

## Document Citation

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Seen in perspective, Olmi's inconspicuous debut was an event of quite extraordinary importance for the future. At that time, however, it was overshadowed by other first features, especially by two films directed by Francesco Rosi (b. 1922), Visconti's former assistant. *La sfida* (The Challenge, 1958) revealed a filmmaker who knew how to re-create the atmosphere of his native Naples and also how to spell out his involvement in the social issues of the day. The film tells the story of Vito, who confronts the world of swindlers and profiteers and is assassinated on their orders on his wedding day. Rosi used the narrative mainly to depict a world of corruption, sacrificing the complexity of his characters to the almost neorealist authenticity of the background. A year later, in *I magliari* (Dry Goods Dealers, 1959), he turned to the fate of the first wave of Italian journeymen who tried to find a better life in West Germany during the early years of the "economic miracle." *Dry Goods Dealers* does not have the dramatic strength of *The Challenge*. Its strong points are the originality of the subject matter, the portrait of Germany at this particular moment, and the portrait of a group of Italians in a foreign world. The film suffered, however, from compromises with the requirements of commercial production.<sup>7</sup>

The fiery revolutionary Francesco Maselli used film to depict characters typical of Italian bourgeois society. *I delfini* (Heirs to the Throne, 1960) returns, after six years, to the world of *The Runaways* but this time not in the context of the German occupation and the resistance. The film's protagonists are the golden boys of a provincial town, the scions of affluent families. For Maselli they represent the moral, social, and political degradation of an entire generation. But the moralizing message of *Heirs to the Throne* was too generalized to capture attention despite its interesting observation of a certain kind of life in the provinces.

*La sfida*

LA SFIDA