Cabaret-Contini, from page 5
and canes become Nazi style helmets and guns.
The parodies of the night-club routine are unseemly, but marvellously staged and a joy to watch. It is no joy to watch Nazi hooligans slowly take over the streets, or to hear the weary show no fear because “We can control them,” as one noble type German says. The man takes Sally and Brian to his mansion in the country as his guests. They dance the swing, and it is only later that we find he has mustered two of them on separate occasions.
Their wealthy benefactor has driven a wedge of suspicion between the pair, to such an extent that their relation rapidly deteriorates, until she finds out that she is pregnant, and does not know whose child it is. The pair decide to keep the baby, a joy to watch. It is no joy to watch Nazi are unsubtle, but it is. The pair decide to keep the baby, pregnant, and does not know whose child such an extent that their relation rapidly.

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The Italian Jew of 1938 is the topic of The Garden of the Finzi-Contini, and the film moves rather word per image in directing its point home. Very little else in the film is of much consequence, as it expresses the tragedy of an entire people led away merely and slaughtered. The richest family in the small Italian town of Ferrara is the Finzi-Contini family. They are, of course, Jews; they are, of course, good to the other Jews in the area. They are convinced that the best way to weaken the Fascist storm is to withdraw into their palatial estates and avoid contact with the trouble outside.

The film starts with the declaration by the Mussolini government of the anti-Semitic laws: no more inter-marriage, no more public schooling, no more Jewish money to leave the country, and no more servants for Jewish families. The effects are immediate and dramatic: the younger children have no longer to school, the elder children have their careers in the university threatened, and the mother wonders how the house can be run without servants. But these effects are not visited so extensively upon the Finzi-Contini — they seriously affect only the middle class family of Giorgio, Micol Finzi-Contini’s childhood sweetheart. The daughter Micol hidden. The film is pessimistic in tone; no one means it. Almost, but not quite.

The film moves from the subtitles of the nazle massacre flash by. A Jewish girl’s dog is brutally killed and placed at her feet, while “Jude” is written in blood on the sidewalk in front of her house. Micol is brutally beaten by a pair of Nazis when he ridicules them in their presence. One of his felow townsfolk tells him of an international Jewish conspiracy, and he finally replies “You’re part of an international conspiracy too. The international conspiracy of horror’s axes.”

The film is pessimistic in tone; no one can do anything to stop what a few are willing to start. To escape, to go to England, is a coward’s escape. To stay, seemingly in bravely, is to continue the martyrdom of this family. The Finzi—Micol, a tennis partner Giorgio met while playing at the Finzi-Contini’s (the only place he can play now that the tennis club has kicked him out). Micol attempts to interest Micol in a little hanky-panky, but she is convinced he is too “hairy.”

It is just as true. Micol is as frosty as Sally is wary. She is willing to hold Giorgio’s hand, but only for a moment; to kiss him, but only briefly; to visit him after both are alone and apart after a rain storm, but without ever letting him touch the merchandise. There is only one scene in which she eventually shows the slightest amount of warmth, and that is with her blonde acquaintance Malnate, to whom she makes love on the eve of his departure into the army.

There are implications of non-standard sexuality in this film, as there were in Cabaret; the bawdy innkeeper girl Alberico with regard to his actual past, getting only non-committal answers. He asks Giorgio at one point whether he would rather have a woman or a man. The same cuts to the inside of a theater.

In the end, the police cars invade the Finzi-Contini estate, as all Jews are checked off on a master list, even those who have been dead for months. Giorgio’s family is brought in, as are all his friends (the manager to recur at the last minute himself). Here, as in Cabaret, we are the unknownness of either running or hiding.

Between the two films in their approach to the stories they have to tell. De Sica has returned to his roots, using non-professional actors in authentic locations to evoke a general realism, which keeps the acting from overwhelming the plot. He uses subtle lighting, and an occasional soft focus, to take the edge off otherwise figuratively harsh scenes. Bob Fosse, director of Cabaret, used elaborate sets, intricate photography, and absolutely stellar performances by Minnelli and Joe Gray to make his point. I have rarely seen a better parody performance than the one Gray turned in for this film. One is swept away by his macabre presence every time he appears on the screen, a counterpart to the dull, colorless world around him. Cabaret and Finzi-Contini are two films that really stand alone as different approaches to the cinematic art. Yet they have remarkable similarities and points of comparison: they both have welloff heroes, for instance, and men whose personae are dominated by their wives. But, more than that, both of these films represent the agony of the crumbling of imaginary oases in the rise of fascism in the Thirties. And, far from showing different sides of the issue, they evoke the common themes of decadence, in one form or another, that pervades such dying societies — from

P. E. Schindler, Jr.

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