

TELEVISION

George C. Scott Shines as Dickens' Scrooge

By Henry Herx
 New York (NC) — George C. Scott portrays Ebenezer Scrooge in a spirited production of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," airing Monday, Dec. 17, 8-10 p.m. EST on CBS.

Rather than turning out yet another caricature of Scrooge as misanthropic miser, Scott invests the role with some dignity and not a little sympathy. By playing Scrooge as less than a total monster,

Scott makes him somewhat redeemable and his transformation in the end becomes all the more credible and touching.

Scott's performance is but one of the reasons for the success of this new British production. Backing him up is a fine supporting cast, including such veterans as David Warner (Bob Cratchit), Susannah York (Mrs. Cratchit), Frank Finlay (Marley's Ghost), Nigel Dav-

enport (Silas Scrooge) and Edward Woodward (Ghost of Christmas Present).

Roger O. Hirson's script is faithful to the spirit of Dickens' tale, and Clive Donner directs the production with careful attention to blending moody fantasy and vibrant realism.

This adaptation succeeds better than most in conveying Dickens' concern for the poor and the importance of our sharing with them. That's the central message of "A Christmas Carol" and the reason it has become a perennial part of the season.

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 "Masterpiece Theatre" moves from Anthony Trollope's 19th-century England to 20th-century India with "The Jewel in the Crown," a 14-part series premiering Sunday, Dec. 16, 9-11 p.m. EST on PBS. The other episodes in the series are one-hour programs.

Adapted by Ken Taylor from Paul Scott's "The Raj Quartet," the dramatization takes place during the years 1942-47, a period beginning in the darkest days of World War II, with Imperial India threatened by Japanese invasion and by Gandhi's mass movement against British rule. Japanese arms are defeated but Gandhi's passive resistance succeeds in 1947 with the creation of an independent India.

Set in this historical context of conflict between cultures and national interests is a story of individuals -- of the ruling class and of the ruled -- whose lives are entangled in the events leading to independence.

The first episode is centered in a tragic romance that

develops between young Daphne Manners (Susan Wooldridge) and Hari Kumar (Art Malik), an English-educated Indian.

Also courting Daphne is the local police superintendent (played with menacing intensity by Tim Pigott-Smith). She turns him down gently but firmly. He is jealous of her friendship with Kumar, whom he despises because of his independent manner. With civil unrest growing in the area, tragedy seems unavoidable.

There is considerable depth to these characters and the ominous times in which they find themselves. However, before becoming too involved in the series you should know that the second episode gets into hard-edged tragedy.

When Daphne is raped by a gang of toughs, the police superintendent blames the deed on her Indian lover. The superintendent, a sadist as well as a racist, has Kumar arrested on falsified evidence, savagely tortured and imprisoned without trial.

These scenes of Kumar's physical and psychological brutalization are as graphically violent as they are morally repugnant. In representing the arrogance of total power and the helplessness of those subject to it, this particular sequence is convincingly realistic and powerfully effective in its condemnation.

Such scenes are unusually strong for television fare and adults seeking light entertainment are advised to look elsewhere.

Produced by Christopher Morahan, who co-directed



David Warner stars as Bob Cratchit, and Anthony Walters plays Tiny Tim in a new production of "A Christmas Carol," which stars George C. Scott.

with Jim O'Brien, this Grenada Television series begins its twilight-of-empire saga with a fascinating collection of characters -- including a missionary modeled on Mother Teresa -- whose

individual problems are set firmly in the historical tapestry of the period.

Filmed in India, the production is visually rich and always captivating to the eye.

MOVIES

Capsule Film Reviews

New York (NC) — The following are synopses of movies recently reviewed by the staff of the U.S. Catholic Conference Department of Communication.

"Beverly Hills Cop" (Paramount)

An Eddie Murphy vehicle whose particulars are of little importance. If you like Eddie Murphy, you'll like this because he's at his good-natured best. Because of its violence and rough language, this story of a supercool Detroit detective in the conspicuous consumption capital of the universe has been classified A-III -- adults -- by the U.S. Catholic Conference. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R -- restricted.

"City Heat" (Warners)

Clint Eastwood and Burt Reynolds as, respectively, a police detective and private eye who talk rudely to each other whenever their paths cross in the course of a struggle between two rival mobs in Depression-era Kansas City. These exchanges are supposed to be terribly funny, but they're not, and the violence and the in-joke nature of the whole enterprise gets quite wearing. Because of its graphic violence, it has been classified A-III -- adults -- by the U.S. Catholic Conference. The industry rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested.

"Mass Appeal" (Universal)

Zealous young deacon jars middle-aged pastor out of his complacency in this screen adaptation of the hit play. In the more realistic film medium, the humor and force of the original become much diminished. The slightness of the film's Catholic content, marked by omissions and inaccuracies, becomes all too apparent. Mediocre entertainment at best. The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it A-II -- adults and adolescents. The industry rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested.

BOOKS

New Book Explains Spiritual Value of Suffering

"I Need Souls Like You," by Kathryn Spink. Harper and Row (New York, 1984). 95 pp., \$10.95.

Reviewed by Ruth Ann Hanley NC News Service

A eucharistic minister visiting a sick and incapacitated woman in a nursing home heard her complain that "you are out there working in the world, while all I can do is sit here and say my rosary."

"Who's to say," replied the visitor, "that all the running around I do might not look like the dog chasing its tail from the Lord's perspective, whereas it is just possible that you, sitting here in this room, offering all that you can do, might be earning many more graces for our world?"

This is basically the message that comes through in Kathryn Spink's little book about the Sick and Suffering Co-workers who are joined in intention to the missionary efforts of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

"I Need Souls Like You" is an inspiring compilation of quotations from Mother Teresa and of excerpts from diaries and letters of those suffering chronic or life-threatening disease.

What links each sufferer to an individual missionary is a belief that suffering can be a gift and blessing -- and most especially an offering to God for the missionary in foreign

lands who is tending the sick, homeless and lonely.

"When Christ hung motionless on the cross, apparently useless, he was saving us," says Jacqueline De Decker, a Belgian woman who was the first Sick and Suffering Co-worker to offer her pain for the work being done by Mother Teresa.

This small volume contains a long essay on the trials and illness in Jacqueline's life. Her illness destroyed forever her hope of becoming a missionary sister.

Yet today, Jacqueline and 3,000 others are able to "offer their pains for a second self," a missionary.

As Mother Teresa writes: "What a beautiful vocation is yours, a Missionary of Charity -- a corner of God's love -- we carry in our body and soul the love of an infinite thirsty God -- and we -- you and I and all the dear sisters and the Sick and Suffering will satiate that burning thirst -- you with your untold suffering, we with hard labor, but are we not all the same one -- 'as your father in me and I in you,' said Jesus."

The first section of the book is Ms. Spink's narrative about Mother Teresa, her work and founding of this auxiliary society to help the missions.

The second section is the story of Jacqueline De Decker, and the third is the spiritual gold sifted from the

letters of the sick and suffering.

This book would be a fine gift for a sick person who is truly dismayed at her inability to help others. It could provide that sense of purpose and self-worth through Christ. It would also be excellent for the complainers and grippers and all the rest with problems and frustrations who see their complaints as less than a gift.

Be advised, however, that it would take a bit of predisposition, or grace, to read this little book, and maybe even a belief that "God can be at work in the delays" of life.

(Ms. Hanley is a free-lance writer for the Catholic and secular press.)

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 "The Weaker Vessel," by Antonia Fraser. Alfred A. Knopf (New York, 1984). 544 pp., \$19.95.

Reviewed by Patricia B. Hoffman NC News Service

This almost encyclopedic chronicle of women in 17th-century England is a valuable and comprehensive analysis of the social history of a violent, tumultuous era.

During the years covered, from 1603 to 1702, the lot of women was not, generally speaking, a happy one.

They had no civil or legal rights and were considered inferior to men mentally, morally and physically. Any

property owned by a woman became her husband's upon her marriage. Divorce was unheard of, and if a woman separated from her husband she immediately became penniless.

"The weaker vessel," a title from Tynedale's 1524 translation of the New Testament, well describes her plight.

In spite of all these handicaps, there were some startling exceptions to the conventional view of the sex. There was even a forerunner of our present political activists. In 1649 a group presented "The Humble Petition of divers well-affected women inhabiting the City of London, etc." asking for the release of political prisoners. The House of Commons told them to "go home, ...meddle with your housekeeping."

Miss Fraser tells of women who quite literally held the fort during the troubled times of the Civil War. "This century was the time when Charles I was beheaded, Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector, and Charles II came to the throne. There was an enormously wide range of political and social climates, but throughout that epoch women as a rule were considered inferior.

The gap between rich and poor was enormous. The latter were mostly illiterate, and mere slaves to their husbands (an unmarried woman's lot was miserable).

A wealthy widow might have considerable independence. As, for instance, Lady Anne Clifford. After two very unhappy marriages she enjoyed life as a patroness of the arts and benefactor of the poor. A friend of poet John Donne, she wrote her autobiography. This in spite of the fact that women writers were frowned upon -- indeed, any kind of learning was thought unsuitable for ladies.

Many marriages, however, were happy, although women were married off by their families without any regard for their wishes. Lucy Davies, later Countess of Huntington, was married at the age of 10, although she did not actually live with her husband until a few years later.

Once wed, wives were expected to produce, and produce they did. Elizabeth Walker had 11 living births, and only one infant lived to maturity.

Miss Fraser gives us a huge cast -- wives, warriors, mistresses, preachers, princesses, and commoners -- and draws their lines, in many

Deadline

The deadline for submitting news to the Courier-Journal is noon on Thursday preceeding Wednesday publication. Items must be written and sent to 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14610.

instances, from their own journals and family letters. The book is alive with anecdote after anecdote.

It is a very long work, carefully researched and fully annotated, a volume to be dipped into and enjoyed from time to time. There is enough material and plenty that is interesting in its pages to provide for several books.

(Mrs. Hoffman is a free-lance writer based in Indiana.)

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