

Letters on The Hurt Locker and the Academy Awards

18 March 2010

On “The Hurt Locker, the Academy Awards and the rehabilitation of the Iraq war”

Dear Mr. Walsh,

Sometimes it is worthwhile just to say thank you. Yes, the Academy Awards came up for discussion at lunch with my co-workers. I can't really say that you have said anything different than what was said at lunch, save to add that our little group includes both someone of Arab descent and a veteran of the war. No one present would argue with your point of view.

Our vet said that the Awards speak to a class that he did not consider his own, their fancy dress and opulence was something he felt didn't really have much to do with either him or most of America.

Our Arab descendant simply thought the whole thing terribly banal. After all, she said, the movie was in the end pretty boring. She totally concurred with another of your writer's views that the movie could have been about the German army during WWII.

Interesting to me was that they both watched the Awards, which is why I thank you. Someone has to set the record straight and confirm what we in fact know.

Best,
Ted M
California, USA
12 March 2010

I could not even finish it. I agree with everything you said. Thank you.

Karin L
Maine, USA

12 March 2010

Thanks for that. Enjoyed it. And didn't therefore feel like an idiot for reading it at the end. It would never occur to me to go to see *The Hurt Locker*. Hollywood projections on the Vietnam War have given me an aversion to its modern War Stories. Its World War II films, by contrast, can be vastly entertaining and historically instructive. You can actually find a time when suicide bombings were lauded, as long as it was a regular American crashing his Tank/Plane/Submarine/Jeep into a House/Airport/Ship/Garage full of the “inscrutable” Japanese.

Babeouf
Ireland

11 March 2010

On “An exchange on ‘The Hurt Locker, the Academy Awards and the rehabilitation of the Iraq war’”

Mr. Walsh,

I'm having some ambivalent feelings about this film. I agreed with JL's take on the film before I even saw it and so refused to see it in the theater. Then I did see it on DVD months later and, like others, I couldn't help feeling the film succeeded on some level as a story about addiction and also as an anti-war film—perhaps despite the director. (If all war movies are anti-war movies, aren't all anti-war movies then war movies?) I guess I can't help recalling the passage in Voronsky's “On Artistic Truth” where he speaks of the “objective resonance of artistic works” that exist despite the artist's subjective intentions.

A friend of mine also argued that the director is merely playing the promotion game. She knew that if

she pitched the film as an anti-war movie, she'd lose a bunch of potential viewers and she knew that if she pitched it as a war movie she's also lose viewers. So she played it smart and called it apolitical. To his mind, the movie is anti-war and succeeds as such.

Beyond all this, I still fully agree with your points about the almost schizophrenic split in the liberal attitude toward the two illegal occupations one of general disdain for war—in general—and the other of rationalizing the occupations because the guy they pushed the button for a year ago presides as commander-in-chief over them now.

I fondly remember our conversation over supper at the 2007 Summer School and remain an admirer of your writing. Any thoughts you find the time to send me would be appreciated. I don't consider this a letter to be published, just the continuation of a worthwhile conversation.

All the best,
Robert C
New Jersey, USA
15 March 2010

I could not agree with David Walsh more. I lived through the Vietnam War and spent most of those years protesting it. People who were too young may not understand the implications of trying to understand why the murderous bastards do what they do, but the softening up of our views on Vietnam War criminals began very early in the piece. Can't remember the film but Jon Voight was in a wheelchair, very difficult propaganda to argue against. Personally I made a decision to never see a Hollywood film on Vietnam and I have never resoled. This post modernist view that film can somehow be neutral comes from those who have lost their passion and sense of justice.

Diane J
16 March 2010



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