center of his life.

The honor bestowed on Michael--the San Sebastian medal--indicates three developments in his character. One, Michael has been doing good works to atone for Fredo's death. The bestowal of the award in church is a step in the direction toward his search for spiritual rebirth. Two, Michael and his money have made an impact on legitimate enterprises. During the past two decades, he became aware of his ethics, and of the degree of violence he could endure. Three, Michael the patriarch has softened and become a model for others. The San Sebastian medal forecasts his role as martyr.*

At last, Michael has accomplished the long-dreamed-for legitimization--no interests or investments are illegitimate. The Vito Corleone Foundation, an organization established to help needy Sicilians, is a stepping stone toward atonement. After having amassed so many riches, does it matter how the money was earned as long as it benefits those who need it? Mary, as the head of the Foundation, is a symbol of hope. Michael maintains control over the distribution of the funds, but also instills his daughter with a spirit of philanthropism. Her role as Michael's messenger of forgiveness foreshadows her death in his stead.

The characteristic reception which opens all three Godfather movies is in Michael's honor. Three important events occur this day

in The Godfather Part III. Michael receives two honors, and Mary presents Archbishop Gilday with a $100 million check from the Foundation. Connie sings, as her mother did in The Godfather, but in forgetting the words, shows her identification with her ethnic background is slipping in a way that it would not have from Eleni (Mama) Corleone.

The media are conspicuously present throughout the film. Photographers are welcome at the reception in Michael's honor. This presents quite a contrast to the scene in which a photographer's camera is wrested from his grasp to destroy the negative of Barzini (one of the five heads of Families) at Connie's wedding in The Godfather. At the reception the press is skeptical of Michael's goodwill. The Foundation's press agent stresses the infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff, "You think you know better than the Pope?" in response to the journalists' demand for the "real" scoop about Michael. The constant presence of radio and television news, especially during the opera/massacre sequence, indicates the power of the media.

The strained reunion between Michael and his ex-wife Kay after eight years' separation is played out at the reception following the ceremony. Michael has changed drastically since the last time he saw Kay (in the second film) and shut the door in her face. His guilt has humbled him into a quietly festive man. He is pleasant, charming, smiling. Kay, though she has changed into a confident, outspoken woman, still mistrusts her ex-husband. She does not want

to be misled by his charm into shelving the reasons for their divorce.

Kay is not present to make up with Michael, but to support their son in his desire for a singing career. Michael sees Anthony as a possible replacement for Tom, the Family attorney in the first two films. He urges his son to finish his law degree so he can have a back-up career. Only after Kay's intercession, does Michael finally concede to Anthony's career choice. After Anthony leaves, Kay and Michael engage in the same line of cat-and-mouse dialogue begun at the end of the first movie, when she demanded the truth about Carlo's death.

This time Michael eases the patriarchal hold over Kay and Anthony. However, the old persona appears when, saddened by the confrontation with Kay and Anthony, he withdraws to his chair in the shadows. He shucs out the world in characteristic fashion by covering his eyes and bowing his head. Isolation has always been Michael's best defense.

Completion of Quest: Conflict

While Michael frees himself from past transgressions, he is called upon to rescue others. Though he has developed a better understanding of his boiling point, he reluctantly acts as mediator between Joey Zasa and Vincent. Vincent wants his permission to take over the former Corleone territory, now managed by Joey Zasa. Vinnie thinks that Zasa is not running the neighborhood the way it should be run, with due respect for those who have lived there longest.

Wanting them to finish the discussion on their own, the Godfather asks, "Am I a gangster?" Here Michael acts as arbiter, fostering negotiation instead of violence. Again, Part III echoes Part II: Michael discussed territory with Pentangeli (who was unhappy with the Rosato Brothers' running of the old neighborhood) in Part II, also encouraging a hands-off approach.

Zasa brings a gift, the Meucci Award, just as Ola (in Part II) brought a gift of an orange, to pay respects to Michael before asking his assistance. Michael and Vinnie are in opposite camps. Michael spends most of the film proving his legitimacy--to become a respected citizen. Vinnie's illegitimacy of birth is his own Achilles heel, but it is also his whole identity. Vincent, born of Sonny Corleone and Lucy Mancini's passionate interludes, manifests a gutsy anger; some would call it forceful stupidity. Interestingly enough, the only way Michael could survive as Godfather was to reach for legitimacy--in opposition to feeling outside of his own family unit--illegitimate in his goals.

The meeting in Rome with the Board of Directors of Immobiliare challenges Michael's fantasy of church legitimacy. Michael rides through the streets of Rome, as he did through Havana in The Godfather Part II--an observer, outsider. He hears of the Pope's illness on the radio as he is safely whisked to his meeting.

Archbishop Gilday, the Vatican representative, wants $600 million to bail out Immobiliare. We are falsely led to believe that Immobiliare, as a multinational corporation with mass holdings in real estate and finance, affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church,

is lawful and therefore, beyond reproach. Michael can make more money from having controlling interest in a legal enterprise such as Immobiliare. He buys stock in Immobiliare--the money is a bribe to control the Board. Thus both the Board and Michael can gain from the newly formed business arrangement.

The setting within the marbled halls of the Vatican lends a chilly atmosphere to an already tense situation. Though the purpose of this meeting is supposedly legitimate, Immobiliare proves as dangerous as the Mafia chiefs of Michael's past. He believes the decision made at the stockholders' meeting was sound and will be approved by the Pope. He describes the Board as "a pack of Borgias." In this meeting Michael can be compared to Vito, who in The Godfather, the first of the trilogy, was asked to contribute to the Tattaglian drug enterprise.

The Corleone Family at one point in history, has to be smuggled out of Sicily in the form of a little boy--Vito. When Michael completes the deal with Immobiliare, he comes home with all the respect, and pride of the man who chased Vito from Sicily. In one generation the Corleones rise from abject poverty to the pinnacle of Italian-American society. Vito learned and taught his son what he could. What he couldn't teach him, he provided in the form of the best education that he could, Dartmouth. Therefore, Michael alone was extraordinarily well suited to be the most powerful man in Italy on his return. He restores the reputation that was taken from his father.

In all three motion pictures, there are formal Mafia business meetings, usually accompanied by fruit on the table and feigned joviality among the attendants. All three meetings are called to discuss investments or, in the case of Part III, a return on an investment. The Mafia meeting in Part III differs greatly from the meetings in Parts I and II. In GF Part I, Vito has called a meeting to stop the war among the five Families. In GF Part II, the Cuban dictator Batista calls a meeting of investors, among them Hyman Roth and Michael.

In Part III, Michael sets a meeting at the request of Don Altobello who seemingly wants to satisfy the casino investors, but who has ulterior motives. Don Altobello acts avuncularly, but is like Hyman Roth from Part II--he wants Michael out of the way.

During the helicopter ride to the meeting in Atlantic City, Michael warns Vincent, "Never hate your enemies. It affects your judgment" (GF III). As in the meeting in Las Vegas with Moe Green in The Godfather, the hookers vacate immediately after Michael's arrival, showing that he still rules the underworld. This meeting signals an end to his relationship with the old crime bosses. No longer can he do business their way--his new direction necessitates the cutting of old ties. Vincent presents each investor with a check, noticeably excluding Joey Zasa. Zasa's formal speech is an open acknowledgment of the rift between him and Michael. Zasa uses the slight of not receiving a dividend as a ruse to leave the room before his assassination plot is undertaken.

As in the meeting in Havana in Part II, when a gold telephone is circulated among the investors, a plate of jewelry is passed, rather like an offering plate. In this case, the purpose is to take, not give. just as the investors are about to embark on the business of eating, the ominous growl of helicopters fills the room. As glass objects shatter from the quaking, Vinnie instinctively steps behind Michael to guide him to safety. The splendor of the banquet room is matched by the horrific congestion of shattered bodies and furnishings, a result of the grisly massacre which occurs after Zasa's departure. Trapped by handcuffed doorknobs, the investors scurry for cover from the barrage of bullets filling the room. Within minutes the banquet room and most of its occupants are leveled. Many of the old Dons die in the massacre, but Michael, Vincent and Al Neri escape.

Death Struggle

The death struggle, on the surface, appears to be with Zasa, but is with Altobello. In the first movie, Vito understands that his true attacker was not Tattaglia, but remained hidden from view (Barzini). Just as the assassins who attack Michael at the beginning of Part II die to protect the identity of the real assassin, Hyman Roth.

His cardigan, reading glasses and slight paunch suggest Michael would rather continue his leisurely philanthropic retirement than re-enter the vengeful world of the Mafia. Michael, Vinnie and Neri discuss the possible author of such a massive hit back in Michael's

high-rise apartment. The exertion of thinking about retaliation upsets Michael and indirectly causes his diabetic attack.

Disappearance of the Hero

As Michael loses physical control and must be helped to his feet by Connie and Neri, he gets angry. Any sort of visible support is an effrontery to this man whose strength has always come from isolation. Michael cries out Fredo's name as he collapses into a diabetic coma.

Diabetes becomes another sign of his mortality. Having never been seriously ill, Michael is devastated by this disease which takes control of his body. While he remains in a coma, Michael's governing power is temporarily replaced by Connie's. She takes over just as Michael did when Vito was in the hospital. In an effort to rectify the New York territory problem and to gain personal power, Connie approves Vinnie to kill Joey Zasa.

Vinnie's initiation into his uncle's Family (of the Mafia) is completed by his murder of Zasa. It is not his first murder, but while Michael is convalescing (an undefeated champion retiring), Vinnie's kill represents a show of power, the ascending of the winner to the throne, just as Michael killed Sollozzo and McCluskey while Vito was in the hospital. Much like his grandfather Vito, Vinnie makes his first kill during a religious festival. That Coppola employs the festival setting for Vinnie's first hit emphasizes the importance of violence and religion in the Italo-American culture of the Corleones. Times have changed so that Vinnie, dressed as a mounted police officer, moves through the crowds and at point-blank

range, kills Zasa in three shots. Michael and Vito also finished off their first kills in three shots. Vinnie, like his father Sonny, uses violence in public to evoke fear and thus gain power.

Though at first immobile, Michael eventually holds court in his hospital suite as regally as he had from his penthouse. In one scene, Michael shows a full range of emotions, harshly reprimanding Connie and Vinnie for Zasa's murder: "I command this Family, right or wrong. It was not what I wanted!" (GF III). Minutes later, he insidiously inquires about Vinnie's relationship with his daughter Mary. Michael's parental vulnerability comes out in this scene. His hospital stay provides a slight respite from the main action.

In the return to Sicily, Michael is flooded with memories of his first time there. Most touching is the scene in which his son Anthony sings for him. It is the same song that a street minstrel sang (in the first film) after Vito returned from killing Fanucci and held Michael as a baby. The music stirs old feelings in Michael, and images of Apollonia (his first wife), killed in an explosion.

In the return to Sicily, Michael stays at Don Tommasino's villa, as he had as a young man in the first motion picture. Don Tommasino is the only paternal advisor left to him. He encourages Michael to visit Cardinal Lamberto, to involve someone who could take action. His trusted tutor assures him that the Cardinal is "a wise and good man." Michael could use this opportunity to purge his transgressions; he need only have the desire for confession.

Don Tommasino accompanies Michael and after seeing him settled in with the Cardinal, leaves. He has passed him into the hands of

someone who can relieve some of Michael's stress. When he finally confesses to having Fredo killed, the most worrisome sin on his mind, his confession is heard by the man who becomes the Pope. During his visit with Cardinal Lamberto, a parable seems to touch off Michael's diabetic collapse. As Michael consumes some orange juice and a chocolate bar, the Cardinal's astute appraisal, "The mind suffers and the body cries out," impels Michael to confess to his life's misdeeds amid the cooing pigeons and evening prayer bells. For the first time, Michael is helpless, vulnerable. "What is the point of confessing if I don't repent?" (GF III) His confession scene is one of the most powerful in The Godfather Part III.

> I betrayed my wife. . . . I betrayed myself. I killed men and I ordered men to be killed. . . . I ordered--I killed, I ordered the death of my brother. He injured me. I killed--I killed my mother's son. I killed my father's son. (GF III)

The number of times he uses the words "betrayed" and "killed" indicates his remorse. Michael was never obviously aware of his deeds. Michael cries and covers his eyes, a gesture signifying a spiritual contraction. He blocks out the world. Michael's face is obscured by a shrub. This garden paradise is not authentic to Michael's true nature; therefore, he cannot show his face. Perhaps he finally is repentant of his murder of Fredo and thus hides his face in shame. He would like Cardinal Lamberto to remove the guilt from his soul, but only Michael can do that. The act of confession

unites the words and deeds of Michael, and signifies a restorative effort.

Shortly after this scene Michael reconciles with Kay in the same country where he found another love, Apollonia. They spend a day in the town of Corleone, walking the cobblestone streets. The puppet show they see depicts a father killing his daughter--a forecast of Mary being killed in his place. Back at Tommasino's villa, they lunch on traditional Italian fare: meat, cheese, bread and wine. In high operatic fashion, Michael holds a knife to his throat and asks Kay to give the order for his death. An apology for all the misunderstandings, it is Michael's way of making himself vulnerable. However, even now, he controls when and how he's vulnerable.

MICHAEL

> . . . You couldn't understand back in those days. I loved my father. I swore I would never be a man like him, but I loved him and he was in danger. What could I do? And then later, you were in danger, our children were in danger. What could I do? You were all that I loved, valued most in the world. And now I'm losing you, I lost you, anyway. You're gone and it was all for nothing. So . . . you have to understand--I--I had a whole different destiny planned. (GF III)

A comparison with Vito's life might illuminate Michael's development. When the young Vito realizes he's being laid off, Vito tells the grocer Abbadando that he understands he is an honorable man and that Vito does not take offense. The grocer then tries to offer him some food, Vito refuses, not wanting charity. That night, Vito, by

happenstance, meets Clemenza and the seeds of how to protect his family, of how to protect their honor, are planted. Vito understands that the corrupter, Fanucci, has become ultimately corrupt. He knows it is time to take down Caesar and he sees it through quietly and carefully to its successful completion; thus establishing himself as the new man to answer to. Michael's situation is not different from Vito's. The corrupter in this case, the Catholic Church, has now become ultimately corrupt. As Vito before him, Michael exploits it to his advantage.

The most valuable lesson Michael could learn from his encounter with the Vatican is that no one is exempt from corruption. The Vatican Banking system uses pyramidal authority, as does the Mafia. After the Pope (formerly Cardinal Lamberto) dies mysteriously in his sleep, Michael remarks to Connie that "The higher I go, the crookeder it becomes" (GF III). Michael selectively forgets his own past.

During his afternoon with Kay, Michael learns that Don Tommasino has been killed by the assassin Mosca. At Tommasino's wake, Michael reveals emotions that he repressed at his father's funeral and his mother's wake. Michael has lost the last trustworthy connection to Vito (as his partner in the olive oil business). Tommasino saved Michael's life in two ways. Don Tommasino acted as Michael's padrone (caretaker, mentor). First, when Michael lived in Sicily, Tommasino warned him of the death threat. Second, when Michael returned to Sicily, Tommasino sent him to Cardinal Lamberto so that Michael could save his own soul. The confession to Cardinal Lamberto was his

turning point; it gave Michael the strength to find the natural atmosphere for expressing his feelings.

One who was born of dark, secret meeting rooms finds solace in returning to such dens to confess sins. Here, at his darkest time, Michael makes the confession he needed to make. Just as his confession to the Cardinal was punctuated by vespers bells, so too is his confession, or promise, to Don Tommasino.

Forlorn, Michael delivers a soliloquy in right profile, a position similar to that taken in the Confessional (the view of the confessor that the priest would see).

> Goodbye my old friend. You could have lived a little longer; I could be c-closer to my dreams. You were so loved Don Tommasino. Why was I so feared and you so loved? What was it? I was no less honorable. I wanted to do good. What betrayed me, my mind? My heart? Why do I condemn myself so? I swear on the lives of my children, give me a chance to redeem myself, and I will sin no more. (GF III)

Michael is an introverted man. He has always been self-contained. He seemed to need no one, and indeed, eliminated those who got too close to him emotionally. The return to the villa, the provincial life, promises renewal. The irony is that Michael swears on the lives of his children that he will change and yet, in so doing, condemns one of his children to death so that he can live. Whereas Vito swore on the lives of his grandchildren (in GF I) after Sonny has been killed--a pledge for future peace among the five Families.

Don Tommasino was Michael's protector (a second father), so, with his death, Michael is left unprotected. Therefore it is no surprise to him when Vinnie tells him of an assassin's being hired. Michael realizes that he must pass on the role of Godfather because he no longer has the emotional strength to continue. He has tutored Vinnie for this position and now must transfer power to him. Near Tommasino's open casket, Michael passes on the legacy of Godfather to Vincent and tells him that from now on he can call himself Vincent Corleone. He warns Vincent that, "You won't be able to go back. . . . I wanted to get out all my life. I wanted a family" (GF III). Michael's deep sorrow comes out in this scene. Vincent becomes like Vito in the name change, transformed. Vincent adopts Michael's former body language, arms clasped behind the back (at military "attention"). Even an event as legally time-consuming as a name change is accomplished in a matter of minutes. Vincent has become an official member of the Corleones and Godfather of the Family. His initiation occurs during the opera.

Reappearance and Recognition of the Hero

The murder spree during the opera Cavelleria Rusticana is structured like the group hit during the baptism in GF Part II. Vincent himself is a combination of Vito's strongman, Luca Brasi, and his father Sonny. He has a taste for violence and for women. Using voice-over narration, Vincent gives the orders to kill the major players in the Vatican Banking Scandal who tried to swindle Michael. Hours before, he was christened Vincent Corleone.

Anthony's debut at the opera is also a baptism into a legitimate way of life. He has received recognition for his ability despite his feeling overshadowed by his father. He has won the battle for independence from Michael and more importantly, from the constricting responsibility of succeeding him. How apt that a Corleone would sing in an opera whose plot mixes Sicilian images of religiosity and violence.

The opera sequence has a three-fold structure. The sequence is divided into three areas of action: the on-stage action and performance, the reaction of the audience, and murders occurring outside the opera house. Anthony's performance takes place on stage. His parents and relatives watch. Vinnie's actions are not meant to be seen. His first murders are private, not public. Again, we have the dichotomy of the good son v. the bad son--the same dichotomy established in the first film between Michael and Sonny. Now their offspring carry on the same tradition.

Coppola's editing here establishes the tree-fold layout of this sequence. On stage, a life-size crucifix is carried by four figures dressed as death, dominantly portraying the themes of religion and death. Al Neri is shown on a train with a two-layer box of sweets. On the bottom layer [illegible] a gun, wedged between chocolates and cookies.

The soundtrack also provides a contrast among the scenes of action. Like Hitchcock's violin accompaniment in Psycho, the shrieking in the opera punctuates the deaths of Gilday, Lucchesi and Keinzig--traitors to Michael. The audience applauds, but the editing

almost suggests they applaud the works of Tony and Vinnie, songs and murders, respectively.

During the opera, Michael escapes death once again. In this third film he has eluded death twice, once during the hit of the casino investors in Atlantic City. Now, just as Mosca is about to shoot him, B. J. Harrison, played by George Hamilton, calls Michael aside to discuss the recently elected Pope and his medical condition.

A third time he escapes death when Mary is shot. Michael, shot in the left shoulder, rushes to hold his dying daughter. Just as Apollonia died in Michael's place, his daughter Mary, is sacrificed, and once again a loved one has been taken from Michael. He mourns Mary's death in a pantomimed scream. The soundtrack takes over as he is frozen in time. As in an opera, the grand emotional passions are played out on the magnificent staircase of the opera house. A scream from Michael replaces the music--pain evident in the timbre of his cry. He was depending on both his children's lives to remain relatively untouched by the violence that overshadowed his. Killing Mary was like killing a part of Michael.

The last sequence of GF, Part III depicts Michael alone in Sicily, years later, presumably at Don Tomassino's estate. In a medium close-up, Michael adjusts his delicate wire-framed glasses; a second shot provides a full view of him in a chair. Now an old man, as he begins to peel an orange, Michael falls forward and out of the chair. His long struggle has ended. Finally he is free. The empty chair signifies here, as at the beginning of Part II, that the seat of authority remains empty. His most important quest has ended.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Each part of the Godfather cinema trilogy has a different purpose. The Godfather examined the lives of Vito and Michael Corleone. The solitary natures of the father and son were portrayed. The Godfather Part II emphasized the similarities between Vito and Michael. The Godfather Part III contrasts and compares Vito, Michael, and Vinnie in subtle ways.

Michael, the main character, completes a quest in each film of the Godfather trilogy. In the first film, Michael's quest is to murder Sollozzo and McCluskey and take on the responsibilities of Godfather. In The Godfather Part II, Michael battles with those who oppose him. In the third film, Michael struggles for personal redemption and for status in the Catholic Church.

The quest is a personal sacrifice that the hero makes and expands upon; thus, it is a process and a product. The process of the quest involves coming to terms with oneself, with one's personality, while daily taking part in the world of other people. The product of the quest is the effect of the hero's actions on others. His son Anthony's decision to work outside the Mafia results from his father's quest. Kay's decision to divorce Michael is also a result of his quest. Michael Corleone lives through his quest which is part of his life, but it is also superimposed upon the lives of others

because he is the decision maker. He is the Godfather and therefore his decisions and his personal journey become part of other people's personal journeys. The demonic symbolism, which is another framework superimposed upon the quest theme, and thus the romance theme, involves the tyrannical leader who is Michael. Michael, at least during The Godfather and The Godfather Part II, is the dictatorial leader and eliminates everyone from his world who does not kowtow to his demands or wishes. In this way, he becomes a savage. As an autocrat, Michael loses sight of his quest for legitimacy which is completed in The Godfather Part III. His quest for wholeness and for the completion of his personality demands that he absolve himself of his past, whatever it might be. So in Part III, Michael makes amends to many people for his past behaviors.

In the first and second films, Michael loses sight of what his father has told him, "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer." Michael seems to disregard this dictum and instead kills his friends, kills the people who could help him. He psychologically kills himself; he is unconscious to his needs and remains ignorant of his motivations. During the first film, Michael is the initiate. He learns at his father's side the procedures, the ways of thinking, that must rule a majority of his life. In The Godfather Part II, we see Michael begin a new enterprise and lead himself further away from his humble beginnings and the Old World, common sense, values to being deceived by profits from the New World of technology--slot machines. In The Godfather Part III, Michael must come to an understanding of himself. The third film depicts Michael being

brought back into the Old World way or the fold of the traditional Godfathers, by having Don Altobello feign camaraderie and hire an assassin to murder him. He has come back to his origins with a new perspective, experience as a tyrant and the refusal to play that role.

Michael's tyrannical character takes shape while his father Vito is still alive. He uses psychological terrorism to control the people around him and if that fails, instead of using brute force, Michael has the offending parties murdered.

Michael never loses an argument or a conversation. He's too shrewd. He understands the whole game of debate. His speech suggests his own personal truth--he's telling the truth, yet he's lying.

Most of Michael's successes come from planning, not using his money to manipulate. He never uses the money, but puts it in a different kind of bank. During the first film, when he visits Moe, he's sending a message to his fellow mobsters that he intends to occupy Vegas. He's also offering to pay tribute. He lets Moe think he (Moe's) won the verbal encounter. Michael returns to New York and shortly thereafter, we watch him deal with those who refused the offer he made them. Michael, when he walks into the church for the baptism, waits word that those who treated him and his father unfairly are now gone and that he can buy their businesses for a tenth of their value. By killing the five leaders, Michael won the argument with Moe Green and all the others.

By killing Carlo, his brother-in-law, Michael puts the rest of organized crime on notice. In effect his message is: Mess with me and everyone dies. If you think I have compassion for my family, I killed my brother-in-law to show you I think nothing of it. That sets a tone in the second film. To kill Michael one must get close to him. Any gangster who thinks he has the power to get to Michael must get to someone in his immediate Family. The killing of Carlo showed he had no respect for an in-law. During the second film, Roth uses Fredo to get to Michael. At the end of the film, Fredo is dead, along with Roth. Both deaths reinforce Michael's point that he will kill anyone who betrays the code of the Mafia.

Michael then starts to un-do his wrongdoing. He sells the casinos, becomes self-reflective. In the third movie, he receives the awards and kudos a 50ish man of his social stature has earned. Contemplating his past consumes a large part of Michael's time in The Godfather Part III. In this film he takes stock of himself, through flashbacks, and does not like what he sees. Amends to all those he wronged, especially his God, are hard to make. His acts of mercy, both financial and familial, help him to mend his past hurts, inflicted on himself and others. Staging is tantamount to an accurate portrayal of Michael as redeemer. For instance, in the third film, when he meets with the Board of Immobiliare in the Vatican, his short stature is further accentuated by the tall columns and ornate, dark furnishings of the hallowed chambers. It seems that Michael has been swindled by this corporation. Coppola uses a long shot to show Michael walking toward the camera, exasperated with

"the pack of Borgias." This scene is followed by one showing Mary and Vinnie in the old neighborhood of their grandfather, Vito. Michael never can go back to his own beginnings, but his children's generation can visit with a nostalgic glint in their eyes.

At the beginning of the trilogy one has the sense of Vito protecting a huge family. At the end of Part III one can see how Michael's family and trust and protection of that family resides in him. Michael is the true upholder of the law of the Mafia, the Capo di tutti Capi (Head of all heads). Michael is the ideal--he can have no frailty. If Kay had betrayed Michael as Fredo had, she would have been killed.

Michael unites two important aspects of his life by making a connection between a legitimate lifestyle and his role as parent. By appointing Mary head of the Corleone Foundation, Michael has ensured her standing in the community. Anthony eventually receives his father's nod for a career outside Michael's system, legal or illegal. By acknowledging Anthony's wish to be an opera singer, Michael has silently admitted that his children have the successful, legitimate lifestyle Vito wanted for him. Recall the words of Vito in the last conversation that he and Michael have, ". . . it could have been Senator Corleone, Governor Corleone, something" (GF I).

One of the most important cinematic aspects of the Godfather trilogy is Coppola's use of montage. There are two kinds of montage. for the purposes of brevity, they can be defined as a Hollywood montage and an Eisenstein montage. The Hollywood montage is "a quick succession of brief shots blending and dissolving into one another,

created to compress action and convey the passage of time." An Eisenstein montage, invented by the Russian director, is "a rhetorical arrangement of shots in juxtaposition so that the clash between two adjoining images creates a third, independent entity and a whole new meaning" (Katz 821).

Montage is less obvious in the first film than in the second one. In The Godfather, parallel action shows Michael in Sicily and his family in New York. A Hollywood montage (in Part I) shows the passage of time after Michael's departure for Sicily. An Eisenstein montage shows the group hit during the baptism. We see the murders and the baptism in parallel action, but the third meaning, or conclusion drawn from both images is that Michael is baptized, or initiated, into the Mafia. The second movie is similarly edited; however, the development of the characters is emphasized--the actions are taking place in different years. At the end of the second movie, a subjective montage shows Michael contemplating his life, his decisions. The structure of the third movie is wholly that of Eisenstein's theory. The movie opens with a Hollywood montage of Michael's lives, the old one in Lake Tahoe, and the new one in New York. The group hit at the opera is structured similarly to the group hit during the second film. An Eisenstein type montage, tri-part action occurs during the opera: audience reaction and the opera itself; the stealth of Mosca, the assassin, in his attempt to kill Michael; and the murders ordered by Vinnie, the new Godfather. One montage shows Michael being shaved by Vinnie, while they plan to

double-cross Altobello being carried out, while Mary gazes nostalgically at photos of Apollonia, Michael's first wife.

Another important characteristic of Coppola's directorial talent is his ability to imbue the trilogy with an epic quality. The trilogy covers more than 80 years, depicting the best of the three Godfathers, Vito, Michael and Vinnie.

Coppola employs the overhead shot during wedding/party/reception scenes to illustrate the enormity of the Corleones' influence. They are important people; they live grandly, celebrate grandly, and die grandly.

Both of the elder Corleones, Vito and Sonny, die in the first film. There is a different strength to both sequences. When Vito dies, his heart, not a barrage of bullets, takes him out. Amidst the tomato plants in the backyard, Vito plays hide-and-seek with his young grandson Anthony. The little grandson does not realize that his grandfather is no longer playing a game as he lies on the ground, dead from a heart attack. Just moments earlier orange rind in Vito's mouth had substituted for a monster's fangs.

Sonny, Vito's eldest son, dies at a toll booth, riddled with bullet holes. Set up by Barzini (one of the heads of the five Families), Sonny travels on the turnpike to find Carlo, his brother-in-law. His entrance through the toll is blocked by a car full of gunmen, and as the toll booth operator ducks for cover, suspense builds. Besieged by gunfire, through the windshield and passenger side of the 1941 Lincoln, Sonny stumbles out through the passenger door. His strong frame takes many shots, so many that his writhing

body seems to be held up by them. With Sonny's death, the Corleone family is temporarily left without a don. This intense scene "cost $100,000 to shoot and was finished in one take." The high cost probably resulted from the "110 brass casings containing gunpowder squibs, and sacks of blood . . . deployed on Caan's body, face, and hair" (Biskind 35-36).

If Robert Redford, Warren Beatty or Ryan O'Neal (all who tested for the role) had been cast as Michael Corleone, the character would have had a less chilling effect than the portrayal by Al Pacino. As a new face to Hollywood, Pacino could fashion himself into a Mafioso image the public could accept. Well-cast in this drama, his short stature and dark, brooding countenance play to the stereotype of the swarthy Sicilian overlord. Pacino's vocal range, facial gestures and physical presence all contribute to the believability of the character Michael.

His vocal range is illustrated in scenes with the characters of Pentangeli, Connie, and Vinnie. He raises his voice to exert control over those around him. A chilling scene in the second film includes Michael yelling at and demanding from Tom an answer about the identity of Kay's miscarriage (aborted fetus). At a time when some men would have mourned, Michael replaces sorrow with anger and the need for control; thus, instead of crying, he screams.

Pacino plays the character to its core. At first Michael is the innocent. Smiling and making eye contact are signs of his naive openness, willingness to give of himself.

After his journey into the wilderness of his Sicilian roots, Michael is quietly forceful. His face creases and darkens from deceitful scheming.

His physical stance is the typical military position, feet apart to prove a solid grounding. Pacino's body language also speaks of Michael's surrender to the Mafia system. At the end of the first film Michael accompanies Carlo to the car where he is garroted. Michael watches and walks away, arms swinging awkwardly as if he were a puppet. Michael maintains this disembodied comportment through the second film.

In the third film we see Michael's youthful spirit rekindled. He smiles, touches people, laughs. His hands are clasped in front, almost coyishly, or are at his sides, relaxed. Having come full circle with his inner struggles, Michael's friendly, easy-going attitude is genuine. He is comfortable with life and is ready to die.

Dying alone is symbolic of both the futility of his life style choice and the reconciliation with himself. Michael dies a natural death as his father Vito had, and in so doing, points to the effectiveness of their methods. Michael eluded death many times. In the first film, the bomb which killed Apollonia was meant for him. In the second movie he escapes death in Vegas and Cuba. In the third film, his life is spared at the casino investors' meeting, in the opera house, and on the staircase of the opera house. Vito, too, eluded death in Sicily (after killing Don Ciccio) and in New York, after Sollozzo's men shot him six times. Neither one died at the

hand of another; neither one succumbed to the violent underworld of which they were a part.

NOTES

[1] Note that when "Family" is uppercase it denotes a Mafia unit of force, like a battalion. When "family" appears in lowercase, the meaning is of biological, not criminal, connections.

[2] This dialogue and all conversations which follow, have been transcribed from the films.

[3] The role of consigliere is a conglomerate of confidante, financial secretary, and manager of business affairs.

[4] The following conversation in Italian is subtitled and was transcribed from the screen. The ellipses do not represent omitted phrases, but hesitations in the speech of the characters.

[5] San Sebastian was a martyr in fourth century Rome.

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