

Letters To The Editor

Valley of the Dolls, Little More Than A Character Sketch

Dear Editor:

"Valley of the Dolls" may be "one of the year's biggest money-making motion pictures," but this fact is true not because of its depth of meaning but because the producers of the tabloid have spent millions of dollars in raising the curiosity of the public via publicity. It is clearly a sensational movie, filmed to make money and that's all.

The movie is not, however, entirely unenjoyable. Credits to the movie would be the beautiful New England scenery, the glamorous clothes, and the young and attractive stars. Aside from this, there is little else to its credit. There is no depth to the story, few absorbing characterizations, no surprises. The movie is little more than a character sketch (and a poorly organized one at that) of three girls as they live out their lives in the world of sleeping pills, movie stars, models, pep pills, sex, slimming pills, insane asylums, tranquilizing pills and getting to the top. And, I suppose, the "moral" of the movie might be that once they have reached the top (whatever that is) there is nothing more. It is only the portrait of the easy success story which is really not very successful.

Ann Welles, perhaps the best developed character but the most disappointing, begins as the secretary to a theatrical lawyer and then becomes famous as a model of cosmetics. She is the girl who left her New England home to make her way in the big city, but as she does, she succumbs to sex and dolls (the pills.) At the end she takes hold of herself, returns home, and walks off into the snow-covered countryside, supposedly proving something, just like in the movies.

Neely O'Hara wins quick success as a singer, but because she thinks there is no one as good as she is, she destroys those who loved her, uses her friends and husbands, and alternates between sanitariums and stage comebacks.

The most pathetic character in the movie is that of Jennifer North. Jennifer is constantly seeking a true romance, someone who will love her for herself and not for her body. In spite of this, she uses her body to make French nude movies, and in the end commits suicide (via the "dolls") because of an operation that will mar her body.

In closing, I would like to quote Penelope Mortimer, one of England's foremost film critics: "What this film does is to succeed entirely in what it sets out to do—to wrench tears from those whose tears are near enough to the surface to be wrenched, to involve those whose involvement needs to be vicarious, to tug at heart-strings attached to sleeves. It is a kind of poor girl's 'The Group' with show-biz birds for graduate ladies and a deep welter for female masochism replacing the spark of intelligence."

—Nancy Spann

"Be Specific Or Withdraw Your Comment"

Dear Editor:

Throughout this year, the editorials in *The Dialette* have maintained the time-honored tradition of campus newspapers by frequently being critical of various aspects of college life. These criticisms, sometimes deserved, have usually been tempered with constructive suggestions. Unhappily this cannot be said of the comments on required chapel in your recent editorial (March 22.) That discussion seems to me to be irresponsible, misleading and harmful.

Your editorial is irresponsible, because it makes general and unsubstantiated accusations of maltreated Scriptures and personal obsessions on the part of people who have come here to address the student body. As a member of the Religious Activities Committee, which has invited some of these speakers, I feel this is a serious slur which ought not to go unchallenged. In fairness to all the men who have spoken in our chapel, you should be specific or withdraw your comment.

Your editorial is misleading because it chooses to ignore the considerable variety of style and subject matter on the part of visiting speakers in order conveniently to lump all that has been offered in Friday chapels under the heading of "pious irrelevance." Some speakers may, at times, be pious or irrelevant or both at once. But chapel talks have ranged widely over themes as diverse as the current sexual mores and the nature of the problem of evil. So perhaps you could enlighten your readers as to the standard you use which leads you to suggest all of these are a waste of time for students. The editorial is further misleading in declaring that the chapel rules "states simply that each student is allowed to miss only three chapel services each semester." The statement on page 33, of the *Student Handbook* reads as follows: "Each student is allowed three unexcused absences from Sunday morning worship and a total of six unexcused absences from chapel, college convocations and official college functions combined." As the system is set up at present a student could, if he so desired, take each of those six cuts on Fridays.

Your editorial is harmful because it advocates a disrespectful attitude toward our chapel speakers. You do our campus the disservice of suggesting that if a student does not wish to participate, "he should turn his back to the speaker. He should read, play cards, study for the third period test or whatever . . ."

In effect you invite students to violate one of the basic standards of a responsible community, that of according its guests a respectful and a fair hearing. No one requires that students agree with all they hear; quite the contrary, but even disagreement, if it is to be informed, necessitates some attention to what is being said.

The advantages and disadvantages of one required chapel service dur-

ing the school week ought to be discussed on campus and when the subject is taken up in the editorial column of the official campus newspaper your readers are surely not unreasonable in expecting a responsible contribution to the debate. You could, for example, render a service to all of us by stating and exploring some of the basic questions which you say "hammer within" the student body. You could also promote some positive suggestions as to how to get the most out of the brief 40 minutes that are dedicated to communal worship each school week.

Comment of that kind might engender a fruitful discussion which would help to drive out some of the unconstructive and peevish complaining of which we have a surplus.

Yours Truly,

Donald Mitchell.

Dear Mr. Mitchell:

I have lately learned that this letter should be addressed to the entire Religious Activities Committee in the form of a withdrawal or an apology. I sincerely hope that I have not thus far offended or will not further offend any of the committee members. I am sure the committee is unbiased enough to see through the opinion of one student and realize that his views do not necessarily reflect those of the entire student body. I was not aware of the reaction which could result from an editorial on such a sensitive subject. Although, the committee must realize that this does not mean I am withdrawing my editorial or the parts you deemed worthy of withdrawal.

I appreciate being given the chance to reply to your accusations. I feel as Peter and John who were brought before the Sanhedrin in the fourth chapter of Acts for healing a cripple. "By what power or by what name did you do this thing?" was the question put before them. The Sanhedrin without knowing it, had given the disciples of Christ a chance to preach the word of God and win souls to their cause. I will attempt to be more specific and clarify the points of interest you consider "irresponsible, misleading, and harmful," with all due respect to the Religious Activities Committee.

When a person makes a discovery, he often becomes so convinced that he wants everyone possible to learn of it. If this were not so, Christianity would have not gotten as far as it has in the world today. I can find no place in the Bible where a speaker of God's word had an audience which had to listen against its will. Based on personal conviction alone, I feel the Scripture, meaning the word of God, is being maltreated when we are forced by our institution to listen to its exposition rather than being allowed to accept it on faith freely. At the same time that the speaker is preaching the word of God to the Montreat audience gathered against its own will he may also use his conviction to the point where it reaches obsession. George Bernard Shaw once said, "When I was a little boy, I was compelled to go to church on Sunday; and though I escaped from that intolerable bondage before I was ten, it preudicated me so violently against churchgoing that 20 years elapsed before, in foreign lands in pursuit of art, I became once more a church-goer. To this day, my flesh creeps when I recall that genteel suburban Irish Protestant Church,

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The Sin Of Silence

—By James Halstead

I have had a troubling bout with my conscience in the days following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. I have been especially troubled by some words reportedly spoken by Dr. King here in Montreat in 1965. In an address at that time, he is said to have reserved his harshest criticism for the people of both races who were largely "unconcerned" about racial problems.

Now, I have been concerned. Concerned in a detached, distant way by the riots in far-off cities. My sin, basically, is the same as that of much of the middle-class white America: the sin of silence.

I have been silent. Many of us have been silent, and the extremists and anarchists have taken advantage of our silence. The Stokely Carmichael's and Rapp Browns." The ranting clansmen, and the red-neck local politicians who gain votes on the basis of their fervent racism, they have been heard. And all the while, supposedly decent and broad-minded people have been choking on their comfort.

We turned our heads a decade ago while King's early followers were doused with hoses and chased by police dogs while demonstrating for the privilege of choosing any seat on a bus. We continued to turn heads from the almost unbelievable forgiveness and courage of King and his many followers.

It will be difficult for us to turn our heads any longer. The black man will not let us. He demands confrontation. And that confrontation, whatever form it takes, promises to be difficult.

It will be difficult to carry out the exhortation of former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, John Gardner, who challenged the white race to "extend a hand across the gulf of fear and anger" to our black brother. There is evidence that increasing numbers of blacks will reject that hand. And if we are not prepared to accept and understand this rejection we had better think twice before extending the hand.

Being realistic, however, it seems that we have little choice but to grant the black man full equality and to offer our help and understanding as he attempts to bridge the wide gulf between subservient, second-class citizenship a responsible, creative position in society as a first-class citizen. The gulf is indeed wide in many cases, and the black man will need white help and understanding if he is to cross it. Martin Luther King always exhorted black men to maintain communication with the white man whose help he needed.

There is, of course, an alternative to extend the helping hand: open warfare. It is difficult to think that decent men who have enjoyed unparalleled abundance in the most highly civilized society of all history would even consider this alternative. Given time, they probably wouldn't, but it is possible that they will be forced to it by less rational and less decent men.

Decent men must speak out at last—and soon. And all of us must be constantly alert for opportunities—large and small—to help bring an end to racial distrust and to promote racial good will.