

Letters from our readers

22 September 2009

On “Obama’s health care speech and the lies of the Nation”

Interestingly, the progressives of today would have been considered mainstream-to-somewhat-liberal when I was young, as well as when my grandparents were young early in the 20th century.

You need to keep things in perspective, though. The people who write and publish the media (like the *Nation*) rarely come from the ranks of the poor/working-class. When former president Bill Clinton took an ax to the New Deal, calling it “welfare reform,” most of America’s progressives yawned, apparently not only disinterested in human rights in the US, but oblivious to the role that welfare has played for decades in protecting wages and giving workers at least a measure of power.

Yes, today’s progressive media is pretty conservative in comparison, but it’s what we’ve got today. It’s too bad. The people who know what it’s really like on the economic front lines, so to speak, can’t afford to have a voice.

Dianka F

Wisconsin, USA

17 September 2009

On “US suspends eastern European missile shield plan”

Lets put the “shield” in a European context. Today the Italian prime minister announced his intention to withdraw Italian troops from Afghanistan “as soon as possible.” Once the first country goes, the rest will rapidly follow. For all the reasons known to your readers, the Afghan strategy is in the process of collapse. The failure in Afghanistan will finally finish the hopes of the American elites to use NATO as an out of area force, simultaneously finishing it off as an instrument of American hegemony in Europe. Already, businesses in Germany and France are

expanding their Russian activities. But with the missiles not arriving for at least ten years, with the abandonment of Polish reaction, this engagement will accelerate. In five years the intertwining of the Russian and European elites will make the possibility of unilateral action by the USA impossible in Europe. The political elites in Germany and France show no enthusiasm for Turkish membership of the EU. But what of Russian membership? A deeper entanglement of European elites with their Russian counterparts is inevitable now that the decline in American state power has become official.

Chris

Ireland

18 September 2009

On “A New World: A Life of Thomas Paine by Trevor Griffiths”

I saw this play while I was in London the week before last. I agree that it was well conceived and performed, but I do not share your liking for John Light as Paine. I much preferred James Garnon, particularly as Danton. Light’s Paine was too stolid and clench-jawed for my liking. His performance was too one-note, and he didn’t appear to change much from the beginning of his experiences to the end.

That aside (which is more than a quibble when you consider that he was on stage nearly all of the time), the performances by the rest of the cast, most of them in multiple roles, were terrific. There was a light shower of rain the afternoon I saw the play, but everyone ignored it (except perhaps for the groundlings, who had to duck under their plastic macs). You are right that the physical structure of the Globe made many aspects of the production possible and also more forceful. The theatre is a magnificent structure and seems to encourage creativity both in the design of the productions and in the actors’ creation of their roles. The cast worked well as an ensemble. I congratulate them.

Magic happens at the Globe.
Carolyn
California, USA
18 September 2009

These are the Times: a Life of Thomas Paine was a good read and would make a great movie. A number of fine scenes make up the screenplay. One scene I remember, particularly vividly, also contained Danton; remembered for the levity of the moment under the dire circumstances. Danton in prison and awaiting his execution, has Paine, recently imprisoned himself, summoned to his cell. The scene suggests in a subtle if not subliminal way the power of labor over any given situation. Things happen materially and you find yourself with these two men cramped together in the small space. Danton removes from his coat a bottle he has managed to procure and suggests that Paine propose the toast, one that will make him laugh, to which Paine responds, "To the Future!"

Heinz S
19 September 2009

On "Citizen of the world: a brief survey of the life and times of Thomas Paine (1737-1809)"

A wonderful article on Thomas Paine. It brings to mind the abysmal historical education I received in my school years, where Paine was reduced to three stupid words: "radical pamphleteer" and "rabblrouser." I am forwarding links to this article to a few young people of my acquaintance who need to know the whole story.

Charles H
Texas, USA
18 September 2009

On "District 9, an attempt at serious science fiction"

I liked your review of *District 9*, but just wanted to add a couple comments of my own if I may. I felt that this would have been an alright movie—I especially liked the documentary-style realism—if not for its submission to Hollywood norms. There was simply too much completely gratuitous violence and gore for me to be able to appreciate it as a serious work of art. The scene you mention in which Wikus gets in an alien battle suit was plain Hollywood trash; along with all the blood and guts, its purpose was only to get a thrill out of the audience. Still, *District 9* was better than most American movies I have seen in a while.

Julian Q
18 September 2009



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