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THE IMMIGRANT'S RETURN:
ITALIAN MALE AND FEMALE IMAGES IN FIVE AMERICAN NOVELS

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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää miten italialaisia mies- ja naishahmoja kuvataan amerikkalaisessa populäärikirjallisuudessa, ja minkälaisia stereotyyppioita kuvauksessa on käytetty. Lisäksi tutkitaan yhteiskunnallisten ja kaupallisten tekijöiden vaikutusta stereotyyppioiden kehittymiseen. Henkilöhahmojen kuvausta ja stereotyyppioita tutkitaan kulttuurillisesta ja sosiologisesta näkökulmasta.

Tutkielman materiaalina on viisi amerikkalaista populääriromaanin. Kolme romaaneista on amerikanitalialaisen Mario Puzon teoksia, joista näkyy kehitys omaelämäkerrallisesta romaanista populäärimpiin, ja samalla enemmän stereotyyppioita sisältäviin, romaaneihin. *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1965) on omaelämäkerrallinen romaani, joka kuvailee italialaisen siirtolaisperheen arkielämää Yhdysvalloissa, ja jossa on keskeisenä käsitteenä perheyhteyden tärkeyden korostaminen juonen jäädessä toisarvoiseksi. *The Godfather* (1969) on jännitysromaani, jolle tyypillisiä ovat nopeat juonenkäänteet, ja jonka teemana on italianamerikkalainen Mafia-perhe. Kirjailija itse myöntää kirjoittaneensa kyseisen populääriromaanin taloudellisista syistä. *The Last Don* (1997) on modernimpi versio Mafia-aiheisesta romaanista, kuten myös Sidney Sheldonin jännitysromaani *Rage of Angels* (1980). Sheldonin työssä tulevat esille jo Puzolle tyypilliset stereotyyppiat. Tropicannon etninen romaani *Big Night* (1996) käsittelee jälleen italialaista siirtolaiselämää ja sen vaikeuksia, sekä perheen merkitystä. Kirjailijan tarkoituksena on luoda italialaisia henkilöitä ilman stereotyyppioita. Puzon omaelämäkerrallisesta romaanista *The Fortunate Pilgrim* poiketen, romaanissa on kuitenkin havaittavissa kaupallisia piirteitä. *Big Night* perustuu elokuvakäsikirjoitukseen, se on luonteeltaan koominen ja siihen on liitetty italialaisia ruokareseptejä.

Aikaisempaa tutkimusta aiheesta on tehty vähän, joten tutkielma keskittyy romaanien henkilöiden ja stereotyyppioiden analysointiin viitekehyksen jäädessä vähempiarvoiseen asemaan. Tutkielma rakentuu romaanien pohjalle, jotka käsitellään yksitellen, ja taustatekijöitä pohditaan jokaisen romaanin kohdalta erikseen.

Tutkielmassa havaittiin, että stereotyyppiat ovat suurilta osin riippuvaisia romaanin kaupallisuudesta. Mitä kaupallisempi romaani on, sitä enemmän siinä on stereotyyppioita. Lisäksi stereotyyppioissa havaittiin yhteneväisyyksiä ja ne voitiin alustavaksi luokitella kolmeen kategoriaan: Mafia-johdajat, naistenmies-gangsterit ja alistetussa asemassa olevat naiset. Eri kirjailijat käyttivät samantapaisia stereotyyppioita, mutta myös uusia elementtejä havaittiin viimeisimmissä romaaneissa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present study is to analyse Italian male and female images in five American novels. Attention will be paid to similarities and/or differences between different authors and the time of publication of the novels, and possible stereotypical schemes will be investigated. Further, it will be interesting to see what is the relationship between the popular Italian images and the social reality of the ethnic group in question, and to what extent the degree of integration of Italian immigrants in American society and the commercial interests of the author show in the presentation of the characters.

The five novels examined in the present study reflect the development of American society towards multi-ethnicity and the growing economical interests in writing a novel. Three of the novels are by the Italian American author, Mario Puzo (1920-1999). His work, in fact, serves as a guideline to the present study. His three novels represent three different phases in the development of the Italian images. The first two, the autobiographical *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1965) and the bestseller and Mafia classic *The Godfather* (1969) serve as examples of novels published in the same period of time and by the same author, but which still are contrasting in their images due to the commercial interests of the author. *The Fortunate Pilgrim* is inspired by the author's own immigrant experience. It describes the growing up of an Italian immigrant family in the United States and emphasises the importance of family ties. *The Godfather*, a fast-paced thriller with a Mafia family theme, has more commercial motivations in the background, as the author himself has stated, and a tendency to stereotypical description of characters. The further development of the images, along with the economical interests, will be seen in the three novels published more recently. *The Godfather's* success as a bestseller and blockbuster led, almost three decades later, to the creation of Puzo's own Godfather remake *The Last Don* (1997). The two novels, despite their difference of age, still have many similarities. Their principal goal is to entertain the readers, which has led to using sharp stereotypical

images and to the dominance of the plot over the characters, even more so in the more recent *The Last Don*. Sidney Sheldon's bestseller, *Rage of Angels* (1980), is a thriller which uses the Mafia theme in creating Italian stereotypes, but in which the importance of the family is, however, diminished. In any case, the principles of Sheldon's Italian images can be traced back to Puzo's *The Godfather*, even if some variation can be observed. Finally, the last novel, Joseph Tropiano's *Big Night* (1996), is an ethnic novel written by an Italian American author which returns back to *The Fortunate Pilgrim*'s immigrant experience theme, and in which the strong family tie is more important than the plot. However, the novel is based on a screenplay which thus demonstrates the economical superiority of screenwriting. Whereas Puzo's *The Godfather* was a bestselling novel first and had success as a film (and two sequels) later, in *Big Night* the situation is reversed. Further, the novel is rendered more commercially appetising than *The Fortunate Pilgrim* by its comic approach and the inclusion of Italian food recipes. The birth of *Big Night* and the re-releasing of *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1997) are indices of the growing interest in the immigrant origins and, at the same time, of the change in the social position of Italian Americans in the multiethnic American society. The author of *Big Night* declares to be against the commercial principles of mass entertainment, which actually encourage the creation of stereotypical images. The novel thus intentionally challenges bestsellers like *The Last Don* and *Rage of Angels*. It will be investigated to what extent the novel is anti-stereotypical and anti-commercial.

The present study has a socio-cultural approach to analysing Italian images, since social factors and the elements emphasised by novelists are often interconnected. The already existing research in the area of Italian stereotypes in American literature is very restricted, mostly limited to articles. More studies have been done, instead, on the field of American films and their stereotypes. In fact, in the present study references will be made to Paola Casella's study on Italian stereotypes in Hollywood film industry. The sociological researches of Andrew Rolle (1980) and Humbert S. Nelli (1983) will be used to sustain aspects of Italian American culture

and society in the United States. The general historical background is based on the studies of Casella (1998), Rolle (1980), Iorizzo and Mondello (1980) and Glazer and Moynihan (1970). Finally, in the short introduction to the principles and social factors influencing stereotyping, the studies of Leyens (1994) and Oakes (1994) have been consulted.

It must be pointed out that the emphasis of the present study will be on the analysis of the novels because of the already mentioned lack of secondary sources. Background information will be given in the course of the main analysis for the close connection between social factors and stereotypes. The present study is structured novel by novel. In the beginning of each section of the analysis, the historical background of the novel in question, and the time of its publication will be introduced, with a short reference to the author. Consequently, the chosen Italian characters of each novel will be analysed and categorised. The prototypes of the following stereotypical categories: Mafia boss, gangster-casanova, submissive daughter and submissive wife-mother (generally called as, women of the shadows), will be defined. These collective terms and prototype definitions have been taken into use by the present author. In the end of the analysis of each novel, there will be a short conclusion of the findings, which will be compared with the results of the earlier sections. After the overall analysis of the novels, there will be a short summing up of the results on male and female images and a brief elaboration on the reasons and effects of stereotyping in society.

2 THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL: MARIO PUZO'S *THE FORTUNATE PILGRIM* (1965)

The novel is set in 1920s and '40s Little Italy in New York. The protagonist is an Italian immigrant mother who alone struggles for a better life for her six children. In effect, between the 1880s and 1920s about four million southern Italian immigrants settled down in the U.S. east coast cities. In search of better opportunities in respect to the poverty of their rural home villages, this great number of immigrants, for the most part illiterate peasants, opened family restaurants, continued with their profession as artisans or worked at constructions thus striving hard to realise their American dream of a better and richer future. (Glazer and Moynihan 1970:183-185, Iorizzo and Mondello 1980:76-77, Rolle 1980:74, Nelli 1983:124-126, Casella 1998:19-21). They looked for security in the familiarity of the life in the Italian neighbourhood since especially after the First World War there were feelings of hostility towards foreigners, even xenophobia, in the United States. In addition to this, the 1930s brought the Great Depression with unemployment and economic problems influencing all the society forcing the immigrants to keep a low profile and work hard, and at the same time enhancing the flourishing of the black market and organised crime. In the 1940s, where the novel ends, the United States counts approximately five million Italian Americans, suspected of divided loyalties between the United States and Italy the Second World War bringing these two countries into a conflict. Americanisation to the point of abandoning their mother language meant further security for the second generation immigrants. Adding to this tendency was the bad reputation of the Italian Mafia weighing on all the Italian American population. As a result, the first generation immigrants and their children easily found themselves in a conflictual situation between the old and new world values and habits, the gap between the generations growing (Casella 1998:33-34, 49-52, 87-96).

In reality, the story of *The Fortunate Pilgrim* is similar to that of many other immigrant women. As confirmed by Rolle (1980:49), they were women who

had decided to escape the poverty-stricken past in southern Italy by marrying “strangers” on the way to America. In this case, the husband soon dies in a working accident, and later on, the second husband is discovered to have mental problems and so not able to support the family leaving the protagonist mother on her own. Mario Puzo, the author himself, was Italian American. Born in 1920 in New York’s badly reputed ‘Hell’s Kitchen’, one of seven children in an immigrant family from the countryside near Naples. His father had been institutionalised for mental problems, as happens in the novel, leaving everything on the shoulders of his strong mother. *The Fortunate Pilgrim* is Puzo’s second novel, first published in 1964, in a time of civil rights movements, the beginning of the sexual revolution and the battle against the Mafia in the United States. The novel was not a success at the time of its publication. It received the same treatment as Puzo’s first novel (*The Dark Arena*, 1955) based on his Second World War experiences; despite positive reviews it did not appeal to the bigger public. As it is the case with other autobiographical novels of the period. For Puzo himself *The Fortunate Pilgrim* was, however, a personal success for its honesty to the truth. In this section, it will be seen how Puzo has described the Italian protagonist mother, the daughter and the eldest son, and what is the overall emphasis of the novel between male and female roles.

2.1 THE PROTAGONIST MOTHER - LUCIA SANTA

Perhaps Lucia Santa’s most memorable characteristic is her unquestioned devotion to home and family, and her decisiveness in defending them against the outside world. She is described as “courageous and without fear of life and its dangers . . . strong, experienced, wary and alert, well-equipped for the great responsibility of bringing a large family to adulthood and freedom” (p. 8). She dedicates herself entirely to her six children sacrificing her own needs. When it comes to the family, she proudly does not save on expenses: “She bought the best olive oil, expensive cheese, imported prosciutto” (p. 94) and when her daughter gets ill she is, without hesitation, sent to a prestigious hospital in order to be treated like a “human being” and not like a

poor immigrant. "It was a fantastically foolish step that would wipe out the savings of years just at the time when they were most desperately needed" (p. 175).

Lucia Santa had learned in her life that the outside world could not be trusted like your own blood relatives. As a young widow she had been considered "dangerous" in the poor Italian neighbourhood, as it was believed that "a young woman without a man . . . could draw off money and goods as the leech draws blood" (p. 11). Potential mistresses were avoided as leeches, and so even a young widow with numerous children could not count on help from outsiders. In Lucia Santa's view the family formed "a union against the world", a protecting shelter against the foreign American society as well as the surrounding Italian neighbourhood. It must be remembered that initially Italian immigrants encountered hardships in integrating into American society. Staying within the family structure, as noted by Rolle (1980:33,114-115), was a way of "playing it safe", partly also influenced by a history of oppression and dependency in the mother country. Eleanor Cutri Smeal and Ken Auletta (Brandi Cateura:1987:34,176-177) describe how, in their personal experience, loyalty to the family and family closeness became strong, functioning as a natural defence mechanism against the world. Equally for Lucia Santa, the family union is based on respect and duty between the family members. Each member, female and male alike, has a position to be filled for the good and honour of the whole family. Individual needs are considered secondary. This view is confirmed by Nelli (1983:131-132), according to whom, in fact, family unity and strength in southern Italy made the individual subordinate to group interests.

In Lucia Santa's world there is an unspoken division between male and female roles in the family. The women, mothers and daughters, are expected to protect and care for the men at home, to manage the household and children. The home is conceived as a female empire with the mother and the eldest daughter in the position of the powerful "chiefs of an obedient tribe" (p. 151). The women being thus safe in their own world, the men have the duty to affront the hostile outside world and provide the actual living for the

family. The mother figure has a central and honoured role in the family. As the Italian American Gay Talese puts it, “the Italian mother is saintly; she is never scandalous . . . never a servant” (Brandi Cateura 1987:71-72). This same aspect is to be found in Lucia Santa’s character, revealed even by her name. In effect, ‘santa’ in Italian means ‘saint, saintly’. According to Iorizzo and Mondello (1980:220), the model of the saintly mother can be traced back to the Catholic religion and the cult of the Virgin Mary. She has a highly honoured position in Italian culture and thus reinforces the central place of mothers. Furthermore, Virgin Mary represents a desexualised woman, a mother but hardly a wife, influencing the traditional view on the Italian woman. After the marriage the woman is tended to see exclusively as a mother (Rolle 1980:111,157). Accordingly, Lucia Santa is desexualised; “a small, round, handsome woman” (p. 8) and her role is that of a solitary mother, the figure of the husband not constantly present. Thus, it is not a chance that the novel titles ‘Mamma Lucia’ (Mother Lucia) in Italian.

Lucia Santa’s powerful mother figure is idealised and greatly adored by her sons: “Vincent thought his mother beautiful, though she was fat and always dressed in black” (p. 21). In turn, the sons are object to Lucia Santa’s adulation, not allowed to separate easily from the mother’s control. She would like each of her sons to marry “a good Italian girl”. That is, a girl who has been “trained” by her family to be a good wife and mother, as the Italian American Helen Boehm (Brandi Cateura 1987:160-161) describes her own situation. According to Lucia Santa, a good Italian girl “knew from the cradle that man ruled, must be waited on like a duke, fed good food that took hours to prepare; who cared for the children and the house without whining for help” (p. 222), thus guaranteeing them a safe future under the motherly protection of the wife. So the wife actually functioning as a substitute of the mother for the husband. The future wife-mother does not need to be sexually attractive to men. As demonstrated by the extracts from the novel describing the ideal wife-mother (p. 228), she preferably has modest looks (“She did not use paint, did not wear high heels to weaken her pelvic bones”) and functions first as a daughter adoringly serving the father (“skilled in all the secrets of cookery, she prepared for her father at the Sunday feast handmade

macaroni”), and then as a wife-mother equally serving the husband. As confirmed both by Child (1943:80) and Nelli (1983:134), the traditional marriage is considered more as a deal with a mutual profit, rather than a union generated by romantic love. The position Lucia Santa takes with her own daughter is opposite to this principle: “Thank God Octavia was marrying a man who was not an Italian and therefore might show mercy to womankind” (p. 223), revealing another aspect of this traditional division of roles. The idea of victimising and sacrificing the woman by leaving her alone to the household chores. Rolle (1980:111) calls it the “mater dolorosa” role. A desexualised wife-mother who spends her life waiting upon men, doing household chores constantly. An image that is reinforced by the black clothing of a widow, like in Lucia Santa’s case, connoting self-sacrifice, misery, and determination, as in martyrdom (Rolle 1980:49). This is also the image that, with time and with the impact of mass entertainment, has been imprinted to people’s minds and led to stereotypical judgements on Italian women. Julie Bovasso (Brandi Cateura1987:222) talks about the caricature of a “fat, short Italian mamma” and Aileen Riotto Sirey (Brandi Cateura1987:116) finds out through her interviews that the image of an Italian American woman in America was that of a good housekeeper, wife and mother who remains “invisible” and “quiet”, a woman of the shadows.

Under this surface structure of women serving men, however, the roles are reversed. It is the woman to have the ultimate power and strength in the family. Nelli (1983:133-134) sustains that Italian wives and mothers had a high and respected status in the family and might “play the part of the submissive female” only for outsiders. And Aileen Riotto Sirey (Brandi Cateura1987:110-111) mentions, what she calls, the “innate sense of power” Italian American women acquire by controlling and running the family. Lucia Santa’s power is revealed in the way she can afford to show her contempt for the men’s world, as in the following extract.

Lucia Santa was happy but a little irritated by . . . the masculine pride and hoopla, as if such things were really of great importance . . . What man would risk his life day after day and year after year as all women do in the act of love? Let them bear children, let their bodies open up into a great bloody

cavern year after year. They would not be so proud then of their trickling scarlet noses, their little knife cuts. (p. 87.)

Lucia Santa could also be described with the term “household goddess”, used by Rolle (1980:113) in describing the Italian mothers. The following description in the novel renders what this goddess is like: “She moved in clouds of steam like a humble god, disappearing and reappearing, with smells of warm cotton, garlic, tomato sauce, and stewing meats and greens . . . And at night Lucia Santa waited until the house was quiet and at rest before she sought her own sleep. Her children had never seen her eyes closed and defenseless against the world” (p. 216). Lucia Santa is a goddess in her omnipresence, in her role as a creator (“she had made a world, she had been its monolith” (p. 216)) and in the role of a protector and a judge (“Don’t fear. I’m your mother. No one can harm my children. Not while I live” (p. 43)).

Still another salient aspect of Lucia Santa’s character is her practicality and modesty. Rolle (1980:38) explains that the emphasis on interior qualities rather than exterior looks, and the idea of not wasting and being practical, among Italian immigrants was learnt in the poverty-stricken past. Lucia Santa’s principle shows in her attitude towards religion. She believes in simply respecting life and other people and not “the primitive social rites of the Church” as she calls them, and “felt an overpowering contempt for . . . men who sought something beyond life, some grandeur. As if life, life itself, were not enough” (p. 113). Accordingly, she considers romanticism and dreaming useless: “Those who read books will let their families starve. To numb their brains with stories that were not true, to enter worlds in which they could never live. What foolishness” (p. 221). And, as mentioned before, even a marriage was easily based on economic necessity instead of romantic love. Lucia Santa is rather a woman of action ready to launch herself at every good occasion or moment of need in order to benefit and protect the family. To borrow Helen Boehm’s words in describing her own Italian mother: “Real jewels were not what she wanted. The most important thing to her was to be a good mother and give her husband and children love and support” (Brandi Cateura 1987:160-161).

In Lucia Santa's family the husband/father is a weak character. The first husband dies young and the second one, even if nominally the head and supporter of the family, remains in the background. He is like a shadow; he comes and goes obscuring the life of the family from time to time and then disappears again. And, in the meanwhile, the life of the family goes on, the children growing up hating, ignoring and being scared of him and his physical violence. Everything he does is accepted by Lucia Santa, even if most of the time weighing on the family. His main role is being the prisoner of his mental illness. After a dangerous fit of rage, he is closed to a mental hospital and diagnosed "crazy". There is a clear contrast between Lucia Santa's tenacity and strength and her husband's complete lack of constancy and resistance, as though confirming Lucia Santa's general belief on men's weakness respect to women. The family remains a strongly female dominated one.

2.2 THE PROTAGONIST DAUGHTER - OCTAVIA

Lucia Santa's eldest daughter, Octavia, conforms to the traditional role of the Italian daughter who, as seen by Rolle (1980:112) and Nelli (1983:134), follows her mother's example. She dedicates plenty of her time to the rest of the family; doing household chores, cooking and, protecting and taking care of the little brothers and sister. Her relationship with the mother is one of conspiracy and mutual respect and understanding. She is "a faithful but powerful underling" (p. 151) who shares the everyday worries with her mother acting as a substitute husband, as well as a front against the alien American society (see Rolle 1980:112). And exactly like her mother, Octavia has a strong character, with the same ambition to overcome the difficulties of immigrant life.

Despite her traditional behaviour at home and her respect to the mother, Octavia seeks for a different status in her own life. "She felt frightened pity for these women enchanted into dreamless slavery by children and the unknown pleasures of marriage bed." (p 13). Not wanting to be seen as a

desexualised Madonna, “a classical type, made for children” (p. 173), as she is described by an Italian American doctor. And not intentioned to take on the traditional role of the wife-mother, she looks for freedom by refusing the Italian men of the neighbourhood. She declares: “I’ll never marry one of these guineas. They just want a woman they can treat like a dog” (p 26). Her aversion is further reinforced by the Italian step-father who mistreats and neglects the family. Even though refusing the wife-mother role, Octavia does not abandon her position as a traditional Italian daughter and as a loving sister. As seen above, in this respect, she follows her mother’s example. She shows an unquestionable love for her brothers, and cherishes the memory of her adored father. She used to “set his plate for dinner, jealously placing the fork with the straight tines, the sharpest knife, the small wineglass polished and flashing like a diamond” (pp. 35-36). A behaviour contrasting with her aversion to Italian men in general.

The studies of Rolle (1980:112,128-129) and Nelli (1983:136-137,144) offer explanations to the motives of Octavia’s rebellion. First of all, the second generation immigrant children had to face a conflict situation between two cultures and two sets of values. The old world family centred life was challenged by independence in the new world. The Italian girl was often the first one to rebel by intermarrying and integrating. This tendency was encouraged by the economic necessity of the family. A work outside home, and thus major independence, enhanced the seeking of status and material well-being. The will to overcome prejudices associated with immigrants, and the dream of better opportunities tended to push the children out of the Italian neighbourhood. Octavia’s case is similar to that of Helen Boehm (Brandi Cateura 1987:162-163), an Italian American daughter, who marries an American and starts a business in order to escape a sheltered life at home. So also Octavia’s rebellion is not exclusively a question of Italian men. Rather, it demonstrates a strong will to gain a status through disassociation to the poor Italian neighbourhood and, as interpreted by Rolle (1980:112), provides a way of acting out the unexpressed anger of the mother.

Octavia's process of integration and its problematics show in the occasional moments of uncertainty between two opposing modes of behaviour. When promoted to a saleslady "she learned that to get ahead in the world meant despoiling her fellow human beings . . . But she was still so naive that she felt that to use her personality, her smiles, her words of friendship, was like using her body for material gain." (p 92). Accustomed to absolute honesty and straightforwardness with her family, Octavia finds it difficult to fake friendliness in order to earn her living in a materialistic world and, finally, refuses the job. The same way she, initially, refuses the emphasis on exterior looks, the taking care exclusively of oneself. Several months in hospital had changed her into "an American girl, full blown . . . Her cheeks were rosy red, her hair waved in a permanent, American style" (pp 188-189). Her carefully attended looks being out of place in the modest home environment and, furthermore, contrasting with the practical principles of her mother, she prefers to abandon individualism and egoism learnt in the outside world. The practical mother might criticise her of reading too much and painting her nails, but, after all, respects her daughter's decisions. And Octavia comments: "At least I'm not having a baby without a husband. I'm still a good Italian girl" (p. 171). She is "a good Italian girl" who is, however, going through a process of family centred values changing into more individual ones.

Seeking status and material well-being, Octavia marries a non-Italian, literate husband, in opposition to the "illiterate peasants" like her step-father. And moves far away from the old neighbourhood, to a "quiet, antiseptic apartment in the Bronx". As she wanted, her husband is different from the Italian males of the neighbourhood. "This young man was handsome, fair, slender of build, and gentle as a girl . . . Wherever he went, there was a book under his arm or open in his hands" (p. 221). So he is supposedly different in looks, character and interests from the Italian men she feels aversion to. In the end, Octavia has a good job and no children, thus avoiding the traditional wife-mother's homebound existence. But still, managing to escape the old world, she is not satisfied with the life in the new world either. "No, she was not happy with her husband as she was this instant, happy that she had

lighted the look of suffering and loneliness on her young brother's face". She reveals her profound attachment and affection to the family she has left behind, for a husband who "would not sleep until she returned. And then he would kiss her with a gentle sadness that made them alien to each other" (p. 249). Like her mother, Octavia remains strong and determined in her search of the American Dream, and an "alien" husband is only a sacrifice to be made, an object for a better future. She says: "There would be no children, and thanks to this and other elementary precautions against fate, she and her husband would rise out of poverty to a better life. She would be happy someday" (p 247).

2.3 THE GANGSTER CASANOVA - LORENZO "LARRY"

Larry has all the characteristics of Rolle's (1980:137-138) description of the "good" child of the Italian family. In fact, he is "like a young man brought up in Italy" (p. 45), he has good friendly manners and a social character. Instead of looking forward to escaping the Italian neighbourhood and becoming americanised, he respects the Italian traditions. He does his best to protect the family, taking on a fatherly role in the absence of the step-father, and respectfully obeying his mother. Not interested in studying, and in order to help the family finance, Larry starts with modest jobs that "appealed to his heroic sense". Thus dreaming of being a hero, he is called "the last of the dummy boys"(p. 3), leading trains across the city on horseback. His tradition-bound existence, as well as his job as a "dummy boy", is under a risk to be outrun by time and the development of American society. But Larry is trustful of the future: he "rode as straight and arrogantly as any western cowboy" (p. 3) enjoying his heroic position in the admiring eyes of little children and "sleeping in the smelly stable, cowboylike on a prairie of stone . . . Larry Angeluzzi never doubted his happy destiny" (p. 50).

Contrasting with his boyish dreams and innocence, is Larry's strong and mature body. "Young as he was, he had a chest as hairy as and even broader than the older man's" (p. 84). And so, being a social and handsome young

man with an innocent mind and “great brawny forearms” made him attractive to women. In fact, he is known to be the “neighborhood Romeo”, “The Lady Killer”. At his work carrying heavy sacks of laundry to the customers, he keeps company to lonely married women considering it “another little detail of the job . . . half duty, half pleasure” (p. 44). And the young girls of the neighbourhood are not safe either. “Angry mothers brought daughters to Lucia Santa and made ugly scenes, shouting that he kept the girls out too late, that he had promised to marry them” (p. 45). In this respect, Larry resembles Rudolph Valentino, the 1920s Italian American sex symbol. Like Larry he was a son of Italian immigrants (born Rodolfo Guglielmi), known as “the most successful lover on the silver screen” (Rolle 1980:130) and, at the same time, an object pursued by women and used by the media. He became the symbol of Italian masculinity. A symbol that has contributed to the image of the Italian male at large.(Rolle 1980:130-133, Casella 1998:44). Rolle (1980:122) further explains the behaviour of the Italian American male who acts as a casanova, as an outlet of “unresolved internal rage” created by the immigrant life. Child (1943:80) offers another point of view tied to the Italian tradition of making a distinction between so-called good and bad women, saints and sluts. According to him, the young Italian male was actually encouraged to look for sexual gratification from bad women. Borrowing Child’s words: “He must not make sexual advances to the sort of woman he is encouraged to feel affection for or to consider as a possible wife”. In the novel, Larry’s easy-going behaviour is, in fact, protected by the mother. Not until he starts keeping regular company to an older married woman, does Lucia Santa interfere. ‘Animale ! Bestia !’ (p.) (‘animal, beast’) are the Italian terms she uses to address her playboy son. In the end, the mother takes over control and saves him from becoming, as she would say, a “sucked-out jellyfish”. And so Larry takes up again his role of the good dutiful son.

Larry has his innocent American Dream of becoming successful and rich, for the good of the whole family.

He felt himself, knew himself, as one destined for success and glory. In the world he lived in he was the strongest of the boys his age, the handsomest, the most successful with girls. Even a grown woman was his slave . . . He would be powerful. He would make his family rich. He dreamed of wealthy young American girls with automobiles and large houses who married him and loved his family. He was not snobbish. He never thought they could be looked down upon, his family, his mother and sister, his friends. For he considered them all extraordinary (pp. 49-50).

According to Rolle (1980:129), bigger cars and houses, as well as a blond wife, were typical status symbols for the Italian American male, who is willing to integrate. Larry dreams of all these things, but lacks in decisiveness and independence characteristic, instead, of his mother and sister. And so, to save himself from trouble with a pregnant lady, instead of a rich American girl, he hurries to marry a young Italian girl of the neighbourhood. His adjustment to the life of a married man, soon with two children and not much money, is not easy. Larry feels “a sense of loss; that his life was over” (p. 203). Larry’s marriage to Louisa follows the so-called classic model, which is based on the principle of dividing women into two categories, good and bad. A recent article on an Italian women’s magazine (*Io Donna*, 22 April 2000, p.273) takes up this theme and, in particular, the wife’s position in the marriage. The conclusion is that she is perceived by her husband first of all as an angelic mother, with no sexual attributes. In Rolle’s point of view (1980:133-134), this kind of behaviour is due to the son’s dependence on the figure of the saintly mother. And if the wife accepts this model of marriage, the husband is encouraged to pursue other type of women. So in the novel, once Louisa accepts her status, Larry continues his life of *The Lady Killer*. Similarly, Mario Cuomo (Brandi Cateura 1987:15) sees the popular stereotype of the sexist Italian male with a submitted wife, as an erroneous interpretation of traditional family roles.

Larry’s laid-back character is apt to change. Involved in a fist fight to defend his brother “for the first time in his life, Larry really wanted to fight, to hurt someone, to show himself the master of his world” (p. 84). This is an attitude interpreted by Rolle (1980:122) as yet another defence mechanism against the outside world and a way of liberating internal pressures. In search of economic security and a proper place in society, Larry accepts the position as

a “collection agent”. In practice, he had to collect illegal protection money from the local bakers, which could involve the use of physical violence. His still innocent mind is revealed in the initial refusal of the violence: “I can’t go around beating guys up for the money. I don’t mind collecting, but I’m not a gangster” (p. 212). And his fear of dishonouring the family strong: “Larry was overwhelmed. He could only think of his name in the papers, his mother in disgrace, himself a criminal and in prison” (p. 211). But, in the end, he is not courageous enough to object to his powerful employer, and so, resigns to his fate and starts the life of a gangster.

It was almost as if he were changing second by second, each drop of blood, each bit of flesh, into someone else . . . He realized that you couldn’t always be nice to people and expect them to do what you wanted, not with money anyway. You had to be mean. What puzzled him was the admiration people had for a man who did something cruel (pp. 211, 214).

Larry is really seen like an innocent victim, pushed to the new way of life. He does not really care for profit, for money and business. What is valuable to him is the family: “Because of this he would make money, his wife and child would live like people who owned a business, he would help his mother, and brothers and sisters” (p. 214). When the mother decides it is time to move away from the old neighbourhood, Larry and his family, now with three children, loyally follow her. The mother is proud of his dutiful and successful son, and accepts the weakness of his character: “They had always seen through Larry . . . Larry was delighted that Louisa and the children would have company, while, he, animal that he was, chased young girls starved by the war” (p. 301).

2.4 CONCLUSION

The Fortunate Pilgrim describes the everyday life of an Italian immigrant family, and follows the process of growing up of the children. The protagonist mother, Lucia Santa, could be defined as a ‘hero of life’ in her courage and strength in protecting the family in the new country. In the

present study, her character has a central role. She serves as a model for the Mafia boss prototype, which will be introduced in the next section. In addition, she is chosen to represent the prototype of an Italian mother, who is entirely dedicated to the family and to the household, thus setting the basis for the category of the so-called women of the shadows used in the present study. The strong and independent daughter, Octavia, functions as the prototype Italian daughter, who helps her mother in managing the household chores. Finally, the eldest son, Larry, is a dutiful Italian son, whose principal characteristic is his devotion to his mother, brothers and sisters, and his absolute loyalty and respect to the mother all through the novel. Larry is the prototype of a so-called gangster-casanova. He is masculine, physically strong and non-intellectual, as well as social and attractive to women. There is also an element of two-facedness in his role of a good son/gangster-casanova. Furthermore, his young Italian wife is submissive and perfectly invisible; a typical example of a woman of the shadows connected to a gangster-casanova. Larry's Italian character contrasts with his sister's non-Italian husband. In effect, Octavia's Jewish husband is described as slender, weak, bookish and trustworthy, boring but safe in his predictability.

All in all, *The Fortunate Pilgrim* emphasises the importance of the nuclear family, and the power and strength of the Italian woman protagonists. The novel faithfully describes the immigrant experience; the poverty, the prejudices and the struggling for a better future of an Italian immigrant family. It concentrates on the description of the characters, the different personalities and their evolution. In the analysis of the following four novels it will be seen how the prototypes defined above have changed with time and under the influence of the entertainment genre.

3 THE MAFIA CLASSIC: MARIO PUZO'S *THE GODFATHER* (1969)

The novel is set mostly in 1940s and '50s New York City following the rise and dawn of the Corleone Family. As mentioned also in the novel, the general poverty and difficulties of the war time period, had enhanced the flourishing of the black market and the organised crime. The New York criminal culture has a multiethnic history. Jerome Charyn's article 'N.Y.C. mafia' (*Carnet*, 2 April 2000, pp.122-127) describes this phenomenon greatly influenced by the abyss between the rich stratum of society and the mass of poor immigrants in the beginning of the 20th century. The birth of various gangs was thus normal. After the mythic gangsters of the 1920s, Arnold Rothstein and Legs Diamond, it was the time of Italian American Mafia legends like Lucky Luciano and Frank Costello. Already in the 1950s and '60s the power of the Mafia began slowly to decline due to strict government measures. For the Italian Americans, it was a period of so called mainstreaming and mixed marriages bringing them towards a major integration to American society.

The Godfather was published in 1969. In a period in which the United States government was taking strong measures against the Mafia reinforcing investigations and inserting special units. The Mafia had come to represent the extreme delinquency and corruption in American society. And the frequent connections to Italian American Mafia bosses made so that, in the end, the Mafia was associated with the Italian component of society at large. Consequently, the Italian anti-defamation league was founded in 1966, in the hope of reconstructing a more positive image, an attempt partly obstructed by negative newspaper reportage. The 1960s and '70s were characterised by social turmoil; civil rights movements, the beginning of the sexual revolution and the concept of new ethnicity, which meant re-valuing of ethnicity, pride of one's origins. Another characteristic of the period was the growing importance of marketing and profit. *The Godfather* is an example of the making of a bestseller. Puzo, a talented but already aged writer, had financial

problems after the commercial failure of the first two novels. Despite his reluctance to write a novel for money with the idea “Let’s write a book that’s going to appeal to people”, he was persuaded to write a novel on the Mafia. Instead of describing poor immigrants and their everyday life, it was more profitable to focus on a Mafia boss, an anti-hero, and the glamour and power of the idealised and romanticised Mafia family. Despite the economic pressures, Puzo’s wish was to write a family, not a crime, novel (*Mario on Larry King Live*, 2 August 2000). The eldest son Larry’s thoughts in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* reveal the same sentiments: “He realized that you couldn’t always be nice to people and expect them to do what you wanted, not with money anyway. You had to be mean. What puzzled him was the admiration people had for a man who did something cruel” (p. 214)

The Godfather is the story of the Corleone Family. It introduces the concept of the economically and socially integrated extended family protected and guided by the Don. Balzac’s words chosen by Puzo, synthesise the principle of the novel: “Behind every great fortune there is a crime”. For Puzo himself, it was a “crime” against other Italian Americans to write a novel, which was to reinforce the stereotypes on Italians, and “a fortune” for the economical profit (“the best selling novel in publishing history” according to Larry King, 2 August 2000). The international nature of the *The Godfather* phenomenon is also largely due to the success of the homonymous film (and its sequels) at the cinema. In the same way as Casella (1998:386) describes the birth of the Mafia movie genre, so one could also talk about the Mafia novel. A classic with numerous imitations and adaptations, *The Godfather* has shaped the American literature creating a new branch of entertaining genre. In this section it will be investigated how the prototypes of the mother, the daughter and the gangster-casanova, defined in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, have changed in order to conform to the genre. And the prototype of the Mafia boss will be introduced.

3.1 THE MAFIA BOSS - DON VITO CORLEONE

The character of Don Corleone resembles in many respects that of the protagonist mother, Lucia Santa, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. He too, a young boy of humble origins, has to face a tough beginning in the new country. As his father was killed by the local Mafia in Sicily, the young Vito is sent safe to America. Without ideals of romantic love, he marries early a Sicilian girl and settles himself in an Italian neighbourhood in New York. He is a hard-working young man, who is ready to accept any work he finds, legal or not, to support his family. He is also a man, who is used to, and proud of, doing things his own way, by his own rules. Like Lucia Santa, he thus shows a lack of faith in the outer world. As explained by Rolle (1980:136), this was a natural part of the immigrant experience. When a local Mafia boss tries to get his share of his already modest earnings, Vito cold-bloodedly kills him. He does not feel the need of an institution in order to do justice and to protect his personal and the family honour.

After this episode, the neighbourhood treats Vito with respect, and people start paying protection money for his “friendship”. In other words, he is not only a pioneer and a family pillar, but becomes the protector of the whole neighbourhood. He starts an olive oil importing business, and being successful, keeps on expanding his illegal activities and his personal empire. He proves to have the “natural cunning and shrewdness” (*The Fortunate Pilgrim*: 8) that Lucia Santa lacks. Rolle (1980:123) sees this mode of behaviour (“shrewdness and cunning”, the exactly same words that he uses of Lucia Santa) simply a way in which immigrants defended themselves against maltreatment. Similarly, the family and the Italian neighbourhood had the function of protecting and guaranteeing safety against the foreign outside world. (Rolle 1980:74). Rolle (1980:124) puts it: “In order to hold out against enemies, there must be family unity”. Lucia Santa protects her children and husband with a strong will and strength forming a “union against the world”. In the same way, also for Don Corleone “the family is more loyal and more to be trusted than society” (p. 301) and “blood is blood, nothing else is its equal” (p. 98). The Don’s Family, however, is a larger

concept. It is not confined to the nuclear family as in Lucia Santa's case, but actually forms an economic institution with extensive business connections. In addition, the Don has a Family mall that functions as a fortress. According to Nelli (1983:134-135,114) this kind of community was illusory. When the immigrant family was confronted with urban problems, it tended to co-operate with the mainstream. And, as seen in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, already the second generation was encouraged to look for a position and acceptance in the larger society.

Following Lucia Santa's example, Don Corleone is known for his practicality and wisdom in taking decisions. He is devoted in his role of the head of the Family, who wants to secure a better life for his children, and emphasises the importance of loyalty and respect between the family members. This is, in fact, a characteristic that the Italian American Rudolph Giuliani (Brandi Cateura 1987:230) assigns to his own Italian father. The Don is described as the "most modest of men" "disposed to help anyone who respects him, treating everyone equally" (p. 15). His humility shows in his love of life and nature represented by his hobby of gardening and respect of death/god. On the other hand, like Lucia Santa, who is the goddess of her home, the Don has the status of a god(father) in the world he has created. His all-knowing character, his seeing through people and taking care of and protecting his faithful are all features he shares with the protagonist mother. But unlike Lucia Santa, to whom life without "grandeur" is enough, Don Corleone is surrounded by glamorous power and greatness. He is "a great national leader" (p. 216) and "an apostle of peace" (p. 215). Further, his character has a controversial aspect, a certain two-facedness, which is closer to the image of the eldest son Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* than to that of the mother. Thus, it creates a connection between these two Italian male characters.

The Don's negative side, the already mentioned "cunning and shrewdness", is present in his personal ruthlessness and acts of violence and in the amorality of his illegal business. The cover text of the novel introduces him in the following way: "Tyrant, blackmailer, racketeer, murderer . . . Meet

Don Corleone, a friendly man, a just man, a *reasonable* man". Conforming to the rules of the entertaining genre, it gives a one-dimensional picture of his character. The Don's son Michael, however, tries to explain to his American girlfriend, and to the reader, that his father is "not irresponsible, or at least not in the society which he has created. He's not a crazy machine-gunning mobster" (p. 366). However, the Don's masculine world of business and violence contrasts with Lucia Santa's values. Unlike the male heroes with their "trickling scarlet noses", Lucia Santa is a hero of her own family-centred life. Rolle (1980:30) actually sustains that the Italian immigrants, in order to assimilate, had to accept more masculine, materialistic values, and refuse sentimentalism, which in the new world was regarded as feminine, a sign of weakness.

3.1.1 *The Don's submissive wife - Mama Corleone*

Another aspect that is very different in the world of the Don from that of Lucia Santa is the position of the mother/wife. In fact, Lucia Santa, in her role of the mother-protagonist, is closer to the character of Don Corleone than to his wife. Here it must be noted that Puzo is said to have used his own mother as a model in creating Don Corleone (*Celebrity Biographies*, 1997, Baseline II, Inc), and so the submissive wife is a pure commercial choice. Indeed, the Don's world is a men's world so, the wife has to stay in the background. "Business is the "forbidden territory" of the marriage" (p. 365). This position is clear since the beginning of the novel. While other characters are being introduced, the Don's wife remains anonymous. She is not given a first name, but is always referred to as "Mama Corleone" (cf, Mamma Lucia), "the Don's wife/widow" or "Mrs Corleone". This fact implies that she does not have a full personality, and is destined to remain faceless, a "shadow", totally dependent on her husband. Rather, her position is similar to that of Lucia Santa's mentally ill husband. When young Vito is to get married, his wife's virtues are described in one sentence: "an Italian girl freshly arrived from Sicily, a girl of only sixteen but a skilled cook, a good housewife" (p. 196). So, she has the traditional qualities of a wife-

mother, who has been educated by her family to take care of the household. But unlike in Lucia Santa's case, her personality is not explored further. When Vito starts his business, she "believes in and has absolute loyalty to her husband" (p. 365), and remains impassive: ". . .in her life with the Don she had learned it was far wiser not to perceive. . ." Since "business is the "forbidden territory" of the marriage" (p. 365), the wife's territory remains the house. Characteristic phrases describing Mama Corleone, when present at all, could be: "Behind her rose the smell of frying peppers" (p. 83), "bustling around preparing a snack for the arrival of her daughter" (p. 268) or the more nasty: "the old woman forced Kay (the daughter-in-law) to eat" (p. 360). Cooking and serving food is an essential part of her life. If not in kitchen, she is at church "to pray for the soul of her husband". According to Iorizzo and Mondello (1980:247), since the Church supported the concept of family, attending Mass was considered by Italian immigrants a way of assuring family stability and neighbourhood loyalty. And, similarly, Rolle (1980:154) sees the Italian women "bound to the mass, the sacraments, and confession". This mode of behaviour is not, however, one of Lucia Santa's characteristics. In her case, practice and action wins over theory and doctrine.

There is little interaction between Mama Corleone and her already grown-up children. However, there is one occasion on which the mother expresses her opinion recommending her son to get his injured face operated: "You look like a gangster in the movies, get your face fixed for the sake of Jesus Christ and your poor wife" (p. 395) to which the Don immediately interferes: "He's out of your hands, it's no concern of yours." So, he puts his wife back in her submitted position. It is clear that she has no power in the family and, consequently, no right to give orders even to her own son. This situation is completely different from the strong mother-son bond between Lucia Santa and the eldest son Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Larry remains attached and faithful to the mother all through the novel. More than a mother, Mama Corleone (even if called "Mama" as if following the example of "Mamma Lucia") is seen as a submitted wife. Like Lucia Santa, she is desexualised: "a short, stout woman dressed in black" (p. 237), but in turn, not given any

positive characteristics. On the contrary, a fairly negative picture is given: “He (an adopted son) had never thought of her as his mother as he thought of the Don as his father and Sonny as his brother” He felt “the affection for someone who has been kind but not loving” (p. 269) . She is considered more traditional and less integrated than the Don. Unlike her husband, she has a “heavy Italian accent”(p. 237)) and comes from a “primitive culture”(p. 269. Mama Corleone is not regarded as an affectionate, respected mother or an attractive woman, or even as an interesting and full personality. She is exclusively the Don’s wife, an object that fulfils a certain position in the family. There is, however, a hint of dissatisfaction in her attitude. She assumes a *mater dolorosa* role (Rolle 1980:111), showing a secret disrespect of men and “the great Don” (p. 393) as she calls her husband. She says: “He just plays the fool with his garden, his peppers, his tomatoes. As if he were some peasant still. But men are always like that.” (p. 393). So like Lucia Santa, she thus considers men foolish. However, she does not have the same power and position in the family as Lucia Santa has. Whereas Lucia Santa is a household goddess and a humble god, Mama Corleone is an object, a woman of the shadows. She remains invisible and insignificant in doing her household chores.

3.1.2 The Don’s son/romantic hero - Michael Corleone

The Don’s youngest son and successor, Michael, represents the second generation version of the Mafia boss. He is very much like a duplicate of his father. “He had all the quiet force and intelligence of his great father, the born instinct to act in such a way that men had no recourse but to respect him” (p. 18), as well as the god-like, greater understanding of people and situations. But he also has his own, Americanised, side of personality. Michael is a rebel son, a so-called bad child of an Italian family (Rolle 1980:137). Disobeying his father, he goes away from home to study. Then, he joins the army and returns from the Second World War as a hero. He is intelligent, tactful, courageous, handsome, sensitive. More like a Mafia boss, he is a romantic hero. He has a positive, Americanised role by the side of his

American girlfriend. In the first part of the novel, in fact, Michael and his girlfriend function as outside observers of the Family, interpreting a foreign culture to the reader. And so, for a while, Michael remains alienated from the Family business. This attitude is, however, forgotten when his father is shot at. At this point, Michael's civilised, Americanised, character changes into a more brutal, animal-like one: "his presence seemed to radiate danger ... he was a reincarnation of Don Corleone himself" (p. 135). He is suddenly discovered to have the same two-facedness already found in the Italian male characters of the eldest son Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and his own father, Don Corleone. These characters tend to change from positive to negative, and vice versa, thus conforming to the plot of the novel and the general rules of the entertaining genre. Accordingly, Michael is destined to become an active member of the Family organisation and a cold-blooded killer. Having completed his personal revenge, he is forced to exile to his father's native Sicily. This return to his origins allows the reader to explore further his Italian/Sicilian side of personality. Michael is enchanted by the primitive beauty of his homeland and its tradition, all incarnated in a young village girl. This girl awakens the primitive, animal aspect of his character. "Nothing was going to stop him from owning this girl, possessing her, locking her in a house and keeping her prisoner only for himself" (p. 340). Thus, he primarily sees her as an object to be both worshipped and dominated. The Italian girl's sexuality could traditionally be sanctified only by marriage and with the permission of the father, as explained by Rolle (p. 132). So, also Michael, following the tradition, marries the Sicilian girl. After the wedding the young wife is, however, mistakenly killed, and so eliminated from the novel. As Don Corleone says: "The sexual power of women is a private affair, it does not influence business" (p. 60). Also in this case, the wife, the young Sicilian girl, functions as an object to be sacrificed to the plot. Even if a beautiful woman with sexual power, she is categorised as an insignificant woman of the shadows, like Mama Corleone, and reduced to representing Michael's exile to Sicily.

After the period of exile, Michael is soon called "Don Michael" as the successor of his passed away father. He gets married with his former

American girlfriend, Kay, on the condition that “You’ll be my wife but not my partner in life” (p. 362) following his father’s example of excluding women from business. This “washed-out rag of an American girl” (p. 17) does not conform to the image of a Don’s wife. “She was too thin, she was too fair, her face was too sharply intelligent for a woman, her manner too free for a maiden.” (pp. 17-18). Further, she has an education, a profession and a distinct personality with a freedom of choice, like the Italian daughter Octavia in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. These two characters sharply contrast with the Italian women of the shadows described above. And so, Michael and Kay’s relationship, like that of Octavia and her husband, is based on friendship and mutual understanding, instead of power and submission. Kay is not seen as a passive object like her mother-in-law, Mama Corleone, or like Michael’s young Sicilian wife. She voluntarily chooses the traditional role of a wife-mother, independently from her husband. She learns Italian dishes from her sister-in-law and goes to church regularly with Mama Corleone. Thus, she is “on her way to becoming a Sicilian” (p. 405), but not submitted in her role of a housewife. Like Lucia Santa, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, Kay has power over her husband. She is “the only person to whom Michael listened to act against his own nature” (p. 362), and she is even referred to as Michael’s “Don” (p. 405). Instead, Michael, in the end conforms to the description of Nelli (p. 144) of a mobile Italian son, who tends to intermarry and to integrate. In fact, Michael insists on his own children growing up all-American, thus guaranteeing them a safer future. All in all, Kay and Michael have reached a modern compromise between Sicilian and American values in their marriage.

3.2 THE SUBMISSIVE DAUGHTER - COSTANZIA “CONNIE” CORLEONE

Following her mother’s example, Connie remains an insignificant character, a woman of the shadows, even though the novel promisingly begins with her wedding. Equally, her passive femininity is opposed to the strong woman characters of Octavia in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and the American Kay. The description of Connie, like that of Mama Corleone, is rather one-sided and

negative. She is introduced as a “not quite pretty girl, thin and nervous and certain to become shrewish later” (p. 20). Her modest looks are emphasised, and the best compliment at the wedding is that “She was so radiant as to be almost beautiful” (p. 20). Connie is, however, said to be the father’s favourite girl (“Connie, the Don’s favourite, came in from the kitchen, where she was cooking the Sunday dinner” p. 395), who has learnt good cooking skills from her mother (p. 264). Thus she is perceived to be a good Italian daughter who, according to the tradition, is properly trained for an Italian husband. At the same time, there are signs of rebellion in her attitude. “Connie had consented to a “guinea” wedding to please her father” (p. 20) and the husband she marries for sexual attraction is “not the usual greasy dark guinzo husband but crew-cut blond” (p. 240) distrusted by the rest of the family. Connie’s rebellious attitude is, however, suppressed by the marriage. She takes on the traditional role of a submitted wife-mother, and it is her husband, Carlo, who is more present in the novel in the role of the bad guy and Family traitor.

After the wedding, Connie’s looks and attitude change conforming to the new role. “Five months of marriage and she was already spreading, besides blowing up” (p. 239). Also her character changes: “As a young girl Connie had been nice, as a married woman she was a nuisance” (p. 74), referring to her habit of complaining. Altogether, like her mother, she is desexualised and seen solely as “a dutiful little Italian wife” (p. 241). She becomes a victim of her typically Italian, violent, unfaithful and double-faced husband, who disrespects his wife. Having married the daughter of the Don for power and money, but not getting recognition, Connie’s husband becomes physically violent. “She might be a daughter of the Great Don but she was his wife, she was his property now and he could treat her as he pleased” (pp. 239-240). A good Italian wife is expected to suffer in silence, as advised by her parents: “Go home and learn how to behave so that he will not beat you.” (p. 242). In Helen Boehm’s view (Brandi Cateura 1987:160-161) “assuring domestic tranquillity” was one of the basic skills taught to the daughters. In this way, also Connie remains passive, submitted, and pregnant, perfectly conforming to the tradition and to her role. Masochist-like, she adapts herself

exclusively to her cunning husband's needs. Even when Carlo orders Connie's brother to be killed, she naively keeps on defending her husband, and foolishly adoring him.

Despite her sacrifices, Connie is seen in a negative light. Now she is "old and unattractive" (p.429) and her nervous character is highlighted. "She was always *nervously* eager for some word of approval for Carlo" (p. 394), "the poor thing is always so *nervous* about what you think of her husband" (p. 394), and her nervousness turns into "a young widow's hysteria" (p. 441) when the husband is killed. Whereas the daughter Octavia in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, has a strong and stable character of a woman protagonist, and who deliberately uses her non-Italian husband as an object for a better future, Connie is unstable and weak, neither beautiful nor intelligent. She is entirely dependent on and obedient to the men in her life who, in turn, ignore and mistreat her. After the husband's death, Connie remarries, but her position does not change. Also the new husband, "graduated from the top business college in America" (p. 442) has made economic calculations: "Naturally his marriage to the sister of the Don (Michael) made his future assured" (p. 442), thus confirming to the reader that being used by men is Connie's immutable destiny.

3.3 THE GANGSTER-CASANOVA - SANTINO "SONNY" CORLEONE

The eldest son is not reserved any specially important role in the novel, it is the second son, Michael, who is privileged in this respect. But the character of Sonny has a resemblance to the prototype of the gangster-casanova, the eldest son Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. First of all, Sonny's personality can be divided into two opposing elements: the brutal/animalistic and the civilised/human one. As already noted, this is a common trait to all the Italian male characters so far investigated. In Sonny's case, in contrast to the good Italian son Larry, the division is very neat and the dominant part is clearly the animal one. Accordingly, Sonny is characterised with animal-like

qualities. His “animal force” is incarnated in the strong and masculine body of a gangster-casanova. He is “built as powerfully as a bull” (p. 16) and “generously endowed by nature” (p. 16). Already at a young age, he wants to become the Family bodyguard. In this way, like Larry, he represents a “good” son, as defined by Rolle (p. 137), who stays in the family to help. He does not have intellectual interests, preferring to act rather than think. His passion for action and impulsiveness is like innate reinforcing the animal image. In fact, Child (p. 81) mentions that a quick hot temper is considered typical of Italians and Casella discovers “Italian” equalling “animal” in films (p. 252). Also Sonny’s handsome outside hides an explosive inside. He is a “hothead” gangster with “a genius for city warfare”, famous for his “merciless ruthlessness” and savagery (p. 222). Larry: “what puzzled him was the admiration people had for a man who did something cruel” (p. 214) According to Rolle (1980:122), recurring brutality and bravado is actually one of immigrants’ defence mechanisms against the outside world.

Sonny’s impulsiveness leads him to errors of judgement, and finally to self-destruction. His intensive but short life recalls the fate of the 1920s Latin lover Valentino (Rolle 1980:131). Further, like Larry, Sonny is a puppet of fate guided by the plot, and conditioned by the entertaining genre. Sonny’s weaker, human side is seen in his protective affection for his sister. But even here his behaviour tends to brutality. Defending her against the husband “he had flown into a murderous rage” (p. 243). A proof of his good-heartedness is his ideal of never hurting women or children, and his generous gesture of taking an orphan friend to his home. This side of his character is, however, not given any emphasis. In contrast to Larry, whose human side is dominant, Sonny is principally seen as a ruthless gangster-casanova.

3.3.1 *Sonny’s wife and mistress*

During his relatively short life Sonny is admired by women. He has the same kind of personal magnetism as the gangster-casanova Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. In the same way, Sonny has a traditional Italian wife, a woman of

the shadows, who spends her life at home cooking and taking care of the house and children. She is “a coarse, good-natured woman who had been born in Italy but brought to America as a small child. She was strongly built . . . and had already borne three children in five years of marriage.” (p. 27). Rather than a wife, she is seen as a saintly mother-figure, thus following the example set by Lucia Santa. She is religious, invisible, flexible, all-forgiving and proud of her husband, like of a son. Like in the classic model of a traditional Italian marriage defined by Shere Hite (*Io Donna*, 22 April 2000, p.273), the wife assumes an angelic behaviour and becomes untouchable for the husband. In contrast, the sexual attributes missing in the wife are found in the so called bad women. This kind of double standard is also typical of the gangster-casanova. In Sonny’s case, this saint/slut division (as called by Casella 1998:216) is clear. The traditional wife is a saint and the mistress is a girl with a “reputation” (p. 21). Unlike the wife, who is hardly visible and disappears when Sonny does, the mistress, after Sonny’s death, starts a new life as a minor protagonist. She is the only Italian woman character in the novel to have a distinct and not submitted personality. In fact, she has an American name, Lucy, in contrast to the wife’s more traditional, Sandra, and she is “thoroughly Americanized by three years of college” (p. 21). Rolle (1980:132) explains that in the Italian American family being “americanised” was considered pejorative for a girl, since she was no longer under family control.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The Godfather is a Mafia novel, which conforms to the rules of the entertaining genre. Accordingly, its emphasis is on the fast moving plot and not so much on the psychological aspect i.e. the description of the motivations and evolution of the characters. Thus, it contrasts with the author’s earlier, autobiographical, novel *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. In *The Godfather*, the characters are one-dimensional, and actually change from positive to negative, and vice versa, according to the plot. The world the characters live in is a romanticised and, at the same time, infantilised world

of male heroes. The family theme is still strongly present, like in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, but it is extended to include a whole network of parents and family friends. The immigrant experience is given less importance in the midst of glamour, power and money.

The Mafia boss prototype, Don Corleone, has many characteristics in common with the protagonist mother, Lucia Santa, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. They are both strong and powerful protectors of their families, worthy of respect, admiration and obedience. Don Corleone, however, has a more masculine, ruthless side of personality, which is discovered to be typical of the Italian male characters in general. He also has a submissive and invisible Italian wife, called Mama Corleone. Like Lucia Santa, she is wholly dedicated to the household. She cooks and goes to church, but remains a woman of the shadows in her lack of personality. The Don's youngest son and successor, Michael, represents a modern version of a Mafia boss. He is rather Americanised in his role of a romantic hero who gets happily married to an American woman. Whereas Michael is a rebel son, willing to integrate, the eldest son, Sonny, has a natural inclination to Family business. In him the characteristics of a harsh and masculine gangster-casanova, only emerging in *The Fortunate Pilgrim's* sentimental and human Larry, are evident. He is a brutal, but basically good-hearted, hothead admired by women. Gangster-casanova-like he also has a submissive Italian wife and an Americanised mistress. The Don's only daughter, Connie, is very far from the image of the strong and independent daughter, Octavia, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. The only aspect they have in common is having learnt good cooking skills from the mother and the idealistic adoration of the father figure. Connie, however, remains a woman of the shadows, who is not given much importance in the novel, but who is rather seen in a negative light. Altogether, the novel, even if published at the rise of women's emancipation and preceded by the strongly feminine *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, leaves all the Italian woman characters in the background. The only exception is the gangster-casanova Sonny's mistress, who is, however, considered Americanised. It is interesting to note that the Americanised and the American (Michael's wife Kay) woman characters have more important, positive roles in the novel.

The same phenomenon is to be noted among the Italian male characters. Michael Corleone, in connection to an American woman, has a positive role as a romantic hero. On the contrary, his brother, Sonny, with an invisible Italian wife, remains a brutal gangster-casanova.

The Godfather, the novel and its film versions, has created the vision of the Mafia as a family institution. In addition, it has reinforced the association between Italians and the Mafia thus concurring with the public's preference of the out of ordinary and the tendency to refuse realism. The next section will concentrate on a more recent Mafia novel by Puzo. It will be studied how the 1990s Mafia family differs from and, at the same time, resembles the Corleone Family in *The Godfather*.

4 THE GODFATHER REMAKE: MARIO PUZO'S *THE LAST DON* (1997)

The novel takes up the Mafia family theme of *The Godfather*, published a couple of decades earlier. This time, the Family name is Clericuzio and the protagonists are already third generation Italian Americans, the Don's grandchildren. The beginning of the novel is set in 1965, which signs the birth of the protagonist cousins and the Don's wish to retire from the business. It is to be noted that, similarly, *The Godfather* begins with the wedding of Don Corleone's daughter, and also his intention is to slowly abandon the illegal business. In the 1960s, the United States had started their fight against organised crime, and the Italian American population was still unfortunately often equalled to the Mafia. By the 1980s, these associations finally started to change by the natural process of assimilation. In fact, Italian Americans were to be found in every level of American society, and the Mafia was in decline. The 1980s were a decade of materialism and egoism. "Greed is good" was one of the slogans, which glorified success and money. At the same time, along with the birth of the yuppie generation, there was a growing interest in Italian fashion. Designer names like Armani and Valentino had become world famous, as well as Italian food and culture in general, for example in the form of the appearance of espresso and cappuccino in coffee bars. Interest in Italianity and its roots shows also in the birth of the 1988 television miniseries *The Fortunate Pilgrim* based on Puzo's autobiographical novel. *The Last Don* is mainly set in the 1990s, when the Don's grandchildren are already grown up. This is also the decade of the publication of the novel, in 1997. According to . . . in this period, there were 25 million Italian Americans, which formed the 5th largest ethnic group in the United States. The 3rd and 4th generation living in a multiethnic society were in search of their origins in the past of their immigrant grandparents. Italian language Finally, the Mafia was seen to represent only a marginal part of the immigrant experience, being reduced into stereotypes in bestsellers and blockbusters. The ideals of the decade were altruism and recycle, which made realism a current topic. Puzo's autobiographical novel,

The Fortunate Pilgrim, was in fact re-released in 1997. The thrillers Puzo wrote after *The Godfather* were less successful, and so the author dedicated himself to screenwriting. However, once again he was offered a profitable deal for writing yet another Mafia novel as if all he needed to do was to follow a recipe for success. In fact, Larry King (*Mario on Larry King Live*, 2 August 1996) ironically calls the novel “The Ultimate Capitalist” for the economic motivations that led to its creation. According to the cover text of the novel, it describes “a world without integrity where everybody has a price” and “killing is still what the family does best”. Puzo himself thinks that the Mafia family theme appeals to people most of all because it describes a black and white dream world (*Mario on Larry King Live*, 2 August 1996). So, in 1990s there were two tendencies to be seen, reflected by Puzo’s novels. That is, the return to realism and the rediscovering of the immigrant experience, as seen in the re-publication of *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, and, at the same time, having space for highly entertaining novels like *The Last Don*. Mario Puzo passed away in July 1999. Also his last novel, *Omertà* (2000), like *The Last Don*, remains faithful to the Mafia theme, thus introducing it to the 21st century.

This section concentrates on comparing the images of the Family members in *The Godfather* (1969) and *The Last Don* (1997), with references to Puzo’s earlier novel, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, and its prototypes. The purpose is to reveal possible general differences and variation to the prototypes, due to the changes in American society as well as within the entertainment genre.

4.1 THE MAFIA BOSS - DON DOMENICO CLERICUZIO

Compared to the Mafia boss prototype Don Corleone in *The Godfather*, Don Clericuzio is reduced to a decorative, one-dimensional role. He exclusively represents power and money with his Organisation and his large Family estate. There is no depth in his character, and no humanity. He is said to be “the most powerful Mafia Family head in America” (p. 3) “admired not only for his intelligence but for his strength” (p. 57). And, on the other hand, he is

famous for his “Borgia-like cruelty” and “Machiavellian subtleness” He is a ruthless Mafia boss par excellence, a role assigned to Don Corleone, but actually even more characteristic of Don Clericuzio. There is no reference to a peasant background and common-sense that were strongly present in the characters of the mother Lucia Santa in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* as well as Don Corleone in *The Godfather*. In fact, Don Clericuzio’s personal immigrant experience is not described, and he is seldom present at all in the novel. Nevertheless, Don Clericuzio’s intentions of creating a freer future for his grandchildren conform to the ideals of his predecessors.

Even if a first generation immigrant from Sicily, exactly like Don Corleone, Don Clericuzio is surprisingly americanised He has capitalist values, and a “solid American business know-how” (p. 58). Moreover, he is regarded as superior to his excessively ferocious Sicilian fathers. “Don Domenico built his own empire, with far more cunning and foresight than his ancestors had shown in Sicily” (p. 56), whereas Don Corleone, respectful of his origins, takes the name of his native village as his family name. All in all, the importance of business over the family is emphasised to a larger extent in *The Last Don* than in *The Godfather*. Indeed, Don Clericuzio’s devotion to money and power surpasses everything else. “He had made monstrous decisions to achieve power and wealth” (p. 13). These include, for example, the elimination of the daughter’s enemy husband, by which he consciously sacrifices her future, “but he felt little regret” (p. 13). Altogether, he is not seen from a human perspective, but rather as a calculator. In fact, “Don Clericuzio had a huge blackboard in a corner of his brain that was chalked with all necessary information, including the totals of all the sins and virtues of those dearest to him.” (p. 290). Once again against the principles of Lucia Santa and Don Corleone, he does not value modesty, but he consciously accumulates richness and power “so that the Family name and fortune would survive as long as the Church itself” (p. 58).

Whereas Lucia Santa and Don Corleone strive for protecting their family, their “world”, from the outside society, seeing it as an enemy, Don Clericuzio emphasises *using* society for the Family’s benefit.

Certainly the Don had the vision of a civilized society, the world, as this great tree shedding the fruit that must feed and shelter humanity. But in the roots of this great tree would be the immortal python of the Clericuzio, sucking nourishment from a source that could never fail. (p. 57).

Thus Don Clericuzio’s Family represents non-civilisation and corruption, instead of being a strong union against the hostile society. Conversely, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* “Lucia Santa held the scales of power and justice; the family could never be corrupted” (p. 43). Consequently, the concepts of honour, duty and loyalty, emphasised by both Lucia Santa and Don Corleone, are less important in Don Clericuzio’s world. And the “lack of faith in the outer world, as well as in government” of Italian immigrants (Rolle 1980:136) is contradicted, when Don Clericuzio, patriotically, uses the term “the leader of our country” (p. 332) in reference to the President of the United States. However, the Clericuzio Family is seen as an element of danger, an “immortal python”, threatening society. The same way as Lucia Santa, as a solitary widow, is initially avoided in the neighbourhood as a blood-drawing “leech” (*The Fortunate Pilgrim*: 11).

Don Clericuzio is seen in the role of a god, exactly like Lucia Santa and Don Corleone. This is the case particularly in the end of the novel, when he is an all-knowing judge between good and evil. And, when dying, he considers himself immortal. “He would live forever, the Clericuzio blood would be part of mankind forever” (p. 482). In this respect he is again very different from Don Corleone, who respects death and admits God to be his superior. In fact, Don Clericuzio is described as a “devout Catholic” (p. 61), who *uses* religion to pay his sins. In his vision God comes second after “the creatures of his blood” (p. 289). All through the novel, the Don has an absolute power over everything surrounding him, including his God. His power is compared to that of the Pope, and the Family is referred to as “the Holy Church” (p. 57). According to Iorizzo and Mondello (1980:219) religion strengthened

family unity and “The Holy Family . . . was cherished by the southern Italians as a paradigm to be imitated”. In Don Clericuzio’s case, however, reference to the Church implies power, not strength of the family ties.

Don Clericuzio’s Family is a business organisation. A proof of this are his three sons, financial assets, who are inserted into different sections of the Family business. Their one-dimensional characters are introduced in the beginning, but the reader is to discover that they have only nominal roles. The eldest son is “the economic genius” (p. 58) of the family. The second son is “a natural-born assassin” (p. 6). And, finally, the youngest son is the good-hearted one, who has learned “all the classic peasant Italian dishes” (p. 4) from his passed-away mother. He enters the restaurant business informing his father proudly: “Pop, would you believe I charge sixteen dollars for a plate of spaghetti ? When I make it at home I figure out the cost is half a buck a plate” (pp. 333-334). So, profit is a priority also for the Don’s sons, who obediently follow the “royal edicts” (p. 4) of the father.

4.2 THE GANGSTER-CASANOVA - JOSEPH “PIPPI” DE LENA

Pippi is the Don’s dead sister’s son, but has a more central role in the novel than the Don’s own sons described above. It is emphasised since the beginning of the novel that Pippi is “like a son” (p. 4) to the Don, which also seems to justify his important position in the Family. He is a gangster-casanova like the eldest sons Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and Sonny Corleone in *The Godfather*. And like his predecessors, Pippi is to have his brutal animal side and civilised human side of character. His looks reflect his animal nature emphasising physical strength. He has a “brutally handsome face”, a “rugged strong body” (p. 7) and “an overwhelming masculine presence” (p. 61). His animal exuberance, violence and unpredictability seems to be innate and nobody, not even his family, knows him thoroughly. His primitive brutality can also be observed in his attitude toward educating

children: “Young children were animals; how could you make them behave in a civilized way without flinging them against a wall.” (p. 65).

Controversially, Pippi is also “extroverted” and “full of charm” (p. 14). His charming but dangerous character, described as a mixture of “rustic Sicilian” and “movie American” (p. 60), however, appeals to women and gives him the air of a romantic hero. This image is reinforced by his heroic qualities listed in the beginning of the novel. He is “strong and quick, cunning and withholding” (p. 14), a genial and faithful soldier, who takes his work seriously. Further, his sociability is not limited to gallantry, but he is a good storyteller and always the centre of attention, “a legend” (p. 14). It is to be noted that, whereas Pippi is “the great hero general of the Clericuzio family” (p. 4), the prototype gangster-casanova, Larry in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, only innocently dreams of being a hero. Accordingly, Sonny Corleone in *The Godfather* does not prove to be genial enough. Pippi’s image of a romantic hero is, however, shattered by his tendency to decadence. He drinks, gambles, and is “excessively fond of women” (pp. 60-61). The brutality and/or gentleness of his character conforms to the vaults of the plot, which evolves around a family secret. Once the family secret is resolved, Pippi is not needed anymore. And following Sonny Corleone’s example, like a puppet of fate, he is killed by a nephew.

4.2.1 Pippi’s American wife

Pippi’s weakness and innocent impulsiveness shows when he falls in love and marries an American showgirl. The “slim, tall and elegant” (p. 13), as well as intellectual, wife, is instantly judged as completely inappropriate for Pippi. She is not welcome to the family: “She was as foreign to them as the Muslims, the blacks, the Hasidim, and the Asians who were banned.” (p. 62), and the marriage is seen as a betrayal. This is not the case in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (the daughter Octavia and her husband) nor in *The Godfather* (Don Michael and his American wife) in which intermarriage is accepted. And as Bonnie Tiburzi (Brandi Cateura 1987:84-85) confirms from her own

experience: "Once you are brought into the family - you may be Anglo Saxon or whatever - you are part of the family, and there is no doubt about it". In *The Last Don*, however the family is against the American wife, and even the husband's affection changes into indifference. "Pippi swamped his wife with gifts, but they were gifts a master gives to his slave. They were bribes to disguise her servitude." (p. 65). Thus conforming to the image of a gangster-casanova, Pippi adopts the traditional double standard. He has mistresses and keeps his business in secret from the wife. In fact, as discovered in the earlier sections, in a gangster-casanova's world, women have sexual power only as mistresses. The wives remain invisible and do not interfere with the business of the men conforming to the image of the women of the shadows. Accordingly, "Pippi had always lived in a world where women could not be an enemy" (p. 79), but his wife is not part of the same world. She is American, and so not invisible by tradition, but liberal and strong. As soon as she discovers Pippi's two-faced and brutal side, she asks for divorce. Her behaviour contrasts with the attitude of submission discovered in the gangster-casanova wives examined above, as well as in the women of the shadows in general. They do not have the same possibility to choose and to free themselves from a dissatisfying position.

4.2.2 Pippi's half-Italian son/romantic hero - Croccifixio "Cross" De Lena

Cross, the Don's half-Italian nephew, is the protagonist and the romantic hero of the novel. He is described as "an exceptional athlete in high school . . . And although he had extraordinarily good looks, he was not excessively interested in women" (p. 84). An Americanised image, that is opposed to the character of his Italian gangster-casanova father, who is "famous for his weakness of the flesh" (p. 11). Initially, Cross follows his father in the Family business, only to realise later on, that brutality and violence is not a natural part of his character. Nevertheless, the romantic hero's duty is also to fight, and to win, the evil in the Family. This evil is represented by Cross's Italian cousin Dante, the Don's daughter's son. He has Italian enemy blood in his veins and so, he is "a man who went beyond savageness, an intimation

of bestiality” (p. 184). In his case, the characteristics of a brutal Italian gangster are further emphasised, and his violent death is prescribed since his violent birth, when his father is killed by the Family. However, his attachment to the mother and the strong mother-son bond recalls the relationship between the gangster-casanova Larry and his mother Lucia Santa.

At the same time, Cross falls in love with an American actress, who is the only beautiful woman in the novel, and who represents the female Perfection. This “world-famous movie star” (p.25) is nominated “the most beautiful woman in the world” (pp. 18-19), and “her intelligence framed her physical beauty by giving it dignity that beauty sometimes does not have” (p. 25). She is also good-hearted, mature and well educated, “one of the luckiest people on earth” (p. 25). Her misfortune is the husband, who envies her perfection and tries to destroy her career, and their incurable autistic daughter. Cross comes into the picture when the heroine is to be saved from the savage husband, and to be consoled and supported in her fight against the unfortunate destiny of the daughter. In the end of the novel, Cross, the romantic hero, abandons the Family and starts a new life with this woman of his dreams.

4.2.3 Pippi's protagonist daughter - Claudia De Lena

The half-Italian Claudia is a career woman in Hollywood, developing from a successful screenwriter in the beginning of the novel, to a director of a film studios in the end. Americanised like her brother She has modern and liberal ideals. Her Americanised role is the opposite compared to the Italian women of the shadows, for example, the Mafia daughter Connie Corleone in *The Godfather*. On the other hand, her character is closer to the strong Italian daughter, Octavia in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, and the gangster-casanova mistress, Lucy, in *The Godfather*. Claudia, being modern and liberal, is in an equal position with the male protagonists of the novel. She goes through a facial surgery in order to accelerate her career advancement, and uses men

for her personal pleasure, considering them, in their turn, as objects. Her attitude is that of a female challenge in a male-dominated world, “as if women were somehow shameful for doing what men did” (p. 112). Thus, it is not a surprise that there is a conflict between her and the Italian gangster-casanova father, who expects submission from women. After the collision of these two worlds, the father and the daughter start, disinterestedly, living separate lives. Claudia’s independence from the Family and disrespect of her father’s way of life is a sign of Americanisation. It could be noted, however, that even in her non-traditional role as a disobedient Italian daughter and a single woman, she could be considered to fill in the position of the traditional Italian female mistress/slut, who is freer to decide for herself, like in *The Godfather* where the lover of the gangster-casanova Sonny, in effect, is discovered to be a more important character than he or his wife. In addition, Claudia’s half-Italian character and physical aspect does not reach the perfection represented by her brother’s American companion.

4.3 THE SUBMISSIVE DAUGHTER - ROSE MARIE CLERICUZIO

Rose Marie’s role is very similar to that of the submissive daughter Connie Corleone in *The Godfather*. They are both women of the shadows, victims of circumstances and prisoners in their own families, unlike the American or Americanised female characters in the respective novels. Rose Marie is “a very young and very pretty widow, but black did not suit her. Mourning for her husband and brother suppressed the natural vivacity so necessary to her particular kind of looks. Her large brown eyes were too dark, her olive skin too sallow.” (p. 11). So, since the beginning of the novel, her olive colour is combined with her role as a widow dressed in black, thus connecting her Italian looks to desexualisation and sacrifice. Exactly like the submitted daughter Connie Corleone in *The Godfather*, Rose Marie is not considered a truly beautiful woman, but she possesses all the qualities of a good Italian daughter. In fact, “she took care of the widower Don Clericuzio (her father) with the utmost affection. To her three brothers she showed sisterly concern.” (p. 417). And, naturally, she is a skilful cook, who prepares

business dinners for the men. The Don feels fatherly affection, even possessiveness, towards his daughter: “She was the light of my life. My wife died young, and I never remarried because I could not bear to share Rose Marie with a stranger.” (p. 403). Acting as a liberal, permissive father he also says: “I wanted her to go to college, marry someone from a different world.” (p. 403). Thus, in theory, she, Don Clericuzio’s daughter, is offered the same possibilities as the strong Italian daughter, Octavia, has in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Rose Marie, however, foolishly falls in love with the son of the enemy and gets pregnant. A marriage between the two is strictly forbidden, but to no effect. This situation recalls that of Connie in *The Godfather*, who cannot get a divorce from her violent husband because of an early pregnancy. The aspect of fertility is thus emphasised in connection to the traditional Italian wife-mother, who gets pregnant shortly after the marriage, and later on, stays at home with several children.

The immediate consequence of Rose Marie’s disobedience to the Don is the cancelling of her existence. The husband and his family are killed at the wedding, but Rose Marie is saved for pity by her cousin Pippi. So, Rose Marie’s life and happiness are sacrificed for Family business. In fact, romantic love is not a matter that concerns the Family: “Who were Romeo and Juliet? . . . Certainly not Italians.” (p. 403). However, the practical attitude towards marriage, that both the mother Lucia Santa in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and Don Corleone in *The Godfather* have, in Don Clericuzio’s case, is turned into intolerance, even cruelty, towards romantic love. Similarly, as seen above, he is against his nephew, the gangster-casanova Pippi’s marriage to an American woman. And whereas in Lucia Santa’s feminine world, men are considered troublemakers, for Don Clericuzio, the roles are reversed: “The only thing I have never been able to understand is how women can cause so much trouble” (p. 403). Rose Marie receives no compassion from her father, even if he says: “There is nothing so beautiful as a woman in love, nor so heartbreaking as when she is made a widow . . . Rose Marie was the child he had most loved, she had been so radiant, so full of cheer. But Rose Marie had changed.” (p. 13). She is treated as if she were dead like her

husband, and her behaviour is controlled by the Don in order to keep the killing of her husband a secret.

At this point, Rose Marie starts having fits of rage and she is diagnosed, not only as extremely nervous like Connie in *The Godfather*, but as crazy. She becomes like Lucia Santa's weak husband in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, a prisoner of his mental illness, who suffers "as a deaf mute . . . who cannot cry out in pain" (*The Fortunate Pilgrim*:17). In this novel, the roles are reversed and this kind of unbalanced behaviour is considered a typical female weakness. Rose Marie is "screaming unintelligibly, weeping incessantly" (p. 394) and "her hair was wild, her makeup was bizarre, and her clothing was twisted." (p. 185). Rose Marie is not supported by the family like Lucia Santa's husband. The Don shows only insensibility. In his view, "She will get better or she will die . . . If not I will send her away" (p. 186), or, coldly noting to his nephew, "Your father, Pippi, made a mistake. He should never have spared Rose Marie" (p. 415) actually confirming that from the family's point of view, it was better if she was dead. Her brothers act in the same way, and showing no brotherly love or concern, they see their sister merely as a "nerve-racking nuisance" (). The eldest brother reveals his priorities when he says egoistically: "She's locked herself in her room, thank God, or else we wouldn't be able to enjoy our dinner" (p. 184). And Rose Marie still remembers: "they would have killed me, they would have. My own brothers" (p. 417). In fact, without the mercy of the cousin Pippi, she would have been treated equally to the enemy.

Nevertheless, Rose Marie is not completely impassive and resigned in her attitude toward her father and brothers. "She hated them, she wanted them dead . . . They should choke on their food, go blind from the wine" (p. 185). Instead of dutifully trusting his father, she shows a great disrespect: "Never trust him. He betrayed his own daughter, he betrayed his grandson and he betrayed his nephew Pippi." (p. 395). Her dissatisfaction, like that of Connie, is however not acted out. Rose Marie is kept a prisoner and forced to obey the men in the family. Once showing her rebellion, the Don "had ordered her seized and locked in her room and then had her dispatched for three months

to a special nursing home” (p. 186). In addition, visitors to the psychiatric clinic were forbidden in order to isolate her completely, and so to protect the family secret. The Don’s power over the daughter is also seen in her son’s family name. The son becomes a Clericuzio, in disregard of his father. The only positive thing in Rose Marie’s life is her union with the son, who, however, is killed in the end of the novel. Rose Marie’s role is very similar to that of the submitted daughter Connie Corleone in *The Godfather*. They are both women of the shadows, victims of circumstances and prisoners in their own families, unlike the strong American or Americanised female characters in the respective novels.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The Last Don is farther from the ideal of a strong family union, clearly present both in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and *The Godfather*. The protagonists are no longer nuclear family members, and several characters are American or only half-Italian. The novel emphasises the plot and the juxtaposition of good and evil. In fact, what is new in respect to *The Godfather*, is the aspect of mystery. That is, the central role of a family secret, which is revealed only in the end of the novel, after the good wins the evil. Accordingly to the plot, also the characters are black and white. They tend to represent the extremities of two opposing poles. The Good is represented by the Americanised romantic hero and the Evil by his enemy cousin. Similarly, the Italian male characters have a tendency towards chauvinism, and the only Italian woman character in the novel is a masochist. In general, the characters in the novel are Beautiful, Rich, Powerful and Famous. They are described with terms like “the most”, “the best”, with an emphasis on exterior looks. It is clear that in this kind of environment, the picture given of Don Clericuzio is an extremely one-dimensional one. He is not worthy of the same respect as Don Corleone in *The Godfather*. His role of a traditional Mafia boss is marginal, and it is contaminated by his all too evident greed for money and power and his American patriotism. The insignificance of Italian women is greatly emphasised in the novel. This can already be noted

from their scarce presence. The Don's wife, as well as his sister, are said to have died young. The only Italian woman character in the novel, the submissive daughter, is alive, but the men of the family would prefer if she were gone, too. The daughter's, Rose Marie's, happiness is sacrificed by the killing of the beloved husband in the beginning of the novel, and that of the equally beloved son in the end. *The Godfather's* Mafia daughter, Connie, is after all in a more positive situation. After the husband's death, she is allowed to forget and to remarry. Like Connie, Rose Marie is a woman of the shadows. She is a good cook at the service of her father and brothers. Her role differs from the position of the half-Italian, and americanised Claudia, who is an easy-going career woman, and from the American woman characters in the novel who either represent the Perfection, or are in the condition to decide for their lives. This is the case of the gangster-casanova Pippi's American wife, who gets a divorce from his stereotypical Italian husband. Pippi, in fact, in his good-hearted sociability and, on the other hand, brutal violence, is similar to the gangster-casanova Sonny in *The Godfather*. The only difference is his major inclination towards the perfection of a romantic hero seen in his marriage to an American woman. The marriage, however, fails and so Pippi is to remain a gangster-casanova. The only romantic hero, and the protagonist of the novel, is Pippi's half-Italian son. He is an Americanised, more positive version of his father, similar to Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. Also in *The Last Don*, like in *The Godfather*, the Italian characters are reserved stereotypical roles, whereas the Americanised or American characters are normal, or alternatively, perfect.

The author, whose work will be studied in the following section, is another master of bestsellers. His novel, which has a Mafia (family) theme in the background, will be compared to Puzo's work.

5 THE BESTSELLER - SIDNEY SHELDON'S *RAGE OF ANGELS* (1980)

Sidney Sheldon is famous for his numerous thrilling bestsellers, screenplays and television series with exotic settings, strong female characters and surprising plots. The cover text of *Rage of Angels* offers “suspense, intrigue and passion from the world’s favourite storyteller”. The novel is set in New York in 1969, and the protagonist is an American female lawyer caught between intrigues. In the United States, the 1970s were dedicated to new ethnicity and the emphasis was on individualism. Slogans like “Italians do it better” were aimed to reinforce ethnic identity and self-confidence. Puzo with his bestseller and film adaptation of *The Godfather* had created the image of the Mafia family as an institution. The Mafia of the period was however continuously to a larger extent connected to drug dealing. The novel was first published in 1980. As already seen earlier, the 1980s were characterised by materialism as well as the high level of integration of Italian Americans. Being Italian had become trendy, and so, for example, Italian style and elegance, and eating habits were largely imitated.

In the following, it will be analysed how Sidney Sheldon sees the Italian Mafia boss, gangster-casanova i.e. the romantic but evil hero, and his submitted wife, in relation to the American female protagonist and the world of law and politics. Attention will also be paid to the eventual differences and/or similarities with the prototypes defined in Puzo’s novels.

5.1 THE MAFIA BOSS - ANTONIO GRANELLI

Sheldon's Mafia boss, Antonio Granelli has been subdued to a transformation towards a more one-dimensional and negative picture in respect to the prototype Don Corleone. The same tendency has already been noted in Don Clericuzio in Puzo’s *The Last Don*. So, rather than a protagonist, Granelli is an exotic ingredient in the novel. His position can even be compared to that of the

Don's submitted wife, Mama Corleone, in *The Godfather*. Her character is, in fact, used to fill in a subsidiary, but nevertheless, what is considered a traditional position. She is shadowed by her husband, as well as Granelli is in the shadow of the Italian male protagonist, the romantic but evil hero. In *The Rage of Angels*, as in Puzo's *The Last Don*, the fast-moving plot is, altogether, more important than the characters, who, in fact, remain one-dimensional. Following the example of Don Clericuzio in *The Last Don*, Granelli is offered to the reader as "a ruthless man with the down-to-earth cunning of a peasant, and a total amorality" (p. 120), the leader of "an incredible moneymaking machine" (p. 352). He is never referred to as a "Don", which implies that he is actually less important than Puzo's Dons. It is also to be noted that the term "Family" used in Puzo's novels, is substituted with "the Mafia" in Sheldon's work. Puzo's "Don", the head of a Family is unique as a Father, and thus valued and respected to a larger extent than Sheldon's powerful leader of a criminal organisation. Granelli's ruthless principle is "If anyone betrays us, we get vengeance" (p. 348), but it is not clear who "we" are since family union and loyalty does not exist. A proof of this lack of union is that a cousin's son, the Italian male protagonist, is considered, not an ally, but a rival in the business. There is no focus on the family, and this can also be noted from the fact that Granelli does not have sons, which is typical of Puzo's Dons. Altogether, more than the Family, loyalty and respect, the novel emphasises power and money in the Mafia, even to a greater extent than Puzo's *The Last Don*.

The only other family member present in the novel, and a classic element in Puzo's Mafia novels, is the adored but submitted daughter. The old Mafia boss, together with his traditional daughter, is seen as a peculiar relict of a primitive culture. Granelli is not Americanised, but rather bound to the tradition, which shows, for example, in his unwillingness to accept American names, like the name of the female protagonist, Jennifer: "That's not no Italian name . . . It's too hard for me to remember. I'll call you lady" (p. 358). Like Don Clericuzio, he is not open-minded towards non-Sicilians, and, rather like Don Clericuzio's submitted daughter, Rose Marie, Granelli loses control of his feelings ("the old man screamed and raged" (p. 123), when the daughter gets married with his

rival, Michael, who is not from Sicily but from Florence, and “that alone made the Moretti family suspect” (p. 120). The core of Granelli's already black and white character seems to be his disrespect of and aversion against women in the business, which shows in regular intervals: “Women are weak. You never know what the hell they gonna do” (p. 188), “It ain't good to have a woman know our business” (p. 284), and further on, “It's not good for a woman to be too smart. It's better to leave the brains to the men” (p. 347). However, the American heroine of the novel is already inside the organisation as a Mafia lawyer. In fact, there is a clear antagonism in the novel between her, the American female protagonist and a career woman, and the masculine world of the Mafia. In her view, it is a strange and primitive but, at the same time, an exotic and fascinating world. These ingredients can also be found in the Italian male protagonist Michael Moretti.

5.2 THE ROMANTIC BUT EVIL HERO - MICHAEL MORETTI

Almost all of Michael Moretti's characteristics can be traced back to Puzo's gangster-casnovas, Larry, Sonny Corleone and Pippi De Lena, in the novels analysed earlier. What is new in Sheldon's perspective is Michael's elegance and sophistication; his “fashionably styled black hair” and “a tailored grey suit, a light blue shirt with a darker blue silk tie, and polished custom-made shoes” (pp. 15-16), and the fact that he is an habitu  in an elegant French restaurant. This kind of detailed description of fashionable, perhaps considered typically Italian, clothing and a sophisticated taste, is missing in Puzo's work. Michael, in his dark elegance, in contrast to the non-intellectual and muscular gangster-casanova, strikes the American female protagonist as a romantic hero. Rolle (1980:59) confirms that, in fact, in the United States “romantic young women craved for something southern, Latin, and intense”. This ideal was personified in the Italian American gigolo and movie star, Rudolph Valentino, (Rolle 1980:131), who was the dream of every woman in the 1920s America. In the same way, Sheldon's Michael Moretti is admired for his looks of “a movie star” (p. 21). Whereas, according to Rolle (1980:131), Valentino had “dark sideburns”, “olive skin”, graceful body, and was a born dancer, Michael,

too, has dark Italian looks with “olive-black eyes” (p. 15) and is a skilful dancer. Another common feature is the intense but passive sexuality of a sex symbol, whose looks are admired, but who, however, remains untouchable. Michael, in fact, is, in this respect, less active than Puzo’s gangster-casanovas, but, nevertheless, he has the same masculine charm: “There was such a vitality about Michael Moretti that it seemed to spill over, charging the air” (p. 285).

Michael is described as “a man of deep silences, a man who distrusted words” (p. 281). His taciturn and mysterious character brings him closer to the image a Mafia boss, instead of the social and boyishly innocent gangster-casanova. Also the rough physical power of a gangster-casanova is transformed into the powerful connections of a Mafia boss. “Various people approached their booth to pay their respects to Michael Moretti: business executives, actors, a judge, a United States senator . . . It was power paying tribute to power, and Jennifer (the female protagonist) began to feel a sense of how much influence he wielded.” (p. 282). He is “a man of power” (p. 337), and this element is used to represent the extreme evil in society in opposition to the extreme good, the United States senator/president. Michael also has a double standard, which has already been discovered a common feature to the Italian male characters in Puzo’s novels. Already in the cover text of the novel, Michael is represented as “Her (the protagonist’s) only ally when the crisis strikes - and the man who will bring her world crushing down”. This double standard is also to be seen in the sharp contrast between his handsome outside and dangerous inside. This is typical especially of gangster-casanovas, who represent, at the same time, the dream of every woman as well as a (sexual) menace. So also Michael is “attractive in a dangerous, exciting way. There was a feeling of violence about him, ready to explode” (p. 282). The controversial terms used in this sentence reinforce the idea of his unpredictable and unknown character. Even to Jennifer, the American female protagonist, it is a continuous fight between his irresistibility and brutality: “How can I think of Michael Moretti as attractive? He’s a killer, an amoral animal with no feelings” (pp. 282-283). Gangster-casanova-like, he is frequently described with references to the animal world. For example, he is called a “beautiful, exciting animal” (p. 344), who has a “rugged, feral look” (p. 15) and a “wild, animal vitality” (p. 285), till the point

that he is actually “not capable of loving another human being . . . It was as though something was missing in him. He had no feelings for people, only for animals” (p. 124).

Like Granelli, the old Mafia boss of the novel, and his predecessor, Don Clericuzio in *The Last Don*, Michael has his “innate ruthlessness” (p. 189) in business. For him, money and power have the priority; the family, instead, has little importance. Michael says: “My old man was a Coca-Cola bottle . . . There are billions of them in the world and you can't tell one from another” (p. 337), thus showing his disrespect towards his honest shoemaker father, and revealing his own ambitiousness. Thus, there is also a contrast between the world of Lucia Santa's immigrant family in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and Michael, who despises poverty. “Being poor is only romantic in books. In real life, it's smelly rooms with rats and cockroaches and bad food that you can never get enough of” (p. 337) In the same vein, he confesses: “I love the money. I love the power. I'm a king, baby, and I love being king” (p. 337). To realise his ambitions, Michael attends prestigious business institutes, proving his intellectuality, and in order to inherit the highest position in the Mafia, he marries Granelli's daughter. As seen in the previous cases, marriage to an Italian woman is a profitable deal for both the gangster-casanova and the Mafia boss. For Michael, it is a fast way of advancing in his career. In fact, “he had used women all his life . . . Basically, Michael Moretti despised women. They were too soft. They had no spirit” (p. 189). But whereas Michael ignores and cheats on his Italian wife, he is faithful to the American protagonist, Jennifer. “Various women came up to greet Michael. All of them were young and attractive . . . Michael was polite to them, but it was obvious that he was only interested in Jennifer” (p. 285). This triangle situation is similar to the case of the gangster-casanova Sonny Corleone and his invisible Italian wife and Americanised mistress in *The Godfather*. Also Sonny's submitted wife remains in the background, while the mistress becomes a protagonist.

In connection with the American female protagonist, Michael's qualities of a romantic hero are emphasised. The reader is to discover his human qualities. “He exposed feeling to her (Jennifer) that he had never revealed to anyone else

. . . He was basically a lonely, solitary man” (p. 351). Jennifer, who had taken the risk to trust this unpredictable creature, becomes the only person to be able to explore him. Little by little they become allies. He saves her son from a kidnapper and she works for him as a lawyer. At this point of the novel, it is no longer clear who represents good and who evil. Michael's American rival, the president-to-come, who leads a campaign against the Mafia, and who is also Jennifer's "ex", is seen in a colder light than Michael. The rival chooses the career and the family instead of love. In contrast, Michael, even though a cold-blooded killer and an unfaithful husband, is sympathised with. His falling in love with the American Jennifer gives him human characteristics. Michael is, however, a romantic villain. In the end of the novel, he unpredictably changes again from an ally to an enemy. Discovering Jennifer's unfaithfulness, he becomes thirsty for revenge, and in his attempt to kill her, he kills himself. This is a common fate to gangster-casnovas, who are puppets of fate conducted by the plot, often to a tragic death. Such characters were also represented by Sonny Corleone in *The Godfather* and Pippi De Lena in *The Last Don*. Michael's behaviour gives further proof to the reader that you cannot trust gangster-casnovas, and their variants, like, in this case, the romantic but evil hero. Behind their handsome and charming exterior, there is an unpredictable and brutal animal, quite certainly on the way to self-destruction.

5.3 THE SUBMISSIVE DAUGHTER/WIFE - ROSA GRANELLI

Granelli's daughter's position is equal to that of Puzo's Mafia daughters, Connie Corleone in *The Godfather* and Rose Marie Clericuzio in *The Last Don*; a shadowy character with great cooking skills, a hereditary position that goes from mother to daughter. Granelli says: “My Rosa's a great cook . . . She's almost as good as her mother was” (p. 347). Rosa's uniqueness is to be the only Italian woman character in the novel, who, nevertheless, remains traditionally insignificant. A woman of the shadows, Rosa is invisible since her birth. She “had been brought up in a convent and was allowed to come home only during holidays” (p. 122). Like a nun, she is an imprisoned saint, who blindly follows Virgin Mary's example. She is thus

put away by the over-protective Mafia boss father. Similarly, the Italian American Julie Bovasso defines her own position as a “little female, to be loved, cuddled - and set aside” (Brandi Cateura 1987:215).

The father's sheltering, almost suffocating, attitude also shows in the daughter's complete exclusion from the business: “he remained happy in his belief that his daughter was an innocent and that she was spared the shock of knowing the truth” (p. 122). In her fragility and innocence, Rosa does not have any initiative or will of her own to discover who her father and his business is in reality. As the truth is imposed on her by the outside world (“over the years, Rosa's classmates had shown her newspaper and magazine articles about her father and his real business” (p. 122), she suddenly reveals a sparkling of vitality and a certain potential for activity and rebellion: “Rosa found her father's business terribly exciting . . . She hated the discipline of the nuns at the convent and that, in turn, led her to hate all the authority” (p. 122). But her secret potential is shortly suppressed. Exactly like Puzo's Mafia daughters, she continues to act in an innocent and foolish way, and uncritically accepts her submitted role. Following the plot, she madly falls in love with the romantic but evil hero, Michael Moretti, and is shifted from a submitted daughter to a submitted wife, from a convent to a marriage.

As a wife, Rosa's principal activity is organising business dinners for her husband, being always “at his service” (p. 351). Her connection to food, in the form of exotic Italian names and the quantity of servings, is further emphasised, when Jennifer, the American female protagonist is invited for dinner. At the same time, the Italian wife's subservient behaviour is highlighted: “Rosa was constantly jumping up and cleaning the table to bring new dishes from the kitchen” (p. 347). The husband, Michael, instead, shows a complete indifference to his wife, treating her like a servant. He says: “Rosa was pleasant and easy to live with and she adored him, but Michael knew that if she died or went away, he would get along without her. He would simply find someone else to do the things she did for him” (p. 124). She is a “pet dog who does everything she's told” (p. 189) for her

husband. So Rosa as a so called “pet dog”, is in a situation which the strong Italian daughter, Octavia, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* abhors: “I’ll never marry one of these guineas. They just want a woman they can treat like a dog” (*The Fortunate Pilgrim*: 26).

Rosa does not have any specially negative, or positive, characteristics. She is ordinary both in her character (“pleasant”, p. 124) and looks (“an attractive brunette with a full figure”, p. 347). Most of all, she is an innocent victim not valued by her husband. There is a sharp contrast between the Italian wife Rosa and the American Jennifer as seen by Michael: “What made Jennifer special was her intelligence, her independence. Rosa obeyed him, other women feared him; Jennifer challenged him” (p. 352). So Jennifer is seen to have a personality that Rosa, in turn, does not have. (Even Rosa in her submission notes this disparity in their roles: “I’m pleased to meet you, Mrs. Parker. Michael tells me you’re very intelligent.” (p. 347) The cover text describes Jennifer “brilliant, beautiful and indomitable - the most glamorous lawyer in America and one of the most successful”. Her perfection is similar to the American protagonist-actress, Athena, in *The Last Don*, actually confirming that excellence is more typical of an American woman character than of her Italian counterpart.

From Jennifer's American point of view, Rosa's role in life is exotic. She observes her as someone part of an surreal entertainment world. “Jennifer met other Mafia wives, and she found their lives fascinating, Their husbands went out to restaurants and bars and racetracks with their mistresses while their wives stayed home and waited for them.” (p. 351). The collective term, Mafia wives, implies that all these women have a certain set of qualities set by the genre. In fact, all of Rosa’s characteristics are found in Puzo’s Mafia daughters Connie Corleone and Rose Marie Clericuzio. In reality, Rolle (1980:111) describes the traditional role of the Italian wife as follows: “Repudiation of erotic impulses has led women toward lives spent waiting upon men”, which conveys approximately the same idea of the desexualised wife bound to the life at home. Michael and Rosa's marriage reflects the ideal of the traditional marriage. Michael

knows since the beginning what he is going to have marrying an Italian woman and he treats her as such, his property. Rosa resigns to her fate acting as she is expected to from the tradition in her unconditional obedience and belonging to her husband. The fact that the submitted Italian wife is cheated on by the American protagonist is fully accepted. After all, she is a “Mafia wife”.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Rage of Angels differs from Puzo’s novels in its lack of emphasis on the Family, both nuclear and extended. It is substituted with the Mafia as a pure criminal organisation, and characters as individuals without common, or even definite origins. This tendency can, however, be noted in Puzo’s *The Last Don*, published in the late 1990s, so more than a decade later than Sheldon’s novel. In both the novels business is emphasised over the Family. In fact, in Sheldon’s work, “the Family” is actually cancelled and the term “Mafia” is introduced. In addition, the two novels have in common the fight between good and evil, the good represented by the more American component and the evil by the stereotypically Italian. Differently from Puzo’s Mafia novels, *Rage of Angels*’s protagonist is a beautiful, intelligent and successful American woman, who is caught in between the intrigues of good and evil. Thus, the novel, partly, conforms to the ideals of the sexual revolution of the period.

Sheldon’s Mafia boss, Antonio Granelli, is very similar to Don Clericuzio in Puzo’s *The Last Don*. They are both one-dimensional and, at the same time, insignificant characters, whose only concern is power and money. Granelli is not a “Don” surrounded by his family. However, there is one aspect that he inherits from Puzo’s Dons and that is his adorably submissive daughter, Rosa. Granelli’s role seems to be glamorously primitive and outdated in his firm opposition to business women and Americanisation, and in his amoral ruthlessness and control over the daughter’s life. The evil Italian protagonist of the novel is Michael Moretti, who is similar to both

the Mafia bosses and the gangster-casanovas in Puzo's work. He is taciturn and socially powerful like a Mafia boss, but attractive and unpredictable as a gangster-casanova. In the present study, he is called a romantic but evil hero A choice, which is also influenced by his sophistication and elegance lacking in Puzo's novels, as well as his close and heroic connection to the American female protagonist. In fact, the position of a hero and an affective connection to an American woman are, so far, interconnected. This is the case with the second generation Mafia boss/romantic hero, Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*, and the gangster-casanova Pippi and his protagonist son/romantic hero in *The Last Don*.

In the beginning of the novel, Michael is one-sidedly described as an amoral and feelingless Mafia boss/gangster. The situation, however, changes when the American heroine of the novel, Jennifer, falls in love with him. He is begun to be seen as more human and attractive. The two actually become allies, and so Michael turns into a devoted companion, who heroically saves the life of Jennifer's son. At the end of the novel, he is again put back to his place as a dangerous criminal, and good wins evil, even if at a certain point in the novel it is not clear if Michael, the romantic hero, has lost his evil side. Michael's character thus unpredictably changes conforming to the plot, from negative to positive to, once again, negative. His tragic death in the end of the novel conforms to the fate of the gangster-casanovas Sonny Corleone in *The Godfather* and Pippi in *The Last Don*. Also, he has a submissive Italian wife, along with Jennifer, the mistress. The wife, Granelli's daughter, Rosa is a woman of the shadows like the Mafia daughters Connie and Rose Marie in Puzo's novels. They exist only because of their acritical submissiveness and cooking skills. Jennifer, who contrastingly, represents the perfection of an American woman, sees Rosa as a part of a primitive but, somehow, fascinating world, which has remained untouched by the sexual revolution. Interestingly, Jennifer's position as Michael's mistress is considered normal and justified, and so also his cheating on the stereotypically Italian Rosa.

The last novel taken up in the present study is innovative in its form and, according to the author, against Italian stereotypes. It will be examined in the light of the findings in the earlier sections.

6 THE ETHNIC NOVEL - JOSEPH TROPIANO'S *BIG NIGHT* (1996)

Big Night is a novel based on the screenplay of the homonymous film created by the author Joseph Tropiano and his cousin Stanley Tucci. The novel is not conventional in its form and it is garnished with recipes of Italian dishes. Differing from Puzo's Mafia novels and Sheldon's thriller, *Big Night* is a comedy. Its emphasis is on the Italian immigrant experience like is the case with Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, the first novel examined in the present study. The author, Joseph Tropiano is a third generation Italian American, like his cousin Stanley Tucci. The cousins' grandparents had immigrated to . . . from southern Italy. The novel is set in the 1950s, in a small seaside town in New Jersey in which two newly arrived Italian immigrant brothers open a family restaurant. The 1950s, the period after the second World War, featured yet another wave of immigrants to America, mostly consisting of relatives who rejoined their families. It was called the boredom decade. The immigrants were on their way to assimilation through mixed marriages and the Mafia was suffering public humiliations (Casella 1998:137-141). The novel was published in 1996, near to the publication of Puzo's yet another Mafia novel *The Last Don* (1997). As seen earlier, in the 1990s "Italian" had come to mean "trendy", for example, in the form of food and fashion. In the time of political correctness and multi-ethnicity, the 3rd generation Italian Americans (like the author of the novel himself) were generally proud of their roots. Also in literature ethnic revival had come to challenge the classic entertainment literature. *Big Night* is an example of a modern ethnic novel which goes to the origins of the immigrant experience. Its predecessor in the present study, Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, also, was re-released in 1997. The two novels have a similar theme and they both also give priority to the characters over the plot, unlike what is seen to happen in Mafia novels and thrillers. *Big Night* is in fact an attempt to challenge the entertainment business and its preference of profit over artistic expression. In the introduction to the novel, Tropiano explains the motivations behind the creation of the film. According to him, works of art like *The Godfather* have "left a black mark on the public's idea of who and

what Italians are". In fact, he continues, "it is rare that an Italian character shows up on-screen without the assumption that he or she is linked to violence and criminality" (p. 7). So, *Big Night* was created as a response to the popular Italian stereotypes in films greatly affected by the demands of the mass.

Paola Casella's study 'Hollywood Italian' (1998) is dedicated to the Italian stereotypes in American film industry. Casella's findings partly coincide with the results of the present study, confirming the fact that a popular image, a stereotype, is affected by the current state of society. Further, it can be transmitted from films to novels, and vice versa, and thus be further homogenised. However, novels lack the visual aspect leaving space to the reader's imagination. In entertainment literature, for example Puzo's Mafia novels and Sheldon's bestseller, the image is created by a careful description of physical looks. This characteristic is lacking for example in Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, in which the emphasis is on the personality rather than exterior looks, thus breaking the rules of entertainment industry, and in fact not being a bestseller of its time. *Big Night*, however, differs from *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. It is an example of a modern, more commercial, way of making literature. The fact that a novel is written out of a screenplay brings films and novels even to a closer contact with each other. The popular images in novels are thus directly influenced by film industry and the authors are encouraged to the more profitable screenwriting. In fact, this is the case with Puzo whose sequels of *The Godfather* were not novels. The commercial character of *Big Night* is revealed by the fact that it is a novel with recipes based on a screenplay. It functions as if as a compliment to the film.

In this section, Tropiano's so called anti-stereotypical Italian characters will be confronted with the stereotypes (Mafia boss, gangster-casanova/romantic but evil hero, women of the shadows) found in the present study. Further, one non-Italian character will be analysed, because of his role of representing the stereotypical "Italian" male.

6.1 THE TWO BROTHERS - PRIMO AND SECONDO

Primo and Secondo are symbolic Italian names, which literally translate into the 'first' and the 'second' in English, indicating the order of birth of the sons. These terms are, however, commonly used in reference to the first (for example, pasta or rice) and second (for example, fish or meat) dish of a meal. Thus, these names also reflect the important role of the Italian cuisine in the novel. (In this case, however, the theme of food and cooking is not connected to the Italian women of the shadows, but to two Italian immigrant brothers who try their fortune in the New World by opening a family restaurant.) Primo and Secondo represent two opposing characters, the introverted and the extroverted one, united by brotherly love. These universal, not exclusively Italian, characteristics provide a neutral starting point to the novel, even though the brothers' Italian heritage is strongly present in their culinary tradition.

Primo, the eldest, is the introverted one of the brothers. He clings to the traditions of the Old World and is not in a hurry to integrate into American society. As his brother describes him: "Primo never learns very good English and since we come here he doesn't go out like I do. He stays home to read or listen to opera or he goes over to Alberto's barbershop on our street and he talks Italian with Alberto" (p. 17). Stereotypically, Primo has a hidden primitive side, like the Italian male characters discussed above. Under the simple and introverted surface, he has an explosive temper, which comes out in his fury with the unsatisfied customers. "We all jump like rabbits when we hear the crash of something very loud against the swinging doors. Primo has thrown another pot" (p. 13). He is also described as an imprisoned animal: "Primo starts to walk up and down like he is an animal in a cage" (p. 11). Furthermore, his clear non-Americanisation, in the form of a firm clinging to the Italian traditions and a strong accent contributes to the primitive image. However, in contrast to the brutal gangster-casanovas and Mafia bosses, Primo is a sensitive artist, who cooks with true passion and expertise. "All he wants is to stay in his kitchen and cook his food" (p. 13). Business is a thing

that does not concern or interest him. His passive kitchen-bound position is actually closer to the image of the women of the shadows. With the difference that the Italian women, however, are not seen as stubborn passionate artists like Primo is. Closest to this image is Sheldon's submitted daughter Rosa Granelli in *The Rage of Angels*, who, according to the Mafia boss father, "likes to cook" (p. 123) and her abundant dinner menu is described in detail.

Primo masters not only Southern Italian dishes of his origins, but Italian cuisine at large, from North to South, as taught by his restaurant-keeper uncle. This aspect of the Italian cuisine as a whole is new in respect to the Mafia novels, in which the women of the family cook "real Sicilian style" (p. 424) like Mama Corleone in *The Godfather*. Primo, in his professional pride, does not understand American customers who consider his Italian dishes strange. Instead of the foreign-sounding "risotto" (a typical North Italian rice dish from the Milan region), they prefer the more familiar American spaghetti and meatballs. The typical phrase of an unsatisfied customer, "it just isn't what I expected" (p. 9), reveals the customers' suspicion of new unknown things and preference to the habitual customs. At the turn of the previous century, Italian food was not appreciated in the United States and the Italian immigrants were expected to perfectly assimilate to the American way of life. In effect, according to Nelli (p. 119) "Italians who ate macaroni and drank red wine were offering proof that they had not yet become true Americans".¹

Despite his attachment to the Italian tradition, Primo cannot avoid the contact with the New World. Finally, in order to survive economically, he is forced to start giving the customers what they want: "These are meatball. I

¹ A recent article in the Alitalia magazine, 'Arrivederci' (May 2000), takes up the issue of the Italian cuisine in the United States, and reveals that today it can actually be considered a cult. Some Italian restaurants, for example in New York, have become extremely trendy, and "no one asks for macaroni anymore, they rigorously request pasta, which is funny when you consider that until a few years ago the most requested Italian dish in America was the famous spaghetti and meatballs" (p. 27). To paraphrase Paolo Guzzanti in his article in the Italian 'La Stampa': "Nothing is more American in New York than eating Italian" (25 February 1997, p.9). This further shows that the roles have been reversed

only make this because my brother say we need something for these people in America think to be Italian” (p. 58). This Primo’s sentence is as if a description of Mario Puzo’s situation, when he decides to write a Mafia novel, *The Godfather*, for economic pressures and because of the failure of his autobiographical novels (*Mario on Larry King Live*, 2 August 1996). As Rolle (1980:187) puts it “to succeed do what the others do”, “play the game”. Primo’s second step towards integration is his falling in love with an American woman, who, in Primo’s words, “no look like any of the girls from our town in Italy. In Italy the girls are dark and have dark hair and eyes” (p. 62). So, he shows signs of abandoning the ideal of the traditional Italian woman for an American one, whom he describes with the culinary terms he knows best: “Her big eyes, they are like the green of the arugula” or “There are so many different color of flower in Ann’s store, like the different color of the *antipasti*” (pp. 62-63). Primo transfers the elements of his culinary passion to the attraction to Ann and, instead of following the traditional path of marrying an Italian girl, finds himself attracted to a woman who has a passion for flowers like his own for cooking.

Primo’s brother Secondo with his out-going character is already further integrated in the surrounding society, and this is also reflected in his major presence in the novel. He pursues the American Dream of success taking care of the management of the restaurant. Secondo’s dream is instrumentalised in a pink Cadillac, which, to him, represents wealth and success. He notes to the car dealer: “I know I will probably be in the next century before I have enough money to buy a car like this one” (p. 90) revealing the actual position of Italian Americans in the beginning of the 20th century, who were not yet part of the wealthy upper classes. They were still, for the most part, poor immigrants, who worked hard for their dreams, like Primo and Secondo, but who had a more prosperous future in front. In fact, for Secondo, America represents opportunity and future, as he says: “if you just work very hard then anybody can buy this car”.

Secondo’s character is very much Americanised, but traits of the stereotypical Italian male can also be found in him. His relationship with his

American girlfriend is one of friendship, and he is in no way portrayed as a penitent casanova. He says: "It's not for me, you know, just a casual thing" (p. 39). His principle is to make a difference between the roles of a wife and a lover. He remains distant to the girlfriend, who could be his future wife: "Someday, probably, yes, in the future, I want to marry you, Phyllis, but not right now" (p. 40). He seems to say that there is nothing romantic in getting married, it is a serious thing, and that, in fact, a wife is reserved a different treatment from a lover. Accordingly, with his Italian lover Secondo acts in a sweeter way, adoring her dark looks and dedicating her more attention. This kind of double standard behaviour is, as seen earlier, typical of gangster-casanovas. Another Secondo's principle that can be found in the Mafia novels studied before, is the priority of business over sentiments. He says to Phyllis: "I want us to be something when I am more set. And yes, okay, it is about money . . . I want to make the Paradise a success" (pp. 39-40). His attitude is thus the opposite to the sentimental and modest Primo. According to Rolle (p. 30) this serves as an index of Americanisation. "Assimilation meant acceptance of the harsh masculinity that pervaded the dominant society. This made it seem wise to reject sentimental, soft, or feminine feelings as unworthy or weak".

6.2 PASCAL

Pascal is the owner of a rival 'Italian' restaurant. He and his stereotypical restaurant contrast with the Italian brothers and their genuine cuisine. Indeed, Pascal's role is important in representing the stereotypical 'Italian' male, even if:

Pascal comes to America from Corsica. This is a very beautiful island in the Mediterranean Sea but it is not Italian, it is a French island. The people speak French there and another language that is a kind of Italian. Now he speaks only English, but he sounds like he is some French and some Italian and something else that you can't really figure out. I never heard an accent like his before anywhere. (pp. 44-45)

Pascal's accent is a unique mixture of characteristics, Italian, French and English, and it somehow symbolises the popular image of the 'Italian' male created by bestsellers and blockbusters. Pascal's being from Corsica challenges this image which is normally considered typically Italian. Corsica is close to Italy, it is an island like Sicily but, nevertheless, it is not Italian. The author seems to say that Pascal's character, like, for that matter, the Italian characters in Puzo and Sheldon's bestsellers, remains a creation of the mass entertainment, an infantilised caricature in which cultural traits are of less importance.

Pascal's business principle: "Give people what they want. Then, later, you can give to them what *you* want" (p. 48) contrasts with Primo's view of giving the customers time to learn something new and genuine, something that is really worth discovering. Pascal's attitude, in fact, reflects his capitalist values of profit at the cost of homogenising the product. So, even a Frenchman can run a successful 'Italian' restaurant in America, once he grasps "the recipe for success". According to the novel, the same principle has been used in creating stereotypical images in entertainment business. The description of Pascal's Italian restaurant gives an idea of the general situation. Only some, stereotypically Italian, characteristics are (over)emphasised, and so the result in Primo's eyes is the following: "The way I would tell you how Pascal's look is that it is very red . . . I think maybe it look a little like they say Hell look, except in here, it seems like everybody is having a good time . . . and everything smells like too much garlic is in it" (p. 43). Quality, genuinity i. e. Primo's carefully chosen fresh ingredients, original family recipes, simplicity, are sacrificed to Pascal's stereotypical, but profitable, exaggeration. In the same way, in popular literature (in the present study represented by the bestsellers of Puzo and Sheldon), the Italian male characters more or less conform to the Mafia boss/gangster-casanova role and Italian female characters usually remain submitted women of the shadows.

As already anticipated, the image of Pascal has many aspects in common with the Italian male characters defined earlier. First of all, his brutal and

primitive behaviour of a gangster-casanova is characterised by the phrase: “Then Pascal jumps up again and comes toward me and makes a big sound like he is a wild animal” (p. 50). In addition, his vulgar manner of speaking, uncivilised behaviour and physical intrusiveness shows in the following: “Hey, hey, fucking guy ! . . . Pascal yells and he grabs me in a big hug and kisses me on the cheek. When Pascal says hello to you it is like you are being attacked.” (p. 45). According to Casella (1998:252), in film industry “Italian” has come to equal “animal”. In this case, it is Pascal who is called an “animal” (p. 47). Another stereotypical aspect of the Italian male, discovered earlier, is his double standard. Since the beginning of the novel, Pascal is described as deceitful: “Pascal has very blue eyes, the color of the Mediterranean, but they are not warm like that water. They can be very cold.” (p. 45). In fact, in the course of the novel, Pascal comes out to be unpredictable and violent. For example, in a fit of rage, he cruelly sets his chef’s apron on fire. As confirmed, “the fire was no accident - it was Pascal” (p. 79). Then, after this, “all of a sudden he is Mr. Nice Guy” (p. 79). This two-facedness can also be seen in the contradictory elements in his affirmations: “This is so fucking good I should kill you” (p. 165) and “I love secrets. Secrets make friendships more strong.”(p. 53). Finally, his total unreliability is confirmed by his behaviour with Primo and Secondo, his rivals. He initially flatters the brothers big-mouthedly: “I love this guy, he is like my brother !” (p. 45) or “You are the best, the best guy” (p. 45) making them believe in his false generosity. In the end of the novel, however, Pascal definitely turns out to be a cheater and a liar. His character thus functions as an entertaining element. In fact, Pascal fits in to Daniela Gioseffi’s (Brandi Cateura 1987:130) characterisation of the Mafia boss stereotype, which, in her words, consists of “one-dimensional, Mafiosi vulgarians with loud mouths and no inner feelings”.

In contrast to the gangster-casnovas of the previous sections, Pascal is not seen as a handsome lady-killer. He is “a very short man with a big voice” (p. 44), but like Sheldon’s romantic but evil hero, Michael Moretti, he “always wears the best new suits, very stylish” (p. 44), a feature missing in Puzo’s novels. Pascal’s relationship with women is rather one-sided. He is not

married, but practically owns his Italian girlfriend. In fact, Pascal reminds a Mafia boss in his indifference to women and his wielding of power. He is referred to as “a mayor” (p. 51) whom everybody wants to greet, and “a sergeant” (p. 45), who orders his waiters like soldiers. His power is represented by his acquaintances in the higher spheres of society and entertainment business, as Secondo observes “Some are movie stars, some radio people, musicians, politicians. It seems to me like Pascal knows everybody in the world” (p. 46). Pascal, however, does not have family, or any roots. He is an independent character, like Sheldon’s Michael Moretti, a unique combination of a Mafia boss and a gangster-casanova.

6.3 THE ITALIAN SLUT - GABRIELLA

Gabriella is the only Italian woman character in the novel. She is a “career woman” in the typically Italian style, a mistress by profession. Her principal activity is pleasing Pascal. She is both a hostess in his restaurant as well as his girlfriend “and that’s not all she is” (p. 43) as Secondo puts it. She passively uses all the men of the neighbourhood, including Secondo, but stays with Pascal “because he buys her everything she have, whatever she want . . . All she have to do is stand around and look beautiful for the customers at his place.” (pp. 80-81). Gabriella’s looks conform to the image Primo gives of a typical Italian woman when he says: “In Italy the girls are dark and have dark hair and eyes” (p. 62). According to Secondo, “Gabriella looks a little like Sophia Loren with her dark eyes and dark hair and big lips” (p. 51). In fact, Casella (p. 192) mentions Loren as one of the symbols of the passionate Italian woman in Hollywood. Gabriella is thus not a desexualised housewife, but a provocative Mediterranean beauty. She has sexual power over men like the young Sicilian girl, whose primitive beauty captures Don Michael Corleone in Puzo’s *The Godfather*. Gabriella, however, is not young and innocent. Her character has a dose of mystery. Secondo says: “I don’t even know really where Gabriella comes from . . . I know she has been around some . . . You never know with her” (p. 80). So, like her boyfriend Pascal, she is an individual without definite origins. There is an element of

intrigue and perhaps even danger in Gabriella, which brings her closer to the image of her male compatriots. She says on the phone: “You should cut his hands off”, “I thought she was dead already” (p. 80) and “Oh, you are the best of them all, Mike. I tell you, Mike, whenever your wife leaves you, you call me, okay?” (p. 82). Her typically Italian unreliability is finally discovered in the end of the novel. Dissatisfied of her position, she jealously reveals her relationship with Secondo to his American girlfriend.

Gabriella is categorised as a so-called bad woman, not worth of marriage. Men lust for her, but are not ready to tie themselves to her. This is true of Secondo, too, who is more serious about his American girlfriend Phyllis, perhaps his wife to come, than the seductive Gabriella. To Pascal, she is an object, a decoration in his restaurant. She does not have a clear position with him. She is a “hostess” (p. 43) and a “girlfriend” (p. 43), not a wife nor a mother. She owes her life to Pascal who provides her a living, but at the same time she is dissatisfied of being completely dependent on him. “Gabriella said maybe she wanted to go out to the West and get a cowboy with a horse for herself, that she wanted one because cowboys are strong and silent and they are always there” (p. 159). She dreams of a better life with a caricatured cowboy instead of a Mafia boss. However, she accepts her fate by remaining impassive, like the Italian woman characters in the previous three Mafia novels, in their roles of submitted daughters and wives. In other words, also Gabriella is a woman of the shadows, a victimised prisoner of her role, in contrast to the American girlfriends of the two brothers, Ann and Phyllis, who have normal, positive roles. The Italian woman, if not a saintly wife-mother, is a slut. Gabriella’s position can, in fact, be compared to the americanised gangster-casanova mistress, Lucy, in *The Godfather* and to the half-Italian, easy-going, career woman Claudia De Lena in *The Last Don*. They all have visible roles, being connected to more than one man. As Lucia Santa says “the world was never made without its proper number of sluts” (*The Fortunate Pilgrim*:229-230)

6.4 CONCLUSION

What happens to diversity and uniqueness, if making profitable spaghetti and meatballs (i.e. stereotypes) is more appealing than the genuinity of risotto? This is the central question of *Big Night*, first a film and then a novel based on its screenplay. In fact, Tropicano's purpose is to make a risotto, that is, to represent non-stereotypical Italian characters instead of stereotypical ones, for example the Mafia bosses, gangster-casanovas and women of the shadows discovered above. Similarly to Puzo's autobiographical novel, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, the novel leaves the plot in a secondary position and describes two Italian immigrant brothers, Primo and Secondo who try their fortune in the New World. Unlike Puzo, however, the author is not interested in the psychological growing up of the characters thus giving them less depth. In this respect, *Big Night* is closer to bestsellers, like Puzo's *The Last Don* and Sheldon's *The Rage of Angels*, and even to blockbusters. In fact, the novel is based on a screenplay. *Big Night* wants to please, to entertain the readers, for example, with recipes of Italian dishes, and the fight between good and evil is only substituted by a sharp antagonism between the stereotypical and the genuine. The genuine is represented by the Italian brothers, and their family restaurant, and the stereotypical by a non-Italian rival. In fact, the brothers are seen as normal, human beings with their differences of character and love of food. The two of them form a strong family union which is not affected by external factors or opposing interests, and which lasts all through the novel, in the same way as in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Some stereotypical characteristics can, nevertheless, be found in both of the brothers, even if, in contrast to Pascal who is the incarnation of Italian male stereotypes, they may seem insignificant. Pascal is brutal, violent and unpredictable like a gangster-casanova, but has the powerful connections of a Mafia boss. The emphasis on the description of exterior looks can be noted in his elegant clothing, as is the case with the romantic but evil hero, Michael Moretti, in Sheldon's *Rage of Angels*. The fake "Italian" is not represented only by Pascal's stereotypical personality, but also by his restaurant and his cooking, which is all made with the principle to please the clients.

So, *Big Night*'s protagonists are male characters. The only Italian woman character, Gabriella, is, once again, a woman of the shadows. She is not an invisible mother-wife, or a submissive daughter. She is an individual without definite roots and without a definite role. She is Pascal's "girlfriend", a hostess in his restaurant. Her easy-going character and the 'career' as a slut give her a resemblance to the Americanised protagonist mistress in *The Godfather* and the half-Italian, easy-going career woman in *The Last Don*. For the rest, Gabriella is like Puzo's Mafia daughters, who dream of freedom, but remain passive prisoners, unlike the American female characters. Indeed, contrasting with Gabriella's position of a 'girlfriend', the Italian brothers have normal, American, girlfriend's'.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 STEREOTYPING - A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

The images seen in the previous sections can be considered stereotypes strongly influenced by the genre of the novels in question. Stereotypes are grounded in reality, but often they are exaggerated or even outdated (Leyens 1994:15). In addition, the stereotype attributed to a group extends to all the individuals belonging to that group (Leyens 1994:19, Oakes 1994:102) and even to confining groups. In the introduction to her study, Paola Casella points out that the Italian American stereotypes created by American film industry have come to represent the Italians in Italy as well, so that all Italians are thus “labelled” (term used by Schaefer 1988:68). For the purposes of the present study, it is interesting to note that stereotypes reflect the social reality, in this case, the position of Italian Americans in the United States. As sociologists Leyens and Oakes point out, it is a natural human process to generalise, to simplify i.e. to stereotype the surrounding world. Since it is a continuous process also modifying or even completely changing stereotypes is possible (Leyens 1994:27). The public attitudes and images, the stereotypes, are greatly influenced by the mass media and mass entertainment. In fact, bestsellers and blockbusters are creators of popular, international, images, reinforced by the homogenising power of television as noted by Joseph Giordano in his article (Tomasi 1985:69).

7.2 THE ITALIAN MALE: MAFIA BOSS AND GANGSTER-CASANOVA

The Italian male images in the present study are divided into two initial categories; the Mafia boss and the gangster-casanova, represented by the respective prototypes. It must be noted that these two groups have several characteristics in common. To mention some, they have an unpredictable character, they are double-faced and have a submitted wife. The model for

the Mafia boss stereotype is represented by Don Corleone in Puzo's *The Godfather*, and is inspired by the mother, Lucia Santa, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and her down-to-earth wisdom, stability and absolute loyalty to the family. The stereotype of the gangster-casanova can be traced back to Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim* and the eldest son, Larry, and to his boyish innocence, muscular body and attraction to women. The stereotypes chosen for the present study have naturally been modified in the course of time, and in the hands of different authors, they have begun to resemble each other. In addition, they have inspired new adaptations and forms.

7.2.1 *The Mafia boss*

As already mentioned above, the origins of the Mafia boss image can be found in the character of the mother, Lucia Santa, in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*. Her iron will and tenacity to protect the family from the injustices of the outside world, capacity to keep her feet on the ground in difficult situations always placing the good of the family first, are all characteristics later found in *The Godfather's* Don Corleone. It must be remembered that Puzo's decision to write a bestseller has had its influence on the resulting image. Don Corleone and his Family is more salable in an exotic, entertaining setting. In his world, there are intrigues and passion instead of *The Fortunate Pilgrim's* poverty and strive to survive. Lucia Santa's female compassion turns into Don Corleone's heartless business dealing, where lives of enemies are not saved. And whereas Lucia Santa's world is reigned by women, the world of the Mafia is exclusively for men.

Puzo's *The Last Don*, published a couple of decades later, is an attempt to recreate the success of *The Godfather*, which in its time became a myth, a bestseller and a blockbuster, a classic from which a new entertaining theme has been born. There is a difference between the two Mafia novels, however, perhaps signed by time itself. *The Last Don's* Don Clericuzio is cold and calculative. Business rules over the Family. Italian characters are substituted with American ones and the nuclear Family members are no

longer protagonists. The basic plot stays the same, a powerful Mafia family retiring from illegal business, only garnished with a battle between the forces of good and evil (cousins fighting against each other tormented by a family secret) and plenty of Hollywood glamour (movie stars, screen writers) to further entertain the readers. One might even ask whether the old Mafia family theme is outworn. Perhaps so. There seems to be a longing for supplementary ingredients.

Sidney Sheldon also uses the Mafia theme in *Rage of Angels*. Also here the Mafia boss, Antonio Granelli, remains in the background, whereas the romantic but evil hero with both Mafia boss and gangster-casanova characteristics is destined to steal women's hearts. Granelli's position is similar to that of don Clericuzio in *The Last Don*. His role is decorative, he is not a protagonist and does not have the unquestionable respect of his Family, in contrast to don Corleone. Keeping the family together is less his concern than making the Organisation profitable, and instead of respect he yearns for power and success. Loyalty inside the family and the importance of the family in general has disappeared. Instead, there is rivalry among family members. The character of Michael Moretti, a sort of romantic but evil hero, is here grouped among the gangster-casanova. A characteristic that makes him nevertheless resemble an old time Mafia boss (such as don Corleone) is the power and respect that he yields. In fact, he is compared to the United States senator/president Moretti representing the extreme evil power menacing the American society. This kind of black-and-white positioning is certainly characteristic of the entertaining genre, but it is interesting to note how the Mafia and Italian American characters are positioned in the overall puzzle.

Tropiano's *Big Night* is a novel which acts against popular Italian stereotypes, frequently present in novels as well as in films. The image of the Italian American Mafia boss is one of the most popular ones in mass entertainment due to the success of the novel/film *The Godfather* and its film sequels. In *Big Night* the typical characteristics of a Italian Mafia boss/gangster-casanova are transferred to the non-Italian character, Pascal.

Thus, the author of the novel attempts to disassociate Italianity from this popular stereotype. Like Sheldon's Michael Moretti, Pascal is similar to a Mafia boss with his powerful and mysterious connections and, on the other hand, he is like a gangster-casanova for his brutality and violence.

7.2.2 *The gangster-casanova*

Whereas the Mafia boss is originally seen as a family pillar with a great stability of character (like the prototype don Corleone), the gangster-casanova is partly inspired by the 1920's Italian American gigolo Rudolph Valentino. His dark looks, graceful body and early death made him a legend that survives in the image of the Italian male as "a consummate Latin lover" (Rolle 1980:133). In reality Valentino was the son of poor Italian immigrants and an innocent victim as "an exploited plaything of the media" (Rolle 1980:131). The same boyish innocence and attractiveness to women is to be found in *The Fortunate Pilgrim's* Larry, the prototype of the gangster-casanova in the present study. Whereas don Corleone, the prototype of the Mafia boss, is seen as stubborn and stable, Larry is rather a puppet of fate with an unpredictable character common to gangster-casnovas. Larry conforms to Rolle's (1980:137) view of the "good" child of a peasant Italian immigrant family. He is loyal to the family staying at home to help instead of looking for an education. He is also big-hearted in his friendliness and availability, but at the same time simple-minded and unworried. The essentials of a gangster-casanova are seen in Larry's hidden brutality, the way his mother calls him an animal and how, guided by the fate, he becomes a gangster by profession and marries an Italian woman of the shadows. In Puzo's Mafia gangster-casnovas Sonny Corleone in *The Godfather* and Pippi De Lena in *The Last Don* these characteristics are further developed and made more one-dimensional. Brutality and violence take the place of humanity and the strong mother-son bond in the male dominated Mafia world. The same tendency can be seen in Sheldon's romantic but evil hero, Michael Moretti, and Tropiano's non-Italian Pascal, who, however, represents the stereotypically "Italian" mix of Mafia boss

and gangster-casanova. As noted in the cases of Sheldon and Tropiano the Mafia boss and gangster-casanova characteristics have started their fusion and have created new adaptations on the basis of the old characteristics.

Along with the Mafia boss/gangster-casanova division, there is a romantic and heroic element emerging in the novels, which depends on the character's affective connection to an American woman. Already *The Fortunate Pilgrim's* gangster-casanova, Larry, dreams of being a hero and marrying an American girl. This dream, however, is not realised and he remains a gangster-casanova. The first romantic hero is found in *The Godfather's* second generation Mafia boss, Michael Corleone. He is americanised, passively attractive to women, heroic and, most important of all, he happily marries an American woman. *The Last Don's* gangster-casanova, Pippi, has a similar tendency. He is slightly a more romantic, heroic character than his predecessor Sonny in *The Godfather*. He falls in love with an American woman, whereas Sonny has 'only' an americanised mistress, and is considered the family "hero" and less a muscular hothead. Pippi's destiny, however, is to remain a gangster-casanova and, consequently, his American wife asks for a divorce. It is Pippi's half-Italian son, who is more Americanised and civilised in respect to his father, to be the romantic hero of the novel. His role is to save the beautiful American heroine from the evil and to live happily ever after. Finally, Sheldon's Michael Moretti is defined as a romantic but evil hero. He is the companion of the American female protagonist, her (romantic) ally and her (evil) enemy. The major presence of gangster-casanova characteristics, however, leads him to self-destruction. Even the two brothers, Primo and Secondo, in *Big Night* have positive, even if not romantic, roles beside their American girlfriends. Whereas their rival, Pascal, who has an Italian 'girlfriend' is the bad guy of the novel.

7.3 THE ITALIAN WOMAN - SAINT OR SLUT

With the exception of the protagonist mother and daughter in *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, the Italian women characters in the novels of the present study follow a perceivable pattern. Most of them are connected to gangster-casanovas and Mafia bosses. At the same time, they are women of the shadows, insignificant and invisible characters used by men. The few characters that do not conform to this image have sluttish tendencies. Altogether, in these novels, the importance of Italian woman characters decreases with time, in favour of American women. Whereas *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1965) describes a female dominated world, where men are weak and unstable, in the following Mafia novels the roles are completely reversed. By the 1990s, their minor importance is clearly to be seen also in the diminished number, often remaining alone in the category.

The Fortunate Pilgrim remains unique in its emphasis on the strong Italian woman characters, who, nevertheless, serve as prototypes for the women of the shadows. The protagonist mother, Lucia Santa, is the hero and the goddess of her beloved family, and a source of inspiration to the Mafia bosses. However, it is her unquestioned and even self-sacrificing dedication to the family and the household, and her saintly desexualisation, that becomes the model for later Italian woman characters. In the same way, the protagonist daughter, Octavia, is basically a stubborn fighter, who has decided to overcome poverty, but who obediently helps her mother at home and cherishes the memory of her passed away father. Also Octavia's example of inheriting household and cooking skills from the mother, as well as adoring and being adored by the father, is later found in the characters of the Mafia daughters. The only woman of the shadows found in the novel is the gangster-casanova Larry's young and invisible Italian wife. *The Godfather* has still relatively many Italian woman characters, but the roles have already changed. The Don's wife, Mama Corleone, is an insignificant wife-mother without personality, but with good cooking skills. The same skills are inherited by the daughter, Connie, who is, initially, the father's

favourite girl but who is later seen as a hysterical victim of her Italian husband.

The slut of the novel is the Americanised mistress of the gangster-casanova, Sonny. After his death, she becomes a minor protagonist, in contrast to the insignificant wife, who disappears. Even the only beautiful (Italian) woman in the novel is only used for the purposes of the plot. This woman of the shadows represents the primitive and capturing beauty of Sicily, the romantic hero's Michael Corleone's, homeland. Contrasting with all these Italian women is Michael's American wife who can choose her own way of life, and still be happily married to the romantic hero.

In *The Last Don*, the number of Italian woman characters is much decreased. The Don's wife and sister are mentioned, but both of them are already passed away. The daughter, Rose Marie, is a victimised prisoner of her father and brothers to whom she, however, cooks. It is emphasised that before getting mental problems, she and her father had a special relationship. Things changed when the Family killed her husband, and finally also her son. Rose Marie is actually the only wholly Italian woman character in the novel, and the only woman of the shadows (if the dead mother and aunt are not taken into account). Claudia De Lena is a half-Italian career woman and one of the protagonists of the novel. She is independent, successful, and easy-going in her way of using men for her own pleasure. Yet, she is not as beautiful as the American woman protagonist, and she does not have her perfection, which appeals to the romantic hero of the novel.

In Sheldon's *Rage of Angels*, the antagonism between the submissive Italian woman and the perfect American woman is very clear. Rosa Granelli, a Mafia daughter, adored and excessively sheltered by her father is used and married by the romantic but evil hero, Michael Moretti. With Rosa he shows his evil side by treating her as a servant who knows how to cook. However, with the American female protagonist he changes into a romantic hero. If Rosa is a submissive and passive woman of the shadows, the American Jennifer is a successful career woman, beautiful and intelligent. Finally, the

same antagonism can be found in Tropiano's *Big Night*, a novel that the author in its preface declares to be anti-stereotypical. The American girlfriends of the two Italian protagonist brothers have positive roles, unlike the only Italian woman character, Gabriella. She is easy-going, the slut of the neighbourhood, and mysterious with a tendency to mischief. She is beautiful, but still a woman of the shadows dependent on her stereotypical male. All in all, there seems to be an escalation of importance in the novels, from the submissive and insignificant Italian to the easy-going and Americanised, finally reaching either the perfection, or the normality, of the American woman character.

8 CONCLUSION

In the present study one central finding was how the Italian male and female images have developed and changed in five American novels. Puzo's autobiographical novel, *The Fortunate Pilgrim*, and his bestselling Mafia classic, *The Godfather*, represent two opposing novels in terms of contents and motivation of the author himself. In this respect, the second one can be considered more popular and commercial. The three following, more recent novels, Puzo's *The Last Don*, Sheldon's *Rage of Angels* and Tropicano's *Big Night*, have been analysed in order to understand the more recent tendencies and to what extent they still conform or not to the opposing principles of the first two novels. Undoubtedly, the novels and their emphasis have changed with time. This is seen clearly in the contrast between Puzo's *The Fortunate Pilgrim* (1965) and Tropicano's *Big Night* (1996). They are both ethnic novels written by Italian American authors, but still the entertaining element is stronger in the more recent novel. The same phenomenon can also be perceived by comparing Puzo's *The Godfather* (1969) and *The Last Don* (1997), both Mafia family novels, and both with a different emphasis on the relationship between family and business.

The Godfather was a classic of its time, which has had its influence on the popular image of Italian Americans, even Italians in general. The popular male and female images in it have been cultivated in popular literature and films, till the point that they are starting to change and to become more mixed. It is evident that the position of the Italian American population in the United States has changed through decades, from immigrants to ethnic Italian Americans. (Political correctness and interest in the immigrant experience takes ground in the form of revival of autobiographical novels, which outline the complexities of immigrant life instead of hiding them. The 3rd, maybe 4th generation Italian Americans are getting proudly interested in their background in the multiethnic American society). Whereas poor Italian immigrants in the beginning of the 20th century might have been ashamed of their origins in front of the American mainstream and inclined to adapt to its

way of life, in modern American multiethnic society the roles are reversed. Being Italian has become even trendy and the Italian culture and habits are actually imitated. (Italian schools and Italian language are flourishing and Italian restaurants are “in” in New York.) A proof of this is the revival of Italian ethnic literature, as demonstrated by *Big Night*, and by the republication of Puzo’s *The Fortunate Pilgrim* in 1997. Stereotypical Italian male and female images are, however, still commonly found in bestsellers and blockbusters, but this does not mean that they reflect the actual image of the Italian American population. The entertaining genre uses stereotypes in creating antagonisms, for example between good and evil, because they have a powerful mass appeal and because in the entertainment business the starting point is often the public, not the characters and their honesty in themselves. It is difficult and time-consuming to change a popular association. *Big Night*’s anti-stereotypical Primo argues: “Sometimes the spaghetti likes to be alone” (p. 10) tired of the American customers always wanting spaghetti with meatballs as if other combinations did not exist. The situation appears to be the same with the term “Italian”, also this continuously served with the same side dish i.e. with an association to Mafia bosses, gangster-casanovas and women of the shadows expected from bestsellers.

For a further analysis, it would be interesting to see how the Italian stereotypes continue their development. Perhaps, at a certain point in a homogenised future, they will cease to exist and will be substituted with similar stereotypes of other nationality groups, or, on the contrary, perhaps there will be a major revival of the Italian stereotypes pointed out in the present study. However, it must be remembered that stereotyping is a natural social phenomenon which serves to simplify people’s environment, and also forms an essential part of popular literature

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