

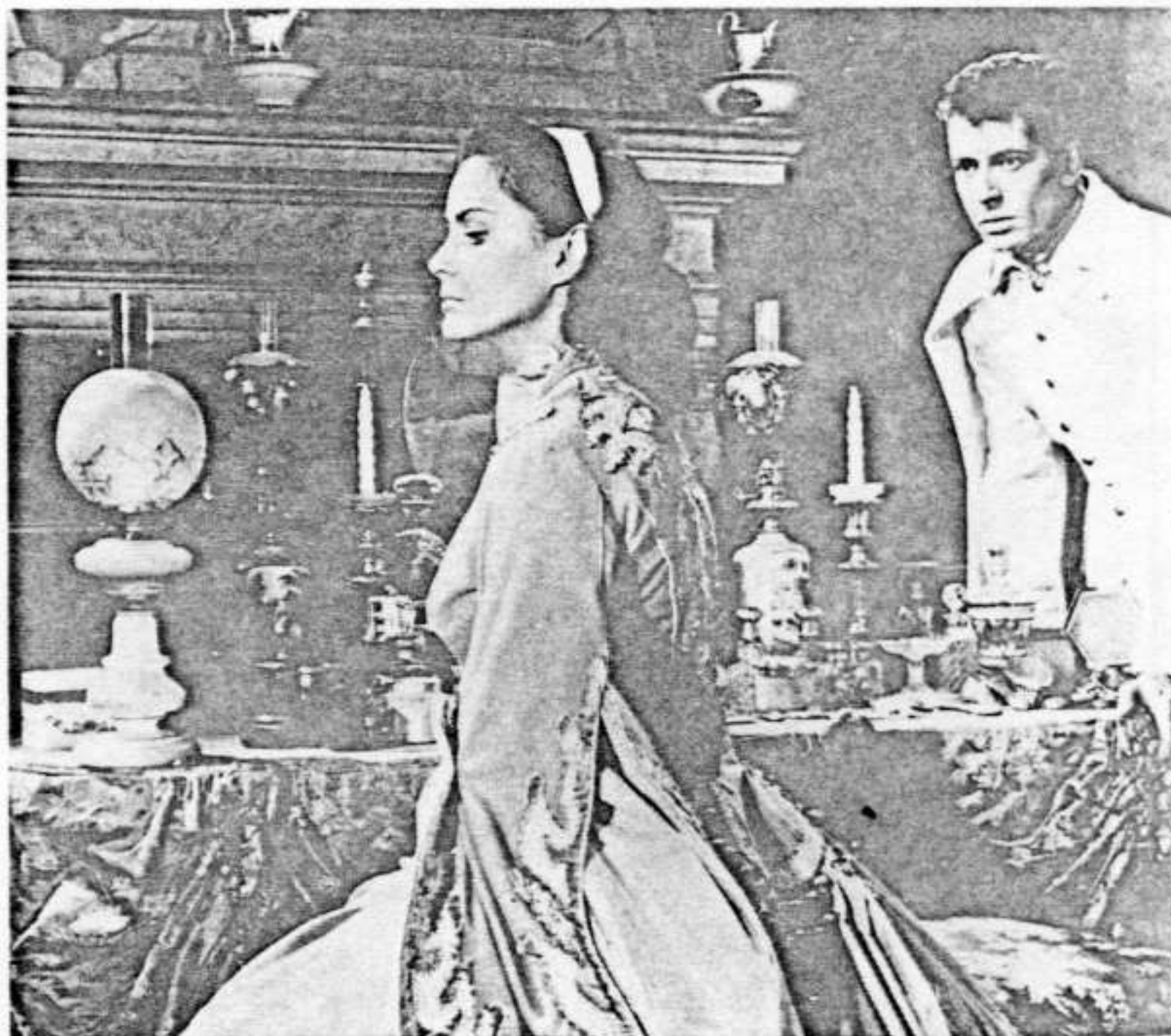
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SENSO. Italy. Script: Luchino Visconti and Suso Cecchi d'Amico, from a short story by Camille Boito. Direction: Visconti. Photography: G. R. Aldo and Robert Krasker (Technicolor). Editing: Mario Serandrei. Music: from Anton Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. Art Direction: Ottavio Scotti. Players: Alida Valli, Farley Granger, Massimo Girotti, Heinz Moog, Rina Morelli, Sergio Fantoni. Production: Lux Films. (120 mins.)

Against the backcloth of the Risorgimento and the crumbling of the old order in Italy, Visconti's masterpiece proceeds with all the majestic rhythm and the meticulous design of Grand Opera. It is a story of degradation; hardly a tragedy, for the lovers care little about the revolutionary ideals that fire those around them. Livia, the countess (Alida Valli) is ensnared by the suave masculinity of Franz Mahler (Farley Granger), an officer in the Austrian army. She bribes him to malingering so that they can remain together, but he spurns her shamelessly. She betrays him to the Commander and Franz is shot summarily for desertion.

Senso is probably the finest color film in the history of the cinema. The compositions have the deep-hued refulgence of Old Master paintings. The glimmering canals and decaying palazzos of Venice project unforgettably—and with romantic realism—the furtive pleasure and the fading resolution of the affair between the countess and her craven admirer. The battle of Custoza, at which Livia's cousin, a brave patriot, is wounded, begins with a formal advance by the infantry, and ends in chaotic retreat. Visconti brings to the film a sense of innate drama that resounds in the accompanying strains of Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. He lingers at the passing of an epoch, deploring the corruption and the hedonism, and yet admiring the elegance and the tranquillity of its civilization. *Senso* is great because Visconti's style is never indulgent. He describes the terrible progression of the lovers with a lucidity that often



1954: *SENSO*—"the countess and her craven admirer."

deserts him elsewhere in his work. When the countess flees deranged through the gloomy streets of Verona while Franz is dragged before the firing squad, it is as though Visconti had peeled away the pretense to display a loathsome foundation of hatred and desire.

SEVEN SAMURAI (Shichinin no Samurai). Japan. Script: Shinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa. Direction: Kurosawa. Photography: Asakazu Nakai. Music: Fumio Hayasaka. Art Direction: So Matsuyama. Players: Takashi Shimura, Toshiro Mifune, Yoshio Inaba, Seiji Miyaguchi, Minoru Chiaki, Daisuke Kato, Ko Kimura. Production: Toho (Shojiro Motoki). (160 mins., originally 200 mins.)