Mona Lisa Isn't Smiling

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Another feminist propaganda movie hit the theaters during the Christmas season, proving again that the feminists are an unhappy bunch whose lifestyle leads to loneliness. The heroine of "Mona Lisa Smile," Katherine Watson (Julia Roberts), ends up single and jobless on a slow boat to Europe, having tossed aside the latest of her faithless lovers.

At least her fate wasn't as grim as that of other macho-feminist movie heroines who mouthed the irrelevant silliness that women need to be liberated to make their own choices free from male domination. Thelma and Louise demonstrated their liberation by driving their automobile off a cliff to their death, Virginia Woolf in "The Hours" walked into a lake to drown herself, and G.I. Jane had herself beaten to a bloody pulp to prove that she could take it like any Navy SEAL.

Proclaimed by the CBS-TV movie critic as "the best picture of the year by far," "Mona Lisa Smile" is a sanctimonious feminist homily preaching salvation through modern art and making one's own career choices just so long as career does not mean marriage and motherhood. But the sermon boomeranged on reality, and the movie proves again that those who follow that commandment travel a dead-end road.

Ms. Watson's erudition didn't extend to an ability to evaluate human nature. She was totally snowed by a dishonest fellow professor even though she knew he had the reputation of sleeping with his students.

A preachy professor of art history, Ms. Watson came from the University of California-Berkeley to pre-Hillary Clinton Wellesley College in 1953 determined to change the students' attitudes, expectations and career plans. She wanted them to work toward a J.D. rather than an MRS.

Her strategy was to immerse them in Picasso rather than Michelangelo. She tried to replace their respect for artistic standards with a search for meaning in meaningless scribbles on a canvas.

Ms. Watson pressured her star student Joan to apply to law school and she was accepted at Yale Law School. When Joan told Ms. Watson in emphatic terms that she was rejecting this honor and choosing instead to become a wife and mother, the audience is supposed to think she is a fool.

Clearly, that's what Ms. Watson thought. The movie probably was designed to show that feminism is progressive and modern, and that courageous female professors of a generation ago challenged traditional orthodoxy and opened up new pathways for young women.

Feminist propaganda is not just humorless preaching about how work in a law office is so much more fulfilling than raising children. It's also an incessant put-down of the homemaking role and even of traditional customs and morality.

The students and their Wellesley instructors are authentically costumed in the fashions of the fifties. Nobody wore torn blue jeans, purple hair, or the metallic items used in body piercing.

The neatly dressed and bright Wellesley students have more self- confidence and self-esteem than the professor. But the movie caricatures them to look smug and old-fashioned.

The movie ridicules the notions that a wife would delight in displaying her new automatic washing machine and dryer (remember, this was the fifties), or take pride in keeping a kitchen clean. The movie showed a wife who didn't even look oppressed when she was mopping or vacuuming!

Irrelevant advertisements from the fifties for Dutch Cleanser, an ironing board, and a girdle were what passed for humor during the dreary two-hour movie.

The audience is supposed to be unsympathetic to the student who had a big traditional wedding and soon discovered her husband was cheating on her. The audience is supposed to think it served her right because she was dumb to choose marriage.

On the other hand, the audience is supposed to sympathize with the lesbian nurse who was fired for giving contraceptives to college students in violation of state law. The audience is expected to empathize with the student who was outrageously promiscuous.

Despite enormous advance television publicity, the message of "Mona Lisa Smile" isn't selling. When Oprah featured the movie cast on her program with a live student audience, the final comment came from a student who rejected her mother's feminist ideas and said she wants to be a wife and mother.

What's out of date today is not the fashions of the fifties but university-imposed political correctness of the nineties.

To enjoy the smiles you didn't have while watching "Mona Lisa Smile," I suggest you rent a video of the 1988 movie about another stereotypical feminist professor. The movie is called "Cannibal Women in the Avocado Jungle of Death" and stars Bill Maher in the "politically incorrect" role of his life.