

‘Silent Scream’ is propaganda

by Warren M. Hern

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More than 30 years ago, several of my Englewood High School classmates and I heard that a “sex education” movie was going to be shown at the South Drive-in near Littleton. Since none of us knew anything reliable about sex and were desperately curious about it, we couldn’t resist the opportunity to go.

The first film was about venereal disease. The movie showed men whose genitals were in various stages of horrifying putrefaction. The message was clearly to avoid kissing girls or doing anything more serious.

The second film was about abortion. It portrayed a handsome young couple, an athletic hero and a cheerleader, who kissed during a walk through the woods. The next thing you know, she was entering a seedy, back-alley place to have an abortion; the shades were down and screams issued from within. Next, she appeared, clutching her abdomen, whereupon she staggered onto a trolley car and collapsed in a pool of blood. The families and community were scandalized; the couple’s lives were ruined. Heavy implications of sin and shame permeated the narration.

Message for the evening: don’t have sex. The lucky ones will be struck by lightning and killed instantly.

“The Silent Scream” reminds me of nothing so much as those “sex education” films made in the 1940s and designed to scare the wits out of junior high school boys with sexual fantasies. It is a horror movie complete with scary music and somber intonations. There are wooden por-

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trays of weeping young women who have no thoughts to express or connections with the subject. There are dark innuendos at the end of the film about mutilations and sterility from abortion and criminal control of the “abortion industry;” no evidence is given.

In one part of the movie, its narrator, Bernard Nathanson, dons the ritual white coat of medical priesthood and gives a pseudo-clinical description of abortion technique complete with the chilling sound of forceps locking shut on an imaginary fetal skull. He moves then to a misleading narration of an abortion procedure viewed by ultrasound. The murky view of the fetus is speeded up for effect when the abortion procedure begins. The film allegedly portrays abortion of a 12-week fetus, but the model Nathanson holds is that of a fetus of 20 or more weeks. The ultrasound image is highly magnified. His narration is accompanied by soothing pastoral music when he speaks of the fetus “moving serenely in its sanctuary” and by funereal music when he describes it as a victim.

The fetus and uterus are not attached to any woman who is a person, who has thoughts, feelings, plans, reasons, needs or medical risks resulting from pregnancy itself. The woman, in this film, is not important; she counts for nothing. The fact that abortion has become an indispensable component of health care for American women is irrelevant to the narrator.

Experts on fetal development, neurophysiology and ultrasound state that Nathanson's narrative is flat wrong. Even his allies against abortion concede that the film exaggerates the dangers of abortion and is "overdramatized." The film is propaganda, pure and simple. It is not intended to inform but to deceive, to inflame opinions, to create feelings of guilt, horror and anguish, and to create sympathy – for the fetus. The fetus becomes a demigod, a fetish object to be protected against evil.

Strangely enough, the film has no other goal but the imposition of guilt. Nathanson does not ask for abortion to be made illegal. He merely requires that the film be shown to any woman seeking an abortion – a requirement for indoctrination and mental abuse of women that has already been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. The goal of the film is sadistic, and it is sadistic toward women.

The issue is not whether abortion or any other surgical operation is aesthetically pleasing – it isn't. The issue is not whether propagandists can manipulate the magical symbols of science to inflict guilt and inflame the ignorant – they can.

The issue is whether the propagandists and zealots will succeed in destroying women's rights as citizens in our society. If they succeed, we are all diminished.

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