

pressed in the important shaping forces of their lives. This would account for the observation that the Utah Mormon patients more often expressed their pathology in religious terms.

While the use of religious themes in expressing pathology may reflect the influence of religious beliefs, it may also be that the use of religious themes is a defense against facing more troublesome inter-personal and intrapsychic conflict. If this is the case then it would follow that the Utah Mormons had stronger defense systems than the California Mormons. This suggests that the Utah Mormons are reared in a stricter, more authoritarian environment, with a greater stress on right and wrong, and a greater demand to adhere to the "right."

Finally, it seems certain that California citizens are more acceptant of the need for mental health services than are Utah citizens. Perhaps this is the result of the greater availability of mental health services in California. For example, Beverly Hills has one of the highest concentration of psychiatrists in private practice in the country, and mental health clinics are proportionately more numerous in California than in Utah, as are clinical and school psychologists and other mental health professionals.

NOTES FROM A MORMON MOVIE-GOER

Linda Lambert

Linda Lambert is a professional editor and writer who makes her home in Los Angeles.

I'm more than a movie-goer, I'm a critic. That means the question, "What did you think of (*any movie*)?" requires more than "It was great" or "It was lousy." It means I'm hardly ever paid and often suffer a loss of ego: I've just put my soul into a review of *Women in Love* and the day after it's printed somebody says, "Hey, have you seen *Women in Love*?" It means I scribble frantically during the few times the screen is white with light — difficult in any Bergman film, easy during the explosions in *Zabriskie Point*.

But I'm more than a critic, I'm a Mormon critic. That means as a Mormon I'm reluctant to see *Myra Breckinridge*, though as a critic I feel some responsibility to see such a talked-about picture. It means church members chide me ("Seen any skin flicks lately?"), use me ("What's a good film where there isn't a line around the block?") and worry about my testimony ("How can you even go to films when they're all so bad?"). My purpose here, as a Mormon who makes it to the movies more often than might be considered good for her, is to reflect on my experiences during my first year as a Mormon critic.

Crossroads, the publication I write for, is not for Mormons. Its circulation is among English-speaking Japanese, and despite increased conversions

among Oriental people, I have no indication that my readers are anything but, as the editor likes to say, "Buddaheads." Religion, therefore, plays no explicit part in my reviews (though once in a review of *Paint Your Wagon* I did mention the Mormons), but my religion is an implicit factor in my approach to criticism: it affects the films I choose to see and what I write about them.

When I began reviewing in July 1969, I had a great love of the movies. I soon found out that one of the occupational hazards of the critic is the number of films he sees — whether he is obligated by his publication or his conscience or is simply lured by free screenings for the press. William Zinser reviewed more than 600 movies in 3½ years for the *New York Herald Tribune*, which he said nearly killed his interest in movies. As a lower-echelon critic, my tally is significantly smaller: I saw slightly over 50 movies during the last year. Though my interest at the end of that time was nowhere near moribund, there were a lot of movies I thought ought to have been killed before they were canned for distribution.

By the end of a year I was hearing the little voice (the one I rely on to tip me off) say "I dislike" more than "I like," and my reviews were sounding about as cheerful as obituaries. It was fun, on occasion, to imaginatively lambast a detestable picture. I once devoted a whole column to *De Sade*. A mistake. Why write about a movie I'd advise nobody to see? Besides, I would rather write about good pictures — pictures like *Personna*, *Five Easy Pieces*, *Oliver*, and *Z*. Too, I suspected that my readers might get weary, as well as wary, of a critic who was always shaking his head and panning films in print — even if he was just reflecting a real slump on the film front. My solution was to cut back my reviews from one a week to one every other week, and to think about the kind of pictures I was seeing.

After several of the reviews I wrote for *Crossroads* appeared in a church newsletter, a lady came up to me after Sunday school one morning and despaired aloud: "Don't you ever see anything but "R" and "X" movies?" "Well, yes," I said. "There was *Ring of Bright Water* and *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, and . . ." It did seem that if I wasn't spending sentences on *De Sade* I was dispensing mixed blessings about *Sister George*. Was the chink in my critical armor a disregard for the family picture?

Up until that time (January 1970) I had paid little attention to the ratings. Like any other movie-goer, I was affected by word of mouth, advertising, and the advice of critics I respected. But more than any of those, I relied on past movie-going experience. I began to notice the ratings of pictures and I began to use them, along with the above-mentioned criteria, as an aid in deciding whether or not I would initially attend a picture. I did not, however, avoid an "X" movie just because it was an "X."

Several more months passed and then one of the brethren asked me if I were seeing any films which might be injurious to my spiritual health. If my job required me to see such movies, he thought it might be well for me to consider another profession. I hesitated, and then articulated the basic position I still hold. "Yes," I said, "if you put 'X' movies in that category."

While I had little appetite for and would not expose myself to any film I anticipated as pointlessly dirty, steeped in sex or detrimental to my testimony, I would usually attend an "X" movie which I thought would be exceptional. *Medium Cool* and *Midnight Cowboy*, for example. I might add that I was hard put to name an "X" movie besides those two which I considered good. In fact I couldn't think of one. I don't think he knew what an "X" rating was anyway, for he ignored my qualification. Then I explained that I was not bound by the newspaper I write for to see or review any film I didn't want to, and that since "movie critic" is only one of the journalistic hats I wear, compared to other critics I spend relatively few hours at the cinema.

Our conversation, now that he knew my job did not require my attendance at films which might debase me, continued with the subject of movies in general. He had seen few movies of late, but didn't think there were many, if any, worth seeing. I could imagine his saying in 20 years what one elderly relative proudly told me: "Why, I haven't seen a movie since 1937."

I understand the desire to reject films as a whole when the marquees are cluttered with titles like *The Babymaker*, *Dansk Sexualitet*, and *The Marriage Manual*. And yet, I feel there are too many persons within the Church who categorically reject movies as if they were a single, universally vile commodity, like napalm. Somehow they have escaped the sometimes soft, sometimes strident voices of those who believe in the movies. ("Look here, film can entertain, elevate and educate — it's an art!") In 1914 people were astonished that a poet like Vachel Lindsay would write a whole book on cinema, a vulgar medium produced for the masses and machine-made. I'm afraid that there are still those who summarily dismiss film as an art form, and I'm not sure they can be persuaded to the contrary, even though a *Song of Norway* or *Sound of Music* may temporarily put a crack in their wall of certainty.

A slightly more discriminating variation of the movies-are-all-bad attitude is the one reflected by this comment: "Oh, I never go to anything but G-rated movies." I have no quarrel with persons who feel that only "G" movies are appropriate for them and are, indeed, the ones they most enjoy. I think, however, that too many readers use the rating system not as a way of discerning the film's suitability or unsuitability for children — which was the original purpose of the Motion Picture Producers Association — but as a way of determining its quality. To them, "X" is synonymous with bad ("X it off your list") and "G" stands for good ("Go see it"). Just as misguided are those who consider themselves more enlightened, for whom "X" portends sophisticated, nitty-gritty cinema while "G" promises pallid, innocuous entertainment. The MPPA code is not a star system, although some people may think that "G" means a 4-star movie. The ratings mean what they say. A "G" film is for the general public. "GP" is for the general public with parental guidance suggested. "R" is restricted to persons under 17 unless accompanied by parents, and "X" specifies that no one under 17 can attend.

The biggest problem, as the President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography recently discovered, has been to get theater owners to enforce the code. Exhibitors are notoriously lax in their admission policies. One way to circumvent the problem is to keep youngsters uninformed as to what's playing where, and to prevent their exposure to tantalizing advertisements. In that respect the *Church News*' decision to refuse advertisements for "X" and "R" rated films was a very positive move. The *News* referred to the "moral deterioration of films" since the establishment of the code in November 1968. They expressed their objections to scenes of permissive sex, nudity, and violence in current films; they hoped that their refusal to advertise "X" and "R" rated films, as well as the public's refusal to attend them, would prompt a return to higher standards in motion pictures.

The fact that *The Love Bug* was the highest grossing picture last year and the fact that filmmakers have, on occasion, deleted segments of a film in order to obtain a "GP" instead of an "R" rating is cheerful news. But by and large there's enough sex, nudity, and violence in American films to satisfy the dirtiest old man and disgust most everybody else at one time or another. I object to the surfeit of sex, violence, etc., so I like to have information available to help me decide which movies I will or will not attend. Advertisements are a means of obtaining that basic, though decidedly slanted, information. If I were a newspaper publisher who could afford to exclude all or part of my movie advertising, I would serve my readers' needs in another way: I would carry a list of current films which would include credits and a plot capsulization, and I would have as many reviews as possible by a reviewer who had my audience's principles and standards in mind. I would pay particular attention to "R" movies, because the "R" rating with its allowance of greater frankness and candor, has included some serious attempts at art as well as the more numerous sensational films by filmmakers who misuse their freedom to make a buck. A critic sensitive to his reader's standards might be able to steer him clear of questionable films.

Of course, as I learned some time ago, it is almost impossible to predict a film's effect on any two people. Two of my friends went to see *Women in Love*. One came out soured and depressed by what she had seen on the screen; the other felt edified by what D. H. Lawrence had to say about love and human relationships.

Everytime I sit down to write my movie R, I try to remember that I am an individual who can only label *my* reactions. When I dub a movie good I try to make my reasons explicit, for when it comes to opinions on films, one person's "great" is another person's "garbage." I do not want to be one of the quacks of film criticism who thinks he can always prescribe what's good or what's not good for his readers.

I used to think it was okay to see any film I wanted to. But as a Mormon seeking whatever is virtuous, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy, and as a critic hoping to lead other people to the same, I decided that exposure to some films, like sampling heroin, is unnecessary and contrary to my well being. While I think my testimony is strong enough to endure ex-

posure to most excesses on the screen, I will leave it to other critics to discover those “sleepers” among X-rated films. If one turns out to be a marvelous work of art, great. I’ll see it. Then I’ll jump on the bandwagon, if indeed I think the film is worth trumpeting about.

I didn’t like parts of such films as *Bloody Mama*, *The Killing of Sister George*, and *A Man Called Horse*. But until my list of scenes-I-would-like-to-un-see grows longer than my list of films to re-see, I will still anticipate putting movies under my magnifying glass and be one of many super-sleuths of the movies — a critic, a Mormon critic.

EDITORIAL DECISIONS

Dialogue receives hundreds of manuscripts each year. We thought our readers might like to know something about the way we handle these manuscripts, and why it sometimes takes a good deal of time to make a decision on a manuscript.

We feel that part of *Dialogue’s* success is due to the fact that each manuscript is given at least five different readings. Normally, each manuscript is sent to three members of the Board of Editors, who are requested to submit a written evaluation and a recommendation either to accept, accept with revisions, or reject the manuscript.

After a manuscript comes back from the Board it is read by at least two (and sometimes by as many as five) members of the editorial staff. This happens even with rejected manuscripts. This is our way of assuring that every manuscript gets a fair hearing. If authors sometimes wonder why it takes so long to get a decision on a manuscript, perhaps they will appreciate our conscientious efforts — and the fact that all the editorial work is done by professional people who donate their time to *Dialogue*.

Usually the decision as to whether to publish an article, essay, review, note, poem or story is a fairly easy one. Generally there is a consensus among the Board Members. Sometimes, however, members of the Board differ in their estimates of a manuscript’s worth, and when this is the case the decision is more difficult. To illustrate this difficulty, we thought it would be interesting to publish a poem which was submitted to us along with the three evaluations by the Board. (By the way, can you guess which response was written by a female editor?)

PRAYER FROM A SECOND HUSBAND

Mary L. Bradford

She always came to the door
as if expecting someone else.
But she devoted her day
to the hogs, the horses and me.
She kept the butter whirling,