

in this interpretation of lion society. We really do use sexist thinking when interpreting animal behavior. We think of the old Soviet Union as the place where they let political correctness govern science. Lysenkoism was chosen over genetics for purely political reasons. Lysenko's theories of inheritance of acquired

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characteristics somehow went better with Marxism than genetics did. But we look at animal society with the same sort of sexism. I have never heard anybody describe lion sexual politics without making it sound like lion society functions mostly for the benefit of the adult male.

But now what occurs to me is that we are interpreting this situation filtered by our own sexist prejudices. Human sexism often gives power to the male and sympathy to the female. Basically what you have is a harem situation. The male has little to do in life but sit around and look sexy. The female gets the thrill of the hunt. Seen from that point of view, the male's position is much more sympathetic. The prime mover in lion society is the female. The male is just decorative or little more. But it is odd that it comes so naturally to feel sorry for the female in a harem situation no matter which sex is the "kept" one. I think that says a lot more about the viewer who is interpreting than about the actual situations being observed. [-mrl]

2. As reported by the AP: "John Brunner, the science fiction novelist noted for his experimenting with form and his attention to contemporary social issues, is dead at 60." Brunner died on August 25 of a heart attack (other sources say a stroke) while attending Intersection (Worldcon). Best known for STAND ON ZANZIBAR and (more recently) SHOCKWAVE RIDER, Brunner was an incredibly prolific author with over seventy books to his credit. He received three Nebula nominations and four Hugo nominations and won a Hugo for STAND ON ZANZIBAR. [-ecl]

3. Here are this year's Hugo Award winners:

Best Novel: MIRROR DANCE by Lois McMaster Bujold
Best Novella: "Seven Views of Olduvai Gorge" by Mike Resnick
Best Novelette: "The Martian Child" by David Gerrold
Best Short Story: "None So Blind" by Joe Haldeman
Best Non-fiction Book: I. ASIMOV: A MEMOIR by Isaac Asimov
Best Dramatic Presentation: "All Good Things" (STAR TREK:
THE NEXT GENERATION)
Best Professional Editor: Gardner Dozois
Best Professional Artist: Jim Burns
Best Professional Artwork: LADY COTTINGTON'S PRESSED FAIRY BOOK
by Brian Froud & Terry Jones
Best Semiprozine: INTERZONE edited by David Pringle
Best Fanzine: ANSIBLE edited by Dave Langford
Best Fan Writer: Dave Langford
Best Fan Artist: Teddy Harvia

John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer: Jeff Noon
E. Everett Evans Big Heart Award: Kenneth F. Slater
First Fandom Awards: Jack Speer and Harry Warner, Jr.

4. Chaz Baden of the L.A.Con III tells us "L.A.con III, the 1996 World Science Fiction Convention, has a new Home Page URL. Their web pages are now available at <http://lacon3.worldcon.org/> and include pointers to an Email Directory for the Worldcon."

5. BOMBAY (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: While by Western standards this is not a great film, it towers above most films made for the Indian domestic market. Western viewers who do not know the conventions of Indian domestic films may be puzzled by the

combination of light comedy and serious political content, but will find the film rewarding nonetheless. Rating: low +2 (-4 to +4)

The vast majority of Hindi films are weak exploitation films intended to entertain mass audiences, and rare is the film made for the domestic Indian market that looks intelligently at a serious issue. People in India usually do not go to the movie theater to be edified by a film with serious meanings. That is why a film like BOMBAY is so unusual and is touring international film festivals. It performs a balancing act trying to please the entertainment audiences and at the same time trying to be an indictment of the violence of the 1993 religious riots in Bombay. Trying to do both, it is not altogether successful at either. There are nightmarish depictions of the riots that presumably will bother the entertainment-oriented audience. Still, in the examination of its real issues it betrays itself twice, first in putting the serious themes so late in the film and then in treating those themes overly simplistically. To an American audience it will seem that BOMBAY mixes 1990s violence with a simplified view of the issues of racial intolerance much like the United States might have had in the 1950s. It does not look very deeply at the causes of the religious differences for fear of appearing to take sides. Instead, it limits its message to saying simply that violence is wrong and whatever the religious differences they are, rioting is not the way to resolve them. That is an important statement but not all that profound. Effectively India has discovered the politically correct film. One of the film's

reviewers called this India's SCHINDLER'S LIST. The comparison applies only if comparing BOMBAY to other Indian films.

Our story starts like a classic "Romeo and Juliet" plot. Young Hindu boy Shekhar Misra (played by Aruind Swami) loves Muslim girl Shaila Banu (Manisha Koirala). He knows his family will never approve--his father does not like even Northern Hindus, much less Moslems--but he goes ahead and courts her. When his family objects too strongly he flees to Bombay and sends for Banu. Bombay initially represents the anonymity and tolerance of a cosmopolitan

city. However, their love has already caused a feud between the two families and it continues in their absence. While the plot takes a comic turn of the newlyweds unable to find privacy to be together in Bombay, the reluctant fathers-in-law escalate a feud. This is all done with a light touch, but soon the theme of intolerance will be handled more shockingly. The city of Bombay is about to be torn apart by riots, and the film will get a good deal more serious.

Western critics discussing BOMBAY find it odd that a light comedy turns into an angry political indictment. The original film was probably an even stranger combination. The version we are seeing is reportedly cut down from a version in which there were also the traditional love songs mixed in. There are some light musical interludes in what is being shown but not the popular songs that were probably in the original. It might be a mistake to attribute the combination to the originality of writer and director Mani Ratnam. It is much more a convention of Indian domestic films that all films are musicals and comedies. As an example, KHAL-NAAIKAA, a remake of the American horror film THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE, was very close to the original except for the seemingly incongruous injection of comedy and musical sequences into the story. But in spite of this, what does come through is often moving, though at times not as subtle as a Western viewer might like. At times the action stops as a character make speeches for tolerance. But what other critics are finding fresh and original is, in fact, a cultural difference and almost inevitable in Indian domestic films. Incidentally, I noted the credit included a dance director in spite of the fact that there was no real dance in the version we saw.

The camera work for BOMBAY is a little showy. Several simple effects are used including slow-motion, scenes rushing past the camera, and strobe effects as well as subjective hand-held camera shots.

Also, the film might have been a bit better with a screen or two at the beginning explaining the basis of the conflict and the name of a political group referenced in the film. This would serve a double purpose. It would not only help foreign audiences understand the conflict, it would also bind the film together by

promising that there will be serious political material coming up. There certainly was some question why, for example, the Moslems in the film are so opposed to a particular temple to Ram being built. While most of what goes on becomes clear from context, most Western viewers could do with a few notes.

While the basic subject matter is contrived, this is certainly the best Indian domestic film in years. Rate it a low +2 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

6. CARRINGTON (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: Production values are absolutely first rate, but the story is worthy of Harold Robbins. This is a true story populated with supposed geniuses, but we learn little about them except about their sex lives. With this budget, Emma Thompson, and Jonathan Pryce, somebody should have asked if this story was really worth the telling. Rating: 0 (-4 to +4)

This is the true story of a woman who made all her own choices. She chose to love a man who (in addition to being much older and a bit repulsive) was gay and could not give her a sexual relationship. She chose her lovers, ruining their lives. Yet she still ended unhappy because a gay man could not love her back the way she wanted. It seems to be the point of view of the film that we should feel very sorry for Dora Carrington. But you know, life is tough. In spite of the best efforts of the filmmaker to make Carrington a sympathetic character there is roughly 98% of humanity more deserving of sympathy. And the tears that some audience members shed for her could have been much better spent.

Dora Carrington (played by Emma Thompson) is a young but very promising art student when she first meets Lytton Strachey (Jonathan Pryce). Strachey is a most disagreeable and self-centered man. For reasons never really shown in the film Carrington falls in love with him. Their relationship is mostly platonic since Strachey is gay and not interested in sex with her. However at this point in life Carrington is not interested in sex at all, so his orientation is not a problem. That will change. It is to be presumed that their relationship is on a higher and more intellectual plane, though writer/director Christopher Hampton does painfully little to us show this. Later when Carrington decides that she does like sex after all, she takes a husband to whom both she and Strachey are attracted and apparently tries to make up for lost time. Even more fascinated by sex as she gets older, Carrington takes multiple lovers including her husband's best

friend. She apparently has the looks to attract men and is little fettered by contemporary (1930s) morality or even decency.

In all this time we see little of Carrington's supposed intellect. Hampton shows us far more of her body than we see of her mind. Her talent for painting seems to be channeled mostly into home decoration. Her attraction to Strachey is never explained since he seems to have the sex appeal of an old book consumed by mildew. His conversations are more cutting than clever. Through the middle of the film nearly every scene seems to concern in some way the sex lives of the characters.

Much of CARRINGTON seem well photographed, though at times there are disturbing and obvious shifts in filters giving some scenes a disagreeable yellow tint. The directing and acting are quite up to what you would expect for the prestige production this was intended to be. Jonathan Pryce gives an appealing portrait of a most unappealing character. Emma Thompson never gives a bad performance, but did not noticeably show us anything new in her acting besides a willingness to take her clothes off. She shows us too much of the flesh of Dora Carrington and not enough of the person.

I saw this film at the Edinburgh Film Festival. It had already won a Special Jury Prize and a Best Actor Award to Pryce at Cannes. I had high expectations and I certainly expected better than what was basically a Harold Robbins sort of sex story, only set in the first third of the century and made with high production values. I cannot rate this higher than a 0 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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Like its politicians and its war, society has the teenagers it deserves.

-- J. B. Priestley

