

Letters from our readers

5 January 2010

On "In praise of George Eliot's Adam Bede on its 150th anniversary"

Thank you for this superb article. It puts me in touch with the magnificent feelings I felt while reading *Adam Bede* in what now seems like centuries ago! This novel had a profound, subterranean influence on me, long before I became a Marxist, but I was never able to quite grasp why the book moved me so much in my youth. Now, forty-five years later, I do: its uncompromising honesty and empathy.

I was happy to read all the footnotes, especially those dealing with my favorite poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and their revolutionary *Lyrical Ballads*. To this day, Wordsworth's *Ode: Intimations of Immortality* is my most favorite poem, though I don't think, if memory serves me well, that it was part of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Anyway, thanks for this article. I think it one of your best.

Raoul R
Los Angeles, California
4 December 2010

This two-part article was a lovely Christmas present which I've passed on to friends. I've come to appreciate the articles about film, theatre, literature and art that appear in the WSWs above those of other web sites. Your writers combine a socialist conscience with a high degree of aesthetic discernment and historical awareness. I read *Middlemarch* a few years ago and was very impressed with George Eliot, wanting to know more about her. Now I will be reading her other novels as well.

Kamilla

North Vancouver, British Columbia
31 December 2009

Thanks very much for this article about George Eliot and *Adam Bede*.

Oddly enough, while I was in London, I picked up a copy of a book entitled, *142 Strand: A Radical Address in Victorian London*, by Rosemary Ashton, that was all about Eliot's association with John Chapman and the *Westminster Review*. It was very interesting indeed and conveyed the ferment surrounding what was permissible to discuss about religion, science and sexual relations, among other things.

On the same trip, I visited Eliot's grave in Highgate Cemetery. It is right around the corner from that of Karl Marx. A very nice section of the cemetery, I must say!

Carolyn Z
San Francisco, California
30 December 2009

Thanks a lot for this great analysis, David; I keenly look forward to the next part.

If you write more of pieces along these lines, you might consider tackling Elizabeth Gaskell. I found her *North and South* a compelling piece of literature, not least of all for its insights into the political economy of the day.

Colin B
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
30 December 2009

On "Canada's Conservatives shut down parliament, again"

Canadian soldiers and civilians appear to be reaping the bitter fruit sown by the Harper government's Geneva Convention violations in Afghanistan.

On or about December 31, a roadside bomb attack in the Dand District killed four Canadian soldiers,

wounded four others, and killed a Canadian journalist. The attack is considered one of the deadliest since Canadian troops began their mission in 2002.

The Dand District was thought to be relatively peaceful in that it had been the focus of Canadian counterinsurgency efforts in recent months. The District is also the home to the village of Deh-e-Bagh, considered a model of Canada's counterinsurgency work. According to the *Globe and Mail*, "Constant patrols and development projects were supposed to have won the trust of Afghans in the region and driven down the insurgency."

Yet what kind of "trust" is created when patrols handed over innocent Afghan peasants and villagers to local security forces for "extreme" torture? How could anyone trust troops that were/are operationally integrated with torturers and acting on behalf of a government complicit in war crimes?

The answer, as the *Globe and Mail* reports suggest, is that the Taliban have been gaining strength in recent months, while Afghan peasants keep their heads down, and are unwilling to get involved and risk their lives to save those of young Canadian working class men and women.

Harper has a lot of gall stating that he stands for and beside Canadian soldiers, as his government's criminality taints them and helps puts them in harm's way!

Dan P
1 January 2010

On "Precious: A view of Harlem through a very narrow lens"

Helen Halyard writes, "It is the task of the artist not merely to 'show what is happening' (Sapphire's words, in an interview), but to offer an interpretation, and a critical one at that."

My response is yes and no.

How one picks the subject of a film matters, just as the theme of a film matters. But a film—especially a

commercial film—is generally not the proper setting for a discussion about the philosophical or political underpinnings of the system that predominates. A film is, in my humble opinion, a vehicle for human drama, for allowing oneself to feel for the struggles and challenges a character faces.

But having said that, I'd argue that the film *Precious* does allow a broad audience to be exposed to poverty and the abuses it creates. But the audience is given that window limited by the choices the story's character sees as most advantageous. That's the prism that makes it interesting. The character isn't doing what you or I would do, but in this case, what *Precious* must do.

A film is primarily not an intellectual experience. It may be sorted through afterwards that way, but even a good "politically themed" film must first engage one's heart.

So I'd argue that at least one theme of the film is redemption, but an incomplete redemption. A redemption begun by an act of kindness.

What could be more political?

Jeffrey B
California, USA
29 December 2009



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