

By MELANIE MODLIN  
Asst. Arts Editor

The folks who brought you the Looking Glass Cafe have taken their Alice-in-Wonderland metaphor still further to create The Mad Hatter, located downtown on Franklin Street.

The Hatter bills itself as a "North Carolina Style Deli," a puzzling term since the place seems to have every element of a New York delicatessen, right down to the bagels and Dr. Brown's cream soda.

The decor is definitely no-frills — there's a pristine look to the wood-paneled walls and chopping-block-style tables, which are so new that they're even graffiti-free. Plastic utensils and paper plates are also part of the layout. Yet for all this spartan atmosphere, great care and delicacy seem to be lavished upon each sandwich and salad the kitchen prepares — so much in fact that service may occasionally seem sluggish. It's probably

worth the wait, though; portions are generous and it's with an artistic hand that the multi-layered sandwiches are put together.

The menu is unlike any other in Chapel Hill, and instills in the diner a feeling of power. Given a choice of cheeses (from among ten international varieties) and nine different meats, the client can become a Michelangelo or mozzarella or a Picasso of pastrami, combining ingredients in whatever fashion he finds gastronomically satisfying. Sandwiches can be as straightforward as the one-meat offering (\$1.75) or as razzle-dazzle as the mile-high three meat and three cheese.

## Things are hopping at 'The Mad Hatter'

Those who hanker after a lighter meal might try this interesting twist, new on the Chapel Hill scene: the Cheese Board (\$1.25), with your choice of five varieties and any one bread. Anything prepared on the premises can be "carried out" as well.

Salad bar fanatics might find a veritable wonderland in the one featured here. Forty ingredients are arranged in their panoramic glory, some of the more intriguing items being raisins, olives, grapefruit sections and anchovies.

Also for vegetarians, or anyone craving something extraordinary, there are certain

creations that border on nirvana. One is the "Mushroom Melt" sandwich which, in addition to the main ingredient, features cucumbers, sprouts, sunflower seeds and tomatoes.

With a menu as varied as this one, you would have to come back hundreds of times before having to eat reruns. Considering the quality of the ingredients, you may want to have a shot at it, trying to sample every possible combination. And, should your passion for salads and sandwiches begin to cool, it's possible you'll get hooked on the desserts. It's never made clear who "Barbara" is, but she is given credit on the menu for creating the Carrot Cake and Carob Brownies that are setting some Chapel Hillians to drooling.

Some day when you're not particularly late for a very important date, duck into the basement of the Mad Hatter and let them show you the smorgasbord of sandwiches and salads.

## Mystery and reality converge in Altman film

By HANK BAKER  
DTH Contributor

The first half of Robert Altman's *3 Women* is both tantalizing and wonderfully realized. You feel as if you were being drawn into something fascinating. The camera first focuses on moving water and then on a mysterious, hunched woman painting a bizarre mural on the walls of an empty swimming pool. Then the water, through which we see the woman, becomes the steaming mineral water in a health spa pool. Aging people are led through the water by attendants, one of whom is Millie Lamoreaux (Shelley Duvall). This dichotomy between dream-like mystery and reality becomes blurred as the film moves along. You can't take your eyes off the screen because of the extraordinary imagination behind this most interesting and ultimately maddening film.

There isn't much in the way of plot in the film, because it isn't needed. The characters hold the film together (at least most of it) along with the circumstances that bring them together. Millie Lamoreaux is mediocrity personified. She rattles on about all sorts of trivialities with her co-workers, who blithely ignore her. Yet she keeps at her routine, trying to be the cool, romantic, popular socialite. Most people forget who she is, but

Pinky (Sissy Spacek), a very impressionable new worker, thinks Millie is wonderful. When Millie needs a new roommate, Pinky jumps at the chance, delighted at her good fortune.

Pinky, however, is all too perfect a match. Awed by Millie's repartee about her supposed social life and accomplishments, Pinky becomes obsessed with Millie — even to the point of reading Millie's diary and copying her Social Security number. Through Millie, Pinky meets Tom (Robert Fortier) and Willie (Janice Rule), who own the apartment complex in which the girls live, and a western tourist trap called Dodge City, replete with bar and shooting range. Willie, who rarely speaks, is also the painter of the murals in the swimming pool.

Soon Millie grows tired of Pinky's naivete and angrily tells her to leave. Shattered, Pinky attempts suicide in the apartment pool, but is saved before she drowns. Once this happens, the film begins to take more curious turns.

The success of the first half owes much to the carefully realized portrait of Millie, Pinky, and their everyday lives. The dreariness of working at the spa, the tackiness of the apartment complex (the outside is painted in shades of purple), the barren flatlands of the town and Dodge City.

("It sure looks like Texas," Pinky says.) Yet the lack of normality in the first half of the film (eccentricities abound everywhere) is in keeping with what is to come. We get the subtle mysteries that act as a prelude to the second half — Willie's silence, the brutally sexual content of her murals, Pinky's fear of guns, the self-contained twins at the spa who live in a world of their own. At one point Pinky says of the twins, "How do they know which one they are? Do they ever switch places with each other?"

Once Pinky recovers, she is transformed. She refuses to recognize her own parents, and begins to assume Millie's personality and dominant role in the apartment. Perplexed and frightened, Millie cannot understand Pinky's callousness and cruelty. But this is where the film becomes problematic.

Altman has been concerned with the switching and confusing of identities before — his *Images*, with its schizophrenic heroine confusing the living with the dead, toys with the idea without going into much depth. Also like *Images* (and *Brewster McCloud*), *3 Women* is based on one of Altman's own dreams. But a dream is an experience not quite tangible — you feel much more than you can express. Once you have awakened, all the details that would make it mean something to others are not there. *3 Women* is frequently brilliant — the first half ranks with Altman's best and the second half contains stunning sequences, such as Pinky's chilling dream and the gripping sequence of Willie's giving birth to a stillborn child.

But what are we to make of Pinky's sudden reversion to a childlike state after her dream, and of the matriarchal "family" at the end consisting of the three women? The transitions in both cases are too quick considering the gradual pace leading to Pinky's first change. I know why Pinky

doesn't go to get the doctor during Willie's labor, and I understand the motif of rebirth — the moving water, Pinky's parents making love in her bed, Willie's spiritual rebirth after the trauma of having a stillborn child. But I have to say that *3 Women* is more a work of imagination than of intelligence. Altman certainly knows how to use the medium and Chuck Rosher's photography lends just the right air of unreality to the film. But I don't think Altman is quite sure what he is trying to grasp. Ingmar Bergman, in his *Persona* (to which *3 Women* is compared frequently, doesn't resolve what he was trying to impart, but you see that he tries to wrench some complex idea from within himself. Altman isn't quite so internal — the last ten minutes seem rushed, as if he can't decide how to resolve the women's relationships.

And what of the women? Are we meant to see them as archetypes or as three facets of the same person? I hope the latter, even though that is not too original an idea. The former seems impossible, not because you can't believe the women as human beings, but because they are not your ordinary people. They're a bit too eccentric for us to identify with that closely. Nevertheless, Altman has gotten superb performances. Sissy Spacek has mastered the art of conveying naivete and then doing a complete turnaround. Janice Rule has few lines, but the enigmatic, worldly beauty in her face shows us more in itself than all the gifts in many other actresses. Shelley Duvall equals Spacek with her finest performance yet — her graceful presence coming forth even under obstinate circumstances. Even with its shortcomings, *3 Women* should not be missed. It is rare when a director can provide a stylized vision of people and their surroundings and hold us transfixed. Altman may not always be successful, but he is truly original.



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