

A Humanistic View of the Movies

The English Patient and the Drama of Infidelity

Philip Rogers

When we go to a movie we relax and sit in the dark and what we see enters very easily into our subconscious and informs our attitudes and values, unless we consciously bring in our ability to discriminate. The images that we are absorbing in this very receptive state need to be thought about and brought into consciousness so that we can choose what we are accepting. Some very good movies contain some very negative messages and *The English Patient* is one of those.

A gorgeous film — full of visual, sensual images that delighted my eyes. There is one moment when the camera pans across the patient's bed and as he reminisces the folds of the blanket magically become the rumpled surface of the desert dunes seen from a plane. The film deserves its awards; but there's one thing I find hard to swallow — the drama of the infidelity. This beautiful film and moving story lend their glamour to infidelity and so validate it. What is it in us that is so attracted to this particular drama? Whatever it is, I find myself more and more objecting to this in the films and plays that I see.

This film has great characters, gor-

geous dramatic desert scenery, the excitement of discovery, handsome men, beautiful women, the danger and intrigue of war and the resulting conflicts of loyalty. Do we really need the added zest of illicit sex and so-called love?

I am willing to acknowledge the passion of the two adulterers, their intensity and the beauty of their absorption; but is this love? My answer is no, it isn't. They fall in my estimation because they become liars. Their tragedy is devalued because they prefer the drama of their infidelity to facing up to the fact that their need and desire is not only for each other but also a desire and need for something secret. Why does their affair have to be concealed from the eyes of their friends and society? Their sexual passion is heightened by the added spice of shame and guilt. Like teenagers in a steamed-up phone box the forbidden fruit tastes so much more juicy than the mundane fare of honest and open relationship.

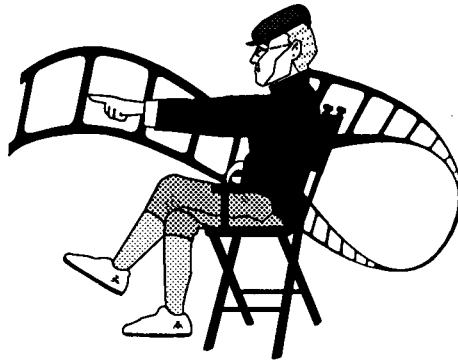
Would they still be so 'in love' (I prefer 'obsessed') if they went to her husband and told him the truth? Would their love survive being open instead of secret? We'll never know. Would her bleak, dark death

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in the cave be different if their love was not so equally hidden? Or what of his grief as he fulfils his promise and carries her from her tomb, would his grief be less? Would our perceptions change if the plot had this adulterous element removed? I don't think so. Her awful, lonely death and his futile battle to save her transcend their history and elevate both characters to heroic proportions. Their true tragedy is demeaned by their lies.

I am fed up with the glorification of lies and infidelity. It's not glorious, it's sordid. Love flourishes in truth, not in deceit. This

may make our lives difficult sometimes but isn't this also how we learn and grow? It is not manly to make love with another man's wife and then sit down to dinner with him, it's dishonest and puerile. It's not womanly to lie to and cheat the man you have made vows with, it's adolescent and based in fear. If you feel good about yourself and what you are doing, do you need to lie? It takes courage to be truthful and there's plenty of drama in it, too; just like this film which is full of images of courage and doesn't need the drama of infidelity to make it interesting.



An Astrologer at Work

Anne Whitaker

The Starting Point

My first serious encounter with astrology came at a stage in my life when I was an

out-and-out sceptic. In 1974 in a launderette in Bath I became friends with a little girl whose parents were astrologers. They

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