March 3, 2020 (XL:6) Luchino Visconti: **THE LEOPARD/IL GATTOPARDO** (1963, 185m)

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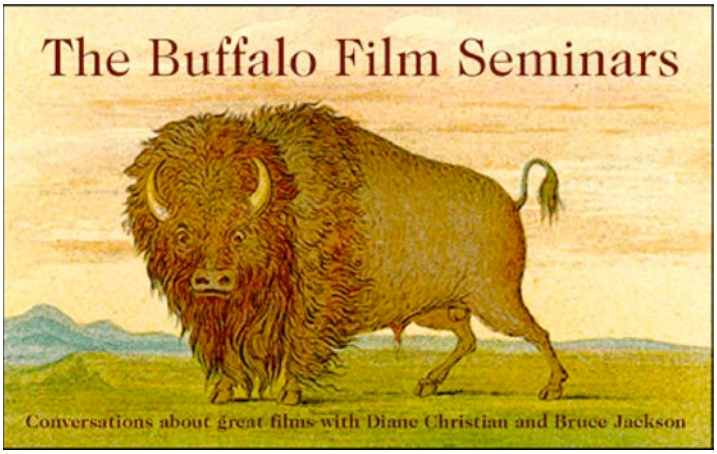
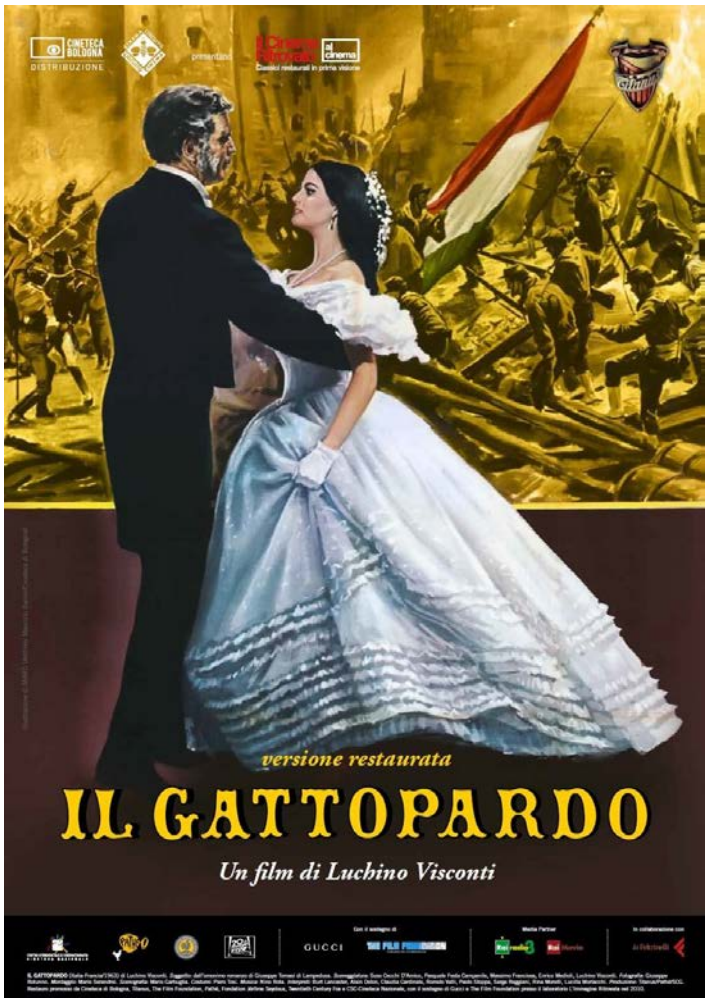




DIRECTOR Luchino Visconti
WRITING Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Pasquale Festa Campanile, Enrico Medioli, Massimo Franciosa, and Luchino Visconti wrote the screenplay based on the Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa novel.
PRODUCER Goffredo Lombardo
MUSIC Nino Rota
CINEMATOGRAPHY by Giuseppe Rotunno
EDITING Mario Serandrei

The film won the Palme d'Or at the 1963 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for Best Costume Design at the 1964 Academy Awards.

CAST
Burt Lancaster ...Prince Don Fabrizio Salina
Claudia Cardinale...Angelica Sedara / Bertiana
Alain Delon...Tancredi Falconeri
Paolo Stoppa...Don Calogero Sedara
Rina Morelli...Princess Maria Stella Salina
Romolo Valli...Father Pirrone
Terence Hill...Count Cavriaghi (as Mario Girotti)
Pierre Clémenti...Francesco Paolo
Lucilla Morlacchi...Concetta
Giuliano Gemma...Garibaldi's General
Evelyn Stewart...Carolina (as Ida Galli)
Ottavia Piccolo...Caterina
Carlo Valenzano...Paolo
Brook Fuller... Little Prince
Anna Maria Bottini...Mademoiselle Dombreuil, the Governess
Lola Braccini ...Donna Margherita
Marino Masé...Tutor (as Marino Mase')
Howard Nelson Rubien...Don Diego (as Howard N. Rubien)
Tina Lattanzi
Marcella Rovena
Rina De Liguoro...Princess of Presicce
Valerio Ruggeri
Giovanni Melisenda... Don Onofrio Rotolo
Giancarlo Lolli...
Franco Gulà
Vittorio Duse
Vanni Materassi
Giuseppe Stagnitti
Carmelo Artale
Olimpia Cavalli...Mariannina
Anna Maria Surdo
Halina Zalewska...
Winni Riva
Stelvio Rosi
Carlo Palmucci
Dante Posani
Rosolino Bua
Ivo Garrani...Colonel Pallavicino
Leslie French...Cavalier Chevally
Serge Reggiani...Don Francisco Ciccio Tumeo

LUCHINO VISCONTI (b. November 2, 1906 in Milan, Lombardy, Italy—d. March 17, 1976, age 69, in Rome, Lazio, Italy) was born into one of Northern Italy's richest families as one of the Duke of Modrone's seven children.

He was friends with opera composer Puccini, conductor Toscanini, and writer Gabriele D'Annunzio (who would write Visconti's last film, *The Innocent*). While he started as a director of plays and opera, pursuits he would continue into his career, his entrée into film was working as an assistant director to Jean Renoir, to whom he was introduced by mutual friend Coco Chanel. After the war, Visconti established himself as an innovative director for the stage, on one occasion having Salvador Dali design his sets for *As You Like It*. His film career was almost cut short in the 1940s when *Ossessione* (1943), based on James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, engendered the ire of Benito Mussolini's censors. Visconti was thrown in jail and he was to be executed, only surviving because of the timely arrival of American troops. *Ossessione* was later hailed as an early example of Italian neorealism. *Rocco and his Brothers* (1960) may be Visconti's most accessible and influential film: it's impossible not to notice the similarities in Coppola's *Godfather* films and Scorsese's *Raging Bull* (1980), in particular. He wrote the screenplays or full stories for almost all of his 20 directorial projects which include *L'innocente* (1976), *Conversation Piece* (1974), *Ludwig* (1973), *Death in Venice* (1969, screenplay), *Alla ricerca di Tadzio* (1970, TV Short documentary), *The Damned* (1969), *The Stranger* (1967), *The Witches* (segment "La Strega bruciata viva"), *Sandra* (1965), *The Leopard* (1963), *Boccaccio '70* (segment "Il lavoro"), *Le Notti Bianche* (1957), *Senso* (1954), *We, the Women* (1953, segment "Anna Magnani"), *Appunti su un fatto di cronaca* (1953, Documentary short), *Bellissima* (1951), *La Terra Trema* (1948), *Days of Glory* (1945, Documentary) and *Ossessione* (1943).

NINO ROTA (b. Giovanni "Nino" Rota on December 3, 1911 in Milan, Lombardy, Italy—d. April 10, 1979, age 67, in Rome, Lazio, Italy) was born into a family of musicians. Considered a child prodigy, by the time he was a teenager Rota was a well-known composer and orchestra conductor. His first oratorio, "L'infanzia di San Giovanni Battista," was performed in Milan and Paris as early as 1923 and his lyrical comedy, "Il Principe Porcaro," was composed in 1926. He briefly moved to the United States to study under Fritz Reiner before returning to Italy to teach. In 1937, he began a teaching career that led to the directorship of the Bari Conservatory, a title he held from 1950 until his death in 1979. Throughout the '40s and '50s, Rota branched into opera and by the '60s he was scoring ballets. His work in film dates to the early forties and the composer was known for the volume of his output in a short amount of time. Averaging around 3 film scores per year, Rota is also said to have worked most ferociously in the period of 1949-54,
where he would produce close to 10 film scores per year. His is most well-known movie scores are for Fellini's films from *The White Sheik* (1952) to *Orchestra Rehearsal* (1978), and especially the 1963 classic *8½*. While the latter film may appear to be in disorder, Rota's tracks helped synchronize the entire production. Other directors the composer worked for include Renato Castellani, Luchino Visconti, Franco Zeffirelli, Mario Monicelli, and Francis Ford Coppola. Rota's score for the *The Godfather* (1973) earned him his first Oscar nomination for Best Original Score, a prize he would win for his score in *The Godfather: Part II* (1974). He also composed the music for many theatre productions by Visconti, Zefferelli, and de Filippo.

GIUSEPPE ROTUNNO (b. 19 March 1923, Rome) has worked with some of the greatest names of the golden age of Italian cinema, including Dino Risi, Vittorio De Sica, and Federico Fellini. Originally a still photographer, his entry into film was operating the camera for legendary cinematographer G.R. Aldo. In 1955, Rotunno became a full-fledged lighting director and due to his versatility, became one of the most in-demand cinematographers. His work ranges from the epic, operatic compositions of Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963) to the daguerreotype-influenced style of Monicelli's *The Organizer* (1963). He has shot several of Fellini's films as well as Mike Nichols's *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), Bob Fosse's *All That Jazz* (1979) and Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1989). For Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers* (1960) Rotunno shot with three cameras simultaneously, which he remembers, "For Visconti…was ideal. But it was horribly complicated…because there wasn't enough space on the set for the lights." Speaking in an interview, the cinematographer points out that just as music has only seven basic notes, cinematography has only three lights: "You've got the key light, fill light, and back light, out of which comes an infinity of results. The light is like a kaleidoscope, but those three lights mixed together

are more touchy than the kaleidoscope. It's difficult to ask a painter, 'How did you paint the picture?' I go with my eyes and intuition. I like so much to light, and I cannot stop. When I was shooting with Fellini, I was always lighting the next shot, because I was afraid to lose the idea of the light." These are some of the other films he worked on: *Wolf* (1994), *Regarding Henry* (1991), *La Fine del mondo nel nostro solito letto in una notte piena di pioggia/The End of the World in Our Usual Bed in a Night Full of Rain* (1978), *Casanova* (1976), *Amarcord* (1974), *Roma* (1972), *Man of La Mancha* (1972), *Satyricon* (1969), *Candy* (1968), *Lo Straniero/The Stranger* (1967), *On the Beach* (1959), and *Le Notti bianche* (1957).

BURT LANCASTER (b. 2 November 1913, New York, New York—d. 20 October 1994, Century City, California) was so over the top so often it's perhaps easy to miss how good an actor he really was. His first screen role was riveting: "Swede" in *The Killers* (1946), based on Hemingway's famous short story. His fourth film, *Brute Force* (1947), is still one of the best prison movies and was one of the reasons Bruce loathed the otherwise loveable Hume Cronyn, who played the evil warden, for decades. He was in nearly a hundred theatrical and made-for-tv films in all, and he played the lead in at least half of Hollywood's great war movies. Some of his memorable performances: *Field of Dreams* (1989), Local Hero (1983), *Atlantic City* (1980), *Go Tell the Spartans* (1978), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1977), *Twilight's Last Gleaming* (1977), *1900* (1976), *Ulzana's Raid* (1972), *Airport* (1970), *The Gypsy Moths* (1969), *Castle Keep* (1969), *The Swimmer* (1968), *The Professionals* (1966), *Seven Days in May* (1964), *Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *Elmer Gantry* (1960), *The Unforgiven* (1960), *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *The Rainmaker* (1956), *The Rose Tattoo* (1955), *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1952), *Jim Thorpe - All American* (1951), *All My Sons* (1948), and *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1948). Lancaster won one best actor Oscar for *Elmer Gantry* and was nominated for three others *Atlantic City*, *Birdman of Alcatraz*, and *From Here to Eternity*.

CLAUDIA CARDINALE (b. April 15, 1938 in Tunis, French Protectorate, Tunisia) was 17 years old and studying in Rome when she entered a beauty contest, which resulted in her getting a succession of small film roles. The same year she had a child out of wedlock, however, she had just signed a contract forbidding her to cut her hair, marry or gain weight. Because of this, she told everyone that her newborn son was her baby brother. She did not reveal to the child that he was her son until he was 19 years old. It was in *Careless* (1962) that she rose to the front ranks of Italian cinema with her beauty, dark flashing eyes and explosive sexuality. Cardinale then became an international star in Federico Fellini's classic *8½* (1963) with Marcello Mastroianni and only increased her appeal in Sergio Leone's epic *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968). Though known for her bombshell characters, Cardinale won two awards from the Venice Film Festival: a Career Golden Lion in 1993 and the Pasinetti Award in 1984 for Best Actress for *Claretta* (1984). She has acted in 117 films and TV shows, among them, *All Roads Lead to Rome* (2015), *Twice Upon a Time in the West* (2015), *A View of Love* (2010), *Brigands* (1999), *Son of the Pink Panther* (1993), *A Man in Love* (1987), *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), *La pelle* (1981), *Corleone* (1978), *Blonde in Black Leather* (1975), *The Red Tent* (1969), *The Conspirators* (1969), *A Fine Pair* (1968), *The Hell with Heroes* (1968), *Mafia* (1968), *Don't Make Waves* (1967), *The Professionals* (1966), *Lost Command* (1966), *The Pink Panther* (1963), *The Leopard* (1963), *The Battle of Austerlitz* (1960), *The Magistrate* (1959), *Big Deal on Madonna Street* (1958) and *Goha* (1958).

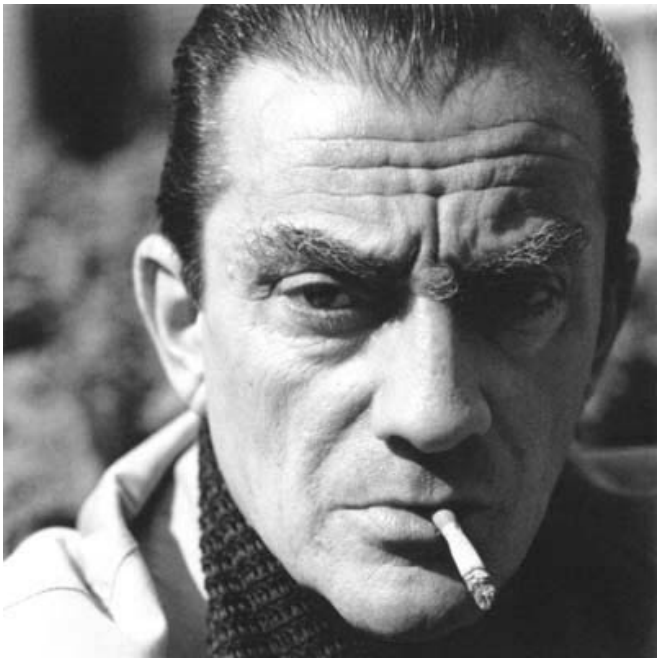
ALAIN DELON (8 November 1935, Sceaux, Hauts-de-Seine, France) is often called the French James Dean. While some may argue that this title is more appropriate for "cool" *Breathless* star Jean-Paul Belmondo, Delon's brooding characters gave him an instant sexual appeal. In addition, both actors famously refused to learn English, thereby limiting their roles in Hollywood. Film scholar David Thomson once described Delon as "so earnest and immaculate as to be thought lethal or potent. He was also close to the real French underworld. Delon is not so much a good actor as an astonishing presence." Initially, the French heartthrob wanted to be a butcher, like his father. However, his mischievous nature often got the better of him and as a child he was expelled six times from different schools. Eventually, Delon enlisted as a soldier in the French army and served in in the war of Indochina, where he spent 11 months in prison, giving credence to the darkness exhibited by many of his characters. Delon garnered his first Golden Globe nomination for his turn as the headstrong nephew of Italian prince Burt Lancaster in Visconti's celebrated *The Leopard* (1963), which increased Delon's international visibility, leading to offers from Hollywood. Save for the gritty neo-noir *Once a Thief* (1965), his Hollywood efforts were largely glossy, empty

affairs like the allstar *Yellow Rolls-Royce* (1965) and the truly dreadful Western comedy *Texas Across the River* (1966) with Dean Martin and Joey Bishop. He returned to France the following year to appear in his iconic role as an icy, meticulous hit man in Jean-Pierre Melville's New Wave cult favorite *Le Samourai* (1967). His carefully controlled performance as a moody loner who lived and died by a strict code of personal conduct would come to dominate his screen persona, and Delon would play variations on the role in subsequent films like *Le Motocyclette* (1968), which increased his standing among both French and international audiences. In 1969, Delon's ascent to fame was severely threatened by a scandal involving the murder of his former bodyguard, Stefan Markovic. Investigations into the killing unearthed links between the actor and numerous members of the European underworld, as well as scandalous connections to political figures. Delon was repeatedly held for questioning, but was eventually acquitted. However, many industry figures believed that his association with Markovic would ruin his career. To the surprise of many, Delon became even more popular with French moviegoers, who felt that his connections to criminal elements lent a note of veritas to his numerous gangster roles. He quickly capitalized on the notoriety by starring in a string of popular crime films, including *The Sicilian Clan* (1969) and *Borsolino* (1970), which finally teamed him with Belmondo. Delon then gave a critically acclaimed turn in Volker Schlondorffâ's *Swann in Love* (1982) and finally earned a César for Notre Histoire (1984). The actor was not present at the awards ceremony and the presenter Coluche accepted the award on his behalf—which he kept. After the presenter's death in 1986, the César was nowhere to be found. To this day, Delon still does not have this award. These triumphs were compounded by the blockbuster hit *Parole de flic* (1985), an action-packed crime picture that featured the 50-year-old Delon performing his own stunts. But advancing age, as well as the expensive failure of *The Passage* (1986), forced Delon to consider his future projects with greater care. Ever the shrewd opportunist, he created a popular line of products that bore his name from perfume and cigarettes to sunglasses that became the epitome of cinematic cool after Chow Yun-fat wore a pair in John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (1986). Between 1991 and 1995, he also reaped numerous honors for his lifetime of film work, including an Honorary Golden Bear in 1991 from the 45th Berlin International Film Festival, as well knighthood from the Legion of Honor that same year. In 1995, he was made an Officer of the National Order of Merit, while in 2005, his knighthood was promoted to the next highest class, that of Officer. Madonna's song "Beautiful Killer" on her *MDNA* album is a tribute to Alain Delon. He, most recently, appeared in *Toute ressemblance* (2019). He was the recipient of an Honorary Golden Palm at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival.

PAOLO STOPPA (b. 6 June 1906 Rome, Italy—d. 1 May 1988 (aged 81), Rome, Italy) began as a stage actor in 1927 in the theater in Rome and began acting in films in 1932. As a stage actor, his most celebrated works include those after World War II, when he met director Luchino Visconti: the two, together with Stoppa's wife, actress Rina Morelli, formed a trio who worked to produce adaptations of works by authors such as Chekhov, Shakespeare and Goldoni. As a film actor, Stoppa made some 194 appearances between 1932 and his retirement in 1983, with roles in popular classics such as *Miracolo a Milano* (1951), *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), *Viva l'Italia!* (1961), *Il Gattopardo* (1962), *La matriarca* (1968), and *Amici miei atto II* (1982). He also had a role in the Sergio Leone epic *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) and a cameo in *Becket* (1964). Stoppa was also a renowned dubber of films into Italian. He began this activity in the 1930s as dubber of Fred Astaire. Other actors he dubbed include Richard Widmark, Kirk Douglas and Paul Muni.

TERENCE HILL (b. 29 March 1939, Venice, Italy) is an Italian film and television actor (82 credits). During the height of his popularity Hill was among Italy's highest-paid actors. Hill's most widely seen films include comic and standard *Westerns all´Italiana* ("Italian-style Westerns", colloquially called "Spaghetti Westerns"). Of these, the most famous are *Lo chiamavano Trinità* (*They Call Me Trinity*, 1970) and *Il mio nome è Nessuno* (*My Name Is Nobody*, 1973), co-starring Henry Fonda. His film *Django, Prepare a Coffin*, shot in 1968 by director Ferdinando Baldi, and co-starring Horst Frank and George Eastman, was featured at the 64th Venice Film Festival in 2007. Girotti had his first lead in *Guaglione* (1956). He could also be seen in *Mamma sconosciuta* (1956), *I vagabondi delle stelle* (1956), *La grande strada azzurra* (1956) with

Yves Montand and Alida Valli, and *Lazzarella* (1957). Girotti did *Anna of Brooklyn* (1958) with Gina Lollobrigida, *The Sword and the Cross* (1958) with Yvonne de Carlo (playing Lazarus of Bethany), and a TV version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1958). He had support parts in *Il padrone delle ferriere* (1959) with Virna Lisi, *Juke box - Urli d'amore* (1959), and *Hannibal* (1959) with Victor Mature and Carlo Pedersoli, who would later become known as Bud Spencer. Girotti had the lead roles in *Spavaldi e innamorati* (1959) and *Cerasella* (1959), a teen comedy. It was back to support roles with *Carthage in Flames* (1960), *Un militare e mezzo* (1960), and *The Story of Joseph and His Brethren* (1961) with Geoffrey Horne and Robert Morley, directed by Irving Rapper. Girotti had support parts in *The Wonders of Aladdin* (1961) with Donald O'Connor and directed by Henry Levin and Mario Bava, *Pecado de amor* (1961), *Seven Seas to Calais* (1962) with Rod Taylor, and *The Shortest Day* (1963). Girotti secured a major film role in Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963) alongside Burt Lancaster and Alain Delon. During this time, he studied classical literature for three years at an Italian university.



from *World Film Directors* V. 1, Ed John Wakeman, H.W.Wilson Co. , NY, 1987

Count don Luchino Visconti di Modrone was born in Milan, Italy, the third son of Giuseppe Visconti and the former Carla Erba. His mother was the daughter of a millionaire industrialist and his father was the son of the Duke of Modrone. His father's family, wealthy landowners, had received their dukedom from Napoleon. They trace their ancestry to the Visconti who ruled Milan from 1277 to 1447, and on back to Desiderius, father-in-law of Charlemagne.

With his six brothers and sisters, Luchino Visconti grew up in his father's *palazzo* in Milan. His education was supervised by his mother. She was a talented musician and he first envisaged a musical career also, studying the cello for ten years in childhood and adolescence His delight in the theatre and opera also developed in childhood, inspired by the plays and entertainments his father liked to arrange in the *palazzo*'s private theatre. From the age of seven, he attended performances at La Scala opera house in Milan, which his grandfather and then his uncle had helped to support. Although Visconti usually described his childhood as idyllic, there was discord between his parents. In 1921 they separated for good, and a bitter court battle over Carla Visconti's share of the Erba fortune ensued. She eventually regained her property but lived thereafter in retirement, the children staying sometimes with her, sometimes with their father.

As a youth Visconti was restless and discontented. He ran away repeatedly from home, and once from a college in Geneva. Hoping that military discipline might bring him under control, his father sent him to the cavalry school at Pinerolo, where he conceived a passion for horses.

For some ten years after that the breeding of racehorses was Visconti's principal interest—he often remarked on the similarity between the problems involved in schooling horses and directing actors (and said that horses were on the whole preferable because they didn't talk). During this period Visconti dabbled in the arts but remained uncertain of his direction. He painted, designed sets for one or two plays, and tried his hand as a film scenarist. He was nearly thirty when in 1936 he left Italy with the intention of working for the cinema in England or France. The same year, having been introduced by Coco Chanel to Jean Renoir at a racetrack, he found himself on the great French director's production team.

At first in charge of costumes, Visconti then served as Renoir's third assistant director on *Une Partie de Campagne* (1936) and *Les Bas Fonds* (1937). Escaping in this way from the claustrophobia of Italy, home, and Fascism, and finding himself accepted by a group of dedicated and talented artists in the heady atmosphere of the Popular Front, permanently changed Visconti's life. Of Renoir himself he said: "His was a human influence, not a professional one. To be with Renoir, to listen to him, that opened my mind."

After a brief, disillusioning visit to Hollywood in 1937, Visconti went home. In 1940 he was able to work once more with Renoir, who had gone to Italy to film an adaptation of *La Tosca*. Renoir had to abandon the movie when Italy declared war on France and it was completed by Charles Koch. Visconti himself remained in Italy, where he joined the editorial staff of the magazine *Cinema*. The young critics and filmmakers associated with *Cinema* were

in vigorous revolt against the insipidity and conformism of the contemporary Italian film industry. Their aim was to make cinema an extension of the literary realism that had developed in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century, notably in the work of the Sicilian novelist Giovanni Verga.

Visconti's first film was *Ossessione* (*Obsession*, 1942), based on James M. Cain's starkly naturalistic thriller *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, with the action translated from America to the Romagna region of Italy. Visconti had been looking for a subject which would not invite the hostility of the Fascist censors, and the Cain novel had been suggested to him by Renoir (whose stylistic influence can be detected in this but in none of Visconti's later films). *Ossessione* is about the destructive passion that develops between Giovanna, wife of an aging innkeeper, and Gino, a young wanderer who takes a casual job at the inn. Gino begins to suspect that he has been used and goes to another woman, a young dancer with whom his relationship is purely physical, uncomplicated by financial greed or sexual politics. But the police are closing in, and Gino and Giovanna, reconciled, die together as they try to escape arrest.

Several members of the *Cinema* group had a hand in the script of *Ossessione*, which thus became a kind of manifesto. At its first showing in Rome in 1942 it had an effect that was described as "explosive." Appearing at a time when the Italian cinema was devoted to optimistic trivia, *Ossessione*'s social and psychological authenticity and sexual frankness outraged the Church and the Fascist censors, and terrified the commercial distributors. When the censors tried to ban it, Visconti and his friends appealed to Mussolini himself, who passed it with only a few cuts. In the confusion following the Allied invasion, the film was destroyed. Visconti managed to preserve a duplicate, however, and a somewhat mutilated version of *Ossessione* was finally released some years after the war. It was almost universally hailed as the first masterpiece of Italian neorealism. Pierre Leprohon has called it "a great film, the portrait of a miserable, greedy, sensual, obstinate race at grips with the daily struggle for existence and with instincts they are unable to master. For over and above the neorealism, this film has the ingredient indispensable for its lasting greatness, poetry."

For a time during the war, Visconti was imprisoned by the Fascist authorities, charged with aiding the Resistance. Moved from jail to jail and threatened with shooting, he was only reprieved by the Allied invasion. After the liberation of Rome, he filmed the trial and execution of several Fascist officials, including his jailer, and the death of another at the hands of an angry mob; these sequences appear in *Giorni di Gloria* (*Days of Glory,* 1945), a documentary produced by the Allies.

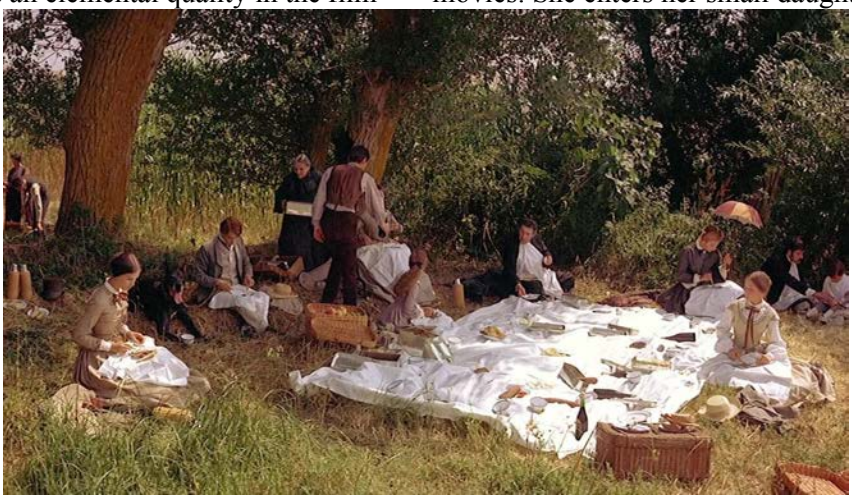
In 1945 Visconti began another and immensely successful and influential career as a theatre director. No one did more to free the Italian stage from outworn conventions, techniques, and attitudes or to modernize its repertoire, to which he added the works of such contemporary French and American writers as Sartre, Cocteau, Anouilh, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Hemingway and Erskine Caldwell. Visconti built up a repertory company which later provided acting and technical talent for his films, and whose best-known products are the actor Marcello Mastroianni and the director Franco Zeffirelli.

There were no professional actors at all in Visconti's next film, however. Visconti was a Marxist, though an unorthodox one, much influenced by the Italian socialist leader and theorist Antonio Gramsci. In 1947 he went to Sicily with some funds advanced by the Communist Party, intending to make a short documentary. What he saw there inspired a far more ambitious project—a vast fresco of the Sicilian poor, in three parts dealing respectively with the fishermen, the peasants, and the sulfur miners. In the event, only one part was completed—*La terra trema: Episodio del mare.*

The film is loosely based on Verga's novel *I malavoglia*, but in Visconti's Marxist adaptation the great enemy of the poor Sicilian fishermen is not the sea but the local wholesalers, who own the boats and pay the fishermen derisory prices for what they catch. One family, the Valastro, try to free themselves from this pernicious system. They mortgage their house and buy their own boat, but are ruined when it is destroyed in a storm. The film centers around two key episodes in the development of the political consciousness of the young 'Ntoni Valastro—when he leads a spontaneous if short-lived revolt against the wholesalers, and when, at the end, he recognizes the

need for concerted rather than individual action against exploitation/

La terra trema is performed entirely by the people of the village of Aci-Trezza, who contributed in important ways to Visconti's scenario and who say what they have to say in their own dialect (which is so obscure that it was necessary to overlay the dialogue with a commentary in standard Italian.). There is an elemental quality in the film that has reminded critics of Flaherty and Eisenstein. It has occasional longeurs, and purists have complained of certain hauntingly beautiful shots whose only function is aesthetic. Nevertheless, as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has said, "the chiseled beauty of its images, the simplicity and rigour of its narrative, and its unbending concern with social realities have all cause *La terra trema* to be hailed as a masterpiece of the propaganda film." It received first prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1948. It was nevertheless not popular with audiences used to lighter fare, was not widely distributed, and is said to have cost Visconti almost $200,000 of his own money.



For some years after that Visconti restricted his activities to the theatre, presenting among other things a number of innovatory interpretations of the classics like his celebrated 1948 production of *As You Like It* (with additional scenery and costumes by Salvador Dali), and an equally famous version of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* produced in Paris in 1951. The excessive visual effects and self-indulgent *coups de* théatre that had marred some of his earlier productions gave way to a more purposive and disciplined use of all the resources of the theatre, but he never lost his love of spectacle or his meticulous concern for realistic detail (luxuries that he was prepared to pay for himself if necessary).

The same qualities distinguished his operatic productions, which were often lavishly staged, but in which his singers were required to curb the traditional extravagance of operatic gesture and to "act like people." Many considered Visconti the greatest operatic director of his day, especially in a triumphant series of productions with Maria Callas. "The real reason I have done opera," he once asserted, "is the particular opportunity of working with Mme. Callas, who is such a great artist." His operas were produced not only at La Scala and elsewhere in Italy but at Covent Garden in London (where he staged an un forgettable production of Verdi's *Don Carlos* in 1958) and in other foreign countries. In 1958 he helped Gian-Carlo Menotti to launch the Spoleto Festival of Two Worlds, for which he directed a number of operas over the years.

Meanwhile Visconti had made his third film, *Bellisima* (*The Most Beautiful*, 1951), starring Anna Magnani as a working-class woman befuddled by the movies. She enters her small daughter in a competition to find "the prettiest child in Rome," who will star in a new film. The child eventually wins the competition, but by that time her mother has seen something of the ruthless commercialism of the movie industry; she rejects the preferred contract and is restored to her long-suffering husband. The director himself collaborated on the script, as he always did, along with Suso Cecchi d'Amico, who was thereafter his principal writer, and Frances Rosi, himself now an important director. *Bellisima,* the first of Visconti's films to be released in the United States, is an amiable satire on the petty greeds and snobberies of Italian society and on the parasitic nature of the cinema. It is all the same a minor work in the Visconti canon, and an atypical one.

It was followed by *Senso* (*Feeling*, 1954), widely regarded as one of his greatest films. Set in the *Risorgimento* of the mid-1860s, it opens with a brilliant scene in a Venetian theatre where a performance of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* disintegrates into an Italian nationalist demonstration against occupying Austrian forces. The story (from a novella by Camillo Boito) turns on the love affair that develops between an Italian countess—a nationalist, played by Alida Valli—and a young Austrian officer (Farley Granger) for whom she betrays her husband, her brother, and her political allegiance. This personal drama resembles that of *Ossessione*, not least in the way that emotional responses and moral standards are shown to be influenced by class and historical factors—notably in the complex characterization of the Austrian officer Franz. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith points out there is, moreover, "an implicit parallel between the events of 1866 and those of 1934-1945. In each case, one élite replaced another, and the new élite came to look suspiciously similar to the old."

It has often been pointed out that Visconti brought to the theatre the skills of a film director, and to the cinema those of a stage (and especially operatic) director. From the beginning his films were in some respect operatic in form,

made up of scenes involving two or at most three people, with occasional interventions by larger groups having the function of a chorus. This is partly true of *Senso,* which actually begins with an operatic performance, and whose plot would look perfectly at home in a romantic opera (though in fact it escapes melodrama because of the subtlety of its characterization). *Senso* is operatic also in the opulence of its technique. It was the first of Visconti's films in color, which he used with absolute mastery, making *Senso*, as Pierre Leprophon says, "a landmark as important in its day as Renoir's *Carrosse d'or*."

Visconti used three different cameramen to achieve the effects he sought at different point in the film—effects that were often derived from various styles of nineteenth-century Venetian painting. Admired as it was and is by the critics, *Senso* was nevertheless a failure commercially. A dubbed and shortened version was shown in Britain as *The Wanton Countess,* with English dialogue by Tennessee Williams and Paul Bowles.

With a growing reputation for extravagance in production and failure at the box-office, Visconti was unable to find producers. In an effort to vindicate himself, he shot the next film in seven weeks, with a relatively small budget provided by himself and some wealthy friends. This was *Le notti bianchi* (*White Nights*, 1957), adapted from Dostoevsky's short story. Natalia (played by Maria Schell) lives with her blind grandmother. Their mysterious lodger, whom she loves, has left them, promising to return. Every evening she awaits his return on a bridge over the canal that separates her dreamy private world from the vital, noisy, transient life of the big city. On this bridge—which is also a bridge between memory and actuality, illusion and reality—she meets one evening a man (Marcello Mastroianni) who is as lonely as herself, an exile in the city. He falls in love with her, but loses her when her half-imaginary lover quite unexpectedly returns,

For the first time Visconti filmed entirely in the studio with constructed sets, deliberately achieving a stylized and theatrical atmosphere that is intensified by grainy photography in soft definition, reminiscent of the "poetic realism" of Marcel Carné. The result was admired at the Venice Film Festival, but at the time of its release received generally tepid reviews. The adherents of neorealism indeed greeted it with considerable hostility, as a further step away from the naturalism of Visconti's early films—a kind of betrayal. Most critics now regard it as a work of great charm but no particular significance, though it has been claimed as an influence o the films of Jacques Demy and Resnais.

Visconti's retreat from naturalism was reversed in his next film, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (*Rocco and His Brothers*, 1960). It may be seen almost as a continuation of *Le terra trema,* examining the fate of the widowed Rosaria Pafundi and her five sons, a peasant family from the impoverished south trying to make a new life in the northern industrial city of Milan. Each brother in effect illustrates a different approach to the problems they all face: one opts for unobtrusive integration, another (the saintlike Rocco) clings loyally but hopelessly to the traditional peasant values, and one decisively rejects them. Widely regarded as a requiem for these virtues, the film was actually intended to convey something very different—a recognition that the old values, and the traditional Italian family in which they are embodied, must be modified if society is ever to become less confining and unjust. When Ciro denounces his brother Simone to the police—for a murder committed in the name of "honor"—he is freeing himself from the bonds of the past. If the film confused its critics it is because of something ambivalent in Visconti's own view of the world—its persistent opposition of what Geoffrey Nowell-Smith calls "two conflicting ideals, one rooted emotionally in the past, and the other projected intellectually into the future."

Like most of Visconti's movies, *Rocco and His Brothers* changed considerably in the course of its filming. Although the nucleus of the story was original, the script incorporates material from the Milanese stories of Giovanni Testori, and from Dostoevsky, Thomas Mann, and Verga; a number of scriptwriters were called in at different stages. The distinguished international cast included Katina Paximou, Alain Delon, Claudia Cardinale, and Annie Girardot.

Rocco and His Brothers was the first of Visconti's films to gain worldwide distribution and not to lose money. It won a special jury prize at the 1961 Venice Film Festival and several other international awards. Though the version seen in the United States was damaged by extensive cuts, it was warmly received by most American critics. One in *Newsweek* found it "a moving humanitarian report" comparable to John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*, with a

"persistent reality that finally drowns out the movie's faults."

This success made possible Visconti's ambitious screen version of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's novel *Il gattopardo* (*The Leopard*, 1963). A return to the *risorgimento,* it is a study of an ancient family of Sicilian aristocrats at a time of rapid social change. This theme, and the fact that Visconti undertook it with a multi-million dollar budget provided by 20th Century-Fox, using a wide screen and Technicolor, greatly disquieted the nostalgics of neorealism. In fact, Visconti recreates the story in his own way. Where the Prince of Lampedusa accounts for the survival of the House of Salina in almost mystical terms, the "Red Duke" Visconti attributes it to political and economic cunning—as another example of the way the old order perpetuates itself in the face of revolutionary ferment. He shows the old Prince (played by Burt Lancaster) coming to terms with the changing social order. Over the timid objections of the family priest, the Prince gives his blessing and a bag of gold to his nephew Tancredi (Alain Delon), off to join Garibaldi's forces, and upon Tancredi's return, arranges a marriage between this fiery young opportunist and the beautiful Angela (Claudia Cardinale), daughter of a rich bourgeois. In the brilliant and immensely long ball scene at the end, the alliance between aristocrats and parvenus is sealed, amid rumors of reprisals against Garibaldi's peasant followers and intimations of the old Prince's mortality. Politically the film is highly ambiguous. The stratagems by which the privileged class will survive are set forth with unsparing realism, but as we see through the Prince's eyes what endures and what is lost of the past, the dominant note is unmistakably one of nostalgia.

The film won the Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival and had splendid reception in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. The version shown in the United States, however, was shorn of several important scenes, badly printed on inferior color stock, and insensitively dubbed. Visconti, denying paternity of this version, remarked: "It is our destiny to be always in the hands of assassins….We work for months and months to create material that is then torn to shreds by ravening dogs." Even thus mutilated, the film seemed to David Robinson "a beautiful and fascinating spectacle….The *mise-en-scène* is superb. Each scene is staged with the rhythm of a choreographer and the composition of a painter" and "it is a film of enormous virtuosity and brio." Robinson's mot serious complaint as that he would have expected deeper social and psychological perceptions from Visconti, who "apart from anything else, reflects the central historical situation of *Il gattopardo* in his own life." In 1983, a new print of *The Leopard* dubbed in Italian with English subtitles and longer by twenty-five minutes, was released in the United States and Britain to general acclaim. "The appearance of this enchanting work," Vincent Canby wrote, "proves that two decades make no difference whatsoever, but twenty-five minutes can transform a very good film into a possibly great one….The replaced footage now reveals the shapeliness and elegance of the movie Visconti conceived, which is more about the inevitability of change than about the specific nature of those changes."

Vaghe stelle dell'orsa (1965), shown in the Unites States as *Sandra* and in Britain as *Of a Thousand Delights* is one of the most complex and difficult of Visconti's films, Sandra and her American husband drive from Geneva to the ancient hill-town of Volterra—a journey into the past. They are to attend a ceremony in which the garden of Sandra's family home is to be opened as a public park in memory of her Jewish father, who died in Auschwitz. Enigmatic incidents begin to point to two dark possibilities—that an incestuous relationship had existed between Sandra and Gianni, and that their mother (now insane) had betrayed their father to the Nazis. At the end of the film Gianni is dead by suicide, and Sandra, her ghosts exorcized, has achieved a dubious liberation. Inspired partly by the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, the theme of the transmission across the generations of a family curse becomes in Visconti's hands a historical and existential phenomenon. The film won the major award, the Golden Lion, at the Venice Film Festival in 1965, and seemed at least to one critic Visconti's greatest single work. But many reviewers, struck as they were by the film's brooding atmosphere, its striking visual contrasts of light and shade, remained more puzzled than impressed.

Le straniero (*The Stranger*, 1967), Visconti's rather flat-footed attempt to film Camus' *L'Étranger*, was followed by *La caduta degli Dei* (*The Damned*, 1969), a baroque and intricately plotted study, through the microcosm of a family of German steel barons, of the conditions that gave rise to Nazism in Germany, John Coleman thought it "surely the worst Visconti yet, a great wallow in décor and decadence," while Geoffrey Nowell-Smith called it "a confident if not entirely successful, return to the operatic-melodramatic mode" of *Senso*. It seemed to the latter critic that Visconti was becoming less and less a critic of society as his interest shifted from history to culture, and Howell-Smith dealt dismissively

with *Morte a Venezia* (*Death in Venice*) which followed in 1971.

In the novella by Thomas Mann on which the film is based, Gustav von Aschenbach is a great writer whose work and life alike have celebrated the classical virtues of order, restraint, and discipline. On a vacation in Venice he encounters a Polish youth, Tadzio. They never so much as speak to one another but the boy's beauty—itself the embodiment of a Platonic ideal—unlocks the ecstatic and Dionysian part of Aschenbach's nature, so long denied. The moral certainties of a lifetime are swept away in an anguished discovery of the terrible powers of chaos and unreason. Mann based Aschenbach on Gustav Mahler; in Visconti's film he is presented as a composer rather than a writer, and Mahler's music fills the soundtrack. Visconti said: "I think of *Death in Venice* as essentially the search by an artist for perfection in art and the impossibility of achieving it. When he achieves it, that's death. There is a second theme: the dualism between respectability and the corruption within the artist—the seeds of genius and self-destruction….The boy [is] a sort of angel of destiny, a fatal presence, he knows, instinctively, that he will lead Aschenbach to his death." are equally authentic and correctly franked for that time and place. Dork Bogarde, who plays Aschenbach, said of Visconti: "He concentrates every second, oh, Christ, every split second. You're supposed to do your job perfectly , because he does his perfectly." Whether in this instance Visconti had done his job perfectly is a matter of opinion. No one denied that it was a film of great visual beauty and power, brilliantly capturing the diseased beauty of the ancient city in which it is set. Jan Dawson noted that "the social nuances and sartorial niceties of life in an expensive hotel are lovingly observed, the self-conscious nonchalance of the guests minutely choreographed." Georges Sadoul called it "unquestionably [Visconti's] most perfect film…a richly textured, obsessional study of passion and social putrefaction," and at the Cannes Film Festival it received the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Prize and the Golden Globe. For many critics, however, it was a vulgarization of Mann's story. Jan Dawson thought it "only a pathetic self-discovery of an elderly closet queen," and David Thomson called it "a disguised weepie, its surface a stcky crust, covering nothing."

Soon after completing *Death in Venice* Visconti collapsed with "nicotine poisoning." He never fully recovered his health but continued to work, making three more films. *Ludwig* (1973), about the mad king of nineteenth-century Bavaria, seemed to Stanley Kauffman "as mad as its subject—in every way but one. It is gorgeous." *Gruppo di famiglia in un interno* (*Conversation Piece,*1974) stars Burt Lancaster as an old professor whose home is invaded by a rich, vulgar and imperious countess and her retinue; it was warmly received in Paris but hissed at the New York Film Festival in 1975. *L'innocente* (*The Innocent*, 1976) has Giancarlo Giannini as a heroic D'Annunzian hedonist who murders his wife's illegitimate baby in the interests of uxorious delight and, finding this gesture unappreciated kills himself. Directed from a wheelchair this "ravishingly elegant movie" was Visconti's last. He was editing it when he died in his sumptuous Roman villa of influenza and heart disease.

Luchino Visconti was a stocky, elegant man, deep-voiced, dark-eyed, with heavy eyebrows and the prominent nose of his great ancestors. He was said to be liable to sky-rending rages" on set but in conversation was a person of "totally disarming courtesy and sly, laconic wit." Often accused of 'voting Left and living Right,' he remained a communist all his life, though he would not join the party. He was also a Christian, though often anticlerical. As a young man, he said: '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 enough to make the things that surround him poetic and alive. . . .And [his] momentary absence from the luminous rectangle gives to everything an appearance of still life [*natura morta*]."

John Edmund: "The Contiguous World of Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963)" (*Senses of Cinema*, 2016)

In the middle of *The Leopard* (*Il Gattopardo* 1963) there is a hunting trip. The ring of Sicilian cicadas. A rabbit is killed. A conversation takes place. Don Fabrizio (The Leopard himself The Prince of Salina, Burt Lancaster)

engages with his gamesman Don Ciccio (Serge Reggiani) about recent events: Ciccio is furious at the rigging of a referendum that saw Italy unified and his vote perverted, observant about bourgeois Don Calogero's (Paolo Stoppa) rise from peasant stock, while Fabrizio's announces that his nephew Tancredi (Alain Delon) will marry Calogero's daughter Angelica (Claudia Cardinale). Their conversation brings together three transitions significant to the film: cultural, social and familial.

The staging mostly makes sense. The camera is attentive to the hunters' movement and emotion, and when Ciccio connects Fabrizio's old holdings and Calogero's peasant ancestry, it pivots to present this unifying landscape. Yet the rabbit jars. It bisects the frame, the pair, then, as the camera and the conversation shift, Fabrizio distractedly strokes the slain pest.

The significance of the rabbit is explained in this sentence from Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa's 1958 novel *The Leopard*: "While sympathetic fingers were still stroking that poor snout, the animal gave a last quiver and died; Don Fabrizio and Don Ciccio had had their bit of fun, the former not only the pleasure of killing but also the comfort of compassion."[1] This gesture, this act encapsulates Lampedusa and Visconti's stance towards Fabrizio and the class he represents.

The Leopard – novel and film – present the Risorgimento, the moment when Garibaldi's landing and subsequent invasion of Sicily lead to the unification and potential modernisation of Italy, through the lens of the noble Salina family. The film opens in 1860 with the discovery of a soldier's corpse in the Salina garden, marking Garibaldi's arrival, and closes in 1862 with an extended ball, which is marked by Tancredi's introduction of Angelica to his society and news of the capture of the reformist Garibaldi by the new Kingdom of Italy.

Two important threads can be pulled from this: Fabrizio's exhaustion and mortality, indicative of the nobility's decline; and Tancredi's rise, indicative of the ruling class's renewal. Lampedusa and Visconti, conservative and Marxist, were both the last moments of minor Italian noble families and this is their history talking to the then present and finding parallels between the Risorgimento and the renewal of the Italian ruling class after the end of fascism. For David Forgacs and Rossana Capitano: while Lampedusa is cynical about reformation, Visconti sees the story's exclusion of the left as revealing the hidden avenue of progress.

The thoughts of a hunter could be a false lead; the film is not the book. Yet they are of the same world. There is no such thing as distinct media, only the world presenting the world to the world; *The Leopard,* book and film, are two contiguous wrinkles of the world. *The Leopard*'s period preoccupations obscure the fact that the book is a contemporary of the film, published a scant few years beforehand to great success. People watching the surfaces of the film knew of the book's worldly existence and its ironic and subjective filtering of the world of Sicily. Lancaster used to relay how Visconti would fill the Prince's chests with the "finest broadcloth and silk shirts", never to be seen by the camera but a known presence.[2] This is Visconti's metaphor of adaptation.

This attention to a worldly surface defines the film's sensibility. The book's success brought Hollywood attention and 20th Century Fox money, permitting Visconti certain extravagances: bespoke Salina crockery, cutlery and costuming, but also the restoration of old Sicilian palaces for sets and painting of permanent frescos. Though only seen for a moment, they also turn the film's production into a form of interventional art, one that understands *The Leopard*'s contiguity with the world. However this form of representational prowess also had its purpose within the film. Visconti was also significant director of theatre and opera and this lends him a carefully calibrated sense of how design and staging intersect. The film's mise-en-scène is grounded in the acute observation of social behavior between class, gender and generation. Where servants stand, officers sit, feminine behaviour and the functionality of bourgeois tailoring all shape the meaning of the movie, while the thread of Tancredi's narrative arc – his renewal of his class – can be followed in his costuming. *The Leopard*'s classically refined decoupage matches this grounded detail. Visconti's fluid camera movements and Technirama compositions theatrically emphasis entrances and exits. As Walter Korte observes, Visconti's "use of pillars, walls and doorways to block out or open up the scenes means that a single camera movement can have the syntactical effect of a series of cuts."[3] Nonetheless, Visconti will readily cut in to highlight a glance or hold a shot so that the eye can drift across his compositions and observe a distant detail, unifying fore and background.

This sensitivity sees its apotheosis in the ball sequence. Whereas the book is comprised of even episodes, Visconti presents a lopsided work: minor moments are compressed and elided while the closing ball is extended

and stretched out into its own universe. Time becomes palpable. The ritual of a dance, costuming and movement, when contrasted with a netherworld downtime, sharpen prescribed behaviour into stylised performance and spectacle. As the ball progresses the Prince's exhaustion sees him become "more an accompaniment of the mise-en-scène, rather than a determinant of it" leaving him to, at the ball's conclusion, walk into darkness.[4]

The Leopard was strongly received in Europe, winning the 1963 Palme d'Or at Cannes and going onto critical and commercial success. In America it was drastically cut down, its colours poorly processed, and dubbed into English.[5] However, time and the film's influence on New Hollywood and their renewal of the studio system saw its reputation rise. In 1983, a subtitled print of the Italian cut finally made its debut in America and confirmed the film's significance.[6] Rising through time, restored as if one of its palaces, is the world of *The Leopard.*

Risorgimento (*Britannica online)*

(Italian: "Rising Again"), 19th-century movement for Italian unification that culminated in the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. The Risorgimento was an ideological and literary movement that helped to arouse the national consciousness of the Italian people, and it led to a series of political events that freed the Italian states from foreign domination and united them politically. Although the Risorgimento has attained the status of a national myth, its essential meaning remains a controversial question. The classic interpretation (expressed in the writings of the philosopher Benedetto Croce) sees the Risorgimento as the triumph of liberalism, but more recent views criticize it as an aristocratic and bourgeois revolution that failed to include the masses.

The main impetus to the Risorgimento came from reforms introduced by the French when they dominated Italy during the period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars (1796–1815). A number of Italian states were briefly consolidated, first as republics and then as satellite states of the French empire, and, even more importantly, the Italian middle class grew in numbers and was allowed to participate in government.

After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the Italian states were restored to their former rulers. Under the domination of Austria, these states took on a conservative character. Secret societies such as the Carbonari opposed this development in the 1820s and '30s. The first avowedly republican and national group was Young Italy, founded by Giuseppe Mazzini in 1831. This society, which represented the democratic aspect of the Risorgimento, hoped to educate the Italian people to a sense of their nationhood and to encourage the masses to rise against the existing reactionary regimes. Other groups, such as the Neo-Guelfs, envisioned an Italian confederation headed by the pope; still others favoured unification under the house of Savoy, monarchs of the liberal northern Italian state of Piedmont-Sardinia.

After the failure of liberal and republican revolutions in 1848, leadership passed to Piedmont. With French help, the Piedmontese defeated the Austrians in 1859 and united most of Italy under their rule by 1861. The annexation of Venetia in 1866 and papal Rome in 1870 marked the final unification of Italy and hence the end of the Risorgimento.

(See the Wikipedia entry, "Italian unification," for a far more extensive and historically grounded discussion of the Risorgimento: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_unification)

***The Leopard* (Wikipedia)**

Il Gattopardo is a novel by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa that chronicles the changes in Sicilian life and society during the *Risorgimento*. Published posthumously in 1958 by Feltrinelli, after two rejections by the leading Italian publishing houses Mondadori and Einaudi, it became the top-selling novel in Italian history[*citation needed*] and is considered one of the most important novels in modern Italian literature. In 1959, it won Italy's highest award for fiction, the Strega Prize.[1] In 2012, *The Observer* named it as one of "the 10 best historical novels".[2]The novel was also made into an award-winning 1963 film of the same name, directed by Luchino Visconti and starring Burt Lancaster, Claudia Cardinale and Alain Delon.

Tomasi was the last in a line of minor princes in Sicily, and he had long contemplated writing a historical novel based on his great-grandfather, Don Giulio Fabrizio Tomasi, another Prince of Lampedusa. After the Lampedusa palace ear Palermo was bombed and pillaged during the Allied invasion of Sicily, Tomasi sank into a lengthy depression, and began to write *Il Gattopardo* as a way to combat it.

(This brief note is taken is from the long, excellent Wikipedia entry on the novel: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Leopard

Roger Ebert: "The Leopard" (2003)

"The Leopard" was written by the only man who could have written it, directed by the only man who could have directed it, and stars the only man who could have played its title character. The first of these claims is irrefutable, because Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, a Sicilian aristocrat, wrote the story out of his own heart and based it on his great-grandfather. Whether another director could have done a better job than Luchino Visconti is doubtful; the director was himself a descendant of the ruling class that the story eulogizes. But that Burt Lancaster was the correct actor to play Don Fabrizio, Prince of Salina, was at the time much doubted; that a Hollywood star had been imported to grace this most European--indeed, Italian--indeed, Sicilian--masterpiece was a scandal.

It was rumored that Lancaster's presence was needed to make the epic production bankable. And when the film finally opened in America, in a version with 40 minutes ruthlessly hacked out by the studio, and with a soundtrack unconvincingly dubbed into English, it was hard to see what Visconti and Lancaster had been thinking of. "Unfortunately Mr. Lancaster does have that blunt American voice that lacks the least suggestion of being Sicilian," wrote Bosley Crowther in the New York Times. Visconti himself was blunt: "It is now a work for which I acknowledge no paternity at all," he said, adding that Hollywood treated Americans "like a public of children."

"It was my best work," Lancaster himself told me sadly, more than 20 years later. "I bought 11 copies of *The Leopard* because I thought it was a great novel. I gave it to everyone. But when I was asked to play in it, I said, no, that part's for a real Italian. But, lo, the wheels of fortune turned. They wanted a Russian, but he was too old. They wanted Olivier, but he was too busy. When I was suggested, Visconti said, 'Oh, no! A cowboy!' But I had just finished 'Judgment at Nuremberg,' which he saw, and he needed $3 million, which 20th Century-Fox would give them if they used an American star, and so the inevitable occurred. And it turned out to be a wonderful marriage."

When we talked, the original film--uncut, undubbed--had scarcely been seen since the time of its European release in 1963. But in 1980, four years after Visconti's death, the cinematographer Giuseppe Rotunno supervised a restoration; at 185 minutes his version is still shorter than the original 205 minutes, but it is the best we are ever likely to see, and it is magnificent.

What's clear at last is that Lancaster was an inspired casting decision. An actor who always brought a certain formality to his work, who made his own way as an independent before that was fashionable, he embodies the prince as a man who has a great love for a way of life he understands must come to an end. He is a natural patriarch, a man born to have authority. Yet as we meet him, he is aware of his age and mortality, inclined to have spiritual conversations with his friend Father Pirrone, and prepared to compromise in order to preserve his family's fortunes.

We see him first leading his family at prayer. That is also the way Lampedusa's novel begins, and one of Visconti's achievements is to make that rare thing, a great film of a great book. Word comes that there is a dead soldier in the garden. This means that Garibaldi's revolution has jumped from the mainland to Sicily, and the days of the ancient order are numbered

The prince has a wife named Maria Stella, who he dutifully honors more for her position than her person, three daughters of only moderate loveliness and a feckless son. He looks to his nephew Tancredi (Alain Delon) to embody the family's noble genes. Tancredi is a hothead who leaves to join Garibaldi, but a realist who returns as a member of the army of the victorious Victor Emmanuel. …He moves every year with his household from the city to the countryside to wait out the slow, hot summer months, and in the town of Donnafugata, he is welcomed as usual by the mayor, a buffoon named Don Calogero (Paolo Stoppa). This mayor has suddenly become rich through lucky land investments, and feels that wealth has given him importance, an illusion that the prince is willing to indulge, if it can lead to a liaison between the mayor's money and the prince's family.

He invites the mayor to dinner, in a scene of subdued social comedy in which Visconti observes, without making too much of a point of it, how gauche the mayor is and how pained the prince is to have to give dinner to such a man. The mayor has brought with him not his unpresentable wife but his beautiful daughter Angelica, played by Claudia Cardinale at the height of her extraordinary beauty. Tancredi is moonstruck, and the prince swallows his misgivings as arrangements are made to go ahead with the marriage.

All of this would be the stuff of soap opera in other hands, but Lampedusa's novel sees the prince so sympathetically that we share his regrets for a fading way of life. We might believe ideologically that the aristocracy

exploits the working class (Visconti was a Marxist who believed just that), but the prince himself is such a proud and good man, so aware of his mortality, so respectful of tradition and continuity, that as he compromises his family in order to save it, we share his remorse.

There is another factor at work. The prince is an alpha male, born to conquer, aware of female beauty if also obedient to the morality of his church. He finds Angelica as attractive as his nephew does. But Visconti doesn't communicate this with soulful speeches or whispered insinuations; he directs his actors to do this all with eyes, and the attitude of a head, and those subtle adjustments in body language that suggest the desired person exerts a kind of animal magnetism that must be resisted. Observe how Lancaster has the prince almost lean away from Angelica, as if in response to her pull. He is too old at 45 (which was old in the 1860s) and too traditional to reveal his feelings, but a woman can always tell, even though she must seem as if she cannot.

The film ends with a ballroom sequence lasting 45 minutes. "This is a set piece that has rarely been equaled," writes the critic Derek Malcolm, and critic Dave Kehr called it "one of the most moving meditations on individual mortality in the history of the cinema." Visconti, Lancaster and Rotunno collaborate to resolve all of the themes of the movie in this long sequence in which almost none of the dialogue involves what is really happening. The ball is a last glorious celebration of the dying age; Visconti cast members of noble old Sicilian families as the guests, and in their faces, we see a history that cannot be acted, only embodied. The orchestra plays Verdi. The young people dance on and on, and the older people watch carefully and gauge the futures market in romances and liaisons.

Through this gaiety the prince moves like a shadow. The camera follows him from room to room, suggesting his thoughts, his desires, his sadness. Visconti is confident that Lancaster can suggest all of the shadings of the prince's feelings, and extends the scene until we are drawn fully into it. He creates one of those sequences for which we go to the movies: We have grown to know the prince's personality and his ideas, and now we enter, almost unaware, into his emotions. The cinema at its best can give us the illusion of living another life, and that's what happens here.

Finally the prince dances with Angelica. Watch them as they dance, each aware of the other in a way simultaneously sexual and political. Watch how they hold their heads. How they look without seeing. How they are seen, and know they are seen. And sense that, for the prince, his dance is an acknowledgment of mortality. He could have had this woman, would have known what to do with her, would have made her his wife and the mother of his children and heard her cries of passion, if not for the accident of 25 years or so that slipped in between them. But he knows that, and she knows that. And yet of course if they were the same age, he would not have married her, because he is Prince Don Fabrizio and she is the mayor's daughter. That Visconti is able to convey all of that in a ballroom scene is miraculous and emotionally devastating, and it is what his movie is about.

BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS SPRING 2020, SERIES 40

Mar 10 Masaki Kobayashi *Kwaidan* 1965
Mar 24 John Schlesinger *Midnight Cowboy* 1969
Mar 31 Alan Pakula *Klute* 1971
Apr 7 Robert Altman *McCabe and Mrs Miller* 1971
Apr 14 Martin Scorsese *King of Comedy* 1983
Apr 21 Wim Wenders *Land of Plenty* 2004
Apr 28 Wes Anderson *Isle of Dogs* 2018
May 5 Pedro Almodóvar *Pain and Glory* 2019

CONTACTS:

email Diane Christian: engdc@buffalo.edu…email Bruce Jackson bjackson@buffalo.edu...
for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: http: //buffalofilmseminars.com...
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