

THE BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GREAT FILMS WITH BRUCE JACKSON & DIANE CHRISTIAN

PRESENTED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO AND THE MARKET ARCADE FILM AND ARTS CENTER

NOVEMBER 6, 2001 (IV:10): THE LEOPARD (1963)

LUCHINO VISCONTI (Count Don Lucino Visconti di Modrone, 2 November 1906, Milan—17 March 1976, Rome) wrote or co-wrote and directed all or part of 19 other films, the best known of which are *L'Innocente* 1976, *Morte a Venezia/Death in Venice* 1971, *La Caduta degli dei/The Damned* 1969, *Lo Straniero/The Stranger* 1967, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and His Brothers* 1960, *Le Notti bianche/White Nights* 1957, and *Ossessione* 1942. According to *Leonard Maltin's Movie Encyclopedia* he was "One of the primary forces in the rebuilding of the Italian cinema after World War 2, Visconti was an enigmatic and influential figure. Born a count into one of Italy's most aristocratic families, the young Visconti lived a carefree life, cultivating a taste for opera and the theater. At the age of 30, he befriended Jean Renoir and followed him to Paris, working as a costume designer and assistant director. Here he also became influenced by Marxist ideology and, despite his family background, became an avid leftist and anti-fascist throughout the remainder of his life. In 1940 he returned to Italy to make films of his own, but his first feature, *Ossessione* (1942), came under fire from Mussolini's government. An unauthorized reworking of James M. Cain's "The Postman Always Rings Twice," the film angered authorities with its gritty representation of everyday life, and was severely censored. After codirecting a documentary, *Giorni di Gloria* (1945), Visconti made his second feature, *La Terra trema* (1947), a story of class exploitation in a small Sicilian fishing village. Along with Rossellini's *Open City* and *Paisan* and De Sica's *Shoeshine* and *The Bicycle Thief*, *La Terra trema* officially inaugurated the Italian neorealist movement. Notable for their use of nonprofessional actors and naturalistic settings, these films provided a sharp contrast to the ornate, studio-produced escapist fare officially sanctioned by the now (deposed) fascist regime. Visconti's subsequent films were deeply personal, and almost operatic in structure. His most prominent themes were class exploitation and the manner in which the upper classes responded to a changing, tumultuous world; moral decay within families of all classes; and male and occasionally female self delusion. In *Bellissima* (1951), he told the story of a movie-crazed stage mother obsessed with attaining stardom for her untalented young daughter. *Senso* (1954), set in Austrian-occupied Venice in 1866, when Italian partisans were scheming to repossess their land, detailed the relationship between an Austrian officer and his married Italian mistress. Here Visconti united the realism of his earlier works with the romanticism that was to categorize his later films. *White Nights* (1957), a further example of his break with neorealism, told of a shy young man who falls for a woman awaiting the reappearance of her lost love. He returned to neorealism one last time in the superb *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960), a gritty, tragic tale of Southern Italian peasants who relocate to Milan in search

THE LEOPARD/IL GATTOPARDO (1963)

Burt Lancaster.... Prince Don Fabrizio Salina
Claudia Cardinale.... Angelica Sedara/Bertiana
Alain Delon.... Tancredi
Paolo Stoppa.... Don Calogero Sedara
Rina Morelli.... Maria Stella
Romolo Valli.... Father Pirrone
Terence Hill.... Count Cavriaghi (as Mario Girotti)
Lucilla Morlacchi... Concetta
Giuliano Gemma.... Garibaldino General
Ida Galli.... Carolina
Ottavia Piccolo.... Caterina

Directed by Luchino Visconti
Written by Pasquale Festa Campanile, Massimo Franciosa, Enrico Medioli, Luchino Visconti, and Suso Cecchi d'Amico, based on the novel by Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa
Produced by Goffredo Lombardo
Original music by Nino Rota
Non-original music by Vincenzo Bellini, Giuseppe Verdi
Cinematography by Giuseppe Rotunno
Film Editing by Mario Serandrei
Production Design by Mario Garbuglia and Giorgio Rotunno
Costume Design by Piero Tosi
Fabrics Filippo Haas and Sons
Production Companies S.G.C., Société nouvelle Pathé Cinéma [fr], Titanus [it]
Runtime: Italy:205 / Spain:151 (cut) / UK:195 (cut) / USA:165 (cut), restored US version?

of economic stability. *The Leopard* (1963), one of Visconti's all-time classics (with American star Burt Lancaster effectively cast in the leading role), was set in the same time period as *Senso*. It dealt with an aristocratic Sicilian family responding to the death of its class and the rise of the bourgeoisie. The finale, a lengthy banquet sequence, remains one of film history's great set pieces. *Sandra* (1965) centered on an upper-crust woman's incestuous involvement with her brother (as well as her awareness that her mother had doubled-crossed her father, a Jew, during World War 2). After directing an excellent adaptation of Camus's *The Stranger* (1967) with Marcello Mastroianni, Visconti further explored the rise of Naziism in *The Damned* (1969), his most celebrated film, a pitiless look at the disintegration of a German industrialist family under the Hitler regime. (Again he gathered an international cast headed by Dirk Bogarde); the film won Visconti his sole Academy Award nomination, for best screenplay. In *Death in Venice* (1971), the filmmaker as never before focused on the theme of male vanity in telling of an aging homosexual's search for beauty and purity, in the person of a good-looking young boy. *Ludwig* (1973), another tale of decadent, dedining European society, spotlighting the "mad" king of Bavaria, was seen as heavy-handed, and *Conversation Piece* (1975, with Burt Lancaster) was a talky tale of an aging intellectual, but Visconti was back in form for what would be his final film, *The Innocent* (1976), a melodrama about an aristocrat, married to a beautiful woman, who nonetheless feels compelled to take a lover. To the end, Visconti remained an individualistic-and inspired-filmmaker."

SUSO CECCHI D'AMICO (Giovanna Cecchi, 21 July 1914, Rome) daughter of screenwriter Emilio Cecchi, wrote or co-wrote nearly 90 films, the first of which was the classic *Roma città libera/Rome, Open City* 1946. Some of the others: *Panni sporchi/Dirty Linen* 1999, *Il Male oscuro/Obscure Illness* 1990, *L'Innocente* 1976, *Brother Sun, Sister Moon* 1973, *Lo Straniero/The Stranger* 1967, *Spara forte, pi forte, non capisco/Shoot Louder, I Don't Understand* 1966, *I Soliti ignoti/Big Deal on Madonna Street* 1958, *Le Notti bianche/White Nights* 1957, and *Ladri di biciclette/The Bicycle Thieves* 1948.

PASQUALE FESTA CAMPANILE (28 July 1927, Melfi, Basilicata, Italy—25 February 1986, Rome) directed 45 films which we mention here primarily because the American and British release titles are so cockamamie, i.e., *How to Lose a Wife and Find a Lover* 1978, *Sex Machine* 1975, *When Women Played Ding Dong* 1971, *When Women Lost Their Tails* 1971, *When Women Had Tails* 1970, *Where Are You Going All Naked?* 1969, *The Chastity Belt/On My Way to the Crusades, I Met a Girl Who...* 1969, and *Drop Dead My Love* 1966. He wrote or co-wrote most of those, as well as *Rocco and his Brothers* and several other films.

BURT LANCASTER (2 November 1913, New York, New York—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. He is the only star ever to appear in back-to-back presentations of the Buffalo Film Seminars. Were he still inhabiting this mortal coil he would perhaps not consider that conjunction among his most significant accomplishments, which would not be uncharitable or unreasonable, given the range of them., 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*. (Last week's notes, as Dick Ellis pointed out, incorrectly said he'd never won any.)

CLAUDIA CARDINALE (15 April 1938, Tunis, Tunisia) bracketed her performance in this film with roles in Fellini's *8 1/2* 1963 and Blake Edwards' *The Pink Panther* 1963. Whatta year! She appeared in 100 other films, beginning with *Big Deal On Madonna Street* 1953. Some of the others: *Un homme amoureux/A Man in Love* 1987, *Princess Daisy* 1983, *Burden of Dreams* 1982, *Fitzcarraldo* 1982, *La Pelle/The Skin* 1981, *Krasnaya palatka/The Red Tent* 1971, *C'era una volta il West/Once Upon a Time in the West* 1969, *The Professionals* 1966, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and His Brothers* 1960, *I Soliti ignoti/Big Deal on Madonna Street* 1958. The CC website is <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/9766/cardinal.html>.

ALAIN DELON (8 November 1935, Sceaux, Hauts-de-Seine, France), once called "the French James Dean," came to stardom in Visconti's *Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and his Brothers* 1960 (his seventh screen role) and starred in Visconti's stage production of *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* in Paris the following year. He appeared in more than 80 films, among them *Un amour de Swann/Swann in Love* 1984, *The Concorde: Airport '79* 1979, *Monsieur Klein* 1976, *Zorro* 1974, *Borsalino* 1970, *Is Paris Burning?* 1966, *Texas Across the River* 1966, *Once a Thief* 1965, *The Yellow Rolls-Royce* 1965, *L'Eclisse/The Eclipse* 1962, and. He also produced 10 and wrote 17 films. Delon was a parachutist with the French army in Indochina in the early 1950s and in 1968 was implicated in a murder, drug and sex scandal that involved several French politicians and show business personalities; unlike most of the others, he was exonerated. He currently stars in the French television series, "Fabio Montale."

NINO ROTA (3 December 1911—Milan, 10 April 1979) Rome composed scores for all three *Godfather* films 1972, 1974, 1990, for Fellini's *Amarcord* 1974, *Roma* 1972, *I Clowns* 1971, *Satyricon* 1969, *Giulietta degli spiriti/Juliet of the Spirits* 1965, *8 1/2* 1963, *La Dolce Vita* 1960, *Le Notti di Cabiria* 1957, and *La Strada* 1954. He also scored *Rocco and His Brothers*, *I Vitelloni* 1953, and about 150 other films.

GIUSEPPE ROTUNNO [19 March 1923] Rome photographed the sweet biopic of Mastroianni playing on A&E lately, *Marcello Mastroianni: mi ricordo s , io mi ricordo/Marcello Mastroianni: I remember* 1997. He also shot more than 70 other films, among them *Wolf* 1994, *Regarding Henry* 1991, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* 1988, *All That Jazz* 1979, *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, *Carnal Knowledge* 1971, *Satyricon* 1969, *Candy* 1968, *Lo Straniero/The Stranger* 1967, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and His Brothers* 1960, *On the Beach* 1959, and *Le Notti bianche* 1957.

FROM THE ST. JAMES FILM DIRECTOR'S ENCYCLOPEDIA, ED. ANDREW SARRIS, VISIBLE INK PRESS, 1998

The films of Luchino Visconti are among the most stylistically and intellectually influential of postwar Italian cinema. Born a scion of ancient nobility, Visconti integrated the most heterogeneous elements of aristocratic sensibility and taste with a committed Marxist political consciousness, backed by a firm knowledge of Italian class structure. Stylistically, his career follows a trajectory from a uniquely cinematic realism to an operatic theatricalism, from the simple quotidian eloquence of modeled actuality to the heightened effect of lavishly appointed historical melodramas. His career fuses these interests into a mode of expression uniquely Viscontian, prescribing a potent, double-headed realism. Visconti turned out films steadily but rather slowly from 1942 to 1976. His obsessive care with narrative and filmic materials is apparent in the majority of his films.

...Like Gramsci, who often returned to the contradictions of the Risorgimento as a key to the social problems of the modern Italian state, Visconti explores that period once more in *Il gottopardo*,

from the Lampedusa novel. An aristocratic Sicilian family undergoes transformation as a result of intermarriage with the middle class at the same time that the Mezzogiorno is undergoing reunification with the North. The bourgeoisie, now ready and able to take over from the dying aristocracy, usurps Garibaldi's revolution; in this period of *transformismo*, the revolutionary process will be assimilated into the dominant political structure and defused.

FROM WORLD FILM DIRECTORS V. 1, ED JOHN WAKEMAN, H.W.WILSON CO. 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.

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 hdeay 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.

...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 [*nature morta*]."

FROM THE LEOPARD GIUSEPPE DE LAMPEDUSA, TRANS. ARCHIBALD COLOUHOUN. (PANTHEON, 1960),
"HISTORICAL NOTE BY ARCHIBALD COLOUHOUN"

This book opens when the Bourbon state of Naples and Sicily, called the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, was about to end. King Ferdinand II ("Bomba") had just died; and the whole Italian peninsula would soon be one state for the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire.

The Risorgimento, as this movement for unification came to be known, had been gathering strength since the occupation of the North by the Austrians after the Napoleonic Wars. And had already come to a head once, in 1848. Leadership had now fallen mainly to Piedmont, the so-called Kingdom of Sardinia, ruled from Turin by Victor Emmanuel of Savoy, with Cavour as his Prime Minister.

Early in May, 9160, the popular hero Garibaldi, acting against Cavour's wishes, sailed from near Genoa with a thousand volunteers for Sicily, to win the island from the Bourbons. The Redshirts, or "Garibaldini," landed at Marsala, defeated the Bourbon troops at Calatafimi, and within three weeks had occupied the capital, Palermo. Garibaldi, hailed as "Dictator" of Sicily, gathered more volunteers, crossed to the mainland, swept up the coast, and entered Naples in triumph. That autumn the Bourbon armies were defeated on the Volturno, the Piedmontese besieged the last Bourbon King, Francis II, in

Gaeta, and Garibaldi handed over southern Italy to King Victor Emmanuel; he then withdrew to private life.

Plebiscites were held; every state in the peninsula agreed to join the new united Kingdom, except the Papal States, which were occupied, for reasons of internal French politics, by troops of Napoleon III. In 1862 Garibaldi tried to force this issue and marched on Rome. But on the slopes of Aspromonte in Calabria his men were routed and he himself was wounded by Piedmontese troops.

This action by Italian government forces ended the revolutionary phase of the Risorgimento, which culminated officially in the declaration of Rome as capital of Italy in 1870.

Leiden University Historical Institute reference page on Unification of Italy:

<http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/history/rtg/emu/ItalianConfederation.html>

THIS IS FROM THE NOVEL:

The Prince was depressed: "All this shouldn't last; but it will, always; the human 'always,' of course, a century, two centuries... and after that it will be different but worse. We were the Leopards, the Lions; those who'll take our place will be little jackals, hyenas; and the whole lot of us Leopards, jackals, and sheep, we'll all go on thinking ourselves the salt of the earth."

AND SO IS THIS:

As he crossed the two rooms preceding the study he tried to imagine himself as an imposing leopard with smooth scented skin preparing to tear a timid jackal to pieces; but by one of those involuntary associations of ideas which are the scourge of natures like his, he found flicking into his memory one of those French historical pictures in which Austrian marshals and generals, covered with plumes and decorations, are filing in surrender past an ironical Napoleon; they are more elegant, undoubtedly, but it is the squat little man in the grey topcoat who is the victor; and so, put out by these inopportune memories of Mantua and Ulm, it was an irritated leopard who entered the study.

AND THIS IS FROM "LUCHINO VISCONTI: THE LEOPARD: THE ARISTOCRAT'S TALE," THURSDAY NOVEMBER 16, 2000 THE GUARDIAN

Luchino Visconti was the aristocrat of Italian cinema, and also an avowed Marxist. That fact alone makes his films intriguing, none more so than *The Leopard*, one of the grandest widescreen historical epics. It stars Burt Lancaster as Prince Salina, the Sicilian leopard of the title, an ageing patrician whose declining fortunes under Garibaldi and the Risorgimento of the 1860s lead him to arrange a financially advantageous marriage between his nephew Tancredi (Alain Delon) and Angelica, the daughter of a rich merchant (Claudia Cardinale). Lancaster, at first sight an eccentric choice for the part, carries all before him. He often said he based the character on Visconti himself - a man who acknowledged the need for change but increasingly began to regret the vulgarity of the present compared with the past. Oddly, vulgarity is what Visconti's critics accuse him of, because of the operatic conception of many of his movies, their opulence and their obsessive attention to decor.

Visconti came to the fore in the 40s with *Ossessione*, adopting the precepts of the neo-realist movement but adding a melodramatic, formalised structure. Later he was to reject neo-realism in favour of a more classical tradition which seemed to defend the humanist literary tradition. *The Leopard*, for instance, was taken from the novel by Giuseppe di Lampedusa which sought to ruminate on the old versus the new, and to suggest that the best values of the past were at least the equal of and

sometimes superior to those of the pseudo-revolutionary present. Fixing this conception with a gimlet eye, Visconti ends his film with a stunning ball scene, in which all his visual powers, his philosophical doubts and ruminations are in evidence. *The Leopard* must accept that the old order is finished and power has passed to the nouveaux riches. This is a set piece that has rarely been equalled, and the film won the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

Unfortunately it was financed by 20th Century Fox who, despite its European acclaim, butchered it comprehensively, releasing a much shorter version that was dubbed and reprocessed. It took 20 years before a fully restored version was released.

Visconti was fortunate to receive fine expressive support both from his cinematographer Giuseppe Rotunno and the music of Nino Rota. But the triumph is mostly his own because his talents suit the subject so well. There is a sensuousness about the direction that perfectly matched the ideas behind the film, the most sophisticated of which was that, even when the old order was able to reach an accommodation to the new, it brought a kind of corrupting decadence with it. Only the prince escapes this charge because he eventually recognises this bitter truth.

All this was very different from the orthodox Marxism of films like *La Terra Trema*. But then Visconti was as full of ambiguities as many of his films. He viewed the world as a kind of melodrama in which passion and destiny predominated. And frequently the radical nature of what he was trying to say was almost obliterated by the way he said it. In *The Leopard* the two came together superbly. Now that we can see it in its full glory, it is probably his greatest film.

FROM MOMA FILM NOTES, 1997

Throughout his career, Visconti's theme was often the moral decay and tragic disintegration of families or great figures. His stage and opera work informed the sweep and intensity of his filmed dramas, and few directors have matched the historical breadth or magnificent visual sensibility of his films.

STANLEY KAUFFMANN, "FILMS IN OUR HEADS," NEW REPUBLIC, 08.21.00

Lately I had a shock that I have had before. I went to see a film that I had seen decades ago and discovered that my opinion of it had changed greatly. It was Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard*, which was released in 1963 and which I reviewed that year, a large-scale drama of the Sicilian nobility in the time of the Garibaldi invasion. Seeing it again, I was overwhelmed. I looked up my review and blushed. Yes, I had praised the film's visual splendor, but I wriggled now at the rest. A few hours before, I had been greatly stirred by this film, which in 1963 I had indicted for shortcomings in acting and directing. Most of the performances now seemed more integral and true than they had once seemed, and Visconti's virtuosity in directing, which I had once scorned for ostentation, now seemed much more at the service of the work. ...I had really been swept along by this second encounter, and my first review seemed almost to have been written by someone else.

I tried to understand what had changed. With the acting, the explanation was simple. Originally the distributors had feared to release this Italian film in the United States with subtitles. *The Leopard* had an American star, and they thought that audiences here would not want to hear him speaking Italian--or someone else speaking his Italian lines for him. So in the 1963 version the star, Burt Lancaster, spoke his own lines in English, and all the other actors were dubbed--quite unskillfully--into English. Most of those performances had been jarred askew by American voices.

Now, when I heard these actors with their own voices, they seemed more rounded, three-dimensional, alive. The chief improvement, contradictory though it sounds, was in Lancaster, who plays a Sicilian prince. In 1963, with his own voice, he had seemed hollow. Now, dubbed in Italian, he was much more believable and commanding. (A few years ago I learned that Lancaster had been dubbed by a famous Sicilian actor, Turi Ferro.) He even looked more princely. Though that earlier English soundtrack had hurt the rest of the cast, the replacement of Lancaster's somewhat gassy voice with one of ring and authority seemed to arch his back.

As for Visconti's directing, my altered response might well have been because in recent years I, like many others, have been starved for imaginative, individualistic filmmaking style--a treasure that was showered on us in the 1960s. Now, hungry for the feeling that a unique artist--not a corporation--had made a film, I was suffused with gratitude as I watched Visconti's hand figuratively caressing every measure of sumptuousness, of cultural texture, in scene after scene. Such a moment as the spreading of an immense tablecloth on the grass when the prince's family stops to picnic during the journey from Palermo to their summer palace, with the grooms walking the horses in the background to cool them down--I longed for it to linger. The very last moment of the picture, in a small Palermo square at midnight, where the prince kneels and crosses himself when a priest and acolytes hurry past to someone's bedside, now seems a peak in film art.

Explanations or not, I still felt somewhat miserable about my four-decades-old review, and in my misery I sought company. I remembered that Eliot in 1947 had publicly recanted the low opinion of Milton that he had once published. (Ten years earlier he had written that Milton was a poet whose sensual capacities "had been withered early by book learning.") I remembered, too, how Shaw, in his persona as music critic, had recanted in old age his much earlier dismissal of Brahms's Requiem as music that could be "patiently borne only by the corpse." These lofty examples consoled me a bit; but they did more than that. They confirmed my belief that criticism is always in some degree diaristic, a journal of experiences rather than a series of cast-iron pronouncements. This is one more proof of the mercurial nature of truth. Every serious critic speaks the truth of his opinions, but that truth comes from the person he is at that moment, not the person of his past or his future.

When we respond to a critic, we can keep in mind that both he and we are communicating at exactly that moment. Certainly a very great deal of criticism that I have been reading through the years has benefited me through those years, has stood firm. It is the exceptions that are worrisome.

Charles Rosen, one of the most rewarding critics writing today, magisterial in the fields of music and literature and painting and aesthetics, has faced this dilemma, in himself and in his writing. In the introduction to his collection, *Romantic Poets, Critics, and Other Madmen*, Rosen says:

In collecting these essays, I have left them without correction.... I do not want to read any fictitious foresight into these essays, or to inject any observations on the most interesting of modern trends. It seemed more honest to try to bring them up to date by adding a postscript when an apology or second thoughts seemed advisable, or when subsequent developments needed to be remarked. Where some of the discussion has dated, I hope that the reader will be pleased to remark a certain period flavor.

Those comments could helpfully preface any collection of criticism. (I may say that I have often used the postscript device in my own collections.) But, though the postscript is useful to critics, it doesn't solve the problem, which besets everyone, critic or not. Our minds are freighted with beliefs that we may no longer believe.

That is the most important aspect. All these reservations are true for everyone, not just for critics. The plain, discomfiting fact is that every one of us who has watched plays and films or read books or listened to music or looked at painting and architecture is, in some measure, self-deceived. Filed away in the recesses of our minds are thousands of opinions that we have accumulated through

our lives, and they make us think that we know what we think on all those subjects. We do not. All we know is what we once thought, and any earlier view of a work, if tested, might be hugely different from what we would think now.

What can we do about it? Other than realize that this condition exists, very little. We cannot spend our lives reexamining past experiences to keep our opinions up to date. We have to operate with a certain degree of trust. If someone asks my opinion of Laurence Olivier's *Oedipus*, which I saw three times in 1946, all I can do is summon up as best I can what I felt and thought in 1946 and hope that I would react the same now. If the question is about *War and Peace*, I can either sit down and re-read it before answering or dig out my memory file of what I thought when I last re-read it thirty years ago. All of us rely on what our former selves, sometimes quite different selves, once thought. It's a scary realization--that we are all carrying around in our heads a lot of opinions with which we might now disagree.

COMING UP NEXT WEEK, TUESDAY NOV 6:

Nov 13 Bernardo Bertolucci, *Il Conformista/The Conformist* 1970

Bertolucci's best film. Jean-Louis Trintignant is superb as Marcello Clerici, the central character of Alberto Moravia's novel about a man who so wants to belong he manages to betray everything and everyone except the fascists, for whom he is merely an instrument. Cinematographer Vittorio Storaro is perhaps best known to American audiences for his work on Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor*. His work on *The Conformist* is as great as either.

Then it's just three more in the fall 2001 series:

Nov 20 Nicolas Roeg, *Don't Look Now* 1973

Nov 27 Terrence Malick, *Days of Heaven* 1978

Dec 4 Terry Gilliam *The Adventure of Baron Munchausen* 1988

For notes and links for each film, visit our website: <http://www.buffalofilmseminars.com>

SUNDAY IN THE MAFAC SUNDAY CLASSICS....

November 11 *GIULIETTA DEGLI SPRITI/JULIET OF THE SPIRITS*'65. Federico Fellini's delightful, visually inventive fantasy concerning a bored Roman housewife (Giulietta Masina) who finds relief from the mundane and from her philandering husband through sensual escapades in the spirit realm--her own subconscious. 2 Academy Award Nominations. 3:00 p.m. in this very room.

DIANE'S FRENCH CONNECTION

The Albright-Knox is offering three lectures to celebrate its current show, *The Triumph of French Painting*. Diane will give the first of them this Friday, November 9th at 7:30 p.m. in the Gallery's Auditorium. The title of her talk is "'Lost in the Stars': Voices from French Literature and Film 1800-1927." She'll speak on literature and film and show clips from the Lumière Brothers' *Paris 1900* and Abel Gance's *Napol on*. Friday November 9th, 7:30 p.m. in the Gallery's auditorium. Tickets required. She's been spending a huge amount of time in her study working on this, so it should be a dilly.

Email DIANE CHRISTIAN AT engdc@acsu.buffalo.edu email BRUCE JACKSON AT bjackson@buffalo.edu. For the complete BFS FALL SCHEDULE, with notes and links for each film, visit our website: <http://www.buffalofilmseminars.com>

