

'Trek' fine for fans; other films offer flawed fare

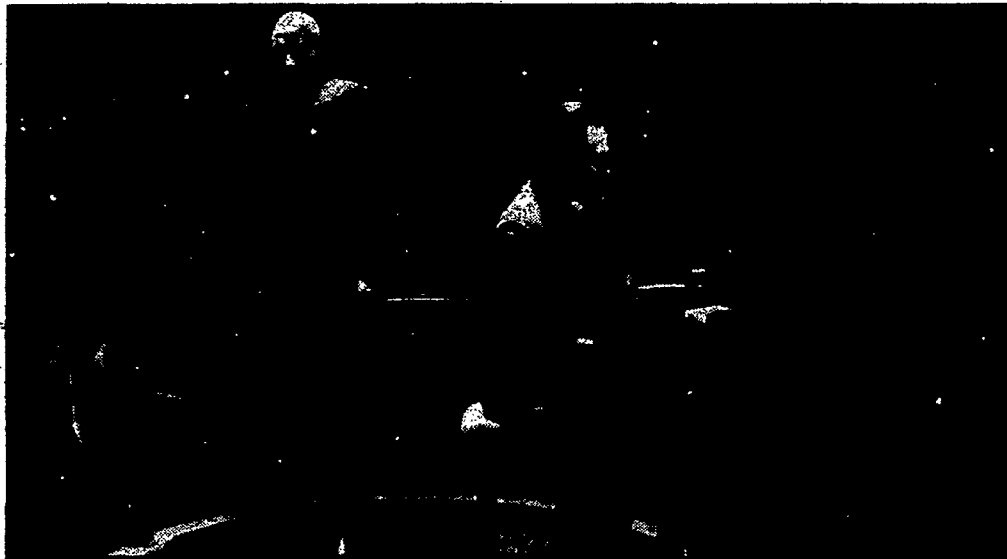
NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by the U.S. Catholic Conference Office for Film and Broadcasting.

'Star Trek Generations'

(Paramount) Sequel joins Starship Enterprise captains from different centuries (William Shatner and Patrick Stewart) in trying to stop a villainous alien (Malcolm McDowell) whose tampering with an energy field would result in millions of deaths. Director David Carson's ambitious sci-fi saga is heavy on the kind of action, plotting, special effects and technobabble that Trekkies relish, but other moviegoers may find less than stellar entertainment. Stylized space battles, some fistfights and a crude expression. The USCC classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG — parental guidance suggested.

'The Pagemaster'

(20th Century Fox) Bland, mostly animated tale starts with a fearful boy (Macaulay Culkin) wandering into a library where the librarian (Christopher Lloyd) magically turns into a wizard providing the young worrywart with experiences of adventure, horror and fantasy which leave him a braver lad for having faced up to his fears. Director Mau-



Paramount Pictures
Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart, left) and Lt. Commander Data (Brent Spiner) scan maps of the galaxies in an effort to determine Dr. Soran's planned destination in 'Star Trek Generations.'

rice Hunt's animated effort is a tame affair which preaches the value of reading without offering young viewers much in the way of wonder or imagination. The USCC classification is A-I — general patronage. The MPAA rating is G — general audiences.

'Junior'

(Universal) Lowbrow comic fantasy in which a fertility specialist (Danny DeVito) tests an anti-miscarriage drug by in-

jecting a fertilized egg into a willing male colleague (Arnold Schwarzenegger), who then refuses to end the experiment after the first trimester and goes to term with the pregnancy while romancing the woman (Emma Thompson) whose frozen egg was used without her knowledge. Director Ivan Reitman's one-joke premise of a pregnant man relies on common stereotypes of expectant women for its laughs while presenting fetal experimentation as all part of a nutty plot that gets increasingly bizarre.

Comic treatment of reproductive technology, references to casual sexual relations and an instance of profanity. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned that some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

'Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle'

(Fine Line) Dark depiction of the life of writer Dorothy Parker (Jennifer Jason Leigh), focusing on her close relationship with humorist Robert Benchley (Campbell Scott) and other members of the famed Algonquin Round Table luncheons in the 1920s and '30s which helped sustain her emotionally through failed marriages and a doomed affair with playwright Charles MacArthur (Matthew Broderick). Director Alan Rudolph's joyless dramatization captures some of the acerbic wit of the Round Table's celebrities, but is relentlessly grim in its portrait of a talented woman turned bitter by years of professional insecurity and self-loathing. A few brief bedroom scenes with nudity, frequent alcohol abuse, a suicide attempt and occasional rough language. The USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted.

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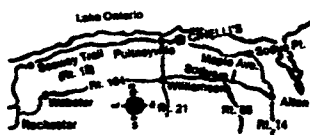
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Author takes 'nurture' side in race, intelligence debate

"Race and Culture," by Thomas Sowell; Basic Books (New York, 1994); 331 pp.; \$25.

Reviewed by Ronald Johnson
Catholic News Service

Thomas Sowell could have hardly chosen a more timely moment for the appearance of "Race and Culture," his newest book on the racial contours of culture. The heightened debate over culture and race — as seen in the clashes between multiculturalists and advocates for the cultural right or in the exchange of views over the Afro-centrist proposals for revising inner-city school curriculums — has continued throughout 1994.

Most recently, the publication of Charles Murray's "The Bell Curve" has ignited yet another battle between those who differ over the impact of race in the area of intelligence and cultural development. The angry charges and countercharges between those who agree or disagree with the Murray hypothesis have been intense. A sustained debate over his book and its analysis of race was inevitable.

The controversy over the Murray view of race and intelligence provides a relevant framework for evaluating Sowell's book, which he subtitled "A World View." From the beginning, Sowell makes it very clear that he views race, racial identity and race relations as a product of social and cultural construction. He would stand clearly with those critics of Murray who argue that genetic and other similar scientific data in no way confirms or can be used to support a view that intelligence is shaped primarily by racial ancestry. For Sowell, intelligence is rather mainly affected by the cultural and social systems within which individuals, and groups, find themselves.

In his chapter on "Race and Intelligence," Sowell acknowledges the challenge of discussing this topic: "Few subjects," he writes, "are so difficult to discuss as race and intelligence — much less to discuss unemotionally, logically, or



empirically." As a consequence, he has drafted a strong and documented chapter attempting to demonstrate that racial groupings throughout the world have been and are in continued flux and interaction with other groupings. As a result, intelligence testing can at best record the social and cultural impact on any aggregate number of individuals.

For Sowell, the truth about intelligence is to be found in the social, cultural and political conditions that affect all racial groupings. Biology and genetics are a clear part of what defines racial identity, he would agree, but neither constitute the fundamental basis for individual or collective patterns of intelligence.

"Race and Culture" also addresses the other critical questions that are involved in understanding racial identity and race relations. Sowell has grouped all his research, including the discussion of intelligence, in the context of a "world view" or an intercultural and international perspective. The book is literally the result of extensive travel around the globe and consultation with other scholars involved in analyzing racial identity in a comparative framework.

The result is a book that is methodologically current and relevant to contemporary debate over race matters.

Johnson is director of American studies at Georgetown University, a member of the history department and an author of several writings on race and society.

"Race and Culture" is available at your bookstore or order prepaid from Basic Books, Keystone Industrial Park, Scranton, Pa. 18512. Add \$2 for shipping and handling.

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