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THE CONFORMIST (IL CONFORMISTA)

Director: Bernardo Bertolucci

Italy/France/Germany 1970 115 minutes • Cast: Jean-Louis Trintignant, Dominique Sanda

Based on a novel by Alberto Moravia, *THE CONFORMIST* is a psychosexual study in the formation of a fascist. The “conformist” of the title is the clenched, suave Marcello Clerici, who has sublimated his repressed homosexuality by joining the Italian Fascists. (As a child he murdered the family chauffeur who seduced him, and has been living with the guilt ever since.) When he is dispatched to Paris to assassinate his mentor, a leftist professor married to a beautiful bisexual woman (Sanda), Clerici’s obsession with normality and social acceptance drives him to a coldly calculated crime. No Bertolucci film is more gorgeous: the chiaroscuro lighting, fluid camera work, ornate visual design, and the many set pieces, from the lesbian tango to the Ides of March murder in the wintry forest, are indelible. This print includes five minutes which were cut for its original release: an elaborate sequence in which Clerici is the only sighted person at a ball attended exclusively by the blind. This sequence is no doubt crucial to what has been called the film’s “dominant metaphor of blindness and sight” (Robert Phillip Kolker). “One of the great films of the seventies, a sensuous, sensual, complex and penetrating analysis of the compulsion toward normalcy and an individual’s need to fit into society” (John Harkness, *NOW*).

Cinematheque History • *Dreams & Delirium: The Films of Bernardo Bertolucci*, 1994; *Summer in Italy II*, 1995

Saturday, July 15 6:30 p.m.

THE CONFORMIST

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