

Contrived thriller lacks suspense, believability



Matthew McVay-Hollywood Pictures
During location work, Rebecca De Mornay (right) discusses a scene in *The Hand That Rocks the Cradle* (Hollywood Pictures) with director Curtis Hanson. Annabella Sciorra, Matt McCoy and Ernie Hudson also star in the movie, which the U.S. Catholic Conference classifies as O — morally offensive.

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Catering to the public's basest instincts and hoping to attract the *Fatal Attraction* crowd is *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (Hollywood).

Annabella Sciorra plays happily married mom Claire, who reports her gynecologist for an improper examination that prompts other women to come forward and the doctor to commit suicide.

The doctor's wife (Rebecca De Mornay) miscarries as a result of the shock and must undergo a hysterectomy. She blames it all on Claire.

Six months later when she shows up at Claire's using the name "Peyton" and sweet-talking her way into becoming nanny to baby Joey and little Emma (Madeline Zima), it's obvious what she's planning to do. Unless Claire and her equally gullible husband (Matt McCoy) wise up, the kids are in jeopardy and it's curtains for Claire.

Director Curtis Hanson gives *Cradle*

the slick Hollywood treatment, but this is a thriller with no suspense or believability. The situations are all so contrived and transparent that the story just marks time from one cheap thrill to the next.

The parents' continuing naivete is incredible as is their initial acceptance of Peyton without ever bothering to check her only reference. Every scene has the feel of a set-up, with characterization lost in the heightened atmosphere of menace to innocent little ones and imminent violence.

Ernie Hudson is a mentally retarded groundskeeper who's made to look like a child molester — one more manipulative development in a movie that looks as if it followed a programmed formula to make an audience bloodthirsty.

Because of exploitation of violence to women and children, occasional nudity, sexual references and some rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Fable leaves reader wondering

'Shua, story by William Burke, illustrations by Mary Southard, CSJ, ACTA Publications (Chicago, Ill., 1990); 103 pages; \$8.95.

By Bob Zyskowski
Guest contributor

What would it be like to hear about Jesus from somebody who watched Him grow up?

Storyteller Father Bill Burke has crafted a fable upon the premise that Jesus' boyhood friend would be able to shed light on this Jesus we Christians say we need to know better.

'Shua — short for Yeshua — is the Christ-figure in this simple, quick-reading story told by the anonymous narrator, 'Shua's friend and adopted brother.

Dramatic silhouette art by Sister Mary Southard is a positive addition to this beautifully crafted paperback.

As the story weaves through the childhood years and adolescence, you'll be able to see how Jesus — 'Shua in the book — later would turn these real-life stories into parables.

The stories are all there: the prodigal son, the woman at the well, healing on the Sabbath.

It's such an obvious assumption to make: Jesus must have seen these situ-

ations occur in his formative years. He must have known that people would be able to appreciate them because they came from their lived experience.

We all know, however, that the people of Nazareth rejected this prophet in their own town, and Father Burke's 'Shua does things that might have warranted their shunning.

Shua offers bread to the Romans.

He holds a "shiva" — a wake — and buries a tax collector.

He visits the house of a prostitute and gives her food.

The Nazareans — 'Shua's narrator friend included — aren't surprised to hear that he winds up being crucified up in Jerusalem.

But 'Shua's boyhood friend ends his reminiscence wondering something which should give us modern-day followers of Jesus reason to pause, too.

He knows why the people of Nazareth didn't stand up for 'Shua.

All the cultural reasons any Nazarean would have known are there.

What he wonders is why 'Shua's disciples — those who were supposed to be his friends and followers — deserted him and broke his heart?

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SHUA, by William Burke.

Home.
I remember being so struck by the word. Certainly I knew that Nazareth was Jesus' boyhood home, but "going home" is much more a matter of the heart than a matter of distance.
Wouldn't it be wonderful, I thought, if time meant nothing and we could talk to a man who grew up with Jesus and we could listen to his stories?
I imagined such a man—not a Christian, just a boyhood friend of Jesus...

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