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The God-Father is Dead

From the Corleones to the Sopranos

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Table of Contents

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Introduction

According to Lacan, in our time, we can talk of "death of the father", which is a radical change in the aspect of the father figure. We live in a time where the father as *pater familias* has completely disappeared. How can we consider or where can we place the mafia godfathers? Are they to be considered as an exception or have they also evolved through the years like any other father figure?

This dissertation will try to analyze the godfather figure (in particular the Italian-American one) by considering some famous *padrini* of the literary, cinematic, and TV world. I will evaluate *The Godfather* by Mario Puzo, lingering in particular in the characters of Vito and Michael Corleone in both the picture and the novel. At the same time, I will compare them to the one who has become one of the most praised contemporary fictional godfathers: Tony Soprano. I chose these *mafiosi* not only because of their celebrity, but also because I can compare the old mafia to the new.

I will start by tracing a short story of Italian mafia in the United States, and then, these characters will be debated through the relationship they have both with their blood and criminal families, their children and, not least important, with the women of the family, in particular their mothers and wives. I will also examine the families – as Italian Americans – to see if they have evolved like any others in both fiction and reality.

I.
The Mafia Phenomenon

1.1. Italian Mafia in the United States

> *A more benign, ethnically based explanation of the American Mafia's success holds that it was a combination of two factors: natural succession and luck. According to this theory, as the Irish and other groups moved into the middle class they were less likely to be represented in criminal activity, so the late-arriving Italians filled the void, just at the time when Prohibition was adding vast revenues to organized crime's coffers.*
>
> Thomas Reppetto (xi)

Although late American history is characterized not only by Italian criminal groups or gangsters[1], this dissertation takes chiefly Italian-American *mafiosi* into account, as they are probably the most embedded in the popular culture, and, therefore, in our minds. It is interesting to note how many historical facts and references we can find both in *The Godfather* and in *The Sopranos*. Salvatore Lupo, in his book on the history of Italian Mafia in America, recounts that its development started from the cities of New York and New Orleans. At least, he refers to two events that, for the first time, brought to light the Italian Mafia phenomenon. In New York, in 1888, two owners of a restaurant were accused of having murdered a Sicilian fruit dealer, whereas, in New Orleans, in 1890, a group of Sicilians killed Captain David Hennessy. American authorities were told by some Sicilian police officers that those people belonged to the Mafia.

Lupo explains that the first mafiosi moved to America mainly for two reasons: "to manage their regular businesses" or "to escape sentences handed down either by the Italian state or by the Mafia", and that "many moved before the great wave of immigration" (16). In Puzo's *The Godfather*, Vito moves to the new continent precisely because the *mafioso* who

[1] One of the most famous examples are the Jewish gangsters. In *The Godfather: Part II*, Hayman Roth, one of Vito Corleone's business partners, is a Jew, and so is Hesh Rabkin, one of Tony's advisors in *The Sopranos*. As far as nonfictional gangsters are concerned, I can mention Edward "Monk" Eastman, Arnold Rothstein, Mickey Cohen and Meyer Lansky, who was Lucky Luciano's associate.

killed his father, is now after him. Another fact that highlighted the existence of a mafia was the killing of the police officer Joe Petrosino in 1909. He was murdered in Palermo during his investigation of the Black Hand[2], probably at the hand of Giuseppe Morello[3], one of New York mobsters.

Prohibition Law (January 17, 1920), which "banned the 'manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors' (Dickie, 175) boosted criminal activities even more. It is in those years that rivalries between all the gangs arose, as in Chicago, where Al Capone managed to take control of the city by smiting the rival North Side Gang, an Irish-American criminal group. At the end of the 1920s, in New York there were two main factions: the first led by Lucky Luciano's associate Joe Masseria – of the Morello family – and the other one that referred to Salvatore Maranzano. The conflict between these two groups for the control of the criminal activities resulted in the Castellammarese War, a struggle that ended in 1931 with the murder of Masseria[4]. Salvatore Maranzano, who decided to divide the city of New York among "the Five Families"[5], was killed a little later by Lucky Luciano. With the death of Maranzano – an old-style type of boss – we witness the beginning of the Americanization of the mob and of the mobsters. In the same year, Luciano draws up the *Testament*, that is "a description of [his] contempt for the paternalistic, familistic, Catholicistic patterns of Mafia ideology" (Lupo, 71), and – after he murdered Maranzano – he established "The

[2] Black Hand – "Mano Nera" in Italian – is another name through which criminal organizations are known, and it takes its name from the method of extortion exercised by gangsters. The character of Fanucci, in *The Godfather*, also practiced it.

[3] Giuseppe Morello was known for "The Barrel Murder", in which his *cosca* killed Salvatore Madonia, who was himself a member of Morello's gang.

[4] The death of Joe Masseria brings to mind the murder of Sollozzo at the hands of Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. Masseria, who was actually Lucky Luciano's associate, was having dinner with him. Suddenly, Luciano goes to the bathroom, and three members of his gang – Vito Genovese, Albert Anastasia and Joe Adonis – come out and kill him.

[5] The Five Families of New York Cities are:

- the Genovese Family, which takes its name from Vito Genovese (an old affiliate of Joe Masseria's gang) and that was created in 1931 by Lucky Luciano;
- the Gambino Family, created in 1910 by Salvatore d'Aquila;
- the Lucchese Family, created in 1922 by Tommy Reina;
- the Bonanno Family, which was born at the end of 19th century in Castellamare del Golfo, and was named after Joe Bonanno;
- the Colombo Family, founded in 1928 by Joe Profaci, an associate of Salvatore Maranzano.

Commission". It was created to better control the criminal families and prevent possible conflicts between them, and it was led by Lucky Luciano, Vincent Mangano, Tommy Gagliano, Joseph Bonanno, Joe Profaci, Chicago boss Al Capone, and Buffalo boss Stefano Magaddino.

After the end of the Prohibition era (1933) these criminal organizations needed other ways to make profit (bootlegging was no longer possible), and they started heading towards gambling, usury, extortion, job rackets, drug dealing[6], and the construction industry through the control of labor unions.

In the same year as the creation of "the Commission", the state of Nevada legalized gambling (March 19, 1931). This was an important turning point for the mob, as the families vied with each other for the control of casinos in Las Vegas, which was becoming the capital of gambling activities[7].

Unfortunately, the police still did not have enough information and resources to fight this criminal web, and many police officers or FBI agents were corrupted, as we see in *The Godfather* with the character of the police officer Marc McCluskey. "Despite J. Edgar Hoover's views to the contrary, by the beginning of 1947 many reporters and cops believed in the existence of a national crime syndicate" (Reppetto, 251). In 1950, the Kefauver Committee (named after US Senator Estes Kefauver) was created, and, even though it operated only for two years, "it brought men like Adonis, Accardo, Dalitz, Costello, and the rest before them and spread their histories on the public record. No longer were they simply names in the newspaper, but living human beings" (Reppetto, 268). Moreover, "Kefauver

[6] In *The Godfather*, Don Vito has to face this problem, as he does not want to get involved in this new necessary illegal activity together with Sollozzo. The fact that he does not want to make a deal is the main cause of his later assault.

[7] The transfer of business activities to Nevada plays an important role in *The Godfather*, because Michael decides to move his entire family over there. In the second movie, in fact, he is celebrating his son's Confirmation at Lake Tahoe. This fact also gets mentioned in *The Sopranos.*

investigation laid the groundwork for the federal government's assault on the American Mafia in the second half of the century" (Reppetto, 269).

Four other facts deserve to be mentioned to end this little excursus on the Italian-American mob. In 1957, New York State Police burst into a meeting and succeeded in arresting many important mobsters. It had been held in Apalachin and was intended to reorganize the Italian-American underworld[8]. In 1963, Joe Valachi, a member of the Lucchese Family, provided the U.S. government with useful information and confirmed the existence of the Mafia. He became one of the first Justice Department's collaborators – one of those that in Italy are erroneously called *pentiti*[9].

Reppetto has claimed that "after many false starts, the enactment of new laws put federal enforcement efforts on the right track" (275). In fact, another step forward in the fight against the mob was made with the approval in 1970 of the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statute, "which made it possible to go after organizations, not just individual bosses. It took years to learn how to use it, but by the 1980s, federal prosecutors were jailing mobsters wholesale" (Reppetto, 275). The FBI was starting to be more efficient, and as we see in *The Sopranos*, mobsters had to – and still have to – watch out for possible moles and to vet the people they became friends with[10].

Again in 1991, thanks to the collaboration of Sammy Graviano, the FBI managed to arrest and later condemn some powerful mafia bosses, among whom there was John Gotti.

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[8] The years that preceded the meeting were marked out by many incidents. "On April 1951, Vincent Mangano was murdered and his corpse was never found; a few days earlier, his brother Philip had been shot to death. Anastasia was suspected of being the instigator of both killings, and it was he who also replaced Vincent Mangano at the top of the Family. Meanwhile, troubles developed in another Family, too—the one once led by Luciano. Here Frank Costello had to face Vito Genovese […] 27 On October 1951 Willie Moretti, Costello's brother-in-law and right-hand man, was killed. On May 2, 1957 an attempt on Costello's life persuaded him to withdraw once and for all from the business of crime. Five months later (October 25), Anastasia was murdered inside […] a barbershop" (Lupo, 120).

[9] In *The Godfather: Part II*, Coppola stated that the character of Franck Pentangeli is based upon the figure of Joe Valachi. Moreover, in *The Sopranos* ("The Test Dream", 5.11), Tony holds a copy of Peter Maas' *The Valachi Papers* in his hands during a dream. This book was published in 1968, and was based on the testimony of Valachi.

[10] In the series, for instance, Adriana La Cerva (Christopher's girlfriend) and Pussy Bompensiero (one of Tony's closest friends) are obliged to become infiltrators on behalf of the FBI.

Apparently, we have reached a time in which the Mafia is not as strong as it was some decades ago.

II.
The Mafia Family

I would like to start this chapter with two quotes written by the Italian American sociologist Paul Campisi and the psychoanalyst Innocenzo Fiore. Campisi wrote an essay where he analyzed the evolution of the Italian family in the United States. He stated that its "structure and functions […] have undergone a radical change from what they were in the Old World", and that "the shift [was] from a peasant and patriarchal family to a democratic and highly individualized type" (Campisi, 443). Innocenzo Fiore has observed that "nel pensare mafioso l'individuo esiste attraverso la famiglia, il nome familiare è la carta d'identità che cela un'appartenenza rassicurante" (178).

Therefore, before getting into detail and analyzing the figure of the godfather or *mafioso* in relation to the other members of the family, it is fundamental to see how the gangster families have changed through time, and whether they are equivalent to or have followed the same path of the other Italian American immigrant families both in reality and in fiction – at the same time evaluating the cultural tradition they belong to. Furthermore, it is important to consider the role and the impact the two types of families had on the *padrini* and vice versa.

2.1. *The Godfather*: A Family belonging to the Same Tradition

> *The Corleones believe, with a kind of feudal fervor, in patriarchy, patronage, and protection. The Godfather is saturated with the imagery of paternity, family, and intimate friendship; with the rhetoric of respect, loyalty, and the code of silence; with references to Sicilian blood and the machismo attributed to it; with the social events – weddings, christenings, funerals, meals, and so forth – that embody the culture of family honor.*
>
> Thomas J. Ferraro (181)

Francis Ford Coppola opened *The Godfather Saga* of 1977 with a little disclaimer stating that "*The Godfather* is a fictional account of the activities of a small group of ruthless criminals. It would be erroneous and unfair to suggest that they are representative of any ethnic group". Nevertheless, Puzo himself, who was the son of Italians and was raised in Hell's Kitchen, stated that it is inevitable not to associate the early Italian immigrants with the criminal activities considering that "nearly all Mafia men are Sicilians (Al Capone, a Neapolitan was the great exception)" (179). However, he also wrote that "quite simply and obviously, criminals are human beings" (180), and their families are indeed made of people. Of course *The Godfather* is a work of fiction, but – considering the author's upbringing – both the novel and the movies can be seen as a significant fictional example of the Italian American family from the beginning of the 20th century – the period of the greatest migrant flows – until 1970s. Besides, even if Ferraro argued that it "is not reliable as […] a historical novel", and that "details are fuzzy, mixed-up, and much exaggerated" (178), Puzo assured that the book was written "entirely from research" (31) and that when he met real gangsters, "they refused to believe that [he] had never been in the rackets" (31).

Fred Gardaphé, who grew up in Little Italy and whose grandparents emigrated from Italy, wrote: "the world that Puzo created taught me how to read the world I was living in, not

only the world of the streets but the world within my family; for in spite of the emphasis on crime, Puzo's use of Italian sensibilities made me realize that literature could be made out of my own experiences" (178). Therefore, only through a more private analysis are we able to truly establish whether this family can be associated with the others in real life or in literature.

In the first place we have to bear in mind the sheer number of Italians that emigrated to the United States, and the fact that they brought with them their own fundamental values, typical of the Southern culture, and, in particular, the small town tradition, the supremacy of family bonds, religion and superstitions:

> Tra il 1900 e il 1910 emigrarono negli Stati Uniti 2,1 milioni di italiani, l'80 per cento dei quali meridionali. La maggior parte erano braccianti e artigiani. […] Soli, tagliati fuori dal sistema familiare che in Italia era stato la base della loro sicurezza personale, incapaci di comunicare con quanti non fossero loro paesani, i nuovi immigrati si ammassarono nelle metropoli. […] Cultura di villaggio, supremazia dei legami di parentela, religione, superstizioni: tutto l'immigrante portò con sé. (Ianni, 73-77)

In fact, the first thing that comes to mind when we think both of the mafia and the Italian immigrants (thus the world of *The Godfather*) is the strong sense of family and kinship they have and they have strived to maintain. It sometimes acts as a sort of protective shield. The family in *The Godfather* – at least Don Vito's (because with Michael we already start witnessing the change Campisi wrote about) – embodies the extended type that was typical of the southern Italian tradition, and that could be easily associated with the old feudal system.

Chloé Deambrogio, analyzing the mafia family from a sociological point of view, talks about a patriarchal hierarchy with an authoritative father and a discrete mother; in addition the web of the family bonds was extremely vast, and its development went beyond the blood ties:

> La famiglia era strutturata secondo il modello gerarchico patriarcale: un padre austero ed autoritario imponeva la sua legge ad una madre discreta, silenziosa e sottomessa alla sua autorità così come lo erano i suoi figli. La rete di rapporti familiari era estremamente estesa, fino ad includere i consanguinei e gli affini. Nonostante non vivessero sotto lo stesso tetto, tutti si riconoscevano in una collettività più vasta, in un clan parentale, del cui onore ogni membro era responsabile. Un ulteriore allargamento della rete veniva a costituirsi con il *comparaggio* (o *comparatico*), l'uso di istituire ruoli di parentela fittizi in occasione dei riti di passaggio. (7)

It is the *comparaggio* – a sort of honorary kinship – that highlights the strong effect and importance of the family institution, allowing it to grow in size. Moreover, this traditional trait allowed the immigrants to survive in America, enabling them to create a little enclave and a community inside a totally different culture. Therefore, it acted as a glue that was meant to keep the "family" together, especially because we are talking about people who did not share the same bloodline. This feature is very much present in *The Godfather*, and we notice it from the very beginning of the movie and in the first chapter of the book – during Connie's wedding scene. For instance when Amerigo Bonasera goes and asks the Don a favor. In this situation we also detect how this peculiar kinship is almost sacred, and when it gets disregarded, it is an offence to the kin, but most of all to the entire family:

> Bonasera began his request obliquely and cleverly. "You must excuse my daughter, your wife's goddaughter, for not doing your family the respect of coming today. She is in the hospital still." […]
> "We all know of your daughter's misfortunes," Don Corleone said. "If I can help her in any way, you have only to speak. My wife is her godmother after all. I have never forgotten that honor." […]
> Don Corleone rose from behind the desk. His face was still impassive but his voice rang like cold death. "We have known each other many years, you and I," he said to the undertaker, "but until this day you never came to me for counsel or help. I can't remember the last time you invited me to your house for coffee though my wife is godmother to your only child. (Puzo, 29-31)

Everything seems to revolve around the family as an institution, especially due to the belief that "the blood never betrays", and you can always count on the help of the family members. In another situation, Tom Hagen highlights the importance and usefulness of this tie; it is when he is sent to Jack Woltz by the Don after Johnny Fontane – his godson – asked him for help:

> Hagen said coldly, "I don't think you understand the situation. Mr. Corleone is Johnny Fontane's Godfather. That is a very close, a very sacred religious relationship." Woltz bowed his head in respect at this reference to religion. Hagen went on. "Italians have a little joke, that the world is so hard a man must have two fathers to look after him, and that's why they have Godfathers. Since Johnny's father died, Mr. Corleone feels his responsibility even more deeply. (Puzo, 71)

However, Campisi – in a table where he compares the original southern peasant family in Italy to the first-generation southern Italian family in America – has pointed out that in the latter type, even if the extended honorary kinship is still maintained, the godparent relationship is a little weaker than before. The first scene of the movie is a definite example of this subtle change, and it is the first sign of a family that is beginning a slow, but irreversible evolution – as will happen later in the novel. Amerigo Bonasera embodies the transformation, while Don Vito is still the representation of the old family's values.

Another quite noteworthy aspect is the blending of Bonasera's request – an emblem of the weakening process of the godparent relationship – and Connie's crowded wedding scene, which is still representative of a southern tradition, and gives the idea of the extended family, as almost everyone linked to it was invited. It goes back to the fact that "within the family, Italians passed on the folklore and customs of their native land. […] The immigrants' religious life was centered on weekly mass, or church service, and various holidays that featured large celebrations" (Burgan, 46-47). Among these there were baptism, marriage and confirmation, and throughout the novel there are several scenes which take place during these

celebrations. The attendance of the celebration of the mass is also present, especially through the character of Don Vito's wife, Mama Corleone.

> Every morning when Kay Adams Corleone got up to take care of the baby's early feeding, she saw Mama Corleone, the Don's wife, being driven away from the mall by one of the bodyguards, to return an hour later. Kay soon learned that her mother-in-law went to church every single morning. (Puzo, 524)

Another scene that confirm that Don Vito and his newborn family are a representation of the first-generation southern Italian in America is in "Book 3". This part of the novel is dedicated to the account of Don Vito's arrival in the United States, and how he created the family we first meet during Connie's wedding scene. "An attempt is made to perpetuate an Italian way of life in the transplanted household" (Campisi, 447).

> The Don […] had been born Vito Andolini, but when strange men came to kill the son of the man they had murdered, his mother sent the young boy to America to stay with friends. And in the new land he changed his name to Corleone to preserve some tie with his native village.[11] […] Young Vito went to work in the Abbandando grocery store on Ninth Avenue in New York's Hell's Kitchen. At the age of eighteen Vito married an Italian girl freshly arrived from Sicily, a girl of only sixteen but a skilled cook, a good housewife. They settled down in a tenement[12] on Tenth Avenue, near 35th Street, only a few blocks from where Vito worked, and two years later they were blessed with their first child, Santino, called by all his friends Sonny because of the devotion to his father. (Puzo, 255-256)

Campisi added that "this is a family in transition, still struggling against great odds to keep alive those customs and traditions which were sacred in the Old World culture". What

[11] In the movie, Coppola has given a different explanation to the change of surname. He justifies it by saying that it was an Ellis Island official's fault. Gardaphé, in his book *From Wiseguys to Wise Men. The Gangster and Italian American Masculinities,* saw this change as a means to increase the audience's sympathy for Don Vito. In his opinion, it increased Don Vito's victimization (39).

[12] In this short description of Vito's new life, another detail that has always been a constant with the Italian American experience is the presence of the tenements. Tenements are a type of crowded apartment building designed to house as many people as possible, often in unhealthy conditions.

was starting to lack is "that strong family and community culture which had been such an indispensable part of the Old World peasant family" (Campisi, 447). Don Vito, in fact, struggles but wants to recreate a community that he left in Italy. The reason is that everything had to be done for the sake of the family.

As a result of the family's powerful symbolism, the business association was indeed structured as the family, or it even was the same thing. However, this is not only a mafia characteristic, but, again, it derives from the Southern tradition. The southern Italians usually ran their business in the same way that they were heading their family, with respect and affection as main goals (Ianni, 36). As a consequence, the Italian immigrant brought this trait to the New World. Again, the criminal syndicate is gradually introduced – in the novel – during Connie's wedding, considering that they all are part of the two families.

> Vito Corleone is president and chief executive officer, as well as father or godfather to everyone within the organization. Genco Abbandando, "*consigliori*" (right-hand man), has been his best friend during his American childhood, his honorary brother, the son of the man who took him in and gave him his first job. But Genco is dying, and it is suspected that Tom Hagen, Vito Corleone's "adopted" son, will be taking over as counselor. Vito's eldest, Sonny, operates one of the principal three divisions or regimes of the family. The other two division leaders (*capo-regimes*), Tessio and Clemenza, are *compari* of Vito, godparents to each other's children. Fredo, the second son, serves his father as bodyguard and executive secretary. (Ferraro, 183)

Ianni in fact wrote that "la famiglia opera come un'unità sociale ed in essa si fondono le funzioni dell'organizzazione sociale e di quella economica" (Ianni, 221). The two families – the criminal and the biological – are intertwined, and in the movie this dual role of the family members is rendered through the use of *chiaroscuro* and setting, making the scene visually effective. The audience can *de facto* distinguish the people who belong to both the Family and the family thanks to a really effective device. The wedding is celebrated in a very big house on Long Island, but the party with the family and the guests is held outside in the

garden, whereas when the framing moves inside the house, in a very dim light, it is because the members of the Family are involved.

By reading the book written by Francis A.J. Ianni about the Lupollo crime family[13] – which he had tried to analyze in an objective way – the reader can find the same syndicate structural pattern of *The Godfather*. In the same way the roles of the organization depend on the degree of kinship, and they do not enact what has been called *amoral familism*[14] – typical of certain Southern Italian communities – which is the propensity to focus the attention only on the nuclear family.

> Joe Lupollo occupa la carica di "capofamiglia", detto anche "boss" nella terminologia della criminalità organizzata. Quanto a Charley Lupollo, pensiamo[15] che, essendo fratello di Joe e di lui più giovane, occupi la posizione di intermediario tra Joe e gli altri membri della famiglia, un ruolo che sembra sotto certi aspetti assai vicino a quelli di "sottocapo" (*underboss*) e di "consigliere" nelle classiche descrizioni di Cosa Nostra. […] Tutti gli altri ruoli della famiglia sono specialistici, simili a quelli di "corruttore" (Phil e Charley) e di "individuo-cuscinetto" (Charley) che Donald Cressey ha identificato nella comunità organizzata. […] Essi sono altresì riusciti ad allargare il loro familismo fino ad includere nelle loro aspettative comportamentali una vasta gamma di parenti, dipendenti e clienti. (Ianni 235-236)

[13] Lupollo is a pseudonym Ianni decided to use, and he also changed all the names of the people belonging to the family.
[14] This concept was introduced by Edward C. Banfield in his book *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*.
[15] Dalfo Ceni, who translated this book, makes use of the "we" narrative.

2.2. Early American Experience and Family Assimilation

> *To become well practiced to a prevailing culture is to acculturate. To become absorbed into the dominant social structure is to assimilate. Since the beginning of the American nation the Anglo Protestant nativist population has wanted minority ethnic groups to acculturate but not necessarily to assimilate. The "late-migration" Southern and Eastern Europeans were expected to discard their alien customs and appearances offensive to American sensibilities. A new verb was invented: they had to "Americanize".*
>
> Michael Parenti

Eric Martone affirmed that "early Italian immigrants were often perceived as anti-assimilationist. They congregated in small neighborhoods with other Italian immigrants and retained aspects of their Italian culture" (13). This is true, and it is how we first perceive Don Vito's early nuclear family at the beginning of its experience in the United States. It is interesting to note how many resemblances the family depicted in *The Godfather* has with other fictional immigrant families – which are not involved in criminal activities –, such as the one in Di Donato's *Christ in Concrete*, Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, and Barolini's *Umbertina*. All these novels deal with immigrants arriving in America, and their way of adapting to the New World. As in *The Godfather,* the reader is presented with their story developing over a wide period of time.

Christ in Concrete recounts the story of a bricklayer and his struggle to provide a home for his family in New Jersey. *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, which could be considered as a prequel to the ideas later developed in *The Godfather*, depicts the struggle of the Angeluzzi-Corbo family in New York at the beginning of the 20th century, whose *mater familias* is Lucia Santa. In *Umbertina*, there is the story of three generations of women in one family coming from Calabria at the end of 19th century.

The immigrant families depicted in these novels could, indeed, really have been neighbors or living down the same street. Even though their stories took different directions, their initial approach to the new life was rather the same, and perfectly embodied how the immigrant lived this new experience.

Whereas in the novel it is only briefly mentioned, in *The Godfather: Part II*, Coppola has decided to show the classical scene of the immigrant journey from Italy to America, and we are presented with Vito Andolini escaping from Sicily, going on a steamship with other Italians and, finally, being examined in Ellis Island[16].

> EXT. STEAMSHIP - CLOSE VIEW ON VITO – DAY
> huddled in blankets, on the deck of the ship in Steerage. He does not say a word. The Waltz grows louder as the VIEW ALTERS, revealing the hundreds of immigrant families huddled together with all their earthly possessions on their way to America.
> Then, suddenly, the Waltz stops.
> THE NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY
> SILENCE. We glide past the Statue of Liberty.
> VIEW on the IMMIGRANTS standing on shipboard silently; looking. Vito is standing with them, his eyes wide.
> CAMERA MOVES IN on the statue, then MOVING PAST, on to the beautiful buildings of Ellis Island.
> EXT. ELLIS ISLAND - DAY
> A tugboat pulls a barge brimming with immigrants into the Ellis Island harbor. Uniformed officials of the Immigration Service load them up toward the main building.
> INT. ELLIS PROCESSING HALL - DAY
> The hundreds of immigrant families sit on rows of benches in the great hall. Various painted lines lead to the steps and processing rooms above. There is the babble of many interviews going on simultaneously, uncertainly, in different languages.

[16] Ellis Island replaced Castle Garden as a reception center for immigrants in 1892.

> Vito is bundled in an old coat, with a large tag pinned on it: "Vito Andolini -- Corleone, Sicilia."[17]

Vito's early family is totally different from the one which the reader has already contextualized at the wedding scene. This is a family that has achieved a well-being status, although through a lot of effort and hard work (in this case, the means through which this wealth was obtained do not matter). Their economic situation was not the best, and he had been forced to work in a railroad after being fired by Fanucci, and struggled to feed his family. In that period "Italians by the thousands helped build railroads and other important parts of America's transportation system. They worked on the Brooklyn Bridge and dug the tunnels for New York's subways" (Burgan, 36):

> He then moved a nephew into the store and Vito Corleone found himself out of his job. […] He worked in the railroad for a few months and then, when the war ended, the work became slow and he could earn only a few days' pay a month. Also the foremen were Irish and American and abused the workmen in the foulest language, which Vito always bore stone-faced as if he did not comprehend, though he understood English very well despite his accent. […] Time went on, things did not improve. The Corleone family could not eat the beautiful rug. Very well, there was no work, his wife and children must starve. (Puzo 257-260)

By reading these few lines, no one can imagine Puzo is describing the person and the family that will be included among the most feared and respected in New York. Actually, in *Umbertina*, they similarly have made sacrifices, at the beginning, in order to earn money and allow the family to live a better life. They have been forced to work and submit a *padrone*.

> Good, she thought to herself with her ironic bent, we have crossed the ocean to trade the *fattore* for a *padrone*. Serafino was, as usual, trusting. "He will get me work," Serafino told Umbertina. "He knows the American bosses. They are building an

[17] From now all the quoted lines of *The Godfather – Part II* will be taken from the second draft of the screenplay (September 24, 1973), which has been retrieved from www.dailyscript.com/scripts/godfather2.html.

> underground railroad in New York and he can get me work." "You did not want to work ever again on the railroad," she said irrationally, knowing as she did that there was no choice now. "It is only until we have the money to leave for Cato," he said. "A few months." In the Rotunda the sorting out of the silent and stoic-looking immigrants by the *padroni* from various regions was still taking place. (Barolini, 60)

It is undeniable that everywhere in the world the family as part of the social structure has kept changing, and will always undergo an evolution, due to a set of several different factors such as the country, the society, the beliefs, and the epoch among many others.

Even though we are talking about an Italian family in the United States, as soon as the members get a foothold in a new continent and a new culture, they inevitably start adapting and shaping depending on the age and environment they make contact with. In the same way, the Mafia family – which is Italian – has to assimilate the new society, yet maintaining some of the distinguishing cultural traits. A quite obvious thing, in fact, is the different kind of family we encounter in *The Godfather* and in *The Sopranos*. The latter, which will be later analyzed, does not consist of first-generation immigrants, and it has by now Americanized. It is closer to a modern American family, and Italian – sometimes stereotypical – characteristics have almost reduced to something coming out of inclination.

In *The Godfather* movie, the first scene underlines the process of family assimilation to the American way of living, which had already started in the 1940s. The film opens with a declaration made by Amerigo Bonasera who is making – as we have previously seen – his request to Don Vito:

> While this remains, we hear: "I believe in America."
> Suddenly we are watching in CLOSE VIEW, AMERIGO BONASERA, a man of sixty, dressed in a black suit, on the verge of great emotion.
>
> BONASERA
> America has made my fortune.

As he speaks, THE VIEW imperceptibly begins to loosen.

BONASERA
I raised my daughter in the American fashion; I gave her freedom, but taught her never to dishonor her family. She found a boy friend, not an Italian.

[…]

I – I went to the police, like a good American.[18]

Bonasera, again, embodies this ongoing process, even though he hurries to underline that he taught his daughter to never forget one of the most important Italian values. The immigrant, therefore, was becoming torn between tradition and modernity. This duality is also, ironically, visible in his name; the first one is the same as the Italian explorer after whom America was named, and his surname recalls a common Italian salutation – written, however, in a jargon and more familiar manner. Don Vito – clearly the anti-assimilationist – simply answers: "Why did you go the police? Why didn't you come to me first?". The family Don Vito created – in his beliefs – has to keep alive the Italian community and the family bond, and not merge with the American society. This answer goes also back to the reason for the development of the mafia. This organization was born in the absence of a higher power – in this case the state – and the Don does want to keep the things as they have always been.

Another step forward towards the assimilation was made at the outbreak of World War II. "At the outset of war, Italian immigrants were the largest foreign-born group in the US. One way of providing unquestionable loyalty to the new country was performing military service during World War II" (Gardaphé, 304). They mention this fact in an episode

[18] From now all the quoted lines of *The Godfather* will be taken from the third draft of the screenplay (March 29, 1971), which has been retrieved from www.dailyscript.com/scripts/The_Godfather.html.

of *The Sopranos* ("The Legend of Tennessee Moltisanti", 1.08), when, at dinner, the family is remembering the contribution Italians made to American society. By enlisting in war the Italian showed that he could be a good American, and that he could integrate. In the story, the one who represented this beginning of assimilation is Michael, who volunteered for the Marine Corps as soon as the war broke out.

This aspect is only useful to demonstrate how many things the Corleones have in common with a common immigrant family. The outcome of this decision in the relationship between Michael and Vito will be analyzed in another chapter.

2.3. The Impact of Capitalism on the Family System

> *Immigrant adjustment to capitalism in America was ultimately a product of a dynamic between the expanding economic and cultural imperatives of capitalism and the life strategies of ordinary people. […] Millions of immigrants in industrial America had neither the desire nor the capacity to relate to the social order of capitalism.*
>
> John Bodnar (207)

The difference between the family of *The Godfather* and that of *The Sopranos* is rather obvious. Both are considered criminal "enterprises", and both have been molded – among many other intrinsic factors – by what was happening in the society they lived in.

Among the main factors, the most important one – which has been and continues to be at the center of many studies – is capitalism. Not only did it shape the entrepreneurial activities of the family but also it affected its moral side and the relationships between its members. Like all the other immigrants families in America, the Corleones had to adjust to this new capitalistic attitude and the American empire that was in constant expansion. Especially when Vito arrived in America – at the very beginning of the 20th century –

capitalistic greed was gaining the upper hand. Furthermore, we are dealing with highly industrialized cities where the lust for money prevailed more than in other rural areas.

The Corleone family can thus be analyzed as a sort of pre-capitalistic enterprise. In fact all the effort is devoted to sustaining the family (or the community) and it is not simply a matter of capital. This is again linked with the many similarities to a feudal system, and the still visible attachment to the old Southern Italian tradition.

In an article that seeks to analyze the family in relation to capitalism, Steven Horowitz[19] makes some considerations on what this institution was before the advent of capitalism.

> Before capitalism, the family was both the central unit of economic production and the core political institution. In an economy based mostly on agriculture and secondarily on small crafts, economic production was largely for the family's own survival and performed with the limited capital possessed by the household. With limited physical capital, labor-intensive methods of production were required, especially in agriculture, making larger families preferable. In addition, with limited financial resources and opportunities to store material wealth over long periods, having a large family was a form of old-age insurance. The family of the Middle Ages was an all-encompassing social unit, bound together by the need to survive economically. (26)

Capitalism affected the Corleone family as it did to the one in *Christ in Concrete*. Of course, in the latter novel the effect is totally different, but what is important is that it influenced their destiny[20]. In *The Godfather*, Don Vito's criminal syndicate clashes with the capitalistic greed – represented by the other Families of New York, and in particular by Sollozzo. The Turk –

[19] Steven Horowitz is a professor of economics at St. Lawrence University.

[20] Another fictional family which has been heavily influenced by the advent of capitalism are the Lomans in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The main character is Willy Loman, who is the head of the family and the "salesman" of the title. He is unable to accept that the society has changed, and that the old times of the salesmen are over, therefore he would like to lead the same life he used to. His "blindness" is conveyed through his daydreams, when he relives some events of his past. In the end he commits suicide because he is not able to be in line with the new epoch he is living in. In *The Godfather*, Don Vito's reaction is different, as he becomes aware that he has to let his place to Michael and retire.

this is the name given to Sollozzo – proposes a new deal to the Corleones, which will involve narcotics and will make them enlarge their business. “There is more money potential in narcotics than in any other business. If we don’t get into, somebody else will. […] Their Family will become stronger than ours. […] I think the narcotics is the coming thing” (Puzo, 86-87). This is what Tom Hagen explains when asked his viewpoint on the situation. It is a capitalistic and future oriented forecast, and Tom Hagen reasons by taking into consideration the growth of a competitive market.

The Don does not want his family to adapt to this new system, and all he wants is for it to be safe. When he talks about the safety of the family, he does not refer only to the blood one, but also to the enlarged honorary family he has created.

> I must say no to you but I must give you my reasons. The profits in your business are huge but so are the risks. Your operation, if I were part of it, could damage my interests. It’s true I have many, many friends in politics, but they would not be so friendly if my business were narcotics instead of gambling. They think gambling is something like liquor, a harmless vice, and they think narcotics a dirty business. […] And what I am telling you is that this business of yours is too risky. All the members of my Family have lived well the last ten years, without danger, without harm. I can’t endanger them or their livelihoods out of greed. (Puzo, 89-90)

Like this one, all the decisions were taken for the sake of the family, and also the favors the Don has ever asked in return did not concern a monetary reward. Moral values such as friendship, brotherhood or family bond still counted. An example is the favor Don Vito asks in exchange of Bonasera, as the only thing he wants is that he makes his dead son presentable to the eyes of his mother. Sonny had been disfigured during his murder, and the Don does not want Mama Corleone to suffer even more.

In Di Donato’s *Christ in Concrete*, the family is lopped off because of the capitalistic greed. It is affected by it through the death of Geremio, who is a victim of the harsh working

conditions. In *The Godfather* the family is stricken by the sudden assault on Don Vito, and it is following this episode that the family dynamics start to change and evolve. This scene is really effective both in the novel and in the film. It happens right after his refusal of the proposal of Sollozzo, and at that moment the Don stops for a moment and turns round to buy some fruit from a merchant, as he had been lured by this small stand – something genuine, and that can remind him of his native land. It reminds him of those traditional domestic business activities, too often wiped out by the advent of capitalism and the birth of the franchise. In the movie, at the moment of the shooting, all the fruit falls to the ground, making this scene visually symbolic. Moreover, the hit men – who represent the capitalistic greed – are careful not to tread on the scattered fruit.

> Don Corleone was about to get in on the sidewalk side of the car when he hesitated and then turned back to the long open fruit stand near the corner. This had been his habit lately, he loved the big out-of-season fruits, yellow peaches and oranges, that glowed in their green boxes. The proprietor sprang to serve him. Don Corleone did not handle the fruit. He pointed. The fruit man disputed his decision only once, to show him that one of his choices had a rotten underside. Don Corleone took the paper bag in his left hand and paid man with a five-dollar bill. He took his change and, as he turned to go back to the waiting car, two men stepped from around the corner. […] The two gunmen, careful not to slip on the rolling fruit, started to follow in order to finish him off. (Puzo, 98-99)

From this moment on, the Corleones we first met at the wedding start a slow decline, and the new head is Michael. His family is different from his father's, and from an economic point of view, it starts embracing the rules that capitalism dictates. He becomes more cynical as he goes against something he had always believed in, even though he seems not fully aware of it.

The importance of the blood family seems to start moving into the background – arriving at the point in which various family members get murdered by order of Michael.

Anything can be done for the cult of money and for business, and the cult of the family loses its old primacy. Whereas Don Vito refused to enlarge his business activity because it was detrimental for the family, Michael is ready to extend the firm's activities without hesitation. He had been ready to transfer their gambling activities in Las Vegas, and it means that he has to relocate the family to Nevada, thus destabilizing it.

2.4. *The Sopranos*: Sons of Our Time

> *One of the keys to the success of The Sopranos is in the parallel between the problems of these ordinary or extraordinary characters and those of society and the general public. The individual and collective tragedies, the human weaknesses, the lack of values, the crisis of public institutions—these and other crucial aspects of life are all represented without "discounts" for anyone. The unsacredness of roles affects all the traditional authority figures of society (for example, the family, the image of the mob, the police, and the judicial system), and viewers, albeit through an ironic representation, perceive that, in the end, the world of The Sopranos is not so different from their own. The lack of a clear distinction between good and evil does not necessarily lead to a trivialization of criminal activities, because the problems of a sick society is one of the themes of the series.*
>
> Fabio Licata (248)

The Sopranos provides a rather complete picture of the Italian American family, and its experience at the beginning of the new millennium in the contemporary suburban life. In the same way as *The Godfather*, the TV series explores the family dynamics of the Di Meo crime syndicate, lingering in particular on the Sopranos, and highlighting the consequences this new alienating epoch has on them. After all, the main theme of the series is Tony's

sessions of psychotherapy with Doctor Melfi, which can be seen as a symbol of the spreading neurosis of our time.

> Echoing Gandolfini and Gilbert, Martha Nochimson has said that "we are all Sopranos" (personal conversation, January 24, 2008), meaning that not only Italians and other ethnic minorities but most Americans can identify with the plight of Tony Soprano, his crime-ridden mob family, and his personal family, which is as dysfunctional as it gets. (Tomasulo, 197)

What gives even more the idea of the contemporaneity is the means through which this story is delivered: television. It is, in the 21st century, the most commercial and widespread media, and it perfectly embodies modernity. "Literary critic Sandra M. Gilbert views *The Sopranos*' "Nouveau Jersey" family as part of a tele-universe that is somehow representative of contemporary America" (Tomasulo, 196). On this statement, Frank P. Tomasulo adds that "*The Sopranos* is an all-American fable to its core; more specifically, it is a caustic indictment of the material and social conditions of postmodern capitalism in the United States" (Tomasulo, 197). Besides, "the late capitalist American may well share Tony's anxieties about financial freedom, college tuitions, home remodeling plans, and the "company's economic stability" (Weidinger, 3).

At this point, the Sopranos – like all the Di Meo family – have almost completely Americanized, and the link to the Italian tradition – the one still present in *The Godfather* – is almost reduced to a mere façade. Everyone seems to consider it as a sort of habit, more like something they have been taught, instead of something they perceive as natural. Moreover, it seems they all want to refuse the assimilation of the new culture, which is strange considering that we are dealing with second or third-generation Italian Americans.

An interesting example is in the episode entitled "Christopher" (4.03), where the New Jersey Council of Indian Affairs wants to cancel the Monday's Columbus Day Parade in

Newark. The indignation of the Di Meo family is immediate, but this seems more like a nostalgia for the long-gone identity and culture, more than a true feeling of belonging. This can be exemplified in the face of Carmela, and how aloof her answer is to an indignant Fredo, while enjoying some good Neapolitan *struffoli*[21].

Other noteworthy examples are the several references to *The Godfather*, which – along with *Goodfellas* – is constantly evoked in the series, being, as it is, the classical representation of the Italian American gangster in the United States. Moreover, Silvio is praised for his ability to imitate Al Pacino's character. In the second episode of the first season ("46 Long", 1.02), the show opens with a few members of the Family sitting around a table in the basement while counting a lot of money. In the meantime they are watching, in a rather annoyed and bored way, an interview to the real mob's gangster Vincent Rizzo, who is talking about John Gotti. Tony, probably tired of what is on TV, asks Silvio to do his impression of Al Pacino to cheer him up. This again denotes a sort of attachment to a more mythical view of the Mafia and of the Italian American tradition. "The mobsters [even] prepare for a trip to Italy by watching (or attempting to watch) *The Godfather: Part II* on DVD" (Pattie, 140).

In the same episode, Paulie and Big Pussy enter a café (clearly an emblem of the many American franchises) and order an "espresso". A little later Paulie complains about the Americans who, in his opinion, seem to have forgotten how many things Italians imported into that country. As was said before, there is a connection with their original country, especially on the part of Paulie – who's older – , but it cannot be compared to the strong bond present in *The Godfather*. Big Pussy, in fact, does not really get angry about it.

PAULIE: Fuckin' Italian people. How'd we miss out on this?

[21] It is a typical Neapolitan dessert that is traditionally prepared at Christmas time. The dish is made of deep fried balls of dough about the size of marbles, and they are usually mixed with honey and other sweet ingredients.

BIG PUSSY: What?

PAULIE: Fuckin' espresso, cappuccino. We invented this shit, and all these other cockersuckers are gettin' rich off it.

BIG PUSSY: Yeah. Isn't it amazing?

PAULIE: It's not just the money. It's a pride thing. All our food. Pizza. Calzone. Buffalo mozzarella. Olive oil. These fuckers had nothin'. They ate poopsie before we give 'em the gift of our cusine.[22]

("46 Long", 1.02)

The visible Americanization and the consequent detachment from the original culture become apparent when Paulie visits Naples for the first time with Tony and Christopher ("Commendatori", 2.04). He went there with the strong desire to rediscover his roots, considering that his grandfather left for the US in 1910. However, the only thing he finds out is his dislike of Neapolitan hospitality, cuisine, and plumbing. Even though he depicts this trip as fabulous – when Pussy asks him at the Newark Airport –, and said that he "felt right at home", he is very happy to be back in Jersey.

Another thing that makes clear the gap between the generations of *The Sopranos* and of *The Godfather*, always underlined thanks to the constant images from the two movies, is the decline of family bonds and moral values. Not only does this generational gap allow the audience to see the changes in the Italian American family, but it is also a convincing representation of how fickle the family institution is. Although there are things that can be considered a *trait d'union* between the generations, there are others which are typical of our time – which is characterized by a postmodern culture.

> Tony Soprano and the other characters of the drama are also symbols of the global crisis of the family and society. Like society, families are now more fragmented; individualistic and traditional values are increasingly blurring. […] Writers have described the mob as a real part, albeit negative, of our society, and in doing so they

[22] All the dialogs of *The Sopranos* have been directly transcribed from the episodes.

> have portrayed the corrosion and decomposition of the main aspects of the society in which Tony, his family, and its acolytes live and act. The clue to this representation is the icon of the family, given that the image of the Mafia family overlaps that of the blood family as well as that of the larger family, society. All aspects of the social order can be found in *The Sopranos*: family, school, religion, the economy, the police, and justice. (Licata, 246)

One need only to consider how easily the members of the Mafia family commit adultery, diminishing the sacredness of the biological family's bonds. Tony's high jinks are present throughout all the seasons, and he even risks sabotaging his marriage. Carmela, in fact, after several and continuous quarrels, wants to file for a divorce. If one thinks about the strictly religious Italian tradition – which was central in Don Vito's family – and the ostensible religiousness of Carmela, this should be unconceivable. In *The Godfather*, Kay and Michael also separate, but this is understandable if we consider that Kay belongs to a different tradition – she is a WASP –, and that the family they created is more modern and it is a family in transition.

III.
From the *Pater Familias* to the Death of the Father

The father figure – along with patriarchy – was, and still is, one of the most important recurring symbols in world narrative, and is very much present in many archetypes. Since ancient Greece, the father-child relationship has been one of the main literary themes, being also at the center of several myths. Nowadays, they are still revisited as strong examples, and they are key factors in the understanding and analysis of real-life situations.

It is sufficient to name just a few of them in order to realize how much they are embedded in our minds and our society. In my opinion, the first that come to mind are well-known myths, such as that of Œdipus or Agamemnon – which were borrowed by Sophocles and Aeschylus to write their tragedies –, or even Hector in the *Ilyad*, and the relationship between Telemachus and Ulysses in the *Odyssey*. Likewise, we could go from Abraham and Isaac in the *Bible*, Shakespeare's *King Lear* or *Hamlet*, to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* – whose main theme is the weight of the legacy of both the father and of the forefathers. Last but not least, I cannot omit those who are the emblem of the father and son: God and Jesus.

All these characters are immensely important archetypical figures, and they have been fundamental for the research of famous scholars, such as Freud, Lacan, Jung, the Italian psychoanalysts Massimo Recalcati and Claudio Risé, among many others. They have been able to trace a profile of our modern society starting from ancient mythology, and demonstrate that history is a continuum, and some traits or images will always recur.

I am going to analyze both *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos* with the help of these scholars' works, and I will also be briefly disclosing a few of their ideas. In particular, I want to underline Recalcati's theories, which in turn are based on those of Jacques Lacan. I have become really inspired by Recalcati's studies on the father figure, mainly due to the human and most personal perspective I have gleaned from his books and interviews.

3.1 The Law of the Father and the *Pater Familias*

This is the most beautiful law of all: obey the father.
Aeschylus (qtd in Zoja, 61)

In order to understand how the figure of the father has changed it is best for us to start from one of the key concepts of Sigmund Freud: "The Law of the Father" – which Jacques Lacan has later reinterpreted.

In a letter to Fliess[23], in 1897, Freud presents his theory that the father's role is that of preventing the child from realizing his/her unconscious wish to sleep with his/her mother. It is the basis of Freud's thinking, and this idea suggests that a father figure – not necessarily the biological father – is indispensible. Virginia Woolf perfectly managed to show it in her novel *To the Lighthouse* – which is a very truthful representation of the Oedipal struggle. Mr. Ramsey, by denying the trip to the lighthouse to his son, stands for patriarchal authority, and thus he balances the role of the caring mother. These are the two sides of the parental power, where the father acts like the agent of prohibition, and the one who dictates a symbolic law[24].

> Cos'è un padre? È la domanda che agisce come un vero e proprio tarlo nel pensiero di Freud. Egli escogita la figura di Edipo per segnalare che la funzione paterna ha come compito primario quello di proibire ciò che invece l'Edipo di Sofocle realizza: l'accoppiamento con la madre. Un padre, sembra dirci Freud, è colui che sa far valere la Legge dell'interdizione dell'incesto facilitando il processo di separazione del figlio dalle sue origini. (Recalcati, 27)

Until not long ago, this authority belonged to the *pater familias*, who goes back to ancient Rome. "The Roman father, with his monopoly of property rights and power of life

[23] Wilhelm Fliess was a German Jewish otolaryngologist who worked in Berlin. He is today best remembered for his close personal friendship and theoretical collaboration with Sigmund Freud, a controversial chapter in the history of psychoanalysis. [Information retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_Fliess]. The letter mentioned above is part of the considerable correspondence between Freud and Fliess; in particular this a letter of October 15th, 1897 where Freud explained to Fliess his Oedipus Rex and Hamlet's theories.
[24] This is what Lacan calls "The Symbolic Order".

and death over his children, has been prominent in the formulation of the concept of patriarchy in European thought" (Saller, i). He was in charge of all the members of the family, and had the power to decide on their lives. We can definitely see Vito Corleone as one of the last examples of *pater familias*, considering he holds all the main responsibilities, he is respected by everyone in the family, and he is seen as a sort of fixed figure to go to when help is needed. He is a sort of point of reference for the family members, both the blood-related ones and others.

Even though he admits he has "a sentimental weakness for [his] children" and that he has "spoiled them" (Puzo, 90), he thinks that "young people are greedy […] and today they have no manners. They interrupt their elders. They meddle" (Puzo, 90). He, therefore, reasons as a man belonging to the old generation, and he knows how and when it becomes necessary to make his authority prevail with his children, and when it is time to teach them a lesson. He gets angry with Sonny when he commits a robbery, and it is one of the few times the Don loses his temper: "What gave you the right to commit such an act? What made you wish to commit such an act?" (Puzo, 290); he even does not meddle when Connie whines and wants her father to help her because Carlo has been beating her.

> She had found her parents coolly unsympathetic and curiously amused. Her mother had had a little sympathy and had even asked her father to speak to Carlo Rizzi. Her father had refused. "She is my daughter," he had said, "but now she belongs to her husband. He knows his duties. Even the King of Italy didn't dare to meddle with the relationship of husband and wife. Go home and learn how to behave so that he will not beat you." […] Then when Connie became pregnant he was convinced of the wisdom of his decision and felt he never could interfere though Connie complained to her mother about a few more beatings and the mother finally became concerned enough to mention it to the Don. Connie even hinted that she might want a divorce. For the first time in her life the Don was angry with her. "He is the father of your child. What can a child come to in this world if he has no father?" he said to Connie. (Puzo, 317-318)

With Michael, too, Don Vito is always there acting in the shadow, although he initially does not want to get involved with the family business, and believes he can live an independent life. In the novel, the first instance the reader comes across is when Michael is forced to go back home from the war, and leaves the Marine Corps – thinking it was only due to his injury. What he does not know is that this decision was not taken by the Marine Corps, but it was Don Corleone who had him sent back home, thanks to his contact with people who count. It was surely done for the fear of losing a child[25], but also he could not accept his son fighting for someone who was not his family, but the American Nation – an authority that Don Corleone wants to replace. It seems that Michael wanted to replace the authorial figure of the family.

> Don Corleone had no desire, no intention, of letting his youngest son be killed in the service of a power foreign to himself. Doctors had been bribed, secret arrangements had been made. A great deal of money had been spent to take the proper precautions. But Michael was twenty-one years of age and nothing could be done against his own willfulness. He enlisted and fought over the Pacific Ocean. He became a Captain and won medals. In 1944 his picture was printed in Life magazine with a photo layout of his deeds. A friend had shown Don Corleone the magazine (his family did not dare), and the Don had grunted disdainfully and said, "He performs those miracles for strangers." When Michael Corleone was discharged early in 1945 to recover from a disabling wound, he had no idea that his father had arranged his release. (Puzo, 13)

Despite this apparently solid role, we are approaching a turning point in the evolution of the father and in the concept of fatherhood. Even though he remains the head of the two families, the features of his role are undeniably changing, and I dare to assert that – at least in

[25] This is not an unusual fear for a father, as we can even see it in an episode of Homer's *Ilyad.* Here, King Priam wants to prevent Hector from fighting against Achilles. He is divided between his duties as king of Troy and his paternal feelings over his son.

The Godfather saga – the father as a *pater familias* dies with Don Vito, in his vegetable garden.

Unlike the other two sons – Fredo and Sonny – who want and act to please their father (maybe they hope to take up his legacy), Michael behaves in a different manner. From the very beginning we are presented with his refusal of the paternal authority, of the heritage it entails, and therefore a willingness to go against the "Law of the Father" – as he did not want to submit to it. In fact, "he sat at a table in the extreme corner of the garden to proclaim his chosen alienation from father and family" (Puzo,12). Besides, he sat with Kay Adams, a non-Sicilian girl he brought to the wedding, and who was not even part of the Corleone's circle.

> The third son, Michael Corleone, did not stand with his father and his two brothers but sat at a table in the most secluded corner of the garden. But even there he could not escape the attentions of the family friends. Michael Corleone was the youngest son of the Don and the only child who had refused the great man's direction. He did not have the heavy, Cupid-shaped face of the other children, and his jet black hair was straight rather than curly. […] Now this youngest son sat at a table in the extreme corner of the garner of the garden to proclaim his chosen alienation from father and family. Beside him the American girl everyone had heard about but whom no one had seen until this day. He had, of course, shown the proper respect and introduced her to everyone at the wedding, including his family. They were not impressed with her. (Puzo, 12)

Apart from the change of the father figure, what is also weakening is the role of the Godfather as *pater familias* of the criminal Family. If we think for a moment about the traditional initiation ritual[26] that a new *mafioso* has to carry out to become a true "man of honor", he pledges his complete loyalty to the new Family, but most of all he recognizes the Law of the Father, and respects the Godfather as an authority. It is a highly symbolic moment

[26] "During the ceremony […] the candidate swears the oath […] with the burning image of a saint in his hands. […] Before being burnt the image is stained with some drops of the neophyte's blood" (Paoli, 68). As the image of the saint is burning, in the same way should burn the man if ever he betrays the Family and his Godfather.

for the man, and it can be compared – only in meaning, and not in sacredness – to the presentation of Jesus Christ at the Temple by Joseph. This act was typical at the time, and it marked the child's passing from an individual development to a wider approach, that is to say with the father, the society, and God. Therefore the child – or in this case the neophyte – has to relate and recognize the presence of an "other", submitting to the "Law of the father".

In *The Sopranos*, Christopher and Eugene both enter the Family through this ceremony ("Fortunate Son", 3.03), but its meaning is totally different as we have already witnessed the Lacanian "death of the father". They envision it as something "cool" that will make them important people. In one episode, in fact, Christopher gets angry because the press does not mention him in impending mob indictments ("The Legend of Tennessee Moltisanti", 1.08).

In *The Godfather* saga, the irreversible decay of the Family patriarch can be detected in the request of Don Vito's closest friend, Peter Clemenza, to form his own Family[27] – also speaking for Tessio.

> Clemenza had hoped to be given permission to form his own Family, to have his own empire split away from the Corleone. But the Don had indicated that this was not to be and Clemenza respected the Don too much to disobey. Unless of course the whole situation became intolerable. (Puzo, 533)

He was one of Don Vito's most trusted *caporegimes*, and he was there when the syndicate was created. He asked it in a very delicate time for the criminal Family, and this is an ultimate gesture of eternal trust towards his Godfather. His wish for a detachment is not due to an individualistic deed, but it is a refusal of a possible submission to Barzini and Tattaglia, as Tessio explains, maintaining an attitude of reverence.

[27] In the movie, Clemenza asks the Don both for him and Tessio to form their own Families, out of something Don Vito himself once told them. Whereas in the novel it is the Don who takes the decision, and Michael demands their loyalty, in the movie the Don wants to know whether they really are loyal to him or not, because he demanded their complete trust in Michael's decision not to let them break off from the Corleones.

> "Forgive me, Godfather, let our years of friendship be my excuse. But I think you and your son are all wrong with this Nevada business. How can you hope for success there without your strength here to back you up? The two go hand in hand. And with you gone from here the Barzini and the Tattaglia will be too strong for us. Me and Pete will have trouble, we'll come under their thumb sooner or later. And Barzini is a man not to my taste. I say the Corleone Family has to make its move from strength, not from weakness. We should build up our *regimes* and take back our lost territories in Staten Island at least." (Puzo, 534)

The Don does not give his blessing, because it would mean going against Michael – now the real man in charge. The last word is not up to the family's patriarch anymore. He doesn't want to interfere, also considering that he chose his son as his successor, and doesn't want Michael to lose credibility.

Later on in the story, Michael's own brother Fredo will try to betray him, out of a repressed jealousy, resembling the biblical situation of Cain and Abel. In response, Michael decides that he will no longer consider him as a brother. He murders him, first symbolically and then literally.

Furthermore, I want to underline that, when we talk of the need of a "law", it has not necessarily to be a male figure as long as an authority figure is present in the family. Patriarchy "is a signifier, a cultural construct and not a biological or natural feature" (Ebert, 19). A first example is the adoption of Tom Hagen, an Irish orphan whom Sonny found in the streets and brought home. This adoption – which was never formalized – was an act of reciprocal acceptance, as Tom considered Don Vito as a true father, and the Don chose him to be his son, his family lawyer, and later a *consigliore*.

Another instance is the matriarch Lucia Santa in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* – who can be seen as a female version of Don Corleone. The fact that the Don Corleone character was created out of a woman reinforces the affirmation of patriarchy as a pure signifier. She is a woman, a wife – she has remarried to Frank Corbo after her first husband died – and she is a

mother. Most of all, she is the ultimate *pater familias*, because she was forced to take up a role that usually belonged to a man, in order not to leave the family fatherless – something that was also fundamental to Don Vito: to have the complete control of the family in order for it to survive. She forsees what will happen in the future: a gradually more feminist society, where women will start taking men's places. After Anthony Angeluzzi's death – Lucia Santa's first husband – Larry should have become the head of the family, and the one in charge. Unfortunately he fails, and Lucia Santa "tak[es] on the public role of the father"[28] (Gardaphé, 27).

> A good man must have ambition not only for himself, but also for his family. In typical Italian fashion, in the father's absence, the father's responsibilities fall to the oldest son. Therefore, Larry must begin contributing to the family's welfare at a young age by providing for the family through his railroad job and by protecting his brothers when they get into trouble on the street. When he falls short of providing the customary protection for the entire family, his mother, Lucia Santa, must step into a family position of power traditionally reserved for men. (Gardaphé, 25)

Puzo himself, in the "Preface" to *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, stated that he molded the character of Don Corleone on his own mother and on the character of Lucia Santa, which had been created a few years before. Considering that both are to be seen as *pater familias*, I want to highlight one last thing about the inevitable decay of the role they embody. We can notice – in both novels – how this kind of father figure disappears when the characters' families are moved from their original "safe" little community to somewhere else. By moving outside a

[28] Another example of female family leader – similar to Lucia Santa – is the heroin of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Scarlett O'Hara goes through three marriages, but, in the first two, she is the strong personality in the couple, as she is able to take advantage of her strong influence. However this is not only a result of her power of persuasion, since the first two men she marries, Charles Hamilton and Frank Kennedy, are weak and easy to steer. She is, in a way, forced to be the man, and it is thanks to her that the family can survive the harsh period of the Civil War. Her attitude – not typical of a Southern lady – prevents her from building a relationship with her children Wade and Ella, as she is not able to be a real loving and caring mother like Melanie Hamilton. In the end, when she marries Rhett and her financial situation finally improves again, she realizes how much time she has wasted, and promises to herself that with Bonnie she will behave differently. Rhett is a man with a strong personality, and a husband who can really take care of her. Only after this last marriage she can go back and be a woman again, even though her nature never really changes.

traditional place, they are forced to leave behind the ethnic community and Americanize – which implies conforming to the gradual changes of our time. In the case of Lucia Santa, she move to the suburbs.

> In the final chapter of *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, Lucia and her family move to the suburbs. This is a sign of the immigrant's assimilation to American culture, but it also suggests a loss of Lucia's power. Puzo, in essence, kills Lucia's dominance by moving her away from her power base, the ethnic community, where her native language could still be used to further her causes, where her friendships could aid in providing for and protecting her family. The move to the suburbs also symbolizes the turning over of power to the next generation, especially to the males. (Gardaphé, 31)

In *The Godfather*, Don Vito has given up his place to his son – as we see at the beginning of the second movie where the camera stops on his empty chair. Don Corleone moved his family from New York to Long Beach, whereas Michael decided to supervise the family in Nevada, far from the well-known New York area.

I cannot affirm that Michael is no longer a *pater familias*, considering that he still has influence on the members of the family, and he still exercises some power. What I can say is that his role is much weaker if compared to Don Vito's, and he anticipates some of the traits we will detect in Tony Soprano – definitely the antithesis of a *pater familias*.

The difference between Don Vito and Michael can be immediately perceived if we compare the initial scenes of *The Godfather Part I* and *The Godfather: Part II*. I have already presented Connie's wedding scene in the previous chapter, and here Don Corleone holds his power inside his office at home – not in a public place – surrounded only by his family and honorary kin. On the contrary, in *The Godfather: Part II* we have a confirmation that

Michael is now in charge through a scene where some members of the Family kiss his hand[29], meaning that he is recognized and accepted as the new Godfather.

> INT. DON CORLEONE'S OLD OFFICE – CLOSE VIEW ON MICHAEL CORLEONE – DAY
> standing impassively, like a young Prince, recently crowned King.
> CLOSE VIEW ON Michael's hand. ROCCO LAMPONE kisses his hand. Then it is taken away. We can SEE only the empty desk and chair of Michael's father, Vito Corleone. We HEAR, over this, very faintly a funeral dirge played in the distance, as THE VIEW MOVES SLOWLY CLOSER to the empty desk and chair.

Don Vito invited only family members to the wedding, and as soon as some FBI agents arrive they immediately send them away underlining the private nature of the event. On the other hand, Anthony's Confirmation party is more open, with the participation of public personalities.

Here we immediately see that Michael's authority as the head of the family has decreased. His sister – deprived of a father figure and aware that her own brother killed her first husband Carlo Rizzi – goes and tells him she wants to remarry. However, once he suggests to her that she should come back home because with the family she will have anything she wants, she replies that he is not her father, and what she needs is money. This has a strong symbolic meaning, considering that she once believed in his patriarchal authority, having asked him to become her son's godfather. Moreover, that son was even named after Michael. Besides, the fact that Merle does not leave the room, although he was asked to by Michael, is another clear sign of this weakening.

> Connie steps in impatiently, followed by Merle.
>
> MICHAEL
> I said I would see my sister, alone.

[29] This is a typical Southern Italian gesture that indicates a complete submission of one person to another. Usually it is accompanied by the Italian saying "Baciamo le mani" [We kiss your hands].

MERLE
I think this concerns me too.
(taking a cigarette
from the dispenser)
You don't, do you?

Connie steps forward, kisses Michael on the cheek.

CONNIE
How are you, honey? You've met Merle, haven't you. He was with me in Vegas.

MICHAEL
I saw him with you.

CONNIE
We're going to Europe next week. I want to get passage booked on the Queen.

MICHAEL
Why do you come to me? Why don't you go to a travel agent?

MERLE
We're going to get married first.

Michael is silent. Then he rises, and moves to the window overlooking the lake.

MICHAEL
The ink on your divorce isn't dry. Your children see you on weekends; your oldest boy, Michael Francis... was in some trouble with the Reno police over some petty theft that you don't even know about.

CONNIE
Michael...

MICHAEL
You fly around the world with lazy young men who don't have any love for you, and use you like a whore.

CONNIE
You're not my father!

MICHAEL
Then why do you come to me?

CONNIE
Because I need MONEY!

MICHAEL
(softly)
Connie, I want to be reasonable with you. You have a house here, with us. You can live here with your kids...and you won't be deprived of anything. I don't know much about Merle; I don't know what he does for a living; what he lives on. Why don't you tell him marriage is really out of the question; and that you can't see him any more. He'll understand. But if you disobey me, and marry this pimp... it would disappoint me.

CONNIE
It was my father's money; and I'm entitled to what I need. Where is Tom Hagen?

The relationship of the three godfathers with their daughters will not be analyzed in depth, as I do not consider it fundamental to the purpose of this dissertation.

3.2. The Impact of Religion: the Godfather acting as God

> *The figure of the father is a momentous experience for the child. For the adult, too, the relationship to the father is fundamental, and the image of the father often bears superhuman traits. In the Christian world God is addressed as "our Father."*
>
> Heinrich Karl Fierz (41)

Fierz here defined the father as a person with "superhuman traits". In fact God and Catholicism had a great impact, not only on the old *padrino*, but also on the people who surrounded him. Recalcati observed that "la sua potenza fallica ereditava direttamente la potenza teologica del Dio-padre della tradizione religiosa stringendo la Legge e il desiderio in un connubio fondato trascendentalmente" (21). The *pater familias,* and consequently the Godfather, took the figure of God – the father par excellence – as someone to emulate, acting sometimes as one of his substitutes, and used religious worship and tradition to back up his credibility and his role. The father thus becomes a Godlike figure.

If we think about the Catholic Church and its hierarchy we notice that it is structured absolutely as a patriarchal society – the Pope, its head, being the personification of Christ on Earth. Besides, since ancient times men and women have always felt the need to pray to someone or something above them – either a god or a force of nature – when in need.

Recalcati wrote that there was a time in which praying was like breathing (18), that is to say a natural and necessary act. We can affirm that the Godfather – as well as the *pater familias* in general – based their roles on something that has always been present in human history. In fact, these figures started a weakening process when people began losing the need for a God, and the necessity to pray. From this point on, our society has undertaken the irreversible path of individualism – as happens in *The Sopranos*.

Discussing the faith of Italian American immigrants, Peter Kvidera, in an essay on *Christ in Concrete*, defines it as "Cultural Catholicism".

> Catholicism emerges not only as a cultural articulation, but also as a performance by which they simultaneously retain tradition and create new standards for coping with tragedy and disappointment. As a pragmatic response to material circumstances, Catholicism is not a fixed practice but a process that evolves according to individuals and their experiences. […] This is not to say that Di Donato or his characters unquestionably accept Church authority. But despite disappointment with the institutional Church, extricating oneself from Catholicism and fervent devotion to the images and ideals of its doctrine is not always possible or even desirable. Catholicism continues to define cultural practice. (Kvidera, 157-158)

If we compare *Christ in Concrete* with *The Godfather* – a non-mafia and a mafia story – we notice how people need a Godlike figure to turn to, both for spiritual and material support. By emulating the crucified Jesus' appeal to his Father, Geremio, who is the "Christ in concrete" of the title and still believes in the presence of a God, desperately wonders where Christ has gone. He screams: "Show yourself now, Jesu! Now is the time! Save me! Why don't you come! Are you there! I cannot stand it – ohhh, why do you let it happen—where are you? Hurry hurry hurry!" (Di Donato, 18).

In an essay, Sarah Benelli – while discussing the failure of Catholicism in *Christ in Concrete* – notices how a twelve-year-old Paul – after Geremio's death – goes to church and prays to God because he was deprived of his father and the financial sustain of the family.

> There he prays in earnest: "Here in the church of worship I kneel, my Lord. You have taken dear father away for your own need...can you not send him back, O Lord?" (55). His father's return not forthcoming, Paul decides to appeal to the priest for food and help. After a struggle, he is finally permitted to enter the chambers and see Father John. The priest has been at his dinner; Paul's ravenous eyes see a huge table groaning under the weight of sumptuous food. He tells his story to the priest, whose response is, "But tell me, what can *I* do?" (58). He goes on to explain that he

> does not personally give any charity, since that is handled by a board of trustees, and that he can do nothing to help Paul and his family. He finally sends Paul away with a piece of strawberry shortcake to take home, and wishes him well. Presumably, he returns to his full table to finish his supper undisturbed.

After this scene we notice how "the initial failure of the American Catholic church to reach out to the Italian immigrants gave rise to the general impression that this Church was even more indifferent to their needs than the Church in Italy had been" (Mangione – Morreale, 327). Therefore, the irreversible end of patriarchy goes together with the fading importance of the Church as an institution, and its secularization. We can affirm that we are going more and more towards a society without fathers.

In *The Godfather*, a widow, who is going through some family troubles, is advised to ask Don Corleone for help, instead of going to church and hoping for a miracle. With this scene, the *padrino* is presented as a godlike figure.

It is a clear instance of how he heads the little community in the same way he does with his blood family. Besides, he went through this same situation before. By presenting himself as paternal and strong, the godfather – in this case Don Corleone –, manages to strengthen his position of authority, because these are characteristics a father should have.

> One night Vito's wife brought a neighbor, a widow, to the flat. The woman was Italian and of an impeachable character. She worked hard to keep a home for her fatherless children. Her sixteen-year-old son brought home his pay envelope sealed, to hand over to her in the old country style; her seventeen-year-old daughter, a dressmaker, did the same. The whole family sewed buttons on cards at night at slave labor piece rates. The woman's name was Signora Colombo. Vito Corleone's wife said, "The Signora has a favor to ask of you. She is having some trouble." […] Vito said to Mrs. Colombo, "I can give you some money to help you move, is that what you want?" The woman shook her head, she was in tears. "All my friends are here, all the girls I grew up with in Italy. How can I move to another neighborhood with strangers? I want you to speak to the landlord to let me stay." Vito nodded. "It's

> done then. You won't have to move. I'll speak to him tomorrow morning." (Puzo, 274-275)

When Annunziata is desperate due to her very poor family situation, as was the widow with Don Corleone, she turns to another person, "The Cripple", whom she hopes will be useful to contact her dead husband's soul. This woman, basically a pagan, is supposed to be a mediator between the spiritual and the earthly world. The scene bears a lot of similarities with the one previously described in *The Godfather*, as both the women seek the help of an "other".

Michael, although he has taken his father's empty position, is not able to show a balance between compassion and strength, and he appears as a rather cynical person. The emulated image of a merciful and powerful God is fading, and it is making way for the weaker father of *The Sopranos*.

Borrowing a famous Nietzschean aphorism, we could affirm that "God is dead"[30]. In fact, when Paul is asked by Louis if he has seen his father or God, he answers that "there is no God".

> 'You have seen your father.'
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'You knew your father?'
> 'Yes...'
> 'And you know your mother?'
> 'Of course.'
> 'And you love them.'
> 'Why, yes.'
> 'Have you seen God?'
> Paul felt something weakening him.

[30] "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?" (Nietzsche, 125)

'Louis – haven't you – don't you believe in God?'
The gray eyes turned full on him.
'There is no God.' (Di Donato, 140)

Paul's refusal of religion, the denial of the existence of a God, and Michael's initial rejection of his father's godlike role both forebode the change that our society will undergo. They both are a preliminary representation of Lacan's "death of the father". In *The Sopranos* it is A.J. who starts questioning, and then denying the existence of God. In the episode "D-Girl" (2.07), A.J. – after learning Nietzsche's ideas – he gets a new outlook on life, and does not want to attend his own Confirmation. Doctor Melfi explains to Tony that it a normal phase of adolescence, but it is not only the denial of a godly figure, but also the refusal of a fatherly authority. By accepting this idea, he also refuses some beliefs that should have been transmitted by his family, and it seems he does not have faith in them anymore.

3.3. The Death of the Father

> *Ogni discorso sulla crisi della funzione paterna sembra essere, al tempo stesso, irrimediabilmente datato e irrimediabilmente urgente. Non solo perché non ci si rassegna facilmente al lutto del Padre, ma soprattutto perché l'umanizzazione della vita esige l'incontro con "almeno un padre".*
>
> Massimo Recalcati (15)

In 1938, Jacques Lacan started talking about the decline of the *Imago Paterna*, meaning that both society and the family's father figure were gradually disappearing. We have reached a time in which the patriarchal figure has faded.

Massimo Recalcati has discussed this in depth, in particular in his books *Cosa resta del padre?* and *Il complesso di Telemaco*, himself being a Lacanian scholar. In these two

works not only does he sustain his theories with real-life situations, but also with literature and movies. On reading them, I immediately noticed how much of what he suggests can be applied to both Michael Corleone and Tony Soprano as fathers.

Initially, we approach Michael as a son, and the first opinion we build of him is based on the differences from his siblings. When he becomes a husband and a father, he starts showing some of the behaviors and features that will characterize the postmodern father of *The Sopranos*.

Recalcati proposes that we think of the father as a *resto*[31] and not as an *Ideale normativo*[32]. He argues that, whereas once the Father and the Law were the same thing, we have now witnessed their decay.

> Il nostro tempo sembra infatti sancire l'irrimediabile declino della rappresentazione edipica della rappresentazione edipica del Padre mettendosi apertamente sotto il segno dell'"anti-Edipo", esercitando una critica radicale dell'equivalenza freudiana di Padre e Legge. In realtà Freud stesso, ben prima della critica antiedipica degli anni Settanta, annunciava l'epoca della dissoluzione del Padre, come se il padre, sin dalle origini della dottrina psicoanalitica, fosse un padre evanescente, castrato, opposto e alternativo al fulgore autorevole del *pater familias*. (Recalcati, 28)

From the opening scenes of *The Godfather: Part II*, Michael Corleone does not really pay attention to Anthony, who – this day in particular – should be at the center of his thoughts. At Connie's wedding, Vito Corleone managed really well to give attention to his family, and he even refused to take the group photo because he wanted to wait for Michael to arrive. Although he was working, the most important thing for him was that his daughter was getting married.

At the party thrown at Lake Tahoe, we see Anthony sitting alone, and taking the family photo without his father. The only people who stood by his side were the women of

[31] Remainder, what is left.
[32] Regulatory model.

the family; it clearly shows a gradual change in the role of mothers. Michael reaches them only when Senator Geary publicly thanks him for the sum he has donated to the University in the name of Anthony.

> Anthony, in his Communion suit sits alone at the table, looking like a lonely young Prince.
>
> KAY (O.S.)
> Smile, Anthony. Smile.
>
> He does, and a flash goes off.
>
> PHOTOGRAPHER (O.S.)
> Now, one with the whole family.
>
> KAY (O.S.)
> Mr. Corleone can't right now...
>
> KAY CORLEONE enters from the side, leading her four year old daughter, MARY, and MAMA CORLEONE to pose with Anthony.
>
> KAY (O.S.)
> ...but we'll get one with the ladies.
>
> PHOTOGRAPHER
> All together now, c'mon, Anthony...
> CHEESE and
> (flash)
>
> KAY
> Thank you.
>
> She smiles as she leaves the photographer, and then lets out a weary sigh to Mama, as she touches the slightly protruding belly.

Anthony tries to spend time with his father, at least once that day, but Michael appears interested only in his business. When Anthony shows up in front of his father's office, it is Kay who takes him away, as if Michael did not even notice his presence. It is

something that hurts him a lot as he rudely runs away from his mother and goes back to the table without giving an answer when asked where he is going.

Throughout the second movie, the scenes in which Michael and Anthony interact are only two, to demonstrate that he is not important enough to him. This is something that will leave a mark on the child and will influence his future decisions. That night during the party, Anthony, still dressed in his white Communion suit, is again sitting all alone. Like a modern Telemachus, he is constantly waiting for his father – whom, unlike Ulysses, is not trying to find his way home.

At the end of the party, Michael finally goes and talks with him. However, the conversation proves the inability of the father to sustain a real dialog with his son. The initial little hope of Anthony, hinted at by his wide open eyes towards his father, suddenly disappears as he again gives no answer.

> Suddenly, Anthony turns, his eyes open. He is staring, perfectly awake, at his father.
>
> MICHAEL
> Can't you sleep?
>
> No answer.
>
> MICHAEL
> Are you alright?
>
> ANTHONY
> Yes.
>
> MICHAEL
> Did you like your party?
>
> ANTHONY
> I got lots of presents.
>
> MICHAEL
> Do you like them?
>
> ANTHONY
> I didn't know the people who gave them to me.
>
> MICHAEL
> They were friends.

He kisses his boy, and then turns.

ANTHONY
Did you see my present for you?

MICHAEL
No, where is it?

ANTHONY
On your pillow.

MICHAEL
I'm leaving very early tomorrow,
before you wake up.

ANTHONY
I know. How long will you be gone?

MICHAEL
Just a few days.

ANTHONY
Will you take me?

MICHAEL
I can't.

ANTHONY
Why do you have to go?

MICHAEL
To do business.

ANTHONY
I can help you.

MICHAEL
Some day you will.

As soon as Michael goes back to his room he looks at the pillow to see which present his son put there for him. It is a drawing, but the fact that Anthony is trying to interact with his father through a written message, accentuates even more the absence of communication between them.

An arrow pointing to him is marked "DAD." Under it, a nine
year old's handwriting says: "Do you like it? Check YES __
I liked it or NO __ I didn't like it." Michael turns,
looking for a pencil, and moves to the dresser, where he

places a check next to "YES."

We won't see Michael talking with his son again until the beginning of the final chapter of the trilogy. The communication is entirely interrupted, as Michael – who just got back home – asks Tom Hagen if his family knows he has returned. Moreover, he wants to know if Tom bought and sent Anthony a Christmas present. His family, and his son in particular, have become to him like a surplus, something he owns, and something he has to provide for and maintain. He has become – totally unlike his father – much too absorbed by himself. This increasing detachment will be strikingly shown in the final movie, when Michael, unlike his father, will die alone in his garden.

Michael sits in a comfortable chair in his apartment. Neri comes and brings him a drink without asking, but Michael refuses it.

MICHAEL
Al, get me a wet towel. Does Kay know I'm back?

Hagen nods.

MICHAEL
Did the boy get something from me for Christmas?

HAGEN
I took care of it.

MICHAEL
What was it, so I'll know.

HAGEN
A little care he can ride in with an electric motor.

Coppola's editing of the movie is again really effective, as he pulls together this scene with the one in which a young Vito Corleone is looking in a painful manner at his sick son Santino who is crying. The director has been able to contrast Michael's coldness and individualism with Vito's love and sympathy for his family.

Moreover, *The Godfather: Part II* is made of two storylines that move simultaneously, as Coppola[33] wants to show us two generations in comparison.

I also detected some similarities with another Italian American fictional father: Nick Molise, the protagonist of John Fante's *The Brotherhood of the Grape*. In particular I saw many resemblances in the way they consider their children.

There is a moment in Fante's novel in which Henry sees his offspring as property, that is to say as something utilitarian. He was convinced that it was enough to provide them with a living to gain their respect and gratitude.

> "I'm just fine, boys. Tired, that's all. Very tired. Alone in the world. Trying to do the right thing. You do your best for your family. You feed them, buy them clothes, send them to school, and then they turn around and throw you out. I don't know what happened… what I done wrong. Maybe 'cause I was too good. I don't know. God help me. I tried, I tried hard…" (Fante, 52)

This is the same justification Michael gives to Kay when she wants a divorce, and demands that their children stay with her. He is furious about her request, and claims custody. He wants his children to stay with him in order to have something to trade, because he thinks that it will prevent Kay from leaving. This fictional situation is not that far from what happens nowadays when a husband and a wife argue, using children as a sort of commodity.

As Recalcati has affirmed, while before there was an Oedipal struggle, now we live in the epoch of the son as a Telemachus. It is a son who does not see his father as an enemy (as Oedipus), but he wants the Law of the Father to be restored to put everything in order.

[33] In the novel, Puzo dedicates a chapter to Don Vito's life before coming to America. Coppola, on the contrary, takes this story, and decides not to put it in the first movie. He splits it in several fragments in *The Godfather: Part II*.

> La mia tesi è che il nostro tempo non sia più sotto il segno di Edipo, dell'Anti-Edipo e di Narciso, ma sotto quello di Telemaco. Telemaco domanda giustizia: nella sua terra non c'è più Legge, non c'è più rispetto, non c'è più ordine simbolico. Egli esige che si ristabilisca la Legge e che la "notte dei Proci" finisca. […] Attende il padre, attende la Legge del padre come ciò che potrà rimettere ordine nella sua casa usurpata, offesa. […] Telemaco, diversamente da Edipo, si rivolge all'assenza del padre con la speranza di poterlo incontrare. (Recalcati, 112-113)

We have to wait until the last chapter of the trilogy for the reconciliation between father and son. In *The Godfather: Part II* it does not happen because Michael does have a choice while Ulysses is forced to leave Ithaca and his family[34]. In fact, in the movie, there is a sort of reenactment of Ulysses' coming back, and as soon as Michael crosses the threshold after a business trip, he finds no one to greet him. In the other room Kay, who is working at her sewing machine – resembling a modern Penelope – doesn't even seem to hear he has entered the house. Neither of his children are there to welcome him home.

An even more emblematic scene is to be found in a first draft of *The Godfather – Part III*'s screenplay[35]. The initial scene of this version is set in September 1959, and the movie opens at the Corleone compound at Lake Tahoe. A ten-year-old Anthony Corleone is standing on the lakeside looking at the horizon.

> HAGEN'S POINT OF VIEW – THE LAKE AND THE LAKESIDE
>
> Standing by the shore of the lake is a little boy. Tony Adams Corleone, aged about ten. The boy, dressed for travel, is looking off at the lake, his back toward us.

[34] Recalcati explained it in a note to his book and has written: "Ulisse non è solo l'immagine della scaltrezza della ragione borghese. […] È anche colui che sa rifiutare il godimento mortale per mantenere fede al suo desiderio (ritornare da Penelope) e alla sua promessa paterna (ritornare da Telemaco). Sappiamo come il mito racconti che Ulisse non aveva alcuna voglia di partire per la lunga guerra di Troia e che per convincerlo la testa del piccolo Telemaco venne messa sotto il vomere affilato dell'aratro. In quel momento egli non ebbe dubbi a sacrificare la sua vita e la sua libertà per la vita del figlio. […] Nessun incontro, nessun sortilegio lo distrarrà mai completamente dal compito del ritorno, dalla responsabilità illimitata verso la sua famiglia." (114)

[35] I refer to a first draft of the movie script written by Dean Riesner in 1979 (ten years before the final version of Puzo and Coppola). The screenplay, unlike the final version, focuses on the character of Anthony.

[…]

HAGEN
Tony.

(THEN)
Time to go.
There is a beat and Tony composes himself, turns and
moves up toward the house and Tom Hagen.

EXT. FRONT OF TAHOE HOUSE AND DRIVEWAY - DAY

The heavy, black sedan is loaded. Connie Corleane
and a Housekeeper, in uniform, are bringing Mary,
about five, out to the car. She too is dressed for
travelling. As they put her into the car --

CONNIE
In you get ---

MARY
Will Daddy be at the airport?

- ANOTHER ANGLE
as Tom and Tony come up.

HAGEN
No. He wanted me to tell you both
how sorry he was.

In this scene, Anthony really gives the idea of a Telemachus looking at the sea – in this case the lake of his house – with the hope that is father would soon return. Here, his hope is shattered by Tom Hagen who says to him that they need to go, and announces that his father is not going to meet them at the airport. Once again, it is Tom Hagen who stands in for

Michael. It is interesting how in Anthony's name the surname of his mother appears, another sign of the growing importance of her role.

An evolution of the character of Michael is Tony Soprano, who is – as I wrote in the previous chapter – a son, or even better, a father of our times. Luigi Zoja, an Italian Jungian psychoanalyst, named a chapter in one his books "The Rarefaction of the Father". This is a perfect way to define and describe in a few words what has remained of the contemporary father.

> It has been said that the father is becoming a luxury. His traditional psychological functions are exercised to an ever slighter degree. His material tasks are conferred to mothers or institutions. His erosion as a psychological figure is by now accompanied by physical disappearance. How many fathers are unavailable to their children, and for how long? […] The father gives ever more money, but ever less time to his children. He counts out money *for* the lives of his children, but he himself counts ever less *within* those lives. (Zoja, 221)

This little description perfectly illustrates Tony's paternity. Throughout the series, and most of all with his son Anthony Jr., he requires the help of someone or something else. He struggles to conquer the respect of his son, and also to instill a little awe that a father should always elicit. Recalcati himself has written about the need of the contemporary parent to look for an "other" to mediate between him/her and the child.

> La Legge della parola non abolisce le asperità delle relazioni umane, ma rende possibile la loro inclusione in un discorso. Perché allora si è reso sempre più necessario l'intervento di una istanza terza capace di regolare semaforicamente il disordine delle relazioni affettive più intime? Sempre più frequentemente i problemi della famiglia finiscono di fronte a un giudice o esigono la mediazione compiuta da un Terzo. Nell'epoca in cui il Terzo sembra non esistere più, nell'epoca in cui tutto appare uguale a tutto, in cui la differenza tra le generazioni sembra inghiottita in una identificazione confusiva tra genitori e figli, si usa chiamare in causa il Terzo

> ogniqualvolta si incontra un ostacolo al perseguimento dei propri interessi o di quello dei propri figli. (Recalcati, 62-63)

In the series, a clear example to this statement is in the final episode of the third season, entitled “Army of One”. A.J. and a friend steal the answers to a geometry test. It is not the first time that his son has broken the rules, and Tony gets mad about this behavior. He then decides to send his son to a military school in order to straighten him out. In taking this decision, Tony demonstrates how feeble his authorial role is, and that he is not good enough at disciplining A.J.

CARMELA:	A permanent expulsion. I prayed I would never see this.
TONY:	Even I managed to get through school without getting expelled. Maybe it’s a blessing.
CARMELA:	I don’t see how that could be.
TONY:	The place was too loose. It was too easy.
A.J.:	How can you say that? I got expelled.
TONY:	You got nothing to say ‘till I tell you! Unless I ask you a direct question!
CARMELA:	Tony!
TONY:	I work hard all day to pay for this! 6000-square-foot house, big-screen TVs, food on the table, video games, all kinds of scooters and bicycles, Columbia University, and for what? To come home to this?
A.J.:	Sucks to be you.

[…]

TONY:	No, no more fucking schools that coddle him! He’s going to military school.
CARMELA:	What?
TONY:	That’s right, I got some brochures.
CARMELA:	You got school brochures?
TONY:	Yeah, from Janice. She was gonna send Harper there, but she didn’t have the money, and it was too fuckin’ late!

CARMELA: I'm not sending him away!
TONY: We are lookin' at those brochures!

Tony walks away.

CARMELA: What is with you, Tony?

("Army of One", 3.13)

If we think again about Don Vito who succeeded in making Michael come back from the war, we see how their roles are completely different. Don Vito did not need, and most of all, he did not want an "other" to control his son. Don Vito believed in his parental role, and he was very sure about his decisions.

Besides, almost at the end of the episode A.J. – while wearing his new uniform – starts crying because he does not want to be sent to the military school, and suddenly faints due to a panic attack. Tony confides to Doctor Melfi that he has changed his mind, and he doesn't want his son to go to that school anymore, and the uncertainty of the paternal authority shines through once again. He does not believe he can guarantee a secure future for his son. How can an insecure father claim some respect from a son? How can Tony demand his authority to be taken seriously when he is undecided? Apart from a few episodes, Don Vito never needed to raise his voice to dictate his decisions.

Moreover – in the series – Tony demonstrates his inability to be a father-like figure in his relationship with Christopher. Christopher is Carmela's first cousin, but he has always looked up to Tony, who considers him like a nephew. Tony is like the main guide to Christopher within the DiMeo Family. Even Livia is aware of the bond between the two, and remarks it during a conversation with Junior, affirming that "Tony always loved Christopher like a son" ("Denial, Anger, Acceptance", 1.03). Nonetheless, Tony feels the burden of his

responsibility over Christopher, and it is one of the causes of his panic attacks and one of the reasons for his therapy.

Christopher's storyline is, in my opinion, one of the most tragic in the series, as he is unable to truly turn his life over: he is violent, he is drugged most of the time, he struggles with the writing of his screenplay, and after he manages to marry, father a little girl, and get his movie *Clever* produced, he meets his inevitable tragic ending: Tony suffocates him. Tony and Christopher are heading back from a meeting with other bosses, and suddenly Christopher loses the control of the car, which spins out. Christopher is badly injured, and in spite of the terrible pain, the only thing he worries about is the drug test and the possibility of losing his driving license. At first, Tony attempts to shout for help, but then – since nobody is there – he decides to smother him. When they get to the hospital, Tony tells everybody he died in the crash. ("Kennedy and Heidi", 6.18).

At first, Tony's motive seems to be strictly linked to the disapproval of a character in Christopher's movie that was based on him. In a conversation with Doctor Melfi that follows Christopher's death, Tony defines him as "a weak, lying drug addict who fantasized about [his] downfall, [and] who even showed people his filthy thoughts on a movie screen" ("Kennedy and Heidi, 6.18). The truth is, that although he tries to justify himself by stating that he "hand-carried [that] kid through the worst crisis he ever had", he feels relieved now that he has gone. Along with Christopher, Tony also suffocated his responsibilities as a mentor, and chose the easier way. He preferred to eliminate the person who was supposed to be his successor, rather than to try harder and straighten him out.

Nevertheless, he feels some remorse, which appears – as usual – in one of his dreams, where he finds himself admitting during a therapy session to having killed him. This concealed guilt is not for what he has committed, but it is more a denial of his failure. We

detect the same failure in the relationship he has with his son A.J., with the difference that in the latter one, Carmela takes on his role.

Another problem that Recalcati touches upon in the contemporary father and in our society is the ever diminishing discrepancy between the generations. There is always an increasing confusion in parental authority, and there is the birth of what Recalcati calls "*genitore-figlio*"[36]. We have come to a time in which the parent, and in this case the father, is too much like his son or daughter, sometimes creating confusion because the child, on different occasions, seems to be the parent and vice versa. This discourse can be considered a precondition for the father who delegates his responsibilities to a third party, and that makes him lose credibility. Moreover, we can link it to the greater absence of communication, as we have previously detected in the relationship between Michael and his son.

In *The Sopranos*, one of the scenes that struck me most is in the episode "Meadowland" (1.04). Tony enters A.J.'s bedroom, and finds him still awake playing some video games. With a visible disinterest he asks him why he is not in bed yet, and obtains no answer. Instead of scolding him, Tony sits next to him and starts playing with him. Everything we have seen so far is included in this scene: the lack of communication, the failure of a father to bond with the son, the inability of a parent to dictate his authority, the almost inexistent gap between the generations, and last but not least the effects technology has on our lives. Moreover, their faces are a perfect representation of the apathy that characterizes our time. Tony is much more interested in winning the game – an activity that does not require any particular attention – than in what A.J. has to say to him. Besides, A.J. does not feel the need to share anything with his father, as he is totally absorbed by Mario Kart.

[36] Namely the "child-parent".

TONY: What are you doing up? You got school tomorrow.

A.J.: Working on a high score.

TONY: Did your mother go to bed?

A.J.: Yeah. Where were you?

TONY: The compactor went down at Barone Sanitation. Move over.

[Tony sits next to A.J. and starts playing] Ready?

A.J.: Yeah.

TONY: Go!

A.J.: Watch out for the ghosts.

TONY: This ain't steering right.

A.J.: Yeah. Kicking your butt.

TONY: So how're things going with you?

A.J. does not answer.

TONY: How's school?

A.J.: Dad, you have to concentrate. New game.

Tony puts his hand in front of A.J.'s eyes to make him lose the game.

A.J.: No fair.

TONY: It's called a handicap.

Tony's father, Johnny Boy, is already dead by the time the series takes place. However, we get the chance of knowing him through a series of flashbacks, as in the episode "Down Neck" (1.07) – the first one with him. We learn that Tony really looked up to his father and admired him, even though he definitely preferred Janice, and did not spend much time with Tony. In the same way, as we have previously seen, A.J. and Tony's bond is lacking a serious interaction.

3.4. The Legacy of the Father

> *Erede non è colui che incassa dei beni o dei geni dall'Altro; l'eredità autentica non è un fatto di sangue o di biologia. È ciò che Cristo prova a spiegare a un Nicodemo esterrefatto: se vuoi davvero nascere non basta la tua prima nascita, quella biologica, ma devi nascere una seconda volta. Non più dal ventre di tua madre, spiega con calma Gesù. La seconda nascita, quella che investe il problema dell'ereditare, è una conquista della soggettività.*
>
> Massimo Recalcati (122)

The matter of the legacy of the father is of great importance in the relationship between a parent and a child. Recalcati wrote that it is "l'esperienza dell'impossibile introdotta dalla Legge della parola che ci fa esistere come figli. […] Ogni umano, in quanto figlio, è un *erede*" (Recalcati, 136). The father's legacy can be really decisive and interfere with the life of the child if he/she does not know how to deal with it. In *The Godfather* in particular, Don Vito's legacy is fundamental for what Michael will turn into.

It is interesting to observe how different Michael's destiny is from Anthony's, who already belongs to the new generation. They come from the same family – therefore from the same way of thinking – but Anthony will be able to take that paternal history, and then build his own. He will be able to conquer his subjectivity, and start shaping his life with strong dedication.

At the beginning Michael tries to deny and stay out of the narrative of his family, and swears to Kay that he has nothing to do with it. When he talks of it – as he does at Connie's wedding – it sounds more like a description of characters he is not related to. When he does it, he shows a desired detachment. This self-exclusion from the family does not mean he does not love its members. On the contrary, he does care about them, and he demonstrates it after Don Vito risks his life, when he wants to avenge him. It is in the act of vendetta that Michael

repeats the story that once was told of Don Vito, who went back to Sicily to avenge his own parents. The same thing happens when Michael is the victim of a diabetes attack, and is hospitalized. Anthony goes to visit him with Kay and Mary, showing his father how much he cares. Michael does the same with the promise he will not miss his first opera performance in Palermo.

Maurizio Andolfi, in his book *Il padre ritrovato*, dedicates a chapter to the analysis of the exceptional mafia father, and writes:

> Il compito-dono del padre è quello di dispensare giustizia (Cigoli, 1997) a livello di relazioni familiari e sociali. E proprio sulla "riparazione del torto" si fonda il compito esistenziale […]. Nel legame generazionale quanto è stato *donato* dal padre, *obbliga* i figli alla vendetta. Quell'equità dello scambio, nel dare e avere, che permette il superamento del sentimento della colpa. (Andolfi, 216)

Michael almost managed to pursue and create his own destiny, but suddenly experiences a U-turn when he is forced to hide in Sicily – his land of origin. It seems as if before this journey he never really knew his father. After he has learnt where he comes from, he embraces a different destiny, the same as his father's. Regarding this topic, Recalcati explains how the absence or the refusal of the father can lead to a detachment from the regulatory weight of tradition[37].

Michael is not able to re-elaborate his history, and although he wants to legalize the Family, he will never really achieve this desire. He does not seem to realize that times have changed, and consequently society and the mentality of people. He will later become aware that "times have changed", in a conversation with an old Mama Corleone, but unfortunately it will be too late.

[37] "Nel tempo dell'evaporazione del padre non c'è solo la spinta del godimento mortale, ma anche una maggiore possibilità di invenzione: il vuoto del padre non è solo abisso senza fondo, ma anche apertura di nuove possibilità, non contiene solo il rischio della spinta compulsiva al godimento mortale, ma anche la possibilità di percorsi non più vincolati al peso normativo della tradizione." (Recalcati, 92-93)

However, Recalcati affirms that, after the death of the father the man becomes more and more an "*homo homini lupus*" (Recalcati, 155), who is someone who behaves like a wolf with other men. In fact, even though Michael carries on his father legacy, and takes his place, he shows a propensity for violence that his father never had.

Gardaphé tries to explain this with a failed separation from the mother, and writes that "this could be because Michael Corleone doesn't mature, and so he doesn't separate from his mother" (Gardaphé, 35). How can a man who is not able to mature be an exemplary father and transmit his legacy? Moreover, in a conversation with his son at the beginning of the third movie, he tells him that he would prefer him to become a lawyer. Don Vito, too, wanted a different future for his son, but the difference is that Michael only look at the possible benefits for his business.

The door opens and Tony comes in.

MICHAEL
(cold)
I hear you never wanted to be a lawyer.

TONY
I gave it a try. Because you were so much for it. But yes, I'm not going to take the bar. I wanted to tell you myself.

MICHAEL
Your mother prepared me.

TONY
(smiling)
So you wouldn't be angry.

MICHAEL
When have I ever been angry with you?

TONY
Never. You didn't have to be.

MICHAEL
What does that mean?

TONY
(pause)
It means that though I love you, I don't want to be in the family business.

MICHAEL
Anthony, I'm preparing to hand over the whole family business to you. It's all legal. You'll be one of the most powerful men in the world. And you can pursue your music. You can have everything you want.

TONY
You're my father and I love you. I'm grateful for everything you've given me. But I'm going my own way.

MICHAEL
Does that mean I can't help you?

TONY
(laughing)
Sure you can. I'll need all the help I can get. But either I have talent or I don't. The public will decide and you with all your power can't help in that.

He pauses for a moment and then says very quietly:

TONY
I don't want to live your life.

MICHAEL
I don't want you to live my life. I want to give you a chance to be a great man. To have your children become the leaders of this country. To have that chance.

TONY
No.

Anthony in answer quietly says that he will become a singer, and – with the support of his mother – he leaves the family. In this way he is able to break the imaginary fences his father built, and thus pursue his own wishes, in a scene that resembles both August Wilson's *Fences* and John Fante's *The Brotherhood of the Grape*. Indeed, only after this "imaginary rebirth" is he able to create a healthy relationship with his father, and finally communicate with him, as we see in the third movie. When in Sicily, there is a symbolic scene where Michael confesses to his son that he is very proud of him, and pulls out the old drawing Anthony left on Michael's pillow the day of his Communion party at Lake Tahoe. The

drawing, which once stood for their inability to communicate, now acts as a bridge between them.

In these two novels, the two sons leave their father's households behind and either become someone or realize what they had in mind. In *Fences*, Cory manages to become a Corporal in the United States Marine Corps, whereas in Fante's novel, Henry (who stands for Fante's himself) is able to create his own family and become a writer. It is only after they have discovered their subjectivities and enacted their free will, that they can symbolically and *de facto* return to their fathers and finally face their legacy[38]. In *The Brotherhood of the Grape*, Henry even helps his father with his last will before his death, which is the wish to build a smokehouse in the hills.

In *The Godfather: Part III*, Michael comes to terms with what he has done, but it is too late to redeem himself, most of all after the final tragic scene, when his beloved daughter Mary – the only one who seems to be involved in his activities – gets killed by a bullet destined for him.

The Godfather: Part III closes with the death of Michael, who passes away alone in his land of origin – unlike Don Vito who was surrounded by his family. This loneliness is the outcome of a failed adaptation to an evolving society; in fact he retires to an almost primitive land. It also seems to be a Dantesque retaliation law for the individualistic mentality he had developed through his life.

At the end of the trilogy, Vincent Mancini – Sonny's illegitimate son – will take Michael's place. Vinny never had the chance to grow up and spend time with his father,

[38] In the introduction to this chapter I mentioned Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* regarding the legacy of the father. Despite it does not talk about any particular father-child relationship, one of its main themes is the legacy of the forefathers. In fact, it seems that the Pyncheon family is not able to find its own history and carry on because of something terrible that Colonel Pyncheon – one of the forefathers – did long time before. It is only when the remaining members of the family break the tie and leave the doomed mansion – after having discovered the truth – that they can really start a new life. In this way, they have not to live in the shadows of their ancestors anymore. At a certain point in the romance, this idea is expressed by Holgrave – the young daguerreotypist – who explains to Phoebe that each new generation should destroy what the previous one did.

therefore he feels the need to be part of the Corleone family. He looks up to Michael, the closest person that can resemble a father, and who is in fact linked to him by blood.

3.5. The Weight of Masculinity

> *"… And I hope that their first child is a masculine child."*
>
> Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*

I want to make a little detour before passing on to the analysis of women, and reflect on the weight masculinity has on men, but most of all on fathers.

In Italy there is a well-known toast that people say at a wedding: "Tanti auguri e figli maschi"[39]. That is what Luca Brasi tell Don Corleone when he wants to thank him for the invitation to the wedding. This traditional saying indicates how embedded the importance of men in society is. Through the ages, masculinity or manliness has always been fundamental, and it is based on certain characteristics that serve to define a real man. In *The Sopranos* the men of the family, and in particular Tony, are obsessed with it, partly due to its lessening importance.

Don Vito says to his godson Johnny Fontane that "a man who is not a father to his children can never be a real man" (Puzo, 40). First of all, a man who has children means that his genitals – the body part that distinguishes him from the woman – are working. Secondly, with these words Don Vito underlines the fact that a man has to exercise his fatherly power as a head of the family. On the contrary, Johnny, who is divorcing his wife, "gave Ginny and the kids more than the courts said [he] should" (Puzo, 38).

[39] It could be translated with: "All the best and may you be blessed with male children".

It is one of the few times Don Vito loses his temper and yells, because he thinks that Johnny hadn't been man enough, and that he had been weak. He, as a father, should be the one in charge, and the one who takes the decisions.

> Don Corleone's face had become cold without a hint of sympathy. He said contemptuously, "You can start by acting like a man." Suddenly anger contorted his face. He shouted, "LIKE A MAN!" He reached over the desk and grabbed Johnny Fontane by the hair of his head in a gesture that was savagely affectionate. "By Christ in heaven, is it possible that you spent so much time in *my* presence and turned out no better than this? A Hollywood *finocchio* who weeps and begs for pity? Who cries out like a woman – 'What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?'" […] You left your family, your children without a father, to marry a whore and you weep because they don't welcome you back with open arms. (Puzo, 39-40)

Don Vito did not need to cheat on his wife to demonstrate his masculinity, but he knew how to behave, and how to impose his authority.

However, there is another thing to take into consideration as Johnny himself brings into focus, and it is that "not all women are like the old Italian wives, and Ginny won't stand for it" (Puzo, 40). It is an argument I will explore in the next chapter, but I just want to point out that men's masculinity is at stake because of the changing role of women, who are becoming less and less submissive toward their men. Johnny complains like a baby about his second wife fooling him.

> Now my second wife laughs at me. She can't understand my being jealous. She calls me an old-fashioned guinea, she makes fun of my singing. Before I left I gave her a nice beating but not in the face because she was making a picture. I gave her cramps, I punched her on the arms and legs like a kid and she kept laughing at me. […] The whore, you don't hit her in the face because she is making a picture, then you are amazed because she laughs at you. (Puzo, 38)

He is not able to exercise his authority, and he then says he cannot go back to Ginny because he has "to gamble, [he has] to drink, [he has] to go out with the boys". He feels the need to do all these things, which are usually manly activities, but he refuses to do the manliest thing of all: going back to his family and being a father.

In *The Sopranos*, Tony is constantly worried about his patriarchal manliness, even though it is an unconscious concern. In addition to his numerous flings – a means to demonstrate that his manly side still works – there is an emblematic dream he has. In the "Pilot" (1.01), Tony confides to Doctor Melfi a strange dream:

> My belly button was a Phillips head screw, and I'm workin' unscrewin' it, and when I get it unscrewed, my penis falls off. You know, I-I-I pick it up, and I'm holdin' it, and I'm runnin' around, lookin' for the guy who used to work on my Lincoln when I drove Lincoln so he can put it back on. And, you know, I'm holdin' it up, and this bird swoops down and grabs it in its beak and flies off with it. ("Pilot", 1.01)

Right from the start, we are presented with Tony's concern of a weakening virility, and he is the victim of several panic attacks that make him faint. In the same episode, he becomes really fond of a family of ducks who have occupied his swimming pool. When they suddenly migrate, he grows sad and anxious, clearly symptoms of the fixed fear of losing either his children or his family. Moreover, the bird that steals his penis is a duck, and it may stand for the worry of not being up to his role as a husband and a father, as the phallus is the symbol of manliness, fatherhood, and also family power.

In the episode "From Where to Eternity" (2.09), Carmela, who is aware of her husband's high jinks, proposes a vasectomy to Tony, after having heard that the mistress of a mobster just gave birth to an illegitimate child. The interesting thing is that when Tony finally agrees, Carmela changes her mind. Tony is worried about his virility, but he is

evidently unable to maintain it[40]. This fear can also be detected in the fact that he does not like his daughter's boyfriends[41], and he always finds some excuse to belittle them. For instance, one of Meadow's first boyfriends, Noah Tannenbaum, was both African American and Jewish, and Tony did not miss an opportunity of mistreating him, as if he were afraid of being replaced as the alpha man. He, therefore, has to demonstrate he is the strong one, and he holds power over his daughter. Despite his efforts, he never manages to have a strong influence on Meadow, who clearly stands for a more contemporary embodiment of woman.

If we look back at the character of Don Corleone, it is difficult to imagine him with the same worries as those of Tony Soprano. When Connie decides to marry Carlo Rizzi, a friend of Sonny, Don Vito does not think he is suited for her, but he has never dared to scorn him. In spite of his dislike, he agrees with his daughter's decision to the point he expunges Carlo's criminal record, and finds him a job.

Tony, unlike Don Vito, belongs to an epoch where such anxieties are an ordinary thing, and it is undeniable that, nowadays, the issue of manliness or masculinity becomes increasingly relevant for a man. Women are socially gaining ground, and inside the domestic system we have begun to witness a reverse of the family roles, as mothers and wives are more likely to be the manly figures of the household.

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[40] In Fante's *The Brotherhood of the Grape*, one of Nick's sons, Virgil, communicates to the family that his wife Edith is pregnant again, after three children. Someone suggests to use something, and he promptly answers that he uses his cock. He is very proud of it, and when they propose a vasectomy, he tells them that it is for dogs. (Fante, 62-63).

[41] The issue of manliness is also a central theme in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*. In this play, the protagonist Eddie Carbone acts exactly like Tony. Eddie, who is married to Beatrice, is continuously mistreating his niece Catherine's love interest Rodolfo. Eddie is jealous and feels threatened by him, as Rodolfo spends a great amount of time with Catherine in his own house, thus the only thing he is able to do is scorn him by belittling his manhood. Eddie keeps highlighting those features he considers feminine, such as his blonde hair, or the way he sings ["He's a blond guy. Like… platinum. You know what I mean? […] I mean if you close the paper fast – you could blow him over […] If you came in the house and you didn't know who was singin', you wouldn't be lookin' for him you be lookin' for her" (Miller, 47)] . Moreover, he marks his territory by underlining that he is the head of the household, and that they are in his house.

IV.
Mafia Women

Although this dissertation is meant to deal with the analysis of the evolution of the father figure in the fictional Mafia environment, I think that it is indispensable to look at the women who are behind these men. If we think about ordinary families, mothers and wives are constant figures. Female characters can shape a man's nature and destiny, and it does not happen only in the Mafia world. If we go back to Freud's Oedipal theory, the mother is as fundamental as the father, because she is the one who balances the paternal role in the development of the child. She is on the other side of the scale.

Moreover, as Glen Gabbard points out, anyone "knows that a boy's relationship with his mother shapes all later relationships with women" (99), and this is the peculiar case of Tony Soprano.

In this chapter I am going to go through the main women of *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos*, that is to say Mama Corleone, Kay Adams, Carmela and Livia Soprano as models of the evolution of their roles, to see to what extent they have conditioned the godfathers.

4.1. Mama Corleone: The Discrete Italian Wife

> *Magliocco was an old-style Sicilian. He believed that a man's wife was his property. But Sicilians also greatly respected wives, regarded them as objects of honor, and any husband in Sicily who had been as indiscreet as Bill would undoubtedly have been shot to death long ago.*
>
> Gay Talese (qtd in Gardaphé, 54)

I have ended the previous chapter by highlighting the weight of masculinity on the men, and most of all the fathers. This feature was very important to demonstrate they could head the household, and have all the members under their authority. They were not supposed to show any feminine and, consequently, "weak" traits. However, as Don Corleone thought, "without a wife and without any children what kind of man is a man?" (qtd in Siebert, 56). Therefore, among those who had to submit to the *capo* of the house were the wives.

In order to better understand the character of Mama Corleone we have to look once again at the Sicilian tradition. Puzo does not mention her very often, reducing her almost to a secondary character. The fact that she does not appear much in the story is the perfect proof of her embodiment of the Old World's woman.

The evolution of Sicily, and of the South of Italy in general, has taken place relatively slowly in comparison to the north of the peninsula. Until the end of the 19th century, the Bourbon dynasty still ruled over Sicily, which was submitted to a system that still presented some feudal traits. Among these features, there was the defined role of women.

In the family, women – and wives in particular – were relegated to the domestic sphere and all they had to care about were the chores and the children. They were treated as inferior to men, considered as a sort of property, and at the same time they were seen as *Madonnas* because they bore and raised the children, which meant the continuation of the

family lineage. Mama Corleone perfectly embodies the Sicilian wife, in fact the first information we are given about her is that she was "a girl of only sixteen but a skilled cook, a good housewife"[42] (256).

Renate Siebert, in her book on women and the mafia, has written that the "feminine is ubiquitous on the mafia horizon" (48).

> In explicit mafia ideology the relation to women appears unequivocal: they are to be dominated, used and, paternalistically, kept in the dark about the secrets of the Honoured Society. The world of women is thought of as 'naturally' subversive of mafia order, and in the initiation rites the aspirant *mafioso* undertakes to keep these two world separate. (Siebert, 48)

Mama Corleone, from the very beginning of Don Vito's activities, has never dared to comment on her husband's affairs. Furthermore, they had been joined by holy matrimony and she had sworn before God to remain at her husband's side until death. With her indestructible religious devotion, she was obliged to be faithful, even after Don Vito's death. In the novel, Puzo writes that "Vito never said a word to anyone and of course his terrified wife dared not open her lips even in gossip for fear her own husband would be sent to prison" (258).

In *The Godfather* Puzo uses a third person omniscient narrator, and presents Mama Corleone through the point of view of others. At first, it is Tom Hagen who introduces her, after Sonny's death.

[42] Out of the mafia environment, I can mention a character who bears some similarities with Mama Corleone: Linda Loman, one of the protagonists of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. She equally appears as a devoted wife, always eager to please and defend her husband, to the point of scolding her son Biff – who does not venerate his father at all – saying that he has to pay respect if he wants to stay in the house. Both Don Corleone and Willy Loman – two men still linked to the old days – are affected by the new capitalistic system, and their wives are always there by their side. Linda is usually depicted inside the domestic environment, for instance when she repeatedly mends Willy's old stockings. Anyway, unlike Mama Corleone, she has not a marginal role in the story, and she acts as a mediator between her children and her husband, becoming a practical example of the Oedipal struggle.

> Hagen had taken the call in the kitchen, with Mama Corleone bustling around preparing a snack for the arrival of her daughter. He had kept his composure and the old woman had not noticed anything amiss. Not that she could not have, if she wanted to, but in her life with the Don she had learned it was far wiser not to perceive. That if it was necessary to know something painful, it would be told to her soon enough. And if it was a pain that could be spared her, she could do without. She was quite content not to share the pain of her men, after all did they share the pain of women? Impassively she boiled her coffee and set the table with food. In her experience pain and fear did not dull physical hunger; in her experience the taking of food dulled pain. She would have been outraged if a doctor had tried to sedate her with a drug, but coffee and a crust of bread were another matter; she came, of course, from a more primitive culture. (Puzo, 355-356)

From Michael we are better informed of the reciprocal fidelity between Mama Corleone and her husband, after Kay wants to know if the Don trusts his wife. Furthermore, we could never have heard those words from his parents, because they do not let any feelings emerge.

> "Sure," Michael said. "But that doesn't mean he tells her everything. And, you know, he has reason to trust her. Not because they got married and she's his wife. But she bore him four children in times when it was not that safe to bear children. She nursed and guarded him when people shot him. She believed in him. He was always her first loyalty for forty years. (Puzo, 486)

Siebert explains how much wives are useful as evidence that the godfather is able to be a protector, a good husband, and most of all a real man. Don Vito's main worry at the beginning of his American experience is to provide for his wife and child, and afterwards, too, he always cares about her.

> In some respects women appear to have a terrible responsibility conferred upon them: responsibility for reputation, a fundamental prerequisite for the success of a mafia career. […] One condition, however: the marriage is indissoluble. As far as appearances are concerned, his own wife must be respected, not so much because

> she is a woman to be respected, but because she is the mother of his children. (Siebert, 48)

Among the few appearances of Mama Corleone, both in the novel and in the movie, there is one scene that provides an outline of the typical Sicilian wife. It is set at the beginning of their life in the United States, and Don Vito has just started his business with Tessio and Clemenza. He orders his wife to go out of the house with their sons, and tells her she can go back inside only when he says so.

> Vito Corleone told his wife to take the two children, Sonny and Fredo, down into the street after supper and on no account to let them come up to the house until he gave her permission. She was to sit on guard at the tenement door. He had some private business with Fanucci that could not be interrupted. He saw the look of fear on her face and was angry. He said to her quietly, "Do you think you've married a fool?" She didn't answer. She did not answer because she was frightened, not of Fanucci now, but of her husband. (Puzo, 266-267)

In the chapter on Don Vito's early years in America, the gap between husband and wife is given through a very brief and apparently futile scene with Clemenza and his wife. Clemenza is said to "have served wine that he had made himself" (264), whereas his wife only puts "a plate of salami, olives and a loaf of Italian bread on the table" (264), and then she goes down "to sit with her women cronies in front of the building" (264). Clemenza did not simply buy the wine, but produced it, and the grape in the Christian belief is a symbol of fertility; in the Bible, wine is a gift that God gave to men (Book of Siracide – 31,2). The woman's only duty, on the contrary, is to serve the men, and stay with the other women, or the other *comari*, as the Italian tradition prescribes. Puzo does not even provide us with a name, reducing her to the marital role, as he does with Mama Corleone, who will always be called this way. Clare Longrigg has explained that, however, "in any immigrant community,

perhaps particularly the Italian-American, the mother plays a vital role: she is the link with the old world, she represents cohesion and continuity, often through the food she cooks and the language used within the home" (239).

Even though I come from the north of Italy, I will always remember my grandmother – a peasant like Don Vito and Mama Corleone – recalling the old times. Among the scattered memories there are these same images: my grandfather providing for food and money, and her taking care of the household and the children, and spending time sitting in front of the house with the other women of the family and of the neighborhood. The hierarchy was the same, and the Italians took it with them to the new continent.

Although women seemed more like property than objects of love[43], men really cared for them, and recognized their value. An example is to be found in the autobiography of the real mafia boss Joe Bonanno, which he dedicated "to the memory of [his] humble, faithful and devoted wife" (49). A fragment here reported clearly shows it.

> She had waited and loved me throughout all the disruptions [the so-called Castellammarese war between different mafia factions], loving a man part of whose life would always remain secret, loving a man whom she could not ask certain questions… Fay always put up with my defects, and, moreover, she knew how to bring out the best in me. Fay's favourite room was the kitchen… Although respectful towards men… (Qtd in Siebert, 49)

Notwithstanding Don Vito's coldness, which never allows him to show his feelings, we are able to perceive the bond and reverence he has for his wife through a couple of moments in the story. One of the most amazing gestures he does for her is asking Amerigo

[43] "A woman is basically considered to be a man's property, and the bond that ties the man to the woman is that of possession. This ancestral, almost metahistorical bond is the background that men share, be they farmers, bourgeois or mafiosi. […] A woman is useful, she has a function as the mother of male children." (Siebert, 49-50).

Bonasera to fix "the bullet-smashed face of Sonny" (344) in order to soothe a little her grief. "I do not wish his mother to see him as he is" (344) the Don said.

In *The Godfather: Part II*, we are also briefly introduced to another old Sicilian mother-wife, who is Don Vito's mother. We first meet her at her husband's funeral, and in the following scene – all dressed in black – we see how much she is ready to sacrifice for her son. Resembling Lucia Santa, once deprived of the main and manly figure of the family, she has to take on that role, and fill that empty spot. Maybe it is from his mother that Don Vito has inherited the compassion that identifies him – which I consider a feminine characteristic – and that distinguishes him from Michael.

The worship shown by Southern wives, and by old wives in general, towards their husband can also be detected after his death. Like Vito Corleone's mother, Mama Corleone maintains her awe by wearing black. This devotion will no longer be observed in the next generations of the family.

4.2. Kay Adams: A New Prototype of Wife

> *Michael said politely, "I don't think so either." He was surprised to find himself so secretive with Kay. He loved her, he trusted her, but he would never tell her anything about his father or the Family. She was an outsider.*
>
> Mario Puzo (154)

One of the most important aspects of the Italian *mafia* is "endogamy", which means that a member of the Honoured Society has to marry a girl belonging to a mafia family, or at least one that comes from the same community[44]. "American Mafia wives are also less likely

[44] "Many wives of Sicilian Mafiosi come from Mafia families; in the words of Antonino Calderone, one of the earliest *pentiti*, they have 'breathed that air since their birth'. As is well-documented in Renate Siebert's *Le*

than their Sicilian counterparts to come from Mafia families; some indeed, have non-Sicilian roots"[45] (Renga, 37). Kay is a good example, as she belongs to a respectable New England family. We first meet her at Connie Corleone's wedding, and she can easily be labeled as "the American girl", who is distant from the traditional Italian American environment she has been thrown into.

However, it is not only a matter of cultural and social background, but – also with regard to Carmela Soprano – it is about a new kind of woman and wife that had emerged after the advent of the feminist movements of the 20th century. The new role women are taking on is one of the many factors that will condition a change in the men, and therefore in the mafia bosses.

Coleman, Ganong and Warzinik, in their book on the changes the American family underwent in the 20th century, express how the role of the mother and the father with regard to children mutated:

> The 20th century marked the coming of age of motherhood as a vocation in America. Prior to that, although mothers were largely responsible for the physical care of children (e.g., diapering, feeding, bathing), fathers were seen as responsible for children's character and moral development, leading them in prayers and disciplining them when they misbehaved. Consequently, 19th-century parenting advice was aimed at fathers, and the emphasis was on children's moral education. Legally, fathers were the primary parents. In the latter half of the 19th century, however, childhood came to be seen as a distinct life stage, a view accompanied by the belief that responsibility for childrearing should be placed mainly on mothers. Children, no longer seen as immature adults in need of moral instruction and job skills training (fathers' expertise), came to be viewed as vulnerable, dependent, and in need of extensive maternal care. As the 19th century ended and the 20th century

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donne, la mafia, the youth of these families are guided through social occasions and parental persuasion into marriages designed to build alliances and consolidate kinship networks. […] Frequent inter-marriage within Mafia circles nurtures genuine friendships – relations of solidarity and cooperation – among women, even when they live in different towns or cities" (Renga, 35).

[45] The authors of the chapter in Renga's book offers the example of "Lynda Milito, author of *Mafia Wife*, […] who is Jewish and was married to a Brooklyn Mafioso" (Renga, 37).

> began, clergymen, doctors, and child experts directed their advice specifically to mothers, emphasizing children's needs for nurturance. (133)

From this little excerpt, we can definitely identify the figures of Kay, but also Carmela and Livia – who will be analyzed in the later paragraphs. They are mothers who have a strong influence on their children, either in a positive or a negative way.

Before the assault on his father, and most of all before his journey to Sicily, Michael seemed to be a true American boy, closer to Kay's world rather than his family's. Afterwards, instead of discovering his origins and progressing, he moves back. The first sign of estrangement – especially from his wife – can be observed in a scene with Kay soon after the assault on Don Vito. Three years will pass from this night, before she can see him again.

As quoted in the epigraph at the beginning of this paragraph, Michael senses that "he would never tell her anything about his father or the Family" (Puzo, 154) because he recognizes her as "an outsider" (Puzo, 154). The openness and intimacy that once characterized their relationship (the one at Connie's wedding) has now almost faded, and it is a moment that paves the way to one of the final scenes of both the novel and the movie, where a door is symbolically closed between them. He starts treating her as an ordinary Italian wife, having witnessed his mother's behavior, but he will never understand that Kay is not Mama Corleone. This estrangement is rendered through the fact that they both keep their clothes on during an act in which they should be naked. Moreover, it is something done very quickly. When Michael returns from Sicily, and they make love again, she says that "lovemaking was almost like it had been before except that Michael was rougher, more direct, not as tender as he had been" (Puzo, 481).

> "What about you?" Kay asked. "Are you going to get mixed up in this gang war the papers are talking about so gleefully?" Michael grinned, unbuttoned his jacket and held it wide open. "Look, no guns," he said. Kay laughed. It was getting late and

> they went up to their room. She mixed a drink for both of them and sat on his lap as they drank. Beneath her dress she was all silk until his hand touched the glowing skin of the thigh. They fell back on the bed together and made love with all their clothes on, their mouths glued together. When they were finished they lay very still, feeling the heat of their bodies burning through their garments. Kay murmured, "Is that what you call a quickie?" […] She watched him go out the door, saw him wave before he stepped into the elevator. […] If someone had told her she would not see Michael again until three years passed, she would not have been able to bear the anguish of it. (Puzo, 154-155)

After his Sicilian period, Michael – deprived of his first wife – decides to marry Kay, but he immediately makes it clear that she "will be [his] wife but [she] won't be [his] partner in life, as [he] think[s] they say. Not an equal partner. That can't be" (Puzo, 483). He unconsciously wants her to become an outdated prototype of wife, considering that the rural and feudal-like society of Sicily does not exist anymore. She, as a consequence, wants to know if she is supposed to lead a life like that of his mother – that of "an Italian housewife with just the kids and home to take care of" (Puzo, 483).

Soon after their wedding, she in fact was really becoming the traditional wife. "She had gotten pregnant right away, like a good, old-style Italian wife was supposed to […], [and] the second kid on the way in two years" (Puzo, 344). We have to keep in mind that she had a college degree and a job as teacher, and "she was only twenty-four years old" (Puzo, 479). Kay had her own independence, and was not supposed to become "Michael's silent, supportive Italian-American wife who takes communion at daily mass" (Gardaphé, 40). The woman she was about to become was not supposed to ask Mama Corleone for advice, since in Mrs. Corleone's opinion, they as wives cannot do anything but pray. For Michael's mother their role must be a rather passive one, far from the one Kay was on the verge of taking on.

It is also interesting what Mama Corleone asks Kay when she goes to Long Beach as soon as she learns that Michael is back. His mother, having received no more calls from Kay,

immediately insinuates that she had gotten married to someone else. It is another clear sign of the old way of thinking. She does not believe she could have been busy with something else or that she did not need a man, as if a woman's only duty is to find a husband.

After Carlo Rizzi's murder by order of Michael, Kay leaves him with their sons and goes back to her parents in New Hampshire. She still demonstrates that the woman she was has not disappeared for good. She tries to go against his will and puts her foot down, because she does not agree with Michael's decisions, even if she goes back home soon after. At the end of the novel, the last image of Kay is effectively the one of her receiving Communion and praying for her husband, with an attitude of submission. "She emptied her mind of all thought of herself, of her children, of all anger, of all rebellion, of all question" (Puzo, 595), and the only thing she thought of was her husband; she was there kneeling with her head bowed just "for the soul of Michael Corleone" (Puzo, 595). She was praying for the same man who "reminded her of statues in Rome, statues of those Roman emperors of antiquity, who, by divine right, held the power of life and death over their fellow men" (Puzo, 584).

In *The Godfather: Part II*, Coppola, who has no sequel written by Puzo to stick to, makes the character of Kay change direction. Kay does not become the woman who molds so easily to the authority of a man, destroying the wife she was becoming in the previous chapter of the trilogy. Coppola does not want her to be another Mrs. Corleone. He has been able to clearly depict the gap between the generations the two women represent. Kay clearly stands for the feminist power that was gaining strength during those years.

There are two more features that render Coppola's nuclear family more up-to-date than Puzo's one. First of all, in the novel Kay and Michael have two male children, whereas in the movie they have a boy, Anthony, and a girl, Mary. It is a mixed family, where the one who is more interested in her father's business is actually Mary. The second thing that goes against the old traditional family is the fact that Kay has an abortion. The possibility for a

woman to deny the life of her own son means that she takes possession of the decisional power over the offspring that usually was up to the man of the family.

> In the second film, Kay is not the passive, supportive woman from the novel. Toward the end of the film, she confronts Michael and reveals that she aborted her pregnancy: "You are blind. It wasn't a miscarriage. It was an abortion, like our marriage." She goes on to explain that the fetus was a boy, and that she stopped him from becoming a gangster, "[b]ecause this all must end. I knew there would be no way you would forgive me." This difference again is generational. The character of Kay from the film reflects Coppola's awareness of contemporary women's fight for equal rights, while Puzo's woman is stuck in the past. This difference becomes even more obvious in the third film. (Gardaphé, 40)

At the celebration for the honor granted to Michael, we discover that Kay has remarried. Nonetheless, she is really able to maintain her identity, and it can be noticed both from the relationship she continues to have with Michael and the influence she has over their children, perhaps stronger than his.

To the moment that she struggles to let her true self prevail, she can almost regain the old relationship she had with Michael before their marriage, creating what is nowadays quite an ordinary family. How many times do we see former spouses hanging out together with their new partners, and maybe new children, as if they were normal friends? In fact, Kay brings her new husband – of whom we are given no further information, not even a name – to Michael's party.

A clear sign of the strengthening of her parenting role is at the end of *The Godfather: Part II* when she – with the help of Connie – succeeds in seeing her children. When Kay has to leave because Michael is coming home, Anthony does not utter a word, and does not even give his mother a goodbye kiss. He is clearly upset by the situation because he wants to stay with her – especially because his father is absent most of the time. This transition of her position will end in the final chapter of the saga, where we witness a stronger Kay who has to

mediate between father and child. She is a mother who defends her son, and does not let Michael decide for his future alone.

I previously praised Lucia Santa's strength and ability to take on a role that is usually given to men. However, she was – in a way – forced to personify that role, because neither of her two husbands could: the first one being dead, and the second one becoming mentally ill. Contrarily, Kay manages to overcome the figure of Michael, and let her personality emerge. She becomes what the feminist movements have always fought for: an active personality.

4.3. Carmela Soprano: The American Wife

> *Her resistance, or possibly her will-to-empowerment, confirms the work of feminist historians such as Susan Stanford Friedman and Linda Gordon who have identified ways in which women have over time negotiated uncompromising social power that seeks to constrain them.*
>
> David Lavery (40)

What I love about Carmela – and all the other women in *The Sopranos* as well – is their truthful representation. The audience can really empathize with every one of them, because they are deprived of the mythical aura that usually surrounds fictional gangster's women, and they cannot be so easily labeled[46]. As Akass and Macabe underline, "in a series where the mobster finds himself in an unfamiliar generic territory characterized by mundane chores and domestic worries, women play an important role in referencing the new narrative spaces through which the Mafia don progresses" and they are women "defined by ambiguity and contradiction" (qtd in Lavery, 147). In this manner, they effectively could represent non-

[46] Even in more recent film examples, James Wolcott notes how 'women in mob movies tend to be either nightclub bimbos decked out in acrylic and Christmas-tree-ornament jewelry-Rat Pack chicklets – or troubled spouses minding the fort' (Akass – Macabe, 147).

fictional women, therefore I do not agree with Lauzen affirming that they are "one-dimensional characters" (qtd in Lavery, 146).

"Since *The Sopranos* is considered, even by crime investigators, to reflect the reality of organized crime in the United States today, it is worth noting that women are by no means marginal to the series" (Longrigg, 238). They show the increasing influence that women have on their men, and in this case, on mobsters, who are progressively becoming weaker inside their own domestic environment. There will no longer exist a *capofamiglia* like Don Corleone, whose figure has almost become something of a distant past.

Unlike Kay, Carmela – née DeAngelis – is of Italian origin, although, like her husband, she is by now an American. Even if all the members of the Di Meo crime family consider themselves part of the Neapolitan Camorra, we could regard Carmela has been separate from her Italian origins – unlike Mama Corleone – but. Whereas Mrs. Corleone presents the typical characteristics of an old-style Italian wife, Carmela is closer to the modern wives of American bosses, and also different from the wives of Italian *camorristi*.

> Camorra women have always been much more involved and aware of their men's activities. They are not passive onlookers, but are the active backbone of this criminal organization, and have become increasingly involved, sometimes out of necessity. […] Women in Neapolitan society have become increasingly emancipated: they slowly moved from the private family sphere to the public sphere of work. Young women today have more social aspirations than their mothers and want to combine family life with work rather than just concentrating on the family as their mothers did. The same is happening in the criminal underworld; as Clare Longrigg said, "Neapolitan women play a full and active part in society, perhaps more than women from any other region of Italy, and the criminal underworld is no exception". (Allum, 9-10)

In order to grasp the difference between Carmela and true Neapolitan wives, we need only to think of three other fictional women. The first one is a woman Tony meets during his

journey to Naples, Annalisa Zucca. He went to Italy to do some business with a local Camorra family, and he surprisingly finds out that Zi[47] Vittorio's daughter has taken the place as the head of the criminal organization, because her husband, Mauro Zucca, is serving a life sentence in prison, and his father is wheelchair-bound. In spite of the reciprocal sexual attraction, he manages to resist and treat her like any other business partner ("Commendatori", 2.04). The exact same thing happens to Immacolata Savastano and Annalisa "Scianel" Magliocca from the Italian TV series *Gomorra*[48]. They are both highly considered, as they take over the vacuum left by their men. When Donna Imma's husband Pietro gets arrested, she takes his position and runs the criminal family as he would have done, because she does not consider her son Gennaro ready to take over. Scianel is forced to take her brother's place, as he has been murdered.

The three women above, along with Carmela, are an exemplification of the emancipation of women and their growing influence. Carmela is, of course, different since she is not involved in her husband's business, but she still knows everything.

With regard to Carmela, having mentioned her lack of subservience, I definitely do not consider her to be an absolute victim. At the contrary, she is not under Tony's control, as she is fine with her situation. HBO's website on the page of the characters of *The Sopranos*, reports:

> Carmela DeAngelis first laid eyes on her future husband in high school, where she and Tony Soprano appeared to be worlds apart from each other. Whereas Tony was an uninspired student and outsider, Carmela was studious and popular. Carmela had her sights set on college; Tony seemed destined for a life in the New Jersey rackets. That these two opposites would attract – let alone marry and build a life together – might, at first, seem surprising. But on closer examination, they almost seem made

[47] The word "Zi" means "uncle" in the local dialect. It is a very common word that is usually put before Mafia bosses' names in Italy.

[48] *Gomorra* is a TV series based on the critically acclaimed non-fiction investigative book with the same name by Roberto Saviano. Immacolata Savastano, or rather Donna Imma, is the wife of the *boss camorrista* Pietro Savastano, and all the characters of the TV show are based on the famous Neapolitan Di Lauro criminal family.

> for each other. Carmela was acquainted with gangster life long before she took her first ride in Tony's Trans Am. One of her cousins was a mob tough who was gunned down in front of his own house. All things considered, it's not so surprising that Carmela quit her studies in Business Administration at Montclair State University and became Mrs. Anthony Soprano.

She could leave or file for divorce whenever she wanted – considering that social rules and beliefs have radically changed – and she has the possibility to do that more than once. Even when they actually separate, she then goes back on herself. Even though she may not agree with his husband activities, she once confesses to Father Philip that she "ha[s] forsaken what is right for what is easy" ("College", 1.05). It indicates that she enjoys living under her husband's 'protection', partly because she "is a bitch when she is ignored at her tennis lesson" (Donatelli-Alward, 68). In season 3 she also tells Doctor Krakower – who advises her to leave Tony – that "all [she] do[es] is to make sure he's got clean clothes in his closet and dinner on his table", and defines Tony as "a good man, [and] a good father" ("Second Opinion", 3.07) after all.

In the first season Tony learns that the FBI is starting to make accusations against some of the members of the Di Meo family. After a meeting with the other capos, Tony hurries to hide all the dirty money and the weapons he keeps in his house, and Carmela helps him to do it. When he asks her to hand him her jewelry, because he does not have a receipt, she looks quite upset ("The Legend of Tennessee Moltisanti", 1.08), and demonstrates once again she is fine with the life she is leading and she is reluctant to renounce it. Kim Akass and Janet Macabe observe that "Carmela Soprano in so many ways reminds us of Karen Hill[49]. Both enjoy the good life with beautiful homes and expensive designer clothes while tolerating their husband's philandering ways" (148).

[49] Karen Hill is one of the characters of Martin Scorsese's *GoodFellas*, which is based on the life of American mobster Henry Hill, a member of the Lucchese crime family.

As Gardaphé points out, she is a classical American housewife and she is evidently the ruler of the household, to the point Tony holds his meetings with the other mobsters in the basement, while Don Corleone gathered his Family in his office, inside his house. Moreover, Carmela uses her cooking skills to her advantage, and she is quite proud of it.

> Carmela Soprano's power inside the house is usually manifested in her kitchen, where she feeds her family and friends, and where she often disciplines and counsels her children. Seduced by the materiality of middle-class life that provides her with safety and comfort, she compromises her morality in order to build a sense of security through the accumulation of wealth. Carmela's power dynamics are often played out at the kitchen table, where she, as the provider of good food, can seduce her guests into giving her sympathy, providing favors, and listening to her instructions. Carmela uses food the way her husband uses threats of violence. For example, in episode 21, Carmela's power of suggestion, expressed through the gift of a homemade ricotta pie, exacts an important letter of recommendation for her daughter's college application from an influential and initially reluctant sister of Jeannie Cusumano, a successful alumna of the school. (Gardaphé, 158-59)

In the scene where Carmela wants to have a letter of recommendation written for Meadow from Jeannie Cusamano's sister, she demonstrates her ability in acting like her husband. By accompanying her hidden threats with a homemade pie, a friendly smile, and a placid tone, she incarnates the typical *mafioso*, who usually matches his "requests" with a gift and good manners. As far as Carmela is concerned, the gift is something that is linked to the power she exercises inside the house, that is to say her cooking skills. When these means are not of any help, Carmela gets upset, as if her authority gets underrated. Jeannie Cusamano, in fact, refuses to accept her "gift", as she does not want to be intimidated. Later, though, she will bring Carmela the letter, but only because her sister has decided to write it after having checked Meadow's school transcript, and not because of Carmela's veiled threat ("Full Leather Jacket", 2.08). Carmela's behavior shows once again that women are taking on their men's roles.

Another example that shows her use of food as a source of power is to be found in an episode with Father Philip. Carmela is famous for her baked *ziti*[50], and she knows that Father Phil has a weakness for them. In the first season she decides to prepare and bring him a full baking pan. Although, as soon as she arrives at the church, she finds the priest praising and eating the food Rosalie Aprile has brought to him, and Carmela leaves throwing her *ziti* in the trash can ("I Dream of Jeannie Cusamano", 1.13). She gets angry because someone else has intruded upon her territory, like when she finds out that the psychiatrist her husband is seeing is actually a woman. She is not afraid that her husband may cheat on her, but she admits she is "jealous of her ability to help" him ("Pax Soprana", 1.06). Moreover, she will later yell at Father Philip in the same episode, demonstrating that she can raise her voice and that she does not have passive personality.

Tony would like to be a credible, bossy father and husband, but actually it is Carmela who is the most commanding of the two. In the second season, there are two scenes that show very well the dynamics of their parenting. Meadow has thrown a party at Livia's house with drugs and alcohol, the police arrive and arrest some people. He does not seem to know what to say to her to the point where even Meadow defiantly replies that "now he's repeating himself", whereas she should be afraid of him. Tony does not even seem to care about the girl who is throwing up on the floor in front of him. As soon as they get home, Carmela is truly furious and wants to talk, whereas Tony just seems more interested in acting out his role in the right way, in order not to lose credibility.

MEADOW: We can talk about it in the morning.
CARMELA: Get down here!
TONY: Let her go to bed.
CARMELA: Let her go to bed? I want her to answer for herself. She's drunk. Was she driving like this?
MEADOW: I could've taken ecstasy, but I didn't!

[50] *Ziti* are a type of Italian pasta, characterized by a tubular elongated shape.

A.J.: Don't puke on the floor!
TONY: (to A.J.) What are you doing up? Go to bed!
A.J.: She fools around with ecstasy and you yell at me?
CARMELA: Get up there! (to Tony) So, what did she had to say for herself?
TONY: The usual shit. "Wasn't my fault".
CARMELA: There was designer drugs there, Tony. So, what did you say?
TONY: I don't know. I yelled. What the fuck else am I gonna do!

In this situation, Tony yells at A.J. to go to bed, but he complains about it. It is enough for Carmela to raise her voice to make him hurry up. Tony, on the other hand, is ready to use his force against him. It is Carmela who decides that Meadow is grounded, and Tony just restricts himself to supporting his wife, but he does not take the initiative. The scene itself renders really well the two parents' positions: Carmela is the one between Meadow and Tony, who stays in the background. Even when he proposes something, he always gives a look to Carmela to have a confirmation that he is doing the right thing as a parent. Carmela's strong personality again comes to light when Janice debates Tony and Carmela's parenting a few moments later. Tony cannot contain his anger and screams at his sister. She is however not concerned by his manners, but by Carmela's words, which are initially uttered in a very calm way.

CARMELA: You're passing your judgment on him, Janice. On us as parents. How we discipline our children is none of anybody's business.
JANICE: You let that girl walk all over you, you'll regret it.
CARMELA: Mother of God, Janice. Are all of you Sopranos the same? I ask you nicely to stay out of it, you pretend not to hear. Maybe you will hear this. Mind your fucking business. Keep your mouth shut when it comes to my kids. Alright?

Therefore, Tony's roles as a father and a husband are both at stake. He, however, constantly tries to deny it, either by saying things like: "I'm supposed to make the money,

[Carmela] takes care of the house. That's the way it should be" ("Pie O My", 4.05), and "out there it's the 1990's; in this house it's 1954" ("Nobody Know Anything", 1.11), or by using violence when Carmela communicates her intention of leaving him. He hits her against the wall and pulls her hair ("Whitecaps", 4.13). He is aware that his wife can stand her ground with words, thus he uses the only means that still differentiates men from women: body strength. He does not accept that the world is changing, which is a rather funny thing, considering his psychiatrist is also a woman, and the main cause of his problems is his mother.

4.4. Livia Soprano: A Modern Medea

> *My friends, it is decided: as soon as possible*
> *I must kill my children and leave this land*
> *before I give my enemies a chance*
> *to slaughter them with a hand that's moved by hatred.*
> *They must die anyway, and since they must,*
> *I will kill them. I'm the one who bore them.*
> *Arm yourself, my heart.*
>
> Euripides (110)

When Doctor Melfi asks Tony to tell her "some of the good experiences [he] remember[s] as a child", that is to say "the loving warm ones" ("46 Long", 1.02), he does not know what to say, and strives to come up with at least one good memory. In addition, the only one he recounts is lame, and not close enough to a demonstration of affection from his mother or father. In the same episode, he even cries and has a panic attack when he looks at a photograph of him as a child and Livia, because of something missing in his life: a good and healthy relationship with his mother.

Livia Soprano only appears in the first two seasons of the series[51], but her role is fundamental. In fact, her behavior towards Tony as a child represents one of the main causes of Tony's panic attacks. Since the first scene in the "Pilot" episode (1.01), we see Tony uncomfortably staring at the breast of a little statue at Doctor Melfi's waiting room. The breast is for Tony the symbol of something he never had: maternal love. Recalcati, in *Le mani della madre*, perfectly explains its importance for the baby.

> Il seno è l'oggetto che la madre offre al suo bambino e dal quale il bambino dipende al punto – come ricordava Freud – di percepirlo, nelle prime fasi della sua vita, come una parte del proprio corpo. In realtà, il seno materno appare come un oggetto da sempre sdoppiato: da un lato soddisfa i bisogni più elementari del bambino, quelli legati alla fame e alla sete, è cioè un *seno-oggetto*, dall'altro lato è il segno della presenza amorevole e accudente dell'Altro, è un *seno-segno*. (19)

Tony perceives the lack of it, and when Doctor Melfi decides to "push the Prozac to 60 milligrams", he starts having hallucinations that are linked to this kind of trauma.

In the episode "Isabella" (1.12) he believes that a new Italian dentist student, who is staying with the Cusamanos, has just arrived from Avellino – the city from where Tony's family comes. He daydreams of her breastfeeding a baby boy called Antonio in a house that reminds him of the distinctive ones in little Italian villages. This scene contrasts strikingly with the following one, where Tony – still run-down – is brought back to reality, and has dinner with his family and Livia, whose personality is the opposite of Isabella's[52]. Tony goes and gives her a kiss, whilst she keeps taking the salad and cynically welcomes him by complaining about his breath. The only thing she does during the dinner is mistreat him by belittling his malaise.

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[51] Tony receives the news that his mother has died in her sleep in the episode called "Proshai Livushka" (3.02).
[52] During Tony's flashbacks, we have examples of Livia's rough personality and bad manners. In one of them, she threatens Tony with a fork, warning him she would gouge his eyes, because he asks her for an electric organ ("Down Neck", 1.07).

LIVIA: Well, look who's decided to join us. And with that breath!
TONY: You know, I really don't need that right now, Ma.
LIVIA: Aren't we being sensitive?

[…]

LIVIA: How come my son's in a bathrobe? Is he sick?
TONY: He's fine.
MEADOW: Dad, you're depressed.
LIVIA: Depressed? My father came to this country with seventeen cents in his pocket and he never made a peep.
CARMELA: Ma?
LIVIA: What's he got to be depressed about? Nobody threw him into the glue factory and sold his house out from underneath him.

("Isabella", 1.12)

Doctor Melfi explains that "the hallucinations of that Isabella figure, the protective, loving mother" ("I Dream of Jeannie Cusamano", 1.13) are a clear sign of his problems with Livia. The doctor is the first who suggests she was the one behind Tony's assault in the previous episode, even though he does not want it to be true. In response he hurls himself at her, but it is only an outcome of his denial, as he cannot believe his mother made an attempt on his life. He even tries to affirm that "she's a good woman" because "she put food on that table every night" ("46 Long", 1.02). He feels guilty just for having had bad thoughts about his own mother, due to the value of respect for the mother that were instilled in him.

Doctor Melfi explains that "it's hard to admit [he] may have feelings of hatred towards [his] own mother", but anger "needs to be acknowledged", otherwise "it defines [his] life" ("46 Long", 1.02).

> Children who are psychologically and emotionally abused by their parents must defend themselves against the realization that the parents who were supposed to protect them are actually malevolent and capricious. The children shut down the mental processes necessary for depicting thoughts and feelings both in themselves

> and in others so they do not have to face their parents' hostile intent, which is too overwhelming to contemplate. They must believe that their parents love them at some level because the alternative is unthinkable. (Gabbard, 102)

Nonetheless, in the "Pilot", he is the one complaining about how "she wore [his father] down to a little nub" and that "he was a squeaking little gerbil when he died" (1.01); he actually reveals how much power she wielded, most of all over a man that "ran his own crew" (1.01).

On the other hand, Livia keeps playing the victim, because her son put her in a nursing house, and keeps hoping that "the Lord would take" her, or telling that if her husband were still alive things would be different, whereas she was the one who had him in the palm of her hand[53]. At first, she is falsely shocked about mothers killing their own children, and continues to talk about women "throwing their babies out of skyscrapers windows", to the point that even Tony replies that she is "always with the babies out of the windows" ("Meadowlands", 1.04). She even tries to justify herself to Uncle Junior for planning and wanting Tony's death, even if Uncle Junior tells her that she must not "talk about Tony" because "it's done" ("Isabella", 1.12).

> LIVIA: I was there last night for dinner. […] They [Meadow and A.J.] barely have a father now. You should see the way he comes down at the dinner table. […] In his bathrobe at 7 o'clock in the evening. […] My cousin Cakey, after he had his lobotomy, looked exactly like my son.

[53] Livia clearly wore the pants in the relationship with his husband and had a strong influence over him. For instance, when Johnny Boy wants to move the entire family to Nevada, she refuses, forcing them to remain in Jersey. She bears some similarities with Lady Macbeth. In fact, even though the "Scottish Play" apparently talks about Macbeth's deeds, she is the real responsible for the actions that lead the play to its tragic finale. She is depicted as a sort of witch, resembling the other three who foretell Macbeth's future. It is interesting to note that Macbeth is manipulated by four women; in fact Lady Macbeth forces him to kill King Duncan after the witches predicted that he would be king. She is the ruthless one, as Macbeth initially has doubts and even hallucinations. His wife's strong conditioning makes him become mad, and in the end even Lady Macbeth cannot bear the weight of her actions anymore, and commits suicide. Lady Macbeth appears as the real male figure, in fact she says she would have done it herself if she had been a man. It is remarkable the way in which she handles King Duncan's homicide by framing his own servants, considering that her husband is visibly shaken by what he has done. Livia does not really become mad or kill herself, but she is affected by a sort of – probably fake – Alzheimer's, which symbolically is a reaction to her deeds.

> […] Empty, a shell. Better Cakey had died than go on living like that.
> That's what his own mother always used to say.

This constant image of mothers flinging away their sons is clearly a representation of the act she wants to commit, which is what Medea did. They want to kill their offspring out of an egoistic impulse. They both endured an abandonment: Medea lost the love of Jason[54], while Livia believes to have lost that of Tony. Whereas Medea does not kill the person she hates, but something that belongs to him, the two women have something in common: they both claim the two men's love, although Livia never gave Tony any affection in return.

In front of her family, Livia also mentions that "some woman in Pennsylvania shot her children and set her house on fire", commenting how "the world has gone crazy" ("Isabella, 1.12); she once again pretends to be perturbed by the changes in society, but "like Medea, [she] always seems to land on her feet" (Gabbard, 107)[55]. Many mothers nowadays fit into Livia's same category[56], partly because it happens even more frequently that a mother commits infanticide.

Of course not all mothers are like her, but Livia, with her peculiar and complex personality, symbolically stands for the growing impact of women on our society. All things considered, her conduct inevitably influences Tony's behavior as a husband, a father and, most of all, as a man.

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[54] He left Medea because Creon, king of Corinth, offered him his daughter Glauce, whom he chose instead of Medea. "Giasone decide di sposare Glauce, la figlia di Creonte, re di Corinto, e ripudia Medea, che reagisce con furia e disperazione, e una violenza che la spinge a odiare i propri stessi figli: «… odia i figli, non prova gioia a guardarli. / Ho paura che possa ordire qualcosa di terribile: / il suo animo è violento, e non sopporterà di essere umiliata. (vv. 36-39)»" (Angelo Tonelli, qtd in Euripide, 38).

[55] Gabbard says this of Livia because Medea, after killing her sons, "went on the lam to Athens, where she married Aegeus and later tried to make her husband poison his son" (107).

[56] Gabbard reports two of the many real cases of infanticides as an example. The first one was committed by Susan Smith, who killed her two little sons, and the second one by Andrea Yates, the Texan woman who drowned her five children (100).

Conclusions

I have opened this dissertation debating whether or not mafia godfathers – and consequently their families – can be compared to any other father figures, and if their evolution through the last century has been comparable. Even if this topic might be considered more historical than literary, I have decided – as a student of literature – to analyze fictional characters. In my opinion, one of the aims of literary texts or films – which nowadays need to be put on the same level as books – is for the audience to sympathize with its characters and storylines. In fact, Recalcati himself, in order to support his theories, and to better explain his notions, makes use of literature and cinema.

Both *The Godfather* and *The Sopranos,* as works of fiction, "offer a specific view of human nature and the universe" (Nightingale, 38). This view on fiction was first introduced by Plato and Aristotle through the concept of *mimesis*. Fictional works are imbued with values and features that will always be universal, independently of the mafia environment. Therefore, as I said in the second chapter, they may not stick precisely to historical facts, but they are able to convey the transformation that the institution of family has gone through and will continue to experience. It is especially by putting these two works side by side that we are able to grasp how much it has changed.

The Godfather, among all the mafia books and movies, is possibly the most well-known and the film's lines are probably among the most quoted (who does not know the famous quote "I'll make him an offer he can't refuse"?). It is imbued with a sort of old-school atmosphere which really contrasts with the contemporaneity of *The Sopranos*.

The Sopranos is not a repetition of the same old gangster story, but it is its perfect evolution. It strikingly decodes the figure of the gangster in a new manner, presenting him as a modern antihero. *The Sopranos* may present, at first sight, too many stereotypes linked to the way in which Italian-Americans are depicted; nevertheless, in the United States its

success was remarkable, and this is not unsurprising. Whereas *The Godfather* refers to a domestic system which has already gone (as I observed in the third chapter), *The Sopranos* – as a whole – exemplifies all the typical contemporary aspects of our own families. The series manages to do this by recreating credible familiar dynamics, which allow us to empathize and identify ourselves with the characters. *The Sopranos* is useful to truly comprehend the time we live in.

Massimo Recalcati – in his book *Il complesso di Telemaco* – affirms that the *pater familias* – who in Italy is also described using the term *padre padrone* – has actually long since vanished. However, we should not be nostalgic about his disappearance, as one of the things we have to do is become aware of the changes our society has undergone, and adapt the parenting roles accordingly.

In closing, these changes have also undeniably affected the domestic mafia environment, which is after all made by people, and all this confirms that the God-Father is by now really dead.

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