

Review A Conception of Rosemary's Baby

REVIEWED By RON NORMAN

One great merit of ROSEMARY'S BABY is that it shows what horror films, and the whole tradition of horror, are all about. They are about history, what else? Horror is a flirtation with sadism and masochism; it is the tempting possibility of embracing guilt. Addressed to a mass audience, the horror film lives on mass evil. It may sound silly-Marxist to say so, but this evil can be summed up in one phrase: the alienation of man in capitalist society. Hannah Arendt's famous phrase, "the banality of evil" is resonant because of the evil of banality. For banality is not stupidity or dreariness. As it is commonly encountered, it is a peculiarly bourgeois phenomenon: a firm assertion of the right not to be human.

Rosemary lives with her young husband in a brownstone apartment house in Manhattan. Their neighbours are a dreadfully banal old couple, ghastly American tourists thrice distilled. Their other neighbours are also old and unappetizing. One night, after it has been decided to have a baby, Rosemary has a nightmare of a black Mass with her husband and neighbours present. She is stripped on an altar and, helpless, she is embraced by a devil.

Soon she is pregnant. Her neighbours take charge of her. Her husband gets a break when a colleague suddenly goes blind. He becomes cold and banal. Rosemary finds out that her neighbours are witches and suspects that they plan to sacrifice her baby. She tries to escape, is caught, has the baby and is told it is dead. She enters her neighbours' apartment and finds the coven assembled around a cradle, and in it a baby with terrible eyes, which we are never shown. She is told that it is Satan's; she is allowed to rock the cradle and she is left singing a slightly hysterical lullaby.

Normality is usually said to provide a contrast with horror in pieces like this. In ROSEMARY'S BABY normality is clearly the home of the evil. One cares nothing for the devil, who is defined by God. Our concern is what is evil to human beings, and the whole ambience of New York and middle-class apartment-dwelling is used to define that evil. Normality is the text, with fantasy as the exposition. The old neighbour, the chief power of evil, is simply a boring old American businessman in hideous clothes whose idea of conversation is telling stories. But he is also very clever. And there is loneliness, defined by the solitude of a wife who spends her day alone.

The "black" or "sick" moment at the end puts the film on the wrong side. Impelled by "maternal instinct", Rosemary takes the baby to herself. The "black" thing is Rosemary's helplessness before "instinct". This tells us that we are really machines, and that freedom is an escapable illusion. The way of masochistic emptiness, and of sadistic serenity, is opened for us. The action is not dramatically probable, but then a denial of human reality is under no obligation to be credible.

Motion pictures, by the way, can be very good at depicting human beings as machines. Editing can limit us to those actions which seem most mechanical. And frames often show only the upper parts of bodies. This can have a curious effect. A man seen from the waist up, like a butcher chopping meat, can sometimes look very much like a machine, but his legs symbolically remind us that he is human and has an underlying project rather than causes. This may sound quaint, but think about it.

The very real impact of ROSEMARY'S BABY is in its muffled echo of that cry which was voiced by Paul Nizan, "Where is man hidden? We are smothering. From childhood they have mutilated us. They are all monsters".

By-law keeps homes from students

TORONTO (CUP) - A housing by-law in the Toronto suburb of North York is preventing some 300 York University students from getting adequate accommodation.

North York, a predominately suburban-bungalow area, does not allow single-family homes to rent rooms and the university does not have sufficient residence space to handle the 300.

However, the suburb mayor, James Service, promised yesterday (Sept. 9) to try to temporarily suspend the regulations until York has built sufficient housing to meet the demand.

Second Hand Book Store

SEPT. 9-30

Place: Rink Canteen

Hours: 9 - 5, Mon. - Fri.
10-12 Sat.

Prices: Set your own Price
Get it Less 20%

Operated by:

Alpha Gamma Delta

THE
PERFECT GIFT:
A BEAUTIFUL 5 LB.
BOX OF
COMMERCE
MONEY



CANADIAN IMPERIAL
BANK OF COMMERCE

WANTED:
ADS FOR

THE
DALHOUSIE
GAZETTE

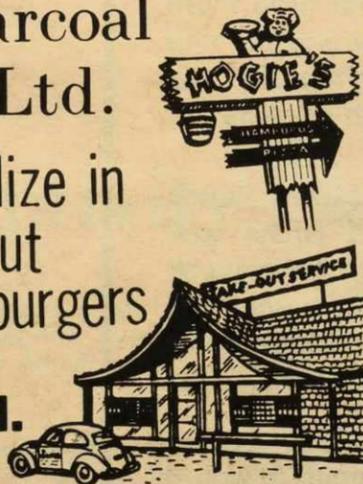
Reward
Student Purchasers

CALL
Alec McCleave
422-7570

Swiss Charcoal
bar-B-q- Ltd.

We Specialize in
take out
Pizza - Hamburgers

6273
Quinpool Rd.
422-4414



MEET ME
AT
Coburg Rd. &
LeMarchant



CANADIAN IMPERIAL
BANK OF COMMERCE

Doug
Marriott's
ESSO

Cor. Quinpool Rd. & Robie St.

Specialist in
Sports Car Repair

WE PRIDE OURSELVES
IN GIVING THE
UNIVERSITY STUDENT
COMPLETE SERVICE
AND A
FAIR DEAL.
423-7630

S.P.C.A. SAY:
BE KIND TO
A COMMERCE
TELLER



White Stag

LONG SLEEVE EMBROIDERED

Sweater

in beautiful shades of:
CHOCOLATE - BROWN - GOLD
combinations
PARSLEY GREEN
combinations
and NAVY - BLUE
combinations

sizes small, medium, large

\$18.00

SLIMS

to match the colours
in above sweaters in
fine Botany Wool
SIZES **\$15.00**
8-18

Available at...

Mix & Match

6281 Quinpool
423-7600