

Films

Thomas Haroldson

A little over a year ago I was a bit disturbed by the slight attention given the 12 victims of “Bonnie and Clyde’s” career. When I suggested that the movie should have given equal time to the victim’s point of view, a fan shot back, “What the hell kind of a picture would that be?”

Well, now, thanks to Francois Truffaut (who directed “400 Blows,” “Jules and Jim,” etc.) the question has been answered. “The Bride Wore Black” is a detailed account of how a woman kills five men to avenge her husband’s death, but the main focus of the film (interestingly enough) is on the victims, rather than on the murderess.

“The Bride Wore Black” is supposedly a murder mystery, but far greater questions are raised than who done it? Each character becomes so real and so human that the question of guilt becomes irrelevant; in fact, the picture is nothing less than a graphic illustration of the old French saying “To know all, is to forgive all.”

In addition, a moral judgment is made almost impossible by the very nature of the story. No one, as it turns out, deserves what happens to them. The men and the avenging bride are merely caught up in a deadly ritual that must be carried out. She must kill; they must die.

Everything is lost and nothing is gained. Fate, in this case, is mindless as well as blind.

The five victims share only one thing in common—they are all bachelors. If Truffaut is attacking any one thing, it is the myth of eternal bachelorhood. The Playboy syndrome is explored in great depth, with great understanding.

Most of the men, by virtue of their male vanity and dreams of sexual conquest, are natural victims for an avenging woman. But they are also shown to be vulnerable, pathetic human beings who really have very little control over their lives, and who clearly do not deserve what happens to them.

Jeanne Moreau (who has the ugliest lower face in captivity) plays the bride fairly well and manages to lend some credibility to an unbelievable role. She doesn’t act human very often, but when she does it’s enough to convince you that she is a real person rather than merely a bloodless killing machine.

Despite the Hitchcock-bright color photography and ragged sound track, the picture, as a whole, is a first rate production. The editing is flawless, the imaginative montage cuts are particularly outstanding—and the casting is almost perfect. The picture proves, among other things, that Truffaut today is much better than Hitchcock today.

fifth Estate

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