

Document Citation

Title	The [leopard]
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Source	<i>Village Voice</i>
Date	1985 Sep 03
Type	review
Language	English English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Il gattopardo (The leopard), Visconti, Luchino, 1963

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Village Voice
Sunday Sept 3, 1985

Luchino Visconti's **The Leopard** (1963), from a screenplay by Visconti, Suso Cecchi d'Amico, Pasquale Festa Campanile, Enrico Medioli, and Massimo Franciosa, based on the Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa novel, with Burt Lancaster, Alain Delon, Claudia Cardinale, and Paolo Stoppa, is probably Visconti's most felicitous wedding of form and content. The film's central metaphor of Sicilian aristocrats surviving revolutionary barbarians is developed with a classical shape of Chateaubriandian memory-span proportions, especially when the grand finale of a ballroom dance-of-life is restored to the version most commonly shown in the '80s. "Nothing could be decently hated," Lampedusa's prince observes, "except eternity." The whole temporal resonance, then, of *The Leopard* is keyed to a sense of eternity fashioned after the intransigent Sicilian landscape, climate, and temperament, draining history of its vitality and momentum and accounting for the lethargy of the nobility during the earth-shaking decades between 1860 and 1910. What the Marxist-aristocrat Visconti stresses, however, is how the dream and specter of Garibaldi dissolved into morning mists and how revolution and reform disintegrated into bourgeois idiocies. *The Leopard* is slightly off the mark of the novel's highest aspirations, but it is, nonetheless, an admirable film of parts. Visconti obviously poured most of his talent and feeling into a series of stunning decors, particularly those embellishing the climactically anticlimactic ball, where history executes an ironic quadrille with death, dung, decay, and disgust to the mocking strains of a hitherto undiscovered Verdi waltz. **Carnegie Hall Cinema: 2, 5:20, 8:45.**