

Movie Review: The Godfather II

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The Godfather II is a film directed by Francis Ford Coppola. It depicts the rise of a petty criminal, Don Vito Corleone, to a powerful man in New York City. Coppola uses the second part of *The Godfather* series to develop the film's main theme. The film centers around the theme of how the pragmatic and rigid mafias operate in a political framework. Consequently, the mafias are seen as running legitimate businesses. Coppola also highlights how good people like Michael can transform into criminals depending on environmental pressures.

The film portrays the past life of Don Vito Corleone and the present life of his son Michael in parallel. It starts in 1901 with the tragedy that befell the family of young Vito in the town of Corleone, Sicily, in which his father, brother, and mother were killed by Don Ciccio, the local mafia (Coppola, 1974). Michael Corleone's story from 1958 depicts his struggles in his attempt to expand his business. Michael's problems, like the rift between him and his brother, Fredo, and his failing marriage with Kay, depict his challenges.

The movie's two plotlines, which examine Vito's past life in New York and Michael's life in the late 1950s, attain different climaxes. The starting action of the juxtaposed stories for the young Vito is his arrival as a child in New York in 1900. Next, he is introduced to crime by Clemenza (Coppola, 1974). The rising action in his plot is where he gains power and gets the attention of the neighborhood crime boss, Gastone Moschin. The climax is seen when he uses his power after killing Don Fanucci to return to Sicily. His return was motivated by the urge to avenge the death of his family. On the other hand, Michael is portrayed as a young boy who wants nothing to do with his family. The rising action in his story is where he takes over the reign of his family businesses. His story climaxes where he loses morality and kills Hyman Roth, although he ends up lonely due to his cruelty (Coppola, 1974).

Coppola uses creative techniques to present two parallel plotlines as though they are occurring in the present. The sharp contrast between the two stories establishes a strong dissonant tone that captivates the audience. He also adopts different color palettes in his scenes to focus the audience's attention on a particular character and portray their attitudes. He uses visuals, designs, and frequent tracking shots to give the movie a greater depth.

The theme in *The Godfather II* rests on a conflict between legitimacy versus respect. Michael struggles to attain legitimacy for his family business by avoiding crimes to get respect from society and American law. On the other hand, Vito struggles for respect by making the people afraid of him. Therefore, respect and legitimacy are portrayed as the backbones of running the mafia. The movie relates to other crime films in which respect and legitimacy maintain the mafia's hierarchy. The mafias fight to attain respect and legitimacy by all means.

In the movie, Coppola demonstrates a significant influence on the audience based on how he investigates and presents the crimes in the entire film. For instance, though they are both murderers, Coppola depicts young Vito and Michael in a way that leaves the audience regretful for the death of Vito and not the fall of Michael. Young Vito is in a sympathetic condition that draws the audience to empathize with him; conversely, he depicts Michael as a villain.

Coppola attained his goal of presenting the contrasting transformation of the father and the son. He successfully depicts how circumstances can affect an individual's morality. He uses contrasting rhythms, which enhances the understanding of the two plotlines. Although the morality of the central characters in the film is wanting, it has helped in expounding on the importance of respect in running mafia businesses. However, Coppola does not elevate the gangster behaviors. Instead, he allows the audience to analyze and investigate the morality in the movie.

Reference

Coppola, F. (Director). (1974). *The Godfather II* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.

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