



"When I grow up, I'm going to stay single ... and all my children are, too!"

## Woman triumphant?

by Michael McCarthy

There is little to complain about in Goldie Hawn's latest film, *Private Benjamin*. On the other hand, there is not an overabundant wealth of things to laud, either. I therefore conclude that its huge popularity can be attributed to a glut of decidedly disappointing movies which makes PB's type of bland, inoffensive type of entertainment seem rapturous in comparison. Of course, one should not underrate the drawing power of Miss Hawn, who is not only one of the world's most beautiful women, but a natural comedienne and a captivating actress, with a rare combination of vulnerability and stamina which render her screen efforts affecting and convincing even when they are not fully utilized as in this movie.

The film lends itself to escapism, as one identifies with the protagonist Judy Benjamin as she is thrown from catastrophe to the army and back, emerging triumphant in the denouement. Judy is a girl who has always been looked after by men, but when her second husband dies she must make her own way. Lured into the army by false recruiting promises, she is about to give up, but a tirade (from her parents) on her inability to handle her life gives her the motivation she needs to stick it out. She becomes the

feminist's ideal, with the strength to establish her career, to fight against corrupt superiors, to stand by the man she loves, and even to leave the security of a marriage when she realizes that her partner is a lying shmuck. The picture ends with Judy striding away from the church where she has just chosen to forego matrimony in favour of a life of her own, confident and finally winning out over her problem. It is almost the equivalent of a female Rocky, only it doesn't quite have the punch of that movie (no pun intended) (well, maybe just a little intended...oh, all right, I did it on purpose).

The film definitely deals with relevant social situations. There are abundant humorous moments, such as when Judy's second husband dies as they make love on the bathroom floor ("What were his last words?", asks his aunt. "I'm coming.", answers Judy after a moment's reflection), Judy's naivety in the army, and her stumbling into capturing an enemy unit during war games. Miss Hawn's portrayal is touching and realistic, as she depicts the emotional battles her character goes through to establish her own identity, separate from her parents, friends, and husbands, and she is constantly bringing a

smile to our lips, thereby never letting the film get maudlin or too remote.

The role is too trite, however, and is too extreme in both the weak and strong personas of Judy. Miss Hawn's character fills the screen too much, and does not offer the depth or vigour to sustain the exposure. None of the supporting cast stand out either way. The plot seems rather contrived (i.e. not many 28-year-old women have been divorced, widowed, and almost married again; too many things seem to happen to Goldie in particular in the army). The army is portrayed as something akin to a summer camp where tricks are constantly played (Goldie's group put blue dye in their captain's shower) and is not always depicted in a believable manner. Many of the male-female oppositions are cliches. Also, it is doubtful that leaving the church in your wedding gown, jobless, over 30, and alone is really as triumphant a situation as the movie would have us think (although the point is taken that presumably the heroine is strong enough to survive).

This movie will provide a passable 90-minutes of entertainment which won't leave you wishing you had spent your money more wisely. However, it is not likely to find a lasting place in your memory.

## One good urn deserves another

by Michael McCarthy

Pasolini's interpretation of *Medea* is an exacting film that will not be to all tastes, but will be rewarding to the viewer with the patience and receptiveness to give himself up to the atmosphere generated by the movie. This 1970 Italian/German/French collaboration is far removed from the British/American tradition of performance. It eschews the exploitation of action, of romantic plots, and of centering on one "star" player, and instead adopts a stylized, ascetic tone intended to create a mood through the cumulative effects of all the separate components of the film. There is a drastic reduction in dialogue, and an accompanying increase in the detailed presentation of movements, of ritual, of visual representations of emotions and compelling forces. There is a strong attempt to recreate the milieu of ancient Greece, where the story was first told, and to present the tale in the form that the Greeks may well have seen it.

This includes the assumption that the characters are already established to the audience, that the inevitability of fate is accepted, and that scrupulous following of ritual and stylized actions are necessary to demonstrate the relationships and motivating factors. One must believe in the heroic ideal, and in the disaster that accompanies offending the Gods. One must see the story not only as a fantastic tale, but as myth that had deep spiritual, or at least, moral consequences for those steeped in the tradition from which it sprung.

The plot concerns the hero Jason, who sails from his homeland to win the Golden Fleece (a symbol of power and continuity) and thereby a kingdom. He is helped by the foreign priestess Medea (passionately played by Maria

Callas), who forsakes her people and her God to return with Jason. Fate decrees that Jason grows enamoured of another, and Medea, alone physically and spiritually, is banished. She exacts a grisly revenge, killing her (and Jason's) sons. The ruthlessness of the two lovers result in their falling from their heights of triumph to the depths of despair, in the true tragic vein.

The rocky and barren, yet beautiful landscapes are beautifully photographed. Authentic, colourful costuming is used, and religious rites and sacrifices are portrayed in a manner that not only is interesting from a historical viewpoint, but gives an aura of mysticism that allows one a glimpse of the belief that underlies the strange, exotic actions. The acting is powerful in its own, silent and representational way, and the whole movie forms a cohesive vista of the culture of the ancient Greeks. The mien of the characters, their dress, actions, and the tools and transportation they use are much more believable and realistic than the Hollywood "epics" generally made concerning this era.

Unfortunately, the long silences in which the viewer must follow enigmatic and frequently unclear events on the screen with no explanation, would tend to leave those too used to passively receiving clear stereotyped characters and situations of the ilk predominant in North American performances, uninterested and/or confused. Probably some previous exposure to the Greek tradition is necessary to appreciate the film and its form of communication. The uninitiated quite possibly would, unfortunately, miss the panorama of heroic Greece and the forces eminent in its culture that this movie provides.

### Cryptoquote

By Chris Young

DM ZMFLV D PZCL LGQSZDHLT BHL ZHJSL BM Z KNLRFDBH, QLBQSL ZVLNHZESL FB MDHT FPL BFPLV FPVLL, D YDSS HBF VLQLZF XPZF D PZCL RZDT.

ABHMNADNR

Last week's answer

If it's under a million, it's money; if it's over a million, it's fiscal; and if it's over a billion, it's a deficit.

Wall Street Journal

Remember, entries  
to the  
Gazette-N.S. Scotia  
Poetry Contest  
close December 10

