

# War between the sexes

**A Question of Silence (15)**

Paris Pullman

**Identification of a Woman (18)**

Camden Plaza

**The Executioner's Song (15)**

Warner West End

**Fighting Back (15)**

Odeon, Kensington

**The Dark Crystal (PG) Plaza 1**

**Young Doctors in Love (15)**

Leicester Sq

POLITICS has never been a popular film subject, and so has been hardly pursued at all over the years. How odd then, that feminism, closely associated with politics in at least one of its aspects, should recently have been producing a positive spate of films, and accomplished ones too, usually from women directors and authors, as might be expected.

I wrote about no less than six such films, not specially assembled, from last year's Taormina Festival. One of these was the Dutch **A Question of Silence** written and directed by Marleen Gorris who has a degree in drama at Birmingham and in English at Gronigen.

I described it as "the fiercest feminist film I have ever seen" and this second view does nothing to change my opinion, indeed has served to increase my admiration for a very ingenious construction handled with great skill.

Three women are arrested for the brutal mutilation and killing of a man managing a large dress shop in Amsterdam. Coming from different walks of life, they had never met each other before being charged. Yet they admit to the crime.

One is an attractive and high-powered secretary to a company director. The others are a middle-aged and cheerful keeper of a café, long divorced, with a daughter married and lost sight of and the wife of a middling civil servant, tied to her apartment by housekeeping, two children and a baby.

Didn't anybody see the murder and try to prevent it, we ask? And indeed as the details become revealed at intervals, as if a cine camera had been actually present, it becomes clear that about half a dozen other customers, all women, looked on.

Briefly the idea illustrated is that men, generally, are a menace to women in their habitual attitudes and behaviour (of which we see some telling examples) and, since change is so slow, a few might well be killed off as an early warning of war between the sexes.

"Well I never!" you may say. "Surely we are in the realms of Fantasy?" But it doesn't seem so as the airy indifference of men and unquestioned subjection of women are revealed here in realistic style.

My original suggestion that some touches of Bunuel fantasy might have helped now seems inept, for that would enable us to laugh it off as black comedy, whereas it is so realistically chilling that few males, I imagine, will leave without examining painfully their consciences and their conduct.

Finely written then, as this suggests, and finely acted, too, by an accomplished cast from which it would be invidious to extract names. In fact an amazingly accomplished first film, and a powerful stroke from the new distributors, Cinema of Women.