

2. A while back I wrote about the theory that arthropods and mammals seem to have a lot of internal structures in common and appeared to be similar to flipped-over analogues of each other. It is almost as if we evolved from a single beastie that could survive

upside down or rightside up. Or more accurately had no rightside up... at least at first. The tides just blew some of them one way and the rest the other way. Eventually they sort of founded communities of those who had either one side up or the other. If the tide came along and flipped one again he had to either get himself flipped back or was ostracized and had to join the other community. As they adapted the choice became flip back or die. The two communities went their separate evolutionary ways. One group became crabs and lobsters and ended up in chowder pots; the other evolved with the other side down and invented rock-and-roll and the Home Shopping Network.

Andrew Hay wrote to me and suggested that this flip theory might explain why the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body and vice versa. At least that is how the senses seem to go. The images you see with your left eye get processed on the right side of your brain and images you see with your right eye get processed on the left side. It would be interesting to see if that were reversed in crustaceans. Or rather if it was unreversed in crustaceans. But then that leads us to the quest that if an optic nerve from the left eye goes to the right side of the brain and vice versa, there must be a half twist somewhere. Does the left optic nerve go over or under the right one? Is it the same for everybody? Do other similar nerves cross over and does this twist tell us which way our ancestors flipped over? Even if not, that could have been the time that the brain functions crossed over.

But that does bring to mind another question I have always had involved with twisting. What is the story with DNA and the double helix? You know about how you have this long helix that picks up amino acids to reproduce itself so you end up with a double helix. Then the two strands separate. At least that was what we were told in biology and everybody just took it on faith. But it always kind of bothered me, myself. Why? Try simulating that with two

ribbons. Take two ribbons and twist them together so that they form a double helix. Now how do you get them apart? Can you just pull them apart? No, because they are twisted around each other. The ends really have to spin around in the separation process. And ribbons are not rigid like DNA. You replace the ribbons with corkscrews threaded around each other and you have a real puzzle getting them apart. So what does DNA do? Haven't you ever wondered why with these nice plastic models of the double helix in biology class they never pull the strands apart to show you how they separate? Well, probably not for long because it become obvious very quickly that you can't pull them apart. Uh-uh! No way. Separatus impossibilus. Well that's one for you to think about while you are going to sleep. [-mrl]

3. RICHARD III (a film review by Mark R. Leeper):

Capsule: This is nothing less than the most enjoyable performance of Shakespeare I can remember seeing. By staging RICHARD III sumptuously in 1930s England, Richard Eyre's stage production, the basis of this film, has created a fascinating parallel history in which the dynastic rivalries of the War of the Roses occurred in the 20th Century. Rating: +3 (-4 to +4)

I generally do not like to see historical dramatic works done in modern dress. I was excited when the Bayreuth production of Wagner's RING OF THE NIBELUNGS was to be broadcast in this country, but when all of the fantasy was sucked out by staging it in late 19th Century dress, I decided that I was not really so anxious to see it after all. It seemed an attempt to replace the magic with social comment. But in this film, based on a popular London stage production, the modern context is as much the show as the story. We have a Britain in an age to which we can relate brought under the control of a Fascist King. Suddenly it is clear why modern

dress (relatively speaking) can open up and even transform the meaning of a story. RICHARD III is told with visual imagination and panache unusual for a 1930s film or a Shakespeare play. There are huge sets out of THE TRIUMPH OF THE WILL, while other scenes have almost the flair of a Terry Gilliam. The view of 1930s England has a nicely accurate and detailed view even if this is politically a very different 1930s England than the one we know from history.

Ian McKellen gives us a more immediate and riveting Richard than the one we are used to from Laurence Olivier. A bit more soft-spoken than we usually think of for Richard, he nonetheless makes a chilling and wonderfully vicious Fascist dictator. Americans Annette Benning and Robert Downey, Jr., at first may seem odd choices for Elizabeth and her brother the Earl Rivers, but a 1930s King of England might well have married an American and for once it might be perfectly reasonable to cast Americans in Richard III. The major roles are nearly all played by familiar and respected British actors. If Downey plays his fey playboy a little too broadly there is the marvelous casting of Adrian Dunbar, formerly cast as sweet and callow in HEAR MY SONG, here as the amoral assassin Tyrell.

Stylistically the film has some terrific moments, oozing period feel. Richard's political rally seems to come from somewhere between Nazi Germany and Ruritania with its boar's head party symbol. Great art deco buildings, stylish royal residences and sterile hospital hallways form the setting. The battle scenes are unexpectedly violent but also unrealistically brief. Richard's

army seems much too easily beaten at the end of the film. The final minute of the film is perhaps the worst stylistic misstep of the film leaving the viewer with a slightly bad taste in his mouth. The only other real problem with the style is that the invented setting is so compelling and has such a powerful effect on the thrust of the film that the staging threatens to overshadow even Shakespeare's writing. Considering the wit of the writing, that says a great deal.

While I enjoyed the warm Tuscan feel of Kenneth Branagh's MUCH ADO

ABOUT NOTHING, it just never was as riveting this amazing production of RICHARD III. It may end a minority opinion but this exciting adaptation was for me the better of the two films and I rate this film a +3 on the -4 to +4 scale. [-mrl]

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Integrity is like oxygen: The higher you go
the less there is of it.

-- Anonymous