

Courtroom melodrama keeps suspense taut

Chemistry works between co-stars

By Gerri Pare
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — A defense attorney feels caught in a web of deceit and murder when she realizes her client is *Guilty as Sin* (Hollywood).

David Greenhill (Don Johnson) is so frank about always having lived off women that criminal lawyer Jennifer Haines (Rebecca De Mornay) actually believes his claim that he is innocent of throwing his wife off their high-rise balcony.

Shortly after taking on his defense, she decides he really is a dangerous psychopath, but the judge curtly disallows her request to be removed as his lawyer.

The soup thickens when his carefully calculated behavior leads everyone to think they are lovers. And the trap closes when she learns he can frame her as an accomplice to murder if she doesn't get him off the hook in court.

Despite an implausible plot, director Sidney Lumet keeps the thread of suspense taut in this sinister courtroom melodrama.

It really amounts to little more than a slickly produced, hollow story, hinged on Johnson's performance as the womanizer you love to hate. He hits some false notes but usually delivers as the supremely cocky egotist for whom murder is a most pleasant diversion.

De Mornay tenaciously plays her role as if she were an imminently endangered species, determined to survive her predator at any cost. Yet together their shifting cat-and-mouse proceedings are interesting to watch, even if their situation seems totally unreal.

Bringing more authenticity to the story is a crusty Jack Warden in his pivotal role as De Mornay's private investigator.

Its redeeming qualities may be few, but *Guilty as Sin* can definitely be charged as being adult escapist entertainment.

Because of briefly intense violence, an implied sexual encounter and in-



Hollywood Pictures Company
Don Johnson plays a smooth talking playboy charged with first-degree murder in *Guilty as Sin*. Rebecca De Mornay also stars in the taut courtroom thriller.

termittent rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted.

Book studies women pastors

They Call Her Pastor: A New Role for Catholic Women, by Ruth A. Wallace; State University of New York Press (Albany, N.Y., 1992); 204 pages; \$44.50 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

By Margaret O'Connell
Catholic News Service

They Call Her Pastor is an easy-to-read if dry sociological study exploring the use of women — chiefly women religious — in the role of parish pastor. Detailed and organized, it briefly describes 20 U.S. parishes, going on to study the "pastoral heart" of the women pastors at those parishes as well as the impact of their "collaborative leadership" style.

Author Ruth A. Wallace explores the support systems and resources — or the lack thereof — available to the women pastors; the chiefly, but not exclusively, institutional problems and tensions the women encountered; and the role of gender in both the pastoral role and within the hierarchy.

Significant gaps exist, though. Who is Wallace, professor of sociology at George Washington University in Washington? She describes herself at the time of the Second Vatican Council as "one of the four American nuns invited to Rome by Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens." Is she still a woman religious? (It turns out she's not.)

In sociology the researcher's qualifications are at least as important as the methodology used or grants obtained — both of which are well reviewed. What were Wallace's qualifications to conduct this study?

The women pastors are never named. If their positions are legitimate, if their bishops had the right to appoint them, why not name them?

Wallace quotes the women religious serving as pastors most often. True, they are the more numerous, but are they truly lay women (apart from the canonical definition of women religious as lay)?

And why does Wallace not note that the qualities she describes in "Pastoral Heart" and "Collaborative Leadership" are not unique to women pastors but characteristics of women executives in business and industry?

Despite its dryness and gaps, *They Call Her Pastor* is a worthwhile book for a time when the Spirit is blowing where it will despite tendencies in the church to resist change.

O'Connell, a free-lance book reviewer and writer, is an associate editor at *The Christophers in New York City*.

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