CORRESPONDENCE

"CINEMA IN SOCIETY"

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS,

Sir,—In the current issue of BLACKFRIARS, Martin Turnell writes (p. 582):

"The Legion of Decency, as its curious name suggests, was concerned exclusively with the moral aspect of the cinema . . . Its aim was in no sense to promote the interest of Catholics in the cinema, but *to eliminate by any means in its power the more flagrantly immoral elements of the commercial film.*"

And again on page 585:

"Catholic interest in the cinema has been for the most part negative and escapist too, *with its unerring instinct for concentrating on the unimportant points like the Legion of Decency* which irresistibly suggests a legion of ostriches burying their heads in the sand."

Must not your readers conclude from the above passages that in the writer's opinion the immoral elements of the commercial film are unimportant?

Further, Mr. Turnell says at the conclusion of his article (p. 597):

"He (the critic) has to remind himself again and again that the only art that is immoral is bad art . . . " And in the body of the article (p. 596):

"*Lady Chatterley's Lover* seems to me to be a piece of literature of permanent value and *Extase* a very minor performance."

The main reason given for the "very minor performance" of this film is that Machaty, the Director, is merely a competent experimenter in a very complicated medium, whereas Lawrence was a greater writer, working in a traditional art form" (p. 576).

Mr. Turnell says nothing of the morality of the film *Extase,* which is a description and defence of adultery in a background of proletarian propaganda. Are not his readers still further justified in concluding that he considers the immoral elements of the cinema unimportant?

One last point. If, as Mr. Turnell says, "the only art that is immoral is bad art"; and if in his opinion *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a "piece of literature of permanent value"; will he tell us whether we may rightly draw the conclusion that, in his opinion, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is moral literature?

I remain, dear Sir,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

FERDINAND VALENTINE, O.P.

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