

Letters from our readers

20 January 2006

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

On “The Sago Mine disaster: Safety reports document deadly conditions at West Virginia mine”

As a resident of West Virginia, and a neighbor to the mining families, I want to say *Thank you*. The media has done a great injustice to the people of West Virginia, and your article was a breath of fresh air. It is with disgust that I view CNN and the ignorant self-serving reporters that stood on *our* soil and made a mockery of *our* pain. God help them. And God bless you.

AB

Weston, West Virginia

14 January 2006

I watched faithfully when this disaster struck, keeping my eyes glued to the cable news stations. I could certainly see how the misinformation got started. It was a chaotic scene. I don't think that it was vicious on the company's part, or anyone else's for that matter. The most important thing to focus on now is saving the life of Mr. McCloy, and making things safer in the future for these miners, who by all accounts are some of the bravest men that I have ever seen. I can't imagine making a living that way. They are truly a special breed. And I must say that I find it simply amazing that after everything is done and over with, the news has vanished, dried up. We haven't heard a decent update on Mr. McCloy's condition in several days. Not everyone is worried about the Alito hearings, and I can probably guess that there are others that feel the same way.

PM

Palmerston, Tennessee

14 January 2006

On “Sri Lankan foreign minister discusses war, not peace, in Washington”

Your article was very much appreciated. What do you expect? When a mafia member feels threatened he runs to the mafia leader! I am afraid Rice has forgotten her roots! Your voice will be a lonely one in the wilderness, for there is no fair play or justice in a capitalist world.

DS

Preston, UK

14 January 2006

On “Independent journalist who attacked Harold Pinter turns on World Socialist Web Site”

I have spent some time reading the articles posted on Johann Hari's web site, and have come to the following conclusion: Mr. Hari possesses a special talent. When he embarks upon a journey, it does not matter whence he starts or in which direction he proceeds, but somehow he always manages to end up in the camp of imperialism. Is it not remarkable?

EG

12 January 2006

I am writing to commend Paul Bond's principled, sophisticated, and substantive response to the *Independent* newspaperman Johann Hari, who has attacked the courageous Noble Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter, as well as the online organ of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the *World Socialist Web Site*. Having read Hari's two-dimensional piece, it is obvious that this young man (b. 1979) suffers from a number of political disorders, among which consist of bourgeois reformism, historical impressionism, and political tyronism.

Moreover, one must add that in the realm of aesthetics and literary criticism, Hari is a rather bad formalist, since he is unable to interpret or understand the social and historical content of certain poetic creations. Hence his flippant dismissal of Pinter's verse on the 1991 Gulf War as a “crap poem”—unless, of course, Hari is unwittingly alluding to the well-known tradition of British scatological poetry. Two of its most notable representatives, for example, are the eighteenth-century writers Jonathan Swift and Mary Wortley Montagu.

But why stop there? Even literary works written in the European medieval period make use of copious scatological devices. Then again, virtually every human culture in every epoch in the social history of art and literature has incorporated scatology in one manner or

another into their art forms, to induce humor or summon anger. In Pinter's case, the scatological references are appropriately and painfully connected with images of bombs, brutality, imperialism, and war:

"We blew the shit right back up their own ass / And out their fucking ears. / It works. / We blew the shit out of them, / They suffocated in their own shit! / We blew them into fucking shit. / They are eating it. / Now I want you to come over here and kiss my mouth."

This is not a "feel good" poem. A number of things are happening here. Firstly, the words are not Pinter's. He is writing in character. That is to say, the poem is told from the perspective of the aggressor in the violent and vulgar idiom of that individual or group of individuals. Secondly, this is a free verse poem with a discernible rhythm and pace with successfully placed pauses, stops, and exclamations that accentuate the emotional effect. Thirdly, the word "shit" is used literally and metaphorically to capture the physical trauma of explosives on the human body, as well as to illustrate a degrading and humiliating subservience resulting from a neocolonial war.

That subservience is seen most distressingly in the closing line, when a forced "kiss" has been juxtaposed against the slaughterous fecal imagery that precedes it. This is nothing less than murder and rape. Why does Johann Hari not see it? As Paul Bond rightly observes, Hari is an apologist of imperialism. The newspaperman may not be entirely aware of his partisanship. Yet, he expresses a definite political tendency, and his cataractous bourgeois world outlook impairs his intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities. Whatever Johann Hari has to say about Harold Pinter or the WSWS, his ideas are not worth much because they fail to be articulated from a critical and independent class perspective.

Sincerely yours,

ADW

13 January 2006

God Yes! That boy is a raving idiot. Thank you for hopefully trimming his buzzing and confused wings for a moment.

PJ

Britain

14 January 2006

On shooting in Florida

Please do an article on the boy shot/killed in the Florida school. The media has announced from the beginning that he was suicidal. How would the school or the media know this the very first time the news came out? How would

police know this before they shot him or afterward? It seems the only person who could answer if he was truly suicidal was the boy, and now he is gone. Chances are he was only determined to take up for himself in the only way he fantasized would work. Some kids get taunted, ridiculed and abused year after year by bullies that fellow students either follow or remain on the sidelines. Even teachers resist "getting involved." Something needs to be done for these kids to alleviate situations before they escalate to this degree. Was claiming he was suicidal done in order to place full blame/responsibility on the boy rather than the authorities (school and police)? I'm wondering why the stun gun was not put to use. It's getting to be as dangerous, if not more so, to call 911 for help than not to. I am hopeful and will be grateful for anyone to do a review of this alleged new right to shoot to kill children.

LM

14 January 2006

On New Orleans

I thought you might find it interesting that the New Orleans Police Department has started a sort of "glamorization" campaign within the city. On the uptown side of Claiborne Ave., headed towards I-10, they have erected a billboard that says something along the lines of, "We served. We protected. We sacrificed. We STAYED." It's quite entertaining, and citizens of the city are finding it absurd and strangely humorous in the way a devastated city could find that sort of thing. I'm currently attending college up in Maryland and my family lives on Magazine in New Orleans. They managed to stay high and dry. I will say, though, you should definitely look into doing a piece on Mardi Gras this year. It should be much smaller, but the New Orleanians are going to pull together and make it an amazing time.

HC

11 January 2006



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