The year's best (and worst) in movies

By Shaw Wilson

The dozens of movies that premiered in 1978. The critics have given their opinion on the twenty-one listed below.

By Joel West

It would be easy enough to dismiss this book as a feminist manifesto, a book of women, for women — a female declaration of independence, neither the first nor the last. As such, it would lose at least half of its potential audience, more here at MIT. But con- sidering or selecting among general truths right and left while elucidating her central theme. The Women's Room, though clearly not for everyone, is a powerful psychological drama with perhaps more to offer a 20th century student than a 40th displaced homemaker-turned-academic who has already lived through such things.

The story centers around Mira Ward, bars at the beginning of the depression; the story is divided between New Jersey sub- urban housewives of the 50's and early 60's and graduate students at Harvard starting in 1968.

It is unclear just how autobiographical the book is; what is clear is that French, a Harvard PhD herself, displays great courage in writing her first novel, while conveying her message, she leaves her own emotional self, her hurt, all to the reader.

Mira and the omniscient narrator are constantly plugged with self-doubt, and question societal values only when given no other choice; the author uses other characters to vent their anger and bit-

ness, Val's rage at being forced to choose — "in their relations with women, all men are rapists, and that's all they are." For any man who takes off- fense at this outburst, 600 pages into the book, the whole point of The Women's Room has been lost; Val's rage at being condemned to a second-class existence by a patriarchal society should be easily under- standable.

Certainly the book has faults. Borrowed from a Lina Wertmuller movie, the women are totally white, which Mira's ideal lover finally turns out to be a selfish male chauvinist pig and the major characters discover that happiness and men are, in the end, mutually incompatible. But the narrator admits that, just as male novelists have trouble portraying female characters, so she is unable to make her men more than still figures.

Women's liberation has made great strides since the period that forms the set- ting for this book. Among adolescents of the '70's, especially the largely middle-class intellectual elite, the idea that jobs should be open to women as well as men has gained the least moderate acceptance. But for anyone with the desirous that men and women of our generation have an equal chance at a future, especially those hoping for an "equal marriage," this book is most revealing. One of French's characters sums it up: "But the institutions get us all in the end. Nobody escapes." Personally, I hope that French's prophecy does not have the pinpoint accuracy of some of her psychological insights.

An acting triumph for Jill Clayburgh.

Watership Down — "Enchanting and thoroughly deserving fairy tale for adults."

The Wiz — "Colorful, warm, exciting, and remarkable rection of The Wizard of Oz."

Animal House — "Expect a lot of laughs..."

Coming Home — "A maudlin love story which serves as the medium for a sympathetic and tenous study of the emotional effects of war."

Death on the Nile — "A little slow-moving, a satisfying visual experience."

RETURN FROM THE ASYLUM — "A low-budget, high-creese." - "Don't go in expecting a great movie; just sit back and enjoy the trifles."

King of the Gypsies — "Very moving story — emotional acting picked."

Midnight Express — "Unique..."

Director Alan Parker has taken an engrossing real-life drama and has transformed it into only a shadow of the movie it could have been.

The Women's Room, a novel by Marilyn French. 687 pp. Farrar/Harcout Brace Jovanovich $2.50

AROUND MIT

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