

A Milestone Release  
Presented by Martin Scorsese  
Luchino Visconti's

## **ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS** *(Rocco e i suoi fratelli)*

A Milestone Film Release  
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Luchino Visconti's  
**ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS**  
*(Rocco e i suoi fratelli)*

Director.....Luchino Visconti  
Screenplay ..... Visconti, Suso Cecchi D'Amico and Vasco Pratolini  
Based on the novel  
*Il Ponte della ghisolfa (The Bridge of Ghisolfa)* by Giovanni Testori  
Producer .....Giuseppe Bordogni  
Cinematographer.....Giuseppe Rotunno  
Editor .....Mario Serandrei  
Music.....Nino Rota  
Art Director.....Mario Garbuglia  
Costumes .....Piero Tosi  
Sound .....Giovanni Rossi

*A Titanus/Les Films Marceau (Goffredo Lombardo) presentation*

### **Cast:**

Rocco Parondi .....Alain Delon  
Simone Parondi .....Renato Salvatori  
Nadia .....Annie Girardot  
Rosaria Parondi .....Katina Paxinou  
Morini.....Roger Hanin  
Boxing impresario .....Paolo Stoppa  
Luisa .....Suzy Delair  
Ginetta .....Claudia Cardinale  
Vincenzo Parondi.....Spiros Focas  
Luca Parondi.....Rocco Vidolazzi  
Ivo.....Corrado Pani  
Ciro.....Max Cartier  
Ciro's fiancée .....Alessandra Panaro  
Laundry workers.....Claudia Mori, Adriana Asti

Italy/France. 1960. 180 minutes. Black & White. 1.66:1. In Italian with English Subtitles

### **Synopsis**

The story of **ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS** unfolds in five chapters over a five-year period. Each chapter is named after one of the five Parondi brothers, who leave the impoverished farmland of southern Italy with their widowed mother to seek a better life in Milan.

### ***Vincenzo.***

Rocco, Simone, Ciro and Luca and their widowed mother Rosaria travel by train to Milan to escape the agricultural depression in southern Italy. In the city, they rejoin the fifth brother, Vincenzo, who has been living there for some time and has already found work and become engaged to Ginetta. The Parondis arrive at Ginetta's parents' home in the midst of the couple's engagement party. Rosaria starts an argument with her future in-laws and they quickly leave. The mother and five brothers move into a dark, cramped apartment in the slums of Milan where the brothers earn money by shoveling the sidewalks of snow. Vincenzo meets Nadia, a prostitute living in their building, when her father throws her out of her family's apartment. She meets the whole family, but when a policeman arrives, she escapes out of the bathroom window to avoid detection.

### ***Simone***

Simone is a lazy, charming ne'er-do-well who finds work as a professional boxer. He wins his first few fights and becomes a local celebrity. One night meets up with Nadia in a bar. He sleeps with her, but becomes upset in the morning when he realizes that she doesn't take their "relationship" seriously. Rocco finds work at a dry cleaners owned by an older woman. One day, when Simone comes to the laundry to borrow money from Rocco, he steals a shirt. When Simone goes back to return the shirt after a weekend with Nadia, he flirts with the angry laundry owner, makes love to her, and steals her expensive brooch. Later, when Nadia is fleeing town to avoid the police, she stops at the family's apartment and takes Rocco for a ride. She gives the brooch back to Rocco to return to the owner, and drives off leaving Rocco to walk home.

### ***Rocco***

Rocco has been drafted into the army and as he is finishing his military service, he meets Nadia again in a remote garrison town. She has just been let out of prison and they talk about their pasts and futures. Rocco and Nadia fall in love and when Rocco later returns to Milan, they start a new life together. Devastated by losing Nadia and unable to train seriously for his boxing matches, Simone drifts into petty crime. One night his friends tell him that Rocco and Nadia are lovers. Taunted by them into a jealous rage, Simone seeks revenge. Discovering the couple in a romantic meeting, Simone and his friends chase them down. Simone's friends hold Rocco back as he watches helplessly as Simone brutally rapes Nadia. The two brothers fight savagely through the streets of the city. Rocco decides it his own fault that he did not realize the depth of Simone's despair and obsession. On a walk high on top of Milan's Gothic cathedral where couples traditionally meet and family's picnic, Rocco tells Nadia that she must leave him and return to Simone.

### ***Ciro***

Ciro works at an automobile factory and has found a pretty fiancée. When Rocco moves in with Vincenzo and his family, Ciro becomes his mother's best hope for support. Simone, meanwhile, takes a broken and bitter Nadia to the family apartment and much to Rosaria's horror, they move in. But Simone's petty thefts and his increasing self-destruction, along with Rosaria's hatred, makes Nadia leave him. Simone, in desperation over his lost boxing career, goes to his gay manager's apartment to beg for money by giving himself to the older man. When the manager approaches him, Simone becomes violently angry and they fight. But the next scene seems to be some months later and it is suggested that they have lived together. By this time, Simone has borrowed or robbed the manager of 400,000 lire and has run away. To pay back the manager and save Simone from jail, Rocco signs a contract as a professional boxer and soon becomes a famous boxer. As he gets ready for his first big match, Simone has discovered that Nadia has again become a prostitute and discovers where she takes her men. While the match is going on, Simone finds Nadia at a park on the outskirts of town. When she spurns him, Simone brutally murders her.

## **Luca**

Luca is the youngest of the five brothers and still relatively innocent. He cherishes memories of their village in the south and dreams of returning there some day. After Rocco's victory, Simone barges in on the family's great celebration. Tortured by grief and guilt he confesses to Nadia's murder. Ciro runs to get the police and Simone is arrested. Later, outside the Alfa Romeo factory, Ciro tells Luca, "*Rocco is a saint, but in the society men have created, there's no more place for saints like him. Their compassion provokes disaster.*"

## **Luchino Visconti**

**1906-1976**

Luchino Visconti's life was filled with dualities. Born into ancient nobility and a follower of fascism in the early 1930s, he became a devoted Marxist and a member of the Italian resistance during the war. One of the founders of neorealism with *OSSESSIONE* and *LA TERRA TREMA*, his films became more and more operatic in tone in the 1950s and 60s. A womanizer when he was young, later in life Visconti's only important and lasting romantic relationships were with men. The journey from the leisured aristocrat to one of cinema's greatest directors was a long and convoluted road.

Count Don Luchino Visconti di Modrone was born November 2, 1906 in Milan. His family was one of the most powerful and celebrated leaders of Milan going back to the Middle Ages, even mentioned by Chaucer in "The Monk's Tale." Luchino's ancestor, Duke Carlo (1770-1836) was the first impresario of La Scala. When the famous opera house became privately financed in 1897, the Visconti family led the efforts to support it. As president of the theater, Luchino's grandfather Duke Guido, hired a distinguished young conductor by the name of Arturo Toscanini and then supported him during his turbulent first years there while he changed the face of opera. In 1899, his second son Don Giuseppe married one of the richest girls in Milan, Carla Erba, heir to the Erba pharmaceutical company, one of the largest industries in Italy. This fortune kept their seven children in considerable wealth throughout their lives (though Luchino always seemed to find a way to spend it all). Don Giuseppe and Dona Carla were famous for their elegance and their taste for social life and culture. Toscanini became a major influence on Luchino's musical upbringing and they later collaborated in the 1950s. Toscanini's daughters Wanda and Wally were lifelong friends of Luchino's.

Visconti was educated in private schools in Milan and Como, but had no plans for his future. At one point he was sent to a boarding school of the Calasanzian Order, but even the monks failed to impress Luchino and he never completed his education. After failing at a job in the family business (the women secretaries became too distracted by the handsome young man), the only solution left was the army. After a successful year in Piedmont's cavalry school, Luchino became an officer in the Reggimento Savoia Cavalleria. Visconti was an excellent rider and loved horses. On his release from the cavalry, he started his first career as one of Italy's most famous trainers and breeders of race horses. After a tragic accident to his chauffeur while Visconti was at the wheel, he withdrew from society and journeyed to the remote Tassili region of the Sahara. These mysterious (and seemingly mystical) two months of solitude altered his life forever.

After returning from the Sahara, Visconti began to spend more and more time in Paris where he met and became friends with Jean Cocteau, Jean Marais, Serge Lifar and other denizens of the artistic world. There, he wrote a one-act comedy, started a company designing chintz fabrics for upholstery and began to explore the cinema, including Von Sternberg's *THE BLUE ANGEL* and other films that had been banned in Italy by the Fascist government. Like many intellectuals and artists of the time, Visconti was fascinated by German culture. In 1933, attracted by the new regime which claimed to be bringing order and discipline to a country in chaos, he decided to visit and see first hand the new Nazi order. Visconti was impressed by some of the changes he saw in Germany and for a while admired fascism.

Returning to Paris, Visconti became the constant companion of Coco Chanel. Chanel was infatuated with the young and handsome Count and introduced him to the cultural and intellectual world. Through Chanel, Visconti met the famous German photographer Horst Horst, who was Visconti's lover for many years and opened his eyes to the evils of fascism. It was during this time that Visconti made his first short film, as was the fashion among his French friends. Never finished and later destroyed when his palazzo was bombed during the war, the story of the film involved an adolescent boy who has three failed love affairs with completely different kinds of women and commits suicide in despair.

In 1935, Visconti met Gabriel Pascal (who became famous directing PYGMALION and MAJOR BARBARA). The Hungarian filmmaker was impressed with Visconti and proposed that they work together on a film based on Flaubert's *November* to be produced by Alexander Korda. Visconti travelled to London to sign a contract as Pascal's assistant director and discovered that the film was only a tentative project and that there was no job. Depressed, he returned to Paris where Chanel again had a hand in changing his life. She introduced Visconti to Jean Renoir and suggested that the young Italian should observe the great director while he was shooting LA VIE EST A NOUS, a film produced by the French Communist Party. It was here that Visconti started both his film career and his lifelong devotion to the Communist Party. In 1936, Visconti was hired as the assistant director on Renoir's LES BAS-FONDS and a year later he worked on UNE PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE. On the second film, he also designed many of the costumes and during the filming, an appreciative Renoir presented Visconti with a typed translation of James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. In a 1961 interview with London's *The Observer*, Visconti said: "*Renoir helped me to understand that unless the cinema is nourished by a profoundly human idea, it is empty. Man must always prevail in the landscape. A wall can only be beautiful in a film if there is someone in front of it: otherwise it says nothing.*"

After finishing work on UNE PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE, Visconti went back to Italy and started working in the theater. Shortly afterwards, Renoir came to Rome to make a French-Italian production of LA TOSCA. Visconti became his assistant again and helped on many facets of the production. But Italy's declaration of war on the Allies ended Renoir's involvement. In *My Life and My Films*, Jean Renoir wrote: "*My farewells to my collaborators were sad occasions, and I particularly regretted parting from Luchino Visconti because of all the things we might have done together but did not do...I was never to see Luchino again, despite the great friendship between us. Such is life.*" Carl Koch, who was working with the two on the script, took over the directing. Now lost, the film received lackluster reviews when it opened.

Visconti next started a search for material to make his own film. He commissioned many scripts and bought the rights to three works by the 19th-century Sicilian author Giovanni Verga, but Visconti's own hesitations and delays by the Italian government stalled the projects. Then Visconti remembered Jean Renoir's gift. The novels of current American writers such as Faulkner and Cain were not banned in Italy because the government believed that they tended to show the decadence of American society. *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was the perfect vehicle for Visconti. He immediately cast the very young Anna Magnani in her first dramatic role as Giovanna, but was forced to replace her with Clara Calamai when Magnani became pregnant. Visconti took the novel as inspiration and molded the story line into an Italian classic which inspired directors such as De Sica and Rossellini to follow in his footsteps in developing the cinema of neorealism. OSSESSIONE was a remarkable change from the country's ultra-glamorous "white telephone" films of the 1930s. In 1943, Visconti wrote:

*"I was impelled toward the cinema by, above all, the need to tell stories of people who were alive, of people living amid things and not of the things themselves. The cinema that interests me is an anthropomorphic cinema. The most humble gestures of man, his bearing, his feelings, and instincts are sufficient to make the things that surround him poetic and alive. The significance of the human being, his presence, is the only thing that could dominate the images.*

*The ambience that it creates and the living presence of its passions give them life and depth. And its momentary absence from the luminous rectangle gives to everything an appearance of dead nature.”*

As it became evident that Italy was losing the war and the threat of German occupation grew, Visconti started to hide escaped prisoners and harbor political refugees at his palazzo. His royal birth and prestige kept the Italian and German fascists from discovering his actions for several years. The day he was to begin active work for the Resistance, Visconti was betrayed and arrested. It was only through the intervention of actress Maria Denis that his life was spared and he was released. After the liberation of Rome, Visconti wrote several screenplays (with Michelangelo Antonioni). He entered the world of theater in 1944 and for two remarkable years, presented brilliant renditions of plays that had never been seen in Italy before. Because of the starkness of the plays he chose and the intense realism of his stagings, Visconti became known as “the director of the soiled beds.”

In 1947, Visconti started what he hoped would be a three-part documentary of Sicilian life entitled LA TERRA TREMA. Inspired by the novels of Verga, Visconti journeyed to Aci-Trezza in eastern Sicily with assistant directors Franco Zeffirelli and Francesco Rosi. The first film, subtitled “Episode of the Sea” focused on the lives of local fisherman and their fight for survival. Without a script and using no professional actors, Visconti created a three-hour film of incredible imagery that created great controversy wherever it was shown. When the film lost money, Visconti simply went back to the theater. It wasn’t until four years later that he returned to filmmaking.

Visconti had a very busy year in 1951. In addition to making a short documentary for Marco Ferreri, he shot BELLISSIMA, one of his most important films. Here, the director finally was able to cast Anna Magnani. It was also on this film that Visconti first collaborated with several artists who would remain with him professionally for many years. Visconti co-scripted BELLISSIMA with Francesco Rosi; famous neorealist writer Cesare Zavattini, who would work with Visconti several more times; and Suso Cecchi D’Amico, who would work on almost of the Visconti’s screenplays through L’INNOCENT — the director’s last film. BELLISSIMA was also the first film for designer Piero Tosi who would be responsible for sets or costumes throughout the great director’s career.

In 1953, Visconti finished SENSO, based on a short story by Camillo Boito, starring Alida Valli and Farley Granger. It was a lyric melodrama set in 1866 Venice and inspired by the music of Verdi. The film, Visconti’s first color production, featured 1,394 actors, 2,100 horsemen and 8,000 extras. The next year, Visconti started still another career as he directed the opera LA VESTALE for La Scala starring Maria Callas. Visconti talked about Callas in a 1968 *New York Times* article: “I first saw Callas in ‘Parsival,’ as the gypsy Kundry, in a rehearsal. She was horribly costumed and wore a little pill-box hat that she kept batting back on her head as she sang. I said to myself right then, ‘One day I’ll work with you and you won’t have to push hats out of your eyes.’” It was the beginning of a great collaboration which lasted only a few years but became legendary for its artistic achievement. Visconti continued to create magnificent opera and ballet productions through the rest of his life. He once said of his work:

*“It has been said that my films are a little theatrical and my theater a little cinematic. Every means of expression is good. Neither the theater nor the cinema should avoid whatever serves it. It is possible that I have exaggerated by using techniques not typical of the cinema. But avoidance of the theatrical is not a rule.”*

WHITE NIGHTS (LE NOTTI BIANCHE), Visconti’s next film in 1957, was a superbly romantic version of Dostoyevsky’s story, starring Maria Schell, Marcello Mastroianni, Jean Marais and Clara Calamai. Financed by Visconti and three of his friends, it was supposed to be a low-budget film shot on location, but Visconti decided that an artificial look was needed so he had huge sets

built on the Cinecittà lot. Considered to be one of his minor efforts, the film lost a good deal of money for the participants.

With **ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS**, Visconti finally had a worldwide success that gave him access to Hollywood studio money. **THE LEOPARD (IL GATTOPARDO, 1963)** with Burt Lancaster was financed by 20th Century Fox, but was brutally edited by the studio for its American release. It finally gained the public and critical acceptance it so richly deserved when the original version was restored and released by Fox's Classics division in the 1980s. **SANDRA (VAGHE STELLE DELL'ORSA, 1965)** and **THE STRANGER (LO STRANIERO, 1967)** followed but did little for Visconti's reputation. It was his investigation of a wealthy family in Nazi Germany in **THE DAMNED (LA CADUTA DEGLI DEI, 1969)** that reaped Visconti great commercial rewards. With **DEATH IN VENICE (MORTE A VENEZIA, 1971)**, the Italian director was finally able to adapt a novel from Thomas Mann who was one of the great influences of his life. His last three films, **LUDWIG (1973)**, **CONVERSATION PIECE (GRUPPO DI FAMIGLIA IN UN INTERNO, 1974)** and finally, **THE INTRUDER (L'INNOCENT, 1976)** all suffered from unfortunate casting decisions and a lessening of his directing skills and health. After suffering a stroke while editing **LUDWIG**, Visconti directed **THE INTRUDER** from a wheelchair (he stated that he'd probably direct his next film from a stretcher). On March 30, 1976, Visconti died in his villa in Rome from influenza complicated by a cardiac ailment.

Visconti was often criticized for "voting left and living right." In fact, Visconti led a somewhat lavish lifestyle and liked to decorate his many villas with antiques that he would buy by the dozen. But his devotion to the Communist Party was sincere. He once stated "*I do like to live comfortably, but that does not prohibit me from having ideas about social reforms.*" His passion for realism was also sincere despite his "operatic" films. Ironically, his opera productions were famous for bringing realism to the stage. Singers were asked to economize their gestures, and even sang at times with their backs to the audience, and acted, as Visconti said, "*like people.*"

*"He was terribly good looking. When he entered a room, no one could ignore him. He had a low, solemn way of moving; there was always something very solemn about him...Luchino could be very cruel; he was a very strong character...He was not a man of our time. He was a kind of Renaissance condottiere...He had no sense of money. He was the most generous man I ever knew, and when it was his own money at stake he didn't care at all."*

— Suso Cecchi D'Amico, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1986-1987

### **The Cast**

**Katina Paxinou** (Rosaria) was a famous Greek actress who already had a long career with the Greek National Theater and had appeared in such films as **FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS**, **MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA**, **UNCLE SILAS**, **THE MIRACLE**, and Orson Welles' **CONFIDENTIAL REPORT (MR. ARKADIN)**.

**Renato Salvatori** (Simone) had done little work in film before **ROCCO**. Married to Annie Giradot, Salvatori spent several months before the film, at Visconti's request, in training for the role including boxing, running and gymnastics. He appeared in **BIG DEAL ON MADONNA STREET**, **TWO WOMEN**, and **THE ORGANIZER**.

**Annie Giradot** (Nadia) started her career with the Comédie-Française. Her first break was in Visconti's Paris production of **TWO FOR THE SEESAW** and from there she was cast in **ROCCO**. She appeared in many films including **THE APE WOMAN**, **LIVE FOR LIFE**, **ALL NIGHT LONG**, **LA VIE CONTINUE** and **THE ORGANIZER**.

**Spiros Focas** (Vincenzo) was also from Greece and had acted in three films in his native country. He starred in such unknown films as PSYCOSISSIMO, RUN WITH THE DEVIL, THE FEAR and STEFFANA.

**Max Cartier** (Ciro) was a popular gymnast who had been offered many film roles before Visconti convinced him to appear in ROCCO. As far as we can tell, he never acted in films again.

**Claudia Cardinale** (Ginetta) was an international screen star by 1960. She agreed to accept the small role of Vincenzo's fiancée in order to work with Visconti. She also appeared in BIG DEAL ON MADONNA STREET, THE LEOPARD, 8 1/2, SANDRA, CIRCUS WORLD, THE PINK PANTHER, THE LOST COMMAND, ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST, and CONVERSATION PIECE.

**Alain Delon** (Rocco) grew up in a small town near Paris where his father ran a small cinema. Like Visconti, Delon never found school to his liking and at age 17, joined the navy where he found himself with the French troops in Indochina fighting in what later became the Vietnam War. When he got back to Paris, he started working as a porter at Les Halles, then a rough-and-tumble food market. He made friends with several people interested in getting into cinema, and was convinced by the future screen star Jean-Claude Brialy to join him on a trip to the 1957 Cannes Film Festival. There, his good looks were so striking, that he attracted great attention. Still a famous star thirty-five years later, Delon has appeared in such films as PLEIN SOLEIL, ECLIPSE, THE LEOPARD, LE SAMOURAI, THE LOST COMMAND, THE ASSASSINATION OF TROTSKY, SCORPIO, THE CONCORDE — AIRPORT 79 and SWANN IN LOVE. He also has directed feature films in France. At the time of the shooting of ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS, he was engaged to Romy Schneider, who became one of Visconti's favorite actresses.

### **Nino Rota**

Nino Rota has been long considered one of the greatest composers for the cinema. Rota started out as a composer of operas (his *Il Cappello di Paglia di Firenze* has played all over the world), symphonies and chamber music. His theater work for Visconti included Giovanni Testori's controversial *L'Arielda* as well as John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's A Whore*. Among Rota's classic works for the screen are the scores for OPEN CITY, ZAZA, I VITELLONI, IL BIDONE, NIGHTS OF CABIRIA, THE WHITE SHEIK, LA STRADA, WHITE NIGHTS, LA DOLCE VITA, 8 1/2, THE LEOPARD, JULIET OF THE SPIRITS, THE TAMING OF THE SHREW, ROMEO AND JULIET, FELLINI'S SATYRICON, ORCHESTRA REHEARSAL, and THE GODFATHER.

### **Giuseppe Rotunno**

Rotunno started with Visconti as a camera operator on SENSO and went on to work with him as cinematographer on WHITE NIGHTS, THE LEOPARD, and THE STRANGER. Rotunno was also director of photography for THE GRIM REAPER, ON THE BEACH, 8 1/2, FELLINI'S SATYRICON, CARNAL KNOWLEDGE, MAN OF LA MANCHA, AMARCORD, ALL THAT JAZZ, POPEYE and Terry Gilliam's THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN.

### **Background**

*"...Stendhal wanted the following engraved on his tombstone: 'He adored Cimarosa, Mozart and Shakespeare.' On the same lines, I would like the inscription: 'He adored Shakespeare, Chekov and Verdi.' Verdi and Italian opera were my first love. My work almost always betrays a touch of the operatic, whether in my films or in my plays. I've been accused of that, but actually I take it as a compliment."*

—Luchino Visconti, *Premier Plan*, no. 17, 1961.

With LA TERRA TREMA, Visconti investigated the poverty of southern Italy, a situation that had troubled him since he first visited Sicily in 1941. But this first part of the planned trilogy was the only chapter Visconti was able to film. During the north's boom years of the 1950s and 60s, there

was a large emigration from the south of men and women fleeing the poverty and backwardness of their villages. The northerners saw these newcomers as a threat to their jobs and despised the new ghettos that sprang up around the cities to house the poor (the situation, topical in 1960, is still a problem today). It is in this “new” Milan that Visconti found inspiration for ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS. But Visconti did not want to present his story in the documentary, neorealist style of LA TERRA TREMA. ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS depicts a brutal, urban landscape of heightened reality with sweeping operatic overtones that would later influence such filmmakers as Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese.

In 1958, Visconti, Suso and her family and the novelist Vasco Pratolini spent a summer holiday working on the story of ROCCO. Visconti himself was influenced by a combination of literary sources and his own previous films and opera productions. Dostoyevsky’s Prince Mishkin in *The Idiot* was a clear inspiration for Rocco, and the film’s tragic love affair mirrors that of Mishkin, Rogozhin and Nastya. The character’s name itself came from a young poet from the south by the name of Rocco Scotellaro. Scotellaro had tragically died young and his poetry had just been published when the screenplay was being written. The rest of the film’s title came from Thomas Mann’s *Joseph und Seine Bruder* (Joseph and His Brothers). Visconti said in 1972 to the *Observer*, that “*After Goethe, I love Thomas Mann. In one way or another, all my films are dipped in Mann.*” But most of all, the film was based on the Sicilian works of Giovanni Verga (especially *I Malavoglia*) and even more specifically on Giovanni Testori’s *Il Ponte della Ghisolfa* which is listed in the credits as the novel from which parts of the screenplay are based. ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS can be seen as a work of many talented artists (four screenwriters are credited in addition to the Visconti, D’Amico and Pratolini — along with Antonello Trombadori, unofficially advising for the Communist Party) as well as the height of Visconti’s personal vision and artistic achievement.

Many of Visconti’s additions to the screenplay were made by repeated visits to Milan where he talked with the southern immigrants at their jobs, in cafés, their homes, anywhere he could find someone of interest. During one of these trips, he came across the woman who he saw as the perfect inspiration for the mother. Rosaria T. had come north with her sons hoping that her nephew would find her a place to live. But lodgings were impossible to find so she forcefully persuaded her nephew to build them a shack on the outskirts of Milan. According to gossip, she found out that there were blocks of low-income apartments being built up and that nobody living in them yet. She found such a building, broke a window, and moved her family into the apartment. Many families followed her example and claimed squatters’ rights — a year later it seemed like the government was unable to evict them. For Visconti, this established the character of Rocco’s mother whom he called Rosaria — “*a peasant Hecuba,*” in his own words. The family name he chose for the film would be Pafundi, which would later cause problems.

ROCCO’s production started in February 1960 and took less than four months to shoot, finishing on June 4. Divided into five sections using the names of each of the brothers as headings, the original screenplay for ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS also featured a prologue and a first chapter entitled “The Mother” that were both to be filmed in Lucania in southern Italy. The prologue starts with a rocky cliff overlooking the sea. “*Four black figures stand at the edge of a cliff jutting out over the sea. Two are holding up a coffin; the other two, shorter in stature, stand a few paces behind. Battered by the wind and the lashing rain, they stand immobile for a moment, then the two coffin bearers lift their burden and tip it over the edge...The coffin falls slowly through the air and is swallowed up by the violent waves, as the four watch in silence.*” Simone explains to the camera that Vincenzo, the oldest brother is far away and if the father had died in the summer he would have been buried in the cemetery. But since it is winter, there are no roads and it is all mud and landslides. As they walk back to the village the credits appear. In the next scene, a line of farm laborers are standing before a run-down employment office looking for work. From the office, a man comes out and offers them three days work at a vineyard 10 kilometers away. The laborers bid

for the work, underbidding each other until the wage is barely sufficient for existence. One of the men comments, *"It must be in the books somewhere...that we have to die hungry."*

The first chapter, "The Mother," takes place in Rosaria's house and explores the stark realities of the family's daily life. The room, with several beds, serves for sleeping, eating and cooking. The only source for light is from the doorway. Rosaria writes to Vincenzo, *"Your father was always stubborn as a mule; he had to die on the land that gave us only misery and ruined his health. I always tried to convince him you were doing well; let's all go to Vincenzo's, I always used to tell him. And he wouldn't..."* She decides that she and her sons must go north. Only Rocco wants to stay — he is in love with a young woman, Imma, who lives across the street. Simone is able to sell the land, but it is barely enough for the train tickets. We see Vincenzo in the city coming out of a gym. Inside the gym are boxers, training for their fights...

These first two scenes were never shot, but they further reflect the film's close connection to LA TERRA TREMA and Visconti's deep feeling for the plight of the southern poor. But the finished film, as it stands, expresses eloquently these personal tragedies of great social upheaval.

ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS was the first film of Visconti's to be distributed worldwide and it received twenty-two international awards. But wherever it played, controversy followed. First off, there was trouble with one of the many Pafundis in Lucania. The son of a former prosecutor announced that he would sue Visconti to change the name of the family. Deciding not to waste time and money with a lawsuit, Visconti used modern technology to change the name to Parondi. Near the end of the film, this can best be seen on the posters announcing one of Rocco's fights. Then at its premiere at the Venice Film Festival, a great scandal broke out when ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS lost the first prize Golden Lion to Cayatte's LE PASSAGE DU RHIN, a film that many considered a far lesser work of cinema (ROCCO was awarded a Special Jury Prize as consolation).

Even more scandalous was the reaction upon its public release. After several minor trims to pass the Italian censors, Visconti was shocked when his own city of Milan stated it had an "inopportune resemblance to reality" and decided to take the unprecedented move of banning the film unless certain cuts were made. Never before had a city done this in Italian cinema history. Visconti refused to make the cuts and while the legal battle was fought back and forth, the "banned" film did exceptional box office. In England and especially the United States, however, the situation was more serious. Much of the film's brutality was censored. For example, the brutal fight between Rocco and Simone after the rape was severely edited. Nadia's murder was edited from the original eight knife stabs to only three. Altogether, the American version was cut from the original 180 minutes to 155 and then even down to 95 for television! This new print comes from the original Italian negative with new subtitles.

### **Visconti on directing ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS:**

*"I wanted to make a film about a southern mother, strong, energetic, obstinate, a mother to whom her five sons are like the five fingers of her own hand. With her husband dead, she becomes the head of the family and is drawn by the mirage of the great northern city. She wants to exploit her sons' energy, but doesn't take into account their different characters and possibilities — she doesn't, but Milan does, and the city gives each one a different destiny. Simone, who seems the strongest, but is in fact the weakest, ruins himself, and kills a prostitute. Rocco, the most sensitive and spiritually complex, wins a form of success, as a boxer, that is fundamentally only a form of self-punishment, because he feels personally responsible for Simone's misfortunes, and he loathes boxing. Once he is in the ring, face to face with his opponent, boxing releases in Rocco a hatred of everything and everybody — and he recoils with horror from this hatred. Ciro, the wisest and most practical of the brothers, is the only one who will become completely urbanized, truly part*

of the Milanese community. Luca, the youngest, may one day return south, because by then things will have changed there too; and Vincenzo, the eldest ... will be satisfied with a little security.”

(quoted in Monica Sterling's biography of Visconti, *A Screen of Time*)

### Filmography

1937	PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE (as assistant to Jean Renoir)
1940	LA TOSCA (as assistant to Jean Renoir and Carl Koch)
1942	OSSESSIONE
1945	GIORNI DI GLORIA (DAYS OF GLORY) (co-directed with Marcello Pagliero)
1947	LA TERRA TREMA
1951	BELLISSIMA
1951	APPUNTI SU UN FATTO DI CRONACA (NOTES ON A HAPPENING) (second episode of a news film)
1953	SIAMO DONNE (WE WOMEN) (a film in episodes)
1954	SENSO
1957	LE NOTTE BIANCHE (WHITE NIGHTS)
1960	ROCCO E I SUOI FRATELLI (ROCCO AND HIS BROTHERS)
1962	BOCCACCIO '70 (a film in four episodes) Episode Three: IL LAVORO
1963	IL GATTOPARDO (THE LEOPARD)
1965	VAGHE STELLE DELL'ORSA (SANDRA or OF A THOUSAND DELIGHTS)
1966	LA STREGHE (THE WITCHES) (a film in episodes) LA STREGA BRUCIATA VIVA (THE WITCH BURNT ALIVE)
1967	LO STRANIERO (THE STRANGER)
1969	LA CADUTA DEGLI DEI (THE DAMNED)
1970	ALLA RICERCA DI TADZIO (LOOKING FOR TADZIO)
1971	MORTE A VENEZIA (DEATH IN VENICE)
1973	LUDWIG
1974	GRUPPO DI FAMIGLIA IN UN INTERNO (CONVERSATION PIECE)
1976	L'INNOCENT (THE INTRUDER)

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