

Thesis vs antithesis: Wyckoff and Boyfriends

by Frank McGinn

Double bills are an endangered species, like the blue whale, and I hate to harpoon one and hasten the process of their extinction. And there is even something positive to be said of the two movies currently running together at the Odeon Oxford. "Old Boyfriends", a film by and about a woman, has an interesting scheme and some finely-shaded characters while "Good Luck Miss Wyckoff", based on a novel by William Inge, has plenty of crude energy. But, and as my brother was saying to me just the other day, it's a big but, the two films work against one another and their combined effect is to nullify the entire, long evening.

"Good Luck Miss Wyckoff" tops the bill. As you might guess from the title, it is about a high school teacher, and as you might expect from William Inge, it is about grand passion in a small town. Miss Wyckoff is, the saints preserve us, another 35-year-old, neurotic, Southern virgin and we meet her on the verge of her 19th nervous breakdown. (Actually it is only her first but we have seen at least 18 previous crazed, fictional spinsters doing the same number, weeping uncontrollably at odd moments, putting the old fist through the mirror to demonstrate self-hatred, etc.) She looks like hell, with a complexion the colour of

boiled cabbage and a bad case of the vague stares, and when her doctor tells her a woman needs romance or her juices will dry up, you begin to consider stepping outside for a breath of fresh air, before your brain dries up. As it turns out, however, that would be a mistake.

William Inge writes stories that are cliched and didactic, but powerful, or at least powerfully gripping. This movie is like a game of chess. The characters are not people, they are symbolic pieces representing Repressed Sexuality, Hypocrisy, Wisdom and so on. And they are manoeuvred into position slowly.

There are only so many opening moves in a game of chess and there are an equally limited number of ways to set up this kind of small town conflict between, say, natural and social law. But, as the chess game gathers momentum and becomes enthralling, so too does Inge's tawdry spectacle gradually arrest and secure the sophisticated viewer's undivided attention. The emotion is too intense, the human interest appeal too basic for non-involvement and when Miss Wyckoff explodes, we are all shaken.

The trouble is that "Old Boyfriends" is the exact, linear opposite type of movie. Instead of chunky characterizations and an increasingly taut plot, it offers slim, sure character sketches and a frag-

mented, episode story line. Talia Shire plays a no-longer-young professional woman who embarks on a quest to find herself through her past. Her method of self-examination consists in the looking up of old boyfriends and, in turn, she visits the man she almost married, the high school hero who almost seduced her and the love of her life when she was in the seventh grade.

This is an intriguing, if implausible, concept and it is developed with taste and a fair degree of wit. The lady herself is a quirky, enigmatic character, interesting to watch as her past becomes her present tense. Some of her encounters are mildly pleasing. Richard Jordan makes an enormously endearing ex-lover trying to become current and John Belushi is funny in the short, revenge-oriented skit.

But after the no-holds-barred, calling-all-guards action of the Inge potboiler, the level discretion here seems boring and the measured pace is positively poky. While at the same time, the skillfully-drawn actual people make you realize with a vengeance how crudely Miss Wyckoff and her pals were created. The sad truth is that the first show makes the second one seem monotonous and the second show makes the first one seem ridiculous. Although both these films feature troubled women, they should never have been run together.

Poetry contest

*How do I love thee?
Let me count the ways.
But wait till let's wait till January.*

The judges of the first annual Gazette poetry contest are sorry to announce that a contest winner will not be declared this issue, as previously planned. Due to an unexpectedly large number of entries, we have decided it isn't possible to do a fair evaluation of everyone's poetry in the space of a week. We want to assure all entrants, however, that winners will be announced and their poems published in the first Gazette issue after Christmas.

The Judges

Lysistrata revival successful

by George Evans

Despite an unfavourable review put out in the Halifax Herald after opening night, turnout for Dal Theatre's production of Lysistrata continued to increase throughout the week. Approximately 800 people enjoyed the performance of the revision of Aristophanes' ancient comedy. Some comment was made that the revision by John Lewin left something to be desired. It was felt that the updated version lost much of the impact of the original work.

The play's preview opened on Wednesday night to a full house. One noteworthy member of the audience was the director of Neptune Theatre, John Neville. After the performance he remarked, "I felt the performance was thoroughly charming, and I

enjoyed every minute. The scenography was remarkable."

Cueing, in the initial performances was generally slow, but everything was running beautifully by the Saturday matinee. During this performance I was so totally captivated, that I missed my cue to change a slide on the panning projector, resulting in a distressing change in the lighting. Sincerest apologies to everyone involved.

Cathryn Coll performed amazingly well the part of Kalonika when she had to substitute for Michelle Chase on Thursday night. Michelle lost her voice after the preview, but came back in full force on Friday night. Tish Monaghan captured the character of Lysistrata with complete success throughout the performances, which ran until

Sunday. All of the actors worked well to form a unified whole. Special appreciation goes to Angela Moutoulas who played the part of Myrina without flaw throughout the series of performances. The actresses portraying Lysistrata, Kalonika and Myrina gave the show its power, while the parts of the old women and men provided the necessary levity which repeatedly caused the audience to fall into fits of laughter. Especially the part of the old man as played by Kent Gallie.

All in all, the director from the Limelight Theatre in Toronto, Adolf Toman did an amazing job in blending these actors and actresses of mixed previous experience successfully for the benefit of the hundreds of people who came to view the performances at the James Dunn Theatre.

...AND IN MY LAST LETTER I SPECIFICALLY TOLD YOU SAUZA IS NUMBER ONE! YOU DON'T SEEM TO UNDERSTAND... NUMERO UNO! SAUZA! I DON'T WAN'T TO HAVE TO SEND YOU ANOTHER LETTER!



TEQUILA SAUZA!



NUMERO UNO IN MEXICO AND IN CANADA

TEN GOOD REASONS TO VISIT

The Leather Foot

A Division of D.J.'s Tannery
5487 SPG. GDN. RD., 423-8567

Clarke's of England
Geronimo / Frye / Acorn
Lighthouse / Annie Hall
Bootlegger / Sperry
Pierre Cardin / Palmer

