

Letters from our readers

26 July 2005

The following is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “Who is Judge Roberts?”

An excellent fact-filled article that supports your analysis of what is happening. The last nails are being driven into the coffin of US bourgeois democracy. Forget “checks and balances.” Forget any legal redress of the inevitable outrages against working people.

The US is being driven by the PNAC-privatization agenda into the barbarism of militarism and third-world poverty—all to maximize corporate profit. We need to focus media towards working class people being most destroyed by the capitalism “as we know it,” who have no current source of information: unorganized workers, non-voting citizens, people without health insurance, etc., etc. The message “Socialism or Barbarism” becomes evermore relevant.

JW

Santa Monica, California

21 July 2005

I appreciate all of the information contained in your story, as the media doesn’t have time to tell the whole thing in between advertisements!

TM

21 July 2005

Thank you so much for your informative piece on Judge Roberts. Sometimes it is hard for me to understand how Americans can know this fellow’s record and ideology and yet still support his nomination. And then sometimes it is not so hard for me to understand. I have recently taken a reporting position for a small newspaper in Texas. I hope (without getting immediately fired) to provide my readers a rather different perspective on politics. My editor would probably die to know she’s hired a socialist with anarchist leanings.

Keep up the great work!

K

Texas

21 July 2005

On “The state of the modern soul: *L’argent*, directed by Robert Bresson”

I was thrilled, after having just seen the New Yorker DVD

of *L’Argent* and loving it, that you decided to write about it. Please keep this up in the future! I like reading your thoughts on the important films of the past just as much as I like hearing what you have to say about today’s cinema. However, I must disagree with you on one point. You write that the breathtaking and transcendent moments are rare in *L’Argent*, and specifically point out the killing of the family and the surrender of Yvon at the end as coming up short. I couldn’t disagree more! I was haunted for days after seeing this ending. The manner in which the slaughter is shot, in which we see no murders, only the aftermath, and hear only the dog running from room to room, is perhaps the most chilling death scene in any movie. The brief moment when the light falls off the table and the camera holds it for a few seconds until it finally pops out is, I believe, the very definition of breathtaking. And what a brilliant ending shot! The crowd of people staring through the doorway, even after Yvon has been arrested. Who is this man, what did he do? They must be thinking. They will read about him tomorrow in the papers and say, “How horrific!” and go about their day, eventually forgetting, never knowing what he went through to make him arrive at this unfortunate point. But we as the viewer know all too well. You go on to note Bresson’s pessimism in his later works, which you think contributes to them being less satisfying. Indeed, *L’Argent* is incredibly pessimistic, but not unjustifiably so, since it so clearly tours the path that so many underprivileged individuals take on a daily basis in the world. I think that despite this pessimism, there is an underlying optimism, at least insofar as Bresson believes things are the way they are because of existing social structures such as capitalism, and not so much because of human nature. If we change these structures we can change the path that Yvon and all the others take into a more hopeful one. Any critical observer of the film should be able to see this because Bresson pays so much attention to existing structures in the film. Even the idea of showing a close-up of money changing hands during a transaction points to these. But in any event, I enjoyed the piece.

Thank you so much!

Sincerely, AC

23 July 2005

I just wanted to drop you a short line, thanking you for an excellent article on Robert Bresson (one of my personal favorite French filmmakers). The last few paragraphs, the questions and implications you raise, I thought were especially insightful and thought provoking. I'm one of those who, while detecting a definite change in Bresson's last few films, have a special love for them. I thought it particularly insightful when you suggested his latter characters have "less soul" and that this in itself raises serious questions about the state of the world. I think you are correct to suggest that this may have been intentional on the part of Bresson. I don't want to comment too much more. It's been quite a few years since I've watched a Bresson film; your review made me want to re-watch his films. Thank you again for an excellent analysis.

Yours fraternally,

MS Cincinnati, Ohio
23 July 2005

In your article about the DVD release of Robert Bresson's film *L'Argent*, you muse on the seeming pessimism of his last four films, wondering what caused the shift in his view of the world, and comment that he found the moral and social state of the world to be deteriorating. You then, near the end of your review wonder whether the reason his characters are "a little blander, slightly more complacent, less sympathetic" than they were previously; that there was "a decrease in emotional intensity, a lessening in the sense of urgency of the moral and social matters treated, an overall artistic and dramatic weakening," could be the result of the filmmaker's blaming the people for the degraded moral state of society. I would suggest two possible considerations of this phenomenon. One, that with increasing age and the inevitable diminishing of physical and mental forces, Bresson's view of life reflected the almost inevitable ravages of time, whether consciously or unconsciously. I don't mean senility. It is just that a man in his eighties does not see and feel the world the same way as a man in his twenties or thirties does. If he is an artist, he may also be disappointed that a lifetime of work has not changed the world; that, in fact, things are getting worse. Second, the fact that the films suffer from "an overall artistic and dramatic weakening" may be because the nature of the time in which he found himself was such that the majority of humanity had actually become emotionally less intense, convinced that moral and social problems were not capable of being solved. In other words, the seeming increased blandness of his work may have been reflecting the shutteredness that increasingly became the face people showed to the world out of a sense of futility regarding the state of society and the importance, if any, of the role they could play in making society a better

place to live. Bland people in bland situations where blandness connotes a sort of safety from the dog-eat-dog brutality of the current age.

CZ

San Francisco, California
23 July 2005

On "A tale of two classes"

I liked the parallel with *Tale of Two Cities*. I also liked the point about executive compensation becoming completely disconnected from the development of productive forces. Salaries continue to be justified on the grounds that skilled executives bring about the conditions under which massive wealth can be generated (likewise for the stock market and the unearned income it generates for traders and shareholders). The myth of the enabling executive is perpetuated by a deeply ingrained meritocratic culture that permeates everything from competition between workers to competition between middle schoolers vying to go to the best college (and hence make the most money). I find the myth of the meritocracy, and the feverish competition that it breeds, to be one of the most alienating aspects of capitalism.

JS

California
21 July 2005

Well said!! I really enjoyed your article. One does wonder how this gap between the haves and have-nots can continue to grow. And, when you consider that a large portion of the world's population doesn't even have a fraction of the financial resources that the Bellinis have, it seems even more outrageous.

KM

Eagan, Minnesota
21 July 2005



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