

Arts Reviews

BOOK: THE LAST WITCHFINDER

AUTHOR: JAMES MORROW

PUBLISHER: PHOENIX

PRICE: £7.99

REVIEW: STEVEN WARD

☆☆☆★☆☆

Jennet Stearne is the daughter of the zealous Witchfinder General. Whilst her father travels the country in search of suspected witches and sorcerers, Jennet is tutored in Natural Philosophy by her inspirational and learned Aunt Isobel, whose scientific experimentalism soon attracts the attentions of the witchfinders. In an attempt to save the life of her aunt and other innocents, Jennet resolves to come up with a work of scientific genius that will logically disprove the existence of demons and witches. Jennet's tale takes her to the Salem Witch Trials and before the malevolent Judge Hathorne, into the bed of Benjamin Franklin, into the confidence of political theorist Montesquieu and finally into conversation with Isaac Newton.

Set against a barrage of different locations, Morrow's novel can at times become overly preoccupied with setting, even at the expense of its central theme—science versus superstition. His erudite message is often lost amidst a jungle of irrelevant contextual detail, which suffocates the novel's basic premises. Although a good idea, it could be great if it were distilled into a more focused work.

CLASSIC BOOK REVIEW

BOOK: DANGEROUS LIAISONS

AUTHOR: CHODERLOS DE LACLOS

PUBLISHER: PENGUIN

PRICE: £6.99

REVIEW: SARAH COWIN

☆☆☆★☆☆

The plot of *Dangerous Liaisons* will already be familiar to most people through the many film adaptations, including *Cruel Intentions*. More amoral than the rugby team in *Ziggys*, *Dangerous Liaisons* was certainly not a book approved of in its time. In fact, it was so shocking that the publishers added a foreword to reassure people that it was a work of fiction.

The schemes, actions and consequences of the main characters are revealed through a series of letters. This style is one of the reasons *Dangerous Liaisons* works as well as it does, as you understand the motives of Merteuil and Valmont without necessarily empathising with them. It is a book that doesn't feel like it has aged; although it is set in 18th-century France, it could just as easily be set in 21st-century Britain. The characters would still be considered morally repugnant; Valmont as a sexual predator using very dubious ways to snare his women, and Merteuil as dangerously Machiavellian.

Dangerous Liaisons twists and turns throughout and has a satisfyingly unpredictable end; it is a necessary read for those who enjoy a well written tale of scandal.

Anjali Raval checks out all the glitz and glamour of Bollywood

Yorkshire recently underwent a transformation with the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Fringe Festival.

The action-packed cultural festival took place from June 5-10, with the most notable event being the IIFA Awards at Hallam FM Arena, Sheffield, on Saturday June 9. The ceremony, which rivalled the Oscars for sheer glamour, saw the arrival of numerous celebrities from Indian cinema aiming to promote Bollywood in Yorkshire. With the venue sold out within days and giant screens set up in neighbouring Leeds and Bradford (renowned for their strong British Asian populations), this was cinema on a grand scale.

The IIFA Festival is expected to bring 28,000 visitors to Yorkshire and generate £10 million, raising Yorkshire's profile as a tourist destination amongst a global TV audience. The ceremony was graced with the presence of the godfather of Bollywood, Amitabh Bachan, who has appeared in more than 130 films and has won nearly 20 top film awards. Other names included Bachan's son, Abhishek, his new wife, the beautiful Ashwarya Rai who has acted in mainstream British cinema, Akshay Kumar, Rani Mukherjee, and Preity Zinta. With them was Shilpa Shetty (of Celebrity Big Brother fame) and British actors Colin Firth and Sienna Miller.

The awards opened in true Bollywood style with a spectacular



Ashwarya Rai performs at the opening ceremony of the Indian Film Academy Fringe Festival

love story with a twist. It was relayed through contemporary dance and performed to the rhythm of 'Ruby' by Leeds-based band Kaiser Chiefs, remixed by Sandy Nuttgens with a driving drum beat from the Dhol Foundation's Johnny Kalsi. It truly captured the diverse atmosphere of the ceremony.

Rang De Basanti (*Paint it Yellow*), about a group of disillusioned Indian youths who learn to be patriotic, starring Aamir Khan and British actress Alice Patten, came out victorious, winning Best Film, Best Supporting Actress and Best Musical Direction. Hrithik

Roshan won Best Actor, while Best Actress went to Rani Mukherjee for her work in *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (*Never Say Goodbye*). Finally, the award for Best Director was given to Rajkumar Hirani for the musical comedy *Lage Raho Munnabhai*.

The UK is the second-largest market for Indian films. Film-makers have acknowledged the demand for Bollywood amongst audiences outside of India and have re-edited films to make them more appealing to this audience. *Rang De Basanti*, for example, is to be released as *The Colour of Sacrifice* with the amount of

Hindi reduced and a Hollywood runtime (Indian films are often three hours long). The festivities were rounded off by that other great Indian love (apart from acting, singing and dancing); cricket. After hosting the test match between England and the West Indies, Headingly staged a celebrity cricket match on the Friday before the ceremony. The cricket match, umpired by Dickie Bird, saw a team brimming with Indian cricketers. For Bollywood fans, it would have been like watching their version of Brad Pitt bowling a yorker to Tom Cruise, with Julia Roberts commentating.

EXHIBIT: MAD MAN IN THE MINSTER

VENUE: YORK ART GALLERY

DATE: 09/06/07 - 21/10/07

REVIEWED BY: KIRAN SHAH

☆☆☆★☆☆

From June 9 until October 21, York Art Gallery offers an exhibition displaying the Minster's scale and grandeur alongside the man who attempted to destroy it.

On February 2 1829, a fire swept through the east end of York Minster. No lives were lost, but the medieval wooden roof, organ and choir stalls were all destroyed. It was deliberately started by a religious fanatic, Jonathan Martin (1778-1838), a man obsessed with divine retribution, who later made no attempt to protest his innocence.

'A Sketch of York Cathedral', made at 9am on Monday 2 February 1829, by an eyewitness is a dramatic depiction of the blazing Minster just after the roof collapsed. After noticing sparks rising from the cathedral's roof, he rendered a vividly cold billow of smoke which contrasts with the surrounding warm watercolours representing the heat radiated by the walls and the glow inside the cathedral. The Clerk of Works at the Minster, John Browne, directed the early stages of the reconstruction after the fire. His own sketches appear throughout the exhibition, depicting the restoration of the



Jonathan Martin, Minster arsonist

nave's roof. John Varley's sketch, 'York Minster from North West' of 1803 was vital to the restoration.

The most striking work is by Edward Lindley. His 'Portrait of Jonathan Martin', 1829, instantly captures your attention when you enter the room. Martin's stern angular face imprints in your visual memory alongside his quotation: "Your great Minsters and churches will come rattling down upon your guilty heads." Lindley paints him with an austere countenance, reflecting his 'mania'. While Martin's own ink sketch of Samson slaying a lion hangs opposite, his bold contours and lack of depth are inconsistent with the intricacies of the architectural sketches. The exhibition is surprisingly diverse, and certainly worth a visit.

WHAT'S ON

Theatre Royal:

Wuthering Heights
Until
June 23

Dansopolis
June 26

Birmingham Royal Ballet
June 29-30

Grand Opera House:

Beauty and the Beast
June 19-30

Other Side Comedy Club:

Edinburgh Review
Steve Williams and Matt Kershin
24th June

Drama Barn:

Daisy Pulls it Off/The Children's Hour
Week 9

Open Drama: Musicals Night
Week 10

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