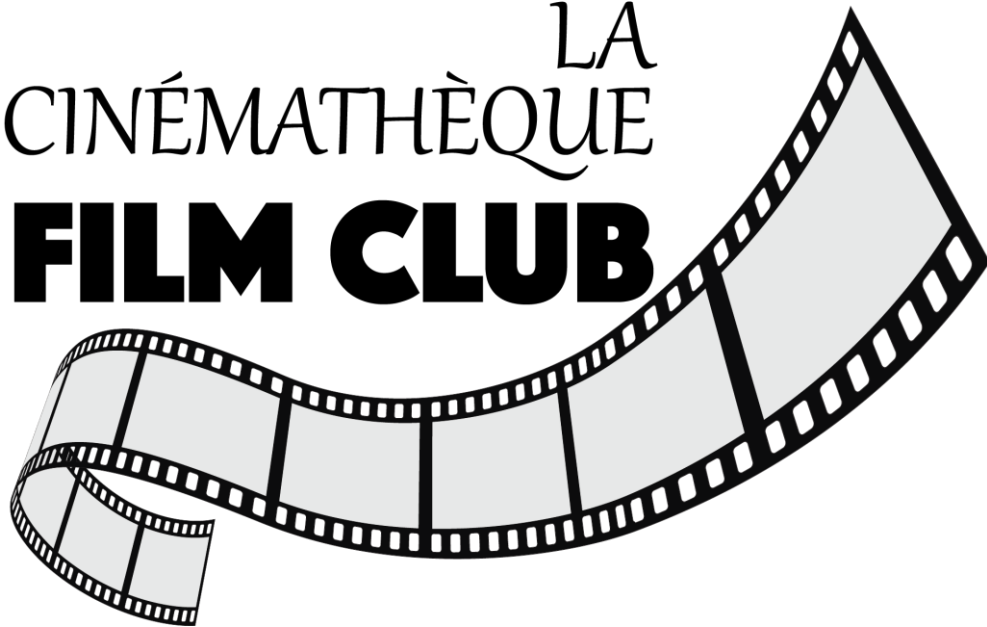


LA  
CINÉMATHÈQUE  
**FILM CLUB**



Spring 2021

Luchino Visconti  
1906-1976

*The Innocent*  
1976

## Luchino Visconti: Italian director

Article sourced from Encyclopedia Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Luchino-Visconti-Italian-director>

**Alternative Titles:** Don Luchino Visconti, conte di Modrone

**Luchino Visconti**, in full **Don Luchino Visconti, conte (count) di Modrone**, (born Nov. 2, 1906, Milan—died March 17, 1976, Rome), Italian motion-picture director whose realistic treatment of individuals caught in the conflicts of modern society contributed significantly to the post-World War II revolution in Italian filmmaking and earned him the title of father of Neorealism. He also established himself as an innovative theatrical and opera director in the years immediately after World War II.

Born into an aristocratic family, Visconti was well acquainted with the arts: his mother was a talented musician, and throughout his childhood his father engaged performers to appear at their private theatre. He studied cello for 10 years and spent a short time as a theatrical set designer. He also had a solid classical education. In 1935 Visconti was hired as an assistant to the French motion-picture director Jean Renoir, who developed his sensitivity to social and political issues.

*Ossessione* (1942; "Obsession"), an adaptation of James M. Cain's novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, established his reputation as a director. In it he used natural settings, combined professional actors with local residents, experimented with long-travelling camera shots, and incorporated sequences taken with hidden cameras to enhance authenticity. A masterpiece of realism, this film foreshadowed the postwar Neorealist work of such internationally important filmmakers as Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica. Six years later *La terra trema* (1948; *The Earth Trembles*), a documentary-style study of Sicilian fishermen filmed entirely on location and without actors, won the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival. Visconti's other widely acclaimed films include *Bellissima* (1951; *The Most Beautiful*) and *Siamo donne* (1953; *We the Women*), both starring Anna Magnani; *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960; *Rocco and His Brothers*); and *Il gattopardo* (1963; *The Leopard*), based on the novel by Giuseppe di Lampedusa about a traditional aristocrat with liberal convictions, a character with whom Visconti strongly identified; *Lo straniero* (1967; *The Stranger*); *La caduta degli dei* (1969; *The Damned*); and *Morte a Venezia* (1971; *Death in Venice*). At the time of his death he had nearly finished editing his last film, *L'innocente* (*The Innocent*), based on the novel by Gabriele D'Annunzio.

As a theatrical director Visconti introduced to Italy the work of such French and U.S. playwrights as Jean Cocteau, Jean-Paul Sartre, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Erskine Caldwell. He built up a repertory company that supplied actors for later films.

During the 1950s Visconti produced internationally recognized operas starring the soprano Maria Callas. Combining realism and spectacle, he scored artistic successes with productions of *La traviata* (1955), *La sonnambula* (1955), and *Don Carlos* (1958, Covent Garden, London).

## Luchino Visconti

### Filmography as Director ([IMDb](#))

- **L'innocente** (1976)
- **Conversation Piece** (1974)
- **Ludwig** (1973)
- **Death in Venice** (1971)
- **Alla ricerca di Tazio** (1970) TV movie documentary
- **The Damned** (1969)
- **The Stranger** (1967)
- “Strega bruciata viava, La” segment of **The Witches** (1967)
- **Sandra** (1965)
- **The Leopard** (1963)
- “Il lavoro” segment of **Boccaccio '70** (1962)
- **Dommage qu'elle soit une putain** (1961)
- **Rocco and His Brothers** (1960)
- **Le Notti Bianche** (1957)
- **Senso** (1954)
- “Anna Magnani” segment of **We, the Women** (1953)
- **Appunti su un fatto di cronaca** (1953) documentary short
- **Beautiful** (1951)
- **La Terra Trema** (1948)
- Caruso trial scenes in **Days of Glory** (1945)
- **Obsession** (1943)

## L'Innocente

### Richard Brody

*Article sourced from* The New Yorker: <https://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/movies/a-love-song-for-latasha>

Luchino Visconti's last film, from 1976—an adaptation of Gabriele D'Annunzio's 1892 novel—brings literary flair to the story of a marital disaster. A Roman aristocrat, Tullio Hermil (Giancarlo Giannini), vainly pursues the dark-eyed, willful temptress Teresa Raffo (Jennifer O'Neill) and complains about his romantic torments to the wife he neglects, Giuliana (Laura Antonelli). When, in turn, Giuliana seeks solace in the arms of a young writer (Marc Porel), Tullio comes home to her, his conjugal passion reignited—but the revelation of her pregnancy sets off a chain of seemingly inevitable agonies. Visconti treats the script's florid speeches as sensual delights—translations into language of a vanished opulence that his images lovingly display. He films Giannini, Antonelli, and O'Neill with a rapt tenderness. He captures their glances in closeups of magnetic power, which are matched by the mellifluous, modulated voices that pour out grief in lofty and delicate phrases—and conceal, with the same rhetorical flourishes, deeply calculated machinations of an imperial cruelty. In Italian.

# Luchino Visconti

Article sourced from SunSigns.org: <https://www.sunsigns.org/famousbirthdays/d/profile/luchino-visconti/>

Luchino Visconti: Director

November 2, 1906

Died On: March 17, 1976

Birth Place: Milan, Lombardy, Italy

Zodiac Sign: Scorpio

## Luchino Visconti Biography, Life, Interesting Facts

Named after a Milanese 1300s ruler, Luchino Visconti was an Italian film producer, musical and artistic director.

### Early Life

Luchino Visconti was born on November 2, 1906, in Milan, in the present day Italy. His original name was Conte Don Luchino Visconti di Modrone. His family was of the elite feudal order in Milan. His father was Giuseppe Luchino Visconti di Modrone, the aristocratic ruler of Grazzano Visconti. His mother Carla Erba, though not from the ruling family, came from a wealthy Italian family. The younger Visconti was among the seven children in the family.

Due to the privileges bestowed to his family, he was educated in the best private schools in Milan. He also studied music and arts from some of the greatest composers in Italy then.

He was also an avid horse breeder from an early age. Like all male members of European aristocratic families, Visconti served for two years in the military. He resumed his ventures in theater in 1928. That same year, he joined La Scala. At the theater production La Scala, he assumed the role of scene set designer. His stint at the theater was cut short with his decision to move to France.

### Film Career

At the age of 29, Luchino Visconti debuted in his career with a role as an assistant film director under Jean Renoir. His first films were Toni, and Campaign Party. These were released in 1935 and 1936 respectively. He assisted Renoir again in 1941 in the production of the film La Tosca. Visconti got his first hand as director in 1943. His film Obsession was widely criticized by the clergy.

His movie career was briefly interrupted by the WW2. Soon after the war was over, Visconti produced The Earth Trembles in 1948. He continued with his production in the 1950s and 1960s to the 1970s. His style of realism gave him a wide acclamation from the public. His sense of touch with the reality of social culture and politics of the day gave his films a unique aura. The documentary film the Earth Trembles is a typical example. This film was done without a cast. Everything was cast at the scene. The end product was the original daily lives of fishermen going on their business as usual.

The subsequent years followed him with other productions. In 1951, Luchino Visconti produced The Most Beautiful. Two years on, he wrote and directed We the Women. In 1960, he produced Rocco and His Brothers. Perhaps the most acclaimed film was The Leopard in 1963

## **Theater**

Despite having made fame in the film industry, Luchino Visconti remained loyal to his theater roots. In his theater productions, he blended Italian plays with other exotic writers from all over Western Europe and the US. He also had several opera productions in Italy. Visconti was a tough director. He got what he wanted despite the cost. In many instances, he fell out with some actors due to his ruthless character. Even so, the actors liked him for his originality, liberal trends and resolve to win.

## **Private Life**

Luchino Visconti was openly gay. His relationships often geared around the handsome men in his productions. At the time of his death, he was involved with his partner Helmut Berger. Berger was an Austrian actor who featured in several Visconti directed films.

Though he was brought up in a fascist environment, he later embraced communism. During the WW2, he harbored the Italian communist party officials at his palatial mansion in Milan. After the downfall of the fascist Mussolini, the Communist Party recognized Visconti in numerous counts. Even with that, he still had critics who never thought he had fully embraced communism.

He was also a heavy chain cigarette smoker. He used to smoke an average of 120 joints daily. The smoking affected his health and slowed down his public life.

## **Conclusion**

Luchino Visconti suffered two strokes before his demise on March 17, 1976, in Rome. He was 76 years. With the aristocratic and bisexual tags, Visconti still managed to have a successful film career without much disruption. His ability to ruthlessly follow through what he wanted led him to be one of the pioneers of bringing European theater to Italy. He used his nobility connections to advance art and theater in Italy.

In his life, he was awarded two prestigious honors. He got the Palme d'Or in 1963 and the Golden Lion in 1965, both in his native Italy. He also has a museum in Ischia named after him.

# L'Innocente (1976)

James Travers • 2013

Article sourced from French Films.org: <http://www.frenchfilms.org/review/l-innocente-1976.html>

5/5 Stars

Drama/Romance

aka: *The Innocent*

## Film Review

Luchino Visconti concluded his remarkable career with a characteristically opulent period piece that easily merits a place alongside some of his better known works, *Il Gattopardo* (1963) and *Ludwig* (1972). Adapted from Gabriele D'Annunzio's 1892 novel of the same title, *L'Innocente* is another scathing portrait of the social mores in the dying years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but one so steeped in character detail and humanity that we cannot help but sympathise with the flawed central protagonist, a libertine who is driven to commit the most heinous of crimes for purely selfish motives. As with much of Visconti's work, you cannot help feeling that, whilst the film is set in another epoch, it has a modern political subtext. It is worth noting that abortion was a hot topic in the 1970s and was not legalised in Italy until two years after the film was made. (Divorce had only been legalized in Italy in 1970).

Visconti is renowned for the exquisite artistry he brings to his films but *L'innocente* has a ravishing beauty that surpasses almost anything in his oeuvre. Despite his failing health (he was confined to a wheelchair as he made the film and died before he could complete it), Visconti exercises such precision and control over his mise-en-scène that there is scarcely a scene in the film that fails to impress with the perfection of its composition. The camerawork, lighting, set design and performances achieve a synchronicity of elegance that is every bit as impressive as the complex inner workings of the finest antique clock. Visconti must have known that this would be his last film, and this must have provided an added impetus for him to make it as perfect as possible.

*L'Innocente* doesn't just look good, it also delivers a powerful emotional charge and is one of Visconti's most involving films, perhaps because it is so narrow in scope, focussing on the fraught relationship of just three characters, that holy trinity of Italian cinema: the husband, his wife and his mistress. Visconti had wanted Alain Delon to take the lead role of the husband, Tullio Hermil, but the actor was already contracted to star in Joseph Losey's *Monsieur Klein* (1976). Giancarlo Giannini is a more than adequate substitute, having, like Delon, a suave ambiguity that allows him to be both sinister and sympathetic, remote and intimate.

Giannini's Tullio is a despicable egoist, driven by impulses that make him appear narcissistic and irrational, and yet we see him not as a villain but as a victim – a man whose desire to live as freely as possible is frustrated by having to live within a society that is governed by dubious Catholic morality and a social code that represses all true human feeling. The performances of Giannini and his co-star Laura Antonelli are subtly expressive of the conflict between the desire to love freely and the necessity to do so within the narrow confines permitted by the Church and upper class society.

Tullio's actions may appear perverse, but are they any more perverse than the dictates of the world in which he lives? At the mercy of desires he cannot control, Tullio becomes 'the innocent' of the film's title – as blameless as the infant he feels he must slaughter in order to preserve the most immaculate thing he has known, his love for his wife. Tullio's transgressions may be hard to fathom, but they reflect the failings inherent in a

society that imposes too tight a control on individual freedom. As he bids farewell, Visconti leaves us with the sobering thought that a world without compassion and tolerance is one that will be forever disfigured by cruel acts and tragedy.

### **Film Synopsis**

In Italy towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the wealthy Tullio Hermil pursues a passionate love affair with his aristocratic mistress Teresa Raffo whilst keeping up the impression that he is happily married. Although he still has a fondness for his wife Giuliana, he regards her more as a sister than as a lover. When he learns that Giuliana has herself been seeing another man, the writer Filippo d'Arborio, Tullio finds that his love for her has suddenly been rekindled and their marriage ceases to be a chaste charade. The discovery that Giuliana is pregnant with d'Arborio's child coincides with the writer's untimely death. Neither Tullio nor his wife want the child but Giuliana's Catholic beliefs prevent her from having an abortion. When the child is born, neither of its parents can bear to look at it. In the end, Tullio makes up his mind that it must die...

### **Similar Films**

Here are some other films you may enjoy watching:

- *L'Important c'est d'aimer* (1975)
- *Last Tango in Paris* (1972)
- *La Veuve Courderc* (1971)
- *Die Marquise von O...* (1976)
- *La Femme d'à côté* (1981)

### **Film Credits**

Director: Luchino Visconti

Script: Gabriele D'Annunzio (novel), Suso Cecchi D'Amico, Enrico Medioli, Luchino Visconti

Cinematographer: Pasqualino De Santis

Music: Franco Mannino

Cast: Giancarlo Giannini (Tullio Hermil), Laura Antonelli (Giuliana Hermil), Jenifer O'Neill (Teresa Raffo), Rina Morelli (Tullio's Mother), Massimo Girotti (Count Stefano Egano), Didier Haudepin (Federico Hermil), Marie Dubois (The Princess), Roberta Paladini (Miss Elviretta), Claude Mann (The Prince), Marc Porel (Filippo d'Arborio), Philippe Hersent, Elvira Cortese, Siria Betti, Enzo Musumeci Greco, Alessandra Vazzoler, Marina Pierro, Vittorio Zarfati, Alessandro Consorti, Filippo Perego, Margherita Horowitz

Country: Italy/France

Language: Italian

Support: Color

Runtime: 125 min

Aka: *The Innocent*; *L'Innocent*