

# TSL570

# Literature and The Media

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## Part 6 of 6: Analysis

Click on the links below to see extremely rudimentary examples of shot breakdown and close analysis of sequences from various films. You should aim to go beyond these examples in the precision and cogency of the analyses in your assignments.

*Rocco and his Brothers* (*Rocco e i suoi fratelli*, Luchino Visconti, Italy, 1960)

*Il Grido* (Michelangelo Antononi, Italy, 1957)

## Rocco and his Brothers (Luchino Visconti, Italy, 1960)

In the beginning of the film, the working-class Parondi family has just migrated to Milan from southern Italy. Unable to stay with the oldest son and his Milanese in-laws, they relocate to a housing project.

### IMAGE

### SHOT DESCRIPTION

### ANALYSIS



Editing: shot#1 fade in (can't see it in this clip)  
Cinematography: LS establishing shot becomes MLS as characters move toward camera  
slight pan to the right, following the characters  
slight refrains all the way through to keep characters centered  
Sound: street noise  
Mise-en-scene: gate, lines across image, rainy street, mist, reflective

Rocco and his family (Parondi) moving into new lodging, in a housing project in the outskirts of Milan. We see the family through the fence; their new home is visually like a prison. The day is rainy -- typical of a Milanese winter but new to the family. They are not dressed for the weather and shiver against the cold. Drab, low-contrast image.



Editing: (same shot)  
Cinematography: MLS, widescreen, black figures on light background  
Sound: suddenly loud: Rosaria calls for the porter. offscreen sound (high reverb) of porter's response  
Mise-en-scene: gesturing: cold; clothing: low class, immigrants (not winter clothes)

Mom speaks, even if she has many grown up sons. She's the boss. Even if they are actually entering (that is, outside), her cries holding the fence brings prison images to mind, calling for help/guards (that is, from the inside). Or rather, animals in the zoo, an association later reinforced by the neighbors' malicious gossip (ie: Africans = southerners = animals). The family huddles together -- a group against an unfriendly northern society.



Editing: (same shot)  
Cinematography: MLS  
Sound: dialogue, two different dialects (Milanese and Southern)  
Mise-en-scene: porter appears from offscreen space;

Porter speaks in Milanese; communication is difficult, lot of gesturing. [Native informant note: This is not dialect but accent -- the film makes an effort to establish linguistic differences but at the same time seeks to make that difference comprehensible to a general audience]. Post-synchronized dialogue detaches voices from the space of the image. Widescreen: good for extended families, group portraits. Visconti heavily pictorial, his aristocratic education allows him to draw compositions from royal group portraits, ironically applied to this family. Reinforces the "epic" nature of the film.



Editing: Shot #2, match on action as gate opens  
Cinematography: LS, pan following characters  
Sound: dialogue continues  
Mise-en-scene: reflections of rain, gestures for communication

Wider shot: the lens "opens up" with the door. The camera remains detached from the characters: no POV shot, no eyeline match, not reverse shots of the family. Instead the shot stresses the relation of the family to the overwhelming municipal architecture.



Editing: (same shot)  
Cinematography: LS  
Sound: noise of footsteps  
Mise-en-scene: cart, imposing postwar housing project, passing woman turns to look.

We get a better look at the cart: ready for war, with mom as general; or exodus imagery. This family in exile from its traditional home. Camera cuts, now showing the family from the back, dwarfed by the architecture. The path looks like a corridor in a prison block, the identical apartments are like cells. They have been sent to the basement: a slow descent into hell. This is registered in the bodily attitude of the family members, dressed in black.



Editing: shot#3, match on action as the woman keep walking and meets the porter  
Cinematography: ELS of family; closer shot of gossiping couple, grey tone, ends with fade to black  
Sound: postrecorded close-up dialogue between the two Milanese women, make fun of the immigrants  
Mise-en-scene: big housing project, all houses are the same. Deep space connects commenting women to family.

Again, the family is dwarfed by the prison-like project. The separation of the family in extreme background from the gossiping women in extreme foreground mirrors a cultural separation between north and south, even though they all belong to the same social class.



Editing: Shot #4; fade in  
Cinematography: darker image, slight track left then pan right across basement apartment to window; it is snowing  
Sound: silent  
Mise-en-scene: religious imagery, family photographs, simple food, no curtains, bare walls

New scene: the objects indicate the low class and lack of education of the Parondi family. The objects associated with the family take over the function of dialogue in this long tracking/panning shot. The images indicate the importance of religion and the family, and their elementary eating and sleeping arrangements. The low key lighting in the image gives us a sense of the drabness of their existence in their new lodgings. The shot of the windows shows that they are buried underground. It is not yet dawn; they spend all the daylight hours working. The film shows that immigrants from the regions are even "lower" than the local working class.



Editing: shot #5, cut  
Cinematography: crane shot rises with Rocco then tracks right with him as he walks across the room to the second window. Mirror of shot #4. Lights come on in the background.  
Sound: silent  
Mise-en-scene: Same objects we see in shot #4. gesturing: it's cold.

Rocco wakes up first and sleeps alone; he is different from his brothers; the most responsible, serious. As in the title, the film here visually singles out Rocco for special attention. The track back across the room reveals that he is sleeping in the "kitchen". We see that it is snowing.



Editing: (same shot)  
Cinematography: track and pan left, as Rocco retraces his steps across the room. camera obstructed by pillar.  
Sound: window opening, voices of people waking up in the neighborhood  
Mise-en-scene: bottles of oil or wine in window, more of basement apartment

Rocco opens the and realizes it is snowing (probably first time for the whole family). Neighbors are waking up too, to go to work: lights, noises; one gets the idea most people in the apartments share a similar social standing. The obstruction of the camera indicates the "reality" of the setting: the space is not arranged for optimum visibility but seems to exist "prior" to the filming (even though this may be a set).

The harsh sidelighting on Rocco is part of a visual rhetoric that impresses on us the harshness of their lifestyle. In general the film is structured by strong contrasts: north/south, modernity/backwardness, city/country, education/ignorance and, ultimately, good and evil. The MCU starts to bring us closer to Rocco in the narrative: earlier he has been seen as part of his family; now the camera contemplates him alone. Alain Delon here is cast strongly against the romantic type he had established in France.

The other brothers are in the next room. Later in the scene we'll see the whole basement where the many Parondis live, virtually one on top of each other. The architectural / social characterization begun in this scene will continue in the following sequence. The bare bulb as another mark of poverty and improvisation, along with the bare walls and the hanging herbs etc. They were expecting to stay with the oldest son's in-laws.

Instead, they find themselves in this dungeon.



Editing: (same shot)  
Cinematography: MCU, as Rocco approaches the camera pan stops as Rocco reaches for the light switch  
Sound: click of light switch, Rocco calls to his brothers  
Mise-en-scene: bare bulb lights up room. bulb in image. heavily shadowed face.



Editing: (same shot)  
Cinematography: MS as Rocco walks away from the camera into the adjacent room  
Sound: Rocco calls his brothers to wake up  
Mise-en-scene: family photograph on wall, whitewashed walls.

## Il grido (Michelangelo Antonioni, Italy, 1957)

The final sequence of Antonioni's *Il grido*. Began as documentarist in this region, interested in landscape earlier features were melodramas, here returns to Po valley, last film before famous trilogy: *L'avventura*, *L'eclisse*, *La notte* (1960-63). Antonioni's first color film, *Red Desert* (1964) sealed his reputation as a high modernist, a reexamination of same topics as *Il grido*, but greater shift from neorealist observation to modernist reflexivity. Story of film: Aldo, industrial worker and his growing alienation from other people (workers, lovers), final realization of the physical and spiritual emptiness that surrounds him. This sequence contrasts social agitation of factory workers struggling with police against the lonely journey of one worker, followed by Elvira, one of his mistresses...

IMAGE	SHOT DESCRIPTION	ANALYSIS
	<p>Editing: shot#1                      Cinematography: ELS, extreme high angle establishing shot. grey tone: low contrast black and white images.                      Sound: people running and shouting                      Mise-en-scene: Misty landscape - never get clear shot in film.</p>	<p>Aerial view. Familiar from landscape documentaries. People lost in / vanishing into the landscape. Problem of individual consciousness reaches climax in this film. Po valley, famous neorealist location, from end of <i>Paisa</i> (1946).</p>
	<p>Editing: shot#2, match in action of the protesters going off the road                      Cinematography: LS, camera descends to eye level                      Sound: sounds gets louder, as demonstrators clash with the police                      Mise-en-scene: silhouettes against the sky; even if far away, the caps allows to tell policemen apart</p>	<p>Police and protesters as two vectors across the landscape. Depersonalized forces.</p>
	<p>Editing: same shot                      Cinematography: LS, tracks down the steep, following the people as they get off the road                      Sound: shouting keeps getting louder                      Mise-en-scene: same as above</p>	<p>Graceful camera movement that mimics the terrain.</p>



Editing: shot#3, quick cut  
Cinematography: ELS, pans left following Aldo as he enters the factory through the side door  
Sound: sudden change to total silence; we only hear Aldo's footsteps  
Mise-en-scene: Aldo approaches and grasps prison-like fence; individual vs. modern/industrial building contrasted with groups/nature of previous scenes

Contrast w/ Aldo - single figure, returning to the deserted factory LS; The bars on the grate are like a prison. Aldo wants to get away from the world. Washed out images in this sequence: low contrast black and white as corollary to vitiated emotions. time of day usually unspecified in this film. Season is late autumn/winter.



Editing: same shot (long take).  
Cinematography: LS, pan continues and tracks forwards (or zooms?) onto Aldo, turns into a MLS  
Sound: Aldo's footsteps, which grow louder or softer as he stops or quicken his pace  
Mise-en-scene: stresses Aldo's isolation, deserted factory. Shift from landscape to factory.

Dead time: actions not simply achieved but constantly obstructed, derailed. Challenging for the viewer too...



Editing: same shot  
Cinematography: camera stops panning at the fence and follows Aldo as he goes further inside, goes from MLS to LS to ELS  
Sound:  
Mise-en-scene: bare tree, deserted sugar refinery, grey buildings against grey sky.

Lack of contrast in the image reduces the distinction between landscape and factory. Landscape drab, so is factory, so are people. One of Antonioni's main themes is the denaturalization of the landscape.



Editing: shot#4, abrupt cut, back to the demonstration.  
Cinematography: LS, camera pans slightly right, taking the curve and following a woman who steps out  
Sound: again, abrupt change in dynamics, loud, fast footsteps of many people running  
Mise-en-scene: woman singled out by her running across the screen

Looks like she's part of running group, but separated in image. we realize that she is Elvira, whom we have seen in the previous sequence running after Aldo.



Editing: shot#5, another quick cut, by now we know this is parallel editing; an eyeline match to something above is suggested as Aldo lifts up his eyes, but we can't see what he is looking at (tower, already important in the diegesis).

Cinematography: MS

Sound: again, change to total silence

Mise-en-scene: Aldo looks up at tower.

Tower is significant in this film: this is where Aldo worked. Film refuses to show us Aldo's perspective, or even his eyeline match to the tower that we realize he is looking at. Like the relations between the characters, all linkages in this film are tenuous.



Editing: shot#6, cut back to the road

Cinematography: LS of a woman (Elvira?); track/pan as she separates herself from the protesters and runs toward the factory fence

Sound: now her sound is matched to Aldo's, softer, only one set of footsteps

Mise-en-scene: Elvira separated from the group, moving toward factory.

Parallel construction of the editing between Aldo and the woman who is chasing him is emphasized by contrast of loud/quiet sound of feet.



Editing: same shot

Cinematography: MLS of Elvira (always tracks along with her) as she presses herself against the fence

Sound: silence

Mise-en-scene: deep space, we realize this is Aldo in the background

The fence and the dark shape of the earth bank correlate with the emotional separation between these characters, part of the emotional background that leads to the conclusion of the film.



Editing: shot#7, match in action/eyeline match, as Elvira was looking at Aldo walking away

Cinematography: MS. tracking Aldo, as he stops and starts

Sound: Aldo's footsteps, slowing, as if in doubt

Mise-en-scene: Framing constantly changes, Aldo framed against buildings for most of this sequence.

Again, notice that time slows down with Aldo; he is the only one not running, and he is shot in longer takes with minimal sound. This is not the cause-and-effect chain of plot but the dead time of story. He just wanders around, looking at the deserted buildings.



Editing: same shot (long take)  
Cinematography: MLS, camera stops tracking as Aldo stops to look at the tower.

Sound: silence, then louder footsteps as Aldo makes up his mind and goes towards the tower  
Mise-en-scene: Now Aldo ventures into central compound, we see refinery tower where he worked in the background.

The tower. This was the place where Aldo is first shown in the film, before descending and running out through the gate. The recapitulation of that scene in reverse suggests that the story is coming full circle.



Editing: same shot  
Cinematography: LS, tilt that brings the top of the tower on screen and leaves Aldo off screen.  
Sound: footsteps  
Mise-en-scene: Tower dominates the composition. Another solitary composition in the film.

We realize the tower, like Aldo, is a marker of solitude. Aldo is associated with the tower as elements that physically stand apart from their surroundings.



Editing: shot#8 cut, real time: cut to HA shots  
Cinematography: LS, high angle, crane (tracks upwards) as Aldo goes up the stairs  
Sound: silence, Aldo slow but firm steps  
Mise-en-scene: rails and metal surfaces of the tower.

Real time / dead time. The time Aldo is absent from the previous shot seems approximately equal to the time it would take for Aldo to reach the tower -- the film insists of the real time of action, at the expense of drama.



Editing: same shot (long take, we get to see each step on the stairs)  
Cinematography: MS, as Aldo gets near to the camera, which keeps craning (not a tilt) and reframing on him.  
Sound: steps  
Mise-en-scene: Aldo looking out, no idea what he's looking at.

Film narration is uncommunicative in not letting us know what characters see or even what they are about to do: we have to reconstruct their field of view in retrospect and are constantly surprised by what they do.



Editing: shot#9, cut as Aldo leaves frame in previous shot  
Cinematography: mirrors Aldo entrance (reinforces parallel construction), from ELS to MS as Elvira approaches the camera  
Sound: hurried footsteps  
Mise-en-scene: recognize factory landmarks

Same scale as Aldo before, LS, then she gets nearer, etc. but she is running, and we don't see her whole movements (much shorter takes) each character has a different time signature. The film establishes different rhythms for different characters. This is a more important structural principle than the typical narrative arc.



Editing: shot#10, cut  
Cinematography: MLS, camera pans/tilts, keeps following Aldo's ascent  
Sound: light footsteps  
Mise-en-scene: continues following Aldo's actions from shot #8

Before, we had an opposition between the longer shots of Aldo and shorter shots of Elvira following. Now the length of the shots becomes similar, but the pace *within* the shot is still contrasted: Elvira always runs, while Aldo moves slowly.



Editing: shot#11, cut  
Cinematography: ELS  
Sound: silence (footsteps in the distance)  
Mise-en-scene: again, Elvira retraces Aldo's path

Elvira's urgency is contrasted to Aldo's previous pensive mood. She does not care for the buildings, does not belong there, as Aldo does. The longer takes emphasize Aldo's connection with the factory, which is not so significant to Elvira. Accordingly, Elvira's scenes in the factory are significantly shorter than Aldo's.



Editing: shot#12, eyeline match, as shot#11 end with ELVIRA looking up  
Cinematography: ELS; unbalanced framing  
Sound: silence (footsteps in the distance)  
Mise-en-scene: striking modernist composition, de-centered, as Aldo and the tower become one.

Aldo goes further and further away from the world, becomes more and more insignificant. He has been associated with the tower from the beginning of the film and now he returns to it. The movement hints at a spiritual aspect of the film: Aldo is portrayed as a kind of "holy fool" who hasn't adapted to the modern world.



Editing: same shot  
Cinematography: MS of Elvira as she comes into the foreground, ELS of Aldo.  
Sound: loud and near as Elvira steps in  
Mise-en-scene: use of offscreen space; as soon as Elvira comes in, she balances the frame

The composition of this shot reinforces the paired relation between Aldo and Elvira, in their simultaneous similarity and opposition. They are present to each other but out of reach. False POV shot: seems like the tower is seen from Elvira's perspective, as shown in shot#11, but then she walks into the frame. This ambiguous setup is common to Antonioni: the arrangement of camera, subject, and object is understood retrospectively, in contrast to the piecemeal style that leads a viewer through the significant elements of a scene.



Editing: same shot (long take)  
Cinematography: ELS as Elvira runs towards the side of the tower, slight tilt downwards to follow her  
Sound: hurried, sudden footsteps running away; first word of the sequence, as she shouts his name.  
Mise-en-scene: Elvira is again dwarfed by the tower

Contrast between puny human figure and the monumental tower and buildings; sense of hopelessness of her cause is nowhere more evident, as her cry pierces the empty space. The tower looks increasingly "alien" -- less an industrial machine than a space ship.



Editing: shot#13, cut. Reaction shot as Aldo starts, hearing Elvira's call.  
Cinematography: MLS  
Sound: Elvira's voice, Aldo's footsteps  
Mise-en-scene: gesturing; Aldo looks baffled, as if awakening from a trance

Notice that Aldo is more and more often shot from the back, stressing his alienation/indifference to everything around him. This is the last time we will clearly see his face; almost as if he is taking his leave. The last frame after he exits is empty, again reinforcing the feeling that "he is no longer there". Contrast of shot scale between the end of shot 12 and the beginning of shot 13 marks an emphatic break. The sequence is accelerating to its conclusion.



Editing: shot#14, match in action as Aldo enters the frame  
Cinematography: MS of Aldo, ELS of Elvira, high angle. Unusual, high angle over-the-shoulder shot.  
Sound: Elvira's voice  
Mise-en-scene: deep space, deep focus, contrast in size of figures

Contrast of size underlines sense that Aldo is removed from emotional contact with his ex-mistress. Also from the human scale of objects on the ground.



Editing: shot#15, match in action as Aldo waves his hand; and a suggested POV shot from Elvira's perspective.  
Cinematography: LS, low angle. Space seems flattened: Perhaps a telephoto lens?  
Sound: silence  
Mise-en-scene: Staircase traps Aldo.

Aldo is now definitely trapped in a narrow space, after traveling across so many open, empty spaces. End of the road, with nowhere to go. Again, POV is understood only retrospectively, when we see the following shot of Elvira.



Editing: shot#16, eyeline match on object of Aldo's gaze  
Cinematography: MCU  
Sound: she utters a cry, as she notices Aldo's swaying, then anguished silence  
Mise-en-scene: wintry, industrial scene. Inexpensive, nondescript clothing -- Elvira is a housewife.

First close-up of Elvira, thus allowing her some individuality/ feelings. Meshing of nature and factory into modern, inhuman space. Tree in the background as unexpected intrusion of nature into factory compound. Will recur later.



Editing: shot#17, shot/reverse shot with shot#18, same as shot#14 and shot#15  
Cinematography: MS of Aldo, ELS of Elvira, high angle  
Sound: total silence  
Mise-en-scene: deep space, deep focus, contrast in size of figures, same camera placement as shot#14

Scene is extended in duration but sense of dead time replaced by sense of anxiety. What will happen? Repeated shot reinforces sense of trance-like repetition in this scene that is a culmination of Aldo's almost somnambulist procession around the countryside in this film.



Editing: shot#18, shot/reverse-shot, graphically matched to shot 12 but from another position  
Cinematography: MLS of Elvira, ELS of Aldo, low angle  
Sound: total silence  
Mise-en-scene: deep space, deep focus: we see Aldo start to fall

Tension between graphic pattern and spatial dislocation. Elvira has been running through the whole sequence but not she stands and watches.



Editing: shot#19, cut. reaction shot of Elvira as she looks at Aldo  
Cinematography: MS  
Sound: sudden, desperate cry of Elvira ("il grido") as Aldo falls; we hear him crashing to the ground offscreen  
Mise-en-scene: Violent gestures of surprise and anguish

Shot scale: this is the first MS of Elvira in the sequence. She screams: this is "Il grido" (the scream) of the title, a (possible) connection to Munch's painting of the same name and same theme (modern alienation). Melodrama reappears when she screams/gestures but is at the same time attenuated by the dubbing (sound comes from somewhere else and it shows) and thematically as well since this is not the "important" woman; more a casual witness, really. Plus, we don't see Aldo falling, only a thud as he crashes. Desperate gestures, which seem all the more brutal when contrasted with the emotional monotony of the film.



Editing: same shot  
Cinematography: slow crane movement sideways and to lower level, from MS to LS. Same angle.  
Sound: silence; at the end of the scene soundtrack music starts playing, for the first time in the sequence  
Mise-en-scene: Elvira walks up to and kneels beside Aldo's body. Prostrate body, kneeling body, tree in background. Deep space, frontal blocking

Quasi-religious associations with Pieta; she is the more motherly of all three women (2 children, and Aldo). Never see his face in the final moments, either too far away, or shot from the back. Further non-identification (opposite of melodrama) She kneels beside him, silent. Soundtrack music starts, first time in the whole sequence, sounds odd, almost vulgar. A waltz (played with some electronic instruments, sounds a bit mechanical). Incongruous conclusion to the film.



Editing: shot#20, cut  
Cinematography: ELS of the empty factory, high angle  
Sound: soundtrack music  
Mise-en-scene: deserted factory, deep space, we still see people & horses on the road, in the background

Very unexpected ending, further modernist detachment, but also reserved in its refusal to show gruesome spectacle. The film reworks vulgar melodramatic intimacy in its respect for the suffering of the characters and their fundamental impenetrability. People passing on the road in the background remind us that life goes on, indifferent to individual suffering.



Editing: same shot.  
Cinematography: camera pans and tilts down to include the two figures, ELS, high angle. The End appears  
Sound: soundtrack music  
Mise-en-scene:

Fine