NBC's 12-15 November 1977 telecast of *Godfather I* and *II* in reedited, almost strictly chronological form, padded by the addition of scenes previously cut, provided some insights into and confirmations of elements in the original films but didn't improve upon the initial structure of the pictures, particularly the point-counterpoint of *Godfather II*. The "complete novel for television" received disappointing ratings and even provoked some unfavorable critical reassessment of the original films. This lukewarm reception contrasts sharply to the rave reviews *Godfather I* and *II* received when first released in 1972 and 1974, respectively. In fact, in 1974, many critics proclaimed *II* even better than its predecessor. No doubt, *II*’s dual-plot structure contributed to this preference; in *II*, the early history of Vito Corleone (né Andolini), the Godfather, adapted (and considerably embellished) from the unfilmed portions of the book, alternates with the continuing story of his son Michael (Al Pacino), the new Godfather, taken up from where *I* left it. Together, these two sections of *II* provide a fascinating framework, backward and forward in time, for the original film. TV disrupted this framework; the Godfather saga lost its epic quality by no longer beginning *in medias res*, with *I*.

Despite the flashbacks, which comprise almost half of its running time, *Godfather II* was advertised as "Michael's story," and most critics were quick to see it as such, since it completes Michael’s degeneration, begun in *I*, from a nice ex-college boy, ex-war hero to a ruthless criminal. (For that matter, *I* is "Michael's story," too.) What critics failed to see was the artful way in which this transformation is accomplished.

For *II*’s modern section, director Francis Ford Coppola and his co-scenarist, *Godfather* novelist Mario Puzo, the architects of *Godfather I*, simply went back to their drawing board, unrolled their old blueprints, and remade *The Godfather*— with, however, several significant differences. They repeated the pattern they established in *I* while playing upon it numerous subtle, clever variations in order to underline the further and complete corruption of the Corleone family: every important incident in the first film has a parallel in the second. Carlos Clarens was the first critic to catalogue in print several of the
many parallel sequences between I and II, but he doesn’t realize or stress the reason for these repetitions or note that they’re imperfect repetitions—by design.4 A complete catalogue— and comparison— of these inexact parallels will reveal that reason and design.

_Godfather I_ begins with a large, outdoor celebration—the wedding of the Godfather’s daughter—while the Godfather holds court inside, taking care of business and personal matters (e.g. undertaker Bonasera’s request that the Godfather avenge his daughter; godson Johnny Fontane’s request for a part in a movie); _Godfather II_ begins the same way—the new Godfather throws a gala outdoor party in honor of his son’s first communion and also attends to business and personal matters (e.g. Frankie Pentangeli’s trouble with the Guzzardo brothers; his sister’s parade of boyfriends and neglect of her children). In each movie, we see that these initial matters are later acted upon; the most notable— and most parallel— of them are the intimidation of movie producer Jack Woltz (John Marley) in I and of Senator Pat Geary (G. D. Spradlin) in II. Both the producer and the Senator—after refusing to accede to a Corleone request—undergo ordeals which persuade them to change their minds (the proverbial “offer they can’t refuse”): they wake up stunned and bloody in bed. Woltz finds his Arabian stud horse’s severed head under the covers and Geary finds his favorite s & m prostitute cut up and dead under the covers. (Clarens also mentions these parallels.)

Early in I, there is an unsuccessful attempt on the Godfather’s life; even earlier in II, there is an attempt on the new Godfather’s life. Both films proceed from these points to tell tales of gang warfare and betrayal within the organization and the family. Barzini (Richard Conte) surreptitiously leads the Five Families in opposition to the Godfather’s organization in I; Hyman Roth (Lee Strasberg) duplicitously threatens Michael’s operations in II. (In both films, the factions ostensibly reconcile. In I, Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando) calls a meeting of the Five Families; they sit around a conference table while the Godfather makes an impassioned plea for peace. This plea is apparently heeded, and everybody becomes “business” partners again, planning to go into dope dealing together. In II, Michael Corleone and Hyman Roth seem to form an uneasy alliance; they also become business partners and sit around a conference table with others, planning to divide up Cuba together. Of course, reconciliation in both films is only a smoke screen; violence between the two factions erupts again before each film ends. Just as his father balked at becoming involved with drug dealing, so Michael balks at investing money in Roth’s Cuban scheme— a smart move, since Castro’s guerillas take over the country shortly afterward. However, in a reversal inspired by I—wherein Michael prevents his father’s attempted murder while Don Vito is recovering in the hospital—Michael is prevented in II, from having Roth murdered while Roth is recovering in the hospital. Michael becomes the unscrupulous criminal his father’s opponents were.

Trusted Corleone lieutenant Tessio (Abe Vigoda) betrays the family to Barzini in I; in II, another trusted lieutenant, Frankie Pentangeli (Michael V. Gazzo), Clemenza’s successor, betrays the family to the government. Each pays the price for his treachery. Similarly, brother-in-law Carlo Rizzi (Gianni Russo) betrays the family and sets up Sonny (James Caan) in I; in II, brother Fredo (John Cazale) betrays the family and sets up Michael. In each case the delinquent family member is given a grace period (no one touches Carlo while Don Vito is alive, nor Fredo while Mama Corleone is alive) before he, like Tessio and Pentangeli, is eliminated. Both movies have as their climax a blood bath, a series of multiple murders carried out under Michael’s orders; he uses these
executions to consolidate his organization's power, ruthlessly wiping out "business" opponents (Barzini, the heads of the Five Families, and Moe Green [Alex Rocco] in I; Hyman Roth in II), traitors to the group (Tessio in I; Pentangeli in II), and the traitors to the family (Carlo in I; Fredo in II). Clarens also notes this parallel slaughter.

But the parallels do not stop there. In I, Michael convincingly lies to his wife, Kay (Diane Keaton), assuring her he had nothing to do with Carlo's death, then ushers her out of his office and closes the door on her, effectively shutting her out of his life as he goes back to business. In II, the latent problems in their relationship (re)surface, and her resentment over his refusal to go legitimate causes her to leave him. Exerting his Godfatherly authority, Michael retains custody of their children. On one of her clandestine visits to see them, Kay tries too long trying to get her son to kiss her goodbye. He is on the verge, about to embrace her, when Michael returns to find Kay on the threshold. He goes to the door and quietly, firmly, shuts it in her face. This gesture is a repetition of his closing her out in I, but it takes on added weight here because of the different circumstances and has a note of finality to it. Indeed, we do not see Kay again in II.

As is obvious, Coppola and Puzo clothe their retelling of I in different terms, disguising the similarities between the two films by using different locales (Florida, Cuba, and more of Nevada than in I) and the later-model cars, hair styles, and fashions of the fifties in II, and by adding to II a variety of contemporary detail (the Cuban revolution, the Kefauver-like Senate subcommittee investigation)—all to obscure its thematic and narrative duplication of I. Besides returning to I for their inspiration, Coppola and Puzo also return to the book, incorporating flashbacks of the early life and career of Vito Corleone (here played by Robert DeNiro), which helps to contribute to the deceptive "new look" of II. However, Coppola and Puzo's talent and integrity save II from being a mere copy of I: they use its repetitions to expand upon ideas put forth in I, and they use its Vito Corleone flashbacks to counterpoint Michael's contemporary story; they develop possibilities which are only suggested in the hastily and sketchily written (but admittedly fascinating) pages of Puzo's novel.

Godfather II's repetition of key incidents in Godfather I shows the perpetuation of crime and the criminal empire in the second generation of Corleones. At the same time, II's imperfect repetitions show the expansion of evil, the degeneration of crime and of that criminal empire. Coppola and Puzo subtly illustrate the loss of any kind of tradition or honor in this dirty business and the gradual and complete corruption of Michael Corleone, a process which begins in I—when he avenges himself upon Captain McClusky (Sterling Hayden), the crooked cop who broke his jaw, and Sollozzo, the "Turk" (Al Lettieri), who had his father shot—but which reaches completion here.

Godfather II may begin with a big celebration, as does I, but the latter celebration is inferior to the former. There is none of the ethnic verve of I's wedding in II's expensive, homogenized communion party, situated in the alien land of Lake Tahoe. Don Vito's suburban New York estate, though somewhat removed from the city, is still close to his roots and to the heart of the Italian community, of which he and his family remain very much a part. In Nevada, the Corleones are strangers in a strange land, where people cannot even pronounce their name correctly. In Nevada, there is no Italian community: in I, Italian-American singing sensation Johnny Fontane (Al Martino) croons a love song at Connie Corleone's wedding; in II, a local boys' choir—practically all blue-eyed blonds—sings some innocuous "inspirational" piece at Anthony
Corleone's communion party. In I, everybody dances to sprightly or romantic Italian music—Tessio with a little girl, Clemenza with a Corleone soldier, the Godfather with his daughter; in II, all the party guests sit around while two heavily made-up performers do a theatrically torrid tango on stage. In I, an old man leads the wedding guests in a bawdy Sicilian rendition of “C’è la luna ’n mezzo mare,” to which everybody—even Mama Corleone (Morgana King)—adds a verse or sings the chorus; in II, Frankie Pentangeli (a New Yorker, in Nevada to see Michael) tries to get the WASPish band to play something Italian, something as familiar as “La Tarantella,” and all it can come up with is “Pop Goes The Weasel”! All the guests laugh, and Pentangeli is ridiculed off the stage; the old ways are shown to be inoperative in modern-American Nevada. This action sets the tone for the rest of the modern segment of II.

Central to Godfather I is the Corleone family structure; that family structure completely collapses in II. No family portrait is taken on this day, as one is at Connie’s wedding. Of course, when II begins, the family is no longer complete anyway: some of the Corleones (Don Vito, Sonny) are already gone—and, by the film’s end, only one (Michael) will remain. Also, when II begins, several surviving Corleones’ present conditions reveal the family’s further degeneration: Fredo is married to a non-Italian “broad” over whom he has no control, and twice-divorced Connie (Talia Shire) neglects her children and flits around the world and from man to man, still making the same mistakes in her choice of mates. (Her latest is Merle Johnson [Troy Donahue]—another somewhat beefy pretty-boy in her first husband Carlo’s image.) These two are a far cry here from the naïve innocents they were at the beginning of I, where Connie was in her virginal wedding white and Fredo—still ineffectual and awkward in his tux—was unattached and unharmed by marital and other entanglements.

The attempt on Michael’s life comes much sooner in II than does the attempt on Don Vito in I. Although Michael escapes injury whereas the Don does not, the attack on him is much closer to home than the one on Don Vito: his bedroom is riddled with bullets and his wife’s life is endangered along with his. Later, Michael violently decries this infamita, bitterly complaining to Frankie Pentangeli about this breach in the unwritten code: “In my home! In my bedroom, where my wife sleeps, where my children come and play with their toys.” The assassination attempt (like Senator Geary’s earlier insulting remark about Michael’s “fucking family”) is not kept on a business level, as is the attempt on Don Vito; Michael’s family is indiscriminately threatened.

The attack on Michael is just one example of how much more corrupt everything is in II. The Corleone organization destroys a race horse to get its way with Jack Woltz in I; in II, it murders a woman to get its way with Pat Geary. Treachery in II penetrates nearer to the inner circle: brother-in-law Carlo—the outsider—betrays the family in I; brother Fredo—an insider, a blood relative—betrays it in II. Likewise, Tessio—the lesser of the two Corleone lieutenants (and not Clemenza, the more favored caporegime)—betrays the organization in I, but Frankie Pentangeli—Clemenza’s successor, to whom the family entrusted its original New York territory, who now lives in the Corleones’ former home—betrays it in II.

Though less extensive than Godfather I’s blood bath, II’s is more brutal: I’s murders are all “necessary,” their vengeance “legitimate”; II’s murders are gratuitous—they represent an extreme form of vindictiveness on Michael’s part. He has to eliminate Moe Green, Barzini, and the heads of the Five Families as a matter of “business” in I—in order to solidify his family’s position, and because Barzini is out to get him first—but, in II, he doesn’t need
to murder Hyman Roth because the old man is no longer a threat to him or his business. Roth’s empire, power, and influence are no more; Roth himself is no more than an exile from his adopted country, Israel—a walking corpse because of the disease that will terminate his life in a matter of months—about to be imprisoned by the authorities as soon as he sets foot on American soil. In fact, the hardest part about killing Roth, Michael’s henchmen tell him, is getting a clear shot at him: from the moment Roth gets off his plane, he’ll be surrounded by reporters and police and F.B.I. agents, ready to take him to jail. But Michael insists the job be done anyway. In I, Carlo—a despicable person anyway—is actually responsible for Sonny’s death and deserves to die, but, in II, Fredo—a poor, misguided fool—only bumblingly and unwittingly helps Michael’s enemies, never dreaming Michael might come to any bodily harm because of it, so Michael’s insistence on Fredo’s execution (especially since he knows Fredo’s mental limitations and has escaped injury anyway) is utterly unnecessary.

Similarly, Pentangeli’s betrayal in II is not as damaging nor as personally dangerous to Michael as Tessio’s is in I. Fear, not selfish reasons of gain, motivates Pentangeli: the Guzzardo brothers have tried to kill him (their abortive attempt here parallels the Tattaglia’s successful one on Luca Brasi in I—both Pentangeli and Brasi are lured to a bar and strangled from behind); he mistakenly believes Michael is responsible for this attack and only turns to the authorities out of self-preservation. Therefore, his betrayal is not as calculated nor as deadly as Tessio’s: it only involves turning state’s evidence, not being party to murder.

The Corleone organization neutralizes both Tessio’s and Pentangeli’s threats, but it neutralizes Pentangeli’s before any real damage is done: the Corleones fly in Frankie’s brother from Italy and prominently display him next to Michael when Pentangeli appears before the Senate subcommittee. The sight of his brother in the company of his former boss grimly reminds Pentangeli of the Corleones’ power, and he tells the committee nothing. Thus, he never goes as far as Tessio, who has already arranged a meeting between Michael and Barzini in I, at which time Michael is to be killed. His actual betrayal of Michael prevented, Pentangeli—convicted of numerous crimes—is doomed to spend the rest of his life in prison; however, that is not revenge enough for Michael, and he persuades Tom Hagen to go to Pentangeli and make him an offer he can’t refuse: his life in exchange for the complete monetary and physical security of his family. So, we next find Pentangeli dead in his bath, his wrists slit.

There is some reason for Michael’s cold and calculating behavior in I: he must regain the family’s lost position in the underworld and hold his family together. In light of this “necessity,” his elimination of his enemies, his lies to his wife, and his other actions are all understandable—even justifiable from his point of view. However, his behavior becomes more of a habit in II, the means become an end in themselves. This change in Michael, along with and as part of the many parallels to I, best illustrates the altered, harsher tone of II. Michael becomes less and less human as II progresses until, like Paul Newman’s Hud, he is left with nothing but his empire and his wealth.

One by one, Michael cuts himself off or is cut off from his family. He banishes his brother Fredo when he discovers Fredo has been disloyal to him and only reconciles with Fredo after their mother’s death so that Fredo will be conveniently close by when Michael gives the order to have him murdered. Michael has already demoted Tom Hagen from consigliore to the family’s Las Vegas lawyer in I; in II, he shunts him aside and distrusts him more and
more. He loses his mother to illness. Before her death, he has a heart-to-heart talk with her, just as he has with his father in I. However, while Don Vito gives him vital advice, telling him that whoever approaches him with a deal to meet Barzini will be the traitor, his mother's advice about how to be strong like his father and keep the family together in his time of crisis is useless. He loses his wife because of his adamant refusal to give up crime and make the Corleone family legitimate. She tells him she aborted their last baby because she wants to stop this process—which we can see from film to film—of the continuation and perpetuation of one Corleone generation to the next of crime and violence and revenge, these "recessive traits" growing more dominant in each succeeding Corleone. He slaps her when he hears about the abortion, when she calls their marriage an abortion, and thus commits another crime against his family, against his own wife—a crime which only the uncouth Carlo, who constantly beat his wife, Connie, is guilty of in I. And, although he keeps his sister and his children with him, it is only through power and not through love. Connie has been through the mill; after her broken marriages and countless affairs, she has nowhere to go and no one to turn to but Michael, who needs her because he needs someone to take care of his children. (The final irony/indignity for neglectful mother Connie is that she ends up entirely domesticated, chaperoning a brood of kids, her own and Michael's.) He keeps his children to spite Kay and because he must possess them—not because he wants them. He is hardly with them; he merely orders subordinates, such as Tom Hagen, to buy expensive presents for them (especially for his son) because he's usually away for their birthdays and the holidays.

Michael Corleone's saga is contrasted to his father's through the parallels to Godfather I and by counterpoint to the interspersed flashbacks of young Vito's life. In 1901, nine-year-old Vito loses his family to one of those insane Sicilian vendettas: local Mafia chieftain Ciccio has his father and older brother—and his mother—killed. Friends help Vito escape to America. There, he is shunted around on Ellis Island, given the wrong name, and quarantined for smallpox. A pathetic scene shows the boy alone in a bare room, singing to himself (an important image to compare to later shots of Michael). His window affords him a clear view of the back of the Statue of Liberty.

Later (1917), we see Vito the young man now integrated into American society—or at least into Italian-American society: he has a job and friends and has begun a family of his own. When local Black Hand bigwig Fanucci (Gastone Moschin) threatens his job and friends and family, he eliminates that threat by eliminating Fanucci. Soon, he and friends Clemenza and Tessio are prospering in the "olive-oil importing" business, and they gain and command the respect of the community. Now that circumstances permit it, Vito takes his family back to his homeland, where he evens up his score with the now-ancient Don of Corleone.

Vito's vengeance is extra-legal and reprehensible, but it is justified—if no way else—in the manner of Greek tragedy, where only more bloodshed erases a crime of bloodshed. However, like Michael's trio of killings at the end of II, young Vito's two murders are excessive. For example, after shooting Fanucci twice and killing him, Vito shoves his revolver in the dead man's mouth and blows Fanucci's brains out. And Vito feels compelled to plunge his knife into Ciccio even though the old Mafia Don is on his last legs—in worse shape than Hyman Roth—when Vito confronts him. (Nearly blind and practically deaf, he doesn't recognize Vito and can't even hear the name of the person Vito has come to avenge. The added TV footage here underscores Vito's excesses by showing him brutally murdering Ciccio's old henchmen, too—as Clarens also notes.)
Middle age mellows Vito Corleone, as I shows. He operates his organization like a business; there is a civilizing influence upon it and him. He avoids open bloodshed whenever possible and conducts his affairs on a business level, keeping all personal reasons out of them. Just the opposite happens to Michael Corleone. Starting off at a fairly civilized level, he gradually degenerates. The policies of Vito Corleone’s heirs become increasingly immoral, beginning in I with hot-headed Sonny’s murderous, manic campaign against the Five Families when his father is hospitalized. Michael deceptively “normalizes” conditions when he takes over—until II, when his policies become totally immoral, divorced from any kind of code of ethics.

The last shot of the contemporary sequence of II—a revealing one of Michael, alone—comes in for a close-up of his face, a face which has taken on certain sinister aspects ever since McClusky broke his jaw in I, but which looks colder and harder than ever now. This scene shows clearly what Michael has become and gains even more force by comparison with the final sequence of II, into which it dissolves—another flashback, but to Michael’s past, not Vito’s. This segment surprises (and delights) the viewer because it seems to be some unshown portion of I. Actually, its date is 7 December 1941, almost five years before the beginning of that film. The place is the Corleone dining room, where the family is preparing for a birthday. Sonny brings his friend Carlo home for dinner and practically pushes his sister onto Carlo’s lap throughout the scene (a perhaps too-easy irony, but revealing nonetheless: the seeds of Sonny’s, Carlo’s, and Connie’s destruction are planted early, here). All the brothers—Sonny, Tom Hagen, Fredo, and Michael—sit around the table discussing Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor; Sonny dominates the conversation, complaining about the nerve of those Japs to start a war on his father’s birthday (another, more subtle irony: it is significant—fitting—that Don Vito’s birthday should be on Pearl Harbor Day, since the Corleone birthright is one of war and slaughter, as the two pictures make clear). Tessio, who brought in the birthday cake, mentions that 30,000 men have rushed to enlist. Sonny sneers, wondering who’d be stupid enough to do a thing like that; Michael quietly says that he would: he enlisted in the Marines that morning. Sonny immediately greets this news with a belligerent attack, Tom with an attempt at logical argument against Michael’s position, and everybody else with shock.

Sonny can’t understand how Michael could do such a stupid thing, especially on their father’s birthday; he tells him that the only group ever worth fighting for is one’s own flesh and blood. Their argument is interrupted by the arrival of Don Vito, and everybody rushes off to wish him happy birthday, leaving Michael sitting alone at the table, contemplating, while they sing “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow” off-screen. (Michael’s loneliness here contrasts to his father’s isolation when he first comes to the U.S. Then, Vito’s isolation was societally ordained; now, Michael’s is self-made.)

In both the contemporary and the flashback sections of II, then, Michael is left alone at the end, in an isolation he has created against his own family. And, while on December 7 his isolation may be based on a nobler principle, allegiance to a cause or ideal larger than that of Family, his present isolation—after he has succeeded to his father’s position and is now supposedly dedicated to his father’s principles and the concept of Family—is due to no high ideal at all, not even that of blood being thicker than water, since his family no longer exists—since he has destroyed it. The movie ends with the image of the earlier Michael, sitting by himself at the table, but this shot—this entire flashback segment—has been superimposed over, has evolved from, the final shot in the contemporary segment and everything that has preceded it: we
are made to see how far Michael has fallen. (The importance of this scene coming where it does is evident: the otherwise chronologically presented TV version does not tamper with its original position.)

The wheel has come full circle—and then some. The last surviving member of his vendetta-depleted family, Don Vito had come to America and established a new family, had moved from personal vendetta to businesslike behavior, to rationality and respectability. College student and war hero Michael, at one time not part of the family business, had been the prime example of that new rationality and respectability, his family’s best and brightest hope. In I, when it is already too late and Michael has become inextricably involved in the family business, his father tells him during their heart-to-heart talk about those former high hopes. He thought Michael might have become “Senator Corleone...Governor Corleone...” Michael waves away the never-to-be-fulfilled dream. Then, for the rest of I and throughout II, he slides steadily downward from business to personal vendetta to senseless killing.

The two films never specifically deal with the motivation for Michael's degeneration, but the audience never really questions that motivation, either. A viewer takes Michael’s actions for granted because he senses that I and II deal with larger issues in which personalities are submerged and subject to manipulation by greater forces: they are a working-out of the age old notion about the sins of the father and the more recent notion about the souring of the American dream.

We don’t expect Michael to escape from his heritage, and he doesn’t. Ironically, when he finally, whole-heartedly embraces that heritage, he cannot cope with it. He is the victim of his own wrong choices and the fact that the younger generation is not equal to the older. Faced with a set of circumstances similar to those his father surmounted, he tries to but cannot solve them in as satisfactory a fashion (because everything—including Michael—is worse than it was in his father’s time). Like father, like son, but—as much as he would like to be—Michael can no more be Don Vito than hot-headed Sonny or feeble Fredo can. His love for his father eventually involves him in the family organization he sought to avoid: his quick thinking at the hospital, which saves Don Vito’s life, earns him a broken jaw from McClusky and triggers in him his father’s streak of revenge (though he insists to his brothers that his murder of Sollozzo and McClusky is “just business”). Hiding out in Corleone, Michael relives his father’s Sicilian experience and loses a loved one (his Italian wife) to a vendetta. After this episode, Michael—unlike his father—can never escape from the cycle of murder and retribution bred in him. He remains the Sicilian killer his father outgrew. Don Vito, during the conciliatory meeting he convenes in I, voluntarily ends the violence: both he and Tattaglia have lost a son; he says they must call it quits—there can be no more killing.

Michael can never call it quits. He is incapable of adopting and still preserving his roots. He displaces his family from the East to the West, and is then bewildered when it falls apart in this incompatible environment. He clings to inappropriate customs, not making allowances for new conditions, and ignores the more important traditions. Always out of step with his family, when he thinks he is acting most like his father, he is actually most unlike him; he tries too hard, and destroys his family while trying to preserve it.

Other directors have sometimes re-made their own films, often to rethink and expand upon themes set forth, to expose flaws inherent but not apparent in their originals (e.g. Ford in The Searchers [1956] and Two Rode Together [1961], Hawks in Rio Bravo [1959] and El Dorado [1967] and again in Rio Lobo [1970]), but none have succeeded quite so artfully as
Coppola and Puzo in the two *Godfathers*. By telling the tale of the Godfather and then essentially retelling it in order to show the deterioration in the second generation of Corleones, they masterfully make the same thing different and the same theme more far-reaching.

NOTES


3 I partially except Richard Schickel who, in “The Final Act of a Family Epic,” *Time*, 16 Dec. 1974, pp. 70 and 73, notes the repetition-alteration technique used in the wedding-communion party celebrations of *I* and *II*.

4 “Whatever seemed to work in the first is repeated almost identically in the second” (“The Godfather Saga,” p. 22). “Almost identically” is the key here. Clarens continues: “This calculated arrangement of episodes that recall each other has been disturbed by the new TV format.” True, but the arrangement is so much a part of the two films’ inherent structures that it carries over anyway. For example, TV segments 1 and 3 end at the same parallel point—in the middle of the wedding and communion celebrations, which then begin the next days’ episodes.

5 Senator Geary mangles the name “Corleone” when he speaks it publicly. However, in private he has no trouble saying it right. His “real American” contempt for the Corleones expresses what must be the prevailing attitude toward Michael and his “kind.” Geary—who doesn’t like these displaced, ethnic Easterners with their “greasy hair”—even stoops so low as to make a disparaging remark about Michael’s family: he says he doesn’t care for his “whole fucking family”—a comment which understandably angers Michael. In New York, in *I*, people don’t make such personal slurs—they leave their families out of business. Even Californian Jack Waltz, Geary’s parallel in *I*, who makes a number of ethnic slurs when he is approached by Tom Hagen about Johnny Fontane, never resorts to the kind of familial insult the Senator does in *II*.

6 The significant look which passes between Tom Hagen, kneeling by the dazed Senator’s bed, and a Corleone torpedo, standing and wiping his hands just inside the bathroom, makes it obvious to the audience—if such confirmation is necessary—that the Senator is being framed for the killing which the hit-man performed. However, an alert observer of this scene may note—in the last shot of the bed, just before the cut—that the victim’s stomach does move. This suggests either that the “victim” is in on the frame-up or—more likely—that the actress playing the part of the corpse is not a complete adept in the art of shallow breathing.
7 *Godfather I* foreshadows Fredo's treachery in *II*. When Fredo tries to defend Moe Green in *I*, Michael tells him, "You're my brother and I love you. But don't ever take sides with anyone against the family again." Unfortunately, Fredo does not heed these words.

8 Richard Castellano's Clemenza is given far more screen time and is shown to be more intimate with the family than Tessio is. For example, it is Clemenza who makes spaghetti for the group and gives Michael, whom he addresses familiarly as "Mikie," advice about cooking, about love, and—later, when they're setting up Sollozzo and McClusky—about killing.

9 Clemenza himself was supposed to be the betrayer in *II*. However since Richard Castellano considered his services too valuable and played hard-to-get, he remained ungotten for *II*. Coppola, figuring that public identification of Castellano with Clemenza was too great to permit him to substitute some other actor for the part, hit upon the expedient of writing Clemenza out of the script (it's mentioned that he died of natural causes) and writing a new character in, one who supposedly got the nod from Clemenza before he passed on. Besides Pentangeli's overall Clemenza-like demeanor, the clearest indication that he was meant to be Clemenza comes when he tries to explain to Michael why he should get better treatment from the Corleones in New York: he says he deserves it because he was with Don Vito in the old days. However, *I* makes no mention of and never shows Pentangeli, whereas all other characters in *II* (except Hyman Roth—a necessary afterthought on the part of the script-writers, since they'd eliminated all of the Corleones' other enemies in *I*) can be found in *I*. Obviously, Pentangeli's speech was originally written for Clemenza. Thus, Pentangeli is meant to represent someone closer to the Corleones than Tessio was.

10 With all of this excess, Michael proves himself to be far less scrupulous than his father, who always only allowed an eye for an eye. When undertaker Bonasera, in *I*, asks the Godfather to have the two boys who brutally beat his daughter put to death, Don Vito tells him, "That would not be justice; your daughter is still alive." Once Bonasera accordingly alters his request—"Then make them suffer, as she has suffered"—the Don readily complies and orders that the guilty duo be brutally beaten.

11 Michael's demotion of Hagen is all the more telling in *II* because it follows on the heels of a promotion: at the beginning of *II*, Michael leaves Tom in charge as acting Don while he goes to Florida, New York, and Cuba on Hyman Roth-Frankie Pentangeli business. When he confers this post upon Hagen, Michael tells him that he always regarded him as a brother. Hagen is choked with emotion. "I always wanted to be thought of as a brother by you, Mikie," he says. However, as *II* progresses, Michael steadily moves away from this early growing-together; he later makes Tom wait outside while he discusses business with some associates. This belies Michael's action at the beginning of *II* when he lets Hagen sit in on his meeting with the Senator and others, telling Geary that he trusts Tom implicitly. In the end, he becomes so suspicious of his step-brother that he accuses him of duplicity and disloyalty.

12 When Michael returns from his months-long trip away from his family, he sees his present-by-proxy to his son, the toy car Tom Hagen sent for him, unused and snow-covered on the lawn. When Michael goes inside his home, no one is there to greet him. He wanders through the house and sees Kay at work in front of her sewing machine. She is engrossed and does not notice him. He stands there and says nothing to her. Through these wordless scenes, Coppola visually conveys Michael's estrangement from his family.