

Plenty

Center

Poor Susan. You see, life was very exciting during the war — especially if you were a young English woman fighting in the French Resistance. The world was wonderful, anything was possible, and life was grand. "There will be days and days like this," said Susan, flushed with victory.

How wrong she was. When World War II ends, Susan (Meryl Streep) returns to England aglow with possibility. Unfortunately, civilian life is very drab compared to the world of a freedom fighter.

Susan is utterly disappointed. She is filled with ennui and a despondent loss of purpose. In *Plenty* we follow her after the war as she drifts slowly and relentlessly into despair and madness.

If Susan sounds somewhat pitiable, she shouldn't. She is a self-centered, selfish, egocentric person who hurts almost everyone around her. In other words, we don't like Susan.

And we're not supposed to; she is an anti-hero. This should have been the main strength of *Plenty*, for we rarely have the opportunity to see a female protagonist who is thoroughly unlikable. But, throughout most of the movie we are bored.

To be sure, there is much that is good about *Plenty*. The sets are sumptuous, and the acting is uniformly excellent. Sir John Gielgud is delightful as an ambassador who misses the empire upon which the sun never sets, Charles Dance is quietly melancholy as Susan's long-suffering husband, and Meryl Streep is, well, Meryl Streep.

She is the premier actress of our time, and she valiantly attempts to let us see why she was attracted to this character. She makes the most of the eloquent speeches in which Susan moans about the boredom of it all.

Two delightful surprises are Sting and Tracey Ullman, a British singer-comedienne. Sting plays Mick, a lower-class man with a lower-class accent, and he is completely convincing. Ullman is a sheer delight as the forward-thinking Alice, Susan's only friend. Her performance is natural, unaffected and a joy to watch.

So, why is *Plenty* disappointing? Let me explain by using another recent anti-hero: Tony Montana of *Scarface*. He was a bum, a criminal. Tony lived a violent, desperate life and died by gunfire.

We completely disliked him, we understood his petty thinking and we felt for him. I do not mean we sympathized with Tony — he deserved what he got. But Tony became a real person to us. He was *someone*, however despicable.

We never feel for Susan. She is more of a symbol than a person. She is bored with life, and we are bored with her.

By Michael Giltz