



MAGICAL REALISM: THE FILM FABLES OF THE TAVIANI BROTHERS

Padre Padrone

Padre Padrone

Directors: Paolo Taviani, Vittorio Taviani

Production Company: RAI

Executive Producer: Tonino Paoletti

Producer: Giuliani G. De Negri

Assistant Directors: Marco De Poli,
Giampiero Cubeddu, Francesco Lizzani
Screenplay and dialogue: Paolo Taviani,
Vittorio Taviani

Adaptation: Gavino Ledda

Original autobiographical novel by: Gavino Ledda

Photography: Mario Masini

Editor: Roberto Perpignani

Assistant Editors: Rita Triunveri, Vincenza Caruso

Set Decorator: Giovanni Sbarra

Costumes: Lina Nerli Taviani

Costumes Assistant: Giovanna De Poli

Music composed and conducted by: Egisto Macchi

Sound Recording: Giovanni Sardo

Sound Re-recording: Pietrantonio Federico,
Adriano Taloni

Cast:

Omero Antonutti (*Ef시오 Ledda*)

Saverio Marconi (*Gavino Ledda*)

Marcella Michelangeli (*Gavino's Mother*)

Fabrizio Forte (*Gavino, as a child*)

Marino Cenna (*Shepherd*)

Nanni Moretti (*Cesare*)

Stanko Molnar (*Sebastiano*)

Gavino Ledda (*himself*)

Pierluigi Alvai

Giuseppino Angioni

Fabio Angioni

Giuseppe Brandino

Mario Cheri

Giuseppe Chessa Perle

Domenico Deriu

Pier Paolo Fauli

Mario Fulghesu

Antonio Garrucciu

Patrizia Giannichedda

Roberto Giannichedda

Vincenzo Giannichedda

Pietro Giordo

Antonello Gloriani

Costanzo Mela

Domenico Morganti

Luigi Muntoni

Giuseppina Perantoni

Cristina Piazza

Matteo Piu

Maria Immacolata Porcu

Cosimo Rodio

Marco Sanna

Stefano Satta

Mario Spissu

Salvatore Stangoli

Marco Unali

Italy 1977

115 mins

Digital 4K (restoration)

Restored by Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia
– Cineteca Nazionale and by Cinecittà S.p.A. at the
laboratory at Cinecittà S.p.A.

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Padre Padrone, a Sardinian-set true story about a young shepherd's rebellion against his tyrannical father and the seventh feature from brothers Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, is based on an autobiographical novel by linguist Gavino Ledda. It tells of the author's struggle to educate himself after being plucked out of school and set to work at the age of six.

Given that the film was made (on 16mm) for Italian state broadcaster RAI, the brothers had not expected *Padre Padrone* to make it to the 1977 Cannes film festival. So when it ended up not only in competition but actually prevailing over the likes of Wim Wenders's *The American Friend*, Theo Angelopoulos's *The Hunters*, Ettore Scola's *A Special Day* and Robert Altman's *3 Women*, they were as surprised as anyone. Much was made of Roberto Rossellini's role as jury president in the final decision. The Tavianis had been inspired to become filmmakers after viewing Rossellini's *Paisà* as teenagers three decades earlier, so it felt particularly fitting. *Padre Padrone* was to prove the Tavianis' breakthrough.

Padre Padrone opens with an extraordinary sequence in which the real Gavino Ledda is shown sharpening a stick outside a school classroom before handing it over to the actor playing his father Efisio (Taviani regular Omero Antonutti, a dead ringer for British actor Julian Glover). Efisio then enters the classroom to march the six-year-old Gavino (Fabrizio Forte) away. As the film progresses, we follow the protagonist (played as a young man by Saverio Marconi) through adolescence, a failed attempt to emigrate to Germany and then on to his military service. The latter experience proves to be the turning point – an opportunity to finally break free from his father's suffocating grip. With the encouragement of fellow conscript Cesare (a young Nanni Moretti, fresh from directing his first feature, 1976's *I Am Self Sufficient*), Gavino starts to develop an all-consuming interest in language. In one scene, he and Cesare find themselves driving tanks across a field, practising Latin with each other across the airwaves.

Padre Padrone's formal playfulness is reminiscent of the mid/late-60s films of Pier Paolo Pasolini, especially *Hawks and Sparrows* (1966). As with that film, sound and music are used in a boldly unconventional way (in one scene, we hear the inner thoughts of children in Gavino's class; in another, a goat warning that it's about to defecate as it's being milked). In a 1979 interview with Aldo Tassone, Paolo Taviani points out: 'Sound is even more important in *Padre Padrone* than our other works because the film tells of the passage from silence to sound, to words.' Scholar of Italian film Millicent Marcus reinforces this: 'Because sound is what frees Gavino from his predicament, it should come as no surprise that sound is also the Tavianis' primary means of cinematic liberation from realist codes.'

Pasquale Iannone, *Sight and Sound*, September 2016

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Padre Padrone

Sun 11 Feb 15:20; Thu 22 Feb 20:45

St. Michael Had a Rooster San Michele aveva un gallo Mon 12 Feb 20:40

Wondrous Boccaccio Meraviglioso Boccaccio

Mon 19 Feb 18:45; Mon 26 Feb 20:40

Elective Affinities Le affinità elettive

Wed 21 Feb 18:30

You Laugh Tu ridi

Fri 23 Feb 18:10; Wed 28 Feb 20:50

Caesar Must Die Cesare deve morire

Sat 24 Feb 12:00; Thu 29 Feb 20:50

Allonsanfan Allonsanfàn

Sat 24 Feb 20:25

Kaos

Sun 25 Feb 14:30

With thanks to

Carla Cattani, Livia Azzolini, Monica Moscato and Erika Allegrucci at Cinecittà.

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Co-produced by Cinecittà, Rome.

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A contemporary review

Padre Padrone is both a naturalistic folk tale about the power of knowledge, and a stylised, almost Brechtian tract about dominance and control, youth and age. By combining information about his own culture with an understanding of Italian, and finally by acquiring degrees in the world outside, Sardinian shepherd Gavino Ledda achieves the inevitable: mastery over his father and master. Efisio is broken by the predictable impact of age, but more by being robbed of an heir who builds on skills he has imparted. Gavino chooses to be an observer, a writer who does not work with his hands, and in so doing rejects the life-style of his forefathers.

In a lyrical adaptation of Ledda's own book, the Taviani brothers preserve a balance between Gavino's individual history and a universal plight. His father symbolises all fathers and masters. He removes Gavino from school, obligatory by law, and justifies his action in terms of the higher law of necessity: the threat of poverty. The father is the boy's link to nature and work, exemplifying nature's caprice in his relationship with his son: the alternation of harvest and killing frost. The stylisation of action and gestures emphasises the cyclical nature of events: Gavino is left on the mountain, escapes, is waylaid, beaten and sent back; the alternating caresses and beatings of his father are frozen into mime.

Music becomes a language, a way for Gavino to think on his own, to connect with community through folk songs, and compensate for his father's loss of face in business dealings by playing for the rich men who have bested him. Personal emotion is shown in the context of custom and becomes ritual, as when the boys take leave of their mothers and girlfriends and are dramatically given locks of their hair. Death gives way to regeneration: a funeral provides the opportunity for the isolated young to plot their escape to Germany.

The circularity of events and the suffocation of village life are brilliantly shown in the staged, sullen hysteria of the sexual episodes, individual but linked, all accompanied by the frightened breathing of furtive, unreleased passion: a lonely young shepherd ties up his mule and uses him sexually; younger boys use a chicken to masturbate; Gavino's father and mother sit at the edge of a bed, then abruptly, as in a dance, couple.

Throughout, education is linked to power. Domination is based on a fusion of skills respected inside as well as outside the community. The physically stronger son can defy his father's commands, but is still regarded as a parasite and a thief for failing to work with his hands. At the time of the final quarrel between Gavino and his father, his mother stands outside, singing to herself an eternal song which transcends the struggle. Without the physical strength to control his son, the father is undermined; but the son, no longer a shepherd, remains in the village he scorned, needing roots to nurture his talent, to become *padre padrone* over words.

Louise Sweet, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, November 1977